A RELIGION THAT WILL WEAR.

A Layman's Confession of Faith.

ADDRESSED TO AGNOSTICS

BY

A SCOTTISH PRESBYTERIAN.

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TO THE MEMORY OF

My Father:

A SEEKER AFTER GOD.

PREFACE.

"He who does not like living in the furnished lodgings of Tradition must build his own house."—ZSCHOKKE.

THE subject here dealt with is often spoken of as being beyond the province of a layman. Now-a-days, however, the fundamental ideas of religion are recognised, not as deriving their authority from either Church or Book, but as imbedded in the very nature of things, and making that perpetual appeal to the heart of man which constitutes the true Real Presence.

The nature-poet and the artist read one phase of that Presence in the beauty of the world and in its many-sided harmonies and suggestions. They see It, as it were, "walking in the garden in the cool of the day."

The psychologist of whatever type, poet, mystic, or analytical thinker, is more profoundly conscious of it still.

He sees it in the deep instincts of the race, and feels it surging through his own being like a tide, taking intellectual form, not in any theological lore, but in "thoughts which lie too deep for tears."

From the burden of endeavouring to discern these ideas and lay them bare to his own mind, no thoughtful man can escape.

The joy of reaching that discovery, more or less satisfactorily, is within his reach. Whether one, who has tried thus to satisfy his own mind, is called on to trouble others with the story of his effort, must be left to his readers to determine.

The frequency of quotation is due to the fact that some of these passages are old intellectual milestones, and that all are expressed in more persuasive words than the writer could himself command.

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A RELIGION THAT WILL WEAR.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

"The truths of the Christian religion rightly understood form the basis of true philosophy."—Gospel of Divine Humanity.

Our object in the following pages is to trace some of the transition steps by which the great movement of modern religious thought has been marked, and to ascertain how far it is possible, in face of all that modern thought has to say, to reach a religion that will wear. A religion, that is to say, that can commend itself to an open, fearless mind as being in harmony with the fullest possible knowledge, as well as with the best instincts of our nature. The religion that cannot be worn with profit by the strongest thinker and most thorough-paced critic, as well as by the healthy averarge "man

in the street," is not a religion that meets our ideal. The intellectual form of such a religion can only be defined for any given time by reference to the state of knowledge and of critical thought at the time. And probably the best way of indicating the extremes within which our search has to be conducted, is to cite the carefully expressed views of some of our ablest though extremest thinkers on the nature and limits of religious knowledge. We content ourselves at present with one typical case. John Stuart Mill is perhaps the most pronounced illustration that could be given of a modern British philosopher with the minimum of religious belief.

The passage we quote from Mill occurs in his criticism of Comte, and is as follows :

> "Though conscious," he says, "of being in an extremely small minority, we venture to think that a religion may exist without belief in a God, and that a religion without a God may be, even to Christians, an instructive and profitable object of contemplation. What, in truth, are the conditions necessary to constitute a religion ?

There must be a creed or conviction, claiming authority over the whole of human life—a belief or set of beliefs, deliberately adopted, respecting human destiny and duty, to which the believer inwardly acknowledges that all his actions ought to be subordinate. Moreover, there must be a sentiment connected with this creed, or capable of being invoked by it, sufficiently powerful to give it in *fact* the authority over human conduct to which it lays claim in *theory*. It is a great advantage (though not absolutely indispensable) that this sentiment should crystallise as it were round a concrete object, if possible a really existent one, though in all the important cases only ideally present. Such an object Theism and Christianity offer to the believer, but the condition may be fulfilled, if not in a manner strictly equivalent, by another object.

"It has been said that whoever believes in the 'Infinite Nature of Duty,' even if he believes in nothing else, is religious. M. Comte believes in what is meant by the infinite nature of duty, but he refers the

> obligations of duty as well as all sentiments of devotion to a concrete object at once ideal and real; the human race conceived as a continuous whole, including the past, the present, and the future. It may not be consonant to usage to call this a religion, but the term so applied has a meaning, and one which is not adequately expressed by any other word."

The other extreme is the attitude of what is known as the Evangelical party in the Protestant Churches.

