

blems that have ever racked and puzzled philosophy find in Him their solution. Truly He is the Light of the World, and they that follow Him need no longer walk in the darkness and in the shadow of death.

Here then, and nowhere else, is what we have been in search of. Amid all the religious traditions of the human race, this is the only one that can stand the test of history and of logic, the only one that can show reasonable claim to be the Revelation of God, that Revelation which, we have seen, must exist somewhere in the order of facts. Here, and here alone, is the Divine Light and aid granted by the Creator to His creatures, that they may reach the destined end which alone can satisfy them. Here, and here alone, is the fulfilment of what the great Apostle of the Gentiles has written: "God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by His Son."

During His sojourn on earth, the Divine Master poured His blessed light abroad for all times and peoples for every human soul.

Into the words He spoke, He condensed the light to enlighten the minds of men with wisdom forever. Into the life He led, He condensed the light that was to guide the steps of men in all the high ways and the low ways, in all the smooth ways and the rough ways of human life forever. And into His cross He has condensed the light to illumine the mysteries of nature and grace, of sin and repentance and reconciliation, and to lead all generous souls to victory over all spiritual enemies, as it was to lead Constantine to victory over his own enemies and the enemies of Christ.

Having thus stored up for us the treasures of His light, He then sent forth His Church to be the dispenser of the treasures to all nations and all generations. "Ye are the light of the world," He says to the first ministers of His Church. "As My Father hath sent Me, so I send you." Forth, then, they went into the whole world, and Christ went with them in invisible presence, guarding and guiding and giving increase. They carried the blessed light first to the neighbouring nations of Asia, and then to Egypt and to Greece, and westward to Rome, the centre of the world. Here it was that Christ intended that the focus of the light should be. And it is easy to see the reason of this Providential purpose. Jerusalem had been the focus of the light during the ages of waiting and preparation, when the light, still feeble, had to be huddled in and guarded from being extinguished by the blasts of Paganism which swept over the whole world. But now, preparation being over, the fulfilment of the reality having come, and the light shining forth in conquering splendour, it was no more to be kept guarded and hidden but to be placed where it might be seen of all men. And so its focus was put in Rome, then the centre of the civilised world, that from thence, as from a great candlestick, it might shine upon the whole earth.

Its first great work was the elevation of the Greco-Roman civilisation. It breathed into the old civilisation the soul for which Plato had sighed, but which he was powerless to impart. Even in the ages of bitter persecution it did its work, forming saints and sages like Dionysius, the Areopagite, and Clement of Alexandria, Justin and Origen, Irenaeus and Ambrose and Augustine. Like the lump of leaven spoken of by Our Lord, it pervaded the Empire, and prepared it for the glories of the age of Constantine.

But a still greater work of Christianity was to be the formation of a new civilisation. All the old civilisations had failed, because based on a one-sided and exclusive view of human nature and duties.

Thus the civilisation of the Hindoos had been so pre-occupied with the Infinite and the hereafter as to become oblivious of the finite and the present; and so it had degenerated into an enervating torpor. On the contrary, the Greek civilisation had been so engrossed with the human, the material, and the present, as to be unmindful of the divine, the spiritual, and the immortal; and, therefore, it had degenerated into sensualism, scepticism, and cynicism. Christianity combined both sides in just measures, the infinite and the finite, the spiritual and the material, and insisted on the right use of the present as the means for obtaining bliss in the hereafter, and, therefore, it contained all the elements for the formation of a perfect civilisation.

God gave Christianity this great work to do after the downfall of the Roman Empire.

Like a rotten colossus, the mighty structure of Pagan power and Pagan civilisation crumbled to pieces when the shock of barbarian invasion burst upon it. Chaos covered the face of Europe, and out of that chaos Christianity had to form a new and better order of things. The material for the great work was only the shattered debris of the old empire and the wild hordes of the barbarians. Yet into that rude mass she breathed the spirit of the Lord, and the result was Christendom. Take the history of Christendom, from the days of Alfred and Charlemagne down to our own times, and we find that whatever there has been of glorious and noble and useful, has come from fidelity to the spirit of Christianity, from the guidance of the Light of the World. And we find, too, that all its defects and all its partial failures have been owing to resistance to the spirit of Christianity and unwillingness to be guided by the Light of the World.

Glance now over mankind as it is, and see if the blessed Light of the World is not the source of all that is true and beautiful on earth.

Christ our Lord is the light of philosophy. He tells us, and He alone tells us clearly and surely, whence we come, what is man's nature, whence his weaknesses and evils, whither it must tend, what are our relations with God and our fellow-men, what our duties to Him, and our means of attaining Him. And this is what makes up philosophy.

He is the light of history. He alone gives the meaning of all the times that preceded Him, and He alone is the explanation of all the ages that have followed Him. Without Him history is an insoluble puzzle. But put Him in its centre, as the Keystone in the arch, and history becomes a systematical and consistent record of all the ways and fortunes of man, and of all the dealings of God with His creatures.

