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SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE WAR,  
PRESENTED IN A DISCOURSE PREACHED IN THE UNITARIAN  
CHURCH, MONTREAL, ON THE 18TH APRIL, 1855, BEING  
THE DAY APPOINTED BY ROYAL PROCLAMATION, AS A DAY  
OF PUBLIC WORSHIP THROUGHOUT CANADA, ON ACCOUNT  
OF THE WAR.

BY REV. J. CORDNER.

“A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction.”

JER. L. 22.

IN our days a sound of battle in one land is a sound of battle in all lands. The methods of communication between the various civilized countries are so rapid and complete, that any important blow struck in one of them is immediately heard every where. A message flying over the telegraph wire can now be conveyed from one distant European capital to another in a few hours, where, within the memory of living men, it formerly took almost as many weeks. And the word of peace or war, of joy or sorrow, can cleave the Atlantic from shore to shore in a few days. Besides the marvels of the ordinary printing press, we have the wonderful popularisation of the

graphic arts, through which the scenes that most interest the world are visibly transported elsewhere and to another hemisphere, suspended in the printshops, laid on our tables, and rendered familiar to every man, woman, and child. Canada is far from the Crimea, considered geographically, but the leading points of the Crimea are familiar to Canadian eyes. We can see the heights of the Alma scaled by the allied troops, and to multitudes of persons in our country those heights are more familiar to-day than the heights of Quebec, which rise from the bank of our own noble river. We can see that awful and disastrous British charge at Balaklava, where, alas, "some one" had so sadly "blundered," and we can hear the French General's exclamation, "C'est magnifique!" We can see the "redoubts" and the "parallels" of the besieging army, and the strong walls and defiant forts of Sebastopol. And we can almost hear the noise of the mighty cannon and the dreadful crash of their shot and shell. Nay more, such is the connection which subsists between the various nations, by the multiplied agencies of our present commercial civilization, that the blow of battle struck in one land is not only heard, but felt, in other lands. A war on the shores of the Euxine is soon felt in the "funds" on the banks of the Seine and the Thames. And a strain put on mercantile resources there is speedily felt on this side of the Atlantic,—in New York and Boston—in Wall Street and State Street. It is felt in our own streets and throughout our own country. The war takes away our mail steamships, and somewhat halts the progress of our Grand Trunk Railway.

"A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction." We have heard it now for more than a year.

Blood has flowed. Treasure has been lavished. There has been human suffering endured to an extent hardly paralleled in our times. "Every battle of the warrior," saith the prophet, "is with garments rolled in blood." Alma, Balaklava, and Inkerman, in our day, have been added to the long list of witnesses. After a lengthened season of peace (with but little general war to disturb it), during which the arts of peace have made prodigious advancement, the leading powers of Europe have become involved in a war of wider reach, and graver consequences, than any war since the career of Bonaparte. "The sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war" was heard coming across the Atlantic, faint at first, but gradually growing stronger and more strong, until it became terrible and appalling. Can we hear it and remain indifferent? If the ancient Hebrew was "pained at his very heart," and could not keep silent, because he heard the alarm of war; surely we who have received the teaching of the Lord's Christ — the Prince of Peace — cannot listen with indifference, or contemplate such bloody strife and complicated suffering, without pain and sorrow. We have heard of ships destroyed by shot and flame while floating in the calm waters — hundreds and thousands of men, fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, sinking together in one vast watery tomb, — fields of carnage, the sweeping ravages of disease, the accumulated miseries of hunger, cold, and destitution, under a foreign and unpropitious sky. These are the images associated with this war which rise up before the mind, and what mind with any spark of humanity, I will not say Christianity in it, can look upon them otherwise than with sorrow and pain? Do we enquire into the moving cause of this sound of alarm which calls up all

these images of horror, misery, and death? O, speak not thereof, for Christian heads should be hidden in shame at the recital. You will remember how it was said at first, and in the highest quarters, that the conflicting interests of the Greek and Latin Churches at Jerusalem was the moving cause of this strife. You will remember how, in high official correspondence, it was stated that the Russian became highly incensed because the Turk seemed willing to allow the Latin Church to have a lamp and a cupboard in the tomb of the Virgin. We all know, however, that this miserable conflict of Church interests was but the ostensible cause. The real cause was vulgar human ambition — vulgar human ambition, that moving cause of so much evil in our world. “From whence come wars and fightings among you?” asks the Christian Apostle, “come they not hence even of your own lusts?” The lust for power, and for increased possessions, was the cause of this war. The ambition of Louis Napoleon gave it the first start. Eager to strengthen his newly acquired position as Emperor of the French, he desired to ingratiate himself with the hierarchy of the Roman Church, and to this end he interfered at the Porte on behalf of certain Church privileges at the Holy Places of Jerusalem. The ambition of the Russian Czar was only waiting for some such pretext to make a fresh move for the attainment of its secret designs, and so has pushed the matter to its present posture. Russia desired the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, in order to extend her own vast territory, and strengthen and augment her national position and consideration. Russia is the Arch-Criminal in this war. Its proper origin lies in her cherished desire for territorial aggrandisement by plundering from her weaker neigh-

bers. She has made religion a pretext to start from. Thus showing us that now, as in times past, the sacred name which was given to bless and save men, has been made a stepping stone to purposes the most base, and a pretence to cover the most vile and selfish ends. Anti-Christ would still disguise himself as the Living and the True.

