

royal "we" in which I had been trained. Another remarkable symptom of the age is the fact that the old, artificial, elaborate, and exceedingly florid rhetorical style is at a great discount. At one time ministers of religion used to prepare elaborate and brilliant sentences worked up into climaxes which produced a great impression upon half-educated audiences. But the age has become so much more earnest that it will not stand that sort of thing except occasionally.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the new method of preaching is its intensely ethical character. George Eliot would no longer be able to accuse Christian preachers of "other-worldliness." They trouble themselves less and less about the other world, and they take more and more to heart the sufferings and the needs of this. It is one of the most curious phenomena of history that what I may call the intensely secular character of Christ's teaching should have been so long overlooked. The idea arose very early in our era that Christianity was too good for this world; and men consequently thought they could attain its ideals only by living artificial lives apart from their fellows in monasteries or even by going to the further extreme of taking up their abode in some solitary cave in an African desert or elsewhere.

At the era of the Reformation the whole civilized world was well aware that neither the monastic nor the solitary life was morally one bit better than the ordinary life of society, that in some respects it was very much worse. But the idea that Christianity was too good for this world still clung even to the Reformers, so they transplanted the fulfilment of the Christian idea to another world altogether. I need scarcely say that this notion is flatly contradicted in every part of the New Testament. The angels who saluted the Nativity of our Lord sang of peace on earth and goodwill among men. In the same way our Lord Himself taught us to pray that the will of God might be done by men on earth as angels do it in heaven. In fact the whole of the Lord's Prayer

refers to this world and to this life. When St. John closed the volume of Revelation with a glowing picture of the ideal city of God he was not referring, as is so strangely imagined, to heaven but to earth. He tells us expressly he saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

All this is becoming more evident to the preacher of to-day, and is giving his teaching an ethical flavour which has never been so conspicuous before. We hear a great deal in the pulpit now about the evils of drunkenness, sexual vice, gambling, and war. The sweating system is denounced, and overcrowding of the poor is deplored. We have entered, in fact, upon the Johannine period, and all the most characteristic religious teachers of our day are disciples of St. John. They realize with him that the very essence of real Christianity is brotherliness, and that we are to prove our love to God by our love to one another. The result is that the modern Pulpit deals very much less with metaphysical questions and protests loudly against the purely artificial distinctions that have too long been made between what is called "religious" and what is called "secular." This new development of teaching is what has given rise to the present strange dislocation of political parties, and to the much discussed "Nonconformist conscience."

Mr. Herbert Spencer has said, with only too much truth, that at present we have two religions in this country: one which we derive from the Greek and Latin authors and the other from the Old and New Testaments; one which we profess on Sunday and the other which we practise during the remaining days of the week. Mr. Spencer imagines that both of these religions must exist for a time, but significantly enough he prophesies the ultimate triumph of the Sunday religion. The modern Pulpit is increasingly alive to the calamitous contradictions and inconsistencies of nineteenth-century Christianity; and it is strenuously endeavouring so to enlighten and strengthen the Christian conscience