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what we have to do is to ask God's guidance in our efforts to cleanse and defend our Church, to cling manfully and with renewed vigour to the light which, since the Reformation, has made our Church and country so great, so glorious, and so free. For, as we look around us we can hardly fail to see that the dangers which threaten us are real and alarming ; and that the heartiest and most widespread support is due from Churchmen to a League which seeks to promote the definite objects I have described, especially at a time when, alas ! if we ask, What is the attitude of our Church as regards the great principles on which it is founded ? I fear the general answer must be summarized in the words to which I have called your attention this morning : " We cannot tell."



Spirituality and Social Reform.¹

BY THE REV. CANON H. HENSLEY HENSON, D.D.

IT gives me great pleasure to be here at the courteous invitation of your President. I am not aware of any reason, whether of law or fitness, why I should not express the desire for closer religious fellowship with the non-episcopal Churches which I must needs feel when I observe their zealous and fruitful labours for the cause of Christ. The Baptist Churches have long outlived the heavy suspicions with which they started, and taken a recognized and prominent place among the agencies by which the world is being slowly but surely evangelized. If I am not misinformed, there are now in Great Britain and America some six or seven million Baptists, fully organized for pastoral work at home and for evangelistic work abroad. I observe that in point of numbers the Baptists stand third in the list of Churches in the recent census of the United States, being exceeded only by the Roman Catholics and the Methodists.

¹ An address delivered at a meeting of Baptist ministers in the Baptist Mission House, Fumival Street, London.

In Westminster Abbey we hope shortly to add to our memorials the window which is to commemorate the name and works of the illustrious Baptist, John Bunyan, one of the greatest figures in the history of English literature, as well as a hero of English Christianity. No Englishman who values his birthright of civil and religious liberty will think without reverence of those obscure and persecuted Baptists who were the pioneers of religious toleration. We have all come round to their way of thinking now ; but, none the less, we owe it to them that the tradition of English citizenship contains this precious element of spiritual freedom. The missionary labours of William Carey reflect honour on the whole Christian Church. The sermons of Robert Hall and Charles Spurgeon are widely read by the members of all the English-speaking Churches. In the present day it would be hard to find names more widely known than those of Maclaren, Meyer, and Clifford. You will understand, then, that in coming here I gladly seize the opportunity of offering my homage to the devotion and labour of the Baptist Churches, and claiming my place as a fellow-labourer in the same sacred cause.

The subject which has been announced has an aspect of religious assumption, almost of self-conceit, which distresses and displeases me. Perhaps I have been unfortunate in my phrasing ; I am not sure that I have conveyed my meaning. In any case, the very last thing in my mind is any intention of assuming a superior or didactic air in speaking to an assembly of fellow-ministers, some far better fitted than I to address you. My purpose is to set before you some thoughts which have occurred to me, and to confess some anxieties, with respect to our duty as "ambassadors of Christ," and "stewards of the mysteries of God." Let me begin by explaining what I mean by these familiar yet ambiguous expressions "spirituality" and "social service."

The evident reference of the word "spirituality," as it is commonly used among Christian people, is to the usage of St. Paul. The *locus classicus* is the passage in the First Epistle

to the Corinthians, where, after disclaiming for believers that carnal "wisdom" which had so woefully misled the "rulers of this world," the Apostle proceeds to claim for them a "wisdom not of this world." The passage must be quoted in full, as it illuminates our subject in many of its aspects :

"We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God : that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth : comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him ; and He cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But He that is spiritual judgeth all things, and He Himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that He should instruct him ? But we have the mind of Christ." With this passage we must place the exhortation in the Epistle to the Galatians, where the practical obligation and, indeed, the inevitable expression in life of this inward illumination by the Spirit are set forth. "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : for these are contrary the one to the other : that ye may not do the things that ye would. . . . If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." Such language as this is applied to the Christian as such. The New Testament has very little to say about the Christian ministry. We can see it taking its place naturally in the society in response to the normal necessities which experience disclosed. "Spirituality" is the attribute of discipleship, not the badge of ecclesiastical office. Yet the common trait became very rightly the accepted condition of office, for how could anyone be a Christian minister who was not first a Christian ? Naturally, men looked to find an exemplary character in those who stood among the faithful as their leaders and teachers. We, as bearing the solemn and awful burden of the ministry, have no right to resent, but infinite reason to fear, the interpretation of