This war, which has been sounding in our ears for some time past, has a twofold claim on public attention in Canada, since it not only involves wide-spread European interests, which may be said to be general human interests, but also involves directly and immediately the interests of our mother country in particular. Great Britain is one of the high contending parties. As the patron and protector of the universal interests of man — freedom and civilization — she avows that she has engaged in this contest ; and we are “ earnestly exhorted ” as loving subjects, by royal proclamation, to give this day a special observance on account of this war. Hence the closed stores and warehouses in our city to-day, and the open churches. Here are the words of the Proclamation, as testified and promulgated, by his Excellency the Governor General :—

“ Know ye, that taking into our most serious consideration the great struggle in which we are now engaged for the defence of the liberties of our people and of the civilized nations of Europe, and considering the propriety of setting apart a day to be observed throughout our said Province as a day of humiliation and solemn prayer to Almighty God, for the success of our arms in the present war, and for the speedy attainment of a favorable and lasting peace, we have thought fit, by the advice of our Executive Council for our said Province, to issue this our

Proclamation appointing, and we do hereby appoint Wednesday, the eighteenth day of April next, to be observed throughout our said Province as a day of General Fast and Humiliation and of Prayer to Almighty God for the success of our arms in the said war. And we do hereby earnestly exhort all our loving subjects in our said Province reverentially and devoutly to observe the same as a day of general fast, humiliation and prayer."

We accept the exhortation of our gracious Sovereign, and here meet for the solemn purposes of prayer and meditation. I know not whether anything more than this be really intended by the proclamation; for we are all aware how long the antiquated forms of words cling to state documents after the progress of events has shaken their original and proper meaning out of them. The letter of the proclamation exhorts us to "fast." If by this is really meant an abstinence from our usual daily food, I must say that, for my own part, I cannot yield to the exhortation, and shall not practise any such abstinence. The life of our religion is well nigh burdened to death in our day by shams and hypocrisies of various sorts, and if my humble voice could be heard in high places, it would remind our rulers to have a care lest, in conforming their documents too closely to antiquated formulas, they may not be helping to perpetuate in our nation the iniquity of religious insincerity.\* If by the exhortation to "humi-

\* The preacher has here assumed that fasting in the ordinary dictionary sense was not generally practised — in fact, was hardly intended — on the day appointed for the "fast." In this assumption he may be wrong; but it was based on the idea that the practice of fasting, if not all real faith in it, had departed almost wholly from all classes of the people. Very few Protestants even pretend to observe it, and as for the Catholics, their practice commonly amounts to little more than a variation of diet, or change of cookery. Under such circumstances, if the Proclamation had omitted mention of such an observance, would it not have been a more sincere document, and therefore more truly religious in its conception and purpose?

liation," be meant that we, the people of Canada, are to humiliate ourselves on account of any culpable connection which we have had with this war — on account of any sin of ours as causing it, or prolonging its evils, — here, again, I must say that I cannot yield to the exhortation. I hope I should not be unwilling to confess it, if it were so, but I am bound to say that I do not consider myself responsible in any way, by any sin of mine, for the calamities in the Crimea. While, therefore, I confess and proclaim, with all the solemnity which befits this place and this hour, the necessity of humiliation for the daily sins of my life, and affirm, as one of the gravest convictions of my soul, that without such personal humiliation for personal sin, there can be no spiritual renewal, no spiritual elevation, no spiritual safety, I decline at once, and shall not pretend, to humiliate myself, especially, on account of the present war. The posture of national humiliation, whereby a Supreme Ruling Power is acknowledged, is, indeed, eminently fitting in a season of national calamity, but we cannot have the substance of national humiliation, as distinct from the mere form thereof, without a thorough and searching process of personal humiliation. A thorough process of personal humiliation brings repentance, and a proper repentance "brings forth works meet for repentance." This is the divinely ordained method through which individuals and nations are renewed and strengthened. As for the exhortation to "solemn prayer to Almighty God," I accept it in all its solemn significance. I believe that Britain stands armed to-day on behalf of human liberty and a progressive civilization. My sympathies are still for this cause. I can see nothing but what is disastrous to it in a Russian triumph. I

pray for the success of our country as against the absolutism, and barbarism, and rapacity, which Russia represents. I pray more deeply than my words can express "for the speedy attainment of a favorable and lasting peace."

When a great war like the present one is sounding through the world, it is fit that we should have a day set apart in this way, specially to think of it. War is a terrible evil. It has been well said to include the sum of all evils, so long as it lasts. It is fit and proper that we should pause for a time in the midst of our busy working and trading life, and reflect upon the awful aspects of this scourge of humanity. There may be worse calamities than war, but it would not be easy to name them. There may be worse calamities than war — calamities made permanent. And I am bound to the belief that the invasion of the European nations by a rapacious and unscrupulous power like Russia, and the trampling down of national barriers by the iron hoof of a semi-barbarous absolutism, upheld by sword and musket, crushing freedom of thought and all generous aspiration among the masses of the people, would bring calamities more to be dreaded, because more likely to be permanent, than even the present calamities of this struggle. If I were not bound to this belief after mature reflection, I should say "peace at any price," and be ready to permit the new Czar to assemble his court next winter at Constantinople, rather than have the armies in hostile array for a day longer. But looking at the antecedents of Russia — looking at her fixed policy for the last century and a half, I could not say so without feeling that I was laying the foundation of future, and more wide-spread, and more permanent calamities, than even those of the Crimea. Russia is the

colossal and aggressive power of Europe; and it is not likely, so far as we can see, that the Europe of the future will be in any better position emphatically to assert the Right against her Wrong than the Europe of the present. Therefore the task ought not to be left for her, if it can be met and accomplished now. Some thoughtful men confidently predict that the Slavie races are destined to be the dominant races in the future of Europe. Possibly they are, but let us hope that they will not be dominant beyond their present limits until they have gained a great deal in their ideas of human rights and civilization.

