

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

THE CHRISTIAN LIVING THAT COMPELS RESPECT.

BY REV. WILLIAM M. TAYLOR, D.D.

Let us notice how earnest Christian living attracts the attention and compels the admiration of those who are still outside of the Church. At first, as I have supposed, the name "Christian" was given to the followers of the Lord in derision, much as the modern appellations, Lollard, Puritan, Methodist, and the like, have been thrown at men of earnest spiritual convictions in the history of English Protestantism. It said much for the aggressive character of their religion and the activity of their exertions, that a nickname of any sort was thought necessary for them. But see how, by their conduct in succeeding years, they redeemed it from ridicule, and earned for it the respect even of their enemies. I presume not, indeed, to say that all who then bore this title were worthy of commendation; but simple justice will compel the investigator to declare that the great majority of them were distinguished for their truthfulness, integrity, and benevolence toward man, no less than for their devotion to Christ. They were not worse in their ordinary relationships of life because they were distinguished for their truthfulness, integrity, and benevolence toward man, no less than for their devotion to Christ. They were not worse in the ordinary relationships of life because they were followers of Jesus; but contrariwise, their love to Him made them better husbands and wives, better sons and daughters, better brothers and sisters, better neighbours and friends, better citizens and servants, than those around them. And in the times when persecution raged most fiercely against them, even a Roman governor had to confess that he could find none occasion against them, except it were in the matter of their God; while by the manner in which they met death—calling upon Jesus, and, Stephen-like, praying for those who had condemned them to execution—they did much to extort from the spectators the admission that "the Christian is the highest style of man." In modern days, alas, we who profess to belong to Christ are very far from resembling him as thoroughly as we ought to do; yet we may not forget that the noblest epithet in our language, conferring as it does the highest honour, and securing the fullest confidence, is this of Christian.

How much better thus has it fared with this name, derived by outsiders from the word Christ, than with that of Jesuit, by which others have called themselves from the word Jesus. If you wish to stigmatize a man as cunning, deceitful, and untrustworthy, you call him jesuitical. Why? Because the members of the Society of Jesus, since almost the very time of its origin, have had the reputation of possessing these despicable features. Devoted heart and soul to the designs of their order, and believing thoroughly that the end sanctifies the means, they have deemed no disguise too degrading, and no falsehood too great to be used by them in the attainment of their ends. Worming themselves into the secrets of families and the councils of cabinets, wearing the masks of servants while they were doing the work of spies, feigning the meekest humility while they were pushing on the proudest and most pernicious schemes—they have been hated even in Roman Catholic countries, and have made their name an offence to all lovers of truth, and liberty, and law.

Thus the designation by which they chose to call themselves, and which they derived from Jesus, meaning it to be a symbol of the highest honour, has come to be hated and abhorred; while that by which the early disciples were styled by on-lookers, who derived it from Christ, has come to be regarded as the worthiest which a man can bear. Surely this contrast is not without its suggestive lesson. In each case the character of the wearers of the name has given to it its popular reputation; and if we would not have the title Christian become a reproach as great as it is now an honour, we who bear it must maintain a conversation worthy of the Gospel of the Lord. The first believers received it from others, we, however, have chosen it for ourselves, and it becomes us either to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the reputation which now it bears, or to renounce it altogether. Let us justify our appropriation of it by a piety as pure, an activity as aggressive, and a devotion to Christ as marked, as those by which Paul and his associates

were distinguished. Like them, let us enthrone Christ in our hearts, and serve Him in our lives. Like them, let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and cultivate the graces of meekness, truth, and righteousness. Like them, let us be filled with love to our fellowmen, and seek by every means to save them from destruction. Like them, let us be "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Then this ancient and "worthy name" by which we are called will acquire new honour from our conduct, and they who come after us will be stimulated by our example to carry it to still higher renown. Let us never forget that this appellation must be to us who bear it either our highest honour or our deepest disgrace. Our highest honour, if we are all that it really imports, but our deepest disgrace if we are not possessed of the character which it so vividly suggests.

HE LEADETH ME.

In pastures green? Not always, sometimes He
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be.

Out of the sunshine warm and soft and bright,
Out of the sunshine into darkest night,
I oft would faint with sorrow and affright.

Only for this—I know He holds my hand,
So whether in green or desert land
I trust, although I may not understand.

And by still waters? No, not always so,
Oft times the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storm's beat loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by,
And whispers to my soul, "Lo, it is I."

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
"Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,
In every path of thine I lead the way."

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys, where
The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.

And more than this; where'er the pathway lead
He gives to me no helpless, broken reed,
But His own hand, sufficient for my need.

So where He leads me I can safely go;
And in the best hereafter I shall know
Why, in His wisdom, He hath led me so.

PLYMOUTHISM.

The Rev. Dr. W. J. Gill says, in the Baltimore "Presbyterian": "We were asked a day or two ago, What is Plymouthism? We reply, it is a modern sect of Christians, variously known as Plymouth Brethren, Brethren, or Darbytes, from their leader, Mr. Darby, a curate of the Episcopal Church in Plymouth some years ago.

