

OPERA FORIS ;

OR, MATERIALS FOR THE PREACHER.

Second Series.—III.

Acts xvi. 6-7 :—*And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia ; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia ; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not.*

Why ? Because they were not the suitable men for the evangelisation of these particular provinces ? or, because they felt the time was not yet ripe for such a mission ? The former interpretation would describe a negative guidance of God, a mysterious arrest of energy. But it is in the latter sense that these verses are quoted by Lord Acton (*The History of Freedom, and other Essays*, 1907, p. 202), who uses them to support his contention that “ there are countries in which the natural conditions are yet wanting for the kingdom of grace. There is a fulness of time for every nation—a time at which it first becomes capable of receiving the faith. It is not harder to believe that certain political conditions are required to make a nation fit for conversion than that a certain degree of intellectual development is indispensable.”

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1 Tim. ii. 15—iii. 2 :

In this passage both sexes come under the principle of a Christian *σωφροσύνη* which is rarely noticed elsewhere in the ethics of the New Testament. The feminine application comes first : *Women shall be brought safely through child-bearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, μετὰ σωφροσύνης* (1 Tim. ii. 15). Immediately after this,

a masculine sphere for the same virtue is marked out: *a bishop must be temperate*, *σώφρονα* (1 Tim. ii. 2), i.e., with his passions under control. This self-control issues in the orderly behaviour which is next enjoined (*κόσμιον*). Nothing is said about the bishop's dress, but already women had been counselled to dress modestly (ii. 9) *ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ, μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς*, i.e., without immodesty, without undue display, without being unwomanly. This is a lower and special form of the *σωφροσύνη*, however. We have no adequate equivalent for either *σώφρων* or *σωφροσύνη*. But they denote a quality which, in Mr. Gilbert Murray's words (*The Rise of the Greek Epic*, pp. 27 f.), "is something like Temperance, Gentleness, Mercy; sometimes Innocence, never mere Caution; a tempering of dominant emotions by gentler thought . . . The man or woman who is *σώφρων* walks amid the beauties and the perils of the world, feeling the love, joy, anger, and the rest; and through all he has that in his mind which saves.—Whom does it save? Not him only, but, as we should say, the whole situation. It saves the imminent evil from coming to be." This description throws some light on the passages which have been just quoted. The *σωφροσύνη* enjoined upon women is primarily a domestic virtue. By it they can often save the situation, as wives and mothers. It is an indispensable adjunct of the religious life, just as it prevents even the exercise of Christian gifts in women from becoming unwomanly (cf. vers. 11–12). The episcopus, on the other hand, can often save the situation within the Church, by a calm exercise of authority which does not get ruffled, thanks to its strong self-possession and its ability to avoid the extremes of laxity and a domineering temper. What is common to both counsels is the principle that each sex and situation has lines of conduct appropriate to itself, and that the individual must have

tact and strength of will enough to pursue these lines instead of lapsing into excesses on one side or the other.

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2 Peter ii. 1-2 :

(a) The unavoidable mixture of character in the Church, and the inevitable danger of corruption, human nature being what it is (Luke xvii. 1). *There were false prophets among the People, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall introduce (as improvements or developments) destructive heresies, denying even<sup>1</sup> the Master that bought them* (all heresies running up into imperfect views of the person and work of Jesus), *bringing upon themselves swift destruction*. But the consequences are not confined to personal ruin in Christian character. (b) Evil example and erroneous teaching influence others: *And many shall follow their lascivious doings*. (c) Still further, the effect of all this is to discredit the Christian religion: *by reason of whom* (i.e., the followers as well as the leaders) *the way of the faith shall be evil spoken of*.

"Ye cannot halve the gospel of God's grace;  
Men of presumptuous heart! I know you well . . .  
Ye heard it speak of peace, chastised desires,  
Good-will and mercy,—and ye heard no more:  
But as for zeal and quick-eyed sanctity,  
And the dread depths of grace, ye pass them by . . .  
O new-ventured art  
Of the ancient Foe!—but what if it extends  
O'er our own camp, and rules among our friends."

Newman's charges and fears were hopelessly unjust to the liberalism which he never understood; the letter of his accusation might even be reversed and turned against the demoralising effects of his own creed.<sup>2</sup> But the spirit of the

<sup>1</sup> As Windisch points out, this is an aggravation of their offence; they are ungrateful, unfaithful servants, even after they have been freed by the Master (cf. Matt. xxiv. 50 f.).

<sup>2</sup> Compare, e.g., Lord Acton's stinging remark (*History of Freedom, and Other Essays*, pp. 493-494): "The Council of Trent impressed on the Church

lines corresponds to something in the tone of this warning passage from Second Peter.

