

sublime denunciation of wrong, or pleaded, in courts of justice, the cases of their clients, or from the pulpit thrilled great congregations with the story of the Saviour's Cross. In short, the human tongue is a symbol of the omnipotence of God.

But, on the other hand, this same organ of speech has wrought in the earth incalculable mischief. Knowing something of its diabolic nature when swayed by sin, the Apostle James declares that it has been often inflamed by the fires of hell. Under the direction of right impulses, capable of the highest blessing, when that government is withdrawn, it becomes a pestilent and unprincipled fiend. Taking up still another figure, he terms it a reptile with virus in its fangs. Men might tame all kinds of beasts and birds and serpents, but "the tongue," he adds, "no man can tame. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

The Apostle's arraignment of the tongue was called forth because of the times in which he lived. There were men and women in that age who gave wrong exercise to their tongues. His reference seems to be concerning slanderers, those who uttered maliciously false reports of others with the intention of injuring character or reputation.

How apt and forcible the description of such persons! The world had no need for that class of people. They were excoriated excrescences upon the body of society. They were gifted with the power to produce the very worst of trouble. Borrowing his idea probably from this source, Shakespeare, speaking of the universality of such utterance, says:

"Tis slander;  
Whose edge is sharper than the sword;  
Whose tongue  
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile,  
Whose breath  
Rides on the jostling winds, and doth belie  
All corners of the world, kings, queens and states,  
Maids, matrons—nay the secrets of the grave  
This viperous slander enters."

There is a fable of an old cracked bell that hung far up in the tower of a building, and its clapper bitterly complained of its inability to utter harmonious sounds. Whenever the iron tongue was moved, the metal spoke to the inhabitants of the village below in tones of discord. The story goes that the spirit of Diogenes one day floated through the belfry, and paused to listen to the clapper's censure, and rebuked its grumbling. Said the ghost of the philosopher: "Thou art thyself to blame, for, in the first place, it was by thee that the bell was broken, and in the second place, if thou hadst kept silent about the matter, no one would have known it." The application is plain. We should be careful of harming our fellowmen by our words, and be guarded in publishing their faults.

But above all, we should beware of having an untamable tongue within the home circle. Husbands and wives who have promised to love, honor and cherish each other, until the parting of death, should be slow to anger, and brothers and sisters should refrain from taunts, and every form of speech that irritates and sets up inflammation. At the fireside of the family, if nowhere else, should peace brood and sing.

O, those arrow words that so often are sprung from the bow of passion in all our homes! How they speedily find their mark! What terrible wounds they inflict! What disruptions they cause! Sometimes a single word, which its author wished could be recalled the moment it shot from the tongue, has led to separations beyond repair, or decency preventing that, has extinguished upon the hearthstone of the heart the last ember of affection, and left there the chill of indifference.

You have read, perhaps, the fairy tale of the two sisters, one of whom when she spoke let fall from her tongue toads and serpents. This was wrought upon her because it suited her disposition. The other girl when she spoke dropped from her tongue pearls and diamonds. This fitted her genial temper, and was bestowed upon her as a gift. So in our home life we can be hateful and repulsive in utterance, or employ jewel forms of speech which shall be the expression of a Christian soul within. May the Lord grant to all my readers a tongue that shall always be a blessing, and whose vibrations, in his service, shall make music for eternity!

## ACTION AND REACTION IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

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(In the *Presbyterian Messenger*.)

The March number of the *Expositor* (London) contains a noteworthy article entitled "Jesus, Our Supreme Teacher," from the pen of the Rev. John Watson D.D., (Ian Maclaren). The style is marked by that exceptional beauty and force which have made the writer famous. A sense of dissatisfaction, however, steals over the reader as the trend of the argument becomes apparent to him. What seems at first only a timely exposition of the dangers of traditionalism, resolves itself into an attack upon creeds. For articles of faith Dr. Watson would substitute "the words of Holy Scripture;" but not all of them we discover, only the words of Jesus; not all of them in fact, only his more elementary teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. The sermon, he says, "was Christ's manifesto and the constitution of Christianity." "We all must know many persons who would pass as good Christians by the sermon and be cast out by the creeds, and many to whom the creeds are a broad way and the sermon is a very strait gate." "Was a man satisfied with this type, and would he aim at it in his own life? Would he put his name to the Sermon on the Mount and place himself under Jesus' charge for its accomplishment? Then he was a Christian according to the conditions laid down by Jesus in the fresh daybreak of His religion." "There is no evidence that He altered the constitution of His kingdom either by imposing fresh conditions or omitting the old." As a sufficient creed based upon his conception of the Sermon on the Mount, the writer suggests the following summary: "I believe in the Fatherhood of God; I believe in the words of Jesus; I believe in the clean heart; I believe in the service of love; I believe in the unworldly life; I promise to trust God and follow Christ, to forgive my enemies and to seek after the righteousness of God." "Who would refuse to sign this creed?" he triumphantly asks. Who would indeed? He could not more succinctly have expressed its defects. We find in it the ideal of life, but no way to attain the ideal; nothing of guilt, of pardon, of the Cross, of the divinity of Christ, of the Spirit of God. Faith is delicately defined as *trusting* God and *following* Christ. Surely no respectable person, Unitarian or Mohammedan, would withhold his signature.

The article in the *Expositor* is worthy of attention from the fact that Dr. Watson's is by no means a sporadic case. He represents a school of Christian thought, whose disciples are making the air ring. "Christianity not a creed but a life," is their watchword. Their warm emphasis of holiness as the supreme end of existence and their vigorous plea for the enthronement of Christ in the lives of His followers, awake a cordial response in the heart of every sincere Christian. But it is impossible not to think that their position is extreme; that they are in a reactionary state, chafing under a yoke whose galling is aggravated by their own nervous unrest. Were their attack only upon elaborately formulated creeds, their aim only to restore pure New Testament faith, the Church might hear them with advantage. But in reality, the object of their assault is not so much the creed as the definite, intelligent faith which it expresses. However much we may admire the earnestness of these men and sympathize with their protest against a Christianity divorced from Christlike conduct, we cannot avoid feeling some misgivings as to the ultimate effect of their teachings. Will the result of their zeal be unmixed gain to the cause of religion? Would not their influence be vastly better if their views were more comprehensive? Will they not bring into the Church greater evils than those which they seek to expel?

The invasion of the Church by that which must be regarded as "a different gospel," calls for wise and earnest action on the part of the Christian ministry. To us has been committed "the word of reconciliation," and we cannot be indifferent as to the security of our trust. If we are prudent, we will not convert our pulpits into arenas for the slaying of theological opponents. In dealing with a type of Christianity