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CHRISTIANITY PROGRESSIVE.

BY REV. A. A. LIVERMORE.

THERE are three respects in which our holy religion is progressive; not in its record or spirit of divine truth, but in its influence and destiny in the world which it came to save.

1. *The ideas of Christianity are progressive* in the human mind. These are the ideas of God, the thoughts of the omniscient intellect. They are the laws of the moral world, and as such are unchangeable. But as it regards the mind of the recipient on earth, they are capable of greater or less admixture with error. It is the same sun that gives us light in a cloudy day as in a fair one; but in one case he shines with direct effulgence, and in the other quenches and dulls his arrows of light in a floating screen of vapor. The communication of truth depends not only on the purity and power of the giver, but also on the condition of the receiver. It is one sign of the Divine origin and authority of Christ, that, born and brought up as a

Jew, he yet retained none of the local and transient features of his age and country, but rose in all things to the absolute and eternal. He suffered no contractedness from the narrowness of Nazareth, and took no hue from the dark bigotry of Jerusalem. But although his precepts came thus pure and glowing from a world of light and love, they became assimilated to the hearers, as they fell upon gross ears, and entered into benighted understandings. The Jews could not receive the truth, because they were not of the truth. They had more truth than other nations, because they had been educated in the belief and worship of one only true God, but they stained the pure liquid of heaven as they poured it into the discolored alembic of their own minds. To deny, indeed, as some would seem to do, that the ideas of the Gospel received into erring and superstitious minds would lose their large dimensions and perfect whiteness, and would be reduced down to the calibre and color of human spirits, dim and earthly and selfish, is to resist all philosophy and reject all facts. We are not repining. It was a necessary process, as men they were. Children of the dust could not at once, unless miracles had been wrought upon all their minds, grasp in their simplicity and sublimity the truths of eternity. Therefore we say, that as soon as the angel of Christianity had left the cross and the tomb of its Founder, and begun her weary journey among mortals, her aspect grew less like the heaven she had left, and more like the earth in which she wandered. Her speech of God and the soul became a dialect of Babel, instead of the song of angels. The "Glory to God in the highest" dulled away into the worship of Mammon. The "Peace on earth" was drowned in the battle-cry. And the third

wire of this harp, strung by heavenly fingers, "Good-will toward men," soon snapped asunder amid the rough strivings of selfishness.

The great solar idea of Christianity is, that the Almighty God is our Father; but that truth faded away into the heathen conception of a Mighty Thunderer, sitting aloft in the heavens, and hurling abroad his bolts of vengeance over a trembling world. The men of war of that fierce period thought the Creator altogether such an one as themselves. The Jewish doctors on one side, and the Platonic philosophers on the other, largely imported their own doctrines into the Christian creeds. The Gnostic and Manichæan doctrines corrupted the Fathers, and the Fathers corrupted Christianity. Arius introduced some errors, and Athanasius others. Augustine opened the way for Calvin, and Calvin moulded and colored the whole Protestant world with his dark, but potent faith.

Now it is vain to say, that all this while there were the words of Christ to correct the errors of his followers. But they were wrested. They were diluted. They were forgotten. They were put aside, by no pagan persecutors, but by the very Church herself, as if in shame at her disloyalty. The Bible was denied to the laity, and was little read by the monks and priests. Luther did not see a complete copy of the Scriptures until he was twenty-two years of age. Such closing of the word of God necessarily shut the door to progress. The Church became the prison of Christ. For more than one thousand years, the Gospel was the captive of monks and priests, her truths hidden, her services corrupted, her progress stayed, and her name used for the purposes of ambition and tyranny and pollution. Ages of unreprieved war, ages of priest-

craft, ages of persecution for opinion's sake, ages of spiritual darkness over the land, and gross darkness over the people! What a fall was there! The instrument of salvation an engine of cruelty; the good news a terror to men; the name of Christ an incantation to curse, not to bless; the revelation of mercy a machine to crush freedom and progress among men!

But a change came. The Reformation broke the slumber of ages, and called men to life from the tomb in which they had so long lain asleep and dreaming. The old systems of error were partially broken up, and the stream began to run clear.

Then other and even deeper changes have come, and are coming. Error after error is washing away. The pure waters of life are again open to the thirsty, to drink and live. The glorious ideas of Christ, eclipsed for centuries, are coming out in their brightness to men's minds. All branches of the Church Universal have felt the movement, and it is as vain to deny it, as to deny that the sun shines at noon-day. History thus demonstrates that the Gospel is progressive in its ideas of love, truth, and right; and that "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away."

2. The second point relates to *the sentiments of Christianity*. All that has before been said about ideas will apply here. Thought is first in the order of philosophy, then feeling. Principles make way for sentiments, and sentiments grow into motives, and motives lead on to action. But how was it possible for the meek and loving graces of Christianity to take possession of the heart of the world, when it was preoccupied with the bigotry of the Jews, and the voluptuousness of Greece, and the am-

bition of the Romans, and the barbarity of the other nations? Especially, too, when those powerful truths, which were designed to chasten and purify men's sentiments, were lying fast bound in the cells of superstition?

