

Joseph Glanvill on Catholic Charity.

IN 1667 Joseph Glanvill, Rector of Bath, preached in London. The full title of the sermon is as follows: "Catholick Charity, Recommended in a Sermon before the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London: in order to the abating the Animosities among Christians, that have been occasioned by Differences in Religion."

In closing the brief account which I gave in the *CHURCHMAN* for May, of the sermon preached by Benjamin Laney, Bishop of Lincoln, with its undisguised prejudice and transparent sophistry, I quoted the words of the wise man: "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." It seems to me, as I read this sermon on Catholic Charity, that Joseph Glanvill may well be taken to represent this even-handed and truth-seeking neighbour. But before we listen to what he has to say, let us glance at the man and his history.

Few more interesting clerical careers come before us at the period of the Restoration than that of Glanvill. Had he not been cut off in the prime of life, he must inevitably have reached the highest dignities of ecclesiastical office in the latitudinarian atmosphere of King William's rule. His clerical life began under the patronage of Francis Rous, a stanch Cromwellian, and Provost of Eton, whose chaplain he became in 1658. On the death of his patron in the following year, Glanvill returned to Oxford. Two main influences moulded his thought—namely, the philosophy of Descartes and Cambridge Platonism. Of this intellectual training his earliest literary effort, "The Vanity of Dogmatizing," published in 1661, when the author was but twenty-five, was the logical outcome.¹ In early manhood he

¹ "The Vanity of Dogmatizing" was recast in 1665, and published as "Scep̄sis Scientifica." Of this work Hallam writes: "Few books, I think, are more deserving of being reprinted" ("History of Literature," vol. iii., p. 361). Lecky fully endorses Hallam's high opinion both of this book and of Glanvill's position in the world of thought. As a divine he considers that "he has been surpassed in genius by few of his successors" ("Rationalism

regarded Richard Baxter with almost extravagant admiration—an admiration that he never lost, although, from an ecclesiastical point of view, the two men went different ways.

On the Restoration, Glanvill conformed, and became Rector of Wimbish in Essex. In 1662 he followed an ejected minister as Vicar of Frome Selwood in Somerset. In 1672 he exchanged this for Streat and Walton, in the same county, and in the same year became Chaplain to the King. Five years later he was made Prebend of Worcester. Meanwhile, in 1666 (the conscience of the Church was then strangely tolerant of pluralism), he accepted the important cure of the Abbey Church at Bath. Here he died in 1680, in the forty-fifth year of his age.

As an original thinker Glanvill takes a very high place among the men of his day. His talent was recognized, and his influence increased, by his admission in 1665 to the sacred circle of the Royal Society.¹ His voluminous writings have left the world in no doubt as to his views. With respect to his position as a religious teacher, we may quote his own words: "Contenting myself with a firm assent to the few practical fundamentals of faith, and having fixed that end of the compass, I desire to preserve my liberty as to the rest."² His undisguised latitudinarianism, his scientific vein, his hostility to traditional scholastic philosophy, and his connection with the Royal Society, combined to bring him under the suspicion of radical disbelief. As a consequence, his teaching was bitterly attacked by good but mistaken persons, who had not the wit to understand him.³ He

in Europe," vol. ii., p. 81 *et seq.*) Principal Tulloch is not quite so lavish of praise. See "Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy," vol. ii., p. 444 *et seq.*

¹ Glanvill wrote a defence of the Royal Society, and published it under the title of "Plus Ultra."

² "Plus Ultra," p. 139.

