

# "CHRISTIANITY AND HERBERT SPENCER NOT IRRECONCILABLE."

## PART II.

We have seen, then, how Herbert Spencer applies his principles of liberty to men. But he takes a still more daring flight. He ventures to apply his axiom to women and the "woman's rights" question, and to demand equal freedom to exercise their faculties for both sexes alike. Our added light as Christians only shows the justice of this with greater clearness. Intellect has no real preëminence over will. It is but the unconscious outflow of will—born of it, yet partaking of the very being of its progenitor. They grow and expand together. If will takes the upper hand, intellect must die. If intellect alone *could* rule absolutely, life would cease. If, then, the Will or Love principle is the primary cause of woman, and intellect of man, neither was framed in order to rule or absorb the other, but each needs, in order to very existence, liberty, the fullest liberty, to exercise all the faculties. Because different faculties or powers are inherent in the one from those inherent in the other, does that imply that those powers inherent in each should not be allowed free exercise? or, as Herbert Spencer puts it, because woman, as at present developed, has less power and fewer faculties, therefore she should not be allowed fully to exercise and develop *those she has*, is simply the doctrine that might is right.

But our author does not stop here. He wings his way with unwearied power to a still loftier height,—the rights of children. To that he applies exactly the same principles we have already stated, that although the faculties possessed be as yet fewer and less developed, *that* is no argument against complete freedom to exercise the faculties possessed.

As already stated, *we* Christians know that love is life; that children are but the product of affection—literally, little loves, as their mothers call them sometimes, scarcely realizing how utterly true it is. But we know also that love or life cannot exist except in freedom. Love coerced, were such a thing possible—but, thank God! it is not—would cease to exist, would cease to be life at all. We can only develop love by infusing more love; we can only develop life by permitting our derived life to flow into others. Again, not from without but from within must the true life-force come. A child at first is all will, all love. Its desires wake thought and set its intellectual powers in motion, and both combine in physical action. To direct these acts by outward force is as vain with the child as we have seen it to be with the man. The true power is spiritual here, as in the other case. Now here it is "that *men* are but children of a larger growth." Surely, then, here as well as in all the other relations of life, the life principle of "doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us" applies most fully. If we desire children to love us we must love them; and according to the quality of the love we give out to them will be the quality of the love they bear to us. If our love for them be only another form of self-love—the desire to have our love of power exercised *on* and *in* them—it will rouse a like spiritual life in them. We then love, in fact, the *evil* that is in them—not the *good*—and develop thereby the same evil disposition, a like perverted life-force. If, however, we love the remnant of good and truth which God has implanted in them, we nourish that by added life of that quality, from *Him*, flowing through us into *them*. It is therefore by courtesy we can alone beget courtesy, by deeds of kindness only we can beget answering deeds, by gentleness foster gentleness, by love draw forth the higher, holier affections which shall grow with what they feed on, in favour with God and man. Thus we reach Herbert Spencer's conclusion, that the sensitive, growing, expanding nature of the child—quick to receive, apt to be taught, where the will is drawn forth—demands our utmost courtesy, gentleness, and affection, and that we thereby, and thereby only, succeed in real education such as will yield strength for the contests of maturer life. By liberty in equal degree for lesser (less developed) faculties we shall enable them to use these *same* faculties when they are more powerful—when will has become a ruling love, and intellect is fully conjoined with it. One might almost add without irreverence that thus, and thus only, shall we in our finite degree "suffer little children to come unto Him who forbids them not," and escape from doing the evil that hinders "one of these little ones," who are formed to be attracted by *love to truth*.

Social life then begins with the child in that love which begets affection, and greedily absorbs its life-giving warmth and intellectual light, till both grow together into an innate perception of righteousness ere almost it has taken form in deeds. When *this* is attained it brings with it an equal perception of its opposite, wrong doing, in its more interior form—intention—so as to be able to deprive it of its power before it has been called into act. Now women, from their very nature, excel, if left in freedom, in this very quality of perception; and it will be *no evil day* for the nations of the world when *that* faculty is exercised in political life. Women and children make what we call home-life—that which makes *men* of us, and enables us to radiate that influence, by our special channels, upon the world. These are Herbert Spencer's "Social Statics." He begins, according to appearances, with man, and thus sets the pyramid on its apex—the basis of the whole uppermost. The true basis is—a little child. Is it any wonder that our Lord and Master said: "He that would be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven let him become as a little child," with all his nature opened to receive affection and to respond to it, capable of forgetting self in absorption in what might seem trivial pursuits, yet proud to do the humblest work, if done for one whom he loves? The childlike state is the true social condition, quick to receive impressions from things external—quicker still to receive ideas of things internal. And, paradoxical as it may seem, it is only when *men* have thus become little children that children will be treated as men.

