

you want to attain all of which you are capable and that you would use every means in your power in order that you may.

Akin to this is that other objection which fears for the future. You are afraid that you will not continue as you begin, that you will not live up to the promises you have made. The answer is, your duty is not with the future, but with the present; "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The question is again simply, What is your purpose now?

Another difficulty, sometimes experienced, is that you are unable to tell the time when a great change was wrought in you; you do not know just when it took place and you cannot say at such and such a time there was a great upheaval, a great revolution in my inmost being, and then and there I became, as it were, a new creature. This makes you hesitate. But you must not make one rule for all. This experience may or may not be yours. To one it may be needful and natural, but not to another. You yourself may have enjoyed such gradual and constant Christian training, which as we have seen, is the Church's purpose for her children, that you have passed naturally and unconsciously into the Christian life, and never, like the prodigal, wandered far away from home. If so, the absence of a sudden and severe experience is no defect. The question is simply, are you conscious now that you desire to become Christ's open disciple and follower?

Or you may say, I do not know just what I believe about this and that Christian doctrine; I must wait until I do. But can you say the Apostles' Creed? Do you believe the great fundamental truths there stated? With more than that you are not at present concerned. Would you not put yourself in the way of knowing them and all their fulness, better and better? This is the question.

Or you may, as is so often done, point to others who have been confirmed and are not living, perhaps, as they should, and give that as a reason for your not coming to that Rite; as though indeed Confirmation and full membership in the Church were to be judged by their spurious representatives; as though that were not all the more reason why you should come forward and be what they have failed to be, and do honour to the Christian life.

But let none of these or any other objections stand in the way of your fair, unprejudiced consideration of the subject. Determine with yourself that you will settle the question on its merits, true to yourself and in the sight of God, asking Him to show you what you ought to do.

If you are thinking of coming to Confirmation because others do, because you have reached a certain age, or because you think of it as a sort of charm; or if you have no hesitation at all about coming and do not mean to do everything in your power to live answerably to your Christian calling; then better a thousand times that you should not come. But if you have looked into your own heart, and feel that with all your imperfections and misgivings and fears you still desire to make Jesus your Master, and to follow as faithfully as you can in His steps, with Him as your Saviour and your Guide, then come; come thankfully, joyfully, exultingly. Never afterwards will you forget the thrill that will pass over you when, as the Bishop places his hands upon your head, he says, in the impressive words of the Confirmation Service, "Defend, O Lord, this thy child with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more until he comes unto thy everlasting kingdom."

One ground for hesitation will perhaps linger after all the others have passed away. It is that

which whispers to the soul aroused and almost ready to do its duty, not now, but some other time; not this year, but another. So said Felix to St. Paul as "he reasoned with him of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come." "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Did the convenient season ever come? O postpone not until the morrow that which is your duty to-day, for we "know not what shall be on the morrow."

RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES OF THE AGE.

BY REV. H. SYMONDS, M.A., RECTOR OF ASHBURNHAM.

A Paper read before the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Peterborough, in St. John's School House, on Friday, February 24th, 1893.

You will probably have observed that the title of my paper is a very broad one, and will readily understand that it is impossible to cover the whole field. I could have limited the enquiry to our own Church, but there are two reasons why I preferred not to do this: (1) Because I think some of us are a little tired of the continuous ringing of the changes on the Evangelical movement and the Oxford movement, and (2) because there are certain very important religious tendencies and movements of our day that, whilst operating within our own Church, are by no means confined to it, that are conditioned and controlled by other forces than those of any one communion, and have other lines of demarcation than those of the various religious bodies around us. There is no doubt, for example, that there is a great deal of sympathy and a kind of Freemasonry existing amongst the new and rapidly increasing school of Bible students, and the same thing is true of men interested in the great social problems, independently of the Church to which they belong.

The peculiar features of our age are, I think, (1) A remarkable interest in religion and religious topics. (2) A very profound dissatisfaction with the present state of Christendom. We have to take into account both of these, for both are present. If we do not, we shall be continually perplexed by seeming contradictions. For example, I read statistics, and note the steadily increasing communicants' rolls and membership rolls of almost every communion. I read of the astonishing growth of the Epworth League, of 15,000 delegates to a meeting of the Society of Christian Endeavour in New York, of the rapid growth and really amazing enthusiasm and zeal of the St. Andrew's Brotherhood, and so far, I am inclined to suppose our first feature to predominate. But, on further examination, I find innumerable signs of restlessness and anxiety. In orthodox journals I read continued lamentation at the prevalent scepticism of both the classes and the masses. I find that it is the opinion of many that this scepticism, or at least vague uncertainty, reigns in our pews, as well as amongst those outside the pale of the Churches. I hear it said that the Gospel no longer suffices to attract; that all sorts of special attractions and advertisements, and sensational preaching, and new features, have to be adopted to excite the jaded spiritual appetite. I find all sorts of religious topics handled in the freest possible way in all sorts of magazines. The secular press, almost without exception, in the large cities of America, assumes an air of semi-satirical incredulity. Trials for heresy, loud and long continued protests against the sectarianism of the day, all these and many other things bear witness to the second feature I have named, so that the briefest description which shall include all the phenomena of the age, seems to be that which I have given—the age is one of remarkable interest in religion and religious topics, and one of a very profound dissatisfaction with the present state of Christendom. For the past 10 years I have taken the deepest interest in the general movements of religious currents, and have always endeavoured to study them as they found expression in the mouths or from the pens of their various exponents, and I am confident of the truth of this statement at least, viz.: that any man who relies upon the representation of any one paper, or of any one party, is absolutely certain to acquire a thoroughly distorted view of the religious world. When I first came out to Canada I lived in a house where the *Globe* was read, and I read it too. The general election of 1882 was at hand, and one day I asked an intelligent man which party he thought would be returned. He replied there was little or no doubt it would be the Conservatives. I confess I thought little of his opinion. According to the *Globe*, the Liberals were certain to be returned. The country was sick unto death of Sir John Macdonald and all his detestable enormities. And so in same way, if you read the *Tablet* and nothing but the *Tablet* for three months, you would suppose that Roman Catholicism was the dominant faith of England. If you read a secularist paper for the same

