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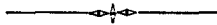
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successors owed obedience to the Irish Church, and recognised the Abbot of Iona as the chief of the mission. At one time it seemed, from the rapid progress made by Aidan and his followers, that they would be completely successful, and that a National Church, independent of Rome, would be established in this country. But after the Council of Whitby, already referred to, one province after another, influenced by the decision of Oswy in regard to the Roman time of keeping Easter, transferred its allegiance to the Roman Pontiff. The truth was that the missionary enterprise of the Scoto-Irish Church from Iona was, like the charge of the Highlanders, brilliantly successful for a time, but unable to effect the permanent conquest of the country. The Roman Church was superior to it in organization. When we contemplate the history of the following ages, we must exclaim, "How has the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed!" The Latin tone and spirit introduced after the Council of Whitby fostered spiritual despotism, and the close connection now established between the Church of England and the Church of Rome had an injurious effect on English Church freedom. We often, as we read the history of the following times, heave a sigh over their degeneracy, and long for the restoration of the good old days of Aidan and his followers. But we cannot suppose that they have lived and died in vain; we have no doubt that they have contributed to shape our spiritual destinies. We owe a debt of gratitude to them, as we have seen, for the conversion of a great part of England. Aidan's name has been comparatively forgotten in this later age. His glory has been eclipsed by other orbs in our spiritual firmament. But the memory of the just is blessed. His work shall live in records more durable than brass or marble, when the monuments of human greatness have mouldered into dust.

A. R. PENNINGTON.



ART. V.—IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

ONE of the many marvellous things about that ancient collection of literature which we reverence under the general name of the Holy Scriptures, is the fact that in them we may find the reflection of every possible and conceivable phase of human experience and feeling. And not merely that, but each of our passions and sorrows is gently led by teaching or by story to a happy, a wholesome, and a fitting result. In what age, for example, have there not been instances of the moody and ungrateful discontent of Jonah? Which of us

cannot count up many of his acquaintances who take a strange delight in saying, "It is better for me to die than to live"? Who does not know some dismal Rebekah, who, when Esau married against her wishes, exclaimed, "I am weary of my life! What good shall my life do unto me?"

Some of us talk as if this imaginary diseased distaste for existence was some new thing peculiar to our own age. There has been plenty of it in the Bible. "My soul chooseth death rather than life" was the perpetual complaint of Job. "Let the day perish wherein I was born!" "Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing which I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that He would let loose His hand and cut me off!" No misanthrope of modern times could say more. "It is enough," cried Elijah; "now take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." "I hated life," says Solomon, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, in the bitterness of his heart. There has been plenty of it in literature and history. "Life is a continuation of misery," said Acosta, the Portuguese. "The happiest hour of life is the departure from it," said Calanus, the Hindu companion of Alexander the Great. "I doubt," wrote Seneca, "if anyone would accept life if he knew what it would cost him." "The blessings of life," wrote Pliny the elder, "are not equal to its ills, even though the number of the two were equal; nor can any pleasure compensate for the least pain." And in our own times men who have lost faith in the future are constantly asking the dismal question, "*Is life worth living?*" Poets have written in this strain:

What is the existence of man's life
But open war or slumbrous strife?
Where sickness to his sense presents
The combat of the elements;
And never feels a perfect peace
Till death's cold hand signs his release.

• • • • •
It is a weary interlude
Which doth short joys, long woes, include;
The world the stage, the prologue tears,
The acts—vain hopes and varied fears!
The scene shuts up with loss of breath,
And leaves no epilogue but death.

