

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. III.

OCTOBER—NOVEMBER, 1923. Nos. 10 & 11.

Crowned Dirt and Profanity.

PROF. W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

An unlovable spirit is revealed occasionally in the *Nation*. Formerly the refined, exquisitely critical, high-toned weekly visitor to exclusive circles of cultured Americans, the stanch and fearless defender of the great American liberties, the arbiter in the realm of literature, art, drama, statesmanship, whose praise was coveted and prized by men of letters and men of affairs, while its censure was dreaded as a blight to budding genius, this journal has lately championed radicalism and modernism, boldly advocated birth control, and lent itself to spreading propaganda literature for this destructive sexual aberration in modern life. Its most revolting escapade, however, was the selection, on February 14, of Stephen Vincent Benét's *King David* as the *Nation's* prize poem for 1923. The poem has for its theme the nasty David-Bathsheba incident. It was selected from four thousand manuscripts by about fifteen hundred writers. If *King David* was the best in this lot, we have no desire to see the second best or the third best.

The poem is in six cantos. Episode No. 1 pictures David surfeited with wealth and power, singing to his "hook-nosed harp":

The Lord is a jealous God!
His violent vengeance is swift and sharp!
And the Lord is King above all gods!

Blest be the Lord, through years untold,
The Lord who has blessed me a thousandfold!

Cattle and concubines, corn and hives,
Enough to last me a dozen lives.

Plump good women with noses flat,
Marrowful blessings, weighty and fat.

I wax in His peace like a pious gourd,
The Lord God is a pleasant God,
Break mine enemy's jaws, O Lord!
For the Lord is King above all gods!

**Enmity against the Christian Religion
and Antagonism to It No Reason Why Christians
should be Offended.**

REV. C. C. SCHMIDT, D. D., St. Louis, Mo.

One of the great trials and temptations to which Christians are always in danger of succumbing is the enmity of men and their hateful opposition to the Christian religion. It is often the cause of great lukewarmness in Christians, even of doubt and hesitancy, when they are called upon to confess their faith in Christ. The

Lord therefore repeatedly warned His disciples against this danger. We quote, for instance, the well-known passage John 15, 26—16, 4: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with Me from the beginning. These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogs; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things have I told you that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you."

The situation the Lord has in mind He states thus: "*They shall put you out of the synagogs; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*" The disciples of Christ, who believed in Him as the Son of God and the Messiah, and who were to be His messengers to the world, would experience much enmity and opposition at the hands of the unbelieving Jews, especially those in authority. These enemies of Christ would excommunicate them from the Church and even put them to death. This might cause the disciples to be *offended*. Having, perhaps, expected to be honored by these men because of their relation to Christ, they would, when encountering such vehement opposition, find this to be a stumbling-block to their faith and be tempted to conclude that they had been deceived when they accepted Christ and expressed their willingness to be His apostles; in consequence of this they would decide to abandon His cause and submit to the authority of the Jewish Church. To forestall this, the Lord means to say, to keep you from taking such offense, I have spoken these things to you. For if you keep in mind that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, has testified of Me, thus confirming your faith in Me, and urged you to bear witness of Me, you will realize that such opposition to Me and My Gospel and the persecution you will suffer at the hands of men is no cause for you to be offended. We learn from this *that enmity against the Christian religion and antagonism to it is no reason why Christians should be offended and deterred from believing in Christ and confessing His name.*

And why not? *Because it is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, that has taught them such faith in Christ and such con-*

fessing of His name. Christians cannot but acknowledge the truth of the Lord's statement that the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, has made them Christians, believers in Christ. They have heard the Gospel and by it were brought to the knowledge of Christ. And whence is the Gospel? It is a word spoken by men, it is true, by the apostles, but in speaking these words the apostles were moved by the Holy Ghost. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Mark 13, 11. Christians, therefore, cheerfully confess: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." And because they are convinced of this fact, they are prompted not to hide their faith, but frankly to confess, by word and deed, that they are Christians. Or should they be deterred from doing so because many doubt the Gospel and even persecute those knowing, as they do, that the Spirit of Truth is the Author of it?

But whence *do* they know it? "*When the Comforter is come,*" etc. The Holy Ghost, in kindling faith in Christ in their hearts, has become their *Comforter*. Christians know that they are sinners; they know and feel that by nature they are under the wrath of God. At the same time, however, they believe, they know positively, that they need not fear the divine wrath, being reconciled unto God and being assured of the forgiveness of all their sins. In the days of adversity when, like Hezekiah, for peace they have great bitterness, Christians find comfort in calling upon God, confidently looking to Him for help and deliverance. What gives them courage to do so? Through the Word and the Holy Spirit they are made sure of being children of God.

Now look at such as are no Christians; have they such comfort? Oh, they are not in need of it, they tell us sneeringly and contemptuously. Perhaps not now; but let a bad conscience reprove them, giving them no rest day and night, how miserable are they then, how much in need of comfort! And what does that sadness of theirs in trouble and distress, that uttering of bitterness against God and man, show but that they are exceedingly unhappy? And one day they may find themselves in the grasp of an incurable sickness, visions of death and the Judgment will beset them, and they will cast about for help and reassurance. They have a good doctor, they have friends who tell them to be of good cheer, the means to procure for themselves what the world can offer in the

way of nursing and giving relief; but can all that save them from death and the Judgment? No, it is only the righteous that has hope in his death. Prov. 14, 32. It is only the Christians that overcome the fear of death and the Judgment, because they have peace with God through Christ and hope of eternal life. Think of the Christian you saw dying in the Lord, showing no fear of death; but a confident hope of life according to the words of the Lord: "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death."

