

Sunday Reading.

THE COMING MAY BE SOON.
A Discussion of the Views Advanced by
Dr. Herron.

A correspondent in the Montreal Witness, under the caption, "The personal reign of Christ," says: The latest apostle of socialism teaching in Montreal has come and gone, leaving many of his audience in doubt as to what would be the actual result, if such utopian ideas as Dr. Herron has enunciated could be actually carried out to their ultimate completion. I have no wish to add further criticism of his doctrines to those which have already appeared in the public press, but I feel more inclined to ask his critics if they are not wandering somewhat from the teachings of our master. The one absorbing question of the day to all thinking people is, what are the future probabilities and possibilities of the human race. We see the drama being played out before our eyes, we see the social fabric of civilization being strained almost to its limit, and we are all strongly tempted to theorize as to what can be done to avert the apparently approaching catastrophe of a universal social revolution, possibly (aye, probably) ending in anarchy.

When we consider the fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ (including the Sermon on the Mount) has been given to the world through preaching and reading for nineteen hundred years, with all its lessons of morality and self-denial, with its great prototype of perfect humanity and divinity united, and above all, with this wonderful promise of great reward, eternal life, when we consider this and look upon the world as it is today, it cannot but appear that it is not within the divine providence that the preaching of the gospel is to regenerate the world or bring about the millennium.

The gospel of grace was to be preached during a certain period for the purpose of gathering together out of the world a body of believers which we call the Church of Christ. We are certainly taught that during the closing period of this dispensation, the world is to go from bad to worse, until it gets beyond its own control, and then One is to come back who will have power to take the reins of government into his own hands and govern the world in righteousness. If not only brilliant idealists, like Dr. Herron, but our more regular-going teachers would trouble themselves to study the signs of the times, as they were warned to do, if they would read the words of our Lord as they have come down to us in the gospels, and believe what he said, they could not escape the belief that we are rapidly approaching that period of the Christian dispensation when all true believers will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." If Christ did not mean us to believe that he is coming back to establish his literal kingdom on this earth he would not have told us so in numerous passages. If he did not wish us to expect and wait for his return he would not have so frequently reiterated the command to "Watch." If the apostles did not believe and hope that he would return they would not have referred to it over and over again. It seems wonderful that our church leaders have nothing to say about Christ's return when all the world is discussing these absorbing questions of the future. We are not left in darkness as to the time of his second advent any more than Simon and Anna were at his first advent. Many signs were foretold of which one example will be sufficient for this present discussion. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Today Jerusalem contains nearly fifty thousand Jews, where a generation past scarcely one could be found in the holy city. They seem to be driven back by the Almighty to that land which he gave to Abraham for an everlasting inheritance, and which has been so long lying desolate. They seem to be preparing the fulfillment of the prophecy, "And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." This is to be the solution of these terrible troubles which are coming upon the earth, and which will be increased many-fold rather than improved before the words of the angels to the apostles after the ascension shall be accomplished. This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Let me be explicit. The scriptures teach that Jesus Christ, "the King of the Jews," came the first time in humility, and that he will come the second time as a king to take the government of this earth upon himself and fulfill all the prophecies from Genesis to Revelation, that he and he alone will be able to regulate the earth and settle all these difficult problems so far as the world is concerned, but thanks be to God all his church, all those true believers who are gathered together from all nations during this dispensation of grace, have far greater prospects, a grander future than even those who are living on this earth when our king shall rule with equity, for "The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." So, I say to Dr. Herron's critics, those particularly who are in the position of teachers—do not be discouraged with your apparent lack of success in doing all that you think you should do. You cannot convert the world, you cannot regulate humanity by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, but you can do what so many grand men and women have done before you—you give the message and trust to God to give the increase. And when the number of his church is complete—not one minute sooner or later—he will return, and this poor, sin-cursed world will enjoy a Sabbath of rest. I cannot close without calling upon those who believe that we are at the very close of this dispensation, to let their voices be heard. We see every conceivable theory propounded, yet we see nothing in the press, and very rarely hear anything from the pulpit of the great hope of very many Christians, yes, of many who were high in the councils of the various churches, yet

who seem timid in giving the warning that the bridegroom is coming. Let your voices be heard, for the time is short. "He who testifieth these things saith surely I come quickly, amen, even so, come Lord Jesus."

AT MONASTERY GATES.
(Full Mail Budget.)

No woman has ever crossed the inner threshold, or shall ever cross it, unless a queen, English or foreign, should claim her privilege. Therefore if a woman records here the slightest things visible of the monastic life, it is only because she is not admitted to see more than beautiful courtesy and friendliness were able to show her in guest-house and garden.

The Monastery is of fresh-looking Gothic, by Pagin—the first of the dynasty; it is by the white roads of a limestone country, and backed by a young plantation, and it gathers its group of buildings in a cleft high up among the hills of Wales.