War, I repeat, is a terrible evil — a calamity that, so long as it lasts, comprehends all other calamities. Let us look at it fairly, and call all men to look at it. We need not now look at its holiday side, as seen in the glitter of a showy review. Its working-day side has been many times presented to us of late. This has shown us victory and no-victory. It has shown us thousands of men disabled and dying through destitution and disease. It has shown us hospitals not fit to be spoken of. It has shown us a camp as cold and cheerless as ever eye rested on. It has shown us the troops of the wealthiest nation in the world lying down to sicken, and starve, and die, through lack of the first necessities of life. Speaking after the manner of the warrior, it has shown us, also, some brilliant achievement. But think how all such brilliancy of victory is smeared with human blood, and made dim with human tears. We read in the Bible of the signal of victory being turned into a signal of mourning, when it was found that the king's son had fallen in the strife. But not only in the royal house, but in the obscurer homes of Israel did fathers mourn the loss of sons in that victory,

and the eyes of mothers, wives, and sisters, were filled with tears for those who fell on the battle field. And the grief of these was deep and poignant as that of him who wore the royal crown. Nature is no step-mother in her gifts of affection. No brilliant victory gained by blood ever came without bringing with it bitter mourning. For it makes desolate many hearths and homes, and plants an anguish in the soul of the bereaved too deep and dreadful for utterance. Human life and lacerated affections—these are the prices which have been paid for victories on the battle field from, and long before, the days of David until the present hour. In the fallen soldier's home, whether his standard has been victorious or otherwise, sorrow sets up her reign. Even while the air is rent with the celebration of some "glorious victory"—even while the bells are ringing and the guns are booming in triumph—the widow and the orphan are seeking secrecy and silence to vent their bitter and burning tears.

The experience of the Crimea has taught our mother country some emphatic lessons. It has taught her that soldiering is no such pastime as many persons in times of peace might have supposed. It has shown her that it is work most real, most awful, most disastrous. It has presented fresh and living proof to the eyes of the men of to-day, of the unmitigated horrors of the war system, and of the damage which actual war inflicts on all the proper interests of humanity. Thus it stands an argument and warning against the war-system of the nations. It is to the lasting honor of Great Britain that she did not go hastily into this war. Her cabinet ministers almost exhausted the patience of the nation by their endeavors to secure the safety of Europe without resort to arms. I am

thankful that they showed themselves above that basest and most criminal trick of politicians — the trick, I mean, of involving a nation in war, simply because they find it popular.

Negotiations for peace are now going on at the Vienna Conference. I am almost afraid to hope for any good results therefrom. I desire a peace — a safe peace — and I pray, indeed, that it may be secured there. But I can scarcely even hope that it will. By a safe peace, I mean such an arrangement as will remove the impending cloud of calamity which the well known designs of Russia still hold over the Europe of the future. And to the conditions requisite for this, that power will hardly accede. But while I can scarcely hope in this matter, I certainly shall not despair. There is a higher Power in the universe than the Czar.

Great Britain has had her day of humiliation on account of this war.\* It is not for me to say precisely how

\* The form of Proclamation for the United Kingdom ran thus :—

“VICTORIA R.—We, taking into our most serious consideration the just and necessary war in which we are engaged, and putting our trust in Almighty God that He will graciously bless our arms both by sea and land, have resolved, and do, by and with the advice of our Privy Council, hereby command that a public day of solemn Fast, Humiliation, and Prayer be observed throughout those parts of our United Kingdom called England and Ireland, on Wednesday, the 21st day of March next, that so both we and our people may humble ourselves before Almighty God, in order to obtain pardon of our sins, and in the most devout and solemn manner send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for imploring His blessing and assistance on our arms for the restoration of peace to us and our dominions: And we do strictly charge and command that the said day be reverently and devoutly observed by all our loving subjects in England and Ireland, as they tender the favour of Almighty God, and would avoid His wrath and indignation: And, for the better and more orderly solemnizing the same, we have given directions to the most reverend the archbishops, and the right reverend the bishops of England and Ireland, to compose a form of prayer suitable to this occasion, to be used in all churches, chapels, and places of public worship, and to take care the same be timely dispersed throughout their respective dioceses.”

A comparison of the two forms will show an essential difference between that for the United Kingdom and that for Canada.

the humiliation was understood there, or for what cause it was felt. But this I may affirm: viz., that it was either right or wrong for our mother country to enter on this strife. It did not come into her borders. She went out to meet it. Did she recognise Duty in the act, or did she not? I believe she did, and I believe that her going out to the Crimea was a noble national sacrifice on the altar of national Duty. She entered into solemn covenant, moreover, not to aggrandise herself, be the result what it might. So far, then, as taking part in the war is concerned, I see no reason for humiliation. That costly armament, and that great expedition, which left her shores for distant seas and foreign climes was a national offering on the behalf of the Right as against the Wrong. Viewed in this light, it has moral worth and moral dignity. Viewed in any other light, the whole proceeding was, and must still remain, indefensible. Canada has already connected herself to some extent with that offering by a money vote through her legislature. And if the sacred cause of Right should clearly require the sacrifice on the part of Britain to be prolonged, Canada should not stop with one such offering, nor two, nor ten. If the cause in which our mother country is engaged, be, as I hold it to be, the cause of human freedom and progress, then we ought to sustain her devoutly — by our prayers, generously — by our purse. Thus linking together the inseparable twain — Faith and Works.

Connected with the conduct of this war, however, there may be, and there is, cause for national humiliation. There is no longer any doubt of the gross incompetence of many persons officially connected with it, to meet the demands of the time, and the exigencies of their position.

The long monotonous and mechanical drill of official routine had disabled them from meeting the emergencies of the Crimea like living men. There was food and clothing for a hungry and naked army, but see how often a loop of red tape held it away from them, and left them to suffer. The preferences, evidently awarded to aristocratic and family connexions have exercised a discouraging and disastrous influence on the efficiency of the expedition. Nepotism and selfishness in high places have amounted to virtual treason against the country, and against humanity. These things are sins, and the nation that practises or permits them stands guilty. Here we see ground for humiliation, and let us hope that the penitence and reparation will be speedy and complete.

