FAITH AND CULTURE.

BY SHAILER MATHEWS.

Among the various likenesses born by the nineteenth to the first christian century is the renascence of aggressive christianity and of culture. Just as the apostolic age produced such divergent characters as the Jewish evangelist and the Roman satirist, our age is producing the missionary and the critic. Then, too, as now, appeared a somewhat pronounced hostility between champions of the two spheres of life. The church nowadays devotes the largest share of its effort to reclaiming the lowest classes, while on the part of many of the modern Hellenistic disciples of sweetness and light there is conscious contempt for the Hebraism of the masses. To them preaching is provincialism, hymn-singing is nasal psalmody, and the prayer meeting is an opportunity for the display of unhealthy introspection. At the same time, earnest teachers of religon in their emphasis of the divine elements in life, have minimized and even antagonized the intellectual and aesthetic movements of our time, continually telling us that culture can not save.

This divorce is all the more noteworthy since religion has in the past inspired all forms of aesthetic life poetry, drama, architecture, painting and sculpture, even dancing. But while noteworthy, the divorce is not inexplicable. On the side of aggressive religion there has often been since the days of the Puritans, a one-sidedness in religious development, a lingering belief in the moral efficacy of asceticism, and too often, a system atic decrying of an educated ministry. To this must be added the suspicion aroused by the very methods which have given success in work among the masses,—methods which have been the natural servants of enthusiasm and excitement and which too often have made religion an affair of the housetops rather than the bolted closet.

On the other hand some of the chief representatives of culture have unnecessarily adopted a hostile attitude towards popular religion. Preferring the position of critics to that of helpers they have sought to clarify dogmas without according them a sufficiently gentle treatment. Magnifying the crudities and monstrosities of religious experience and beliefs hallowed through generations, they have overlooked, or examined but scantily, the profound moral impulse and magnificent faith that have accompanied uncouth words and acts. Gaining religious emotion through the sphere of the aesthetic, as they have worshiped God in the cathedral, they have questioned the genuineness of the worship of the chapel. Believing profoundly in a God, the intellectual worshiper finds himself averse to definition, or the slightest approach to anthropomorphic conceptions. In too many cases, it must be added, has this reverence for infinity given way to an agnosticism which can see in the positive preaching of christian truth only cant or willful deception.

He would see the real meaning of human progress can be content with no such superficial views as these. Faith and culture are not exclusive terms. The highest education need not, can not be godless. Religion need not be, should not be, beauty-less.

The possibility of a religious culture and of a cultured religion, grows more evident as we probe each to its essential element. Unless I mistake greatly, culture at its heart is a form of faith; and the fruit of faith is a form of culture. He who ingenuously seeks culture, attempts to raise the highest instincts and sympathies into dominion over those that are merely commercial or work-a-day. The poet not content with the sight of external nature, finds beauty in that which to the mere farmer is potential milk or butter. The sculptor seeks to catch in stone some unnoticed grace of the human form. The architect expresses with the exactness of mathematics and with the aid of otherwise unshaped masses of material something of the creative idea. The musician, rising above the limitations of all senses but one, appeals to man's deepest sense of harmony and rhythm.

In all of these attempts to suggest one sense the deliverances of others, men are always passing from that which can be weighed and measured to that which must be first believed in, and then felt. And he who would appreciate the work of the artist must himself cultivate that which is the glory of art - the seeing of the invisible. The uncultured man sees in a Greek urn a mere mass of clay singularly preserved through the centuries, but worthless. The Philistine who trudges through life with the heavy tread of one of his own fat dray horses demands that a thing be useful before he allows it room to live. The man of culture, while not disregarding those things that make for common use yet sees in things of beauty something more than agents of production.

But the mere acquisition of knowledge is not culture. The professional scholar too often finds in learning nothing but the weapon for his conflict with circumstances. Too often must we admit that losing its higher aim, education itself becomes the servant of mediocrity. Who has not met the loud talking, ill-dressed man who boasts of his learning while he bolts his food? Education that does not change the fiber of a man's character, that does not awaken some love of that which is truly beautiful, that does not make a man into a gentleman, makes vulgarity doubly vulgar.

