

Christianity—Four Classes of Thinkers Amongst Us.

ALL are willing to admit that if the Gospel of Christ be true, and a future life such as He describes exists, that we should embrace it. But men wish to do so in different ways. Many wish to mix the sins and pleasures of life, sinful in part, with the pure doctrines of Christ. They forget what Christ said in His night conversation with Nicodemus, in His conversation with the woman of Samaria and His sermon on the Mount. In other words they wish to hold on to the world, and attain the life of heaven too. Others doubt as to all things, yet are moral, and a third class are pleased to think there is no God, nor hereafter, hence, like our Epicureans of old, eat, drink and are merry, for to-morrow they die. There is a fourth class who really look upon the life to come as a reality—live in the spirit of Christ, act as if this world was a secondary consideration, and the only good thing is that future life as described by Christ and His apostles, hence their treasure is in heaven. These four classes exist amongst us and in all Christendom, and always have since Christ founded His religion.—(See the parable of the sower). Which of these is the wiser? I propose to say a few words on each class.

1st.—MIXING SIN WITH RELIGION.—Does any man think God is going to accept him if he knowingly, willingly does this? True, we often sin in the world, lightly, thoughtlessly, but, immediately after, repent and express our sorrow to God in prayer. I allude not to this class—but to those who think they can reconcile the world as it is to the Gospel. See what St. James says as follows: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."—James iv. 4. The meaning of this is that we must not be the friend of the sin or pleasures of the world as we find them.

So St. Paul says, Romans viii. 1.—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"—and 13th verse—"For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but, if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh ye shall live," and also 8th verse, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and 7th verse "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God."

Then we must have the Holy Spirit in us—how then can we mix the things of the world, willingly with the things of God, or the Spirit? Carter Harrison, Mayor of Chicago, most worldly and wicked man, governed Chicago in this way—he patronized sin.

THE SECOND CLASS, delight to think there is no future punishment, and doubt as to all things—hope for no future life, act as if there was none, because they are dead in sin, lovers of themselves; die the death of the thoughtless and wicked, and like the brutes of the earth return to dust. Yet they have souls that must live forever, and account to God. Oh, many there are of this day everywhere, in our midst, in Paris and all great cities, in wicked Chicago and all over the United States, as St. Paul says, Romans i. 28th, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient." Was this God's fault, or act? No; but theirs as free agents, hating truth, virtue and purity, they sought vice and evil.

They gloried in their shame, valued temporary to immortal life with God, worshipped the gold and riches of the world, the vice and wicked pleasures; verily they reap the reward of their own acts, and are like the man described by Jesus who built his house on the sands.—Matthew vii. 26, 27. Oh! let us be like the wise man and build upon the Rock of Jesus Christ!!

In this connection remember what Jesus said to the seducers as to the life to come, "You do greatly err; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," as he was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If man did not live again in spirit after the body's death, there could be no accountability to God. Man is an immortal spirit, if the Bible be true.

THIRD CLASS.—Well, there is a third class, more numerous than the two mentioned—the self-righteous, or moral class—that has prevailed in all ages. Nicodemus was one of them, St. Paul was, before his conversion. There is nothing plainer in the New Testament than that the mind must have a spiritual change—by the Spirit of God—if we are to be true Christians. This is effected sometimes very suddenly, as in St. Paul, sometimes by gradual work in the mind by conviction. But the moral class will tell you. We live all right with men, do all the good we can, are honest in business, give to the Church and in charity, walk honestly with all men, in fact, are on the best of terms with the world. What more do you want? Let me ask the moral class just a few questions. Do you commune by prayer with God or Christ? Do you pray at all? Have you found out you are a sinner, and that there is in you a tendency to sin? Have you gone to God to confess sins? Have you made up your mind that Jesus is alive, and rose from the dead, and is your Saviour, more precious than all beside? No, they will say, we don't pray, we act, and trust to have communion after death with God. We try to make the world our friend,—time enough after death for all this—we never take the communion, never joined any Church, love the people out of the Church often more than the closest Christians, don't believe in missionary work, our policy is let things alone and be honest. I have heard ministers say that probably Dives, spoken of in the 17th chapter of Luke, may have been a moral man, that is, was only rich, but not a worshipper of God. If man's morality can save him, why did Christ die to atone for us? Why was His blood shed on Calvary? Was there no efficacy in His shed blood, and why did He talk as He did to Nicodemus? If morality can save us, why is the Holy Ghost given us, or in existence as the third person of God?

THE FOURTH CLASS comes under the men and women who enter in at the strait gate into which, alas, so few enter. As Christ says,—broad is the way that leads to death. This class is a praying class and an acting class, having faith in the Son of God, and acts with it. They are in constant communion with God, night and morning, and many, as Daniel was, at noon; they walk, as Enoch did, with God, the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost; Jesus is their all in all, and they look for Him to be with them in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Recently, when in Detroit, an elder of a Presbyterian church said to me: "You Canadian Presbyterians are too strict. Show me a hale, healthy, jovial man, and if he is a Presbyterian he has no such narrow views as many have. The street car Sabbath question does not trouble him; he can ride in or support the system. It is only thin sort of men who are so thin conscientious." Yes, there are too many such elders, too many such Christians who think as this elder does. That religion is a pocket Sabbath affair, well enough there, but in week days we must act as the world does. In the United States churches, I fear, this spirit is too common. Religion is to be made profitable—to be loved only so long as the world and it can agree.

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CHARLES DURAND.

Thanksgiving must always be a Christian's tone towards God. If troubles are sent, he must be thankful for the Father's discipline, and strive to find out why they are sent; in joy thanksgiving will surely come unbidden.—Schaff.

AN opal of many tints is lying on my table. It filled me with pleasure when first I found it, and it has been a day's delight ever since. Hold it in whatever position I may, it always presents a fresh aspect of beauty. Looking down into its ruby and emerald fires, I discover depths and avenues of light unseen before. Christ is my perfect opal. His beauty enraptured my soul when first I found Him, and He has been a continuous and increasing revelation of grace and glory until now. Viewing Him in the varied aspect of His titles, words and work, whether through tears of sorrow or of gladness, I always see deeper into the fathomless fire of eternal love and loveliness. What will my vision be when my eye is clear and my soul is pure?—Rev. W. J. Mathams.