

ON LOVE AND ILL TEMPER

In Henry Drummond's thesis on LOVE in his classic "The Greatest Thing in the World", he makes a strong division between sins of the body and sins of one's disposition in his consideration of the contrast between LOVE and Ill Temper. Abridged, there follow these quotations from his fine work:

"We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness. We speak of it as a mere infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, not a thing to take into very serious account in estimating a man's character.

The peculiarity of ill temper is that it is the vice of the virtuous. It is often the one blot on an otherwise noble character. You know men who are all but perfect, and women who would be entirely perfect, but for an easily ruffled, quick-tempered, or "touchy" disposition. This compatibility of ill temper with high moral character is one of the strangest and saddest problems of ethics.

The truth is there are two great classes of sins--sins of the Body, and sins of the Disposition.

We have no balance to weigh one another's sins, and coarser and finer are but human words; but faults in the higher nature may be less venial (forgivable) than those in the lower, and to the eye of Him who is LOVE, a sin against LOVE may seem a hundred times more base.

No form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to un-Christianise society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood, in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone.

What is it made of? Jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self righteousness, touchiness, doggedness, sullenness--in varying degrees and proportions, these are the ingredients of all ill temper. Judge if such sins of the disposition are not worse to live in, and for others to live with, than sins of the body.

You will see then why Temper is significant. It is not in what it is alone, but in what it reveals. It is a test for love, a symptom, a revelation of an unloving nature at bottom. It is the intermittent fever which bespeaks unintermittent disease within; a sample of the most hidden products of the soul dropped involuntarily when off one's guard.

Hence it is not enough to deal with the Temper. We must go to the source, and change the inmost nature, and the angry humours will die away of themselves.

Souls are made sweet not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in--a great LOVE, a new Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, Christ, the Spirit of Christ, interpenetrating ours, sweetens, purifies, transforms all. This only can eradicate what is wrong, work a chemical change, renovate and regenerate, and rehabilitate the inner man.

Will-power does not change men. Time does not change men. Christ does. Therefore "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

Selected by:
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