Nor is culture a mere veneer of absent minded interest in things we have been told should interest us. To talk readily at a reception about the latest novel; to parade a smattering of Greek or Latin or politics; to know when to leave one visiting card and when two; to be able to tell without the aid of a clock when a call has reached its end, to be indiscriminately interested in picture gowns, music, University Settlements and all other good works; this is not culture. But to seek to train the deepest sympathies of one's life; to choose that which is noble and that which is beautiful; to learn to despise cynicism and to believe that the world is the abode of purity and goodness as well as of evil; to study with such sincerity that smug respectability be felt unworth a struggle; to feel in life the upspringing of loftier ambitions; to be ready to stake one's life that truth is more than victory, be the triumphal procession never so long in a word, to transmute knowledge into love; this is culture.

With such high purposes as these religious faith has much in common. It too, seeks to apprehend that which eye hath not seen, but which yet is real. It, too, endeavors to appropriate the world of beauty and harmony that lies within the nearer and dustier world of every day life. But it does more. It knows that this world of beauty and goodness exists. It stretches out its hands to that which will not delude. It knows that so long as personality rules in the world we can feel, so long must it rule throughout unending caverns of space. Without stopping to demonstrate the ground of this confidence—for faith that rests upon itself and demands proof is not faith—it has assimilated the eternal verities of an all embracing personality as instinctively and as confidently as ever musician trusted the harmonies he so imperfectly reproduced, or artist the bright idea his chisel so often marred.

But the faith of religion is nobler than the faith of culture. Its sympathies are more subtle and tender and dynamic. There is more moral impulse in a belief in a God than in a belief in ideal beauty. From the days of beauty-mad Greece, culture has proved insufficient to preserve a nation that has lost its faith in God. He who enters the world or ethics through the gateway of mere aesthetic, finds the sharp drawing of moral distinctions replaced by the uncertain coloring of sympathy and has little contribution to make to the world's teaching except the flaccid optimism of Du Maurier.

It is just here where faith is strongest that culture is weakest. It can furnish ideas—it too often fails to furnish motives. I do not think I am overstating when I say that, notwithstanding its noble ideals, a culture not impregnated with a living faith in God tends towards finical criticism, jealousy, selfishness and cynicism. And even if these be not reached, culture is always in danger of pushing its devotees into a dilettante pedantry, or into a worship in which profound trust in a Heavenly Father is replaced by conventional genuflections. Diogenes was no more real than the character in "The Portrait of a Lady" who was a paragon of good manners, of devotion to painted crockery, and of selfishness.

And the reason why this tendency towards the trival so pursues that which plans so nobly, is not far to seek. Culture apart from faith is mutilated—its ideal, be it never so godlike, is but a torso. Man's soul that cries out for God starves when it is given only a painting or a song.

It is one of the astonishing things, this indifference of so much education to man's religious nature. It would sometimes appear as if men believed their religious natures were not worth attention. We with our gymnasiums and baths and games and muscular christianity, are never done sneering at the ghostly scholar of the Middle Ages. And an Abelard or a Thomas might turn upon us and ask why our learning is the servant of business, and our scholarship of trade; why theology and metaphysics give way before the bustle of so called practical study; why we have fewer kings among our clergy; why reverence flees before flippancy; why when men's bodies have been growing sleek, their spirits have been growing lean?

There never was greater need than now for the culture of that power which is as truly human as the power to add or subtract—the power of serving God. When culture is seen to be incomplete until it embraces religion, when a man will not be considered educated who has no sympathies with right and God—when this time comes, and not till then, will the genuine aim of culture be realized. When that day shall have come we shall hear no more sneers at vulgar and narrow religion and no more warnings against the pretensions of an over-ripe intellectualism. For they two, faith and culture, shall be one, and every disciple of the beautiful and gentle will grow more evidently into virile likeness of the Man Christ Jesus.

But to bring about this union, it is not enough that culture alone should realize its deepest mission. Faith must be set forth in its own might and beauty and universality.

