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THE WORSHIP OF NATURE.

The harp at Nature's advent strung
Has never ceased to play;
The song the stars of morning sung
Has never died away.

And prayer is made, and praise is given,
By all things, near and far;
The ocean looketh up to heaven,
And mirrors every star.

Its waves are kneeling on the strand,
As kneels the human knee,
Their white locks bowing to the sand,
The priesthood of the sea!

They pour their glittering treasures forth,
Their gifts of pearl they bring,
And all the listening hills of earth
Take up the song they sing.

The green earth sends her incense up
From many a mountain shrine;
From folded leaf and dewy cup
She pours her sacred wine.

The mists above the morning rills
Rise white as wings of prayer;
The altar-curtains of the hills
Are sunset's purple air.

The winds with hymns of praise are loud,
Or low with sobs of pain—
The thunder-organ of the cloud,
The dropping tears of rain.

With drooping head and branches crossed
The twilight forest grieves,
Or speaks with tongues of Pentecost
From all its sunlit leaves.

The blue sky is the temple's arch,
Its transept earth and air,
The music of its starry march
The chorus of a prayer.

So Nature keeps the reverent frame
With which her years began,
And all her signs and voices shame
The prayerless heart of man.
—John G. Whittier.



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THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

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disease in public life—political indifference, political partisanship and political corruption. Everywhere the men who do not care, the men who care only for their party, and the men who care only for themselves,—everywhere the men who are content to stand aside and do nothing, the men who will move only as the cogs of a machine, and the men who regard public life as only an unhindered avenue for self-advancement. Everywhere the political paralytic, the political partisan, and the political parasite. How more fittingly might our Lord's words of condemnation be applied: "It is written, my house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves"?

I have spoken thus of the evils that are rampant in social and public life, because they concern us as a Church. It is impossible to dissociate these things from religion, and from religion's responsibility. If the evils are as I have painted them, then it is because the Church has failed. If the spirit of materialism has invaded these departments of human life, it is because it has first of all found its home in the Church. If there is needed a cleansing in these temples, it is only because such a cleansing is first needed in the temple of the Church.

We shrink from the suggestion, but not more, doubtless, than did the Jews. Here was the Jewish Church with all its glorious history from the first patriarchal altar until now. They could look back upon its marvellous development through successive stages. It was a wonderful panorama of religious life and history. Was it really true that, with all this wealth of glorious tradition, with all that richness of antiquity, there was need of the radical and searching reform suggested by this dramatic incident? Founded by God, the Jews would ask, how could the Church decay?

And yet the decay was there. Judaism had decayed and become corrupt. It had become impotent as the means and vehicle of grace. The reason is not difficult to find. All religion tends to decay as the human element in it masters for the time being the spiritual. Religion needs to be continually recharged as it were, and at times the very machinery by which it lives and does its work, restored and even modified. Always there are in religion the two elements: the spiritual force and the human form, and the weakness in the human form tends continually to weaken and suppress the spiritual force.

But we have seen the illustration of all this in the history of the Church. Conditions have changed with succeeding centuries, but the spirit of the world has been able to adapt itself to every change. It was the Church of Christ. He has promised to be with it until the end of all the ages. Yet from the first beginning there was in the Church the canker of worldliness. It was the Body of Christ, but how soon grave disorders made their presence felt in growing weakness! Disorders in the Holy Sacraments; divisions in the society of brethren; doubts in the faith itself. Darker and darker grew the pages of the Church's history as the years went on.

Yet God did not desert His Church. For it was then that there came to the Church that cleansing of the Temple, which we remember as the Reformation—a cleansing that accomplished much, even if it did not do all that has been claimed for it. How indeed, could it do so? It was the instrument of God, but it was wielded by the hand, by the agency of man, and, therefore, the work was not perfect. Human ignorance and pride, zeal untempered by discretion, even covet-

tousness, did their defacing work. It may frankly be admitted. There remained in the Church the seed-spots of decay.

