

ART. VII.—THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

THE development of the spiritual life of the Church is the manifestation in the Church of the life of Jesus Christ. And that manifestation has no other possible mode of taking place than by the production in the great community of "the fruit of the Spirit." And what the fruit of the Spirit is we well know. The Spirit Himself has described it and detailed it (Gal. v. 22, 23).

Again, and yet again, let this great Church Principle be written by the grace of God in our hearts, and put into our minds. The development of spiritual life, the manifestation of it, the evidence of the presence of it, lies only and wholly in spiritual fruit; and that fruit is described for us by Him who cannot err, either in excess or defect of description and definition. We are to observe that the question before us is not concerned immediately with religious work, with ecclesiastical activities, considered in themselves. It is concerned with that which, in the right state of things in the Church, lies beneath and antecedent; it relates to the development, the coming out, of the Life which is by the Spirit from the Son of God. I know no sort of activity which, as mere material action, may not in given instances be put forth where yet there is no development of this Life. It is possible to speak with the tongue of angels, and to give away the last coin, and to go to the martyr's pile, without this life, whose inmost element is love. Much more is it possible to compass ecclesiastical reforms, and to carry out a vigorous, perhaps a rigorous, programme of external Church government, and to erect and restore innumerable holy fabrics, and to magnify and glorify every detail of exterior worship; yes, and to plan with energetic practicality how to relieve poverty, how to brighten life for the people, how to attach them to a system—and yet not to possess the life which is hid with Christ in God, and therefore certainly not to develop it.

For genuine work and genuine workers in the Church, God be praised! But the very movement of the time, the very stir of multifold energy to which the severest critics of the Church of England now bear witness, has, of course, its danger. There is danger of confusing action, which in given cases may be wholly due to causes as natural as those which stimulate the modern zeal for education and art, with things—or rather with conditions of things—due to the indwelling life of Jesus Christ; to the true Church's life hid with Him in God. The decisive proof of the development of that life lies not in so much expenditure of energy, but in the growth of the un-

alterable fruit of the Spirit; fruit, let us remember, not fruits; not a separable collection, but an indissoluble harmony of life.

Approaching the topic of development more directly, let me first remind my readers of a principle which might almost "pass without saying," were it not a thing not only obvious, but vital. I mean, that the development of spiritual life in the Church is profoundly connected with the development of it in the individual. I well know that the case might be stated the other way, and we might dilate upon the blessing to the individual of a warm while pure air around him in the community. But for Churchmen as individuals, clergy, or laymen, it is nine times out of ten far more important and to the point to recollect, each for himself, that a lifeless unit—yes, and a unit, if you please, with life in abeyance; yes, further, a unit with life not developing—a man who has said, "It is enough," as to his life in and by his Lord—cannot possibly contribute to the development of the total life. Nay, he positively obstructs and retards it. Practically, at least, he may be as it were a "foreign body" in the organism (to use a metaphor of St. Augustine's), hindering and vitiating its growth. Therefore I point to this vital and antecedent necessity. It is for Christians, whether of the clergy or of the laity (all of us alike being, in the holy theory of the Gospel, priests and kings to God, though not all called or commissioned to act in the same way in that wonderful position), to look, in a profound sense, at home; to take measures, to take pains, to give play and way to the life eternal which is in us, for "Christ is in us, unless"—if I may so render the Apostle's soul-piercing word (2 Cor. xiii. 5)—"we be counterfeits—*ἀδόκιμοι*." Let us see to it, that we, each man, are "growing in the grace and in the knowledge" (sure test of the grace) "of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that we are developing love, joy, peace, and the rest of that sacred fruit; that our yieldingness as to self-interest is better and better known, or knowable, to all men; that the fire of love is rising; that conscience grows tenderer, duty more sacred, our neighbour more honourable in our eyes, our self more base; and all this as in the presence, and for the sake, and by the sought and expected power of our Lord and Life.

Such individual diligence need never be carried on in forgetfulness of the total, of the community. In the nature of the case it cannot terminate in itself. The state of things I mean is, in a delightful paradox, an attentiveness to self, an "accuracy" (to use a word of St. Paul's) about self, which is nothing if not a ceaseless going out to every real claim of others; a loss of the thought of our rights in the light of their claims, and, above all, in the light of His. But for all that, it

is a thing that begins in a most practical sense at home. And in a thousand ways we shall best consult for the community by thus, in the secret of the presence of Jesus Christ, and in the most secret places of heart and of chamber above all, consulting for self; taking thought for our own growth in love, in and unto Him.

Nothing can take the place of this. Memorable are the words of St. Augustine on a passage in St. John's first Epistle: "Love alone distinguishes the children of God. . . . Let all sign themselves with the Cross; let all chaunt Amen and Alleluia; let all be baptized; let all enter the church walls: the children of God are distinguished from the children of the evil one only by love." And no one can be divinely loving by belonging to a community which contains other men who divinely love.