The haggard forms of fear and fancy, which had so long tyrannized over men, the imaginations that had hardened into beliefs, the passions that had taken possession of the arts, the habits which whole histories of blood and wrong and cunning had ingrained upon nations, the monuments and mythologies of the past, the battle-pieces on the canvas and in the marble, the pomp and pride of cities, and the legends of hill and valley, ancestral and national honors, and all the thick-woven web of either a Jewish or a heathen community, could not at once welcome the love and peace and humility and purity of Christ. "His cross was unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

But as time has sped, there have come reformations of Christian sentiments, as well as of ideas. The heart of man has been touched by a kindlier influence. The ages of force are melting into the millenium of love. And though at this moment there may be war carried on by many Christian nations,—awful thought, when we reflect on the purpose of the mission of the Prince of Peace!—yet it is not war unrebuked and unquestioned; it is war that is condemned by the disciples of Christ, war that is prayed against, not for; that is petitioned against, that still clings like some vile and guilty thing to our skirts, not that is taken up into the bosom, and carried and cherished there by the warmth of the heart. It is something to protest against evils which we cannot prevent. And this is true of every other social evil and wrong, as well

as of war. They exist not in peace, as of old. They are condemned; they are met by the free press and the free pulpit. Aged men lift up their trembling hands, and pray that they may be banished out of the sight of heaven and earth. Little children early learn to lisp their names with horror, and to shrink from their touch as from a serpent. So it is with intemperance, and slavery, and excess of every kind, and injustice of every degree. Christianity, after being preached and believed for so many centuries, as a religion of fear and of force, is coming to be received more and more as a religion of love. The Jupiter of mere power, the Mars of violence, the Venus of sensual indulgence, and Bacchus the rioter, are moving out of men's hearts, to make room for the incoming of the Father of love, of Christ the pure and gentle, and the Holy Spirit of righteousness and truth. The star of Bethlehem is rising higher in the moral firmament, and governing more and more, by its heavenly attraction and gravitation, the ebb and flow of human society. Here, also, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away."

3. Christianity is, finally, progressive in *its practical influence on life and character*. This follows as an inference from what goes before. If its ideas are slowly received in their whole length and breadth and depth, and its sentiments gradually felt by the heart in all their transforming life, then of course conduct and character come even behind what men think and feel, because their thoughts are often indistinct, and their feeling fluctuating and short-lived. The long divorce between religion and goodness is coming to an end. The Christian world are opening their eyes to see that we must show our faith by

our works ; that not to him that says, Lord, Lord ! but that to him that does the will of our Father in heaven, is the heavenly portal opened. The institutions of society are reformed, and based more on the law of right and love. Old abuses are tottering to their fall. The school-house is taking the place of the prison. The hospital is built where once stood the gibbet. Men have got tired of war, and have gone to work. They are learning that the best way to cure evils is to prevent them. The literature of the finest geniuses runs more in a Christian vein, and thus the pen is working with the plough and the spindle and the sail to make a happier earth. The question more and more rises to the heart and to the lips, Why, when men stay in this world so short a time, should they take so much pains to make one another unhappy ? They are looking more to see how gently and patiently and sweetly the great Exemplar of goodness lived on the earth, and, amid wrong and outrage the most deadly, was still ever scattering flowers, not thorns, in the path of human existence ; was giving here a word of comfort, and there a deed of kindness ; making his miracles mercies ; always seeking to soften and sweeten sorrow ; and giving up life and all things to teach men to deny their passions and love one another.

In the progress of his divine principles over the errors of the past, his Gospel is now aiming to cover and control the whole sphere of society, to be the witness and friend and counsellor of man in whatever station he may be placed. Too long has its practice been inconsistent, and its profession formal. Too long has it been restricted to Sabbaths, and shut up in churches, and buried in forms and ceremonies. Too long has life and life's law and love

been put asunder, though God once joined them together. But it is beginning to be felt that the place of the Christian religion is everywhere, and its time always, and its rule final ; that it claims a man's heart and obedience in the counting-room or the corn-field as well as in the church ; that it says with celestial mandate, Love, obey, and be happy, on Monday or Saturday, as on Sunday ; that it goes with us when we mingle in the social group and raise the joyous laugh, as much as when we follow, slow and sad and tearful, the bier of the dead ; that it stirs at the heart when we hear the cry of distress, and extend the hand of help, as when we burn with enthusiasm for the right or with indignation at the wrong ; that it smiles in our greetings of happiness, and flashes through our reproof of sin ; that it ascends the halls of legislation as well as the closets of devotion ; that it guides the casting of a ballot as much as the giving of alms ; that it governs the voice of the speaker, and the pen of the writer, and the working of the press, and the spade of the laborer, and the needle of the housewife ; that it teaches in our schools, trades in our shops, toils in our fields, muses in our studies, presides in our assemblies, inspires our social scenes, and sits chief in the temples of justice and cabinets of rulers, as much as at the altars of worship ; that, in short, it reigns over the arts and occupations of men in all their boundless variety ; that its demands are always and everywhere consistent, and that it resolves with a beautiful simplicity all our duties into supreme love to God and impartial love to man. Thus universal, practical, and progressive is Christianity in its application to the conduct and character of mankind. It would make the whole earth one sublime sanctuary of worship, the

whole of life a holiday of peace and brightness, and every act and word a progress of the mind in truth, the heart in goodness, and the life in happiness. Say not this is fable. It was fact once. It took form and body in the Son of God. It was perfectly verified in one, imperfectly in many. It may be here and now in these hearts, in these lives; it may come in ever-increasing beauty, and ever-brightening hope, and holy power. It is the divine life of the soul, for which our heart and flesh cry out unto God. They plead with us not to torment them any more with our excesses and sins, with our worldly sorrows and mean desires, but to bow to the mild yoke of Christ, and find rest unto our souls.