³ The ringleader of his critics was one Henry Stubbe, a well-known physician, practising in Glanvill's own parish at Bath, who violently attacked the Royal Society generally, and Glanvill in particular, as likely either to uproot Christian belief, or pave the way for the re-establishment of Popery in England. Glanvill sent John Evelyn a complimentary copy of his "Plus Ultra (the vindication of the Royal Society). In his letter of thanks to the donor, Evelyn speaks of Stubbe as "your snarling adversary" ("Diary," vol. iii., p. 204). Stubbe was accidentally drowned near Bath in 1676, and

did his best to disabuse them. "I have been preaching," so he writes to a friend, "twice a day to angry mobs, plainly, affectionately, extemporaneously, but have done little good." The fact is that in his writings he, like Pascal, attempted to make philosophic scepticism a plea for religious faith. This method of argument is familiar to us of to-day.¹

Glanvill's literary style places him in the front rank of contemporary writers, whilst for originality of thought he stands almost, if not quite, alone amongst his brethren of the working clergy, his real place as a religious thinker being with Henry More and his brother Platonists. This statement may be emphasized by the fact that his works contain remarkable anticipations of the electric telegraph and other inventions,² and that he devoted himself, in the distinguished company of Henry More, to psychical research. It is in connection with this side of his work that we have to face the fact that a pronounced latitudinarian devoted some of his maturest energies to the task of proving the reality of witchcraft and apparitions. His book on this subject, "Sadducismus Triumphatus," was well known in its day, and still holds its own amongst the curiosities of literature. His object in writing it may be given in his own words: "There is no one that is not very much a stranger to the world but knows how atheism and infidelity have advanced in our days, and how openly they now dare to show themselves in asserting and disputing their vile cause. Particularly the distinction of the soul from the body, the being of spirits, and a future life, are assertions extremely despised and opposed by men of this sort; and if we lose these articles, all Religion comes to nothing."³ If, then, he can prove his point by concrete instances of persons holding commerce with the unseen

interred in the Abbey Church, "his old antagonist, Mr. Glanvill, preaching his funeral sermon" (Birch's "Life and Writings of the Hon. Robert Boyle," vol. i., p. 58.

¹ As, for example, in "The Foundations of Faith," by Mr. Arthur Balfour.

² See "Dictionary of National Biography."

³ "Sadducismus Triumphatus," part ii., p. 1.

world, and if apparitions cannot be explained away, the materialist, *ipso facto*, is refuted. And is there not an important Society engaged at the present time in an attempt to establish the reality of apparitions and voices from the unseen? It may well be that, when we read the stories of witchcraft and necromancy to which Glanvill gave credence, our first feeling may be one of blank amazement that a man of his intellectual calibre should have volunteered authority for their support. We must not, however, forget that belief in witchcraft, though on the wane, was still very active in his day, and that only a few years before the appearance of "Sadducismus Triumphatus" Sir Matthew Hale, as eminent for his Christian character as for his judicial distinction, condemned two unhappy women to death for the crime of witchcraft.¹ Nevertheless, the history of literature contains, perhaps, no more singular phenomenon than that of "Sadducismus Triumphatus" from the pen of a man the natural bent of whose mind was toward universal scepticism.²

¹ This was in 1665. "Sadducismus Triumphatus," in its present form, was not published till 1681, the year after Glanvill's death; but it was practically a reproduction of "A Blow at Modern Sadducism," which appeared in 1668. One of the stories of demoniacal agency contained in "Sadducismus Triumphatus" is, at this day, quoted by distinguished members of the Psychical Society as an unrefuted, if not altogether reliable, instance of unseen personal forces of mischief at work, and as furnishing support to a belief in the existence of the Poltergeist—Anglicè "hobgoblin." See Sir W. F. Barrett's very interesting book, "Psychical Research," p. 205. It is not unworthy of remark that Glanvill, in dealing with the subject of apparitions, etc., resorts to the theory of the fourth dimension. If I am not mistaken, the hypothesis of a fourth dimension is coming to play an important part in discussions that relate to an unseen, spiritual world. My readers may be entertained, if not enlightened, by the following specimen from Glanvill's treatment of the fourth dimension: 'And that I may not dissemble or conceal anything, although all *material* things, considered in themselves, have three dimensions only, yet there must be admitted in Nature a Fourth, which, fitly enough, I think may be called *Essential Spissitude*; which, though it most properly appertains to those Spirits which can contract their extension into a less *Ubi*; yet by an easy analogy it may be referred also to Spirits penetrating as well the matter as mutually one another: so that wherever there are more Essences than one, or more of the same Essence in the same *Ubi* than is adequate to the amplitude thereof, there this Fourth dimension is to be acknowledged, which we call *Essential Spissitude*.'

