

# The Coming Day.

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AUGUST, 1892.

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## OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

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THE following letters will explain themselves. It will save a great deal of trouble if friends everywhere will kindly accept them as giving all the explanation that is possible or necessary.

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LEICESTER,

*July 15th, 1892.*

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CROYDON.

FRIENDS,

In complying with your wish that I should become your minister, I am reminded that I could almost say, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"; and, indeed, that is true: for, in these latter days of mine, a more commanding voice than yours or mine has called me to an enterprise which needed some Church like yours to aid and comfort me, and I turned to you in the belief that you would give me, in the Father's name, the help I need; and in the belief, too, that my work is yours.

Yours is one of the very freest Churches in England; and your trust-deed and your spirit make it possible for you to encourage any man, and to go forward with any man, who believes he has a special message for the time.

For your own sake, as a Church, I could come to you, but you know how deep is my interest in "Our Father's Church," and I think you will help me to make that fruitful for good in and around London, where many are waiting to welcome it. In what way you can help is not yet quite clear, but if the right spirit animates us, the light will shine when we need it. For this reason, I make no conditions, believing that you will only desire to do whatever is right and good, and that, in regard to any wish of mine, you will at least give me "the benefit of the doubt."

Heartily yours,

J. PAGE HOPPS.

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LEA HURST,

*July 18th, 1892.*TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GREAT MEETING CONGREGATION,  
LEICESTER.

FRIENDS,

I have been with you for nearly sixteen years, and, during all that time, I have tried to teach and illustrate one vital thought or fact—the sacred, beautiful, pathetic Brotherhood of man. During about seven of these years, we shewed, by a memorable example, how this could be set forth in worship and religious communion, but I have never recovered from the loss of our Hall,—a calamity which brought our delightful gatherings to a sudden close.

Out of these meetings arose the ideal of “Our Father’s Church” which has now become a profoundly hopeful reality, very dear to many in various parts of the world, but most of all in and about London, where it is now desirable that I should be, in order to develop and direct its influence in that great centre of thought and activity. This has led me to accept a very urgent invitation to undertake the ministry of The Free Christian Church, at Croydon, which specially interests me, and by whose help I hope to try a somewhat difficult experiment.

My comparatively easy life at Leicester, then, must be brought to a close ; and, both for your sake and for mine, as speedily as possible. At present I do not see how I can possibly get through the manifold distresses that must come to me with this change ; and I can only see one endurable way out—the shortest and most silent one, which you must mercifully help me to find. I propose therefore to leave Leicester at the end of September, and shall feel deeply grateful if I can be spared demonstrations and farewells of every kind. It would be entirely beyond my power to face and bear them.

I am not going to an easier life, or to a more profitable undertaking ; far from it. The experiment to which I go calls for the pioneering spirit, and, as I have been warned, I may ‘throw myself away.’ Be it so. You, at all events, will easily find some one to do all that is necessary for you in the green pastures and by the still waters which, God knows, I love, but which, by forces beyond my control, I always seem called upon to leave.

The light here is often tremulous and dim, and we know not what is for the best. But, in a few years we shall all understand : and then it will not matter at all whether we have been happy or sorrowful, rich or poor, befriended or lonely, successful or beaten. It will only matter that we tried to make the most of the little light and strength we had, and stood ready to take the staff in hand, and go wherever the Master seemed to lead.

Heartily yours,

J. PAGE HOPPS.

## MR. SPURGEON'S FINAL MANIFESTO.

[SPOKEN AT LEICESTER.]

ONE naturally shrinks from criticising a book by a man who has passed on, but Mr. Spurgeon is here still, in his work, and this Manifesto, issued by his dearest friends, is both a reminder that this is so, and a challenge to us to take note of it. It is the very best revelation of Mr. Spurgeon's strength and weakness, and is chiefly noteworthy as indicating precisely what the world will soon cease to say or believe. Facts will be too strong for us all. The old crude imaginings must go.

Mr. Spurgeon, in this "Final Manifesto," makes everything turn upon the Bible. "If we want weapons," he says, "we must come here for them, and here only." "The truth of God is the only treasure for which we seek, and the Scripture is the only field in which we dig for it." "We need nothing more than God has seen fit to reveal." What a begging of the question! Is there no "truth of God," then, in what God's holy spirit has taught us during the past 1700 years? and is it not the merest assumption to say that God has revealed nothing outside of the Bible? Is it not a fact that the Bible contains much that could only have come from the opposite of a holy spirit, while much, very much that is not in the Bible bears upon it the clearest marks of heavenly inspiration?

Mr. Spurgeon says, "Try not to cast anything forth from the perfect volume." It is intensely difficult to take such a saying seriously. The Bible is not a "perfect volume." It is unspeakably precious, but part of its preciousness arises from its palpable inconsistencies. We agree in not wishing to "cast anything forth" from the Bible, just as we would agree in not wishing to cast anything forth from the British Museum, or to cast away any of the ancient and modern typical literature of the world. All we say is that, while we preserve all that is in the Bible, we should discriminate, and preserve the various fragments for various reasons;—just as, for various reasons, we store up all kinds of specimens of sculpture and painting.

