

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

between classes, is it necessary and desirable to adopt Socialism in one or other of its familiar formulations—the public ownership of the means of production, the abolition of the private ownership of capital, or Mr. Shaw's approximately equal distribution of the national income? These solutions are attractive in that they are radical, and the evils to be attacked are deep-seated and call for radical solutions. Such proposals may, however, be open to the suspicion that they represent just that kind of action which Jesus seems to have deprecated in the Parable of the Tares. Yet Christians who accept whole-heartedly the policy of prohibition for dealing with the drink evil should think twice before they reject these Socialist measures. If the private ownership of capital does really involve serious social evils, and brings with it subtle personal temptations, then there may be as strong a case for removing this source of temptation and moral degradation as for prohibiting the drink-traffic. I am not myself convinced that the parallel is exact, but it seems sufficiently close to deserve consideration from all who believe that prohibition is the Christian way of securing temperance. But so far as my present insight goes, I think the Christian should advocate the extension of public ownership of the means of production wherever that extension can be shown to be in the public interest. I cannot see that Christianity in principle commits any one to the abolition of private property in capital, and my impression is that Socialists generally hinder the coming of the co-operative commonwealth by proclaiming as essential a formula the wisdom of which is dubious both in economics and in morals.

With regard to Mr. Shaw's proposals, I am much clearer that the existing inequality in the distribution of wealth is wrong, and implies a lack of brotherhood, than that approximate economic equality is the ideal to aim at. The primitive communism of the Jerusalem Church was not a success, and does not seem to have had the authority

of Jesus behind it. This does not mean that Christians should never attempt communist experiments in future, but once again they are not committed to communism in principle, and the more immediate duty of the Christian citizen is to raise wages, and to utilize the tax-system to diminish economic inequality, especially in so far as such inequality can be shown to rest on injustice. Of the relation of Marxist Communism to Christianity it is hardly necessary to write. A Christian may well follow with interest, and even sympathy, many of the social experiments which the Bolsheviks are conducting in Russia, but their philosophy will certainly seem to be as false as their methods of violence are wrong. It is not, however, the main duty of a Christian man to sit in judgment on Bolsheviks in Russia, but to show that we in England have enough Christianity and scientific knowledge to realize more fully a finer social ideal than Communism.

It may be with confidence affirmed that Christianity is less concerned with defining the ideal form of society than with the spirit in which we seek to promote it. In the ideal Christian society, the strong will bear the burdens of the weak without, however, sapping their manhood by relieving them of all their responsibilities. What we call social problems resolve themselves at long last into personal relations, in which we can only discharge our duties to our neighbours, if we set the right valuation on human personality. The Christian must always be coming back to this fundamental truth, and it should make him as intolerant in the face of evils as cautious in dealing with short-cuts which promise to do everything *for* the people but nothing *by* the people. The surest guide to the mind of Christ in all these matters may be the well-known sentence with which John Woolman concluded his word of remembrance to the rich: 'To labour for a perfect redemption from this spirit of oppression is the great business of the whole family of Christ in this world.'

Entre Nous.

Some Notes on Death and Immortality in Literature.

In some months' desultory reading we have felt it to be worth while to note down observations and comments about Death and Immortality, a subject

of such passionate, universal interest that the utterances of all sorts and conditions of men and women concerning it have value; and sayings in books half-forgotten may be well worth pondering afresh. ('Souls can't be lost any more than heat or energy.')

Newspapers, to begin with, very often contain interesting comments upon dying. One of the Sunday journals told us that shortly before Herr Stresemann died he had quoted a remark made by Blücher, brave and calm : ' I know it is late in the evening, but I do not fear the night.'

That steadfast sentence instantly brings up the vision of Lord Morley full thirty years before he died, just crossing Piccadilly Circus with his wife and T. P. O'Connor, after one of his very successful political meetings. T. P., in an Irish reaction, spoke of Death among the incongruous crowds and lights, and Morley instantly replied, ' Well, I am ready !'

This readiness to go is often experienced, it seems, just before death. That poor Russian, Makarov, ex-Minister of the Interior, in prison a few hours before his execution, said earnestly to a lady also in prison : ' Continue to cherish beauty in all its forms. Even when life is hideous we must not let its hideousness swamp us. Whatever ordeal there may be in store for us, there is one thing that is unattainable to our inquisitors, they cannot touch the soul, it soars high above their petty hatred, and I firmly believe it will live in the Great Beyond.'

Among the most confident pronouncements uttered immediately before death is this, by the late Dr. Meyer ; a letter so remarkable that it can surely never be forgotten by the Christian Church. Dr. Hubert Simpson read it aloud in Westminster Congregational Church just after the old saint passed. ' Dear —, I have just heard to my surprise that I have only a few days to live. It may be that before this reaches you I shall have entered the Palace. Don't trouble to write. We shall meet in the Morning.—With much love, Yours affectionately.' Could there be anything more serene than this ?