"Evangelicalism" was in its heyday a generation ago—so rampant, indeed, as to despise and ban all attempts at a more rational faith. It is still a familiar phase of British religious thought. Even the English Newmania was but a kind of sublimated Evangelicalism. It rested like all the other forms of it on the old theories of Inspiration, Tradition, Church Authority, or the slavish and undiscerning interpretation of Scripture. The High Churchman, for example, with all his devout symbolism of the Eucharist, too often ends in what is perilously like the Mass. And the Mass or its imitations is but

the Ritualist's method of emphasizing the pagan dogma so dear to the Evangelical mind, of the bloody sacrifice of Christ. For to rational minds what spiritual difference is there between that dogma thus incarnate in the Mass and the same dogma incarnate in the passionate preaching of an Evangelical clergyman? "Never in any time," said a brilliant preacher now gone, "never in any place, never in any person, can there be remission apart from shedding of blood. It is an essential law of God's moral government. It is one of the fundamental principles which can be neither shaken nor denied." Both versions call for blood. Both attempt to burden Christian faith with the antiquarian Jewish doctrine, strictly descriptive as it is of the ancient Jewish ritual that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Both largely miss the spiritual meaning, the true Christian analogue of that Jewish truth.

As an element in a rational creed, such an anachronism is an impossibility, and fortunately it is fast becoming ancient history. Modern criticism and the doctrine of evolution combined have cut the feet not only from this, but

from much else that is more important in our old faith, and have completely changed the whole aspect of things.

In like manner there is a truth, by the light of which even Comte's pale simulacrum of religion becomes intelligible and even helpful. But by neither of these faiths can a cultured, fearless, reverent soul live. Our intelligence revolts against the one. Our spirit refuses to be satisfied with the other.

CHAPTER II.

The Existence of God.

"Must believe that He is."—Heb. xi. 6.

"The wonder is always and always, how there can be a mean man *or an infidel.*"—Walt Whitman.

The Comtist Theory of Religion is not of much practical value in everyday life. And though it may seem a waste of dialectics to discuss in our day so fundamental and axiomatic a question as that of the existence of God, the task is not so superfluous as may at first sight appear. The writer has frequently, and without any seeking on his own part, found himself in company where even this was challenged, and challenged in such a way as to make the task of vindication difficult enough. For in our day the method of the sceptics is not so much to deny as to endeavour to explain away the conception of a God. And so closely does the modern sceptical line of argument tally with much that is profoundly true from

the most spiritual point of view, that sometimes the battle has the appearance of being one of words and mere terminology.

For instance, take Büchner's "Stoff und Kraft" (Force and Matter), which in 1884 had passed through no less than fifteen editions and is often utilised by sceptics as their *pièce de résistance*. The whole argument is turned against the idea of an extramundane intelligence, working and impressing its purposes on matter and mind from without, which we call God. Büchner deals almost wholly with the material side of things, and his method is very analogous to that of Comte in the moral world as cited from Mr. Mill. The Government of the Universe, he contends, is but the Immanent Intelligence of Cosmic Energies and their proportions. And when he goes on to say that "a perfecting and evolving Principle is universally active," we feel that we are really on common ground. For the idea of God being immanent in the universe and revealing Himself in the orderly succession of events is as old as Origen and Clement, and has been taught successively by Spinoza, Lessing, Schleiermacher, and a host of others. And the practical objec-

tion to our calling Him merely "a perfecting and evolving Principle" is that "we can adore a Person but not a Principle." And man, we feel, was made for adoration.

But the fact is, battle with words as we will, we have the same kind of evidence for the existence of God that we have for that of each other. For in the last resort, all that we are directly conscious of is mind, and "what we call the material universe is simply an imperfect picture in our minds of a real universe of mind-stuff. Our own minds we know directly; our neighbour's mind we know by inference. That which is external to both is a power hidden from sense, which causes states of consciousness that are similar in both. To speak of the hidden Power itself as material is to talk nonsense. We are bound to conceive of the external Reality in terms of the only reality that we know, or else refrain from conceiving it under any form whatever."* The existence of God is, therefore, seen to be just as certain as that of our next-door neighbour. Paul puts the same thing less metaphysically when he says:

"For the invisible things of Him since

* John Fiske "The Idea of God."

> the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity."—ROMANS i. 20.

And to ascribe Intelligence to the Cosmic energies, as Dr. Büchner does, and speak of their "perfecting and evolving Principle," is to "abandon rather than to defend Materialism." Materialism, in short, is not supported by rational thought.