In urging the closest and most thorough reading of the Bible, Mr. Spurgeon appears to forget that it was not originally written in English, and he assumes that we have it just as God communicated it. Read the Bible through and through, he says, lest there be some "part of what the Lord has written which you have never read." It is very difficult to understand how any sane person could write such extravagant nonsense. Did "the Lord" write the 109th Psalm? or the 68th? or the 4th chapter of the Book of Ezekiel? Mr. Spurgeon gives us his answer; "The gentlemen who see errors in Scripture may think themselves competent to amend the language of the Lord of hosts." But that is a perverse misrepresentation, as well as a begging of the question. We do not presume to amend "the language of the Lord of hosts:" we humbly try to find out what God's word really is, and to distinguish between what God would say and what poor imperfect men have attributed to Him; and we only say we hope we are competent to distinguish between coherency and incoherency, between passable purity and palpable impurity.

Mr. Spurgeon says; "Believe in the inspired volume up to the hilt. Believe it right through." It is simply impossible. Mr. Spurgeon himself only thought he believed it so, and was carried away by a variety of subtle illusions and habits. He asks; "If this book be not infallible, where shall we find infallibility?" We frankly answer; Nowhere. But why wish for infallibility? Why should we be saved the trouble, and be deprived of the advantages, of thinking and finding out?

Here, as a contrast to this Manifesto, by a man who did not know or would not look, is a little book, on "The birth and growth of worlds," lately issued by a man who both looked and knew, a professor of Geology in the University of Oxford, whose work is published by the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*. Referring to a scholarly and scientific man of a past age, Dr. Thomas Burnet, and to his book on "The Sacred theory of the earth," including an amazing theory about the Deluge, he says,

"It is instructive to notice how Burnet was led to the speculations which are expounded in the book with the above startling title. . . . He seems to have communed with himself somewhat in this way. The account of the Deluge is found in the Bible, and therefore must be true; still it is not on the face of it a very probable story, and it is hard to get people to believe it. I shall be doing good service to the cause of religion if I can show that the development of the earth has been such that a Deluge must necessarily have occurred at a certain period in its history. And he is very candid: he rejects several explanations as unlikely or contradictory to the Biblical story, and will have nothing to do with such a compromise as that the Deluge was only local."

Then, after describing his ridiculous theory, he says,

"Our author now and then puts forward speculations on physical questions which show him to have been a man of parts. Then how was it that he could produce nothing better than this childish babble? This is the reason. He was speculating on questions in natural science, and we know now that the only safe road in such a case is to go to Nature herself, and to go with a mind purged from all foregone conclusions. Burnet went to a book first; he started from the theological dogma that every statement in that Book must be taken as literally true; and his aim was not to discover the truth and stand by the result, whatever that might be, but so to twist and turn facts, if they could be twisted, as to support the statements of that Book; and if facts would not serve his purpose, to supply their place with baseless guess-work. But, I pray you, don't misunderstand me; I beg you to believe me when I say that I am not capable of speaking of that Book in any other words than those of the deepest love and reverence. But for all that, *I don't go to it for my science.*"

Mark that, "I don't go to it for my science." So then, the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* backs up a man who tells us that at all events the Science of the Bible is wrong. It would not be difficult to shew that its morals are often wrong too. How then can we "believe it right through," or regard it as infallible?

One thing must be said, and greatly to Mr. Spurgeon's credit:—he takes the Bible just as it is, and has a robust dislike for every attempt to bring it into agreement with modern Science. If Science cannot agree with the Bible, so much the worse for Science, says Mr. Spurgeon: "we stand by what God has written." A most characteristic passage, in this vein, is worth quoting as a landmark:—we are fast leaving it behind.

"Here is a good brother who writes a tremendous book, to prove that the six days of creation represent six great geological periods; and he shows how the geological strata, and the organisms thereof, follow very much in the order of the Genesis story of creation. It may be so,

or it may not be so ; but if anybody should before long show that the strata do not lie in any such order, what would be my reply ? I should say that the Bible never taught that they did. The Bible said, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' That leaves any length of time for your fire-ages and your ice periods, and all that, before the establishment of the present age of man. Then we reach the six days in which the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and rested on the seventh day. There is nothing said about long ages of time, but, on the contrary, 'the evening and the morning were the first day,' and 'the evening and the morning were the second day' ; and so on. I do not here lay down any theory, but simply say that if our friend's great book is all fudge, the Bible is not responsible for it. For the most part, we had better leave a difficulty where it is, rather than make another difficulty by our theory. Why make a second hole in the kettle to mend the first ? Especially when the first hole is not there at all, and needs no mending. Believe everything in science which is proved : it will not come to much. You need not fear that your faith will be over-burdened. And then believe everything which is clearly in the word of God, whether it is proved by outside evidence or not. No proof is needed when God speaks. If he hath said it, this is evidence enough."

