

reality the least important part of our, or any service, and that worship is far higher; yet practically we must allow that it can be this only where the parish is well established, and the congregation composed of devoted Church people *who have been educated up to it*, and love their Prayer-book. In the country districts, where the attendance is mixed and the privilege of worship not realized, or valued as it should be, the sermon will, one is sorry to say, continue to be considered the chief part of the service. Let us be ready to meet the situation. After all it is the great opportunity put into our hands for teaching the truth and extending the Church throughout the world. Often we do not appreciate it sufficiently: we do not begin to make the most of it. But how in the name of common sense can a good sermon be expected any more than a good poem, a good house, a good picture, without work, or in two or three hours' time."

■ Reading or preaching other people's sermons:—"I think that the tax upon newly ordained men is often *tremendous*. Undoubtedly the first year is the most trying, apart from the view of the impending examination for priest's orders, for most young clergymen seem held by the delusion that at their ordination they promised always to preach their own sermons, and that their people will tolerate no other, and so they try to produce regularly two sermons a week, which is disastrous to themselves in more ways than one, and also to the congregation. Two or three discourses *per month* would be ample. In order to meet the deficiency, let a young man copy printed sermons, and having rehearsed and studied them, let him announce from the pulpit the name of the author, and then proceed to deliver them as his own.

The act becomes perfectly graceful *if the author's name is given out*—it is only common justice to do so—and then moreover, no painful misunderstandings can arise. It is better to copy than to take a book into the pulpit which looks slovenly. It is a mistake to think that your people will object, however excellent your own may be; they will rather *welcome* a discourse by another man, as they will occasionally a fresh preacher.

CHRIST-LIFE THE ANTIDOTE FOR SCEPTICISM.

FROM A PAPER BY REV. H. P. BROMBY.

The anti-Christian activities of the day tend in a certain true sense to deepen the spiritual life in earnest Christians. The Christian of to-day must be no mere dreamer, no mere subject of strong emotions, no mere idle possessor of inherited dogmas. If the world is to be any the better for him he must have throbbing within him the pulses of the spiritual life, and that means, remember, the reproduction in him of Christ's life; Christ the Worker, Christ the Healer, Christ the Consoler, Christ the Doer of the Father's Will, Christ the Layer-down of Life itself for the brethren.

Now the anti-Christian tendencies of the day tend to shake a man out of the groove of mere dry inherited orthodoxy.

Logic is good, and controversial acumen is good, and sound doctrine is better, but the one triumphant argument is to show the world a living Christ; the one victorious way is to move among men, a kindly man among one's kind, and as one moves to make oneself felt as an embodiment of the Life of Jesus Christ; to go forth into the thick of the fight as the hero in the old Norse Saga went, and felt his sword and arm grow together in the combat, welded into one through blood; thus to go forth, Christ one with us and we one with Him. Men can't

all be logicians or theologians, but the man of most moderate capacity, priest or layman, may go forth and be a *living* argument for Catholic Christianity; he may be a very giant of the spiritual life, a very St. Christopher, or Christ bearer among men.

And all this many of the sorrowful activities of the day are beginning to teach us.

"Freethought," the spread of education, the development and reckless use of the critical faculty, are teaching us this. God knows how infinitely saddening are many of the aspects of such activities.

Yes! there may "be steps in human culture," says Mr. Hutton, when even utter scepticism may be a Divine remedy for moral evil. When civilization becomes corrupt and men are living below their faith, then God smites the nations with blindness. Taking away an influence they resist, He leaves them to learn the stern lesson of helpless self-dependence. The shock of a lost faith often restores sooner than the reproach of a neglected faith. The painful groping of an uncertain footing amidst immortal wants and affections, is often the only means by which perhaps men may have their eyes opened at once to their meaning and their own responsibility. This is a discipline given, not in retribution, but in love.

