

**"THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE
WORLD." THIRD SERIES. SIX SERMONS
PREACHED ON THE SUNDAYS AFTER
EASTER, 1875, IN THE CHURCH OF ST.
JAMES'S, PICCADILLY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649728091

"The Use and Abuse of the World." Third Series. Six Sermons Preached on the Sundays after Easter, 1875, in the Church of St. James's, Piccadilly by Various

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Cover @ 2017

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VARIOUS

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Published under the Direction of the Trust Committee.



LONDON:

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE;

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORIES:

77, GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS;

4, ROYAL EXCHANGE; 48, PICCADILLY;

AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1875.

100. cc. 207.

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CULTURE.

"Make the tree good, and his fruit good."—MATT. xii. 33.

At a time when men's intellectual energies are exercised in so many different directions, it might perhaps be hazardous to speak of any single question as being pre-eminently the question of the day. It can hardly be doubted, however, that one of the most prominent, among persons of the most various modes of thinking, is the question of Culture. It would be difficult, I think, to name a subject in which the Church and the world are at the present moment more deeply interested.

As is natural in such a case, the prophets of Culture are numerous, and the principles of their teaching diverse, and in some respects discordant. Different, however, as are their theories of culture, they do not so greatly disagree with respect to its fruits and its evidences; and in this matter, as in many others, the Church may learn something from the world. If Christians

are in danger of abusing the world, that is, as the Apostle means, of making unlawful or excessive use of the world; yet here, as elsewhere, it has a lawful use. The world—by which we mean the civilization of our own day, its principles and maxims—may, if rightly used, become a handmaid to the Gospel and the Church.

Now the world insists, and rightly insists, on Culture; and it is not altogether wrong in its notions of what constitutes culture. Indeed up to a certain point, there is a very remarkable agreement between the various theories which are in these days proposed for our acceptance.

I. What are those theories, and what do they propose to effect?

We have the simply worldly, or social view of culture. We have the scientific theory and the literary theory. Beyond these we have the confessedly materialistic or atheistic theory. And, apart from all these, and in diametrical opposition to some of them, we have the Christian method.

Now, my brethren, there are, substantially and essentially, only two methods of culture:—the secular, which knows nothing of God; and the religious, which is based upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. I am quite

aware that there are systems which would refuse to be assigned to either of those two classes; whose advocates imagine that they have made a compromise between mere secularism on the one hand, and a doctrinal Christianity on the other; and so have secured the advantages and avoided the evils of both. But these systems have no inherent vitality or consistency. The surrender of distinct Christian doctrine has always led, in human history, to rationalism, to unbelief, to mere deism, and, finally, to pantheism and atheism.

1. While, however, we point out the necessary bearings of these systems it may be useful to notice to how great an extent they agree with the teachings of the Gospel and the Church. Undoubtedly we have something to learn from them, and so we may "use the world," if we must also guard against being satisfied with them and resting in them, and so abuse the world.

(1.) What is the world's view of culture, the social view, as I may call it? The world requires refinement, ease, self-control, gentleness, kindness. We can hardly say, perhaps, that the world requires truth, or a high sense of duty, or self-sacrifice. Still it admires these qualities, and applauds them under certain circumstances, when they are found in union with

those other acquirements with which it cannot dispense.

(2.) What is the scientific view of culture? "That man, I think, has a liberal education," says Professor Huxley (I am condensing but not altering his words or his meaning), whose "body is the ready servant of his will, . . . whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; . . . whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of nature; . . . one who is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learnt to love all beauty, whether of nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself."¹

(3.) What is the literary view of culture? I answer in the words of the most distinguished teacher of this school: "An inward and spiritual activity having for its characters, increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy."²

These theories are in part professedly religious, and partly ignore religion; but there is a still

¹ Huxley, "Lay Sermons," p. 54.

² Mr. Matthew Arnold.