"But we are told that we ought to give up a part of our old-fashioned theology to save the rest. We are in a carriage travelling over the steppes of Russia. The horses are being driven furiously, but the wolves are close upon us ! There they are ! Can you not see their eyes of fire ? The danger is pressing. What must we do ? It is proposed that we throw out a child or two. By the time they have eaten the baby, we shall have made a little headway ; but should they again overtake us, what then ? Why, brave man, *throw out your wife !* 'All that a man hath will he give for his life' ; give up nearly every truth in the hope of saving one. Throw out inspiration, and let the critics devour it. Throw out election, and all the old Calvinism ; here will be a dainty feast for the wolves, and the gentlemen who give us the sage advice will be glad to see the doctrines of grace torn limb from limb. Throw out natural depravity, eternal punishment, and the efficacy of prayer. We have lightened the carriage wonderfully. Now for another drop. *Sacrifice the great sacrifice !* Have done with the atonement ! Brethren, this advice is villainous, and murderous : we will escape these wolves with everything, or we will be lost with everything. It shall be 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' or none at all. We will never attempt to save half the truth by casting any part of it away. The sage advice which has been given us involves treason to God, and disappointment to ourselves. We will stand by all or none. We will have a whole Bible or no Bible. We are told that if we give up something the adversaries will also give up something ; but we care not what they will do, for we are not in the least afraid of them. They are not the imperial conquerors they think themselves. The truth of God we will maintain *as the truth of God*, and we shall not retain it because the philosophic mind consents to our doing so. If scientists agree to our believing a part of the Bible, we thank them for nothing : we believe it whether or no."

One feels half sorry that Mr. Spurgeon cannot be right. It is a pity to waste such a superb appetite. What sturdy force there is in that fine audacity,—"No proof is needed when God speaks. If he hath said it, this is evidence enough" ! But there never was a more unreflecting begging of the question. What we ought to say is ;—Abundant proof is needed when we are told that God speaks. Our position is, not that we refuse to listen to God, but that we are increasingly anxious to make sure we really are listening to Him.

Mr. Spurgeon reversed the truth, and entirely misunderstood us. Our doubts and denials are not revolts against God, but revolts against the degradations of God. We decline to believe this or that which has been attributed to Him, only because we have a higher standard and have become "jealous for the Lord of hosts." Just consider it. If some one put before me a mass of papers, with the statement that all these were written by my father, and if, on examining them, I found, mixed up with much that was good and right, fragments of nonsensical science, scraps of obscene stories, and riotous ravings of fighting religionists, should I not do well to

doubt, to discriminate, to repudiate? and would it be fair to charge me with unfilial behaviour because I hesitated to accept such unworthy things as the writings of my father? Would not my hesitation rather indicate reverence, and care, and respect for my father's memory? But if my father were living, would it not be my duty to judge of the papers by his utterances now?

So we stand up for the all-perfect God: and so we think we obey and honour God by listening to Him in these latter days; and we are convinced that our shrinking from the dreadful things attributed to Him in the Bible is a shrinking which itself indicates the presence of His guiding spirit.

Carrying out to the full the arbitrary theory that God wrote the Bible and that He has written nothing since, Mr. Spurgeon becomes an obscurantist, and warns us, in this Manifesto, against reading books that do not maintain this. We ought, he says, to stand clear of religious books that are in the least tainted with the new tone and spirit. He says:—

“It may chauce that a book which is upon the whole excellent, which has a little taint about it, may do you more mischief than a thoroughly bad one. Be careful; for works of this kind come forth from the press like clouds of locusts. Scarcely can you find in these days a book which is quite free from the modern leaven, and the least particle of it ferments till it produces the wildest error. In reading books of the new order, though no palpable falsehood may appear, you are conscious of a twist being given you, and of a sinking in the tone of your spirit; therefore be on your guard. But with your Bible you may always feel at ease; there every breath from every quarter brings life and health.”

Those last words are singularly wilful. There is life, and there is health, in the Bible, and honest critics are among the first to say so; but there are hundreds of passages which even Mr. Spurgeon never thought of reading from his platform—hundreds of passages which, when young people read the Bible, we can only hope they may never find—hundreds of passages which no elderly English lady, however orthodox, would allow her companion to read to her. It is very far from the truth, that “with your Bible you may always feel at ease,” and that “every breath from every quarter is welcome and wholesome.” Mr. Spurgeon's statement is only another curious instance of the power of assertion and the unreflectiveness which never left him when he spoke of his favourite doctrines.

Turning from this prolonged defence of the Bible, as the veritable book of God, Mr. Spurgeon seems to be conscious of a drifting away from the old moorings, after all. He says:—

‘Old-fashioned believers could give you chapter and verse for what they believed; but how few of such remain! Our venerable grandsires were at home when conversing upon ‘the covenants.’ I love men who love the covenant of grace, and base their divinity upon it: the doctrine of the covenants is the key of theology.’

This “doctrine of the covenants” is really the old doctrine of “Election,” ever dear to Mr. Spurgeon's heart, though never held consistently by him. It was a part of his beloved emotional apparatus, and had nothing to do with his sensible head. In my own early days, I also knew some of these “old-fashioned believers”; in many respects excellent people, but, as a rule, amazingly shut up, mentally, and strangely selfish, spiritually,—calmly able to contemplate without flinching the

prospect of the eternal damnation of their neighbours and friends. One of these was a deacon in the Baptist Church to which I first ministered. How well I remember his quiet chimney-corner, and that never-to-be-forgotten conversation, when, between the puffs of his tobacco smoke, he deliberately asked me whether I thought any one could be saved who had not been baptised !