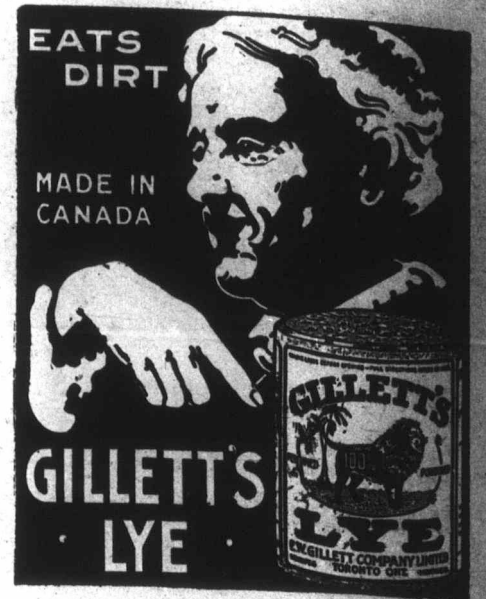
And yet once more God did not leave His Church alone, and from time to time there came fresh cleansings of the temple. Such a cleansing came to our own dear Communion in the Evangelical Revival. Such a cleansing came to it in the Oxford Movement. Each in its turn—the Evangelical Revival with its strong appeal to the personal and experimental in religion, and the Oxford Movement with its splendid emphasis on sacramental truth and catholic order, brought to the Church a fresh tide of spirituality and strength, each swept away much worldliness and sin. Yet through it all, and in it all, there has ever been in the Church the deadening spirit of the world, the narrow selfishness of sin, the Scribe and the Pharisee under different names, the money-changers with the varied equipment of their trade, those who profane the temple under all sorts of specious pleas; and ever, although the Church, slow to see it in the drowsy days of peace, there stands in her midst the stern, sad figure of One who still says: "It is written, my house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Is there going on in the world to-day a cleansing of God's temple? Is that the real, inner meaning of the war? Is the strife and struggle of grappling nations the scourge with which God is doing His reforming work, the whip with which He is driving forth those who profane His presence? Is the awful prolongation of the war with all its inevitable and attendant horrors the expression of His wrath against the sin that finds an easy home within the Church itself? Is it that God Himself is warring against the system under which the Church lives and does its work? Is it the tone and temper of the Church all through the world that is wrong to-day? Has the Church in her inward life suffered loss? Is that the real, inner meaning of the war? Is that the truth that lies behind all the charges of diplomacy, behind all the intrigues and treacheries, which were the immediate cause of our intervention? In this respect, do we share with Germany, and with every other warring nation, the responsibility for what has happened, and is happening still? Is the world to-day reaping a harvest, the seeds of which the Church has helped to sow?

These are solemn questions, and we do well to give them heed. They point to and enforce the duty of personal religion, of a personal revival of religion—personal to every one of us. There must be a constant reforming from within the body—a leavening process from centre to circumference—a more ready recognition of the need of prayer; a more loyal acceptance of the means of grace; yes, and above all a deeper passion of devotion to the Person of our Blessed Lord. It is only thus, perhaps, that there can come to the Church the cleansing for which she waits. There is only one way of spiritual recovery—the way of repentance and faith towards God. We have been praying to God for victory; for a just and righteous peace. But penitence must precede prayer, for "the fires of faith will not glow in a murky moral atmosphere."

The Church to-day is on her trial? What are we doing to help her sustain in that trial? What are we doing to help her to emerge from its terrors into triumph? "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

For if there is evil in our lives, if there is unreality, if there is only a nominal religion, then how can we hope to fight the battles of the Lord? We shall be like soldiers rushing on to the plunder, and forgetting the foe that is yet unconquered in our midst.



Our hope—our only hope—is in that one perennial spring to which the Psalmist makes his poignant and powerful appeal: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"; an appeal to which the Gospel comes with its answer of infinite peace and consolation: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

INSPIRATION.

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die for the nation and for the whole world, and attributed the utterance to the Holy Spirit. The other illustration is from Plato. Socrates described an oracle, saying: He was the wisest of men. He knew he was not in any human sense the wisest of men, and set about the enquiry as to what the God meant, for of course He would not lie. This is the attitude which the writer would urge to the Scriptures. The statements are true, but in what sense are they true? What did the Holy Spirit mean in the enquiry? not what did the prophet intend? The latter is interesting, the former is vital.

To the writer the statements of Scripture are all true and can be harmonized with one another and with truth. But the point which may be discussed in regard to any one of them, is in what sense is this true? All human statements of truth are relative. It is necessary to get the right viewpoint. The human writer may have been mistaken. He may have been influenced by wrong ideals and partiality. He could not, from his own mind, speak outside the range of human knowledge; but none the less, his words may be true in a Divine sense, and by the light of the Holy Spirit and the New Testament interpretation, that Divine viewpoint may come to light.

In such a light, an imprecation like that of the Psalmist may be explained: "Happy shall he be that taketh thy children and throweth them against the stones." The writer, maybe, had witnessed the murder of innocent babes, as by the Hun in Belgium. He may have been filled with a spirit of cruel vengeance. God the Holy Ghost may have intended the words to refer to those ideas and sentiments which are the offspring of Babylon, mother of the abominations of the earth. Surely the man that crushes out evil thoughts and practices is blessed. Some would call this special pleading. Why not special pleading! Let God be true and every man a liar. In this sense: "I unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments."