

## THE TRUE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

BY THE REV. F. LEWIS.

St. Mark iii. 16, 17.

And Simon He surnamed Peter.

And James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James: and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is the Sons of Thunder.

St. Mark xiii. 34.

To every man his work.

I. Cor. xii. 7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

Rev. xxi. 24. 26.

And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

In the surnames which our Lord gave to Simon, and to the pair of brothers James and John, He not only showed His insight into character, but also He showed His reverence for personality. He gave those surnames to those three men at the time when He chose them to be His disciples, "that they might be with Him continually, and that He might send them forth to preach." His purpose in choosing them to be His disciples was that He might train them and educate them. In educating them He developed their personality.

But in what are we to say that personality consists? For my present purpose I shall suppose that personality consists in those distinctive qualities of mind and character which make a man

[p 754]

himself, and mark him off as a person different from the rest of his fellows. A man's personality, I should be disposed to think, is the resultant of a long series of hereditary instincts, modified by the different influences under which he comes from the time of his birth.

Our Lord recognised and respected the personalities of those whom He chose to be His disciples, but set Himself to educate them by developing their personalities. And all true education must have this end in view, the development of personality. The young child is an unexplored country, and the chief interest in education lies in the endeavour to discover the soul of the child: to recognise in what respects one child differs from another, and to have some regard for those differences, instead of trying to force them all into one cast-iron mould. Children are imitative enough by nature, and tend to copy one another so as to approximate to one pattern. "We are born originals and spend our lives in trying to become inferior copies of other people."

Our Lord wished His disciples to remain themselves, but set Himself to develop their personalities on a large and generous scale, by fixing their minds upon a great and worthy

object. To attain this result what did He do? He widened their horizon. He taught them to take broader and longer views of life. What tried Him so in the course of His training of them was the narrowness of their outlook upon life; their spiritual shortsightedness; the smallness of their faith. For faith takes broad views and long views of life. What made our Lord so tolerant of human frailty was His great faith in human nature. He saw "the end in the beginning." He recognised the vast possibilities of human nature. He looked beyond the present into "the land of far distances." He saw "the king in his beauty;" man "crowned with glory and honour," as God had intended him to be when first "He formed him of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man become a living soul."

The narrowness of the disciples' view of life was shown by the view they took of Jesus as the Messiah. They confessed Him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," but yet looked upon Him to assume the state of an earthly monarch, and reign over the Kingdom of Judah then and there. "Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" They were anxious to occupy "their twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." What a paltry Kingdom for One whose Kingdom was to have no end!

[p 755]

It was this small and narrow view of life which our Lord set Himself to enlarge. That was His education of His disciples; the substitution of a broad and long view of life for a mean, paltry and self-centred view. The educated person is one who, with a sound discretion and sane judgment, takes a wide and long view of life; who can look at things from a different point of view than his own; and does not think that the universe is comprised within the railings of his own small garden plot.

But, then, in the scheme of life so apprehended, he must also recognise that he has a definite place of his own; a definite duty to fulfil; a place which none but himself can properly occupy, a duty which none but himself can properly fulfil. "To every man his work." A man's work is his means of self-expression. He puts himself into what he does. But under the conditions of such a complex society as ours, division of labour is carried so far that the sphere of a man's labour becomes extremely limited and tends to be dull and monotonous. This is said to be one of the causes of labour unrest. It is not enough, then, to train children to acquire a skill in what will bring in an immediate return in the form of wages. That means nothing more nor less than bartering a soul for money. It amounts to stunting, at least, if not killing the spiritual side of a man's nature. It is time we learnt to put other than a money value upon labour and other things. Merely to train a child to manual or other dexterity, so as to earn money, is not education, unless it helps to develop the personality, to enlarge the soul, and to widen the outlook upon life: to give the child some notion of the scheme of life; to make him see that he has a part to take in it, and that, even if it is a humble part, it may be made a noble and worthy part. So it is necessary to create wider interests and to point to some means of satisfying them. No pains must be spared to prevent a person from becoming self-centred; to direct his thoughts outwards, away from himself and his own small world. He must be taught to recognise that others have claims upon him as he has claims upon others. No one is altogether self-sufficient. Our Lord taught the value of the individual soul,—a truth which is being strongly emphasized now,—and the right is being claimed for each to live as full and rich a life as possible. It is in this respect, and in this respect only that the equal worth of *every* individual can be claimed; not in all respects. To claim *that*, is to contradict the facts of Nature. It is to put

Sir Isaac Newton upon the same level as the pygmy from the Congo forests.

[p 756]

But for differences of capacity no progress would ever have been made in the world. Each soul is of equal worth in the right to have the opportunity of doing "his duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call him:" the right to do that for which he is best fitted by education and natural capacity.

But in respecting personality and showing the value of the individual soul our Lord also showed how personality is developed by self-sacrifice; how a man must lose himself in order to find himself. He diverted a man's attention from his own self and fixed it upon others; thus widening his outlook upon life; forcing him to recognise that there were other souls in the world besides his own, and that it shows the greatest nobility and largeness of soul to sacrifice one's own life so as to enable another to take and live a nobler and richer life through that sacrifice.

It is in this connection that the teaching of St. Paul is of such great value. It throws such a flood of light upon modern problems and helps towards their solution. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." St. Paul's teaching arose naturally out of the needs of the Church at Corinth. The Church at Corinth was divided because the members who had received spiritual gifts to an extraordinary degree were using them for their own glory instead of for the common weal. The Spirit was manifested in different ways but it was the same Spirit in all. Therefore there ought to have been unity and agreement in the body. Under the figure of the body St. Paul showed how essential each member was to the well-being of the whole body and none could say to another, "I have no need of thee." To recognise that truth in his daily work would give a man a wider outlook upon life. Dull and monotonous as his daily task might be he would feel that in doing it he was contributing to the common weal. Even though he were limited by his task to a great degree he would feel that he could the better concentrate himself upon it, and put better work into it. He could do it "cheerfully as unto the Lord," and feel that he was doing work for God. We are obliged to work under limitations in this life. God Himself by becoming Incarnate in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth submitted to limitations.

How was it that the Gospels came to be written? It should be remembered that the Gospels were written among the latest of the books of the New Testament; and that they were written for believers who worshipped the glorified Christ, exalted at the right

[p 757]

hand of God. But the glorified Christ is inseparably connected with the historic human Jesus. What the Apostles taught was that the Jesus of Nazareth, proved to be Very Man by His Crucifixion, Death and Burial, was also proved to be both Lord and Christ by His Resurrection from the dead. What Christian believers desired to know was how the glorified Christ was manifested in the flesh. How He expressed Himself under the limitations of a human life on earth. And that is what we have shown to us in the Gospels. They were written to shew Him to us under such conditions. The test of Christian faith was "Jesus Christ came in the flesh." How narrow the limitations were! And how strongly our Lord felt them! "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" A Jew of Palestine! Following the humble occupation of a carpenter! Rarely stirring beyond the boundaries of Palestine! Feeling that His mission was to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"! And yet He recognised

that within those narrow limits He was doing the work of the Father who sent Him. And in the thought that He was doing the Father's will He found His spiritual support. He accepted the limitations but looked beyond them to the glory He would resume one day in the bosom of the Father, when no limitations would be put upon the action of His Spirit.

So Christianity teaches us to accept the limitations of our lives but points us upwards and onwards, giving us wider and longer views of life. Even if our immediate task seems cramping and monotonous it goes to shape character and develop personality. There can only be power for proper self-expression within recognised limits. Fire, electricity and water are the most useful of servants when under proper control, but become the most dangerous of tyrants when uncontrolled. We have before our eyes too plain traces of the mischievous consequences which attend an uncontrolled self-centred personality.