SPIRITUAL KINDRED.

BY REV. E. S. GANNETT, D. D.

“WHOSOEVER shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.” If we found language like this recorded as having fallen from the lips of any one but him to whom they are ascribed by the Evangelists, we should consider them liable to the charge of extravagance or the suspicion of affectation. But as we read them in the life of Jesus, they seem to be perfectly in place and character — to belong to such instruction as in our usual habits of association we connect with his ministry; so distinct, and yet so natural, is the tone of spirituality which pervades his teaching.

His meaning in this declaration is obvious. There are higher and closer relations than those of natural kindred

— a more sacred tie than that of blood ; spiritual sympathies are the ground of a union more intimate than any which can be founded on earthly circumstances ; religion makes the nearest friends. The value of domestic connexions is not denied. It is rather admitted, by adopting the titles of these connexions as signs of the spiritual bonds which have their origin in faith and duty. The nearest and dearest of those connexions which centre in home, the scene of love and joy is yet not so precious, says Jesus, as the mutual attraction of hearts which have acknowledged the influences of my Gospel, reconciling and binding them to the Father. They are the truest friends, who help us to God's will. Those are the most sacred and most enduring sympathies, which are entwined around the same stock of piety ; even as vines of different names, growing along the same support, stretch forth their tendrils to one another, and are woven into inseparable union.

The sentiment of this declaration is liable to no charge of extravagance. It is sustained by the analogies of the very home which it may at first seem to undervalue. Strong and tender as are the ties of kindred, it is the living together, the sharing of the same lot, the participation in common cares and labors, trials and pleasures, that binds those under the same roof together with the invisible chains of love. They become endeared to one another through the consciousness of being acted upon by the same influences, which, like electric wires, convey common emotions to their hearts. We may trace this law of sympathy still farther. In the same family we find intimacies and friendships growing up out of similarity of taste or occupation. The heart is not content with natural and

instinctive attachments. It selects the objects of its confidence. There is for every one of the household a more sacred shrine of love within the sanctuary of home. The same principle is illustrated by what we see beyond the domestic circle. Most of the intimacies of life grow out of participation in the same experience. Who understand one another best? Or who have the most thoughts and feelings in common? They, unquestionably, who are engaged in the same employments. Even professional sympathies are often found to be stronger than the attachments of kindred. Similarity of taste and employment is everywhere a ground of friendly union.

It is then according to the analogies of our domestic and social life that religion should produce friendship and union, since it begets similarity of taste, and imposes similar employment of the mind and heart, if not of the hands, upon those who rejoice in its control. And is there not enough in religion to afford a ground of sympathy and union? Look at the objects which it presents to the heart, or the engagements to which it concentrates the life. God and Christ, duty and progress, heaven and immortality — what subjects of interest are these! The truths of revelation, the obligations of love to God and man, the moral meaning of life, the discipline of events, the responsibilities and the privileges, the trials and the joys, the hopes and the fears of the religious life, what a field for the sympathies to range over do these afford! The greatness and the goodness of God, the character and the cross of Christ, the sinfulness and the salvation of man, the wants and the ways of the soul, the condition and the regeneration of society, what topics for common inquiry and common interest! How must hearts be drawn together,

that are conscious of like infirmities, perils and aspirations ! How must souls meet and mingle in the offices of devotion, in the exercises of charity, in the contemplations of faith ! If the circumstances of an earthly residence produce reciprocal confidence or reliance, how much more the experience of a heavenly state begun and cherished amidst the circumstances of an outward and transient existence ! If similarity of tastes or pursuits in worldly matters entices hearts into mutual love, with how much more justice should we expect that they who entertain similar convictions respecting the immortal interests of man, and who are penetrated by the thought of an infinite universe to which they belong, under the guardianship and government of a Perfect Being, should be attracted and bound to each other ! Is not religion, with its Divine influences, its blessed experiences, and its precious promises, a proper—and the most proper, most solid and permanent—bond of connexion ? Undeniably it is. True relationship runs in the line of spiritual kindred. They who are of the same “household of faith” and “heirs together of the grace of eternal life,” are brethren—nearer than brothers by birth. Nay, they are brothers by a higher than the natural birth ; for they are “born again,” having become “new creatures” through Christ Jesus, and so made partakers of the same Divine life, which flows through him from God, and returns through him to God again. Yes, true relationship is that of the spirit. The children of God are the real brethren. The ties of blood, the sympathies of home, the attachments of mortal condition, lose their strength and their value before the moral unions which faith cements. The Christian can say, after his Master’s example, “Whosoever shall do the will of my

Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.”