Ah, this reading of a year, what a harvest it yields on the subject, and how the biographies speak ! One can picture a certain Baroness Rothschild feeling the approach of death and able to perform all the ritual ablutions according to Jewish law, her thin lips firm. Switched over to *Vanamee*, the life of a merry and brisk young American parson, which his wife has written with great delicacy of understanding, we see him lying on his deathbed behind the French lines, finished by wounds ; scribbling painfully to his wife the last letter she lets us see, perchance the very last he wrote, before his strength failed.

' There is apparently a very fair chance that there won't be anything of me to come back to you—except perhaps in spirit—thus to walk

through life together, even as we have these last wonderful years. Somehow I am very happy about everything ; sorry as the dickens for my little girl if she, as almost always in the past, again draws the harder burdens of the two. God bless and keep you my Molly, my wife.' Of course the war books are full of the nearness of death : notably *Grischa* and *Remarque*.

From the biography of *Vanamee* one sees how, at home, this young pastor seemed to take the very best line to comfort his flock who were ill, and had to face the worst.

' People wanted him with them when they were dying, he was so cheerful and casual, so tender and strong, as if he was seeing them off on the simplest adventure. " Well, Joe," he would say, " you'll know all about it before the rest of us." To his own mother-in-law, full of pain and terror : " It looks, Parker, as if I were not going to get better." " Well, there are lots of good people over there," he rejoined, and she glowed.'

The next note comes from *The Fight for Everest*, and this is an adequate epitaph for Irvine and Mallory :

' Yesterday with all the vigour and will of perfect manhood they were playing a great game, their life's desire. To-day it was over, and they had gone, without their ever knowing the beginnings of decay. Could any men desire a better end ?'

Walter Raleigh, the beloved Professor, writes of the death of a dear one : ' I think perhaps it's all right. It's rather luxurious to ask for more value in a life than there was in Arthur's.'

And another author (A. C. Benson) writes freely in his Journal : ' I dread the idea of death very much . . . yet I don't believe it is very dreadful. . . . You know the wonderful letters written by Sterling on his death-bed to Carlyle ? I dread dying as I should dread being told that I was to start to China to live the rest of my life there. The unknown is so full of terror.'

Gerhardi, the young cynic, has some good things on death in *The Polyglots*. ' The thought of death, the complete annihilation of my " I," is as unnatural and impossible as eating myself up and leaving no crumbs behind.'

' Darling, do talk of something interesting . . . something which it is easier to understand,' Sylvia demurred.

' You believe in immortality?' says some one else.

' I have not sufficient data not to believe it. It is no less a miracle that I should exist in a body than that I should exist without one. Your limited knowledge stops short this side of death,

and you give your verdict in favour of this knowledge. But for me to believe that death is the end is like giving a verdict in the absence of innumerable witnesses to the contrary, who have been prevented from appearing by some flood or fires. . . .'

Gerhardi is very tender and dreamy over the death at sea of a little girl. They cast her body into the deep blue-green waters. 'Natasha lay perfectly still, and her closed lids made her faint brows look the more naïve, tender, and touching. She looked like a wax doll.

'The sky was a pellucid mother-of-pearl . . . as if through all the shadows and clouds, the suffering, confusion, and doubts, God still smiled. And curling up into vistas of space it spoke of what is beyond time, beyond loss, and the need of redemption.'

Turgenev is quoted then: 'Can it be that love, holy devoted love, is not all potent? Oh no. However passionate, sinful, rebellious may be the heart that has taken refuge in the grave, the flowers which grow upon it gaze tranquilly at us with their innocent eyes; not alone of eternal repose do they speak to us, of that mighty repose of dispassionate nature; they speak also of eternal reconciliation, and of life everlasting.'

It is good to re-read some words of Newman in the sympathetic Life of the Cardinal by Mr. Lewis May. He wrote to a dying nun:

'God's Angel will be with you every step you take—and I will try and help you . . . as you descend into the valley; but you are to be envied, not lamented over, because you are going to your own Lord and God, your Light, your Treasure, your Life. Only pray for me in your place of places and rest, for I at most can be but a little time behind you.'

'Do I believe in Eternal Life?' said Harold Begbie, to a friend of the writer. (It was a first meeting, but they understood each other at once.) 'I believe Eternal Life is a gift, ready for all who desire it with their whole heart.'

CONSTANCE MILES.

Sheer, Surrey.

A Message for the New Year.

O Christ,
With Thee we would launch forth to-day
On the dim and mist-shrouded sea of the future,
Knowing not what these mists conceal,
But anxious only that Thy great will may find
fulfilment through us:

Be Thou our Pilot,
We give to Thy hands the rudder;
Steer for us always this barque of our lives.

We would look to Thy Cross,
To Thy courage in face of disaster,
To Thy love for Thy craven friends, unstinting
unto the end,
To Thy loyal service of duty, regardless of pain
and loss,
To Thy free pouring forth of Thy life for God and
for man:

O Christ,
Make us a little as Thou art,
Breed in us, Master, a little of this Thy Spirit,
Rule our lives
By the hand that was spiked to the Cross.