Now, the reason of all this discontent and despair, this wishing of a man that he had never been born, this idea that he would be glad if he could lie down and die, is extraordinarily simple and obvious. The people who fancy that they feel these things, and who utter these loud lamentations, are just those who have not made a proper use of life, or who have not understood what life really means. They have made

a hopeless mess of it, and are feeling the discomforts of what they have done. But even these very people, unless they are in the sudden madness and frenzy and unhinging of suicide, would be terribly scared if you took them at their word. If you suddenly met them with a cup of poison where there was no escape, and told them that there was nothing for it but for them to drink it off at that moment, they would wring their hands and sweat with horror, and cry aloud that they never meant what they said. Many a man who has jumped into a river has wished that he was out again before he was drowned. It was only a strong way of expressing their discontent and unhappiness. "So much are men enamoured of their miserable lives that there is no condition so wretched to which they are not willing to submit, provided they may live." That was the remark of one of the acutest, even if he was also one of the most cynical, observers of human nature who ever existed.¹ These people are unhappy because they have ruined their health, or because they feel the burden and yoke of bad habits, or because they have not found out or have been unwilling to learn what is the only way of being really happy. Solomon, for example, had so far forgotten his own wisdom that he had overburdened himself with luxury and amusement. Unless some mistake of transcription has crept into the Hebrew numbers, we are told that he exceeded even Eastern license in the scale of his domestic relations. Such ceaseless monotony of unchecked indulgence of self was enough to make any man discontented.

God gave the true answer to Jonah: "Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?" He showed him that he ought to consider himself more than happy in having been chosen by the Almighty to be the means of saving 120,000 souls in that immense city of Nineveh. The repentance of the whole community, the renewed healthiness of a vigorous municipal life, the simple joys of each quiet hearth and home up and down its streets, rescued and restored and refined by the influence of this portentous Hebrew prophet, the foreign children of the universal Father of all men Who was worshipped at Jerusalem brought back by his message to a sound mind—these things ought to enter into his very being; these lives he ought to feel as if he himself was living; these thoughts, if he realized them and reflected on them properly, were enough to fill him with delight.

That answer is true for all time. Why is it that there are people who bless God for every minute which they live? Whether they are rich or poor, ill or well, strong or feeble, the

¹ Montaigne.

mere fact of living gives them such delight that they can never be too grateful for it. What is the meaning of this? Why are they different from those who moan and groan? It is not merely that they are naturally sanguine and cheerful. Many sanguine and cheerful persons have no real peace of mind. Ill-health may produce morbid conditions, but it cannot rival the Spirit of God in influencing the whole tenor of a life. Dyspepsia and a diseased liver may be responsible for fits of melancholy, but not for the whole cast of a soul. David knew the answer of the secret, and he has written it out over and over again in words which can never be imitated: "*Thou* wilt make me to know the path of life; in *Thy* presence is fulness of joy; at *Thy* right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "Bless the Lord, O my soul," sang David again, "and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." And again, "In *His* favour is life." And again, "With *Thee* is the fountain of life." And another Psalmist: "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard; Who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."

The secret, then, is for a man to follow God's way of life instead of his own—practically, not theoretically only; to take His will instead of the perverse, wayward, mischievous will which he finds in his own mind; to live for others instead of himself. "The end of life," said Socrates, "is to be like unto God; and the soul following God will be like unto Him; He being the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things." "This span of life was lent for lofty duties, not for selfishness; not to be whiled away for aimless dreams, but to improve ourselves and to serve mankind." Even Epicurus, who is so much misunderstood because he taught men to live for true pleasure—even he said that "it is impossible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honourably and justly; and it is equally impossible to live prudently, honourably and justly without living pleasantly." "To complain that life has no joys," says another, "while there is a single creature whom we can relieve by our bounty, assist by our counsels, or enliven by our presence, is to lament the loss of that which we actually possess, and is just as reasonable as to die of thirst with the cup in our hands." That is the absolute truth. That is God's secret for human life.

He lives, who lives to God, alone,
And all are dead beside;
For other source than God is none
Whence life can be supplied.

Is Life Worth Living?

To live to God is to requite
 His love as best we may ;
 To make His precepts our delight,
 His promises our stay.
 But life within a narrow ring
 Of giddy joys comprised,
 Is falsely named, and no such thing,
 But rather death disguised.

