

The Saying of Cain

Am I my brother's keeper?—GEN. iv. 9.

1. The words emphasise the contrast between God's work in creation and the state wrought by man.

Since then they have become the motto of humanity wherever it is untouched by the Gospel. To each nation of antiquity others were barbarians; the very gods were separated by territorial limits; and the philosopher Celsus voiced the opinion of the world when he mocked at the notion of a universal religion.

But selfishness separated equally the classes of the same people.

Even Plato reasoned that the poor were not worth caring for. No philosopher expressed pity for the slaves; no hospital, orphanage, or asylum was ever raised till Christianity appeared.

2. Christ might justly have repudiated obligation, but instead He has made Himself, from Bethlehem to Calvary, the Friend and Saviour of all.

By calling ourselves Christians we profess to imitate and follow Him.

We must therefore care for all, including the most degraded, distant, repulsive.

This Christian sentiment is being recognised even by infidels, and professed as humanitarianism; but it is wholly due to Jesus Christ.

3. Christ cared for the sufferings of the body.

The sick and poor were His constant company, and in the parable of the last judgment He made them His representatives to the end of time.

Consequently the faithful Church has always remembered the poor.

The first hospital was founded in Ephesus, where John wrote "God is love".

The solidarity of Rome, which gave its force to Cicero's *Civis Romanus sum!* is surpassed by that of the new humanity with the Spirit of Christ.

Iniquities practised under the shadow of Christianity shock the conscience even of the world, because they are a contradiction of its source and purpose.

4. But the infinite possibilities of the soul and the havoc wrought in it by sin make the care of it by far the larger part of our duty as Christians.

To save souls Jesus gave Himself to death and shame. Paul shows in his untiring zeal and constant self-sacrifice the reproduction of Christ's love, as in measure it has always appeared in the true Church.

What human bond so touching as that of missions, bringing the sympathy and help even of the children of our schools to bear upon the spiritual needs of the savages of Africa!

But the needy souls are also at hand. Our brother must be recognised in our nearest neighbour.

5. The vastness and variety of the task will utterly discourage if we forget the example and the blood of Christ.

In saving the world He began with the few about Him, and was content with the apparent failure of the Cross.

If we look for gratitude we shall be paralysed. None received it less than Jesus.

If we falter in our propaganda, the agents of the prince of this world will not.

Christ still waits for all, and only needs to be worthily made known.