

## ST. MARY'S, SOHO, AND CHURCH WORK AMONG THE POOR OF LONDON.

Among the many agencies for disseminating the blessings of Christianity among the London poor, the institutions connected with St. Mary's, Soho, are prominent. On a recent occasion Canon Liddon spoke to the following effect:—Probably most of those here to-day are aware that the spot on which we are standing, and which has been the scene of the solemn rite, that has just concluded, is what may be called in a very true sense of the term, "historic ground." For here, something like two hundred years ago, the then Bishop of London, Dr. Compton, acting in concert with the highest authorities of the State, assigned to the members of the Greek Church resident in London a site for their chapel; and it was actually used by them for a period, the exact length of which I do not know. That it was used, however, is a fact, on the importance of which we do well to dwell. Upon this very spot during many years the Liturgy, which is perhaps the richest, the most beautiful, the most devotional amongst all the liturgies of the Church, that of St. Chrysostom, was publicly used; and its use was authorised by a Bishop whom persons in my position are specially bound to honour. He ruled this diocese for a longer period than perhaps any other Bishop since the Reformation; and during his episcopate the present Cathedral of St. Paul was built from its foundation to the top of its dome. He was a munificent, learned, and liberal prelate; and this church is only one among the many proofs of his generosity. After a time the Greeks left this spot, and they were succeeded by a body of French Huguenots, who had been driven from their native land by what we must think a most unhappy persecution. These in their turn were followed by a body of our own Nonconformists, a body of Independents, who remained here until two and twenty years ago, when through the exertions of the Rector of St. Anne's, Soho, this spot, which had been in so many various ways dedicated to the worship of our Creator and Redeemer, was saved from becoming a centre of vice—a casino—and was finally devoted to the service of the Church of England. Now may we not see in these historical facts a pledge of future union amongst Christians? No earnest Christian, in his best moments, can look at the condition of the Christian world; at the alarming prevalence of vice and immorality in this great metropolis, as well as in other large towns; at the violent forms of destructive thought that to a degree, unprecedented in the history of the church, threaten to undermine the most fundamental truths of the faith in the minds of large classes of men;—no one, I say, can look at all this without praying for union among those who believe in and worship a common Lord and Saviour. I trust that the descendants of those who use the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom on this spot,—the descendants of the Huguenots driven from France, and who held no doubt an imperfect creed, but who, there is also no doubt, were encouraged in any errors which clung to them by the hard treatment which they received,—and the descendants of those Independents who dissented in a great number of cases much more from the lifelessness and deadness of the Church of England than from her doctrines or even from her connection with the State, may find their way back to a sanctuary where they will have exhibited to them the Truth in all its fullness, and the Truth, moreover, recommended by zeal and love. It is natural to hope that this Church may be a pledge of union among those who worship our common Lord; but if that blessed consummation is ever in God's mercy to be brought about, it will most assuredly be not an unworthy or cowardly surrender of the faith which we have received from our forefathers, the faith which is not ours to give away, and which it is our most sacred duty to hand on to those who shall follow after us. Union can never be possible, if it is sought in a cowardly abandonment of all distinctive truth.

To the first consideration let me add a second. The services of this chapel represent the fruit of one of the greatest movements—probably I should only do it justice if I said the greatest movement—which has been brought about by God the Holy Spirit in the Church of England during the present century. I refer to what is called the Oxford movement. It was not the first quick-

ening of life in the Church of England. During the greater part of the last century the life of the Church of England was at its lowest ebb, and it was because the Church's spiritual vigour had almost sunk to zero that Dissent made such enormous strides. We owe Dissent in one way a very great debt, for by its aid a large portion of the population of this country was saved from nothing less than absolute heathenism. A very great man once said we Churchmen ought never to approach a Dissenter except in a spirit of humility, and indeed of thankfulness. The first movement of God's Holy Spirit amongst us was the Evangelical, which reanimated the sense of our Lord's living Presence, of His glorious Godhead, of the priceless value of His atoning work and the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, of the feebleness and sinfulness of poor human nature, unless it is washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. So far as it went in a positive direction the Evangelical movement was the work of God the Holy Ghost, but it did not cover the whole area of God's revealed Truth. It did not point out with sufficient clearness that God had come among us by His Son and His Holy Spirit not merely to redeem and sanctify mankind, but in order to found a spiritual Kingdom. It omitted to point out the real meaning and value of the Sacraments as channels of that new life which Christ our Lord has given us in the Kingdom of the new Covenant. This more complete statement of the Truth was reserved for what is known as the Oxford movement. That movement began in the University from which it took its name in the year 1833, and at first it was, from the very necessity of the case and the conditions of its existence, of the nature of an intellectual theory, addressed to learned men, making its way indeed by books and processes of argument, but not coming into contact with the heart or the devotions of the people. If it had always remained in that condition it would not have been the work of God the Holy Spirit. The test of Divine Truth which distinguishes it from any mere human theory is this:—Divine Truth has always something to say to every human heart. It is like God's sun shining in the heavens—it may do more for one creature than another; but it does something for all. And, therefore, it was absolutely necessary, in order to prove its vitality, that this great movement should not only penetrate among the intellectual, the refined, and well-bred classes of society, but that it should come down from these social heights and show the universality of its power by appealing to the hearts of the people. Now it is the peculiar glory of St. Mary's, Soho, that in very early days, when the interest of the community at large had not been attracted to the movement as it since has been, this chapel did, under enormous difficulties and through a great deal of shame and obloquy, teach the deeper truths to which I have referred to the very poorest of the people. It is emphatically a poor man's church which we are to-day proposing to enlarge and beautify. This church deals with the poor in a way which ragged-schools and other schemes (of which I wish to speak with the greatest respect) do not. They attempt to deal with the poor as masses, whereas a church like this seeks to deal with them not as a class, but as individuals. To do any good whatever with any man or woman you must consider that man or woman not as one grain in a heap, but as an individual. The soul of the youngest, the poorest, the most ignorant of human beings is too noble and intrinsically majestic a thing to be herded with large masses of other souls and treated as if it had no special peculiarities. It must be dealt with alone, as if there were but two persons in creation, the soul that speaks and the soul that is spoken to—as if there were but two beings in existence, the soul and its Creator. It is characteristic of the work carried on in this place, that it has not been like that of some clerical lecturer coming down here once, or twice, or three times a week, and delivering addresses of more or less merit, to a large number of persons of whom individually he knows nothing. All teaching, here, is subordinated to the one supreme idea of building up, in each individual, the life of Jesus Christ; of adding, line upon line, precept upon precept, one truth to another; one grace to another; of making each Christian more and more fit for the eternal mansions, until at last the predestined day comes when each soul is committed to the pierced hands of Him who has redeemed it. It is the sympathy and respect which I feel for such a work that has made me thankful to have this opportunity of taking part in the ceremony which has just been con-