Here, in North Wales, remote as the country is, with the wheat green over the blunt hill tops, and the sky vibrating with larks, a long wing of smoke lies round the horizon. The country, rather thinly and languidly cultivated above, has a valuable sub-soil, and is burrowed with mines; the breath of pit and factory, out of sight, thickens the lower sky, and lies heavily over the sands of Dee.

With large aprons tied over their brown habits, the Lay Brothers work upon their land, planting parsnips in rows, or tending a prosperous tea-farm. A young friar, who sang the high mass yesterday, is gaily hanging the washed linen in the sun. A printing press, and a machine which slices turnips are at work in an out-house, and the yard thereby is guarded by a St. Bernard, whose single evil deed was that under one of the obscure impulses of a dog's heart—stung for by long and self-conscious remorse—he bit the poet; and tried, says one of the friars, to make doggerel of him. The poet, too, lives at the monastery gates in a chamber which the tidings of the sequence of his editions hardly reaches. There is no disturbing renown to be got among the cabins of the Flintshire hills.

To the coming and going of the friars, too, the village people have become well used, and the infrequent excursionists, for lack of intelligence and of any knowledge that would refer to history, look at them without obtrusive curiosity. It was only from a Salvation Army girl that you heard the brutal word of contempt. She had come to the place with some companions, and with them was trespassing, as she thought, upon the monastery grounds. She stood a figure for Bourne-mouth pier, in her grotesque bonnet, and watched the son of the Umbrian saint—the friar who walks among the Giotto frescoes at Assisi and between the cypresses of Bello Squardo, and has paced the centuries continually since the coming of the friars. One might have asked of her the kindness of a fellow-feeling. She and he alike were so habituated to show the world that their life was aloof from its "idle business." By some such phrase, at least, the friar would assuredly have attempted to include her in any spiritual honours ascribed to him. Or one might have asked of her the condescension of forbearance. "Only fancy," said the Salvation Army girl, watching the friar out of sight, "only fancy making such a fool of oneself!"

Every midnight the sweet contralto bells call the community, who get up gaily to this difficult service. Of all duties this one never grows easy or familiar, and therefore never habitual. "Is something to have found but one point of victory over habit. What art, what literature, or what life but would gain a secret security by such a point of perpetual freshness and perpetual initiative? It is not possible to get up at midnight without a will that it is new night by night. So should the writer's work be done, and with an intention perpetually unique, the poet's."

The contralto bells have taught these Western hills the "Angelus" of the French fields, and the hour of night—Pora di notte, which rings with melancholy, a note from the village bellfries on the Adriatic littoral, when the latest light is passing away. It is the prayer for the dead: "Out of the depths have I called unto Thee, O Lord."

The little flocks of novices, on these peaceful evenings, are folded to the sound of that evening prayer. The care of them is the central work of the monastery, which is placed in so remote a country because it is principally a place of studies, so much elect intellect and strength of heart withdrawn from the traffic of the world! True, the friars are not doing the task which Carlyle set mankind as a refuge from despair. These "bearded counsellors of God" keep their cells, read, study, suffer, sing, hold silence; whereas they might be "operating"—beautiful word!—upon the Stock Exchange, or painting Academy pictures, or making speeches, or reluctantly jostling other men for their places. They might be the husbands of physiological novelists. They might be among the involuntary busy-bodies who are living by futile tasks, the need whereof is a discouraged fiction. There is absolutely no limit to the superfluous activities, to the art, to the literature, implicitly renounced by the dwellers within such walls as these. The output—again a beautiful word—of the age is lessened this abstinence. None the less hopes the stranger and pilgrim to pause and knock once again upon those monastic gates.

The Roman Index.

The last Roman Index is dated 1888, and additions have been made since that date, the last author to be gibbeted up to the present time being Prof. St. George Milver, in consequence of his articles on "The Happiness in Hell" a few months ago in the Nineteenth Century magazine. He has since retracted those writings, and finds consolation in the fact that one of the half-dozen or more reasons for which books may be put on the roll of the condemned is that of inopportune. Perhaps, therefore, his name will not appear on future

lists. But he would have found himself in good company. Using to the indiscriminate way in which the names of authors and works are mixed up, in the former case being often arranged under the Christian names—the largest number of entries occur under the letter J, because John is a common name—it is somewhat difficult to discover who are among the victims of papal censure. However, a glance will disclose many well known names. James I. and Henry VIII. appear as prohibited authors, an exception being made in favor of a tract issued by the latter king against Luther. Nearly all the English poets figure on the list, headed by Milton, Spencer and Chaucer; Dryden forming a notable exception. Dante is there for his treatise on monarchy, and Petrarch also. Addison, Swift, and Oliver Goldsmith are added by Bacon, Galileo, Robertson, and Gibbon. Philosophers are thick, from Locke downward, including Rousseau, Hume, Kant, and John Stuart Mill. Voltaire is proscribed and Victor Hugo appears thus: "Hugo, Victor, F. D. de Paris, an. 1804, Dec." However, it was worthy work to count up further entries; suffice it to know that prohibition has never been able to check the vital force of genius; indeed, it may be said to have the opposite effect: as Milton points out in his "Areopagitica," "the punishing of wits enhances their authority, and all one who declare to be a certain spark of truth that flies up in the faces of them who seek to tread it out."—Cornhill Magazine.