He is the light of civil society. He alone has given the world a true civilisation, and He alone can maintain it. The stream must ever flow from its source. No system of laws or of government can

tend to true civilisation that does not keep Him in view and take counsel with him. Just so far will legislators and rulers conduce to the real welfare and progress of nations, by how far they are guided by the Light of the World.

He is the light of home—sanctifying the marriage ties—sanctifying relations between parents and children, and breathing into every truly Christian home the spirit of his home at Bethlehem or Nazareth.

He is the light of every mind. It may be the intellect of a St. Paul or a St. Augustine, or a St. Thomas Aquinas; or it may be the mind of an illiterate man or woman, or of a little child just able to speak understandingly the name of the dear Jesus; but whatever be the grade of intellect, the blessed Light of the World illumines them all, is their sure guide, and gives to all their sweetest and noblest theme for thought. And even outside the pale of Christianity, today as in ancient times, whatever light they have in reason or in the old mutilated traditions, that leads them towards God, it shines from Him who was the light of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the heathen world, who is "the Light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world."

He is the light of hearts. No heart so crushed that He cannot heal it; none so bowed with sorrow or weighed down with care that He cannot comfort and strengthen it; no heart so sin-stained that He cannot cleanse it; none so burning with passion that He cannot tame, subdue and sanctify it; none so vast in its power of love that it cannot be filled to overflowing with the love of Jesus.

Painters have given us many a lovely landscape of hill and dale and waving forest, and every form of life, bathed in the beautiful light of heaven. But never was there so beautiful or so wonderful a picture as that which is presented by the myriads in every class and condition of human life, in every clime and every age, all turning towards the blessed Light of the World, to glorify Him, to drink in His radiance and His power; all the minds that are illumined by Him, all the hearts that are purified and perfected by loving Him, all the lives that are beautified and ennobled by imitating Him, all the souls that are consecrated and devoted to Him, all the aspirations that are satisfied in Him. Surely He is for our age, as for all preceding ages, the Light of the World; the truest and sublimest enlightenment of intellect, the safest and most beautiful type of all culture; and they that walk in darkness, or lead deformed lives, do so because they do not follow Him. This is the conclusion to which we are led by all the history of religion, by all the facts that make up the life of all the ages.

And now, in conclusion, what are men trying to do with the Light of the World? Alas! there are still too many of whom Our Lord's words are true: "The Light hath come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than the Light." In every department of human life some are trying to shut out the Light of the World.

They are trying to shut Him out of His place in history, His shrine in the very heart of humanity. Some writers of our times have endeavoured and are still endeavouring to accomplish it, by representing Our Lord as standing on the same level with the Pagan sages of antiquity, or by pretending to substitute one or another of them for Him, as it now seems that some would like to substitute the Light of Asia, as they call Buddha, for the Light of the World. But the attempt is one which no one would be capable of who did not utterly ignore the facts of history. History has preserved the record of their lives and their work as well as of His. We have glanced to-night at the greatest among them. We have seen that each of them protested against some popular evils and gave the world some admirable axioms of truth and duty, but also each of them failed to give a complete or consistent system; each of them failed to accomplish the results he aimed at, or to exert a beneficial influence on posterity, and each of them acknowledged that he was far from being himself the truth or the light, but only a poor groping after the truth and the light. Plato sighed: "Would that one would come from heaven to teach us the truth!" Confucius and Zoroaster were only philosophers seeking to impress on their followers some maxims of morality; and Buddha declared that he, like all around him, was only one groaning under the curse of existence, and sighing for the Nirvana in which existence would be ended. Jesus Christ alone proclaimed: "I am the Light of the World. He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness." Jesus Christ alone declared: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." He alone declared that He was to be the teacher of all nations and every creature all days till the end of the world. He alone has ever ventured to say aught like this, and He had said it, and has verified it in the results of all the ages that have since elapsed. And He alone, now, in all the wide world, is truly light and life, to the minds and hearts of men. As the great Napoleon said: "He stands amid all the great ones of all history incomparable and unapproachable." None but sophists or dreamers, who close their eyes to facts, could seek another in His place, or pretend to give Him a parallel.

Statesmen, too, are trying to drive him out of civilisation and social systems. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Renaissance brought back to Europe, not only Pagan ideals in literature and art, but also Pagan maxims in legislation and politics, which the Light of the World had banished. Caesar's absolute supremacy, even over conscience, was reasserted then, and is advocated now, as in the days of Nero and Domitian; and our own days have beheld thousands groan under persecution because they would not acknowledge that Caesar can make no law to which God and the conscience are not bound to conform. This is a reversal of the principles of Christian civilisation; it is to ignore all the facts of Christian history and roll back the wheels of human progress for centuries. And we see the results in the standing armies of millions upon millions of men, under which Europe is groaning, and in the impending conflict between the one extreme of absolute Caesarism and the other extreme of absolute Communism, which momentarily threatens the entire social fabric with destruction. If the facts of history, past and present, prove anything, they surely demonstrate that the only hope of society and of civilisation is in a return of legislators and govern-