

SUNDAY READING

SHAME, FEAR AND CONSCIENCE.

Their Meaning and Their Influence on the Nature of Man.

In a recent sermon preached at All Saints, Margaret Street, London, by Rev. R. E. Sanderson, Canon of Chichester, on "The Fall of Man," the following passages occur: Shame for a base deed done quickly, as we know, supercedes the glamour which sustains and diverts the spirit of a man while he is active in the weaving of his evil preparations. The very bustle and stir needed for the plot blind his eyes. The prelude of his passion and his purpose, not the consequence, is present before his thoughts. He can think of nothing else but the means whereby to parry all its hindrances. They tax all his ingenuity. But no sooner has success crowned his devices than his eyes are opened, and he sees in all their instant nakedness the foul and unnatural features of his deed. It is the only thing he can see now. The glory is gone. The shame succeeds. He emerges from his darkness into the light of day. He wonders how it is that he never till then saw what he was doing. The shame is very terrible. He went on, step by step, with his eyes fixed upon his purpose, and never knew how it was tricked out with mockery and falsehood. Now the prize for which he so long laboured is worthless in his hands. The deed alone stands up before him to cover him with the torment of an unendurable shame.

Yet shame is better than fear. There is hope in shame. Shame is human. But "they were afraid and hid themselves." They were stricken, not so much with the fear of God, as with fear of the presence of God, driving them in terror and dismay away from the sight of God. In such fear there is something Satanic. For it goes along with enmity. It suspects wrath; it fears it, and resents it. In all history there is recorded no such mother of merciless cruelty as panic-fear. Before the stronger, it assumes the form of desperate and sullen hatred. Before the weak and helpless, it knows no pity. Before a power that is holier and more noble, it cowers down into slavish abhorrence, which in the first paroxysm of its pain finds its only refuge in separation from the object of its dread. Yet fear with shame is less Satanic than fear without shame. Their terror, unabashed, would have marked a greater ruin. Their shame betokened something left of the glory from which they had fallen. Fear without shame, in its workings and its cause is only evil.

There is physical fear, and there is fear to the domain of the spirit. To be afraid of God is spiritual fear. We know how much spiritual fear has to answer for in bringing about that abiding separation of man from God, which has been in history the consequence of the fall. Man hides himself, and then he hides God from himself. The light of God he cannot bear; he bedims it of himself purposely that he may be able better to bear it. Through the long ages of Pagan declension from the truth, idolatry and moral corruption are due to deliberate unwillingness to know God. The language which St. Paul uses in the opening of his Epistle to the Romans gives forcible expression to this truth. "They did not like," he said, "to retain God in their knowledge." It is because He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity that men dare not look at Him. It was easier, therefore, to fashion themselves a religion of their own, a worship of a lower type, gods more on a level with themselves. "They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God in an image like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and to creeping things." Their very moral law they debased to the level of the unclean lusts, "changing the truth of God into a lie."

And thus the very conscience of man, that inner witness to the truth, became a traitor to the truth. It was against conscience that Adam had sinned. Through the witness of conscience he had felt the shame and the fear, his conscience remained. Even after his fall, his conscience remained. That did not die. It lived, indeed, to rebuke him, but it was damaged by the Fall, and the end of its action blunted. For it is the law of the conscience that it must be weakened and corrupted by every act of willful sin. If the witness of conscience, the conscience is, so far, not what it was before. It is no longer an uncorrupted judge.

For what is the conscience? It is some times called "God's Voice" in the soul, "God's Light" in the soul. If it were really so, its utterance must always be true; its light always heavenly. Yet we know that, not seldom, serious error in act and conduct justifies itself by the plea that it was conscientiously done, done according to the bidding of conscience. But many a line of action though carried out conscientiously, is by no means therefore right. A man's conscience may lead him quite honestly into very unrighteous acts.

