

leaves a place in human thought for such a conception. In making these concessions, the truth of religious experience, the worth of personal conviction, the need of a solution of the problem of thought, Troeltsch, as Reischle points out, goes

beyond the limits of the rigidly historical method, and so qualifies his own demand for its exclusive use in Christian theology.¹

¹ Reischle in *Theologische Rundschau*, 1901, pp. 261-275, 305-324.

The Pilgrim's Progress.

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The House Beautiful.

THIS is one of Bunyan's most charming conceptions. Its significance and its interest are as strong from the literary as from the religious point of view. The traveller, coming in the dusk of evening to the house from whose door and windows warm lights are streaming, with their offer of rest and hospitality, is one of the pleasantest figures in the poetry of every generation. The old romances are full of such pleasant episodes, and they find echoes in every one of the long list of those who have written of life under the figure of a pilgrim or journey.

Such a rest-house, with relief and good fellowship for the tired and solitary traveller, is a symbol that may be very variously interpreted; each writer builds for his own spirit its own house. One of the most beautiful and familiar of modern instances is R. L. Stevenson's 'House Beautiful,' where the lonely cottage on the moor, dreary enough to outward appearance, and unromantic as the plainest life, is glorified by the open eyes of the appreciative spirit by the simple but marvellous work of Nature through the seasons of the year. This, however, is analogous rather to Bunyan's Interpreter's House in one of its broader aspects of spiritual communion than to this, which, as we shall see, has a specialized meaning. Christina Rossetti, in her poem of 'Uphill,' has a weird description of the road that winds uphill all the way, only to end in what Sir Walter Scott, in a similar metaphor, in the 'Lord of the Isles,' calls 'that dark inn, the grave.'

Bunyan's House Beautiful stands, in contrast with the inner spiritual meaning of the Interpreter's House, for the external Church, the Church visible and its membership; and it gives

a peculiarly rich and attractive view of these. In Part III. it is represented as a convent, with much discourse on fasting instead of the feasting of this part. From the *Celestial Railroad* it is omitted altogether, and only referred to with a few scornful jests; the way is so easy that there is no need of rest in that journey, and the Church of Christ is far too old-fashioned for the new religion.

The Church is here seen in its social aspect. It is just by the wayside; not out of the world, a secluded place of dim religious light, shut off for the purposes of mere mystery. It is a home, with the fireside element strongly emphasized, in which we hail as our first view of the Church one which lays its stress on the social side of it, welcoming and genial. The incident stands for the beginning of Christian fellowship, that memorable fact in religious history—memorable not on earth only, but in heaven, for when 'they that loved the Lord spake often one to another,' we are told that a book of remembrance was written. The fellowship also is again that of encouragers. In times of depression, weakness, and regret, the friendly hand of the Church may do much for the saving of a man, and the whole passage is an excellent manual for those who are teaching a class of young communicants.

In the light of this interpretation of the House Beautiful, we see the more precise significance of the events which have immediately preceded. The lions and the loss of the roll represent the difficulties which were and still are felt about entering the membership of the Christian Church. Most serious is the loss of assurance, which in all generations delays the entrance of many. With Bunyan's arbour story, compare Question 172 of the Larger Catechism.

The whole of this brilliant and charming passage

makes one think of some of the old Morality plays, whose spectacular influence was long and far-reaching on the English imagination. Each person represents a group or type of certain aspects of the religious life, and the whole picture taken together gives a very complete view of the manifold functions of the Church.

It has been noted that this is a household of women, and that may strike the reader as odd when he remembers Bunyan's words about his relations to women in his 'Brief Account of his Call to the Work of the Ministry.'

The trust and fellowship of this house may, indeed, remind us of many a pleasant passage in such a book as Du Chaillu's *Land of the Midnight Sun*, and the kindness to the wanderer of the Norwegian women in their guest-houses and sæter farms. But Bunyan knew well the difficulty of managing platonic friendships in real life, especially in regard to religious matters. Here he is simply following tradition, where the virtues of pagan thought are female, and the Christian Church is the Bride of Christ. Whether this tradition may have its origin, as Victor Hugo seems to hold, in the fact that women are the best Christians, will be differently answered by different individuals, and the answer will depend upon the women they have met. Here the tender womanly element along with the strength and wisdom of noble women, are represented as among the finest products of religion. No doubt the conception is traceable, at least in part, to the commanding influence of the figure of the Virgin Mother upon so many centuries of Christian thought.

The Conversation.

