

CH. I OUR NEED OF REFORMATION 11

almost every Christian individual outside that pale acts habitually as "representing society," and not as "the individual standing alone" at the judgment-seat of Christ? Yet this pronouncement of one of the most revered of Christian thinkers differs from the teaching of other Christian preachers more in its Christ-like candour, its reverence for fact, than in anything else.

Let each of us ask ourselves if we do not agree with it. With our corporate faith in God such as it is—a low average estimate of his power, a melancholy estimate of his will; with our corporate thought regarding God as the source of all our diseases and disasters, requiring that we shall look to science, not to religion, for their cure; with our minds tainted with sin, appetite and affection deranged, is it not an impossibility to live up to the standards of Jesus, to endure persecution with joy and meekness, to overcome hate with love, not only in the centre of the individual heart but also in the household, in the state, and in the world?

Here, then, we have contradictory ideals,—that of Jesus, who maintains that his is the common-sense method of saving the world, and that of Christendom, which maintains that his laws are impracticable.

What then? Shall our civilisation crumble at the word of Christ? or shall Christ be rejected? That his way of life would mean the breaking down of commerce, the dismemberment of empires, the crumbling of law and order, is perhaps the reasonable forecast concerning an untried method;