

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### THE SUPERNATURAL IN CHRIST.

We take that miracle which is existing and operating yet before our eyes and in the midst of us the supernatural in Christ and we find in the establishment of that, the proof that the mighty works here recorded are credible.

I base my argument, here, on two facts which are patent to every observer. On the one hand, we have in these gospels, the miracles for the time being altogether apart, the record of a life of which the external surroundings may be thus described. In the most degenerate age of Jewish history, when immorality was undermining the foundations of the Roman ascendancy throughout the world, a young man born in Bethlehem, and educated after the ordinary fashion of his nation, in a district which was proverbial for its coarseness, and a village which was proverbial for its wickedness, wrought as a common carpenter till he was thirty years of age. Then for three years and a half he wandered up and down his native land, coming to be received and listened to as a teacher and having as his immediate attendants a few fishermen, tax gatherers and men of no liberal education. For a time he had a large following among the common people; but the incisive sharpness of his moral discourses so cut the hearts of the rulers, that at last they laid hold of him, and with the connivance say rather, through the instrumentality of the Roman governor of the province, they secured his crucifixion. These are facts which not even the wildest scepticism has ever attempted to deny or call in question.

On the other hand it is equally uncontrovertible, that the history of that young man as written by his followers, has been the most powerful force in human history ever since its promulgation among men; and that his name is to-day worshipped among millions, while even by those who stop short of worship it is venerated as that of the greatest of the sons of men. Before four centuries had passed away, and that too in the face of repeated persecutions of his followers by the Imperial power, the spiritual might of that history made itself felt throughout the Roman Empire and took possession of the Imperial throne itself; and to-day, before our own eyes, even at the distance of eighteen centuries from the events, it is more active than ever, and seems gathering to itself new energy for yet grander triumphs than any which it has yet achieved. All through these successive years that history has sat among men like its great subject by the well of Sychar, telling them all things that ever they did, discerning the very thoughts of their hearts, and leading them to a higher life than without it they had ever dreamed of entering upon. Under its influence the drunkard has become sober, the thief has become honest, the adulterer has become chaste, the selfish has become disinterested. It has gone into the homes of men and turned, there, the water of mere earthly fellowship into the wine of spiritual communion, making each household, where its supremacy is recognized, like that of Bethany, a dwelling place in which the studies of the Maries are hallowed because they are carried on at Jesus' feet; and the ministrations of the Marthas are dignified because they are rendered unto him. It has taken the little children into its arms and blessed them; recognizing their existence with its smile and marking their importance by its attention. It has been to society—excuse the illustration, for I can get nothing but a miracle that really resembles it—like the tree which Moses cast into the bitter fountain, and has sweetened and purified all the relationships of man to man. It has gone into political life, and by that great word, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's," it has contended successfully for liberty of conscience while upholding human government, and thereby it has laid also the foundations, broad and indestructible, of civil freedom. It has stood between class and class as the good Samaritan of humanity, and has succoured and revived those who had been maltreated and all but murdered by the grasping avarice and cruel mammonism of their fellows. It has, in fine, been the consoler of the race amid all the cares and sorrows to which men are heirs. It has wiped the tears from the eyes of the mourner as he stood by the grave that was soon to cover in the remains of one he tenderly and truly loved; it has soothed the pain of the afflicted one as he lay on his bed of anguish; it

has given a song to the oppressed in the dark night of his imprisonment or slavery; and, as the death drape has stood upon the brow, and the glaze of dissolution has dimmed the eye, it has given not only peace but positive triumph to untold multitudes of men.

These also are facts which no man will deny. We have seen them ourselves. Some of us have had personal experiences, which are their best attestations. Any man who cares to go to the right places to seek for them may witness them to-night in multitudinous instances in the cities of our land. Nor have they been confined to any one age or class or country. The power of this story has been proved in every century. It has been as manifest among the erudite and the elevated, as among the illiterate and the lowly. It has lost nothing by its reproduction even in the rudest languages, but its efficacy has been demonstrated among the Hindoos and Hottentots, the Chinese and the South Sea Islanders, as really as among the Anglo-Saxons of Europe and America. Its influence is over men, as men, and wherever among men that influence has begun to work it has had a distinctive and peculiar effect, like to nothing else that has ever been operative among them. It has quickened them, intellectually, morally and spiritually, so that it may be well said to have put a new life into them. But lest you should think that, with my inevitable prepossessions, I am exaggerating in speaking thus, I shall fortify myself here with a quotation from the writings of one who is at least above all such suspicion in that regard. I mean Mr. Lecky, who, in his "History of Morality from Augustus to Charlemagne," has written thus: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shewn itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever has been best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution and fanaticism which have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration."