If, then, a man wishes to be truly grateful for the benefit of living; if he wishes to be able to say sincerely in the General Thanksgiving, "We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," he has only to follow the secret of David. He has to live, not for himself, but for God; and that means living for others. There is no satisfaction for him so great as the feeling that each day he has been doing something just, or kind, or useful; no discontent so gnawing as the knowledge that he has been wasting his time and energies and money on empty fancies which were mere delusions, and which left him afterwards poorer in all these things than before. Selfishness is the one great curse of human nature. It is a curse because it can never be satisfied, because it makes everybody whom the selfish man meets an opponent, and because the object which it worships, himself, is so worthless. "Remember for what purpose you were born, and through the whole of life look at its end; and consider, when that comes, in what will you put your trust? Not in the bubble of worldly vanity—it will be broken; not in worldly pleasures—they will be gone; not in great connections—they cannot serve you; not in wealth—you cannot carry it with you; not in rank—in the grave there is no distinction; not in the recollection of a life spent in unconsidering conformity to the silly fashions of a thoughtless and wicked world, but in that of years passed, soberly, righteously, and godly, in the path of duty."¹

Life is infinitely more than a mere consciousness of existence to be moulded by the fashions and customs of the day, and to be spent on the advancement or cultivation of self for the purposes of the visible world alone, even in any of the myriad aspects which self presents. "It cannot be," wrote Bulwer, "that our life is cast up by the ocean of eternity to float a moment upon its waves, and then sink into nothingness? Else why is it that the glorious aspirations which leap like angels from the temple of our heart are for ever wandering about unsatisfied? Why is it that the rainbow and the clouds come over with a beauty which is not of earth, and then leave us only to muse upon their favoured loveliness? We are born for a higher destiny than that of earth; there is a realm where the

¹ Christopher North (Professor Wilson).

rainbow never fades, where the stars will be spread before us like islands which slumber on the ocean, and where the beings which pass before us now like shadows will stay in our presence for ever." When once a man has given himself wholly to God, then all which happens to him partakes of the principle of eternal reality and freshness.

"The mere lapse of years is not life. To eat and drink and sleep, to be exposed to darkness and to the light, to pace round in the mill of habit, and turn thought into an implement of trade—this is not life! Knowledge, truth, love, beauty, goodness, faith, alone can give vitality to the mechanism of existence. The life of honest mirth which vibrates through the heart; the tears from God which freshen the dry wastes within; the music which brings childhood back; the prayer which calls the future near; the doubt or difficulty which God has set before us to make us meditate; the death which startles us with mystery; the hardship which forces us to struggle; the anxiety which ends in trust—these are the true nourishment of our mere natural being."¹ To the mind which is set on the future, and which is therefore living the life of duty and the life of love, all these things bring joy. They bring new experience, new self-control, new victories, new faith, new knowledge of God and of the truth.

Is life worth living? Not if men care for themselves more than for others; not if their absorbing objects and pursuits are anything else than God Himself. Though their lot in existence was the most fortunate which was ever contrived by the machinery of civilization; though the highest rewards of their exertions were within their grasp; though, from the wife of their choice, they should find to the full that society, help, and comfort which they expected; though their children prospered, and no disease ever entered their home; though every refinement of enjoyment, intellectual and physical, could be theirs in picture and song and amusement most suited to their taste; though they lived in most delicious scenery, and could command every variety of travel and of climate; though their resources were such that they could gratify every wish of their heart and imagination as soon as it was formed; yet if their aims were other than the love of God and the love of man, they would be nothing better than a miserable, unhappy, self-tortured, discontented wretch.

