

Christian Experience.

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While Christian experiences differ as widely as the personal traits of different individuals, there are, nevertheless, certain characteristics that are alike in all cases. It may be well for us to take note of what is essential and therefore true of Christian experience in general. It would be a serious thing to mistake here and so live under a ruinous delusion.

In considering the nature of Christian experience, we need to discriminate carefully lest we mistake that for Christian experience which is not even Christian at all. There may be a great deal of religious experience that is not Christian. Undoubtedly the whole religious nature is wrought upon in the case of the heathen devotee, or the Roman Catholic neophyte. Among the ignorant and superstitious, in professedly Christian communities, an emotional craze running easily into animal excitement, is often mistaken for an unusually deep and intense Christian experience. On the other hand an aesthetic sentimentalism gives the easy-going worldling an assurance to which he is by no means entitled. Feeling, it must be conceded, enters largely into genuine Christian experience, but it must also be admitted that there may be as great depth and intensity of feeling when the experience is not genuine, and the individual is the subject of a ruinous delusion. It is possible that, in our evangelistic methods, too much stress is laid on mere feeling, and conversions may be less intelligent and conscientious and resolutely principled than is desirable.

We may say, then, in brief, that a genuine Christian experience is a complete realization of Christianity in every power, and function, and faculty, of the entire human nature. It will operate as a restraint, checking the tendencies to excess. It will give courage in conflicts with evil. It will give comfort to the sorrowing and hope to the despondent. Withal, it will live in the light of eternal verities, giving the energy of victorious life even in the hour and the presence of death.

Do we inquire what is the source of Christian experience? It is supernal in its origin. It is the product of a life that is not an evolution of mere environment, though it may be greatly helped or hindered by surrounding conditions. It comes down from above and is superadded to our common human life. Its source is the Holy Spirit. It is the impress of the Spirit of God on the human spirit. There is always a fellowship with the divine in Christian experience. The experience is altogether human, with, it may be, all the individual's personal idiosyncrasies, but the divine is in it—clearly and distinctly divine. As it was in the incarnate Word, and, by consequence, in the written Word, so it is in this experience of the living Word, the divine and the human co-operate and give the united result. We must therefore bear in mind that the divine is always present, and there is no other source in the universe from which such an experience can originate.

Now, when we speak of the Holy Spirit it seems to some as if we had run into inscrutable mystery. With others it suggests an aimless and unregulated religious excitement. With some it is conceived as an actual ghostly presence, acting upon human souls with all the uncertainties of an infinite caprice. Many of our most pious Christian workers speak of the influence of the Holy Spirit in terms of materialism, as if it were some sort of dynamic force. After all this confusion of representation, there must be some distinctive test by which we can know whether the influence acting upon us is the influence of the Holy Spirit, and this will determine whether the experience it produces is Christian experience.

New Testament instruction leaves no doubt on this point. The Holy Spirit is the "spirit of truth," and this truth centers in one distinct personality—"The Way, the Truth, and the Life." The influence of the Holy Spirit is therefore the influence of the truth in regard to the ever present Christ. "He will glorify me because he will receive of mine and will tell it unto you." It is the influence of this one divine personality, acting as a living presence and power in the human consciousness. A genuine Christian experience, then, is one that is in harmony with this truth; is, in fact, the experience of this truth informing, moving, impelling, inspiring the human spirit. Here, then, is the test, and we have simply to ask in any case, Are these moods and feelings, these tastes and sensibilities, the impulses by which we are being incited to action, moved and molded by the truth as it is in Jesus?

We may readily infer what will be the effects of a true Christian experience. The spirit of truth will, with first and most immediate effect, quicken the intelligence, impelling to thought, reflection, inquiry. It will very naturally put all the thinking powers into vigorous action. So where real Christianity prevails we may reasonably look for progress in knowledge, the broadening of intelligence, and the exercise of superior wisdom. There will also be a new influx of conscientiousness, giving a higher appreciation and approval of the right, and added sensitiveness and repulsion against the wrong; in short, a new righteousness, built upon spiritual foundations, and having a vital energy and power

utterly unattainable by the prescriptive righteousness of a worldly pharisaism.