Another remark concerns an important detail rather than the first principle. I have referred to the secret of development—development not of work, but of life, as beginning at home. May I take up those two familiar words, "at home," and make them the suggestion? One profound characteristic of the Gospel is its reverence for home. True, there are stern words, spoken by the Lord Himself, about His own rights as *against* home: "he that hateth not his father and his mother cannot be My disciple." But what does this mean? Anything, in the end, rather than the annihilation, nay, or the depreciation, of home. The Lord must have His rights; and anything, however dear, must give way—must be crushed, if need be, into giving way to Him. On the throne of home, as of all things, He absolutely must sit. But He once there, all other rights group themselves around Him, and are only more legitimate, more sacred than ever, for their new relation. And so it is Jesus Christ who endorses the spirit of the Mosaic precept, "Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death." And His Apostles are never weary of inculcating the claims of home—claims as against which, so far as I can recollect, they seem to recognise no rights of intrusion on the part even of the Church itself, certainly not on the part of the officers of the Church.

We are considering the development of spiritual life in a mighty community. Now the unit of communities, in the view of the Gospel, is the family. Deep in this fact lies the principle that the development of the spiritual life of the Church is in intense connection with that of the spiritual life of the home.

See this illustrated at large in the very Epistle, that to Ephesus, which dilates most largely upon the life and growth of the mystical body of all faithful Christians. It is just that

Epistle which almost closes with an inspired manual of directions how to live the life of Christ at home.

We are placed in a time when many tendencies have invaded the sacredness of the family, and it is possible that the process of invasion may quicken in the future, whether from the civil side or otherwise. Let it be at least our care, as true followers of Christ, to remember what the Gospel thinks of home. May it be no casual part of the work of the clergy as teachers to place with respectful urgency before their people, as parents and as children, the claims and sanctities of home. May no false jealousy for the clerical office misguide us into forgetting that in the idea of the humblest home the father and the mother are for it God's delegated heads; that every man is God's minister, or ought to be, at his own hearth, at his own table, in gathering his own house round him for worship and the Word of God. Let no just esteem for the public ordinances of the Church be so distorted as to lead us to undervalue, or to teach others to undervalue, the priceless good of a reverent, simple, living and loving family worship, wherever it is the least possible, if but once a day. That occupies a place in this sacred development which nothing, I am sure, is meant to usurp. It has at least this benefit, that, if it is not the very barest form, it commits the head of the household in the eyes of his nearest circle to the responsibility of a Christian life day by day, as few other things can do. An admirable friend of mine, in a country parish in Dorsetshire, has made it a part of his wise and friendly pastoral work to offer himself to call of an evening at any cottage in his parish, and set family worship going, by taking it, in the simplest way, himself. Many a "Cotter's Saturday Night" has he originated. And I am very sure that such nights, whether in cottage or in hall, have a deep and vital function in the development of the spiritual life of the Church.

I hardly need point out that these few thoughts on a great subject are most manifestly, and necessarily, a fragment. I have spoken of the presence and of the development of the divine Life, the gift of God alone, in the individual and in the family, not attempting to follow it into wider circles. And I have said little in detail on means of promoting the development of it, beyond the one important means of domestic worship. But for the present this fragment must suffice; and I conclude by recurring to my main plea for a remembrance of the incalculable importance of home.

In the name of Jesus Christ, which has so often to be invoked in holy love against the set and fashion of a period, let us reverence and cherish for ourselves and others the sanctities of home; even if but a fragment of them remain

anywhere to be rescued and employed. More secrets of blessing for the Church and the world than we often realize lie hid in that recess. The home where parents manifestly honour Jesus Christ in act and spirit, before the keen eyes of children and of servants; where His Word is plainly revered, and that often neglected Sabbath of which He is still the Lord is loyally honoured, and where His presence invoked at the board checks there and everywhere the easy sins of tongue and temper—that home is a true vehicle of the spiritual life. The development of such a home, and of such homes, is an aim supremely worthy of the devoted purpose of the true Church-teacher, and of the true Church-man.

I often heard from my now blessed father, for fifty-five years a faithful and laborious presbyter of the English Church, a proverb, old enough, but not out of date: "*An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.*" The words are the homely concentration of the principle I now press. They carry with them the truths at once of grace and nature in the matter. They at least remind us of the ample teaching of the New Testament on the power and fruitfulness of that school of love and duty, that seed-plot of the growing life of grace, growing into the whole Church's spiritual growth—a Christian, a holy, HOME.

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Reviews.

The Supernatural in Nature. A verification by free use of science. By J. W. REYNOLDS, M.A., Prebendary of St. Paul's, etc. Third Edition. London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co. 1883.

The Mystery of the Universe our Common Faith. By J. W. REYNOLDS, M.A. 1884.

FEW things are more noteworthy in connection with the Christian faith than the strength of reason, the width of learning, and the power of argument which have been called forth in its defence. The direct appeal of the Gospel is so much more to the heart than to the head, to the moral than to the mental forces of our nature, that it would not have been strange if its preachers had been content to rest here and to trust thus indirectly to win the intellectual sympathies of mankind. The actual result, however, has been so very different as in itself to be hardly less striking than the Christian scheme from which it sprung. Within a short time, comparatively speaking, after the Church went forth upon her mission, the intellect of the then known world was ranged directly and beyond dispute upon the side of the new and majestic revelation committed to her charge. The wisdom of the heathen, in all its varied forms, gave way before the faith of Christ; and hitherto, at any rate, in spite of