CHAPTER III.

Is God Accessible?

The Answer of the Positivist and Agnostic.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?"—Job xi. 7.

"Sic itur ad astra."

For one who is troubled with doubt as to the existence of God, there are thousands who have more or less misgiving as to whether God is at all accessible to man. Indeed, so vigorously has the philosophy of the Unknowable been taught, and so imposing are the names of its chief modern apostles, that Agnosticism, as it is called, has long been quite a fashionable cult in many educated quarters.

Two lines of thought in recent times seem to have been directly responsible for this modern form of scepticism. Positivism as taught by Comte and his disciples has given it what appears to be at first sight a firm scientific basis. For Comte had a clear grasp of the doctrine of evolution before the Darwinian philosophy was

heard of, and had applied it to cover the whole objective universe. With him there was no fundamental distinction between organic and inorganic nature, and nothing was deserving of serious thought save what could be substantiated by "positive" evidence, that is to say, by the evidence of the senses.

To Comte, therefore, the common conception of God was a myth, a creature of the imagination.

But, as if to rectify the balance of thought, a kind of glorified material universe took His place. God is dead, but nature is alive. "Causes" are past finding out. "The fear of God" might be the timid "beginning of Wisdom," but Positive Science is the end of all real knowledge. Such is the kind of support given to Scepticism by unassisted modern science. But Agnosticism claims also a philosophical warrant, and much of the nomenclature of its advocates is metaphysical. Their favourite terms are "the Absolute," "the Unconditioned," "the Unknowable." And if we are content to confine ourselves to such pawns of the metaphysical chessboard, we shall never get into the real heart of the play.

For such words as these, *ex vi termini*, already prejudge the question in dispute, and would appear to render all contact with God impossible.

There is, of course, a true sense in which the relativity of all human thought is beyond challenge. Man cannot be the measure of the Infinite. And if this were all for which the aggressive Agnostic contends he contends in vain—for to this extent we are all Agnostics. But the question involved goes deeper into the nature of man than any mere limitations of the intellect. Can the incomprehensible God be apprehended by man? After all that bald "Positive" Science and a mistrustful Agnosticism can do, man's spirit rebels against all such limitations, as this of Agnosticism, and irresistibly asserts its consciousness of the Infinite. The fanatics of Positivism such as Mr. G. H. Lewes and Mr. Frederick Harrison are, of course, horrified at the suggestion of any such consciousness. The elaborate effort which the former writer makes (in his Exposition of Comte's Philosophy) to steer clear of every word that would in any way indicate the spontaneous attitude of the human

spirit in the presence of the phenomena of nature, is the most striking commentary we could have on the vanity of every such attempt.

> "His mind," he tells us, "in the spacious circuit of its musing alighted on terms all so clogged with intrusive and delusive meanings"

that at last he owns himself beaten, and admits that he knows of no term in the language that is wholly clear of such suggestions.

But an abler and far more open-minded Agnostic than either of these thus points out the weakness of this "straiter sect" of his own school.

> "The Positivist," Mr. Spencer says, "is like the spectator who, seeing a bubble (humanity) floating on a great river had his attention so absorbed by the bubble that he ignored the river, that great stream of Creative Power, unlimited in space or time, of which humanity is but a transitory product."

There is a point in fact where the formal intellect alone becomes impotent—and it is

there that spiritual vision begins—that spiritual vision which is as real a faculty of the human soul as intellectual penetration, and therefore in its own province as valid. It would be too much to expect Mr. Spencer to fully admit this, but hear how close he comes to it.

> "In the discovery by science," he says, "that it can do no more than ascertain the order among phenomena, there is involved a tacit confession of impotence in the presence of the mystery of things—a confession which brings science into sympathy with religion—and that in their joint recognition of an unknowable cause for all the effects constituting the knowable world, religion and science would reach a truth common to the two."

This common truth of which he speaks is in his hands comparatively barren of further thought. But it is a fundamentally important admission, and the larger truth of which it brings us just within sight is still further, though with characteristic caution, witnessed to by himself when he says:

> "The name Agnosticism fitly expresses

> the confessed inability to know or conceive the *nature* of the Power manifested through phenomena. It fails to indicate the confessed ability to recognise the *existence* of that Power as of all things the most certain."