Mr. Spurgeon, in confronting critics and objectors, thinks it sufficient to point to the goodness and the happiness of "old-fashioned believers" in his creed. He says, "This must be a true gospel which can produce such lives as these." But the plea will not, for a moment, bear examination, and for two reasons ; first, because multitudes of believers in his creed have been neither good nor happy,—some, on the one hand, being hard and intolerant and selfish, while others have even been driven mad by the horrible side of his beloved Calvinism ; and second, because there are multitudes of good and happy people of all faiths. The Roman Catholic Church, at the one end, and the Unitarian Church at the other, have had their saints whose lives were, to themselves and others, a benediction and a joy. The very day on which I read this, in the Manifesto, about the goodness and happiness of "old fashioned believers," I read the following in a Unitarian paper, "An old gentleman up in the eighties (who, with his wife, left the confines of the old theology for the larger light and freedom of the new, and, as a Thanksgiving offering, made a substantial gift to the American Unitarian Association) in a letter just received, says : 'Oh, what a blessing it is to us to die in the glorious faith of Unitarianism ! Our view of God and the future state is now so beautiful and rational we both are reconciled, and are ready to depart when the forces of nature stop.' It would seem from the evidence of this worthy and venerable pair that Unitarianism is not only a good religion to live by, but a good one to die by."

I wonder what Mr. Spurgeon would have said to that. Is it not plain that through many windows we may catch golden glimpses of God ? It is just that question which brings us to the reflection that sums up all. It is this. All our creeds are only temporary guesses at truth, or passing descriptions of personal moods. None of them reveal God. All of them only reveal man. The Bible is man's book—the record of his voyages of discovery on dark and troubled as well as on sunny seas : and we all, fellow voyagers in our different crafts, small and large, old and new, are only seekers still.

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## WHAT DOES THE SUFFRAGE MEAN ?

BY O. ESLIE-NELHAM.

(Concluded from page 108.)

LORD COLERIDGE has himself affirmed, that the law of England, as it affects women, is a disgrace to a civilised country, and that its statutes are worthier of barbarians than of an enlightened people of the nineteenth century.

Do those who are indifferent about having the suffrage imagine that a statement of the kind could have been made if women had been permitted a voice in the framing of that law? If they desire to see for themselves what "generosity" has done for those who have been debarred from exacting justice, they would do well to read "The Law in Relation to Women," by a lawyer.\* Some of the judgments quoted in that forcible pamphlet are simply beyond comment—so scandalous are they.

In the early days, men monopolised power; and, having been enabled to do so successfully, they made for themselves monopolies of all other good things, as a matter of course. They made the law of the land favourable to themselves, and called one-sided partiality "justice," insisting that those whom they had enslaved should conform to arrangements dictated by a masterful egotism that was as limited and as unfair as it was exacting. And yet men maintain that masculine persons only understand justice and honour; that they only are hard-headed and logical and impersonal, whilst women are led by their feelings. Ah, but men have said cruel things! The world has been ruled by them, and has taken puerile and self-interested inventions for stern facts. They have a heavy account to render of their unjust stewardship.

It hurts one inexpressibly, for the honour of our kind, to think of all that men have done and of all that they might have done; to think how they have degraded themselves in victimising their feminine comrades—how they have desecrated the soul of humanity and have retarded the spiritual progress of the race. Instead of all striving bravely after the highest, we grovel on a lower plane, and, where an animating impulse of universal brotherhood should obtain, we wrangle for our own poor individual monopolies. Where we should be friends and fellow-workers—the man seeking his complement in the woman, the woman her's in the man—we bear ourselves as conquerors and conquered—as tyrants and victims—as autocrats and rebels. The iniquity of the past forces the feminine thinkers of the day into apparent rivalry with their brothers, and all seems to be wrong and riotous and discordant. There need be no rivalry between the woman and the man, there is room in the world, work for all, and when justice, irrespective of sex, is the order of the day, the necessary strife of the present will quietly subside. But it is imperative that strife shall continue until men realise that mankind consists of men and women; not, as they have hitherto supposed, of man only, attended by a species of satellite called woman.

The legal enactments of the land are a terrible memorial of masculine injustice and unreason. But it is not only law—the law in its stricter sense—that is a shame to those who made it, the very ethics of the country are unrighteous. It is not only in appealing to legal decisions that one-half of humanity are at a disadvantage through lack of a vote: the ordinary person has, as a rule, little to do with lawsuits, and will be able much better to appreciate existing injustice when it is pointed out that one-tenth of the farmers of England are women, and that those women are

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\* A pamphlet, to be obtained from the Secretary, Woman's Suffrage Guild, 13, Albert Road, Southport. Post free 2d.

very apt to be expelled from their farms to make room for substitutes with a vote. For the same reason, widows are driven from the homesteads that have become dear to them.

Does it want much imagination to realise what it means for a capable worker to be sent forth into the cold world to begin anew; to be sent from her own little kingdom that she has made a prosperous one, from the lands that she has cultivated with loving pride and that old associations have made sacred to her? Does it want much imagination to realise the bitterness—the just bitterness—of spirit that must overwhelm her when she is ignominiously expelled from the scene of her useful labours; when she is expelled because she lives in a country where empty prejudice takes the place of reason?

If those female workers who worked contentedly, and asked only to be allowed to continue their rightful work, develop into paupers, agitators, criminals, is not the State accountable?

The best men are on the side of women—many of them work unweariedly for the right. Their sisters tender them most earnest gratitude—the future will know how to honour them. It is mainly the male rabble who raise their voice in ignoble opposition. It may be that the rabble, being unable to think for themselves, oppose the oppressed, not from any special unkindness, but simply from custom—simply because they are themselves unaware how urgently the franchise is needed. They are not cruel-hearted, although they are so much accustomed to think of the world as inhabited by men of various types and races—and *by women*—that they sometimes say very strange things about the feminine complements of their being, whom they themselves, by inconsistent treatment, have made incomprehensible. It has been affirmed by masculine intelligence, “No, I would not give women the suffrage, it would cause dissension in family life: and family unity is sacred.” (Most things appear to be sacred, excepting justice to women!) In answer to that assertion, to show whither such style of argument leads, one feels inclined to suggest,—Would it not be better to withhold religion from women also until they are married, in case their husbands might have creeds different from theirs, and family dissension ensue?