The sea of faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating to the breath

Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world,

sings one of the noblest-hearted of our sceptics. Yes, there are times, perhaps, for us all when so it seems to be. And yet I believe that the grand immortal verities of religion are not dying; they are but slumbering in the bosom of humanity, and earnest men and women are being trained by the present troubles "to give to the life Jesus lived upon earth a living expression to-day," and to take their part in the future regeneration of the world. Oh! that every one of us might be among them, the very chivalry of God. With what force should we go forth from this place into our parishes, into Cambridge, into the world, our hearts all on fire with the love of God, the powers of the supernatural world hot within us, the splendours of the unseen realities flashing forth from us.

I spoke of a mere dreamy contemplation of the truths of Christianity, and said that the sooner men were shaken out of it the better. Yes; there is a truth in the utilitarianism of the day which will have none of it.

But let us not forget that there is a contemplative side to the spiritual life. No human being can grow in grace without quiet, regular, meditation upon, and constant communion with Jesus Christ. Don't let us allow scientific, social, recreative, ecclesiastical activities, to draw us away from this, from Him. What sadder sight can there be than to see a man endowed with manful strength of body and mind—a man capable in his spirit of holding communion with "the Supreme and the Invisible, with the things that are above us, and at the same time are lying at the very depths and foundations of our being," to see such a one with possibilities so glorious within his reach, concentrating his energies upon certain results and effects, and upon some mere passing accident, so to speak, of existence, when these energies might be the very shrine of Him Who made the universe. Ah! there are multitudes among us Church-goers, Church-workers, communicants, who, little as perhaps they know it, are hungering, thirsting, starving, dying, for want of the true spiritual life. God has made them for Himself, and they cannot rest until they find their rest in Him.

And we, let us remember, cannot be God's

instruments for bringing this life to them unless we have it ourselves. We can only *do* that which we *are*! "There is an infinity of souls waiting and seeking some one to guide them into the way of truth, some one who will lead them on, himself foremost in the way. But before a man can do that he must die to himself. A man whose heart was filled with God only would draw the whole world after him."

ATTENDANCE AT HOLY COMMUNION.

We believe that this is not entirely what it should be in the average congregation. Too many are satisfied with communion at long intervals, or only annually in the Easter week. Presumably they dislike the self-examination and its results, which every conscientious believer practices beforehand. Yet this very self-examination is one of the blessings of frequent Communion. It makes men watchful. It lets them know where they stand. It keeps them in the faith. The armor of the soul is kept brightly burnished by it. The harp of the heart is kept in good tune. Quietly and thoroughly to examine oneself in earnest meditation is a means of grace none can afford to dispense with.

Presumably others are so discouraged by the result of self-examination as to be afraid to commune, because they "are not fit." But, again, this is also a mistake. If earnest purpose of heart is there, humble penitence, and faith, such will certainly be blessed by communing. The Sacrament was meant for them, just as the plan of salvation embraced them. The Communion is a means to an end, a means of grace for the upbuilding in the faith, for strengthening in spiritual life. The conditions for a right partaking of it cannot be higher than the conditions for that salvation to which it is a means. People who are held back by consciousness of sinfulness in themselves may be in the best of conditions for a blessed participation.

When, moreover, the blessings are remembered which come to him who shares the Sacrament with a sincere purpose of heart, he who would be fitted for the Heavenly home, to which his highest aspirations are fixed, will not fail to regard each opportunity for communing as a privilege which he cannot afford to miss enjoying. The new realization of forgiveness, the encouragement of the Saviour's presence, the assurance of help, the victory and the crown at last, with strength for useful service now—how else can he so fully obtain these things as through the Sacrament? Happy is the believer who misses no opportunity of coming to the Lord's table in the frame of heart and mind that the occasion requires!

Brethren, think of these things.—*Moravian*.

I BELIEVE that the Bible is to be understood and received in the plain and obvious meaning of its passages; since I cannot persuade myself that a book intended for the instruction and conversion of the whole world should cover its true meaning in any such mystery and doubt that none but critics and philosophers can discover it.—*Daniel Webster*.

KNOCKING.

Open the door with shame, if you have sinned,
If you be sorry, open it with sighs,
Albeit the place be bare for poverty,
And comfortless for lack of plenshing,
Be not abashed for that, but open it,
And take Him in that comes to sup with thee.

—*Helen Chauncey*.