the religion we represent by the illustration which we ourselves provide. The essential constituents of "spirituality" stand out clearly in the Apostle's language. Before all things it is a communicated grace, communicated from "the Lord the Spirit," but not *ab extra*, as it were a decoration conferred from above. It is a Presence within the Christian, strengthening, purifying, exalting, directing his natural character, making him "a new creature," but preserving every sound element of his nature. The "spiritual man" is in process of being conformed to the "likeness" of Christ, or, to use the phrase of St. Paul, "Christ is being formed in him." When we ask ourselves, what can be the meaning of such words, we can see that certain elements at least are included in the answer. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." We are referred to the Divine Master as the supreme example of Christianity. "Spirituality" implies having "the mind of Christ," looking at this life and the next from Christ's point of view, applying His standard of values to possessions, endorsing His estimate of success and failure, "taking up His Cross" and "following Him in the way." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews brings his grand series of the heroes of faith to a glorious conclusion by a reference to "Jesus the Author and Perfecter of faith," a most significant description, of which the sense is obscured by the unfortunate insertion of the pronoun "our," which seems to separate Christ's life of faith from that of His followers. Christ's life is offered as the perfect example of the life of faith, which had been illustrated variously by the saints and martyrs of Jewish history. That life is described as involving a detachment of mind, a remoteness of purpose, an other-worldliness, in the sublime sense of the hackneyed phrase. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own, and if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they

would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city." This description is perfectly satisfied only in Christ, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The sacred writer does not scruple to encourage his brethren to hold on in their religious course in spite of all troubles by pointing them to the example of their Master, who, unlike them, "had resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

The importance of insisting on the example of Christ as showing the true content of that "spirituality" which is, if I may so speak, the "hall-mark" of genuine discipleship lies in the fact that thus the balance of truth is secured; for the record of Christ's life demonstrates, what might not easily have been believed apart from that demonstration, that this "spiritual" life of faith is consistent with—nay, requires—a life of redemptive activity. It is not a life removed from the contacts and perplexities of secular existence, but a life in the world, realized and manifested precisely with reference to the world's inevitable claims and demands. There is a reading of the Revisers which is extremely suggestive in this connection. When the Lord was challenged by His disciples to explain the origin of the blind beggar's calamity, whether it was caused by his own or his parents' sin, Christ is said to have declined to answer their main question, limiting Himself to the correction of their error, and drawing a practical inference. "Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." The significant change of pronoun—not "*I* must work," as in the Authorized Version, but "*we* must work"—will at once arrest your notice. Our Saviour thus binds His disciples into His own redemptive mission, and makes them partners with Himself in the world's salvation. It is a Divine

commentary on the commission: "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Let me again remind you that in such words there is no limitation of reference to the Apostles and to the clergy as succeeding to their official position in the society of Christians. To disciples as such the words are spoken, and they come home to Christian ministers with special directness, only because they are necessarily assumed to be disciples, and hold a position of representative and publicly responsible character. The law of Christ's example compels us to unite these two factors, which tend ever to drift apart, "spirituality" and "social service."

It hardly needs that I should attempt any formal definition of "social service." Its range and character are determined by the reference to the supreme and always governing precedent of Christ. Such service as is indeed morally redemptive; as really "destroys the works of the devil," and sets up on the earth the "kingdom of God"; as comes under the description of "working righteousness," in that severe and penetrating sense which the words bore on the lips of the Author of the Sermon on the Mount—this, and this alone, can be meant by the "social service" which attaches inseparably to the Christian's, and *a fortiori* to the Christian minister's, duty. The range of that service, I have said, is fixed by the example of the Lord. If the "Son of man came eating and drinking"—that is, disclaiming the ascetic conception of spirituality, and insisting on correlating the spiritual claim with the secular obligation—then it cannot be otherwise with His followers, if they are perpetuating His mission in the world. If the redemptive process described in the Gospel extended to the physical, as well as to the moral, ills of mankind, so that the Redeemer stood in His generation as the Healer of men's bodies as well as the Saviour of their souls, so it must be now. The assumption of the "Christian Scientists" may be conceded, while the miserable misapplication of the truth which "Christian Science" implies is disallowed. Nothing less than the entire society of Christians is charged with the redemptive mission