Religion, it is generally allowed, has caused more strife upon the earth than politics and everything else put together. Following that masculine argument to its logical conclusion, it would no doubt be eminently judicious to keep from the feminine wrangler so disturbing an element as religion.

It is interesting to project thought into the future, and to imagine what coming generations, who will be guided by pure reason, will think of these times when prejudice ruled social ethics. What will those advanced generations think of the jargon of the day as exemplified in such nonsense as this, in relation to a certain cruel form of sport?—

“If this mischievous and most offensive practice were confined to the male members of society, it would perhaps be tolerable; but the worst of it is that it has invaded the feminine camp,” &c., &c. A “mischievous and most offensive practice” would be tolerable if indulged in only by men;—but is intolerable when committed by women. Why? “The Queen has written to Colonel Coulson expressing sympathy with his efforts to put an end to a certain cruel sport. . . . We shall hope to find, &c. . . . It would be a Christmas message of good will to the deer, . . . and a well-deserved snub for those unsexed women who would be sent to Coventry pretty quickly if, after such an intimation, they persisted in the barbarous sport.”

Women are unsexed when they do the cruel things that men commit without much comment. Why? In justice to the paper from which quotations are given, it must be said that the editor has consistently raised his voice against cruelty, whether committed by men or women.

In the paragraph given, however, we do not take note of the objection to cruelty; what we call attention to is the prejudiced assumption that women should be more merciful than men. Why should they be more merciful? Women, having received little culture, would more naturally be inclined, an unprejudiced, reasonable person would think, to give way to the elementary impulses of human nature, and the elementary impulses of human nature are, most usually, cruel ones. However that may be, when men arrogate to themselves responsible superiority in all directions, the only logical conclusion to be arrived at is that it rests with them to lead their sisters in the way that they should go; and they act in a wholly inconsistent manner in expecting ethical instruction or influence from those whom they degrade.

When one asks, why should women be more humane, charitable, virtuous, and so on, than men, unthinking women by the million, imbued with the tone forced upon them for centuries, will themselves answer glibly with some parrot-cry, based on prejudice; but neither they nor their brothers will be able to assign one valid reason.

Thinkers decline to be put off with prejudice in place of reason, thinkers demand a rational answer; they know how prejudice expresses itself. Custom accustoms us to anything, and women are so accustomed to be hemmed in by the imaginary lines called "womanliness," that they are scandalised by the action of their thoughtful sisters who desire not to be womanly, according to the standard of tenth-rate men, but to be true women.

The future will laugh when it observes that man, because he could not be perfect himself, required an unnatural kind of perfection (in reality imperfection) from the creatures whom they had forced into subjection, that they laid down such laws as were conducive to their own comfort, calling an excessive regard for man's convenience "public opinion."

Of all the vagaries that the future will laugh at, they will laugh with most pitiful incredulity at the credulous foolishness of women who permitted themselves to be so shamelessly tricked; who, not content with being subserviently womanly themselves, prosed on the unmeaning "womanly" theme to their sisters, and told them that they were unsexed when they ventured to espouse good new beliefs; unsexed when they had a great-hearted understanding of the purpose of their being, and felt that they dishonoured the world, and the world them, in allowing prejudice to limit their capacities for good; unsexed when they considered it inequitable that large-minded creatures, capable of filling wide spheres of usefulness, capable of giving efficient service in all manner of directions, should be forbidden to fill the places for which their talents fitted them, and should be arbitrarily restricted to one kind of employment only; unsexed when they saw through men, and decreed it to

be unfair that one-half of the community should be told off to minister to the selfish actions of the other; unsexed when they determined that such domestic ethics were not only unfair but injudicious and most hurtful to the well-being of the community at large.

The future will smile at many things, but it will laugh with most piteous mirth at the women of the past who allowed the sentiment of a false "womanliness" to bar their way to the attainment of a lofty and consummate womanhood.

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## IS THERE NO MORE ANY PROPHET?

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"Hear me, O Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."—*2 Chr. xx. 20.*

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Few figures in history are more difficult to recall than that of the Hebrew prophet: few social forces oftener misunderstood than his. The name is familiar to the Christian as to the Jew, but the meaning attached to it varies between the inspired preacher on the one hand, and the dervish and soothsayer on the other. Far as history and tradition can carry us into the past life of Israel we find everywhere the men, few, or scattered singly, who seem, as it were, the incarnate conscience of the nation, calling it back when it had gone astray, urging it onward when its footsteps flagged: amid trials and temptations, upholding the pure worship of Jahveh, and the righteousness that must distinguish his people. "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." "Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil." "O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord!" With such words as these were the prophets wont to exhort and admonish the wayward tribes to whom they were sent.