² Dean Hensley Henson, speaking of the almost unquestioning belief of that day in witchcraft, remarks that "it is difficult for us at the present day to understand how such barbarous superstition, sound religion, theology, and

But to turn to the sermon on Catholic Charity. The sermon is worthy of attention, not only on account of its intrinsic excellence, but also as the work of one who did as much as any man to pave the way for that Act of Toleration which was passed within ten years of the preacher's death. The whole tenor of Glanvill's writings was against religious persecution. The right of private judgment in matters of faith never had a more convinced advocate. The sermon before us is a thoroughly characteristic utterance, for it gives full play to the preacher's latitudinarianism, and the only logical outcome of its teaching is that no man has a right to dictate to another what he should believe. We can well understand that a man of Glanvill's convictions was constrained to speak his mind on the great question of the day; how, after waiting some years and seeing nothing done to repair the ravages of disunion, but much to aggravate them, he could no longer keep silence. At last he spake with his tongue.

In the foreword prefixed to the sermon the writer informs us that one reason for its publication was that its catholicity of thought had roused resentment in some quarters. His sole aim, he assures the reader, is to recommend one of the greatest, yet one of the most neglected, duties of Christianity; "and I am sorry that our divisions have brought things to such a pass that men take it ill to hear of charity." From the foreword we further learn that, in publishing, something has been added which, through lack of time, was not contained in the sermon as preached. There is, I think, no doubt that the reference here is to the concluding paragraph, which, it must be admitted, somewhat clashes with the main thought of the sermon. In these closing sentences he admits that toleration may be carried too far. Any religion whose principles endanger the safety of the State must expect the enmity of the State. "I shall only

moral thinking, could coexist in the same individual" ("English Religion in the Seventeenth Century," p. xiv). He instances Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter. He might have named Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, who actually collaborated with Glanvill in the compilation of "Sadducismus Triumphatus."

say that so much toleration as may consist with the interests of religion and public safety may be granted. But such a liberty as is prejudicial to any of these should not be expected." In these words Glanvill seems to hedge and safeguard his position against the objections of brother-Churchmen less liberal-minded than himself. We, who have so completely outgrown the spirit of forcible repression, may wish that this addition had not been made to the sermon as it went forth to the world in print. We must, however, bear in mind that Glanvill's England had not forgotten the political intrigues of Queen Elizabeth's days, or the Gunpowder Plot of the first James's reign. Nor, indeed, were signs wanting throughout the reign of Charles II. that Rome had not abandoned her design of bringing England back to the feet of the Pope. We know better than Glanvill, in 1667, could have known how imminent was the danger; for three years after the preaching of this sermon Charles avowed himself, in the secret Treaty of Dover, a Roman Catholic, and bound himself by promise to Louis XIV. to support the policy of Rome; while, a few years later, the second James deliberately set himself to carry that policy into execution. Can we wonder that nothing is more characteristic of Restoration theology than the dread of Popery, and the unanimity with which all parties in the Church, High, Low, and Broad, alike, repudiated the teaching and principles of Rome?¹ It was surely as sharing these sentiments that Glanvill added to his sermon words which admit the possible need of penal law and statutory proscription.

The preacher took for his text 1 Pet. i. 21, "See that ye love one another." He begins by deploring the feuds of this "tottering and broken age." Strange, indeed, that Christians should have so much in common, yet spend their time and strength in quarrelling. "Our God is one, and we have the same common Saviour; we profess one Gospel, and believe the same Creeds; we have the same Sacraments and the same

¹ See, for example, Overton, "History of the English Church," 1660-1714, p. 352.

