

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN

A CHRISTMAS TRIBUTE.

A FEW weeks ago we offered a few thoughts upon the Divinity of Our Lord. We related that one of the ablest mathematicians of the age had given up two years to an exhaustive examination of Christian evidences, with the result of having his faith confirmed. It would occupy all the time an average reading person could give during two years were he to take up this question and give it a thorough study, so voluminous is the literature this, the greatest of all religious questions, has called forth. The difficulty is not to find arguments but to find space for their presentation. In our previous article we ventured to affirm that the physical aspect of the Incarnation is not one whit more difficult to explain than the ordinary phenomena of all births.

The gap between dead matter and a living organism has not been bridged by reason. Science stands on one brink and confesses that the mystery of life, in its varied phases as seen in man, is inscrutable. Mr. Herbert Spencer's explanations as to life are more difficult to understand than the thing he so vainly tries to explain. The Creator of man repeated His own act under different conditions in calling into being the Babe of Bethlehem. Adam was an incarnation, the living soul given to him came through the Spirit, by whom came also the second Adam, the Lord of life. The Being thus created, we showed to have been the first and the last of our race born without sin, absolutely pure, divinely perfect touching his moral character, the One who was alone able to challenge the world of his own and of all ages with the question: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"

The question we have never heard dealt with is this, What constitutes the essential attributes of divinity? You who refuse Christ's claim to be Divine, tell us, Do you regard it impossible for God Almighty to be made manifest by an Incarnation? or, do you know that if such Incarnation were to take place, its phenomena would not be through the life of a Being such as Jesus was? Granting the possibility of God being manifest in the flesh, does not the life of Jesus fulfil all the conditions ideally conceivable of such a manifestation? Is it not a startling fact, argumentatively overwhelming, that the one Man who claimed to have Divine attributes, the one who boldly declared himself to be essentially different in character, in power, in relation to the entire race, and in his relation to God, should have been also in the highest conceivable sense the very Being whose life set forth these claims, and He alone whose divine exaltation of life has ever since commanded the worship, the reverence of the holiest of his fellow men, and brought down into humble submission to His Divine claims the loftiest intellects for well nigh two thousand years?

Napoleon well said, in St. Helena, "Nations pass away, thrones crumble, but the Church of Christ remains. Jesus alone founded an empire on love, and at this hour millions would

die for Him." It is surely a most rational conclusion that He upon whose life, words and acts the eternal Church is founded, a work mighty in blessedness, in potency of moral and spiritual influence, was not merely a frail, sinful, erring man, but that God was with Him, manifesting by Him, His Divine Wisdom, Love and Will,—that Jesus was indeed—God manifest in the flesh.

Regard thoughtfully the claims made by Jesus when illuminated by the light flashing upon His words from the glory of His perfectly pure life, from a life said by an atheist to have been the loftiest exhibition of morality. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Compare that with words familiar to his hearers, "God said unto Moses I AM THAT I AM; say unto the children of Israel I AM hath sent me." Exodus iii., 13, 14. Was this moral model then a blasphemer as His words make Him, if He was only a man? Again He said, "I AM THE WAY, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Note also the claim of Jesus to be higher than angels in St. John i., 51. What a miserable exhibition of self-conceit this assertion of being the sole medium of intercourse with God was, if Jesus was a man like the rest of us! The Way indeed! If Christ were only a man his way was the path of deceit, the way of heathenish superstition. But let millions upon millions of souls answer "Is not Christ the true Way of access to the Father?" There is no fact of science capable of more rigid evidential demonstration by testimony than this fact that Jesus said truly, "I AM the Way!" Rising to a higher plane Jesus went on to say "I AM the Truth." Mark you, he is not saying, I speak the truth, but I, Jesus of Nazareth, I, son of Mary, I, a beggar in circumstances, I am the Truth, necessarily the embodiment of all truth, the manifestation of truth, the fountain of all truth. To answer in a brief sentence "What is a Divine Being?" we can formulate no sublimer reply than—One who is the Truth—to be that is to be God, for a man to be that is to be—God manifest in the flesh. Proceeding up this divine plane Jesus declares—"I am the light of the world—he that followeth Me, shall have the light of life." Only just before Jesus had said, "If any thirst let him come unto Me and drink," promising that He would to such become a fountain of everlasting refreshment, by the gift of the Spirit.

This practical age has invented the phrases "Judging by results," "Nothing succeeds like success." Apply, if you will, these tests to the claim of Jesus to be the Light of the world, do not "results" establish the claim? Has any success succeeded like the claim of Jesus to be the "Sun of Righteousness," the source of Light to the world? But while truth and light are spiritual essentials, life demands sustenance. When God made man He placed him within reach of food, even Eden required a supply of daily bread. So in the spiritual sphere, truth ennobles, light purifies, but man needs soul bread. Note the completeness of Christ's claims in this respect, He said "I am the bread of life, I am the living bread, if any

man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." Expanding this declaration of being spiritual food, how tremendous is the claim made by Jesus when He says: "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day, he dwelleth in Me and I in him." We are content to rest upon these last words the entire argument as to whether Jesus did or did not claim to be a Supernatural Being. Poetise as you will the statements of his being The Truth, The Light, you cannot so muddle away such a distinct assertion of Divine power as is set forth in the words "I will raise him up at the last day!" This promise was preceded by the same claim made in words that have fallen like heavenly comfort at myriads of grave sides, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," words whose truth has ever since been the Light that illumines the valley of death, turning gloom into brightness of hope, and the path of desolation into a shining way that leads to perfect day.

Space forbids further words. Let us close with the appeal of Robertson, "Brother men, the truer you are, the humbler, the nobler, the more you will feel Christ to be your King." Christmas is again here with all the blessed memories of home. The Babe of the Manger is adored by myriads with deeper devotional love than beamed forth from the eyes of "Mary the Mother of Jesus."

May Christmas be to all of us sweet with home love, and every hearth bright with the Light of the World!

A NEW RACE OF WOMEN.

PROBABLY we are not exact in this phrase in a strict historic sense, but practically we are, for the order of women now rising up are to this latter age a new race. Forgetting that the highest glory of a woman as a wife, is a wisely, lovingly governed family Those of the new race are seeking to share with ward politicians, for they rise no higher, all the excitements of a municipal election. The abstract right of a woman property owner to vote is sound, but abstract rights are frequently impracticable to exercise without grievous wrong to those who hold the right. The very fact that where these of the new race are active in organizing their sex as electioneers, as wire pullers, and in sending out noisy blatherskites as their paid agents, they make the whole interests of a community to turn upon some sensational cry, or some false, shameful slander of the candidate they do not favor, that they ask women to vote as women, in a body, is a demonstration of incapacity to exercise the franchise with advantage to themselves and their neighbours. How can women judge of the business capacity of candidates for municipal positions—it is ludicrous to put such a problem before them. They can judge of a man's looks and his speech, and as a matter of notoriety they are in Toronto "gone" on one hero, chiefly because of his supposed animal beauty, and his fascinating, gushing, sentimental appeals to their emotional natures. How far the cause of morality can be furthered