The religious conversation of the House Beautiful can hardly seem dull to any reader, though at first it may strike him somewhat as *Cranford* does, as typical of that old-fashioned propriety which is now so rare in conversation. On closer examination, however, the talk proves not only instructive, but thoroughly interesting and even entertaining. Most probably much of the talk is modelled upon that of the 'three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God,' of whom he tells us in *Grace Abounding*. 'And, methought, they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had

found a new world; as if they were people that dwelt alone and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours.'

Conversation is now more than ever a difficult art. Modern life has not leisure for the coffee-houses of the Strand, and modern men whose talk has felt the influence of many telegraph messages open with a kind of wistfulness the rich pages of Boswell and Eckermann, of Landor and Holmes; or they turn to the lavish brilliancy of Meredith's conversationalists with a kind of wonder. Religious conversation especially has felt the change. It is so difficult to keep it interesting and at the same time entirely real, that while some religious talkers still bore their neighbours with the dullest kind of speech, others exaggerate their experience and become romancers. It is little to be wondered at, and still less to be blamed, that many Christians are reticent, and some are silent about the deepest things. Yet there is such a thing as worthy and interesting religious talk, and this passage, allowing for the differences in the fashion of centuries wide apart, is a model of it. It is bright and sparkling, with clever play of wit in parts. There is no lecturing nor conventionality of 'improving conversation.' There is nothing morbid in it, as religious conversation is so apt to be,—none of that sentimental anatomy and dreary self-analysis which is sometimes associated with intimate religious talk. It is the right kind of *gossip*—i.e. *God sib*, personal talk between intimate friends. It is an art well worth cultivating, for there is much helpfulness lost through undue reticence; and the old commentator knew what he said when he coined his fine phrase, 'the blessedness of experimental savoury conversation.'

Watchful.

The porter, the one man of the place, stands for the official aspect of Church life. A certain formality and carefulness is absolutely necessary for the right management of all public work; and when the work is religious the necessity is even greater. Those are not wise who resent any reasonable officialism and authority, and are continually demanding that everything in connexion with the Church shall be informal. What they mean by informality is very apt to become slovenliness; no Church work gains in spirituality by being done in an unbusinesslike manner.

The conspicuous feature in the figure of Watch-

ful is a certain subordinate faithfulness. He is indeed broadminded enough not to assert that the Church is not altogether indispensable,¹ yet his whole demeanour is that of one who takes his office with the utmost seriousness. Thus the contrast is very striking between this gatekeeper and him of the wicket-gate. Goodwill speaks with authority, Watchful wholly as a subordinate. If he be supposed to represent the minister of the Church, then certainly it is his office and not his personal claim that he magnifies.

The pilgrim's words as to his name are interesting. 'Graceless' carries us back to the title 'Grace Abounding.' The words about the race of Japheth and the tents of Shem remind us of John Bunyan's young and surely very unnecessary heart-searchings as to whether he and the rest of the British people were descended from the Israelites.

Discretion.

The whole of these dialogues form a sort of ideal study for the teaching of a communicants' class. Both in regard to matter and arrangement, they show minute carefulness and completeness on the part of the author, and the story of the House Beautiful is as noteworthy as a work of literary art as it is for its religious qualities.

Discretion comes first, for the place so hospitable is well guarded. Sometimes, indeed, this Discretion has gone too far. The excessive strictness with which the entrance into the Church is guarded in exclusive religious communities is quite as great a danger to the Church as the laxity of which we hear in other quarters. In the one case carelessness, in the other spiritual arrogance, betrays the high trust committed to mortal man. It is true, as Dr. Kerr Bain says, that on the whole it is 'better to err on the side of letting in than of keeping out.' Still, questioning is necessary, and especially self-examination. Were it not for these, we might have Worldly Wiseman, Hypocrisy, and Sloth using the House Beautiful for their own ends, in which case it would soon require to change its name.

The order of Discretion's questions is significant. First come those about his experience, and last that about his name. There are many people whose first question is that of names. This is what they judge by and are interested in. A famous name telling of old family, or influence, or

¹ Compare the porter's words about Faithful to Christian as he is leaving the House Beautiful.

wealth is all that is needed for entrance to many a house of good society on earth. Here it is good to find in regard to all such matters the grand equality of the Church. Of Lord and labourer alike it asks first—or ought to ask—not 'What is thy name?' but 'What has been thine experience?' and 'What is the direction in which thy life is moving?'

Piety.

Before any further examination, Christian is hospitably welcomed. There is much more to be said both by him and by the damsels of the house, but he has already proved himself a genuine pilgrim, and that is enough for his admission.