fundamental Ordinances ; and since we are agreed on these, what is there left that is worth the heat of a dispute ? What can justify a division ?” The root-mischief is that “the Christianity of most Christians is (if I may so speak) quite another thing from the Christianity of Christ.” Quoting profusely from the New Testament, the preacher urges that the duty of love is not inculcated “in half-sentences and doubtful phrases, in fancied analogies and far-fetched interpretations, but in plain commands, in repeated advices and passionate commendations, in earnest entreaties and pressing importunities. . . . Our unhappy first parents lost Paradise by aspiring to be like God in *knowledge*, and if we endeavour to be like Him in *love* we shall be in the way of gaining a better Paradise than they lost.” We must beware of counterfeits. “Here I dare to say that the happiest faculty to preach plausibly, and pray with fluency and eloquence, to discourse devoutly, and readily to interpret Scripture, if it be not joined with a benign and charitable spirit, is no participation of the God-like life and nature.”

It is love, we are reminded, that, more than anything else, commends the Christian religion to those who are without. “And were Christendom Christian in this regard, and the professors of the true religion truly religious—that is, abounding in that charity and goodness which Christianity enjoins—our religion would spread its wings through the world, and all contrary professions would lie in the dust before it ; whereas the divisions and fatal feuds of paganized, degenerated Christendom are now the great partition-wall between us and the heathen world ; yea, they are more particularly the great scandal of the Reformation, and make us the scorn of those of Rome.”

But Glanvill, the representative Broad Churchman of Restoration days, will make no terms with Rome. “O that they who speak and pray much against the BEAST would not prove instrumental to uphold his throne ! We expect and hope for glorious times when the Man of Sin is fallen” ; but the glory of those times will not consist in “ecclesiastical triumphs, external rule, or clerical dominion, but in the universal restora-

tion of the Church to its primitive simplicity and purity." It is not declaiming against the Pope as Antichrist, and "spitting the fire of rage against the infallible Chair," that will bring in the millennium. "There is nothing that could be so effectual a blow at the root of Antichristianism as the exercise of charity and catholic goodness. And when we see these take place, then we may triumphantly sing, 'Babylon is fallen.'"

The means, it is urged, to "sweeten our spirits and to remove the animosities we are apt to conceive against the persons of dissenters" is to "acknowledge worth in any man. . . . And we must take care that we make not our own relish the measure of worth and goodness." It is pride that leads us astray. "Let us take care that we deny not God the honour of His gifts and graces, or proudly fancy that He has given us the monopoly." Men may find work enough in their own hearts without falling out with their neighbours over differences of opinion. "And it seems to me such a kind of madness, as if a man should be picking causeless quarrels with his neighbours about a chip of wood or a broken hedge, when a fire in his own house is consuming his goods and children. Such frenzies, and much greater, are our mutual enmities and oppositions, while we quietly sit down in our unmortified affections."

Such enmities are unreasonable, as well as sinful, on various grounds.

"Love is a part of religion, but the opinions for the sake of which we lose charity are none. The necessary principles of Faith lie in a little room. . . . Religion consists not in knowing many things, but in practising the few plain things that we know." The preacher quotes from the words of our Lord, St. Paul, St. James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, Philip the Deacon, and the prophet Micah, in proof that "the fundamentals of belief are few and plain."

Charity is certainly our duty, but many of the opinions about which we fall out are "uncertainly true." There must be something wrong if we have failed to discover that we are not infallible. Let men consider that in many things they err them-

selves, and therefore shall have need of the charity of others. "There is none of us, I hope, so immodest as to say or think that he is mistaken in nothing; if any do, that person errs more than most of those whose error he censures. Interpretations are infinite, and there is no sort of men less agreed than commentators. All opinions plead Scripture, many pretend to reason, most to antiquity. . . . Every man differs from almost every other in something, and every man differs often from himself in many things. Age hath altered our judgments, or we are children still."

Consider, again, that "Christian love is necessary, but agreement in opinions is neither necessary nor possible. 'Tis true we are commanded to hold the unity of the Spirit, and that is necessary; but this is in the essentials of faith and life, in which all good men are agreed. . . . 'Tis a frequent wish with some that all men were once of one mind; but then it must be theirs, for they would not judge it reasonable upon other terms. They may as well wish that we were all of one age, complexion, humour, and degree of understanding."