But the final goal of all education is "fitness for fellowship with God." In the book of Revelation we see that end realised. The redeemed are those whose education is complete; who have been brought to such a condition of soul that they are fit to have "fellowship with God," and are fully able to appreciate that fellowship. "The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the Lamb, and of the glory of God, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. ... And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." [p 758]

This is the true League of Nations, a league for promoting the glory of God, each nation contributing its glory and honour to add to the brightness of the city of God. Human society is a diamond of many facets. The brilliance of it is due to the fact that it catches the light falling upon it at so many angles. But each facet while it adds to the brilliance of the diamond is not the whole diamond. Human life is manifold and yet one. There is unity in diversity. The one Spirit manifests Himself in an infinite variety of gifts to men. "God fulfils Himself in many ways."

To Mr. H. G. Wells nationality seems incompatible with the idea of a League of Nations. It would seem as if he thought that the League of Nations was intended to obliterate nationality, the very thing which we undertook the war to uphold. In Nationality we are up against one of the facts of Nature; one of the manifestations of the mind of God. If the personality of a person is to be respected, so is the personality of a nation, if such a term may be used. National characteristics are the glory and honour of a nation. They have been stamped upon it by its history and environment. To destroy them one would have to destroy the distinctive natural features of each country, which have been the most potent factors in moulding its destinies. Upon the Cross of our Lord the superscription was written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. They were the languages of the three representative nations of the age. If each of the three nations had a share in the Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, each had also taken its part in the preparation for the Christ; and each took its part in the spread of the Gospel through its distinguishing characteristic: the Roman by his love of law and order; the Greek by his love of beauty; the Jew with his distinctive genius for religion, his deep spiritual insight.

In human society each individual has his particular gifts to contribute to the well-being of the whole body. In the world each nation has its distinctive gift to contribute to the common stock. The truest view of the League of Nations is that suggested in the book of Revelation: "They shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into the New Jerusalem, the city of God." It is the broadest and most far-reaching view that we can imagine; the one to which we are

being educated to-day by what we see going on round us. What we need to do is to look beyond the narrow boundaries of our parish, our class, our party, our country, even beyond the boundaries of this earth: to get rid of the exclusive

[p 759]

spirit of the past; to take wider and longer views of life. We need a deeper knowledge of ourselves, for with greater knowledge of ourselves we should have a better understanding of other persons. We should approach them with far more sympathy, for we should recognise that they also have a desire for the truth. We shall learn that the same truth may be looked at from other points of view than our own: and what parts of the truth each of us has apprehended are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary of each other. All contribute to make up the whole. "In Christ Jesus all are one man."

But when St. Paul wrote "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus," we are to understand him to mean that all alike are of equal value in the sight of God. Each is a precious soul. Each is the subject of redemption. In that respect all distinctions are done away in Christ. But the Jew does not cease to be a Jew, nor the Greek to be a Greek, because the Jew as a Jew, and the Greek as a Greek have each received a distinctive gift from God, to use in the service of God, and to lay as an offering upon the altar of God. As it is with persons so is it also with the nations. Nationality is a gift from God to a nation, its glory and honour to bring into the city of God, to the glory of God. Can we conceive of a more magnificent idea than that of the Catholic Church, as it came from the mind of St. Paul? or that of the City of God as portrayed [sic] by St. John? in which all the members and citizens are swayed by one common desire to give glory to God; differing from each other in their respective gifts but all working harmoniously together because they recognise that all are "one man in Christ Jesus."

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ draws all men to Him because of the strong human appeal of the Cross. The crucifixion of the nations has stirred to its depths the great warm human heart. Will not the power of God again be manifested by a great resurrection? Will there not be again a great outpouring of the Spirit upon all nations, so that each will declare in "his own tongue," in his own way, the wonderful works of God, as the Spirit gives him utterance? That is what we hope. That is what we must prepare for; each of us striving to the utmost of his power to seek the glory of God.