

THE belief that one form of religion is better than another has long been entertained in England and has produced many remarkable results. One of these is the doctrine that dogma is a more important element than works in estimating the prospects of men in a future state, and thus there has arisen a continual refinement of dogma which has left works far behind and out of sight. Each Dissenting sect of Protestants possesses and advocates as essential its own particular refinement, but addressing themselves as they especially do to the poor and the oppressed, they have almost all adopted as a central principle the endeavour to awaken in their votaries a certain transcendental sentimentalism with regard to that Person of the Trinity whose earthly history was one of poverty and oppression. The notions of Authority and of Wisdom as associated with the Deity are rather left aside by them in order to dwell upon the notion of Love exemplified in suffering which best touches the heart of those who themselves most suffer and most have need of love. The Anglican Church is left to teach works to those who have the earthly law for their servant; the Nonconformists teach rather faith and affection to those who have the law for their master. So that the Religion of the poor is a touching proof of their conviction that they have no friends and no prospects here, but must look for a friend above and a prospect hereafter.

The craving for such a compensatory belief is not unseldom made an engine by which to levy tribute upon the poor man's earnings, but there are many Dissenting preachers who have been themselves honestly moved by a great compassion to adopt this special view of Christianity, and everything goes to show that Mr. Newman Hall is one such. Born in 1816 he was brought up by his father in this particular belief and was educated with the special view of fitting him to promote it. At the age of twenty-six he was chosen to occupy the Albion Congregational Chapel at Hull, and while there he made himself remarkable for what in his case must have sprung from a particularly large-

minded spirit of toleration, in rebuking the cry of Papal aggression foolishly raised on a singularly unimportant occasion. In 1854 he became the preacher of the Surrey Chapel, whence he has continued to hold forth ever since. During the American Civil War he was naturally the warm advocate of that side whose cause was identified with that of the slaves and was consequently nearly allied to that of his co-religionists. Moreover, when the war was ended, he visited the United States in order to show to the successful North that the sympathies of the dumb powerless many of England had always been with them, and apparently in the expectation that that fact might mitigate their resentment against the loquacious powerful few. At Washington he was invited to pray to Congress, but neither that nor aught else has been of much avail, as we may now see. He is, however, best known by his tracts, one of which, entitled with what to the superfine may seem something like levity, "Come to Jesus," has had, it is said, a circulation of two million copies. The tract is characteristic of the man and his particular belief and may be said to be an epitome of both. Like all of the same order he labours chiefly to produce in those whom he addresses a self-persuasion of salvation and to show that that is in itself sufficient to make a certainty of it. Such as he do a work for which those who have the good things of the earth cannot be too grateful. It would be dangerous indeed if ever those who have the evil things should come to suspect that the certainty of a compensation hereafter is not within their reach.

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