Whosoever shall render a filial obedience and maintain practical piety, he belongs to the kindred of Christ. What a vast family is this! and who are they that compose it? The good, of every age and condition; the pure and the humble, of every Church; the believing and the faithful, who, under whatever name, are “pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;” the apostles who followed the steps of the great Master, and the confessors who sealed their faith with their blood; the servants of God who have gone about doing good, and the meek who in the patience of humility and amidst the sufferings of disease have possessed their souls, till the day of deliverance came, and they exchanged earthly trial for heavenly joy; they of whom we have read, while our hearts beat with admiration, and we were solicited by their example to consecrate ourselves to high and holy endeavor; and they whom we have known in their work of love and life of faith, and whose departure, when they left us, we felt had made the world poorer; and those who now stand in their various offices around us, walking before God in the integrity of their souls and instructing us by the heavenly character of their lives; — all these belong to that kindred which Jesus has described in the words we have quoted. And if we also belong to it, then are they also our spiritual relatives. What an honorable relationship! What a kindred this, reaching over many lands and embracing two worlds!

Nor do those whom we have enumerated constitute its whole extent, or glory; for Jesus is himself included within its circuit, and of all these kindred souls in heaven

and on earth God is willing to be called the Father. This is the true relationship of love and safety, which neither life nor death has power to dissolve. Behold here a nobler lineage than was ever traced by genealogist or herald. God, Christ, and all pure and happy spirits calling the obedient Christian their child and brother.

AUTHORITATIVE CREEDS.

BY REV. H. GILES.

SUCH creeds disqualify the mind for the pursuit of truth, they generate mental apathy and mental dependence, and this is fatal in the very outset. To a spirit of inquiry there is needed an impulsive intellectual activity, and to this activity there is needed a desire for the thing to be attained, and a sense of its importance. There is no labor without motive; and if in religious belief, the creed has decided before-hand all that is necessary for my salvation, I have no necessity to take any more trouble in the matter. If I am to rest on authority at last, it is just as well for me to be satisfied with it at first;—if after toilsome inquiry, at the peril of my soul's eternal peace, the dogmas of the creed are those to which my conclusions must return, I had better be at once content;—if I must believe as the Church believes, if I must believe as the creed says I should believe, if I must believe as the priest declares my hope of heaven requires, if after criticism and research, long and patient, I must arrive at but one exposition of the Bible, it is but wisdom to spare myself from such a pressure of useless labor. But indolence

in this case is not merely allowable, it is, in fact, the safest. The incitements to mental labor are analagous to those to any other sort of labor ; it is that one shall be the richer and the better for it, and that what he acquires he may justly possess. But if by independent inquiry I may become morally poorer and spiritually worse, if I have no right to my own thoughts, and must be despoiled of my convictions, or punished for them, it is exceeding folly to risk the misery and irritation of being torn between my opinion and my creed, conscience forcing me to acquiesce, and reason compelling me to doubt. This view is no supposition ; it is fact. Submission to creeds and churches, is the true cause of that wide spread moral torpor in every country where creeds and churches have dominion. There is nothing so rare as intelligent, independent religious conviction. And how can it be otherwise, when each leans upon his priest, and the priest gives him ready-made opinions, as they were formed a thousand years ago ? There is a general and profound ignorance of the sources of opinion, of the history of opinion, of the philosophy of opinion, and of the Bible, both in its letter and in its spirit. Speak to multitudes of religion, in any broad or liberal sense, and it seems to them as if it were an unknown tongue. To have any chance of attention, you must use terms which creeds have sanctified, — you must address them in traditionary phrases, which have the sectarian or sacerdotal currency. This never could have been, had religion been recommended as a subject of individual and independent study, leaving the mind free, both in its pursuit and its conclusion. That I have stated nothing but what fact justifies, I may appeal to any one who has considered the religious condition of this

country, or of Europe generally, and considered it in every rank of society. I speak not of the Spaniard, who has not yet rid himself from the palsy of the Inquisition, who can go from the prostration of the confessional to scenes of the wildest crime ;— I speak not of the Italian, that compound of profaneness and credulity, of sin and devotion, who can bow before an image, and with the same hand cross himself, by which a minute before he plunged his stiletto in his fellow creature's heart ;— I speak not of the simple peasantry, who Sunday after Sunday walk stately to church or chapel, and know little more than that they went there and came back again ;— I speak not of the fashionable wealthy, who, on this point are commonly as ignorant as the boor, and choose religion as they choose every thing else, as it happens to be the mode ; I pass these by, because it may be said that pleasure and gaiety leave them no time for study ;— but I will refer to multitudes who are esteemed devout and serious Christians, whose minds passively receive the mould of their teachers, and to whom religion never presents itself as a system of various thought and of independent examination. Now, this ignorant apathy has bad effects, which are not merely negative ; and I will allude in a few words to one or two of them. It gives stability to every error and corruption, and holds to them with an obstinacy against which wisdom has no power ; it is the very soil in which priestcraft grows darkest and foulest ; and the hierarchy in any age or country has never risen to its full stature of lordliness, until the people have lain lowest in torpid submission. And in addition to this, there is no uncharitableness so inveterate, there is no bigotry so intolerant, as that which this species of character matures ;

for as it is unable to comprehend an opposite opinion, it is equally inadequate and unwilling to weigh the arguments in its favor, or to estimate the evidence on which it is maintained. Having no conception of independence itself, independence in another appears presumption, if not something worse; and never having imagined that other opinions could possibly be true except its own, to hold any different could only be explained by supposing a want of honesty or a want of grace.