“A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction.” But the sound comes from a distance — from beyond the Atlantic. On the shores of the Euxine there is war, and all the horrors of war. On the banks of the St. Lawrence we have peace, and all the blessings of peace. The effects of the war, as felt by us, under all the circumstances, need hardly be named. And there is prosperity here as well as peace. I waive account now of any temporary depression. There is a peace which is merely a stagnation, but ours is not such a peace. Unless general report and general appearance greatly deceive us, there has rarely been a time when this country of ours (native country to some, adopted country to others,) gave fairer tokens of promise and progress. Certainly the movements now on foot to develop its resources are far beyond anything attempted before. And it can be no unreasonable supposition to say, that the general advancement of Canada will receive an impulse therefrom beyond any-

thing which it has received before. We have peace, and we are using our time of peace, let us hope, to good purposes for our country and for posterity. After a sober survey of our position, though not enjoying the dignity of national independence, I am bound to the conclusion that there are few lands in the enjoyment of more substantial national benefits. Allied as a province to the leading commercial nation of the world, and the only important European nation that can be regarded as constitutionally free, we are under an undeniably mild political rule, and our growing national importance forbids any attempt at political coercion, or undue interference with our concerns, on the part of the mother country. If we are behind our brothers of the Anglo-Saxon race on the other side of the frontier in some things, we have the blessed privilege of being free from the dark stain of Slavery, and surely this is a great deal. For competence, integrity, energy, and enterprise, there is full scope in our land. Industry is rewarded. Property is secure. Altars are free. Homes are sacred.

The call of God is ever on us to use these great privileges to their highest use. The daily events of his Providence are teaching us momentous lessons. Every devastating war that we hear of invites to solemn meditation, and ought to be taken as a warning against those lusts which the Christian Apostle declares to be, and which we ourselves feel to be, the root of all wars and fightings. The want of harmony in our own members — the lack of peace within — which comes from the passion and sin that we cherish there, calls for humiliation of spirit and penitence of heart. As we see great and powerful nations crippled in their efficiency by official incompetence,

we are called to give sharper attention to the administration of our own affairs, and by strict vigilance to guard against any official favoritism, or political partizanship, which, to serve its own selfish and partial purposes, would place incapable persons in stations of public trust and importance. And as from this land, which daily confesses its history, by its formal recognition of the laws and languages of ancient France and ancient England — as from this land of Canada we look across the sea, and behold our parent lands forgetting Cressy and Agincourt and all former rivalry, to join their standards and strive side by side in the cause of human liberty and civilization, shall we not accept the lesson, and repeat it here on the shores of our own great St. Lawrence? Shall not all former and unseemly rivalries of race and lineage be forgotten, and all hearts and hands unite to build up a nation here, where peace shall find a permanent home, freedom a fixed sanctuary, progress a field wide as its requirements, and civilization a place for the display and enjoyment of its noblest triumphs and choicest gifts, — where the light of our heaven-sent religion shall enlighten all minds, and its warmth warm all hearts, — where men shall feel that they are brothers, and shall have joy, large and full, through willing union in practical loyalty to their Father in heaven? May his name be hallowed and held in all reverence. May his kingdom come — his divine kingdom of truth and peace, and righteousness and love. Speedily may his will be recognised by men everywhere, and done on earth as it is done in heaven.

## UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL.

BY REV. G. E. ELLIS.

THERE are three different methods by which, especially in these inquisitive times, the authority and the purpose of the gospel are investigated; viz., the historical, the philosophical, and the experimental method. It is well to claim and to allow for each of these methods a lawful range of inquiry, and a proper satisfaction in its results, when it is fairly pursued. The gospel must be historically true, and philosophically true, and experimentally true: no believer of it will hesitate to assert and to vindicate all that. So far as the gospel, in its records, is committed to dates in history, to written documents from the inspired pens of those contemporary with its origin, and to monuments of its annals in the lands over which its light first dawned, it must have credentials of no doubtful warrant. So far as the contents of the gospel are justly subject to the questionings of the highest philosophy of life and of truth, they must be proved to be in harmony with God's other oracles; for this is but affirming that the light which shines upon the surface of the earth is of the same essence with the light of which the sun in heaven is composed. And so far as the experience of eighteen centuries will admit of interpretation as having offered confirmation or illustration of the gospel, experience must be shown to attest that an influence from above the earth has been working benignly upon it. It is more important for us to remind ourselves, that either one of these methods for testing the gospel will be perfectly satisfactory in its results. And it is a grateful fact

to be recognized, that every individual can apply some one of those three tests to the gospel. It is not true, as is often alleged, that some persons have no means of assuring themselves by actual trial and inquiry of the gospel evidence. For, if history and philosophy bar out any persons from investigating by their methods, the method of experiment is left free to all. They can ask themselves what the gospel says to them concerning their own nature, condition, and wants, and what its work is upon heart and life; and this method of examination, as it is free to all, is the best and the most conclusive to all.

The gospel satisfies every inquiry which it prompts, except those inquiries which it gives us reasons of its own for not satisfying. It entitles itself a message of love from God, announcing good news to men. It affirms that the original dispensation of it was planned in purpose before even this earth was arranged as a scene of human life. It was not designed to meet an emergency in the divine government, but to be the fulfilment of a divine method. The gospel dates its first spoken word of promise on the earth to the evening of the day on which the first remorse and blight of sin were settling upon two human beings, as they hid themselves in the thickets of Eden. A succession of inspired prophets, the training of a burdensome law, and the preparatory experience of long and dreary ages, were made the means of exciting the hopes and of fitting the hearts of men to receive it. The gospel defines its own purpose under the large words, Redemption and Salvation, — redemption, say some, from "the wrath of God;" redemption, say others, from the "curse of sin;" and only those dispute *angrily* which of these two sentences best expresses the truth, who do not

realize in their inmost consciousness that they are under either of those dread burdens; for the painful sense that we need redemption will never yield to a very ardent interest in a controversy as to which of two Scripture phrases uses the best terms for expressing our bondage.