cluded. Doubtless this chapel will "give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and will guide many feet into the way of peace." It "will be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and will be the glory of Christ's people Israel." It will be a glory to God's people when they here experience a foretaste of that communion with God which, beginning on earth, will continue through all eternity in heaven; and it will be a light to lighten those multitudes outside the Church's fold who do not know our Lord, and therefore do not love Him, but towards whom He has intentions as merciful, as just, as generous, as indulgent as those which are the joy and support of the members of His own Body. It is to promote His love and honour that we have laid this first stone.

The Vicar afterwards entertained a number of his friends at the House of Charity, Greek-street; and after luncheon, Mr. Chambers proposed the health of Canon Liddon. The motto of the Rev. gentleman was, he believed—"Toleration with orthodoxy," and if that principle had been adopted in times past, we should not now have to deplore the alienation of many who were unfortunately separated from us.

After acknowledging the compliment, Canon Liddon proceeded to say—I entirely accept the statement of our principles which Mr. Chambers has been good enough to formulate for us—"Toleration with orthodoxy" and I believe that our safety as a Church depends upon our hearty acceptance of it. Toleration of those outside the Church has, of course, in these days no merit; in exercising it we make a virtue of a necessity. But toleration within the Church, and this in conjunction with the Church's adherence to the old language of orthodoxy, is what we contend for. At this time we are learning that the convictions of men upon the most sacred of all subjects are not to be enforced or propagated by process of law. The antiquated and mischievous idea that they can be has been gradually I should hope, disposed of by a series of unsuccessful experiments and the lesson will not have been bought too dear if by means of those experiments it should be established, that religious convictions to be worth anything must be based upon a genuine spiritual freedom. It is because Churches that are dogmatically strong can afford to be tolerant, that we must, on the other hand, hold firmly the principles of orthodoxy. It is useless to disguise the fact that we are now standing face to face with a great anxiety—an anxiety so serious that Dr. Pusey has said, without the smallest trace of exaggeration, that the present crisis is the most dangerous we have had to face in the present century. There can be no doubt that so often it, palliate it, as you will, if the Church of England in her corporate capacity were to resolve on so mischievous a step as the disuse or mutilation of Creeds accepted by the whole Eastern and Western Church she would take up a new doctrinal position in the face of Christendom. When we consider what consequences would be involved in that, we may well feel that all prudent persons would hesitate before lending their assistance to bring about so much religious confusion. I scarcely trust myself to say more upon a matter on which I feel so strongly; but I wish to add to what I have already said one observation. The maintenance of the Athanasian Creed is not by any means a mere duty to the learning and orthodoxy of the Church,—it is emphatically a duty we owe to the poor. I take it that the real crime of the Athanasian Creed is that there is no doubt about what it means. It speaks too clearly for those who do not really believe the great truths which it affirms. Of course I know that if we analyzed its expressions one by one we should be carried into fields of thought, to explore which requires a special intellectual training; but it is also true that the Creed speaks with such terseness, directness, and plainness, that any one understanding a moderate amount of the English language can easily follow it. A remarkable illustration of this was furnished by a message conveyed to me by a clergyman of Essex some little time since:—"I was lately," he said, called to the death-bed of a farmer in my parish who had been all his life, and who died a Dissenter. He particularly wished to see me, and he said:—I hope you will tell those gentlemen of your Church who are doing what they can to uphold the Athanasian Creed that I wish them God-speed. I can tell you that that Creed has been a great blessing to me, for I do not think I should ever have been able without its help to make out from the Bible what is said as