

**ABREAST OF THE TIMES. A COURSE OF
SERMONS ON SOCIAL SUBJECTS ORGANIZED
BY THE LONDON BRANCH OF THE CHRISTIAN
SOCIAL UNION, AND PREACHED IN THE
CHURCH OF ST. EDMUND, KING AND MARTYR,
LOMBARD STREET, DURING LENT, 1894.**

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Abreast of the times. A course of sermons on social subjects organized by the London Branch of the Christian Social Union, and preached in the Church of St. Edmund, King and Martyr, Lombard Street, during Lent, 1894. by B. F. Dunelm

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B. F. DUNELM

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NOTE.

THESE Sermons were preached, by kind permission of the Rector, Canon Benham, in the Church of St. Edmund, King and Martyr, Lombard Street, E.C., during Lent, 1894. The series was organized by the London Branch of the Christian Social Union. The idea of the promoters was to bring vividly before the minds of business men and others that the pressing Social Problems of the day would be the fittest object of their thoughts, prayers, heart-searchings, and aspirations during the solemn season of Lent; and that, as Christians, they were bound to seek for direction in their solution from their Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

For the benefit of those who may desire to know, the objects of the Christian Social Union are printed elsewhere.

H. S. HOLLAND,

Chairman of Committee.

PREFACE.

THE course of sermons contained in this volume was organized by the London branch of the Christian Social Union, but each preacher was left perfectly free to speak according to his mind, and is alone responsible for his own sermon.

I have not had the advantage of hearing or reading any of the sermons, but the striking variety of subjects and writers illustrates the wide field which the Union occupies and the liberty which is allowed to the members — though I believe that the writers are not all members of the Union — in regard to their economic and political and theological opinions. At the same time, I cannot doubt that whatever differences may exist in the methods and the conclusions of the several contributors, all alike recognise the same motive and the same principle and the same power of Christian action; the motive and the principle and the power which are to be found in the application of the fact of the Incarnation to the manifold problems of life in dependence on the Holy Spirit sent in the name of Jesus Christ.

The popular misconception of the scope and

strength of Christianity, which must be due, in part at least, to the fault of believers, lays upon every Christian the duty of making clear to himself and to others what he holds the faith to be as a social no less than an individual Gospel, the proclamation not simply of the teaching of Christ, but of Christ Himself, born, crucified, risen, ascended, the Saviour of the world. We are bound not only to affirm, but to show practically by patient effort that the faith is co-extensive with the interests of life; that it receives an intellectual expression in order that it may be applied effectively to conduct in the widest sense; that belief in the Incarnation—fulfilled in the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the mission of the Paraclete—supplies such an interpretation of the problems of creation as we are capable of receiving, and the help which we require, that we may be enabled to deal with them.

To this end the Christian Social Union proposes to its members three objects:

‘1. To claim for the Christian law the ultimate authority to rule social practice.

‘2. To study in common how to apply the moral truths and principles of Christianity to the social and economic difficulties of the present time.

‘3. To present Christ in practical life as the living Master and King, the enemy of wrong and selfishness, the power of righteousness and love.’

These objects define broadly the foundation, the preparation, and the character of the active Christian life.

1. The conceptions which we form of God and man necessarily determine all we do. For Christians these two conceptions are indissolubly combined; and all mankind, all the world, are transformed for them under the influence of the fact that the Word became flesh. For Christians the ideas of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men are not merely magnificent aspirations, but direct interpretations of that central truth of history. We have, indeed, lost in part through an unhappy mistranslation the characteristic thought of the love of the brethren (*φιλαδελφία*), the feeling of Christian for Christian founded on the confession of one Faith; but the thought is prominent in the New Testament, and it is through the love of the brethren and through this alone that we can rise with sure conviction to the love of men as men. Our relation to God dominates and determines all other relations. The command to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's is not a contrast to the command to render to God the things that are God's: the special duty is an embodiment of the universal duty. There can be no division in life: all life is essentially religious or irreligious. We accept literally as our rule of conduct, however imperfectly we may be able to fulfil it, the two commands: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*; and *Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*. We are our message; and in things great and small we are called upon to seek to make God known, that

is, to seek 'His glory,' and this can only be by realizing our own fellowship in His Son, as He has been revealed to us. All the conditions of labour and trade and social intercourse, of civil and national life, can be made conformable to a divine standard, and it is our duty to strive towards this issue.

2. The task is not easy, and can never be finally accomplished. The foundation fact of the Incarnation expresses perfectly, in terms of human life, our goal, our way, our strength; but it is also inexhaustible. No age and no race can master all its lessons. It offers something new for us to discover and to do, answering to the new conditions of the time. The Holy Spirit sent in Christ's name—sent, that is, to make His nature and His will better known—still takes of that which is His and declares it to us. We are set face to face with a living and speaking God. We are bound, therefore, to take account of every aspect and grouping of facts in the light of the Faith; and 'to study in common,' bringing together our differences of temperament and experience and knowledge, how to apply the Faith to the difficulties of our own time. This 'studying in common' is the central characteristic of the Union, and includes a promise of spiritual help to calm, systematic, scientific thought. The noble Jewish saying, that when two friends engage together in reading the Law, the Shekinah is added as a third, has for us a present application; and we may humbly trust that when two or three are gathered together in Christ's name (*εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*) to realize more perfectly in life what He is, He will

be in the midst of them. With what reverence therefore, with what patience, with what courage, with what hope, shall we labour together, if we realize that most holy Presence, before which the storms of earthly passion are stilled, accepting the discipline of delay, if delay be necessary, in order that all the truth may be gained. Every conclusion and every design which we form will be shaped in the spirit which England has retained from the movements of the sixteenth century, with a solemn sense of personal responsibility, with a passion for truth, with a whole-hearted devotion to righteousness.

3. At the same time all study will be directed to service. We believe in the ascended and living Christ. It is through us He works. The Vine bears fruit through the branches. In the bold language of early mystics, He needs us even as we need Him. In His name we hasten His kingdom. Yet even here we must remember that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual; and on great festivals, when we meditate on the conditions of our work,* we gladly recall that the earliest offerings which the Lord received were earthly treasures, brought by Gentile hands, that there is an eternal element in things transitory, that there exists already by Divine appointment a fellowship between the seen and the unseen orders.

We look beyond all present attainments, but,

* 'Members are expected to pray for the well-being of the Union at Holy Communion, more particularly on or about the following days: The Feast of the Epiphany, the Feast of the Ascension, the Feast of St. Michael and all Angels.'—*Objects of the Union.*