To understand the precise grace which is referred to under the name of Piety, contrast it with the Piety of Part III., which gives the convent idea of Christianity, an idea which has retreated far from the bright and busy world. Again, this Piety is distinct from that extreme type of Puritanism which has been well described as 'bitterly pious.' In modern times, partly through the influence of such sarcasms as Burns' 'Holy Willie' and Dickens' caricatures, the word *piety* is connected with the idea of a weak and hypocritical type. As a corrective, it is worth while to remember the original Latin meaning of *pietas*, with which Virgil has familiarized the world. Standing as it does for all that is tender and strong in family loyalties, this may serve to give us back a fine but lost word.

Piety in this narrative is not a striking character, but simple and true. She exhibits no cleverness nor attempts any cross-examination, leaving that to the more competent Prudence. A gentle, loving, and ingenuous person, she is quite as anxious to get good as to give it. And yet she is no weakling, for the truest spirituality is founded not upon conventional phrases, but upon real experience. Of course, much more is needed for complete character than this, but it is always well to judge people by what they have rather than by what they lack. There is room in the Church for such lesser lights of grace as this, and after all there is much to admire and be very thankful for in them.

The conversation begins with a very naïve reminder of their kindness in admitting him. This is the egoism of the little child, which is so familiar in many of the Psalms. The following discourse

is entirely retrospective. It avoids all discussion of religious questions in the abstract, and confines itself to details of personal experience. An interesting view of the pilgrim's mind may be had by noting the things he has felt to be most impressive in his past. The thought of the fighter of the Palace, which we shall find to be a forecast of what is coming immediately upon him, is added only as an afterthought. It is a curious and surely intentional touch of humour by which Bunyan makes the pilgrim say that he 'would have stayed at that good man's house a twelvemonth.' Either his conscience is still uneasy about his impatience to get away from the Interpreter's House, or else he has forgotten that impatience. The past, with its halo, makes things seem very precious which we did not fully value at the time. Of course, the most noticeable thing in the memory of the journey is the Cross and what befell him there. It is interesting to note that here he speaks of one who hung bleeding upon that tree, whereas before it was, so far as we are told, the empty Cross which he saw. Looking back upon that supreme experience, we recognize that it is not the mere fact of the Cross, or any doctrinal interpretation of it, which holds the sinner's eye through a lifetime. It is the person of the Crucified, in which is seen the Incarnation of the Eternal love. The pilgrim says he had never seen such a thing before, and that is

both false and true. The Cross has been familiar from childhood to many a man who has never seen it before like this.

There is only a word or two about the bad people he had met. No mention is made of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and the notice of the rest is very brief and gentle. Jeremy Taylor, in his *Holy Living*, has a fine passage of which this reminds us: 'Upbraid no man's weakness to discomfort him, neither report it to disparage him, neither delight to remember it to lessen him, or to set thyself above him. Be sure never to praise thyself or to dispraise any man else, unless God's glory or some holy end do hallow it. And it was noted to the praise of Cyrus, that, among his equals in age, he would never play at any sport, or use any exercise, in which he knew himself more excellent than they; but in such in which he was unskilful he would make his challenges, lest he should shame them by his victory, and that himself might learn something of their skill, and do them civility.' Along with this passage it is interesting to place the following from the life of Bunyan himself: 'It is well known that this person . . . made it his study above all other things not to give occasion of offence, but rather to suffer many inconveniences to avoid it, being never heard to reproach or revile any, what injury soever he received, but rather to rebuke those that did.'

Anglo-Jewish Literature in 5665.

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THE record of Anglo-Jewish Literature for 5665 contains the title of no one book that occupies a position far in advance of the others. The year that closed on the 29th of September has not been especially prolific in either England or America in Jewish books of exceptional value. The year has certainly not been above the average, and gives more in promise, perhaps, than in performance. In accordance with precedent, by far the largest class in Anglo-Judaica is that consisting of Biblical Literature, and as has hitherto invariably been the case, with the smallest possible number of exceptions, the books in this class have been produced by non-Jewish authors. In this section have appeared *The Old Testament and its Message*, by

O. F. Gibson; the Rev. T. K. Cheyne's *Bible Problems*; *The Bible: its Origin and Nature*, by M. Dods; a translation of E. König's *The Bible and Babylon*; L. A. Pooler's *Studies in the Religion of Israel*; and J. M. Lagrange's *Historical Criticism and the Old Testament*. Dealing with the Old Testament generally, also appeared R. L. Ottley's *The Religion of Israel*; G. M. Rae's *The Connection between the Old and New Testaments*; *Old Testament Criticism in New Testament Light*, by G. H. Rouse; J. Paterson Smyth's *The Old Documents and the New Bible*; R. Flint's essays *On Theological, Biblical, and other Subjects*; D. W. Amram's *Leading Cases in the Bible*; and H. M. Wiener's *Studies in Biblical Law*. The last two