Our Lord cut at the very root of the unhappy and worthless way of living by that memorable saying, which, in a very touching way, was called by the late Mr. Matthew Arnold "The secret of Jesus," "He that taketh not his cross and

¹ James Martineau.

followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." Severe as the words sounded, they were inestimably kind and pitiful, for nothing can be more deplorably disastrous than the false view of life. The words would call up to the disciples' minds the idea of the pallid convict, with which Roman rule had made them familiar, dragging the log of wood, on which he was to expire, from the city walls to the place of execution. As he staggered with weary and reluctant steps to that ghastly spot, the one thought about him would be that for him life was over. Whatever he might have done in the past, however he had enjoyed what had been his—home, mother, wife, children—now there was no more of it. In a few hours he would be as lifeless as the very wood which he was carrying. In some sort, that was what the Christian life would be like. Our Lord Himself would die in that very way, and all who wished to be His real disciples must be ready to die as miserably. Their whole life must be spent as if they were carrying that deathly log of wood. Their natural life, the life which they would have lived if they had never heard of Christ, and if He had never come and founded His kingdom, the life of pleasure, ambition, advancement, and self-indulgence, must all be crucified to that imagined log of wood. There was nothing after all in that natural life which could really delight them; all earthly pleasures, begun and ended in self, were disappointing and short-lived; as soon as one pleasure had become familiar it became stale; other pleasures had to be sought and invented; and invention itself was soon exhausted. But in this new life, the life given over wholly and heartily to the declared, visible, audible Will of God, the life of going about doing good, the life of seeking not your own advantage, but the advantage of other people, the life of unselfishness, the life of lessening suffering and increasing happiness, the life of considerateness and sympathy, pity, gentleness, tenderness; in that life would be daily and hourly satisfaction, contentment, happiness and bliss, because it would be the very life of God Himself, in Whom all things live and move and have their being, and for Whose pleasure they are and were created. Thus it is true that he who findeth his natural life shall lose it. He who indulges himself shall never be satisfied. He who is bent on his own selfish objects shall find them turn to dust as he grasps them. He who gives himself up to his natural impulses, inclinations and ambitions, shall never get what he wants. He that findeth his life shall lose it. But thus also it is none the less and far more gloriously true, that he who loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it. He has given up the false, and in so doing he

has found the true. He has left the delusions and snares of earthly enticements, and in giving them up he has found the true riches. He has relinquished the pursuit of the deceptive mirage which glimmers in the haze above the dry deserts of an unspiritual, unenlightened, uninspired life, and in the Son of God and His Cross he has found the hidden well of living water springing up unto everlasting life.

Is life worth living? We are told that one man has no right to say to another that he is the happier of the two, because there are no means of a fair and proper comparison. But we need not ask any to do that. We will both look at the evidences offered by others than ourselves. Where is it that we see the serene face beaming with cheerfulness, the calm, untroubled eye glowing with hope, the temper unruffled, even the burden of ill-health borne with alacrity, griefs encountered with sympathy yet with resignation, the feebleness of old age and the terrors of death welcomed with contentment? Where but in those who have given themselves to God and to the service of men? Yes, if men put away self, and self-interest, and self-advancement, and self-pleasing; if they set themselves steadily to going about doing good; if their thoughts are always occupied with the question how they can make things better and more beautiful; if they are always alive to the cry of distress; if whatsoever their hand rightly findeth to do they do it with all their might, then they will find the day all too short for the things which they wish to put in it. Their joy will be full, because they will understand the fellowship of the Father and of the Son. Yes; life will be worth living.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.



ART. VI.—“L'ANCIEN MONDE ET LE CHRISTIANISME.”

L'ancien Monde et le Christianisme. Par E. de PRESSENSÉ, Paris, 1887; pp. xl., 669.

The Ancient World and Christianity. By E. DE PRESSENSÉ, D.D., translated by ANNIE HARWOOD HOLMDEN. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888, pp. xvii., 479.

THIS work is intended to form the first part of the third edition of the author's *Histoire des trois premiers Siècles de l'Eglise*. The four volumes of the earlier editions of this work have long been known in England, both in the original language and in the translations with which Mrs. Holmden never fails to supply us. The four parts of the earlier edition treat of (1) the Apostolic Age, (2) the Martyrs and Apologists, (3) Heresy and Christian Doctrine, (4) Life and Practice in the

Early Church ; so that the present volume does not correspond to any one of them. Rather, it forms an introduction to the whole, and covers to some extent the same ground as that occupied by Dr. Döllinger's *Heidenthum und Judenthum*, better known to English writers by the somewhat perverted title of the English version of it, "The Gentile and the Jew." In both works the object is to show the condition of the world previous to the birth of Christ, especially in the spheres of philosophy, morality, and religion, in order to determine how far that condition was a preparation for the Gospel, and how far it was an impediment to it.