I might dwell upon the fear by which creeds paralyze the faculties of weak and sensitive natures, by which they deprive them of all power for calm and deliberate examination, by the fear of being excluded from their Church, by the fear of being discarded by their friends, by the fear of being cast into hell, above all these, by the fear of losing the favor of God and the friendship of Jesus, and with right and true minds, this is the greatest of all fears. In the midst of so many terrors, it is too much to expect that our weak humanity could be calm,—that it could look with unmoved heart at the appalling indications of so many and dire threatenings. It is like examining a man on the terms of his faith, while the officials of persecution are arranging the faggots or putting screws in the rack.

MORAL EVIL is the only thing in God's creation of which it is decreed that the more we are familiar with it, the less shall we know of it. — *J. Martineau.*

SPECULATIVE UNIFORMITY.

BY REV. G. PUTNAM, D.D.

ALL the evils of ecclesiastical division, all that exhibits Christendom to men and angels as a divided and distracted community, maintaining hundreds of hostile and irreconcilable religions under the name of a common Master, all arises from the fact, that men make the essence of Christianity to consist in *speculative* doctrines and not in *moral* ones, and accordingly make the unity of the church to consist in a speculative uniformity which is needless and impossible, and not in the uniform reception of those moral truths which are fully revealed and are not differed about. Each individual Christian or sect sets down a point of meeting, where it is impossible to meet, and makes Christianity consist in meeting there, and feels and acts as if such meeting were essential. There are of course a thousand such points, and hence a real division, and all the jarrings and jealousies and strifes, deadly and interminable, which have so rent and distracted the church, that should be one in the bonds of love and peace. The evil arises not at all from the speculative diversities that do and must prevail, but from men's regarding those diversities as violations of the oneness of Christianity. Neither does the evil consist in what we suppose to be the speculative errors of any system of Christian doctrine, as such; but it arises from the idea that that one system, or any other particular system, is the one indivisible and essential Christianity, and from the dispositions, principles, and measures which necessarily accompany that false idea.

We will endeavor to illustrate these remarks by applying them to the case of one or two Christian sects.

Take the Roman Catholic Church for example. It is not its doctrinal system, as such, that is to be most lamented. We may, indeed, think that that spiritual condition which gave rise to, and which is most favorable to the continuance of such a system, is not the highest and most desirable for man; but, seeing that that condition has existed and does exist, the existence of the doctrinal system is not to be mourned for. The evil lies not in the doctrines. They have been the means, and, under the circumstances, probably the necessary means of bringing multitudes to true Christianity, the Christian character. We think we see much error in this system; we could not adopt it; it would not help us in the attainment of true Christianity. But there are a great many minds in such a state of intelligence, or so cast and formed, by constitution or circumstances, that it is just what is needed to christianize them. The evil all lies in the extraneous parts of the system. The enormities which we deprecate proceed from the idea that the moral doctrines which the system may accompany, and the Christian character which it may produce, are not Christianity, but that the doctrinal system itself is the one essential Christianity, and that conformity to it is the test of Christianity. This idea is the very corner-stone of the Romish constitution. It pervades the whole organization. It is an avowed principle, and appears in every measure of church policy. And this principle, that there must be uniformity of faith, and that one system is the single standard of such uniformity, and that all departure is damnable heresy, is the root of all the evil. It is this bad principle that started

and established the idea that the bishop of Rome has an apostolic commission, and that he, aided by his councils, is the supreme spiritual legislator of the world, competent to decree, and authorized to enforce, that uniformity. It is this principle that has afforded that church a reason for its vast secular aggrandizement, thus leading the way to those corruptions of a pecuniary and political nature, which have brought such scandal upon the name of Christ. It is upon this principle that the Scriptures have been wrested from the hands of men, lest notions should be derived from them inconsistent with Christianity, that is, with the Romish system, notions that would disturb this essential uniformity. It is this principle that has built inquisitions, kindled fires, and persecuted and murdered good men. It is this principle that has made Catholic countries peculiarly prolific in infidelity and irreligion. Here is the worst consequence. It has excluded and denounced every other system. It has striven by all means to keep all minds fast bound down to this one. It has not permitted those minds that never could, or had ceased to be able to embrace that system and be influenced and christianized by it, — it has not permitted them to seek and adopt for themselves a different system, with which they might have an affinity, in which they might have a belief, and the peace and sanctifying influence of believing. Accordingly such minds have had no faith and no Christian influence, and hence infidelity and irreligion. The history of France at the time of the first Revolution, when she voted herself a nation of atheists, illustrates this evil, the process and extent of it. And whatsoever else we might find to deplore in Popery, it has its origin in this same fundamental principle, that there must be a

uniformity of belief, and that Popery is of course the standard.