So we seek to understand the gospel as a divine instrumentality, through doctrines, precepts, counsels, warnings, and promises, — all kindled with the power of inspired truth, — for saving men from every thing from which it is desirable to be saved: from the bondage of the flesh, and all unrighteousness; from the curse of sin; from an evil heart of unbelief, from superstition and despair; from uncheered grief; from a godless life, and from a hopeless death. To understand the gospel, we have to realize, that, in our natural condition, and so far as all the wisdom and resources of the world can help us, we are in that unredeemed and unsanctified state, which, while it still leaves us enough of the furniture of a religious nature to be conscious of want and risk and sin, makes us dependent upon a power above our own for all relief. Prayer and preaching; ordinances and means of grace; private meditation; self-conflict; the experiences of life to ourselves and to others; the past, with all its burden of instruction and example; and the working testimonies of faith in Christian fellowships and Christian enterprises, — these are our helps for understanding the gospel. We may be perplexed by the knowledge that the gospel has been so variously understood, and has opened so many controversies. These controversies of men about the gospel are, however, matters of light moment, compared with that controversy between men and God which the gospel is to reconcile. After we have yielded for a

while to our natural misgiving that it must be difficult to understand the gospel because men have so differed about it, let us re-assure our confidence by the thought that it must be easy to understand it if its source is from God, and if its design is to save men. What all men need to know will never be perplexed to those whose wisdom is sincerity. Understand your own wants, and you will understand the gospel that is to supply them. One hour of quiet thought, spent each day over a lesson which you have read from the Bible, will show you relations between the teachings of that book and your own heart and life, which you may be trusted to interpret for yourself. I do not forget the fact that many persons affirm that the Bible itself is the source of some of their deepest perplexities, as they seek to understand the gospel. But are they sure that it is the gospel which they are trying to understand, and that it is mainly for its religious and devotional lessons that they are studying the Bible? There are perplexities in every line of it for those who search it to discover them; and these perplexities are its defences against irreverence and curiosity, and the pride of wisdom. But the whole question, in its simplest form, is this: What does the gospel teach concerning the condition, the duty, and the destiny of man; of his need, and of the means, of salvation from sin and death? It is a question that has been asked by millions of human hearts, and answered to their satisfaction. So far as we are losers by the long space of time which removes us from the age in which the gospel offered a miraculous testimony and demonstration, we are compensated by the multiplied and rich evidences which men and women, in every scene and state of human life, have afforded to

us of the effective power of the gospel. In many a humble cottage, in the fireside corner, have simple-hearted disciples mastered the teachings of that divine wisdom which critical students of the Word, with all their wealth of learning, have failed to interpret, even to themselves. While, therefore, we remind ourselves that the first condition involved in the trust which is committed to us in the gospel is that we understand it, let us never forget that its truths are the plainest to its most willing and devout pupils.

It has been often and earnestly affirmed, that, in order that we may understand the gospel, we must believe it; that the mind can be brought into a state suitable for its fair examination and study, only when the spirit or the heart has humbly and confidently bowed in trustful submission to it. It may be, that, in our controversies upon the issue thus raised, we have another of those many contests, mainly through words and vague ideas, which seem to divide those who in reality agree more nearly than they suppose. But, without arguing upon either side of this issue, we may not only allow, but will urge, that whatever may be lacking of an intelligent view of the gospel, after the mind has tasked all its powers of understanding, will always be supplied by the sympathetic help of a devout and trusting faith. Faith is itself one of the most reasonable and necessary exercises of the understanding. There is a wide margin around every page which records our knowledge and our most intelligent views upon any subject; and that unfilled border-space is surrendered up to convictions sustained only by the instincts of a believing heart. After we have done our utmost to comprehend and ratify to our reason all the

lofty doctrines of the gospel, we shall feel that its power must lie in its spiritual, rather than in its moral teachings; and that these are breathed into the heart, not spoken into the ears. It would long since have proved fatal to the claims of the religion of Jesus Christ, had men come to realize, or discovered, that it exhausted all its lessons simply in teaching the mind. The gospel would not have won the allegiance, even of a single generation of disciples, had it done nothing but instruct them in the truths of an earthly wisdom. It is because there is a more mysterious instinct, a deeper want, in the soul of man, that all ancient wisdom failed to furnish life to true piety. The power of philosophy lies, after all, in its deficiencies, in its confessions of what it cannot do; for, when it leaves us upon an ocean through which it owns that it cannot guide us, it has taught us its best lesson in teaching us this. It is a weary task for man to be ever chasing after the horizon, where light and darkness meet. His horizon changes just as he changes his own place; but, change as he may his own place, he can never alter the fixed proportion of light and darkness to his mortal vision. Better is it to stand convinced that that solemn horizon sweeps all around us, and embraces all of heaven, as well as the earth. All the rays of earthly intellect, pride, and genius, which promise successively to give man light for his spirit, fail to abide by him and to meet his wants. He passes through them and beyond their aid. They go out one by one, as the stars of midnight to the lone traveller. There is something that is dangerously deceptive in the boastful pretences of our modern philosophy, which, having appropriated the substance of Christian truth on some moral and spiritual themes, as-

sumes to teach them as parts of a common human wisdom, and then would shift them from the charge of faith, to which they are committed by the gospel, to the charge of natural reason. The truths which the gospel teaches are turned from moral into religious truths by being rescued from the cold dealing of the understanding, and entrusted to a living and confiding faith. The one sole question which the Saviour asked of those who heard his own words, and felt the power of his mighty works, was, "Believest thou?" so that even eyesight, hearing, and the experience of his blessings, did not make needless an exercise of faith.