The world at present is but one large unruly nursery, and no principle of mutual love or regard for anything but self to restrain headlong self-will. Just look at some of these children of a larger growth trying to satisfy their appetite with a lot of nice things to eat, till they actually sicken themselves and destroy all enjoyment—*gourmands* the French call them, because it is a prettier word than "gluttons." Others have donned a tinsel cap and glittering robe to lend themselves an air of importance, and go through a series of mummeries before their playmates, calling it *worship*, in hope to transfer some of that worship to themselves, and so inflate their personal power and dignity. And there again,

in a corner of the play-ground, are a group of courtiers—one playing at being king—not really ruling anybody, but *being ruled* by a sense of his own marvellous greatness; while maturer minds, with a smile of pity, pass on in the march of progress, and leave him to enjoy his lonely eminence amid the malice and envy of his courtiers. Still another, and a larger group are playing with bits of paper which they *call* gold, shuffling them from one to another, and feeling proud each of his own possessions, till the one tries to snatch it from the other, the fancied values get torn in the struggle, and are lost to all. Others again are playing at being judge, doling out mock-solemn strictures on acts which they know are more virtuous than many of their own—playing with a justice out of which they have extracted all truth, as a charmer might play with a serpent after extracting the fangs which gave it power to strike. Another group play clergyman, prate of faith, take up some fine hair of external doctrine and split it deftly into two portions before the eyes of their astonished and delighted congregations, allotting one portion for those who have faith and another for those who have *only* works, but do those honestly. It is only a play upon words after all, for they forget that the doctrinal hair-line is a complete production in itself, and needs no splitting—that faith and works, when separated, however carefully and ingeniously, cannot but ultimate in nothing—as all hair-splitting invariably does. And there again a larger knot are gathered together engaged in quite an exciting game—swopping marbles, and dry goods, and hardware, and groceries, and grain, &c. &c. What a clamour there is! and how each shouts himself hoarse detailing the virtues of his own particular wares. Yet, after the swopping is done, the possessions of the whole group, taken in the aggregate, are not at all increased, and each, getting disgusted with his bargain, begins swopping again, with the same melancholy and depressing result. To what end is all this labour, energy, and life-force? A mountain of worry has laboured and brought forth—what? A mouse, that form of *most* destructiveness and *least* usefulness in proportion to its size.

Now, if all this is a *play*, it certainly must be a tragedy, for it ends in the death of all the higher, holier instincts of humanity. Reduce this nursery to order by infusing the spirit of love—the will to serve, not to rule—and the clamour ceases—the trifles appear as trifles, they *are so useless*. The play becomes real play, easy to all; no weight of clamour or self-assertion laid on any, for each will then assist the other with just all he has to give, of power, or possession, or energy, or tact, or skill—the best that is in him. The play has changed from Tragedy to Comedy. All is joyous, bright and lovely. Mirth prevails, and joyous laughter, the laughter of light hearts, the joy of kindly labour which delights in aiding others.

So is it *ever* where love prevails. So God meant it to be in this world of ours. He has ever striven—is striving now to make it so, if only His divine love and wisdom can gain entrance into our being. It is contrary to the very law of the universe that this should be done by force. It is *as impossible*, because Divinely ordered otherwise, for God to force his life into us, as it is for us to force *our* life into others. Yet, with an infinite and constant loving kindness, He has, through all these ages, left no avenue of entrance unassailed. Nature, experience, social life, political life, fellowship with good men—aye! and evil—bring us *ever face to face* with Him the Divine cause of all; for, alas! man's hardness of heart makes it still a truth "that God makes good and creates evil" by that very goodness which is perverted by us. His Divine word comes to us in the clouds of the letter, adapted to every capacity, piercing through every joint of our physical and spiritual nature as a discernor of the thoughts and instincts of the *heart*. Veiled also in the clouds of error and entanglement which go to make up human affairs, there is still the expression of somewhat of His Divine Providence perceptible, if we will but open our eyes to see. Perfect as that Divine Providence is, even though constantly thwarted by our dullness and aversion to its laws, it is yet but a faint promise of what lies concealed beneath those clouds we ourselves have heaped around it. Let us but *begin* to clear its path, by opening our whole being to its influence, and behold the entire face of nature and the aspect of human affairs will rapidly change. Self once destroyed, voluntarily, by the will of self conjoining itself with the Divine will, and *Communism* shall reign among us. We shall have all things common, for each shall seek the other's good *more* than his own, and know in *deed* that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus none shall want any good thing, for the want once known shall find a thousand hands anxious to supply it. Is there—can there be—danger in *such* a communism—a communism of love, not of force? Science and art must develop in such a community, for the desire to serve others is a far stronger, more quickening incentive to invention than any possible intensity of desire to serve *self* can be; and the connection between Heaven and earth—the spiritual and the physical—thus strengthened, *must* bring with it a greater similarity of conditions, annihilating time and space to a degree undreamt of as yet, but of which railways, steamboats, telegraphs, telephones, and phonographs are but the faint foreshadowing. Material wealth, by the development of the resources our earth contains, shall increase at lightning speed, and be diffused to all with an equal celerity—the celerity of a love which burns to bless. The outward and visible church (if indeed there shall then be *any* church but the world as one universal church) shall be but a centre, radiating usefulness on every department of life, till all shall know and feel themselves surrounded at every point of their physical and spiritual life with influences which descend, through those brethren best fitted to convey them, from that infinite source of all life, our Lord God and Saviour. These, gathering in our tempered influx, shall restore it fourfold in spiritual riches, till the universal prayer shall be on every lip, on every heart, *in every life*, "Thy will be done, as in Heaven so also upon the EARTH."

If there is a perfectly happy person to be found in the world, it will be the one who has got but little, and don't want anything more.—*Josh Billings*.

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