HERESY OR NOT.

Prof. Smith's Defence Before the Presbyterian Assembly.

The plea made by Dr. Smith before the Presbyterian assembly at Saratoga is worthy of general perusal. Dr. Broad, for the assembly said: "The question before this assembly is not one of the appellant's attitude to the holy scriptures, whether it be reverent and sincere; nor of the spirit in which he has presented his studies and conducted his professional work, nor is the question one of his private opinion, nor even of any personal sentiment which he may have expressed in private conversation; neither is the question whether the appellant may remain in the Presbyterian church as a private member—his good standing in this respect not being involved."

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By the understanding adopted by the assembly Dr. Smith had an hour in which to reply to committee. He was suffering slightly with hoarseness, but was able to make himself heard with ease, without any attempt at oratory and no appeal whatever, and no peroration, he stood before his accusers and friends for an hour, exhibiting the same gentle spirit which had been such a marked characteristic of the present session. He referred pleasantly to the committee's criticism of his phrase, "analysis, sifting and cross questioning," and added:

"The member drew a dark picture of the audacity and wickedness of the creature who would cross-question the Creator. He showed the motive of the cross-questioner to be to discredit the witness, because cross-questioning is done by the opposing attorney, but I must confess to a little carelessness here. I never thought of that aspect of it. In my unfamiliarity with legal procedure, I had forgotten that cross-questioning is intended to discredit the witness."

"In my simplicity I had supposed it was intended to bring out the truth. When I look at it that seems to me at least an allowable meaning, and if you will examine the sentence in the pamphlet which has given so much offense you will see it says nothing about cross-questioning the Almighty."

Dr. Smith then took up the criticism of the committee relative to his language about the chronicle, and said: "No one can deny that the chronicle actually omits the darker features from the account of David's life. Now, I wish to take the full responsibility for what I have said. The evidence of the pamphlet does undoubtedly show divergence from the views set forth in the charge framed by this committee. All of these inferences being correct, it is yet true that I have asserted the following points:

"1. The chronicle has omitted from his book sundry statements of fact."
"2. The inspiration of the scripture is consistent with error of fact in their affirmations."
"3. The inspiration of the scripture is consistent with the idiosyncrasies of the writers which influence their utterances."
"4. A part of the Book of Isaiah is by another prophet than Isaiah."
"5. It is impossible, on the basis of the facts as we have seen them, to conclude that the Old Testament scriptures are free from all errors of fact."

Dr. Smith discussed these points at some length, and then called attention to the points on which all agree. He said: When we get these before us we shall see better where we differ. The points on which we agree are these:

"A. The Bible contains matter directly revealed by God."
"B. It contains other material not in the strict sense revealed."
"C. This material is of importance for its bearing on the history of revelation."
"D. This Material was chosen by men

acting under distinct influence of the Holy Spirit, which we call inspiration."
"E. The result is a book which in its totality is the church's permanent and infallible rule of faith and life."

Dr. Smith reiterated that he had no desire to lay undue emphasis on his special theory. He closed with the assertion that for all the facts which will allow Presbyterians to hold to absolute inerrancy they should know it. The question before the assembly to-day is whether the theory of inerrancy of the autographs is fundamental to the Presbyterian system that the heart of the whole case is that the inerrancy of the original autographs is a new doctrine. It is also an unnecessary doctrine. It detains nothing which is of value to the faith of the church. It gives no surer hold on the truth of God; and then he treated it as a dangerous doctrine and opening the door to the very fact that it is trying to shut out, substituting for the present rule of faith and life a lost and probably irrecoverable document.

But he added, that if the assembly would reinstate him until those autographs were found, he would remain in the ministry for the rest of his life without the fear of suspension hanging over him. His last point was that the doctrine itself was not formulated until last year after he had been convicted, and that, therefore, it could not be retroactive in its effect. His closing sentence was a plea for toleration and forbearance.

Messages of Help for the Week.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord . . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand . . . For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 83.

"Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind?" Job 37: 16, 17.

"Remove far from me vanity, and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Proverbs 30: 8, 9.

"Seek thee out of the book of the Lord and read." Isaiah 34: 16.

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." Psalm 94: 19.

"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come up to thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble." Psalm 102: 1, 2.

"I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Psalm 117: 1, 2.



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