The time is rapidly passing when the charge of Matthew Arnold is true:

"Earnest young men at schools and universities, instead of conceiving salvation as a harmonious perfection only to be won by unresvedly cultivating many sides in us, conceive of it in the old Puritan fashion." We know today better than we knew twenty-five years ago when those words were written that religion is something grander than a single cult, and that the faith of the christian is neither a logical formula nor a spasm of a troubled conscience. The thinking of the world is swinging back to the deepest foundations of christian truth. It may not confirm every teaching we have inherited from the past, but it is doing something vastly more important. It is saying to him who seeks the highest possible development: "If you will be perfect, you must be true to all sides of your nature, and above all your religious nature." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." To the professed christian and above all to the members of the christian ministry is given the opportunity of showing that faith may be intense and philanthropic, and never commonplace; of reinstating religion as a natural part of man's spiritual life; of educating men in the ways of righteousness. Not by belittling culture, but by invigorating it with the Spirit of Christ; not by forcing cultured men to accept the religious forms and experiences of ignorant men, will this be accomplished; but by holding up the faith for Christ as the indispensable prerequisite of culture, by welcoming every new truth, and by urging the appropriation of every thing new that is true and noble, until it shall appear that faith in Christ which seizes hold upon eternal life is also but a synonym for all that is beautiful and manly and divine.—The Standard.

"The struggle is not ended, the trumpet rings again,
To rescue man in bondage, our fellow man from man."

The victory is to be, but the complete victory is not yet. When the zeal of God's people is in some sense commensurate with their obligation, then will the nations be given finally into the hands of His Son.

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

By Rev. D. N. McNamus.

"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."—Psa. XXXIV 8.

The Creator has placed in the human body a number of senses whereby the various qualities of created things are discovered and distinguished. These faculties are complements one of another; each one has a power and sphere of its own. The sense of hearing opens to man the world of sound with its symphonies and melodies, its concords and discords. Through the sense of vision the knowledge of forms and beauty is obtained, and so on with the other senses, each one contributes its portion to the sum of human knowledge. These "faculties operate at different distances and under different conditions. The ear and the eye are affected by objects at considerable distances. The faculty that requires for its exercise the most intimate contact with its object is taste.

By a species of analogy the same terms that designate the senses of the body are employed to represent the faculties of the soul. There is a spiritual hearing to which spiritual messages are addressed. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in." The knock of Jesus can only be heard by the spiritual ear. The voice of the Spirit crying, "Abba Father," is heard by the spiritual faculty. There is also a spiritual vision by which spiritual things are discovered; but the faculty that requires the most intimate and vital union with spiritual objects is taste. It is through this sense of the soul that the real nature of spiritual food is discovered and enjoyed. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

As it is possible to hear of wholesome food, and to behold it with the eyes, to handle it and enjoy its fragrance, and yet not eat of it, and therefore come short of deriving any substantial benefit from it, so one may hear of the Bread of heaven, and behold the provisions of God's grace, and come into touch with Christian society and holy ordinances, and, to some extent, enjoy the fragrance of the lives of holy people, and yet not taste for himself that "the Lord is gracious," and therefore come short of partaking of the divine nature. A saving knowledge of God requires the most intimate contact with him. "Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live." The hearing that results in salvation involves obedience to the exhortation, "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

In revealing his gracious provisions the Lord recognizes the existence of the faculties of the soul, and man's power to appropriate spiritual food. Thus, in Isaiah xxv. 6, under the emblems of material food, blessings rich and abundant, and pleasant to the spiritual taste, are shadowed forth. Also in Prov. ix 1-6, the Lord is represented as making a great feast to which the simple and needy are invited. The same figure of a "great feast" is employed by Jesus Christ in his parables, to illustrate the riches of the grace of God. Our Saviour himself received and was nourished by spiritual food. He experienced the sustaining power of divine communications. When on one occasion the disciples brought him food, and prayed him to eat, he replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." The secret of the courage and endurance of the ancient saints, the source of the fidelity and triumphs of the apostles and primitive Christians is found in this—they had meat to eat that the world knew not of. Unto this day in toil and in trial, in life and in death, God's children are strong, joyous and victorious because they are sustained by "the hidden manna." The triumphant testimony of the Psalmist is voiced by the Christian Church in a hymn of evangelical gladness and solitude.":

"O that the world might taste and see
The riches of his grace!
The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace."