It is the same with Calvinism, either as it existed in the mind of Calvin himself, or under any of its modern modifications. There are many who think there is speculative error in that system. It is not the system that they can believe. But that is no objection to Calvinism. There are other minds, as honest and docile as theirs, that can and do receive it, and do arrive at Christianity through it. It may seem to us an unreasonable system; but there are minds with which it has an affinity, with which it can coalesce, minds that are in a state to need this very system. We, with our turn and habits of mind, cannot know what is the process of this assimilation, what is precisely the state of the soul in receiving this system; and it is not necessary for us to know. But we do know, if we know any thing about it, that multitudes of souls which do receive it, do somehow receive the power of religion along with it, receive all that the soul needs, moral truth, and moral strength, piety, virtue, peace, and a hope full of God and immortality. There may be much error in the system, but it contains so much of truth, or is so apprehended by certain minds, as to make them all that they need to be, religious. The evil is not in Calvinism as a system of theological opinions. All the evil that we associate with that system arises from the idea, that there must be a speculative uniformity throughout the church, of which Calvinism is of course the standard — an idea that has become so extensively incorporated with that system as to be nearly identified with it. It is this idea, with all the bitter uncharitableness and the unholy means and measures that frequently proceed

from it, that constitutes the unchristian part of the system.

We have not space to speak of other systems in the same connexion. But, in passing over them without notice, we do not mean to acquit them of the same charge. And whenever and wherever this idea of uniformity of speculative belief, constituting Christianity, has become deeply incorporated with any doctrinal system, it has, so far, turned that system from its proper course, and its benign influence of saving and blessing the souls that could sympathize with it, and made it a monster of absurdity and mischief. It has often given a fiendish aspect to systems otherwise good. It has tracked their course, sometimes with blood and fire, and always with the worst of passions and the worst of consequences. It is this idea that has so often turned Christian hearts into stone. It has frozen up the fountains of Christian love and even of the natural affections. It has armed human tongues with the stings of vipers. It has caused the press to send out rivers of wormwood. It has changed the language of the pulpit from the message of peace and good will into the hoarse and grating tones of malice. It disturbs the quiet of communities. It alienates neighbors and near friends. It holds up holy and Christian men to scorn. It divides Christ, and divides his Church. It is the demand for speculative uniformity that leads to all this; and systems of faith that might, that do, when this demand is kept out of view, lead humble and believing souls to Christ, and form them to holiness and fit them for heaven, are thus perverted to pernicious ends. The true ground of uniformity is overlooked, and a kind of uniformity is demanded, which is as impossible, as it is unevangelical

and unnecessary. It is not the variety of systems, but the demand made and acted upon that there should be but one system, and that there is no Christianity but in conformity to that.

It may, perhaps, be inferred from the tenor of our remarks, that we would have all systems of doctrine regarded as equally true, and that none can have grounds of special confidence in his own opinions. But not so. All the various systems that are believed are to be regarded as so many forms or modifications of truth. All doubtless are the vehicles of much and the most important truth, and probably none of them contains the whole,—pure, unmixed truth. It is not to be expected, that we can in this life attain to the whole truth, and the pure truth, on such subjects—subjects relating to the infinite God and the world of spirits. We embrace such doctrines, and only such, as we think we find communicated in the gospel. And we have confidence in the truth of our opinions, because we cannot help having confidence in our own intelligence and discernment, and in the convictions of our own understanding. From the very nature of belief, we cannot help regarding our own opinions as the truth and other systems as erroneous so far as they differ from ours. We cannot help having more confidence in our own minds than in those of others who differ from us. At the same time, we are to consider how possible and how necessary it is for minds, different cast and trained, to view the same general truth under somewhat different aspects, and to think they find reasons for believing some things which we, with our modes of judging, do not find to be revealed. We do not, on this account, have less confidence in what we believe to be revealed, nor have

others, nor should they have, less confidence on account of our dissenting.

Thus God, in his adorable wisdom, has adapted his revelation to the various spiritual wants, and circumstances of his children. All can take the needful truth which is there, and so mould and modify it, that their minds can fasten upon it, and coalesce with it and feel its power. All systems, thus deduced, contain the vital spark, the redeeming and sanctifying principle, which was meant to be imparted. Yes, they are all good for the minds that embrace them in the state in which they embrace them, and if they embrace them freely and in good faith, they all give man a Christian faith. They all raise the mind to a revealed God, and extend its views to a revealed eternity. They all bring the soul into believing communion with the blessed Jesus. They all present his image of perfect goodness, his spirit, his example, seeking a place in the hearts of men. They are all fitted to open the soul and prepare it for the indwelling and effectual working of the Holy Spirit. They all can lead their respective adherents to the same point, to the one Christianity, the one Christ, the one consummation, even the favor and acceptance of God. They are all so many somewhat differing scaffoldings, built up on the pillars of faith around the one temple of truth and holiness; and if we would all be content to stand upon our own, and cease to be offended with those of our brethren, and look together towards the one temple, and work together in building it up, and worship together the one spirit that dwells therein, then God's will would be done, and the followers of Christ would be one, and his kingdom would be divided no more on earth.