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### THE RELIGION OF THE PULPIT, AND THE PROFANITY OF THE PRESS.

SINCE the issue of the Proclamation for the day of General Fast, Humiliation, and Prayer, in the United Kingdom, there has been an opinion expressed very freely through a portion of the press that something else was required in this national emergency, besides, or rather than, such church exercises. It cannot be denied that a large proportion of the people have come, consciously or unconsciously, under the influence of a philosophy by which faith is openly slighted, if not totally ignored. A very limited study, and that confined mainly to a certain class of writers on natural laws, quite proper in their own place, and requisite to every complete training, has led to a cognizance of secondary causes so complete and absorbing, as to throw the Primary Cause of all things into a distance so remote, as to make it a matter of indifference whether an actual overruling Providence be acknowledged or not. The influence of such a style of thought on the general character of a man is to narrow and harden his mind, to materialize and degrade his conceptions, and

to render him confident and conceited in his narrowness and degradation. Proper breadth of mind comes from proper faith, whereby confession is made of the infinite nature of God, and of the unsearchable extent of his universe. Proper progress comes from proper willingness to receive every indication or utterance which such an universe may contain. Proper elevation can come only through a proper recognition of things spiritual — things which transcend the sphere both of sense and understanding. No individual, or nation, shut up in bondage to sense and logic, materialism and secondary causes, ever accomplished any thing great, heroic, or divine.

The pulpit, in its teaching, has not failed to notice the unbelieving tendency of the people, and has undertaken, moreover, to rebuke the profanity of the press in giving it a distinct expression, so far as regards recent events. Now this controversy between the pulpit and the press has two sides as well as every other controversy. What has been the religion of the pulpit, and can any relation be discovered between it and the alleged profanity of the press? Let us look at the matter a moment. Must not every national calamity have a cause? Both pulpit and press answer, yes. The pulpit speaks of God — the Lord and Prime Cause of all — and considers itself too dignified to notice any other cause, even as instrumental. The press speaks of the immediate and palpable instrument of calamity — the immediate and palpable instrument, which the people see with their own eyes, and can at once apprehend. Is this instrumental cause nothing? that the pulpit should thus ignore it. Does not the Infinite and Supreme Ruler make the fulfilment of certain conditions requisite to justify us even in looking for success in any human undertaking? Does He not make the fulfilment of certain conditions requisite to justify us even in hoping to escape calamity? Ought we look for the harvest, if we neglected the seed-time? The answer to these questions is obvious. There is, then, a divinely-ordained and

evident connexion between the cause primary, the cause instrumental or secondary, and the result. God has joined these together in the providential order of His universe, and what He hath thus joined together, no man ought put asunder. Yet this is just what the pulpit, assuming for itself the special sanction of heaven, has done.

Let us see. The war has been calamitous. A day of humiliation and prayer is appointed, that the nation may confess its sins before the Ruling Power of the Universe, and seek His favor and help through repentance of heart and change of ways. At the same time a committee of the House of Commons is engaged in direct investigation of the neglects and sins which have contributed to this calamity. There can be no mistake as to the character of the information there brought to light. The men were neglected in their sickness. Their working tools were bad, and so reported to be; yet the second supply sent "was as bad as the first." They were doing camp duty, working in muddy trenches, and fighting hosts of Russians in ravines and among brushwood, with insufficient clothing and tattered foot-gear; yet when a vessel arrived "with the hold filled with boots" for their use, both vessel and boots were wilfully sent away somewhere else. The men were disabled and perishing in the cold of the Crimean winter; yet when a ship came with "650 sacks of charcoal," the official would not receive it, and it had to be carried away. An army, to be effective, ought to have a competent commissariat, yet the commissariat actually furnished, "were boys from the Treasury who had no experience" in actual duty.\* Now here, at least, there were some plain neglects — some palpable sins — whatever others there might have been of a less obvious and more inscrutable sort.

How does the pulpit deal with them? The day of humiliation has come. The peers of the nation assemble

\* *Vide* various witnesses before the committee of the House of Commons.

in venerable Westminster Abbey. The Bishop of Salisbury is the Christian prophet of the occasion, to remind them of their sins, and call on them to repent and amend, that national calamities may be lightened and averted. What is the burden of his utterance? The newspaper report says it "consisted of a general exposition of the necessity for fasting, and resolution of amendment of life," with an enumeration of "a few of the national sins for which we should humble ourselves." There is not a word, that we can see, concerning the actual sins revealed before the Commons' committee. No noble lord had his conscience very sharply smitten on account of any lot or part he might possibly have had in thrusting an incompetent nephew, or friend's nephew, into army, navy, or commissariat. The humiliation service is decently observed, and the peers disperse. Let us now go with Her Majesty's faithful Commons to St. Margaret's Church. The Rev. Mr. Melvill, who has a high fame, is the preacher. He is eloquent. He spiritualizes the ancient Jewish methods. He speaks of "ashes on our hearts, and sackcloth on our souls." On what account, he does not very distinctly set forth, except it be for an indifference to divine things in general, and for having entered on this particular war in too boastful and confident a spirit. As for the open negligences — the patent violations of high trust and sacred duty — the "second causes" in the national calamity — he mildly affirms that "we are not, in this place at least, to look at second causes." Unless more sensitive than we suppose them to be, the Commons are not very deeply "pricked in their hearts." They disperse likewise — Lord Palmerston and all.