It will also have immediate effect on the executive powers. One can not receive the spirit of truth without being moved thereby to repentance and the exercise of faith which works by love. Not only will obedience be demanded in the nature of the case, but there will be imparted a spiritual energy to meet the demand, and to enter on the work of Christian enterprise.

If the higher powers are thus brought under the influence of the truth, surely the subordinate powers will be subject to the same influence, and the divine life, that has been received at the first by the intelligence, will course through the whole nature with quickening and renewing power. Self-mastery and consecration to noble achievement will bear witness to the genuineness of the complex experience.

The activities of the Christian life at the first will be largely those which have been prescribed. Love for the Saviour will express itself by faithfulness in this line of things "If ye love me, ye shall keep my commandments." "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." The integrity of the Christian character will depend upon the fidelity and alacrity with which the individual tasks himself in the duties of the Christian life. The commands of his Saviour will not allow of omission, or change, or substitution. It will not do for him to minify the sense of obligation at this stage.

But it will come to pass at length, in the development of Christian experience, that Christ shall impart his own spiritual nature, his personal qualities of mind and heart to his faithful followers; so that he lives in them, reproducing in them his saving power, and making them the medium for the salvation of others. And it will result that what was done only at the call of duty, at the first, will grow to be the habit of the life, and will become a joyous privilege. Goodness of heart will come into evidence without any special effort or show of self-consciousness. The all-controlling motive will be the love of Christ. And this will produce its own proper moods and feelings, will progressively sweeten the temper, change the dispositions and affections, the emotions, and sentiments, and regards, so that it must needs be that there will be a constant putting off of the old life of sin and the putting on of the new or Christly life. We shall have, therefore, a renovation of the nature by the "renewing of the Holy Spirit;" a process that progressively assimilates the disciple to his Master, the believer to his Saviour. A prosperous Christian experience will, therefore, constantly grow in Christlikeness. And Christlikeness is the root, and carries in it the "promise and the potency" of the heavenly blessedness. Christlikeness is salvation. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."—Journal and Messenger.

Beginning Afresh.

We do not mean beginning a new century. Despite what has been said on the other side, we believe that the new century will not begin until 1901. It takes 10 units to make a decade and it takes 100 units to make a century. . . .

But we do not mean this so much in this article. It is rather the beginning afresh of the various relationships into which we are brought, and for which the new year gives opportunity, that we have in mind. We are wont to think a good deal of this and it is well that we do. Considerable fun is made over new year's resolutions and the turning over of a new leaf, and all that. And yet, there is very much to be said in favor of something of this kind. We, may as to the filling of positions and the discharge of duty, be conscious, in looking back, of much that might have been different. The beginning afresh, which the new year allows, may be of real help to us. Without formulating a set of resolutions, we may entertain many a helpful thought.

Personally, perhaps, we have not been all that we might have been. We have possibly been indolent where we should have been active, and irritable when we ought to have been sweet tempered. We have not, it may be, made the most of our time, and have not done the best possible for ourselves. It is easy to become somewhat morbid in a retrospection of this kind, and yet, without anything of this, probably the best of us will be willing to recognize shortcomings. This is true of young and old as well. For the latter must, if they live at all, keep on making the best of everything. The richest draught of the wine of life need not be quaffed until the beaker is empty. We need not feel, however, that our best has not been done, because in every instance we may have not succeeded. Failure sometimes is as creditable as success, if the worker's very best has been put into it. Browning says:

"It is not what a man does which exalts him,
But what man would do."

And again:

"What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me."

Perhaps these statements of the poets are too broad, but there is something in them. And yet, after all the allowance we may make for ourselves, we are all ready

to say that we have come short of our best, and all wish at least, with the new opportunity, that we may begin afresh.