Several of the books of the Rev. J. S. Hoyland, M.A., have been noticed in this magazine. This *vers libre* is from *The Divine Companionship*, just published by the Student Christian Movement (2s. 6d. net).

Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas.

'It would be possible to write a learned book on Buddhism which should recite the various facts with scholarly exactness, yet leave the reader at the end wondering how intelligent and spiritual men and women of our day could really be Buddhists. I have sought to avoid this effect and have tried to enable the reader to understand a little *how it feels to be a Buddhist*. To give the feelings of an alien religion it is necessary to do more than expound its concepts and describe its history. One must catch its emotional undertone, enter sympathetically into its sentiment, feel one's way into its symbols, its cult, its art, and then seek to impart these not merely by scientific exposition but in all sorts of indirect ways.' This is what Dr. Pratt, the Professor of Philosophy in Williams College, says about his own approach to Buddhism. It exactly expresses what C. F. Andrews has done for Hinduism and the ideas of Gandhi. The volume with the title *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas* which Mr. Andrews has just published is the first of two. This first volume deals with the main ideas of the man whose close friend C. F. Andrews has been for over fifteen years.

One of Gandhi's leading ideas is Swadeshi, which he himself defines in this way: 'Swadeshi is that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote.' So in the matter of religion a man should restrict himself to his ancestral religion, and where it is defective purge it of its defects. In the field of economics it means

that he would use only those things that are produced by his immediate neighbours. 'India cannot live for Lancashire, or any other country, before she is able to live for herself; and she can live for herself only if she produces everything for her own requirements within her own borders.' He is strongly opposed to a marriage outside caste. 'Our present existence is a discipline which has to be lived within certain rules suited to this special stage.' But he does not believe in the artificial multiplication of castes as found in India to-day, nor in the evil of untouchability—Gandhi himself, after a struggle with his wife, adopted into his own family a little untouchable child.

One of the most interesting chapters is on Gandhi's teaching of Ahimsa or Non-Violence, a virtue which involves the positive doing of good, quite as much as the negative refusal to do harm. The chapter is specially interesting because it contains Mr. Andrews' criticism—he has always been a pacifist—of Gandhi's participation in the Boer War and the Great War. Mr. Andrews says shortly that while he quotes Gandhi's argument regarding war it does not convince or satisfy him. The publishers of this enlightening and valuable survey are Messrs. Allen & Unwin, and the price 12s. 6d. net.

The Cinder Paths.

'A good old friend of mine was fond of praying a very curious prayer. Whenever I heard him offer a prayer—and he very often did so at the prayer meetings of the church I went to as a boy—I always used to listen for it, and it nearly always came. "Lord," he would say, "help us to re-cinder our paths." What did he mean? I shall have to explain. In the little town where he lived the sidewalks were usually made of cinders brought from the furnaces of the salt factories, for it was a salt-making town. Very good hard paths they made, too, once they were well trodden down; but they soon got worn and had to be renewed from time to time with fresh cinders. That is what my old friend was thinking about, and he was praying that God would help him to keep all the paths of his life, all the ways in which he walked, in good condition—paths of righteousness, and

truth, and goodness. It was a very good prayer he so often prayed: "Lord, help us to re-cinder our paths." When the paths of our little town were re-cindered, the workmen simply spread the new cinders all over the worn surface of the old pathway, but they did not use any roller to roll them in. They just left them to be trodden in by the feet of the passers-by, and it was not at all pleasant walking on these loose cinders just after the paths had been repaired. I well remember walking with my old friend along a newly cindered path and saying to him, "Let's walk in the road." "No, lad," he replied in his rich Cheshire brogue, "let's keep on t' path! Somebody else'll have to tread 'em if we don't."

'I have often thought of that, and it has often made me ask myself whether I am doing my bit in helping to make the rough places smooth upon the way of life. Do you ever think of those who have done that for us? There are so many paths that are smooth for us to-day because of others who went before us and who bravely and patiently trod the rough places. I think of all the noble men and women who suffered persecution and loss that they might open up the paths of liberty and human rights. I think of Jesus Christ Himself dying on the Cross to make the way of righteousness and goodness easier for us all. How much we owe to those who have done all this for us! How can we repay them? By doing our bit to-day to make the world we live in a better, kinder, and more peaceful place. There are still plenty of rough places in the world.'

This is quoted from *At the Gate called Beautiful*, a volume of children's addresses by the Rev. O. G. Whitfield (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d. net). He offers them as a small contribution to the common material of all those who have to speak to boys and girls. The quoted address shows the matter. The binding is artistic, and there is a charming paper jacket.

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, Tanfield Works, and Published by T. & T. CLARK, 38 George Street, Edinburgh. It is requested that all literary communications be addressed to THE EDITOR, Kings Gate, Aberdeen, Scotland.