And more satisfactory still in a passage which, coming from so careful a thinker, means much more than at first sight appears, and seems to us to grant the real *pou sto* of all religious philosophy.

> "Not only is the omnipresence of something which passes comprehension that most distinct belief which is common to all religions, which becomes the more distinct in proportion as things develop, and which remains after these discordant elements have been cancelled, but it is that belief which the most unsparing criticism leaves unquestionable or rather makes ever clearer. It has nothing to fear from the most inexorable logic, but on the contrary, is a belief which the most inexorable logic shows to be *more profoundly true than any religion supposes.*"

Comte himself could not shut his soul to the vision of this Creative Power. Fresh from the most subtle analysis and scathing iconoclasm, his spirit found a constant and welcome relief in the warm devout language of saints and mystics.

Surely Comte, the High Priest of Positivism, warming his soul at the fire of Thomas à Kempis, is the most dramatic commentary we could have on the permanent inadequacy of science to satisfy the heart of man.

> "I sum up all my wishes for personal perfection," said Comte, "in the admirable form by which the sublimest of mystics was led to prepare in his own manner the moral motto of Positivism, "*Amem te plus quam me, nec me nisi propter te.*"

Of Henry Buckle, too (Comte's English follower), his biographer says:

> "Both Comte and Buckle allowed that the existence of God and the immortality of man could not, at all events at present, or in the immediate future, be positively proved. But there they diverged. Comte,

> to a ridiculous ritual under the belief that the one being unattainable, human needs must be satisfied on the model of what had satisfied the only Church he ever knew. Buckle, to what, at least, was for himself a *transcendental proof* that what for mankind was a universal need was also a scientific truth."

This feature of Comte's spiritual life (we refer specially to his delight in Thomas à Kempis) was no mere personal weakness; for listen to M. Sabatier's description of one of the finest passages from Comte's friend and successor, the Elisha of the Positivist Prophet, M. Littré, of whom a lady, after talking to him, said, "*Je viens de parler à un saint qui ne croit pas en Dieu.*"

> "I remember reading one sublime page of his in which the savant, after traversing the solid ground of positive knowledge, reaches the extreme point, sits down on the final promontory, and on this Cape Finisterre sees himself surrounded on all sides by the mystery of the Unknowable like an infinite ocean. To explore it he has neither

boat nor sails nor rudder. Nevertheless, he pauses; he contemplates it. He gathers his thoughts together before this Unknown, and gives himself over to an impulse of adoration and of trust which gives renewed vigour to his thought and brings peace into his heart. What, I ask, is this contemplation of the great mystery but a sudden outburst of that religious feeling which positive science instead of extinguishing only (exaspére) quickens? And as we have here the religion of 'the Unknowable,' does it not become evident that religion is not essentially knowledge?"

Mr. Ruskin brings it to some extent within the range of human appreciation when he says:

"This forming Power has been by all nations partly confused with the breath or air through which it acts, and partly understood as a creative Wisdom, proceeding from the Supreme Deity, but entering into and inspiring all intelligencies that work in harmony with him." "And whatever intellectual results may be in modern days obtained by regarding this effluence only

> as a motion or vibration, every formative human art hitherto, and the best states of human happiness and order have depended on the apprehension of its mystery—which is certain, and of its personality which is probable."

But the faith which is to stand the stress of the daily tear and wear of life must come nearer to our spirits than anything that has so far been suggested. And with such an atmosphere of thought surrounding them as is above indicated, it is not difficult to understand the practical perplexities of modern religious teachers—of men, that is to say, whose duty is to bring the ideals and consolations of religion home to the hearts of plain men and women. Renan himself, merciless critic as he is of the anomalies of the popular faith, is mercifully considerate of what he calls the "angelic silences" of the educated priests of his day. But it is an atmosphere that is European and not local, and has infected European thought wherever that thought has spread. A well-known French writer, M. Emile Caro, of the French Academy, relates an incident to show

the extent to which this doctrine of Agnosticism has spread among the thinking classes in our own country.

He was told that it was not uncommon to find clergymen's wives who declared themselves Agnostics. And a personal reminiscence of his own readily induced him to believe it.