In our relations to others doubtless the same thing exists. There is a vast deal of philanthropy and helpfulness and chivalry and good-heartedness in this world of ours. There is much selfishness of purpose, doubtless, but in the main we are inclined to think that people would rather help their fellows up than push them down; that they would rather give pleasure than inflict pain. And yet, with all this, we recognize and acknowledge the fact that we might have given more of helpfulness and hindered less, if only we had thought. In our own homes, in our wider associations and business areas, perhaps, we might have been more kind, more inspiring, more encouraging than we have been. At any rate it is well enough for us to think of the possibility of this, and of our being better along these lines. It may help us to be sunshiny when otherwise we might be cloudy; to speak a cheery word and withhold the unkind remark; to exercise a helpful ministry when otherwise we might pass thoughtlessly onward. As the years go by and as our friends depart, it is not the inspiring word or the helping hand, or the kind act that we regret; it is always the reverse that we bemoan when the opportunity is gone forever. We think if we only had said this, or done that, when the chance was in our hands, how glad we would be. There is an opportunity for us along this line to begin afresh.

Well, perhaps it is our church life that we are passing in retrospect. Somehow we have not been quite so faithful as perhaps we might have been. Secular affairs have crept in and the higher life has suffered. The world has been too tangible and the spiritual realm too unreal and far off. Listlessness, perhaps, may have overcome us when there should have been activity, and forgetfulness when we ought to have remembered. But it is not worth while to go on with the catalogue. The thoughtful will discern their own defects and will be glad of another opportunity to begin afresh.

We have not meant in any wise to be gloomy in this old year retrospect. We have simply wanted for ourselves and others, to bring up before us the image of the past that might have been and measure the reality for a moment thereby. If we have not come short of it, for ourselves and our Lord, we have profoundest reason for rejoicing. If we have, there is opportunity to retrieve the fault. Better is always before us than the best we have thus far won. Our promised land is not in yesterday, but in today and tomorrow. Let us move on to possess it, remembering what has been only to forget. Let the past not paralyze us but inspire, and cause us to reach out after larger things to come, which by God's blessing we may yet attain.—Commonwealth.

Mrs Anne Besant having lately made an American tour delivering addresses upon "The Beauties of Hinduism," the "Reis aud Rayyet," an influential paper of Northern India, notices her labor of love as follows: "When an English lady of decent culture professes to be an admirer of pantric mysticism and Krishna worship, it behooves every well-wisher of the country (India) to tell her plainly that sensible men do not thank her eloquence for gilding that which is rotten." The Indian Nation, also a straight orthodox Hindu journal, declares that "the pure and undefiled Hinduism which Swami Vivekananda preached has no existence today; in fact, has had no existence for centuries, but on the contrary abomination-worship is the main ingredient of modern Hinduism." The Hindu, published at Madras, says of the endowed temples and shrines of India that "they are corrupt to the core. They are a festering mass of crime and vice and gigantic swindling." The same paper, speaking of the Brahman priesthood, describes these priests as "ignorant, profoundly selfish, immoral." It mentions the popular dancing girls of India only to say that such a girl "insults the Deity by her very existence," and it declares of the "pining child-widow" that "every hair of her head will rise up in judgment before the bar of God in witness against the system which tolerates it." Americans must be densely ignorant of India as it is to endure such addresses as those of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Judge, of the Theosophical Society. Long before Madame Blavatsky or Colonel Olcott was ever heard of Wendall Phillips summed up the whole debate by saying, "The sufficient answer to all claims put forth in the interests of Indian faiths is India."—Interior.

Literary Notices.

The United Kingdom: A Political History. By Goldwin Smith, D. C. L., Author of "The United States: A Political History," etc. Two volumes. Crown 8vo. Price \$4. The Copp, Clark Co., Limited, Toronto.

The purpose of Professor Goldwin Smith's new work is clearly suggested by its sub-title. It is a political history of the United Kingdom from the earliest times to the Reform Bill of 1832. It is a companion work to his former work on "The United States: A Political History," and, read with it, it represents the political growth of the English race. Professor Smith has treated his second work with the same succinctness and with the same epigrammatic force and weight as he did his work on the United States, which The Nation characterized as "a literary masterpiece, as readable as a novel, remarkable for its compression without dryness, and its brilliancy without any rhetorical effort or display."