length of time, you would hardly suppose there would be any such thing as Christianity in twelve months time. In these journals it is always just about to disappear. If you read the *Record*, you would wonder what in the world delayed the High Church party from taking the inevitable step of going over in a body to Rome, and if lastly your particular affection is the *Church Times*, you would suppose all the sects and denominations of England were about to collapse, to be swept with a stroke into the fold of the one true Church. Whereas we know that secularism pure and simple is a very feeble and unimportant thing, that Rome is not making any headway to speak of in England, that the great religious nonconformist bodies have a considerable vitality as yet, and that there is not the slightest probability that the High Church party or even the Ritualists will ever go over to Rome. Now I know full well that the right method will not infallibly give us perfect results, and though I have earnestly sought for truth in this matter, and so far as possible have studied the various religious tendencies from different points of view, and endeavoured to take account of all the facts, and to arrange them in their right order and according to their true proportions—I am well aware how easy it is to go wrong, to allow prejudice to warp judgment, and to let the wish be father to the thought. I would ask you therefore to distinguish between mere statements of fact, and the deduction drawn from them, and even though I am so unfortunate as to displease some, I trust you will give me credit for sincerity and love of truth.

I. The first tendency, then, of our age which I wish to speak of is towards what I have elsewhere styled "Cosmopolitan Theology."

I do not think it is necessary in a meeting of clergymen of the Church of England to emphasize the influence of the Theology of one generation upon the preaching of the next. And therefore if the phenomena I shall draw your attention to be not imaginary, they are well worthy of our consideration. By the term Cosmopolitan Theology I intend to convey the notion that the various churches and religious communions, in the persons of their greatest teachers, no longer limit themselves to the restatement of the various systematic formula of their communions. Anglicans are not merely Anglican, Presbyterians are not all Calvinists, and so on. If you desired the best handbook of Dogmatics, the probability is that 7 out of 10 Theological Professors would refer you to the Danish Lutheran Martensen. If you desire the best exposition of the historical development of Christian Theology, you would be directed to the German Hagenbach. The fact is that not merely in the case of Theology, but of all learning, there are no longer national distinctions. The investigations of Germany are closely followed in France, England, and America. In every department of mental activity there is a friendly exchange of results. German Universities, which in this century are the real homes of thorough-going research in almost every sphere of learning, are full of English and American students. No English or French theologian would think of publishing any work of importance without having acquainted himself with the results of German inquiry on the same subject.

This partial obliteration of denominational lines amongst students of Theology is nowhere more evident than in the sphere of Bible Study, and it is this branch of study which is occupying more and more time and attention in our schools of Theology. Biblical Introduction is almost a new subject, yet it finds a place in almost every theological curriculum. Biblical Theology, which is the scientific representation of the religious ideas and doctrines which are contained in the New Testament, is gradually winning its way to its true position as the most important of all branches of theological discipline. But in both of these fields it is scarcely ever asked whether the author is a Presbyterian or Lutheran, or Methodist or Churchman, or even Roman Catholic. If you asked Mr. Gore for a good popular account of the modern view of the early chapters of the book of Genesis, he would refer you to the French Roman Catholic Lenormant. If you asked him for a good book on Messianic Prophecy, he would bid you purchase Rietun's work. In Biblical Introduction and Biblical Theology, English students are far behind German, although they are now seriously devoting themselves to these subjects. Bishop Westcott broke the ground in his works on the Canon of the New Testament, and his Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, but if we want to cover the whole field we have still to go to such German authors as Bleek and Keil and Oehler and Schultz in the O. T., and Schurer and Weiss and Reuss in the New.

But it is in the old field of exegesis that this unity of students is most apparent. The commentaries of the German Meyer, and of the French Presbyterian Godet, are freely used by scholars and preachers of the Anglican Church. The contributors to the Pulpit Commentary, to Bishop Ellicott's Bible for English readers, the excellent series known as the Expositor's Bible, and some others, are drawn from the ranks of several leading communions. A com-

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