There is such a thing as a misguided conscience. Shall we not admit that religious persecution, heresy, denial of the truth, desertion of holy things, gross superstition, and the like are frequently the offspring of a quite conscientious belief that they are right? We know that it is so. Conscience, therefore, cannot be the immediate voice of God in the soul. It is, rather, a natural faculty, which, however, is conscious within the soul of a divine law without the soul. It is not the law itself in the soul. It is the mirror which reflects the law. It is not the light of God itself, but the witness of the light; not the very voice of God, but the answering capacity in the soul, which hears and interprets that voice. It is a natural faculty, as natural as the faculty of hearing and seeing. What is visible is apprehended by the eye; what is audible by the ear, and what is right by the conscience. What ear and eye do for external sounds and sights, that the conscience does for moral truth. As we have

natural faculties which enables us to distinguish between objects in the sphere of external phenomena, so have we the conscience, as the natural endowment, which every man possesses, because he is a man, by which he judges the difference between what is right and what is wrong in the sphere of moral action. But just as the eyesight may be dimmed and men may become deaf, so the conscience may become blunted and corrupted. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both their mind and conscience are defiled." (Tit. i. 15.) The conscience may become "seared," as it were, "with a hot iron." If, on the other hand, the conscience does its work well, truly corresponds with the truth, faithfully apprehends the Law of God, and loyally conforms to the Will of God, then it is "pure" and "good," and "void of offence." If Adam had not sinned against his conscience, it would have remained a true and sure witness in his soul of God's Will. But he fell, and his conscience was tainted by the fall. It was no longer a true mirror of the Divine Light. When the conscience is disobeyed, it is dragged down and degraded. When it is silenced, it becomes silent. It shapes itself to its new position. If its disapproval has been set at naught, it acquires the fatal facility of excusing and even of approving that which it once condemned. It readjusts itself only too readily to the lower moral level. If men do not that which is right in the sight of God, they learn, with the assent of their conscience, to do that which is right in their own eyes, so that what once was not right even in their own eyes, may now become even in their own eyes right.

Yet the testimony that the really wrong is seemingly right is often a genuine testimony of the conscience, and is, so far, therefore a token of the existence and of the action of the conscience, though of an injured and damaged conscience. There is still a law written in the heart. There is degradation, but not utter and absolute ruin. There is still hope. The conscience may be taught. The mirror may be cleansed. It may learn to reflect more truly the light of God, even as, on the other hand, it may be trained to give its sanction to darkness and sin.

CHRISTIANITY IN EARLY GERMANY

Irish Missionaries Who Preached by the Rhine and Scheldt.

The number of tribes that originally inhabited Germany was very great, each with its own head or leader; and among these, Herman, or Armin, stands pre-eminent as a noble example of true patriotism. Fighting for freedom, not for conquest, his sole idea was a United Germany, free from the Roman yoke; for notwithstanding their first successes both Cimbric and Teutons had in the end to succumb to the better disciplined armies of Rome. But having at last won independence for his native land, in the grand victory of Teutoburger Forest, he shared the fate of many a hero who has striven for the welfare of his fellow-men. His own people rose against him, and he fell at the early age of 37.

The next stage in German history is one of fear and blood. The Huns suddenly appeared and fairly overran the country, causing terrible consternation, many of the German races changing their habitation. The tribes had by this time formed themselves into large confederacies, among the most important of which were the Allemanni, the Franks, the Saxons, and the Goths. These last were by far the most cultured, having been converted to Christianity by Bishop Ulfobius, whose translation of the Bible into old Gothic, in silver letters on a purple ground, is still preserved in the Library of Upsala. The first Frank sovereign of any fame was Clovis, who was converted to Christianity by his wife Clotild. But the great kingdom left by Clovis did not long remain in the hands of his sluggish descendants, and Pepin, the energetic mayor of the Palace, acting on the Pope's reply—that he who governs, not he who wears the crown, is king—shut up the last of the Merovingians in a monastery and seized the throne.

A strong missionary spirit was developed about this time by the Irish monks. They penetrated into all parts, and it is a curious fact that some of the earliest Irish manuscripts have been found in Switzerland and Germany. Crossing over to England in rude wickerwork boats, covered with tanned hides, they made their way through the island, and again taking boat, penetrated up the Rhine and Scheldt, pushing through almost impenetrable wildernesses, teaching the heathen, and establishing bishoprics wherever they possibly could.