Now, what is all the enmity of the world, compared with the happiness one enjoys in being a Christian, that he should be offended by it? Should Christians doubt the existence of a power they have experienced because others have not had such an experience? Are they to distrust a comfort that has made them so happy because others do not believe it and cannot comprehend it? Christians know Christ and the power of His Word; should they, then, deny it as though they did not know it, merely because others, having no such knowledge, scorn and reject it? Who would doubt the existence of the light of the sun and of the glowing colors of the flowers even though all the blind in the world do not see what he is privileged to see?

But the very fact that the Lord warns His disciples against the great enmity and opposition they would meet with when confessing His name and teaching the way of salvation through faith in Him, offers a very sound reason why Christians should not be offended, even if such opposition should show itself within the pale of the Church. If the Lord had promised His apostles great success, and told them that unity of the Spirit among all confessing the faith would be a matter of course, or if He had tacitly suffered them to entertain such hopes, the disappointment consequent upon failing to realize their fond hopes would have proved a severe trial for them. But now we read: vv. 1. 3. 4.

The Lord not only foresaw what was coming, He also told His disciples about it, in order that they might be prepared and, when the time would come, remember that He had forewarned them. And what stress He laid on having them thus well prepared and how He impressed upon them the melancholy prospects, is shown by words such as these: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." John 15, 20. Again: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matt. 10, 34. Where the Gospel is

preached and people have become Christians, they must look for enmity and strife and be prepared to defend themselves against such as would turn them from the faith. Thus the Lord advised His disciples to expect much antagonism on the part of men.

And, if we consider what experiences the apostles had, did the predictions of the Lord come true? We read in the Acts of the Apostles that in some places their endeavors were crowned with great success. Yet never do we read of conversions of great masses and of whole communities, not even at Ephesus. And when Demetrius, the silversmith, raised a mob against the Christians, the whole city was in confusion, and it became evident that Ephesus was still a heathen city. And even when Paul had "fully preached the Gospel of Christ" from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Rom. 15, 19), we learn that the Church of Christ was called a sect that was everywhere spoken against. Acts 28, 22. Moreover, when we hear the apostles speaking of the future of the Church, do they try to comfort the Christians by promising better times in the future? On the contrary, they tell them that even among those who confess the Christian faith discord and contentions would arise. 1 Cor. 11, 19; 2 Tim. 4, 3.

Why, then, should Christians be offended because of the enmity of men, seeing that all such enmity must serve to offer the strongest confirmation for the truth of the Gospel? If things had turned out the way one would have expected, there would have been a reason for serious misgivings as to the divine character of the teachings of Christ. But as it is, he must be blind who does not see that all opposition of men against the Christian religion, all the books written for that purpose, all the antagonism and strife in the Church itself, is indeed a powerful argument for the truth of the Christian religion.

However, there is one objection against the Christian religion which, it seems, can never be silenced. Again and again Christians are confronted with the argument that, as a rule, only the simple and the unlearned embrace the Christian religion, while the learned and the independent minds do not accept its teachings. It is true, as St. Paul writes, 1 Cor. 1, 26, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But the reason why they are not called is not because they possess such eminent wisdom or great might. At all times we find men of great learning and men in authority joining the ranks of the believers. Abraham was a rich man, and he was held in high esteem even by kings.

Moses was a great lawgiver, one who had not his equal. David was a mighty king, and Solomon's wisdom became proverbial. Paul was one of the foremost among the educated men in Israel in his day, and Luther is acknowledged as having been one of the master-minds of all ages. Preeminence, therefore, in human wisdom or power is no impediment to one's becoming a Christian.

The reason why many of this class of men are enemies of the faith is stated by the Lord in v. 3: "*And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me.*" Jesus says, Matt. 11, 27: "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." But these men pretend to know the Father without the Son. John 6, 44 Jesus tells us: "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." But many of the wise and mighty of the world resist the Spirit of the Father who desires to draw them to Christ. They blindly and persistently deny the Lord who has bought them because, as St. Paul says, 2 Cor. 4, 4: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Hence it is that, when they speak of Christianity, they cannot but manifest their utter ignorance of things spiritual. They know nothing of the comfort and power of the Gospel. Living in sin, as they do, they might know that the way they are pursuing leads to destruction, but the god of this world has so blinded them that they do not realize their terrible condition. They consider it a grievous offense if you tell them that they are living in sin, while all along they are doing things that are wrong and sinful and intend to continue therein. And now comes the Gospel and reproves them for their love of sin and admonishes them to repent and to beseech God for mercy and forgiveness. At this they feel resentment, and hence their hatred of, and their enmity against, the Christian religion. If at all they join a religious body, it must be the Christian Scientists, Russellites, or some other kindred sect that requires no repentance of those who affiliate with them. In short, it is not their higher wisdom nor their eminence in worldly achievements that causes them to be enemies of the faith, but their carnal mind, which is enmity against God.

In view of all this it is as clear as daylight that enmity against Christianity and antagonism to it is no reason why Christians should be offended and deterred from believing in Christ and confessing His name.