How is it that so noble a type of humanity has become strange to us? that Moses and Isaiah no longer speak to us as man to man, but as though from the wonderglow of the Transfiguration mount to the toiling throng in the plain below? Are we compelled to think that in any former age men were able to receive a more direct communication from God than in our own? that the spirit of Him who filleth heaven and earth has in one age only and in one small nation entered into the heart of man? We regard these great moral leaders as especially distinguished from other heroes and holy men by their gift of *prophecy*; but is the worthiest conception of divinely-inspired utterance that of *prediction, foretelling*? And was it by this power alone, or chiefly, that the ancient Hebrews recognised the man of God? or did they not rather see in him the bearer of a divine message concerning things present?

They named him the Seer, the Spokesman, the Messenger of Jahveh, the Man of God : and the "*word of Jahveh*" which he uttered was not primarily a foretelling of things to come : it was this only in so far as warning, or threat, or promise might furnish a motive for present righteousness, and incline the stubborn heart of the people to receive the commands of its God. The tendency of the latest and most careful study of the prophetic writings is to bring down the bright beam of prophecy to the dim light of common human foresight : to regard the "*word of Jahveh*" not as augury such as men sought from the teraphim, but rather as the law of the nation's life, upon the keeping whereof its very existence depended. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established : believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." The prophet, like the priest, stood, as it were, midway between Jahveh and his people : but whereas it was the office of the priest to lead men into the presence of God, the prophet was the *interpreter*, the *mouthpiece* of God to men. Inspired by the spirit of the Eternal he, more clearly than his fellows, could see the nature of sin and its inevitable consequences : filled with the love of God he could see, beyond the punishment, the bright promise of forgiveness ; and, since a true understanding of what *is* is the only sure ground whence to forecast what *will be*, the seer might so far be a prophet also. The true seer, in ancient Israel and in every later age, is no visionary, caught up into the third heaven to see unspeakable things : but he who, in the light of God seeing light, "looks through the shows of things into *things*," looks below the glitter or the gloom of the surface to the abiding fact beneath. His mission is not to unveil the dark future, but to open men's eyes to the light of heaven about them, and their ears to the eternal voices that testify of God.

There are some who tell us that the prophet is an extinct character : that the world has no longer need of or place for a prophet, and none ariseth. Surely such can know little either of the most godlike, or of the most ungodlike, of their fellow men !

In no age has mankind advanced at an equal pace : it seems to be a law of human progress, as of development everywhere, that the few precede and the multitude follow. Nature does not endow her children alike, nor can any Democracy or Communion—how loud soever be the cry for "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity"—avail to keep humanity upon the same plane. And would not many of the sweetest and most sacred of social bonds be snapped were this to be ? We have been taught by prophets of these latter days that religion is *reverence*, *hero-worship* ; and this we learn here among our fellow men as we could not do were all of one moral and intellectual stature. "The admiration of divine nobleness, divine *worship* of god-like nobleness, how universal it is in the history of man !"

To many of us life is, as it were, a long night-journey. Owl-like, we may fasten our gaze and our thoughts upon the earth, and so long as we can find food thereon, and safe enjoyment in the getting, may live quiet and content ; but when the mind awakes and we begin to look above us and about us, an uncomfortable *Sehnsucht* takes hold upon us : we are bewildered by the problems that everywhere wait in vain for an answer : we are overwhelmed by a yearning for the day, and we waste in gazing heavenward the hours wherein we might have been gathering grain. Surely it were better to take our fill of what the earth can give and leave these fruitless

aspirations! But lest such a thought prevail, and we smother within us instincts and yearnings that we can neither understand nor satisfy, there comes to us now and again a man of clearer vision and diviner spirit than ourselves saying, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" And he takes our hand and leads us upward apart; and, walking by his side, the mountain path seems even easier than the lowland road, and, ever as we journey, the gloom lightens, and through the breaking clouds the stars gleam forth, until at length, beholding the full glory of the starlight, we cease to cry for the day. Then our guide may leave us: we may have to go down the mountain and face alone the clamour and conflict of an ungodlike throng: but though the overhanging cloud hide from us now the radiance of heaven, and we have exchanged the hallowed stillness of the lonely peak for the noises of human struggle and pain, yet the memory abides as an ever-present inspiration, and our hearts are strengthened thereby. "Manifold are thy witnesses, O God: and the angels of thine invisible presence: else had we never known thee." There are some to whom "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork," to whom the stars, and the sea, and the wayside flowers testify of "das ewig Eine, das sich vielfach offenbart": but there are others—and the most—who cannot interpret the whisper of Nature, cannot see the light that shines through history until they have first beheld the nearer and clearer image of God in man. And such image is not withholden from us: to us, as to our fathers, are the messengers of Jahveh sent, and happy are we if we know and honour them!

"The word unto the prophet spoken  
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;  
The word by seers or sibyls told,  
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,  
Still floats upon the morning wind  
Still whispers to the willing mind.  
One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world hath never lost."

One, himself a seer of these latter days, has said, "Knowest thou no Prophet, even in the vesture, environment and dialect of this age? None to whom the God-like had revealed itself, through all meanest and highest forms of the Common; and by him been again prophetically revealed: in whose inspired melody, even in these rag-gathering and rag-burning days, man's life again begins, were it but afar off, to be divine? Knowest thou none such? I know him and name him—Goethe. . . . Neither say that thou hast now no symbol of the God-like. Is not God's universe a symbol of the God-like; is not immensity a temple; is not man's history and men's history a perpetual evangel? Listen, and for organ-music thou wilt ever, as of old, hear the morning stars sing together."