Now if this is the sort of preaching that Lord Palmerston has been accustomed to hear — if he has heard "second causes" thus ignored by the clergy in their ministrations — what wonder if he should undertake to give them some prominence himself? What wonder, if, when his opportunity for preaching comes, he should give good em-

phrasing to that department of God's providential rule which he finds is shut out from the notice of the pulpit? Have we not here some explanation of his famous reply to the Scottish clergymen? And if the press, feeling and speaking in Lord Palmerston's spirit, should ironically declare miracles necessary to roast coffee, or land stores, may we not see just the working of the same influence. The religion of the pulpit systematically shuts out the palpable human neglects, which contribute to the national calamity as things "common and unclean;" and the press, true to the great instincts of common sense, and a comprehensive Christianity, declares that nothing in the world which affects the well-being of men and nations ought to be thus treated as "common and unclean." The tendency of the pulpit teaching is to dissever the First Cause from all other causes, which is virtual negation of the true doctrine of a Divine Providence. The tendency of the press teaching is to dissever the immediate and instrumental cause from the prior, or at least from the Prime Cause — thus, by another extreme, denying the true doctrine of a Divine Providence. We believe that the pulpit has been unfaithful in not covering the whole ground, and including in its review all the causes which fell within its observation. God rules over all, and where one messenger, or ministry of his Providence, becomes timid and faithless, even out of the stones can he raise up others which will be faithful and bold. He rules over all, Lord of the press as well as of the pulpit, and we may divine the working of his providential rule in raising up the press to supplement, in such cases as we have just referred to, the deficiencies of the pulpit.

The narrowness and partiality exhibited on both sides is, indeed, to be deplored, and where there is actual profanity in the newspaper press the pernicious influence is great, and greatly to be lamented. But even here we must not close our eyes to the provocations of the pulpit. There is a class of preachers who do not hesitate to re-

volt the understanding, and shock the common reverence of humanity. They drag the Ineffable and Eternal down to the platform of their own passions, and would make him fight the battles of their own miserable prejudices. The Rev. Dr. McNeile of Liverpool, whose eloquence is made telling by the ready rhetoric of special and definite divine judgments, declared, on the fast day in England, that the national sin was the support rendered to Romanism, and hence the present judgments. The same school of religionists gave the same cause for the disastrous famine in Ireland a few years since, while the Rev. Dr. McHale of Tuam, a man of somewhat similar mental type, but brought up under other and opposite influences, declared that that famine was a judgment for the neglect of the Catholic faith. We find this spirit manifesting itself occasionally, with more or less force, everywhere. Even in the city where this page appears, a minister not long since declared that the Almighty, as soon as He heard that Britain was to have a day of national prayer, lifted up his arm, and, by way of sanction beforehand as it would seem, struck a blow of judgment — we are not responsible for the irreverence \* — struck a blow of judgment some three weeks in advance of the actual day of supplication.

When narrowness, and fanaticism, and extravagance, can be brought to a close in the pulpit, we may hope to have more religious seriousness in the secular press. But not, we fear, until then. The tendency of one extreme, always, is to beget its opposite. We have a strong conviction that if the religion of the pulpit were improved, we should soon have much less to fear from the profanity of the press.

\* "Prayer has more might than booming cannons and roaring batteries. And no sooner has the nation been called upon by the Queen, as the temporal head of the nation, to observe a day of solemn fast, humiliation, and prayer, than God lifts up his hand, and the Czar in the height of his pride, hurling his armed legions against us, is smitten to sudden death." — *Address of Rev. D. Fraser, in "Montreal Witness" of March 28, 1855.*

## FREEDOM OF READING — "L'INSTITUT-CANADIEN."

WE hope we shall not be considered too boastful of the merits of our time, if we say that there never was an age more likely than ours to revolt against any application of the principle of the Index Expurgatory. Where their wide freedom of reading is going to land the thoughtful and inquiring minds of the present day, we do not presume to determine, nor are we oppressed with any fear as to the result. There is a good deal of cant, now, concerning darkness dreading the light — of cant which is canted by persons who have as much reluctance to have light thrown on their own darkness as any others in this world. This cant, however, springs from a basis of verity which abides with us to-day, and abides always. Darkness does not generally welcome the light — very frequently it fears it. Fixed systems of politics, philosophy, and theology, have their supporters and admirers, who do not wish to be disturbed by any influx of new thought. Even if such new thought does not shake their faith in the foundations of their favorite system, it seems to displace some portion of the superstructure, and they become startled by any symptom of change. Perhaps they have seen enough to be assured that if the wedge is permitted to enter, and becomes gradually pushed home, their system, though apparently firm as the granite rock, must be split clean open as in a granite cleavage. Or, perhaps, they have not sufficient penetration to perceive the working power, and destined result, of a moral wedge at all, but simply feel their prejudices annoyed by its presence. In either case they will wish themselves well rid of the disturbing force. And having the will, if they possess the power, they will discard it as speedily as possible.

This conservative sentiment has served, as well as injured, the world in time past, and it is of service in the

present time. But it is not the predominating sentiment on this new continent of ours. The popular mind, constantly stimulated by an omnipresent printing press, has become not merely curious, but intrusive, and every day of its life it exhibits an audacity in regard to fixed systems of all sorts — whether of government, philosophy, or religion — which, with scarcely two exceptions, would not be tolerated an hour in the older countries of Europe. Open-eyed and sensible persons of all classes in America appear to accept the existing state of things, in this regard, as a fixed fact, and to have come to the conclusion that no system or institution has any proper business here, which is not ready to hear and answer questioning, and render its reasons.

