

## OUR RELATIONSHIPS, HUMAN AND DIVINE.

There is infinite variety of human type, but we have a common origin. "God created man in His own image." In his famous speech to the Athenians, the Apostle Paul reminded his cultured Greek audience of their common origin with the barbarian, an idea they scouted, believing themselves, as they did, a privileged class. "He made of one blood all the nations of mankind, to dwell upon the face of the whole earth." What follows is very significant: "and (He) ordained to each the appointed seasons of their existence, and the bounds of their habitation." Divorce this statement from the former, and we shall regard less privileged and highly organised races, nations, communities, individuals, as fair prey, to be exploited for our benefit. It is the recognition of the two-fold statement that has induced a human interest in human kind, and given rise to Mass Movements, International Societies, Brotherhoods, Peace Conferences, Federation, in place of purely local, isolated government. But in a deeper sense than is implied in all this there is a shouldering of the responsibility that belongs to privilege. Hence the missionary cut off from fellowship with his kind, from what he once regarded as the necessities of life; the worker in the slums; the man or woman who toils and suffers on behalf of others. And the compulsion of such is not legal. "The love of Christ constraineth us. . . . And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). "Oh, to grace so great a debtor." We say out of a full heart, with the Apostle, "I am debtor." Was this some part of the Apostles' discharge of their liabilities? If so, might it not flood some life with light, joy, peace, if found in the succession? Listen: "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," "as it were appointed to death." We prove that we are in the apostolic succession if, in our fiery ordeals, the world, angels, men, see only in us faithful soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, true to the colours, ready for sacrifice as for service, for loss as for gain. "Are ye able," He asks, "to drink of the

cup; be baptised with the baptism"—Mine? As a mother gazed upon the mangled form of her beautiful child, with none other to take her place, and she a widow, one comment only escaped her lips: "God can make no mistakes." Not so heavily fell the blow upon that other mother. With her it was one, not ~~the~~ chair vacant; she not a widow, yet through long years has she borne a grudge against Him Who took her darling, and in bitterness of soul has nursed her grief. But there is a look in the eye of the one, a tone in the voice, that help others in their distress, and bid them seek her source of comfort. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3, 4). Are you and I, reader, willing and capable of such ministry, if so appointed? And the other poor mother? Certainly there is nothing in the hard eye, metallic voice, stern manner, to invite the broken-hearted to sob out their anguish on her breast. Is ministry such as the former worth the cost? We are not asked. Our surrender to God, our outward ministry, may involve no such cost, but should it, let us not falter, but let others learn through us what we have learnt in sorrow. "I know not what awaits me; God kindly veils mine eyes." And the unveiling is done by Him, "Our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." We stand not alone in presence of our dead; our wreckage of hope and fortune. And let us remember that "He that suffers most, hath most to give." Yea, too, most to gain, even though for the time being all seems loss, and life a drawn-out pain, a sob. "Only one little life to lose." Shall we withhold that life from Him, by Whom it was redeemed; be unwilling, when required, to lay it down for the brethren? The wherefore of our sacrifice is surely more than answered in the statement, "Because He laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). We started with the consideration of our relations with the human race to which we are allied, and our consequent obligations thereto, involving more or less of sacrifice and suffering. "Bound up together

in the bundle of life," our obligations extend to the whole race of mankind. Hence our duty to "Do good to all men," and to this the Apostle adds the tender personal touch, "Especially to those that are of the household of faith."

"Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love:  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.  
We share our mutual woes,  
Our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows  
The sympathising tear."

But while we belong to the human race as a whole, we belong to some one country in particular, some district, some church, some family, in which is involved at once our privilege and responsibility. The body is one organic whole, but it is made up of many parts. Its well-being, and the well-being of its fellow-members, depends upon the well-being of the individual member. Such are the sympathetic relations of the members one with the other, that the suffering or rejoicing of the one is the suffering or rejoicing of the whole. We are then to the body to which we are attached either a source of strength and help or of hindrance and weakness. No man either liveth or dieth to himself. Abnormal activity or sluggishness on the part of any organ may lead to functional disorder that affects the body as a whole. How important that the unit should be healthy, since there is so much at stake. And now for the present to confine our outlook. We have touched upon those larger, catholic interests that reach out to the remotest peoples of the earth. We will now consider those that belong peculiarly to us as our sphere of action, in which our lot is cast. We each of us have some niche to occupy in family, school, business, or church life, upon which our action or inaction involves the weal or woe of others. And foremost among these is our church life, by which is implied our relation to Christ as His, redeemed by His precious blood; hence members of His Body, and fellow-members of those who are His members. Oh, how sacred our trust as members of that Body. How significant the language of the Apostle in relation to that Body. He has been speaking of