

the favor of Cyrus, the king of Persia, whom Isaiah calls "the anointed one of the Lord" (Isaiah xliv. 1).

JESUS AND PAUL.

To the Editor of The Open Court:—

In my article, "The Gospels of Paul and Jesus," in the January number of *The Open Court*, I declared, "Jesus apparently knows nothing of an inherited taint of evil, or of the essential sinfulness of flesh." Upon this statement you have commented in a footnote, "But in the parable of the sower three hearts out of four are bad."

The parable of the sower does not speak of three hearts out of four, but of four sorts of people, without reference to their respective numbers. It is not implied that the best of these are in a minority. To the contrary, we might gather, if the analogy were carried into this detail, that the hearts that receive the seed of the kingdom and let it fructify in their lives are more numerous than all the others. For the sower does not sow seed on the highway, or on the rocks, or among the thorns, from choice; but he chooses the arable field, and only a little of the seed falls by chance on the infertile ground—not three out of four, but just a stray kernel now and then.

So much for numbers. Further, the parable does not speak of bad hearts, but says that some of the seed did not fructify. And why? Not because it was bad seed, but because it was sown in bad places. This parable, then, does not imply that man inherits a taint of evil. But it is one of many illustrations that Jesus regarded human nature as fundamentally good, and its imperfections as due to outside influences—typified in the birds, the rocks, and the thorns.

The Synoptic Gospels report only one saying of Jesus that seems to imply the essential sinfulness of human nature. "There is nothing from without the man that going into him can defile; but the things that proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." (Mk. vii, 15.) This is obviously directed against the Pharisees, because of their distinctions of food. To them he was bitterly opposed, and he was apt to speak without moderation when they were concerned. The private explanation of the parable to the disciples (Mk. vii, 17-23) we can dismiss as probably apocryphal, especially the latter part of it, which is obviously tacked on. Jesus always appears to teach that sin lies in the thought or motive, rather than in the act; and perhaps it is mainly this that he meant by the saying. So far, however, as it may imply that human motives are apt to be bad rather than good, it may be considered as directed against the Pharisees, and not against human nature in general.

It is, moreover, not safe to base our opinion as to whether Jesus did or did not teach a certain doctrine, on one saying alone, considering how uncertain it is that he is in any particular instance reported correctly. But in nearly all of his sayings, as they are given in the Synoptic Gospels, he seems to imply, as I have said in my article, "that men are at heart good and godlike." He seldom disparages the flesh as weak or corrupt, and never hints that sin is due to heredity, but time and again speaks of it "as the direct work of Satan or of evil spirits."

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