THE MORAL PRINCIPLE OF THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT.

BY THE LATE HENRY WARE, JUN., D.D.

"Wherefore, if meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend."—1 Cor. VIII. 13.

THERE is something admirable in the disinterestedness of spirit which dictated this declaration.

It is the entire abandonment of selfish considerations for the sake of others' good. It in this respect exemplifies the meaning of our Lord's precept, *Love thy neighbor as thyself*. It is the application of the principle elsewhere expressed by Paul in various forms:—*Let no man seek his own, but every man another's good. In honor preferring one another. No man liveth for himself.*

The question alluded to was one of peculiar interest at that time, when the new converts to Christianity had but just left their old religions, and were still connected with relatives, friends, and neighbors, who remained attached to idolatrous worship. Mingling with them in the intercourse of common life, it would not be easy to avoid contact with matters of religious form, and involving questions of religious obligation. For example, if a friend invited them to an entertainment, and set before them meat which had been offered to an idol,—what should they do? Might they, as Christians, innocently partake of it? It was plainly a question of great practical interest. The Corinthians, asked advice of the Apostle respecting it. Paul, in reply, lays down the principle, that an act is to be judged of by its effect, not on themselves alone, but on others also. If they partake of the meat with the clear understanding that there is no such thing in existence as a false god, then they may do it innocently; it is no act

of idolatry; it is no dereliction of their Christian principle. But all are not sufficiently enlightened to do this; from custom or some other cause they still have a regard for the idol, and eat it, "as a thing offered to an idol." In so doing they sin. Such persons, therefore, must refrain. Here then, are two classes; the enlightened and strong, who can eat without sin, — the unenlightened and weak, who cannot eat without sinning. But ought there to be two practices in the Church, — some of the brethren frequenting the idolatrous festival, and some avoiding it? This would hardly do; because it would plainly be exposing the weaker brethren to an unnecessary temptation. They could not well understand why others should be permitted this indulgence, and themselves be forbidden; and thus, emboldened by their example, they would take the indulgence and commit sin. Accordingly, the Apostle advises that, in all brotherly love and Christian consistency, the strong should deny themselves this gratification, for the sake of the weak. His expression is very clear. "For if any man see thee who hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, will not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat what is offered to the idol; and so, through thy knowledge, thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? When ye thus sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend."

The occasions for displaying the same generous disregard of selfish considerations, for the benefit of others, frequently occur; and the instances of such disinterestedness are not so rare in the Christian world as to be mat-

ters of wonder. But perhaps never, until the present age, has this principle been made the motto of a great action of philanthropy; never before did thousands unite together for the moral benefit of their fellow-men by means of an express abridgement of their own liberty of indulgence. And, after all that has been pointed out as distinguishing this remarkable period, perhaps nothing is more worthy of being regarded as its distinction, in a moral point of view, than this:—that multitudes have abandoned,—not for a time, but for life,—a customary, innocent, moderate, gratification—which did them personally no harm, and apparently threatened them no harm,—on the single ground that others abused it to harm,—that “this liberty of theirs was a stumbling block to the weak.” In this way, an attempt has been made to begin the removal of a great mass of crime and wretchedness; the removal of which once seemed so hopeless, that the boldest enthusiast hardly dared to dream of it; which had so entrenched itself in the passions of men, in their habits, in their laws, in their interests, that it laughed defiance on all opposition. Against that evil this principle of disinterestedness has been brought to bear, and the evil has begun to give way. An illustrious exemplification of the strength there is in Christian affection; and the appeal to the nobler impulses of human nature.

The words cited express the principle on which this action has proceeded, and are at once its authority and justification. The unhappy class of sinners by intemperate excess had become alarmingly large. It seemed as if there were no hope of retrieving the lost, or of checking the progress of others to the same ruin. But it would not do to let the plague rage without an effort to stay it.

First therefore was tried the power of a moral engagement; the exposed were persuaded to pledge themselves to entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirits. This proved an effective method, and a visible change for the better began to take place. But it soon became evident that the friends of the cause were now divided into two classes — precisely like the two already referred to among the Corinthians; one consisting of the strong, who could partake moderately and remain temperate; the other of the weak, who, could not touch without excess. The latter gave up their liberty; they deprived themselves of the right to use at all what they were so prone to abuse. But this came to be felt as an unreasonable and galling distinction; and until it should be removed, it was plain no further progress could be made. What then should be done? Precisely what the Apostle recommended to the Corinthians. This division between the strong and the weak should cease: the strong should surrender their position of superiority; all should come under the same obligation; and forthwith the magnanimous pledge was taken — If our moderate use of ardent spirit cause our brethren to offend, we shall taste no more while the world stands, least we cause our brethren to offend.

Under this disinterested action, the reform went prosperously on for a time. But it was by and by apparent, that there still remained an inconsistency in practice, and that a stumbling-block still lay in the way of many. "You counsel us," was the language, "wholly to abandon this indulgence, — (which we were early taught to regard as almost a necessary,) — and you fortify your counsel by abandoning it yourselves. But to most of you that is evidently a very unmeaning act. You in reality give up

nothing: you retain all that you care for,— wine and other choice liquors. *We* too would give up our inferior drinks, if we could afford to supply ourselves with yours: but as it is, we think your giving a pledge is little better than mockery: and we are not to be cajoled by any such inconsistent pretences.”