> "I happened," he says, "to meet in 1884, at the Jubilee of the University of Edinburgh, a very enlightened man, an agreeable and brilliant talker, who, if he did not adorn himself with the name of Agnostic, very willingly adopted its idea. In a long interview which we had together, he was most anxious to convince me that if we only made some formal concession to one another, we should end by (*nous entendre*) finding ourselves at one.
>
> "I was not greatly surprised when I learned the name and the profession of my new acquaintance. He was a minister of religion, professor of theology, in a celebrated English University.
>
> "I was indiscreet enough to ask how with his manner of conceiving, or rather

not conceiving, '*le principe des choses*,' he could profitably deal with the souls he had the care of.

"'Very easily,'" he replied, 'by proportioning the Unknowable to the capacity of each, and describing it by the name which each understanding can best grasp.' As he said so, he smiled suggestively (*il souriait finement*).

With the genuine Agnostic such a thing as prayer, as we understand it, is, of course, impossible. But the instinct of the spirit dies hard. In their religious services (for some of them do hold religious service) its place is taken by an appeal or exhortation, with unclosed eyes and no pretence of direct petition.

"Let us appeal to the Divine breath in us, let us worship the God in our hearts, let us faithfully follow that noble instinct which prompts to freedom and to duty!"

Bible lessons are replaced by "the modern Scriptures," and naturally every reverent and inspiring word is prized.

And there is always one point of common

contact for all the varied classes of worshippers.

The touch of passionate human nature which strikes fire in praise makes them all for the moment kin. A good hymn or anthem is a sure spiritual rendezvous for weary souls.

> Father of all, in every age,
> In every clime adored
> By saint, by savage, and by sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!

The form at least of the problem is metaphysical. Can the psychologists and the metaphysicians, then, not really solve it for us? They have laboured at it in one form or another for ages, and their spiritual gyrations through the realm of thought have been a study for the gods. To attempt even to indicate the various steps in the progress of what in later times has been called Ontology is out of the question here. From the earliest Greek thinker to the latest European philosopher the minds of men have grappled with the problem. It is the most momentous question of human thought. Do we as human beings stand in any intelligible relation to the Spirit of the Universe in which we find ourselves? Have we any

faculties by which we can become conscious of this relationship and capable of entering into sympathy with Him to whom we stand related? Is there any base in our own spiritual nature from which we can really become conscious of the parallax of the Divine nature? Even here, where we might naturally suppose we had finally parted company with Mr. Spencer, surely much that is suggestive is granted by him when he says, speaking of the attributes of this invisible power:

> "The choice is not between personality and something *lower* than personality, but between personality and something *higher*, for the Ultimate Power is no more representable in terms of human consciousness than human consciousness is representable in terms of a plant's functions."

A true conception, indeed, of what personality really is will go far to solve the whole problem.

The Hegelian conception of God is that He is neither subject nor object, but the "principle of unity" that binds and sustains both. And this semi-agnostic definition seems to be resorted

to through fear of adopting any limiting or concrete term for God.

But is there any such limitation involved in the thought of personality? Professor Seth maintains that personality is no more a limiting word than spirit. He distinguishes sharply between personality and individuality, which is a term not applicable to God. As Lötze says, "Only God *is* completely personal."

"Final solutions," even that of Hegel, are always more or less suspect. But it is a bold vindication of that apprehension of the Divine by the human, which is the aim of all philosophy. And it has one at least of the marks of a true solution. Its final act is of the nature of a *coup de main*, an act of courageous self-assertion. For when we come in thought to the edge of that borderland between reason and faith, the decisive step must at last be taken by the whole force of our nature, and be to some extent a gennine *auto-da-fè*, an act of faith. It is not merely a forced and wearied surrender to a conclusion of metaphysics. Nor is it a mere imaginative *tour de force* attempting, Ajax-like, in sheer defiance to pierce the unseen, though it is all that, too. No! It is

the "finding" at last—and being found of—Him Whom through all our growing light, we have been "feeling after." It is the whole-hearted trusting ourselves to a faith, that in one form or another is the unique test of every human soul, for it is the expression of character and sympathy and spiritual discernment, the instinctive recognition of kinship with God. We are in a region, "the realm of spontaneous thought and emotion," where mere syllogism is impotent.

Wordsworth expresses something of the same thought when he says:

> "In such high hour
> Of Visitation from the Living God
> Thought was not."