which was Christ's in Palestine nineteen centuries ago, under the limitations of a personal ministry, and is Christ's to-day everywhere on earth through His Church. To suppose that Christ's ministry, then or since, implied the disturbance and abolition of the Divine economy of the universe is truly to make the Redemption a principle of cosmic anarchy, not a power of the restoration of cosmic order. The healing ministry of the Incarnate is carried out in the faithful application of medical science to the ills of men's bodies, and may not be dwarfed into the sorry caricature of the historic ministry which the dubious records of psychotherapy present. The non-Christian physician is as truly the exponent of that healing ministry as the Christian, though he differs in this respect, that he owns not the full majesty of his calling. The quack abates nothing of the dangerous falseness of his character by insolently disguising his quackery under sacred names. Part of Christ's mission as the Light of the World is the dissipation of ignorance. Will any maintain that that mission is limited to the didactic efforts of professed disciples? or that it is not being fulfilled by all sincere teachers everywhere? or that the inherent nobility and perpetual value of true teaching are not then only perceived when that teaching is seen to be part of the process by which the "light which lighteth every man entering into the world" is fulfilling His eternal purpose? Apply the crude literalism of Christian Science to those other beneficent activities by which the social evils of mankind are slowly being abated. We say of the economist, the politician, the diplomatist, the governor, the merchant, that they are contributing to the ultimate victory of the Redeemer in so far as they are honestly and painfully fulfilling their respective tasks in society. We say that no amount of Christian phraseology can change the essentially anti-Christian character of false economy, dishonest politics, selfish diplomacy, tyrannous government, unfair trade; and that only when all social functions are seen in connection with Christ's mission of redemptive mercy are they able to take their true greatness, and discover the whole gravity of their debasement.

It would be just as reasonable to call on Christians to expect that they might miraculously multiply "loaves and fishes" by the power of faith, because the Master is said to have done as much in the days of His flesh, as to tell them that they can dispense with medical and surgical science, because, forsooth, He is said to have worked miracles of healing. Such crude literalism is precisely the religious error which He emphatically condemned when He declared that "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

"Spirituality" and "social service," thus inseparably united in the Gospel, have been found hard to combine in Christian experience. At first the tendency was to magnify "spirituality" at the expense of "social service"; later, the tendency was to exalt "social service" at the expense of "spirituality." In the first days there were many excuses for the ascetic misreading of discipleship which prevailed. The "world"—*i.e.*, the organized system of society—was opposed to the faith. The Church and the State were ranged against one another as confessed enemies. For the clear affirmation of the Christian message, for the satisfaction of the Christian conscience, for the protection of the Christian character, there seemed plain necessity for an attitude of aloofness towards the world. Society was so deeply corrupt that it seemed to need no argument that a Christian's duty was to come out of it. The contemporaries of Nero and Domitian were at no loss to give practical application to the stern language of the Apostle: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." When, however, the "world" itself came to profess Christianity with the conversion of Constantine, a dramatic change passed over the scene. A new meaning had to be found for the old language; or, rather, the old meaning had to receive a limited application. From the third century the Church has never been without movements of moral protest against the secularization of Chris-

tianity. The Montanists were but the leaders of a great army of devout persons who claimed heroically, but irrationally, that the old relationship of Church and world, which had existed in the days of the primitive conflict, should be perpetuated. On the side of the Catholic Church there was accepted the truly lamentable notion of two standards of Christian obligation—one for the clergy and another for the laity, one for the “secular” clergy and another for the “regular.” Christians were divided into laymen and “religious.” The Reformation was a great revolt against this unnatural separation. At all hazards, those whom God had joined together must not by man be put asunder. “Spirituality” and “social service,” religion and good citizenship, must be again combined. It was a great movement in the Church “back to Christ.” Yet very soon the old situation reappeared, and for the old reasons. The enormous disturbance of traditional beliefs and disciplines implied in the process of Reformation did unquestionably lower for the time the moral temperature of Christendom. While the revolting Churches were fighting for their lives against the forces of the counter-Reformation, all the higher concerns of Christianity were subordinated to the immediate issues of controversy and conflict. Against the extreme and prevailing wickedness of the time, pious men began to use the old language of asceticism, and order themselves as exiles from the main tradition of secular life. Time has rectified the proportions of the faith in many directions. We are perceiving again that the truth lay neither with the Puritans, nor with those who persecuted them; that the ancient problem must not be violently solved by a sacrifice of one or other of the twin essentials, since its essence does precisely consist in the combination of the two. It is easy to separate, and serve the separated factor; easy to be a recluse, easy also to be a philanthropist. The really difficult thing is to take the “spirituality” which the recluse is seeking, and the “social reform” which the philanthropist pursues, and hold them resolutely together in a permanent and harmonious unity.