Messages of Help for the Week.

Sunday—Psalm, 65: 4: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."

Monday—Hosea, 10: 12: "Break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord."

Tuesday—Psalm, 119: 71: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

Wednesday—67th. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word."

Thursday—105th: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Friday—117th: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments."

The American Home Missionary society has had the most successful year since its organization, sixty-seven years ago. Its total receipts from all sources, up to April 1st, were \$739,841.39. This sum is \$77,052.11 in excess of the receipts of the preceding year and frees the society from debt.

NEWS AND NOTABILLIA.

It is said that not an infidel book is published in the Welsh language.

The value of the chapels owned by the Primitive Methodists in England is estimated at not less than four millions sterling.

It is said that atheism in England is thoroughly organized throughout the country, and is most vigilant, seductive and aggressive in its efforts.

Lucy Booth, the youngest daughter of General Booth, is now in India, at the head of the Salvation Army work among the women there. She goes about among the native women clad in garments like their own, and lives as they do.

The number of church bell-ringers in the diocese of Exeter is larger than is to be found in any of the other dioceses of England and Wales, with the exception of Oxford. The bell-ringers in Devon are said to number 2,121; those in the diocese of Oxford, 2,200.

The Methodist churches of various names, all over Australia, are conferring with a view to union. In Sydney the representatives of the various bodies have resolved, by practically unanimous votes, that union is desirable. The name of the united church is to be "The Methodist Church of Australia."

A meeting of "Darkest England" subscribers, held at Bradford, England, decided to start a national movement for guaranteeing the £20,000 a year that Gen. Booth asks for. The local committee was recommended to employ an agent to stir up interest in other centres, it being stated that the scheme was at a life-and-death crisis.

Is it not true that we all live two lives, a life of our deepest thought and feeling which is but seldom stirred, and a surface life among things and words? Into that deepest life that never comes, for it is the Holy of Holies of the soul, where God and unconsciousness alone dwell. The surface life is known and read of men; the All-Seeing Eye alone looks into the secret springs of life and consciousness.

The number of clergymen of the church of England in the Dominion is 1,146; Presbyterian ministers, 911; Congregational, 100; Christian church, 33; Methodist, 2,014; Baptist, 316; Evangelical Lutheran, 45; Reformed, Episcopalian, 22; New Jerusalem, 8; Free Methodist, 39. The Roman Catholic church has one cardinal, 19 bishops, 3 prelates—apostolic, and 2,508 secular priests of all ranks.

Fires, says the Boston Congregationalist, seem to pursue Dr. Lorimer. In 1879, when he was pastor of Tremont Temple, it was burned to the ground. He removed to the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church in Chicago, and two years later, while he was its pastor, it was burned down. He became pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church in the same city, which was nearly destroyed by fire two years ago. Now, for the fourth time, he is left with only the ruins of a church edifice.

The Primitive Methodists of England are increasing. The returns bring up the net increase to 2,005, and as there are but forty more home stations to report, and the Colonies and Africa have for some years past reported an increase, there is now reason to hope that there will be a connexional increase of between 2,000 and 3,000, next year there was a decrease of 352, though the African and London missions reported an increase of seventeen and fifteen per cent. respectively.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said at the annual meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that he and his brother bishops had felt bound by duty to refuse the generous and courteous invitation extended to them to attend the World's Religious Congress in Chicago. The reason had been that they felt Christianity could not be made a member of a parliament of religions without the tacit admission that other religions had equal claims with it upon the faith of mankind.

There is no more regular attendant at the sittings of the House of Lords than the Archbishop of Canterbury, who makes it a rule to be in his place punctually at four o'clock. His grace considers it a duty, as head of the church, to be always prepared to answer questions which may be put to him as prime minister. There is an unwritten rule that information on any matter relating to the church should be asked direct of the archbishop; but private notice is always given in advance whenever it is possible.