Probably the best combination of Reason and Faith in the attempt at a final solution (for it is really Faith based upon and prompted by the highest Reason) is thus set forth by one of the clearest metaphysicians and most Christian spirits of our own day:

> "The correspondence," says Professor Pfleiderer, "between the world thought by us and the real world as its exists in itself, upon which the truth of all our

thinking rests, appears to me, only explicable on the assumption that the Order of the real world is subject to analogous laws of being and working, as the order of our ideal world is to laws of perceiving and thinking. . . . For example, the astronomer may calculate a future celestial phenomenon on the basis of the laws of the motions of the heavenly bodies, which he has nowhere deciphered in the heavens, but which his own understanding has thought out in order by means of these to explain and arrange the chaos of the manifold terrestrial phenomena. If, then, the phenomenon calculated by him presents itself punctually at the minute to his perception, this is manifestly a proof of the correctness of the laws thought out by the astronomer, *i.e.*, a proof of their agreement with the laws according to which the heavenly bodies actually move. Hence the laws according to which the human understanding thinks and calculates, arranges the given phenomena and anticipates future ones, correspond to the laws according to

which things hang together and work upon each other in the real world. How is this correspondence between the laws of our thinking, which are not given to us from without, and the laws of being, which are not made by us, explained? So far as I can see, only from this, that the two have their common ground in a Divine thinking, in a Creative reason, which manifests its thoughts partly in the order of the real world and partly in the thinking of our understanding as it copies that order. The agreement of our thinking with the being of the world rests on the fact that it is the reproduction of the Creative thoughts of the Infinite Mind, a reproduction which is always imperfect, according to the measure of the finite mind. The truth of our cognition is a participating in *the* truth which God essentially *is*."

This is probably as simply put and effective a solution of the question as we can expect. It vindicates the Divine thinking and Creative reason as the one transcendent reality. It at the same time asserts His Immanent Presence

in the very centre of our own being. The truth it contends for was condensed by the reverent genius of Kepler into that one brief sentence of his, when his discoveries grew on him and stirred his soul:

> "Oh, God! I think Thy thoughts after Thee."

It is the same truth, which, on its moral and spiritual side, man's spirit has discerned, and more and more responded to, throughout the ages, to which his own spiritual experience has been a constant seal and witness. For whence have come those *cris de cœur* of Prophet, and Psalmist, and Poet, whence those world's epigrams, the proverbial wisdom of the best men of all times? Have they not been condensed into their sparkling forms by the devout vehemence of fiery human experience, thrown up from the burning depths of human nature, like the diamonds from the blazing bowels of the earth? And the more man thus awakes to spiritual self-consciousness, the more is he led to see that in a sense "that is more profoundly true than any religion supposes—'Justice and Faith are God in Man.'"

CHAPTER IV.

Is God Accessible?

The Answer of Christian Philosophy.

"This is eternal life, that they might know Thee."
John xvii. 3.
"Heirs of God."—Romans viii. 3.
"Sons of God."—Passim.

How, then, shall we enter into this Divine Thinking, how transform this Creative Reason into the knowable and adorable God and Father of all? This is the Sphinx-like riddle that every religion has to solve.

Has Christianity a satisfactory answer?

Even Christian philosophers here and there, strange to say, have answered in the negative.

Sir William Hamilton was philosophically as thorough a religious Agnostic as any we have named; and in one surely incautious passage he says:

> "The Divinity in a certain sense is revealed; in a certain sense, concealed. He

> is at once known and unknown. But the last and highest consecration of all true religion must be an altar Agnosto-Theo, to the unknown and unknowable God."

Fortunately, like Kant, he restored under the name of Belief what he had previously surrendered as Knowledge.

Dean Mansel, his admiring exponent, though an ordained Christian teacher, had the full courage of his principle, and coldly applied it to deny the very possibility of any real knowledge of God.

It was reserved for John Stuart Mill, of all men, to show himself a Saul among the prophets, and in one famous passage, not only to prophesy himself, but most effectively to rebuke the official Christian apologist.