Such was the language. It was thought by some to be unreasonable, idle, impertinent, they would not listen to it, and went on as before, wondering at the want of self-denial in the pcor, but refusing to aid them by example: astonished that they would thus wilfully stand in their own light and insist on ruining themselves, because of the inconsistency of their neighbours.

Others however, felt the inconsistency that was pointed out. To be sure, they said, the complaint in its whole extent is rather extravagant and unreasonable: and it shows great weakness in men to insist on injuring themselves for such a cause: but then it is our business as Christians to be considerate towards the weak, and do what we can to strengthen them. Now, it is evident that nothing can be done for them so long as this state of things lasts: but something must be done for them: this stumbling-block must be removed.

And so — leaving all selfish considerations, taking council only of the Christian obligation to others, — they forthwith made application once more of the principle of the Apostle, and pledged themselves to abide by it. If our partaking of wine cause our brethren to offend, we will drink no more wine while the world stands, least we cause our brethren to offend. It is not a small portion of the community that have entered into this Apostolic agreement. It is not a small effect that has been produced by it.

NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

WE cannot be truly armed — we cannot be prepared to conquer, unless we pray. Many a soul, full of confidence, by neglecting this, has been overcome. The soul must seek its strength in God ; it must look to the infinite ; it must pant for the absolute good. Nothing short of this is, or can be, a permanent stay. Every human prop will crumble. All earthly foundations are as dust. We must drink in divine influences from on high ; we must have Christ formed within us, and become partakers of the divine nature, or our virtues are as wells without water, or shadows without substance.

Yet are there not those who are satisfied with a merely outward life, — who feel that if not guilty of scandalous sins they are acceptable Christians ? — that the height of Christianity is temperance in diet, or, at most, the mechanical observance of certain forms and ordinances ? Alas, that men should ever so grossly mistake the nature of religion ! As if virtue were an outside appendage, or could be truly ours unless rooted in the soul : as if religion were not indeed the very essence of life in the inward spirit, an immediate fellowship with God, by spiritual intercourse between our spirits and his.

If there is one moment more holy to a Christian than another, it is when in the act of prayer. Then he makes his nearest approach to the Divine being ; then he communes with God, and God with him ; then come rays of light from the central sun, streams of living water from the inexhaustible Fountain, revelations of wisdom from the all-Perfect, additions of strength from the great Jehovah. The same God who guided Moses, will guide

us; the same God who inspired the Apostles, will kindle in us a living fire, and lead us unto himself.

Let us, then, pray. Not be satisfied with externals, or with any present attainment, but mount and soar to the Supreme God; hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we may continually press on with ardent and spiritual longings, and be filled from on high. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." They shall have a surer witness of the Divine favor than if they saw visions of heavenly splendor, or heard voices of angelic sweetness whispering peace, for the kingdom of truth will be within them. Yea, in the sublime language of scripture, God himself will dwell in their souls.

Ask, says Jesus, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. And above all, he prayed himself. He who was the Head of the Church, and the Light of the world, and the Lord of glory, was an earnest lover of prayer.

"Cold mountains, and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervour of *his* prayer;
The desert his temptations knew,
His conflict, and his victory too."

Often, after his severe labours, would he leave the city of Jerusalem, and go out to pray on the Mount of Olives. O, sublime scene! The Deliverer of the world, the Son of God, the Highest on earth, kneeling before a Higher in Heaven!

Do we feel, as deeply as we should, the importance of prayer? Is it the time we thus spend a delight to our souls? Do we enter upon this act with that lively interest, that deep inward earnestness, which becomes us as creatures of God? Do we frequently find ourselves in devotion, or are we negligent and cold?

How is it with thee? Does thy soul pant after God? Does it rouse up all its energies, and pour itself forth with intenseness of feeling? Do the divine perfections so fill thy mind, as often to make thee gaze upward with profoundest adoration? Is it joyful and invigorating to thee, to commune with the Father of Spirits?

If it is so, then it is well with thee, and thy soul is open to the influences of heaven and within thee the divine light will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

But if thou art cold and neglectful, then it is not well. However moral thy general character, — however blameless to the outward eye, thy daily transactions, — however much thou mayest be admired by society or caressed by friends, — something is wanting, and something of vital importance.

Unless Reason and Revelation are utterly false, — unless Christ, and the Apostles, and devout men of all ages, have been deluded, — however good we may be in outward things, if we love not prayer with a deep and soul-stirring love, something is wanting; and, my friend, I implore thee seriously to weigh this matter; look into thy soul, and, as in the presence of Almighty God, reflect upon these words — “WATCH AND PRAY.” — *Unitarian Tract.*

SELF-RULE. — The most precious of all possessions, is power over ourselves; power to withstand trial, to bear suffering, to front danger; power over pleasure and pain; power to follow our convictions, however resisted by menace and scorn; the power of calm reliance in scenes of darkness and storms.