We have been hearing much lately of the "New Theology." I refer to it now, not for any formal discussion, but in order to illustrate the statement that this separation of elements, which at all hazards must be held in combination, has proceeded far among us, and is a very urgent peril. I have read Mr. Campbell's two books," "The New Theology and "Christianity and the Social Order," several times, and every time I feel more than ever convinced that they are most fairly to be judged as the utterance of reaction against a lopsided conception of "spirituality." Like most such reactionary utterances, they fall into the error of over-statement. As the conventional Puritanism, which the writer repudiates, had dangerously belittled the social obligation of Christianity, so he even more dangerously belittles the "spirituality." Indeed, he has carried his exaggeration to the length of denying that there is any reality in the old problem which has agitated the thought and troubled the conscience of Christian men from the first. Christ's Gospel, we are plainly told, had no other reference than that which is suggested by the phrase "Social Reform." One sentence must suffice :

"The one undeniable and all-important fact about the preaching of this greatest of the sons of men is that it was inspired by the coming of a better day and an ideal human society on earth. *He never says a word about going to heaven, for the plain and simple reason that all His hopes were bound up with the realization of heaven here.* His illusions were those of the period in which, and the people among whom, He did His work ; His ideal is for all time, and is the inspiration of all that is best and noblest in human aspiration and effort to-day" ("Christianity and the Social Order," p. 87).

I make no further comment on these words than that they are the foundation of a frank identification of Christianity and Socialism. For our present purpose they serve to illustrate a tendency which is affecting all the Christian Churches.

I am aware, of course, that I have brought my thesis to a point at which it is probable that we might differ. Be sure that I claim no special wisdom, still less any kind of infallibility, if, in the conclusion of my address, I venture to make a few observations on the duty of the Christian minister with respect to "social reform." First, then, I would insist that our primary

duty is to make sure that "spirituality" is affirmed, and illustrated in our teaching and in our lives. In a true sense, which can never become obsolete, the Christian is "a stranger and pilgrim" on earth; his home is not here; his heart may not be here. He "looks for the city which hath the foundations whose builder and maker is God." His "citizenship is in heaven." Other-worldly he may not pretend to deny that he is. He believes with St. Paul that "the things which are not seen are eternal," that "we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," that "His life is hid with Christ in God." As a Christian minister his supreme privilege and special duty are, in season and out of season, to insist on these truths. This is his true *métier*, the contribution to the general life of society which he is charged to make. So doing, he will assist in the ultimate solution of the social problem, and restrain economists and politicians from the sin which so easily besets them—the sin of mere secularism. His message to them is that which Coleridge phrased so happily when he said that "not without celestial observations can even terrestrial charts be accurately constructed." The practical question for him to consider is, whether he will be helped or hindered in his duty by descending into the arena of political conflict, and facing men in the suspected character of a partisan. That question must be finally answered by every Christian minister for himself, but surely we may agree that the guiding principle throughout must be a clear and just perception of the minister's proper business. Every course of action which implies a departure from the line of manifest duty must be rigorously criticized, and only allowed when its rightness has been made clear to the preacher's conscience. Exceptional circumstances may demand in the future, as in the past, that the Christian minister should become the leader of political opinion, or the organizer of social reform; but normally it will not be in those characters that he will fulfil his ministry. He is concerned primarily with men's characters, not with their circumstances; by reforming the first he aspires to make them masters of the last. Any action which

tends to obscure the ultimate purpose of his ministry is doubtful, and may be dangerously wrong. The note of Christian witness is spirituality; and the effect of Christian witness is spiritual-mindedness. The spirituality of the Gospel does not mean its remoteness from common life, but its power to transfigure common life into something enduring and sublime. The spirituality of preaching is not shown by a manifest lack of relevance to the interests and activities of citizenship, but by a subjection of all these to the Spirit of Christ. The spirituality of the preacher does not mean that he moves through life with the helplessness of a recluse and the unconsciousness of a child, but that he lives ever in the great Taskmaster's Eye, and sees his duties, domestic, civic, political, not less than official, as so many interpretations of his Master's claim. The opposite of spirituality is secularity, and it is secularity which has always been, and always will be, the besetting danger of the Christian, and pre-eminently of the Christian minister. The power of his message and the impression made by his example are inseparably linked, for "the world is better able to read the nature of Religion in a man's life than in the Bible," and *a fortiori* than in sermons. It were no extravagant, or even gravely inadequate, description of Christian preaching to say that it is always directed against secularity, that "mind of the flesh" which is in perpetual conflict with the "mind of the spirit." The Christian life is a gradual and advancing conquest of secularity. I believe it is difficult to overestimate the value to society at the present time of spiritual preaching, and the gravity of the loss which any secularizing of the Christian pulpit will inflict on the course and future of social reform.