Dr. Pressensé starts from the principle, which no one is likely to dispute, that it is impossible to make a proper study of the *origines* of Christianity without forming some idea of the moral history of the age which preceded it. A knowledge of this will prove fatal to the theory that Christianity is in the main a mere compound of Judaism and Hellenism ; and it would appear that it is partly in order to show the untenable character of this theory that the work before us has been written.

The volume is divided into four "Books," preceded by an Introduction. The first book treats of the "Ancient East," and begins with prehistoric man ; the second treats of "the Religious Development of the Oriental Aryans ;" the third of "Hellenic Paganism ;" and the fourth of "Greco-Roman Paganism and its Decadence." The work shows the author's characteristic piety, learning, and thoughtfulness ; and yet at times gives the impression of being somewhat lacking in depth and precision. But it is bright and instructive, and the conclusions drawn from the facts stated are generally reasonable and sound.

Mrs. Holmden's translation is very pleasant to read. The English is vigorous and flowing ; and one is not perpetually reminded that one is reading a translation, and a translation from the French. But she has taken very great liberties with the original. She has divided the third book into two, and thus made five books in all. Here and there she amplifies or paraphrases ; and she *frequently* omits whole sentences. But with the exception of an occasional slip in translation, there do not appear to be any places where she misrepresents the substance of the original by the liberties which she has taken. And slips, so far as we have observed, are rare. Where she gives English equivalents for Dr. Pressensé's translations from Plato, she has wisely availed herself of Professor Jowett's English translation of the original Greek. But there is some rather funny Greek on p. xx, which might be corrected in another edition. A new edition, we both hope and expect

will be called for; and, when that time comes, we earnestly request that the translator will add to our obligations to her by returning to the method of the original in one important respect. In the English edition the title of the whole volume, "The Ancient World and Christianity," occupies the top of the left-hand page from beginning to end, while the subject of the chapter occupies the top of the right-hand page. In the French edition, each page has a heading of its own; and these headings serve as a useful analysis. The title of the whole work is quite useless as the heading of a page. On the other hand, whereas Dr. Pressensé has given us only a table of contents, Mrs. Holmden has given us both that and an index.

The concluding paragraph of the volume gives a very fair idea of the manner in which the translation has been executed :

Qu'on le veuille ou non, sa croix devait marquer la limite entre deux mondes et partager l'histoire. Elle répondait à tout le passé et elle allait enfanter un monde nouveau qui, dans ses pires révoltes, ne devait jamais parvenir à l'arracher. Encore aujourd'hui, elle le domine, soit qu'il l'acclame, soit qu'il la maudisse.

Whether men will have it so or no, the Cross of Christ divides two worlds, and forms the great landmark of history. It interprets all the past; it embraces all the future; and however fierce the conflict waged around it, it still is, and shall be through all ages, the symbol of victory.

The work, either in the original or in Mrs. Holmden's English rendering of it, may be safely recommended to all those who wish for information on the subject of which it treats: and those who are already well acquainted with the subject will find a good many bright thoughts and just reflections upon topics already familiar to them. It affords real help towards understanding the moral and spiritual void which it has been the mission of Christianity to fill.

ALFRED PLUMMER.

Reviews.

The Skein Unravelled. A Course of Lectures, in the form of Dialogue, on the Main Points of Christianity. In nine numbers. By the Very Rev. Canon DUCKETT, D.D. Jarrold and Sons, London and Norwich. 1888.

THESE lectures, or dialogues, in nine cheap numbers, are some of the latest proselytizing tracts of the Romish faction in England. We understand that they have had some success in undermining the faith of some, and it is this rather than their intrinsic merit which induces us to notice them. For in them there is indeed nothing new in the way