"Halte das Bild der Würdigen fest! Wie leuchtende Sterne  
Theilte sie aus die Natur durch den unendlichen Raum."—*Goethe*.

K. M. W.

## LIGHT ON THE PATH.

**OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.**—Many cheering letters have come to hand, most of them telling of good done to those who were lonely and perplexed. One interesting letter, referring to the "freedom" of dropping all creeds, and passing beyond the churches, says, "with some degree of heart-sickness and fear have we attained this freedom—a possession scarcely to be desired, it would seem, and which one might fain be willing to exchange for the ardent confidence of the first young salvationist one should come across." The writer adds, "It seems somewhat strange, after beating about like a lonely ship somewhat out of the ordinary track of vessels for several years, to come across a whole fleet, bound apparently for the same port as I desire one day to make myself." We are glad to have his company, and hope he will find both joy and profit in ours.

**THE NEW BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.**—Many readers of *The Coming Day* will be glad to hear that, after prolonged consultations with over forty ministers, the Book of Common Prayer has reached its final form, and is practically ready. The changes that have been made will not fail to secure very serious attention. Nothing now remains but the music for responses and special hymns and chants. We hope soon to make an entirely satisfactory announcement. It ought, however, to be at once clearly understood that the first issues are entirely withdrawn, and that the only acknowledged edition of the book is that which will be shortly offered.

**THE PATH OF PEACE FOR IRELAND.**—We have never doubted the ultimate emergence into the light of the right road for Ireland; and we hope the light has come. But much has still to be learned in relation to the so-called "hopeless enmities" of factions there. Here is a curious illustration of restricted vision. A week or two ago the London *Telegraph* said;—"There is one way, and only one, in which we can hope to heal the discords that have so miserably divided our Celtic brethren into opposite camps. Our only plan is to fuse the differences into a higher unity, to make them part of a larger system in which their antagonisms will be controlled by more impartial associates." But this is precisely what we have been doing for generations, and the result is—what Lord Salisbury and Dr. Parker describe.

The *Telegraph* says that is the "only" way "to heal the discords"; but we point out another. We are willing to use the *Telegraph's* own phrase, and to say that we need to "fuse the differences into a higher unity." That is exact. The "differences" are local, sectarian, personal. The "higher unity" would be got by lifting all Irishmen into an altogether higher region, and uniting them in the "higher" concerns of care for their country's life and well-being. In other words, let us heal sectarian differences by national duties and responsibilities. The cure for home squabbles is Home Rule.

**BALFOURISM.**—We do not wish to hit a man when he is down, but history must be written and masks must be taken off. In the sad service of truth, a few gentle souls have left for a time their beautiful life-work, and have written down the ugly story of Mr. Balfour's rule in Ireland. In it they track him through all his crooked paths of cynical ignorance, want of sympathy and unfairness, and make manifest the gross folly of the part he played. It is a painful but much-needed object-lesson. The pamphlet, price 6d., can be had from the Home Rule Union, 9, Bridge Street, London, S.W.

**THE *Inquirer*** has been keeping its fiftieth birthday. It may well do so, and with honest pride. Without a break, it has stood all along (and sometimes almost all alone) for scholarly sincerity, honest criticism, devout rationality in Religion, and breezy Liberalism in politics. At one time it kept on the even tenor of its way as a costly luxury for the few; now it appeals to the many, and is perhaps as good a pennyworth as there is in England; though it would be improved by a return to the searching and careful critical work of, say, twenty or thirty years ago.

**SPIRIT-COMMUNION.**—Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, LL.D., one of the most patient, one of the keenest, and one of the most truth-loving men of our day, said; "I was a confirmed philosophical sceptic. I was so thorough and confirmed a materialist, that I could not find a place in my mind for the conception of spiritual existence, or for any other agencies in the universe than matter and force. *The facts beat me.* They compelled me to accept them as

*facts* long before I could accept the spiritual explanation of them : there was at that time no place in my fabric of thought into which it could be fitted. By slow degrees a place was made, but it was made, not by any preconceived or theoretical opinions, but by the continuous action of fact after fact which could not be got rid of in any other way."

BACK TO JESUS.—There are signs in the heavens and on the earth that a revival of true faith in Jesus is at hand : but the reaction will all turn upon "*the man* Christ Jesus." Dr. Clifford's stirring words are noteworthy as to this. They were penned more than a year ago, but they are as good as new : "'Back to Jesus,' saith the Spirit to the Churches ; to Jesus of Bethlehem and Nazareth, Capernaum and Jerusalem. Back to the Boy, nourished and inspired to high aims by His loving mother. Back to the Youth, now drinking in the golden light that falls on the Nazarene hills, now wistfully searching the mysteries of the clear-shining stars ; but oftener rejoicing in the words of psalmists and prophets and the strong assurance of the loving Will of the Eternal Father. Back to the common Working Man, the Carpenter of Nazareth, calmly enduring the long discipline of silence for the sake of far-off issues to the world. Back to Jesus, as He was to the people who lived next door to Him in Nazareth, as He answered with startling wisdom the free and familiar questions of the gossips at street corners, and then in a public ministry, made brief by death, taught and wrought so effectively as to make Him the Redeemer of the world. Alas ! how little we know of Him in His habit as He thought, and felt, and lived. . . . If only we knew the

Jew of Galilee through and through, and his brother of Jerusalem, so that we could see into the working of their minds, that would aid us ; but it is difficult to make sure of them ; how much more difficult to be sure of the workings of the mind of that Chiefest Jew of them all."