As a proof of this, we have only to look at the perfect frèedom of teaching which exists every where. Any man may open any manner of school, to teach any manner of doctrine, sound or false, political, philosophical, or theological. There may be some among us who would strongly desire to interfere and prevent such perfect freedom, but the inevitable progress of events has put it out of their power so to do. Any attempt to close a church, a school, a lecture room, or a printing office, because of the doctrines promulgated there, would have no chance of success, — provided, always, there has been no violation of public decency. As we pass through our streets, we see the open doors of all these. No one compels us to enter any of them. We may make our selection, and go in where we please, avoiding all the others. Thus retaining our own freedom, while we leave all else free.

Now our general reading rooms fulfil their proper function only when they become the reflected image, on a reduced scale, of our general community. We refer here to our general reading rooms, and not to any others more special and limited. A society of merchants, to serve their commercial purposes, may open a reading room, where they may accumulate for their common conveni-

ence all available printed information concerning the state of the markets here and elsewhere. A society of religionists may open a reading room where, for their common convenience, they may collect all available printed intelligence concerning their particular sect, or the particular fraternity of sects in which they are chiefly interested. In such cases as these the object is definite and legitimate. But where persons of various habits of thought and pursuits of life associate on a general basis, and invite all others to enter their association, without distinction of creed or calling, avowing as their purpose the acquisition of general knowledge, and the diffusion of general enlightenment, they are obviously forbidden by the fundamental principles of their organization to exercise any preferences in the management, founded on sectional partiality, or sectarian prejudice.

We have three general reading rooms in Montreal, connected respectively with the Mechanics' Institute, the Mercantile Library Association, and l'Institut-Canadien. The first and second of these were founded, and are still managed mainly, if not wholly, by persons speaking the English language. The third was founded, and is still carried on mainly, if not wholly, by persons of French or Franco-Canadian origin, speaking the French language. These reading rooms are open, as they ought to be, to every printed expression of opinion on politics, philosophy, and religion. Their floors and tables are in the same position with respect to their members, as the streets and squares of our city with respect to our citizens. In either case, if the conditions of citizenship or membership are complied with, the privileges accrue at once, and are indelible: viz., in the one case, of building a church or lecture-room, of any denomination, and going into it if we please; and in the other case, of presenting a newspaper or periodical of any denomination, and reading it if we please. The city Corporation, or the institutional Direction, for the time being, actuated by some sectional

partiality or sectarian prejudice, may close our church or exclude our newspaper; but we do not thereby feel our right annulled. We only feel that an act of oppression and wrong has been committed.

We observe by the current city newspapers that an attempt has recently been made in l'Institut-Canadien to exclude from its reading room certain specified newspapers, on the ground of their connection with polemical theology. But polemical theology is a matter of high interest to a large proportion of our citizens. It is discussed in Protestant newspapers and pulpits. It is discussed in Catholic newspapers and pulpits. The largest congregation we have ever seen assembled in Montreal, was in the parish church of Notre Dame during the season of Lent, and on the occasion of a sort of semi-dramatic discussion of the Protestant controversy. Two ecclesiastics took part in it, standing face to face in separate pulpits, one of them tamely stating some of the Protestant points, and graciously acting as a foil for the Catholic champion, whose arguments were accepted as triumphant by the large and intensely interested audience. These facts serve to show us how general the interest is which polemical theology excites. And every man of philosophic apprehension will see that theology must pass through the stage *polemic*, before it can arrive at the state *irenic*. Now if this be the actual condition of the sentiment of our general community, it ought to be reflected in our general reading rooms. An ignorance of the opinions of our neighbors quite commonly leads to suspicion, misconception, alienation. An intelligent and candid person, who wishes to stand free from petty sectional and sectarian prejudices, can only do so by looking for himself at the actual state of opinion, as it prevails around him, and elsewhere. And it ought to be the aim of l'Institut-Canadien considering its basis and original design, to minister to such intelligent curiosity, and to promote that candor of spirit and largeness of thought, without which

Canada and its people can never rise to proper consideration and dignity.

In reflecting on this more recent movement against freedom of reading, we are reminded of the attempt made a few years since by the Directors, for the time being, of the Mercantile Library Association, to exclude one particular newspaper from its reading room, on account of its special theological character. In this case the attempt to construct an Expurgatory Index, sprung simply from sectarian prejudice, while in the matter of l'Institut-Canadien, whatever sectarian prejudice existed was covered by the more comprehensive plea of a dislike to polemic theology in general. It is gratifying to the friends of enlightened progress to know, and remember, that in both instances, on a full and mature call of the whole body of members, they, by the vote of the majority, decided against the principle of an Index Expurgatory, and in favor of freedom of reading.

*Freedom to think, freedom to speak, freedom to read.*  
This must be the motto of every progressive community.

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### BOOK NOTICE.

**THE ALTAR AT HOME: Prayers for the Family and the Closet.** Boston : American Unitarian Association. For sale in Montreal at the office of H. & G. M. Rose, Great St. James Street.

THIS is a manual of domestic devotion, recently issued by the Unitarian Association, and edited by the Secretary, Rev. Dr. Miles. Its contents are valuable and various, and the arrangement, as it seems to us, is excellent. We have here nearly a hundred forms of prayer for morning and evening, prepared by twenty-five ministers, who had been applied to for the purpose. We have, besides, several forms of occasional prayer, some of the ancient Collects of the Church, and a few Litanies, chiefly in the language of Scripture, suited for alternate reading, when the whole family desire to join in the audible expression. Instead of being marked off according to the days of the week, the prayers are each distinguished by a special title indicative of its prevailing sentiment, as "God our Keeper," "Cheerful Homage," "God in Christ," "Seeking Pardon," &c., &c., and introduced by a brief and appropriate Scripture lesson. By this arrangement, the worshipper is enabled to make his selection more in accordance with the existing state of his mind, than he could by the more common one. We hope the book will find a wide circulation among the families of our churches, and do good service in helping to keep alive the sacred flame of devotion on the domestic altar.