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Numbers xiv. 1 :—*And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried ; and the people wept that night.*

Such was their disheartening at the news of the inhabitants of Canaan. *We saw the children of Anak there*, said the scouts. Their report brought dismay to the untrained Israelites, who for a time threatened to desert the lead of Moses. But even trained troops may be liable to this form of panic. Caesar describes, for example, how his legions at Vesontio (*De Bello Gallico*, i. 39) were “suddenly seized by a violent panic,” owing to the reports brought by the Gauls and by traders that “the Germans were of immense physical size, incredibly brave, and expert in warfare.” Often, these newsmongers reported, “they had met them and been unable to look them in the face or meet their flashing eyes.” The panic spread to such an extent that some officers asked leave of absence, while “throughout the camp every one was making his will,” and Caesar was actually warned that if he gave the order to advance he would not be obeyed.

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Job xxxi. 26-27 :—

*If I beheld the sun when it shined,  
Or the moon walking in brightness ;  
And my heart hath been secretly enticed,  
And my mouth hath kissed my hand :  
This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judges :  
For I should have lied to the God that is above.*

Job declares that even this act of superstitious homage to the sun or moon would have been as culpable as the love of money (*vv.* 24-25) or a breach of the seventh command—the stamp of an intolerant age, and perpetuated by its decrees the spirit of an austere immorality.”

ment (ver. 11). He describes (i.) a sin of impulse, one of those sudden movements of the heart which may carry away even a worshipper of the higher God ; (ii.) a sin suggested by his environment, where the worship of the heavenly bodies formed part of the social order ; and (iii.) a sin which the very power and fascination of these bodies might almost justify or tempt men to regard as at any rate a venial offence. In modern phraseology, it is equivalent to an undue deference on the part of religious men to material forces, or a pre-occupation with external interests. Compare the remark, e.g., of Madame Duclaux in her recent book on "The French Ideal" (p. 74), where she observes that "Pascal is the least pantheistic of thinkers. Though none, like this mathematician, has described the attraction of the Infinite, and the mysterious abyss of the planet-sprinkled sky, yet he never lets these vague depths absorb his worship ; and he might say, like Job, 'I have seen the moon advance in her majesty, and I have not bowed the knee !' "

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Proverbs xxvii. 6 :—

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend :*

*But the kisses of an enemy are profuse.*

"Profuse" neither gives a proper contrast to "faithful," nor is it quite certain as a rendering of  $\text{לִבְנֵי אֹיֵב}$ . Dr. Felix Perles (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, July, 1911, pp. 107-108) suggests that  $\text{לִבְנֵי}$  here (cp. Ezek. viii. 11) means "vapour-like," which, as he points out, is an appropriate epithet (cp. Hosea vi. 4) for the unreal and unmeaning kisses of an enemy. Philo, it may be added, has an interesting passage upon such kisses in *quis rerum divinarum heres* (viii.). He is commenting on Genesis xv. 2. "Masek," he explains, means " 'from a kiss' ( $\epsilon\kappa \phi\iota\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ), but a kiss is one thing and love ( $\phi\iota\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu$ ) is another ; the latter shows the union of souls blended together in goodwill, while the former denotes merely a

salutation between two persons whom necessity has brought together. . . . 'Loving' (φιλεῖν) is not contained necessarily in 'kissing' (καταφιλεῖν), since men under the stress of bitter necessity will greet with a kiss any number of their enemies." Further on, he bluntly calls a kiss "the counterfeit coin of affection" (τὸ φιλίας παράκομμα). On the interpretation of the proverb above suggested, the kisses of an enemy are pronounced useless, because for all their pretty show they are unsubstantial; these lavish demonstrations of affection, whether due to social obligation (as Philo puts it) or to a spontaneous desire of keeping up outside appearances and avoiding a rupture, leave no real good behind them. They are empty and transient, because there is no sincere goodwill behind them.

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John xvi. 2:—*Yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God.*

In Count von Hoensbroech's autobiography, *Fourteen Years a Jesuit* (vol. i. Eng. Trans., p. 7), the author declares that "there is something of the inquisitor and heretic-burner in every Ultramontane Catholic, especially in the recluse nobility, and most of all in their female relatives. The words, 'Ye blessed flames of the pyre'<sup>1</sup> are not a mere aberration of a fanatical Romish editor, but a cry of the heart, conscious or unconscious, low or loud, that springs in every ultramontane breast."

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<sup>1</sup> From *Analecta Ecclesiastica*, a journal published at Rome under Papal auspices, January, 1895.