It is reported from Rome that the Pope has just completed an examination of the questions of the study of the Scriptures, having devoted enquiry especially to the diverse opinions of savants on great biblical questions. It is said that he will indite a letter to bishops requesting them to enjoin upon their flocks a more profound study of the Scriptures, and a larger place in the schools for the study and critical explanation of hermeneutics. He urges the necessity of keeping in the tracks of modern progress and discovery in order to adapt Catholicism to the needs of the day.

In Spurgeon's Tabernacle, London, the strife between the supporters of Dr. Pierson and those of Thomas Spurgeon ran very high. At the prayer-meeting some curious petitions have been put up, and not infrequently so-called "prayers" have been mere expressions of party spirit. An appeal that names should not be mentioned evoked pathetic pleading from one or other. "Dear Lord, haven't we the right to mention names to Thee? Why may we not pray for Thy dear servant, Thomas Spurgeon, when we believe thou hast chosen him for our pastor in spite of the opposition of those who profess loyalty to his dear father?"

Here is a summary of the engagements of Doctor Thorold, Bishop of Winchester, for 1892 down to the middle of December: Letters received, 9,000; letters written, over 5,000 (the other 4,000 may have been written by the chaplain or otherwise); sermons preached, sixty-seven; confirmation services, seventy-seven; committees, thirty-one; public meetings, thirty; addresses, 111; churches consecrated, four; churchyards, five; church opening, one; ordination, one; formal interments, 172. Nor is all this work done amidst the comparative repose of his house at Farnham. "Just before Christmas," the Bishop said during an interview, "I was away for seven weeks in the diocese, and during that time I slept in twenty-two different rooms. I always preach every Sunday if I can, often in the villages round about, and a good deal at Farnham."

Crypts of British Cathedrals.

The underground, or crypt, of Canterbury Cathedral is of greater extent and more lofty (owing to the choir being raised by numerous steps) than any other in England. The extreme internal length of this curious and most beautiful structure is 230ft. from the western to the eastern end, and its breadth at the transept is 130ft.; this also is cruciform in plan, and the principal part, 83ft. 6in. from wall to wall, is divided into a nave and aisles by lines of short, massive pillars supporting low arching upon the same plan as, and forming a support to, the choir above. From the western extremity to the distance of 150ft. eastward is the oldest part of the crypt. In 1561 it was given up by Elizabeth to a congregation of French and Flemish protestant refugees, and a French service is still held there.

The crypt of Glasgow Cathedral for elaborate designing and richness of ornamentation on pillars, groining, and doors, stands unrivalled amongst similar structures in Britain. Properly speaking it is not a crypt, but a lower church, formed to take advantage of the ground sloping eastward. The picturesque crypt of Worcester Cathedral, remarkable for the multiplicity of small pillars supporting its radiating vaults, was described by Professor Willis as "a complex and beautiful temple." The crypt of St. Paul's is a large and magnificent structure of the ground period, with a rich and intricate vault resting on a forest of clustered pillars, and served as the Church of St. Stephen's Chapel at Westminster formerly served as the Speaker's State dining-room, but has been restored to its former sumptuousness of decoration, and is now one of the most beautiful architectural gems in England. The crypt of Hythe Church is remarkable for its large and ghastly collection of human skulls and bones.

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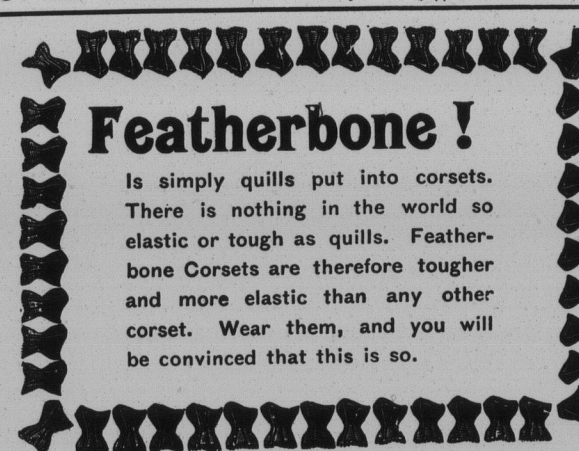
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