They hold peculiar views upon Faith, Repentance, Justification, Sanctification, the Sabbath, the Church, the Ministry, the Moral Law, Prayer, and the Holy Spirit. They are also Anabaptists and Millenarians. In four cases out of five the lay preachers who go around the cities and towns conducting meetings are tinged with Plymouth doctrine. Notwithstanding their repudiation of the name, their doctrinal opinions and their attitude toward the churches are unmistakably Plymouthist, and the effect of their teaching has usually been to withdraw their converts from all existing denominations into small drawing room coteries, which gradually ripen into Plymouth societies. They usually affirm, on their first appearance in a district, that they are not Plymouth Brethren, and the only method of ascertaining their real position is to ask: Do they hold such and such doctrines? or, Do they break bread in any of the evangelical churches? Christian people are often deceived by their apparent catholicity, for "they abhor sectarianism in every form," and simply mean to "preach the gospel." Assuming the airs of the most catholic and pacific of Christians, and concealing their peculiarities, they even claim a superiority above others in undervaluing all sectarian differences. Having succeeded in making a few proselytes, the mask is thrown off, and they commence, cautiously at first, adapting themselves to the capacity of their neophytes, initiating them in the esoteric doctrines of their sect. Their practice is to gather churches out of churches, leaving to others the rough work of filling up the side pews and galleries out of the lanes and alleys, and confining themselves to the daintier work of making proselytes of those who have been so painfully gathered

into the fold. It is entirely a new style of Christianity that prompts its disciples to conceal their opinions, and admits of all kinds of dexterous evasion to accomplish their dividing and sectarian objects. It is a style that is neither Christlike nor apostolic; for our Divine Master "spoke openly to the world—in secret did he say nothing." But the Brethren are usually silent on Ministry, Baptism, the Law, and the Sabbath, in their public meetings; they reserve these questions for their drawing room conversations, to which the converts are affectionately invited, and the result is, in most cases, that the latter are re-baptized—usually at some distance from the scene of operations—and a table is set up where the disciples break bread every Lord's day. The converts are thus withdrawn finally from their several churches by men who came to the district disclaiming all intention of founding a sect. We do not accuse all the Brethren with holding distinctive and destructive views on all the topics mentioned at the outset, but everyone of the propositions is held by the great body of the membership. It is hard to fix the dogmatic peculiarities of a sect so endlessly and infinitelessly divided as the Brethren, who split upon the smallest crochet, and are forever "setting up new tables." From our personal knowledge, we affirm that Plymouthism is no innocent heresy. It is an arrogant spiritualism most subversive of all peace and brotherhood among Christians. Their doctrines are the most sectarian in existence, and consist mainly in insinuating doubts, not only in regard to the teaching of ordinary Christian ministers, but as to the right of such ministers to teach at all, they being, in their opinion, still involved in spiritual blindness; and next, in hinting grave objections to what is called the Christian ministry in general; in denouncing the communion of other Churches as essentially impure; and in holding forth the necessity of supplanting all existing communities of Christians by the advent of an angelic company far above the need of sermons and sacraments, doctrine and discipline, and in which all the members shall enjoy the enviable privilege of being alike saints and teachers. Their well-known place in Christendom is that of ecclesiastical communism and doctrinal individualism. Without a fixed or common creed, their positions in controversy are far from being either loose or pointless, and they defend their views with a sharpness and dogmatism which remind one of the tactics and temper of the Commonwealth sectaries. We make no allusion to their moral characteristics. Gathered mostly out of the existing bodies, the usual rancor of apostasy too often mingles as an element of special bitterness in their estimate of other denominations. They pursue accordingly a most injuriously separatist policy both at home and abroad—being the worst enemies of the Waldenses in Italy and the Evangelicals of France—everywhere alienating Christian people by their supercilious scorn and their measureless denunciation of the churches of the Reformation.

A PRACTICAL RELIGION.

We want a religion that softens the step and tunes the voice to melody, and checks the impatient exclamation and harsh rebuke; a religion that is polite, deferential to superiors, courteous to inferiors and considerate to friends; a religion that goes into the family and keeps the husband from being cross when dinner is late, and keeps the wife from fretting when the husband tracks the newly-washed floor with his muddy boots, and makes the husband mindful of the scraper and the door mat; keeps the mother patient when the baby is cross, and amuses the children as well as instructs them; cares for the servants besides paying them promptly; projects the honeymoon into the harvestmoon, and makes the happy home like the eastern fig-tree, bearing in its bosom at once the beauty of its tender blossoms and the glory of the ripened fruit. We want a religion that shall interpose between the ruts and gullies and rocks of the highway of life, and the sensitive souls that are traveling over them.

It is not needful that we shake with alarm at infidel attacks upon the Bible. Dr. Austin Phelps well puts this fact in "My Portfolio": "Early in autumn I have heard four crickets under the hearthstone serenading each other in voices sharp and shrill, which seemed as if they were a thousand strong. They made the whole house ring. But the solid earth moved on its way, the autumn passed into winter, the crickets died and were no more heard. Such a passing racket are the harpings of a few sceptical minds upon this everlasting claim that our faith is defunct, our theology obsolete, our pulpit dead."