Be it remembered that error springs from an infirmity of the understanding, and not from perversity of the will, "for no man is willing to be deceived: so that they ought not to be objects of our hatred, but our pity. . . . We are all pilgrims on our way to the Jerusalem that is above. If some will go in this path, some in the other, these in a circuit, and those among the rocks, we may be sure 'tis because they know not the danger and inconveniences which they choose. . . . We may lament their unhappy mistake, but must not beat or throw stones at them for it."

Allowance must be made for education and authority. "For let us consider how easily we receive the first impressions, how deeply they sink into our souls; childhood refuseth no folly, examines no absurdity; education makes it anything. The first is entertained as best, and whatever offers after is execrated and despised, if it be not like it. . . . Far the greatest part of men are slaves to the principles in which they were bred, and

our constitution, infirmity, and circumstances, are such that very few can help it."¹

These sane and enlightened maxims are followed by some cautions equally sensible.

"Beware of inordinate admiration and love of any sect." This will lead to contempt for those who differ, and ministers to self-appreciation and Pharisaism. "They look upon the rest of Christians with an eye of pride and scorn, and affectedly thank God that they are not like these publicans. . . . They heap up teachers to themselves, and doat upon their own Apostles. . . . This is a *precious* man, or that is a *Gospel-preacher*; such an one is very *powerful*, and such an one is very *sweet* and *spiritual*; and oh, how beautiful are the feet of those messengers of good tidings to them, while they assure them by the marks of their own sect that they are God's peculiar and chosen people. Which fondness were not so mischievous, if, at the same time, all others were not counted reprobates and castaways." Through this spirit of partiality and man-worship "endless enmities are begun and charity is destroyed, and the foundation is laid for cruelty and persecution, and God's goodness, which is to His whole Church, is wronged by being narrowed, and Christ's blood is undervalued, and the greatest part of His purchase is by these men given to the devil."

Next, the preacher warns his readers to "avoid eager, passionate disputes. In these charity is always lost, and truth seldom or never found." Here is recalled the apologue of the sun and the wind contending for the traveller's cloak. The fiercer the wind, the more tightly was the garment wrapped; warmed by the gentle, insinuating heat of the sun, it is not long before the traveller is glad to put off the cloak. "This is the likeliest way to prevail upon dissenters."

Thirdly, "Beware of zeal about opinions, by which I mean all the propositions of less certainty or consequence." Nothing

¹ Glanvill here reproduces an argument he had used with great effect in "Scep̄sis Scientifica" (the Vanity of Dogmatizing), p. 95. See a quotation in Hallam's "History of Literature," vol. iii., p. 361.

has done more mischief than indiscriminating zeal for matters of opinion as distinct from matters of faith. "This man is ready to burst till he hath given himself vent ; and the other is as impatient till he hath contradicted what has been said. Both are zealous to proselyte [*sic*] each other, and neither can be contented with a single contest till the public be disturbed." Those who follow the preacher's counsel will "exercise their *zeal* upon the necessary, certain things, and their *charity* about the rest. . . . They will converse indifferently with all persuasions without wrangling and discord, and exercise their charity towards the good men of any sort."

Lastly, "Beware of censuring and affixing odious names and consequences upon the persons or opinions of dissenters. . . . He that rails at his neighbour for his opinion wants only power to persecute him for it. . . . 'Tis but raising the cry of Arminianism, Socinianism, Popery, Pelagianism, and such like, upon them, and all other refutation is superfluous. . . . A true Catholic should not take any name to himself but that of a Christian. . . . If men would learn to be thus fair and candid to each other, our differences would be reduced to a narrower circle, and there might be some hopes that peace and love would revive, and flourish in our borders."

Hallam, the historian of literature, could say of Glanvill's "Scep̄sis Scientifica" that few books are better worth reprinting. I venture to affirm that few sermons ever preached from the Anglican pulpit are more worthy to be reprinted than this broad-minded, rational, well-weighed utterance on Catholic Charity, the gist of which I have endeavoured to give in this paper.

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