Now, taking on the one hand the external surroundings of the life of Jesus, as I have set them before you, and on the other the influence of that life on humanity, I ask, Have we in the former, viewed simply by themselves, and as destitute of any supernatural element anything like an adequate explanation of the latter? If Jesus was only a Jewish artisan who died at thirty-three, how could His life record have thus revolutionized all history? We are commonly supposed in these days and in this country to live more in a brief time than the ancients did in one that, reckoned by days and years, was longer. But which of those who have done anything to shape the course of our history would have had even the opportunity of doing so if he had died at the age of thirty-three? Not Washington, not Webster, not Lincoln. No matter, therefore what a man's other advantages may be; nay, even in connection with the highest human advantages, a sufficiently long term of life must be recognized as essential to the exercise by him of such an influence as shall make its mark deep and permanent on the character and history of a nation, much more of the world. How, then, shall we explain the fact that the mightiest regenerative force which has been exerted on our race came out of a life which was cut off almost in youth, and whose public work was performed in the space of three years and a half? From the distinctive character of the effects produced by it I am warranted in concluding that there was something peculiar and unique in the personality of him by whom they were produced. They are such effects, not only in degree but in kind as no other man's life before or since save as connected with his, has generated. They have amounted on Mr. Lecky's own shewing, to a regeneration of mankind, and therefore I am compelled to infer that he who is the regenerator of men is something more than a man. There must have been more in him than in the race, else he could not have thus told upon the race. Water cannot rise above its source; immorality cannot pro-

duce morality; that which is hastening to decay cannot renew itself, and its renewal must be the result of the introduction into it of something higher, nobler and more powerful than itself.—Dr. W. A. Taylor.

### SINS AGAINST CHILDHOOD.

It is related that when a conquered city was sacked and a brutal soldier was striking down all before him, a child cried out, "J'leave, sir, don't kill me, I am so little." He must be a brute that would not respect the feebleness of a child. It is one of the fiendish features of alcoholic drink that it often maddens a parent to maim and to murder his own offspring. There is a poor crippled lad in this neighbourhood whose spine is maimed for life by the drunken father who hurled him down stairs, in a debauch. Let us be thankful for the organization of "societies for the prevention of cruelty to children." They might adopt for their motto Reuben's counsel to his brethren: "Do not sin against the child."

There are many other sins against childhood besides brutal blows or the slow starvation which drunkenness occasions. Nor do they spring from wanton cruelty. Many of them grow out of carelessness, or ignorance, or utterly false views of parental duty. Fully one-half of all the parents in the land need to have the solemn caution whispered in their ears: Beware how you sin against your child! Parentage involves a tremendous trust. God puts into our hands the most susceptible and receptive creature on the globe when he entrusts to us a young immortal mind. No photographic plate takes impressions so readily or retains them so surely. In geological museums you may see stone slabs which shew the prints of birds' feet or of leaves, which were made in the stone when it was liquid pumice, centuries ago. In like manner we detect the finger-marks and foot-prints of parental influence upon the character of their adult children. Very ugly are some of these footprints, too.

1. You may sin against your child by seeding his mind with false teachings. It lies open before you like a garden or a field in May, waiting for either the precious seed or the poisonous weeds. A bad principle dropped in will sprout. A sneer against the truth of God's Word, or a sly sceptical thrust will insinuate itself into a boy's memory and prepare him for early infidelity. Much of the cavilling criticism indulged in by parents after they come home from church completely neutralizes all the good influences of a sermon. If the Holy Spirit has inspired the minister's faithful message, then the foolish derision thrown at that message is not only a sin against the children, but a sin against the Holy Ghost. In a vast majority of cases religious errors are hereditary. Dishonest practices descend in the same way from father to son. Parents often corrupt their children by taking them to impure places of amusement. While the father is laughing at the play, the lad beside him is inflamed by the indecent costume or the lascivious movements of the actress. The daughter's purity is soiled by the licentious ballet or the immoral innuendoes of the stage. These impure sights and utterances breed salacious thoughts. It is bad enough to smutch your own soul; but, we beg you, do not sin against your child.

2. Nothing breeds so rapidly as *example*. We all know how tendencies to character, either good or evil, spring from natural descent, and the chief element in moral heredity is the force of example. There is a monotonous uniformity in the history of the Jewish kings. Each one "walked in the ways of his father who caused Israel to sin." Observe that word "ways." The father made the path, and the son trod in it. This is as true now as in ancient days. The most difficult cases which are brought to our inebriate asylums are those of hereditary drunkenness. I have worked hard lately to reform two inebriates, both very interesting characters; but have about given up in despair since I discovered that their fathers were slaves of the bottle.

Outbreaks of passion have a terrible influence on our children. A man of culture, yet of most violent temper, pleads as his excuse, when he gets enraged: "I can't help it. My father was just so; his boys are all so. We cannot live together in peace; we never did. We are all possessed of the devil." This is a frightful indictment for a living son to bring against a dead parent. And what a penalty these living sins pay for the sins committed against their childhood by parental example! Often, when I see a young man