THE TRINITY.—A sermon in *The Modern Church*, preached in Old Machar parish church, by Dr. G. Jamieson, a good Scotch Presbyterian, is another sign of the times. It is significantly entitled "fresh light on the Trinity." The main point is that the Holy Spirit and Jesus are one : so that, strictly speaking, the Trinity vanishes, and we are left with the Father ("eternal mind") and the Word ("the outward expression of that eternal mind") : in which case we have only the eternal God and His expression : — but why "expression" ? why not many expressions ? Dr. Jamieson says that the fulness of absolute righteousness, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth "constitute the grand essentials of God : " and that these are "transferable." "We know that they are," he says, "and when we partake of them we are said to be made in the divine image, and therefore to be sharers of the divine nature. And we have the authority of Christ for saying that we are hereby made the offspring of God, and therefore in an inferior sense 'gods.' " Dr. Jamieson is indeed throwing "fresh light on the Trinity," and we wish him success. He also is voicing the need of the hour which can only be met and satisfied by the long-abused "heresy" that there never was any one being or thing which fully contained or represented God, and that all beings and things are parts or modes of His manifestation, Jesus Christ included, and whatever holy spirit the Universe has ever known.

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## MESSAGES FROM OUR FORERUNNERS.

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CRAFT.—Dissimulation is but a faint kind of policy or wisdom ; for it asketh a strong wit and a strong heart to know when to tell truth, and to do it : therefore, it is the weaker sort of politicians that are the great dissemblers. The ablest men that ever were have had all an openness and frankness of dealing, and a name of certainty and veracity.—*Lord Bacon.*

CHILDREN AND PRAISE.—For my part I like a child who is encouraged by commendation, is animated by a sense of glory, and weeps when he is outdone. A noble emulation will always keep him in exercise, a reprimand will touch him to the quick, and honour will serve instead of a spur. We need not fear that such a scholar will ever give himself up to sullenness.—*Quintilian.*

## NOTES ON BOOKS.

"Our mother earth." By Charles Wicksteed. London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co. A small work on a great subject, but the value of the Essay must not be estimated by its size. It is all pith and sap, with just enough wood and bark to keep the whole together. The writer, a sound and ardent but honest and temperate land nationaliser, knows what he is talking about. The work is published at the nominal price of 3d.

"How do I know that the Bible is true?" 615th thousand. London: G. Stoneman. The immense success of this tiny tract only measures the still gross ignorance or unreflectiveness of the "orthodox" majority. The title is rather vague, but its meaning is well known: "true" means true from beginning to end; and that, of course, is the nonsense of it. "In this Book," says the writer, "you will find a history of the boundless wisdom and goodness of God." It may be true, but the reverse is also true,—that in this Book you will find a history of the boundless folly and malignity of God. It seems a shocking thing to say that, but it is forced from us; and, if proof is wanted, we refer the strong-minded reader to "Thus saith the Lord" and "The plain truth about the Bible," by the Editor of *The Coming Day*.

The writer of this tract asserts that man "appears to possess two natures, good and bad," and that in the Bible we may find the "explanation,"—this "explanation" being that "man was created perfect" and that he afterwards admitted sin, and so "fell." "If he had been obedient to God he would have remained perfect." We know that all this is unmitigated romancing, and that the human race came into existence, not as a finished article, but the reverse.

Man having "fallen," he had to be "saved," and God provided for this, by sending Jesus who "suffered the whole penalty of the wrath of God" for our sins, that we might be "free": and "he rose from the dead to give us proof that we shall rise also," though it does not appear how an innocent being can justly or usefully suffer the penalty of "wrath" for the guilty, or how the rising of a God on the third day after his crucifixion proves that a man will rise some thousands of years after his burning or burial.

The whole thing is tiresome and stupid beyond all expression. The only wonder is that it persists. The explanation probably is that it is so entangled with human hope and fear, sentiment and sorrow, remorse and longing, that sober reason has but little chance—at present.

## TO ONE PERPLEXED.

He who bears us all along,  
Hidden, silent, patient, strong,  
Knows the end and knows the way,  
Goes on with us night and day.

Subtile law and searching hand  
Hold us to it where we stand:  
Watchful eyes and pitying heart  
On the journey play their part.

Mother-love and Father-care  
Press upon us everywhere,  
Saving not from grief and pain,  
Loneliness and scar and stain.

So we learn to find the way;  
This the price we have to pay.  
Not of these may we complain—  
School-house, voyage or campaign.

Here and there, the sad voice calls,  
"Leave these dear familiar walls,  
Pass out from the old abode,  
Lo! this narrower, lonelier road."

Old, old faces fade away—  
Light of eyes that made the day—  
Voice that cheered the withering night—  
Hope that made life's winter bright.

Ah! but to the road's last bend,  
Love will lead us to the end,  
When the little door at last  
Opens where they all have passed.

'Passed'! but whither! Only say—  
'Still with Him who knows the way,  
Whose dear presence still supplies  
Subtile law and watchful eyes.'

Angel-faces will be seen  
Where the hiding veil had been,  
And from lips, at last unsealed,  
All the truth shall be revealed.

Every lesson will be learned,  
All shall come for which we yearned,  
In the quiet of that land  
Where we all shall understand.—*J.P.H.*