It is the Lord himself who is to be received as bread. The Lord Jesus who is full of grace and truth must be appropriated. "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." The Gospel is not that bread, but is sent to bear witness of the bread. The Word is the means, Christ is the end. The Gospel is sweet to the taste only as it leads to Christ. In order to have eternal life "there must be a deep living reception of and fellowship with the personal life of Christ." A great multitude of the people who had been miraculously fed with the loaves and fishes became enthusiastic followers of their great Benefactor; but he, knowing their hearts, accused them of following him for the loaves and fishes, and proceeded to point out, in a very emphatic way, that they should receive him as well as his gifts. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." St. John vi 53-56. Eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood is parallel in meaning with "coming to Christ," and "believing on Christ." It is the act of receiving Christ as the world's Messiah and our personal Saviour. It is feeding on him in our hearts by faith." There are adherents of the Church today who need to be reminded that "except they eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood," they will perish.

"Thy gifts alone cannot suffice,
Oh, let thyself be given."

The source and support of Paul's life was Christ. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." "He that cometh to me, said Christ, "shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst." O taste and see that the Lord Jesus Christ is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

In order to a hearty reception of Christ there must be, in the first place, an utter abandonment of "the table of devils." "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils." Satan has furnished his table with a great variety of tempting food. He has sent out his servants to say, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." His table is the table of death, and his "guests are in the depths of hell." It is impossible to come to Christ without forsaking all evil. In the second place there must be a sincere and persistent effort to cultivate a taste for spiritual food. "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," but make provision for the spirit. Restrict yourself to the table of the Lord, and your delight in spiritual things will grow. In order to the fullest knowledge of the blessed nature of the bread of God, Christ must be admitted to every part of one's life. Such a surrender to Christ will result in growing up "into him in all things." The inhuman custom of binding the feet of Chinese girls, and thus consigning them to an impaired and uncomfortable life, illustrates the foolishness of professing Christians who refuse to admit Christ freely to certain parts of their lives, and are consequently dwarfed and uncomfortable. Some who have tasted of the Holy Ghost are unreasonably small in their contributions to God's cause; others are defective in conversation, and others show a want of self-control. As food received into the body is assimilated, and, according to the laws of the Creator, distributed to every part, thus strengthening the whole, so Christ received into the heart distributes his life to every part. He that attempts to thwart Christ's purpose to sanctify the whole life prevents his own growth and joy. He that tastes desires more. His prayer is,

"Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole."

He that tastes sees. He that trusts receives a revelation of Christ that is very satisfying. The most rational discourse on bread could not produce a conviction so intelligent and satisfying to a hungry man as one good meal of the wholesome food.

He that tastes and sees feels impelled to exhort and persuade others to come to the feast of the Lord. He can recommend the true Bread. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him," is every believer's verdict. Said a strong, restless thinker: "I have put the best thoughts of philosophy into the crucible, but I cannot get my wife's faith out of them." Leaving Christ out of the crucible, he rejected the only source of his wife's joy and spiritual strength. Hobbes was a great genius, but when face to face with death he could not dispel the gathering gloom, and died exclaiming, "Oh, I am taking a fearful leap into the dark!" John Wesley, on the verge of the same dark stream, said, "The best of all is, that God is new with me." "Blessed is the man that trusts in him." He that trusts in Christ tastes and sees that he is good.

"Come, sinners, to the Gospel feast:
Let every soul be Jesus' guest."

—Gaurdian.

THE DISCIPLINE OF UNCERTAIITY.

There is ample opportunity for the testing of character and the trying of principle along the ordinary routes of life's journey. Ways with which we are familiar the crooks and turns of which are matters of experience, are not the less difficult on that account. We know the heights of the hills and the ruggedness of the road, and our knowledge does not lower the grade or smooth the course. But when we are called to go forth, not knowing whither, when the contingencies of uncertainty perplex us, the strain on faith and courage is much greater.

It is easier "to bear those ills we have than to fly to others that we know not of." Yet this discipline we may not escape. Our great Teacher knows that our faith needs education—when the mists envelop us, and the way is not yet discernible. We may fear as we enter the cloud, yet we must go forward. Military expeditions are often sent forth under sealed orders. It is not deemed best at headquarters to divulge the object and the purpose of the undertaking. Secrecy is part of the policy which organizes and equips the force. For the soldier there is nothing but faith in authority, and obedience to it.

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."

The analogy holds good in Christian experience. This hardness, the hardness of uncertainty, of apprehension and doubt, must be endured by those who would prove themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Consecration is not specific and elective. Obedience is not qualified. Heroic faith must be the condition of entrance upon untried ways. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon God." Christian Intelligencer.

To have learned how to live aright, is to have lerned how to die aright.

If trouble drive you to prayer, prayer will drive away trouble.—Melanethan.

His life must be almost a failure, who needs to ask, "Is life worth living?"

If we walk by faith, it is possible for us to put the shadows of earth beneath our feet.

He serves God and his fellow men best who in love performs his daily duty as it comes to him.

Deal not roughly with him that is tempted, but give him comfort, as thou would'st wish to be done to thyself.

There is nothing so sweet as duty, and all the best pleasures of life come in the wake of duties done.—Jean Ingelow.

If flowers are not cultivated weeds will grow. If Christian graces are not cultivated, vices will spring up in their place.

Membership in the church of Christ is a great privilege and a high honor; but it necessarily involves great and keen responsibilities.

It is easy to work to advance the cause of religion among us when we have the right motive back of it. Selfishness never accomplishes anything.

THE HAPPIEST HOMES.—The sweetest and happiest homes—homes to which men in weary life look back with yearnings too deep for tears; homes whose recollections linger round our manhood like light and the sunshine and the sweet air, into which no base things can intrude—are homes where brethern dwell together in unity; where, because all love God, all love their brothers also; where, because all are very dear to all, each is dearer to each than to himself.—F. W. Farrar.

SINKING A SHIP TO SAVE IT.

A shipowner in New York, in conversation with a friend who had recently enjoyed a voyage on one of his vessels, surprised him by telling him that the fine ship whose praises he was uttering had once been under water. Some seven years ago the ship was at her dock in the East River waiting to taste a quantity of ballast taken out of her hold before taking in cargo. Early one morning smoke was seen issuing from the hatchways, and an examination showed that in some unexplained way a fire had started and had just reached a compartment in which a quantity of hay was stored. The hay caught fire quickly, and the flames shot up to a great height. The river fire department was quickly on the scene and deluged the ship with water. The scuttles were opened, too, and in a short time the ship went to the bottom. The owners and the fire department agreed that the best hope of saving her was to sink her. She was not badly injured, and the work of raising her was at once begun. In a few weeks she was again afloat, thoroughly repaired and newly painted. She had proved a staunch vessel, and had since done good service. Ordinarily no greater calamity can happen to a ship than to be sunk, but in this case it preserved her for future usefulness. If the owners had refused to have sunk her the fire would probably have consumed her. It is so with some lives. When the fires of avarice and lust and passion are consuming the soul, there is nothing that can save it but some great calamity that submerges it, from which by Christ's power it rises regenerated.

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Luke xvii. 33.)
The Christian Herald.

Opportunity for Every Man.

Opportunity is as important as ability to any man's success in life; for unless a man has an opportunity to show his ability, his ability can never appear to advantage. But opportunities are always showing themselves, while men with ability are not always ready to avail themselves of the opportunities that open before them. When, therefore, you find a man who thinks that all he lacks of success is a good opportunity to display his ability, you find a man who has let slip a great many good opportunities, and who is likely to let another slip while he is complaining of a lack of such openings for good work on his part.—Sunday-school Times.

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