> "If instead of the glad tidings," he says, "that there exists a Being in whom all the excellencies which the highest human mind can conceive, exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a Being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the

principles of his government except that the highest human morality we are capable of conceiving does not sanction them, convince me of it and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this and at the same time call this Being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a Being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do, he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no Being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures. And if such a Being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

How then does Christianity conceive this Being of God? Here Philosophy proper may be said to stop and Theology to begin. But is Philosophy then, is Reason, to retire from the field? Must Philosophy, having laid the foundation, leave the structure itself to other hands? On the contrary, the architect's function never ceases till the building is

complete. Theology, which is but applied Philosophy, must retain at every turn the consciousness of that appeal to Reason which is the undeniable right and duty of every soul "made in the image of God." A theology consistent, and capable of being shown to be consistent, with the "nature of things" is the only theology that can permanently survive.

How much of either theology or philosophy there will be "at last" when we come to know even as we are known, will in all probability amaze most of the passionate students of either. The makeshift definitions and subdivisions of our faculties which seem so necessary to us here will then drop from us as a worn-out garment. If there is anything *then* deserving the name of organ of knowledge it will surely be found in our characters. Moral likeness and spiritual sympathy will be the organ as well as the measure of all our knowledge even of one another. And every pore of our being will be a direct avenue to God. How are we meantime as Christians to conceive this Being of God? Is He wholly external to us? Or, we ourselves being part of Nature, is He in any sense internal to us? Is He personal

or impersonal, immanent or transcendent? How are we to step out of the region of metaphysics into a working faith? How are we to take hold of God so as to walk by the faith of Him and act by the consciousness of His inspiration? These may seem bald questions for Christian philosophy to answer. But in our day they are of the utmost importance if Christianity is to retain its place in the hierarchy of thought. Our Christian philosophy must learn to reconcile itself with the philosophy of nature, and some wider idea of the Being of God must be entertained and taught than the old and popular and useful one of the great Heavenly Lawgiver and Judge. Christianity is the crown of man's best thoughts on this the greatest subject that can fill his mind. Its answer is therefore of the utmost importance to every thoughtful man.

Perhaps the simplest way of answering is to ask ourselves, how as a matter of historical fact has the Christian conception of God gradually assumed its present form? We pass over the early stages of man's development when the untutored mind was content to "See God in clouds or hear Him in the wind."

That was the time of nature religions, mythologies, and the various forms of polytheistic faith.

At a much later stage the human mind began to reflect on its own existence, and consciousness turned in upon itself. This was the period of what are sometimes called the subjective religions, in which the conscious workings of the human spirit play the most important part. It accounts for Buddhism in the East, Judaism in its earlier stages, Stoicism and other subjective philosophies in Greece. The latest stage is that of which Christianity with its wider outlook is the commanding example, and it is this that is of special interest to us. What, then, has Christian philosophy to say for itself? However tasteless the forms of religious thought of one generation become to even that which immediately succeeds it, amid all the variety and apparent incompatibility of forms there is always a progressive order running through them.

The world's really classical writers and thinkers, the men who embody this continuity of thought, are never quite foreign to us. They appeal to what is universal, not local

or temporary. "What is Plato but Moses speaking in the language of Athens?" Even the bent, therefore, of our own nineteenth century thoughts on religion cannot be fully understood till we go back and study some of the earliest forms of Christian thought, those forms which the consideration of the facts of the Christian history first assumed in cultivated minds.

The teaching of Paul is, of course, the earliest though by no means the most striking illustration of what we refer to.

Paul was in this respect to some extent an outsider.

Though "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," he was dealing with facts and teaching which to himself were but hearsay.

Not to have had the matchless advantage of personal intercourse with Christ Paul had drunk of His spirit, and discerned the spiritual bearing and world-wide sweep of His teaching, as few even of Christ's personal followers were able to do. The result is that the impress of Paul's spirit and intellect is for ever stamped on the Christian records. His interpretation of the great outstanding facts of the life and death of Christ is a deeply spiritual interpreta-

tion. It is an attempt, indeed, to bring these facts under the category of spiritual and philosophical conceptions. But the contact of the mind of this powerful apostle must be estimated, like every other, in the light of the early training, the surroundings, and the mental idiosyncracies of the man himself. Not to do so is to throw out of due perspective and give unfair proportion to much in his writings that is only intelligible in the light of these special considerations. His mind, though powerful and subtle to a degree, was too much influenced by his Rabbinical training and strong Jewish associations to illustrate in a sufficiently typical manner the interpretation of Christian facts by what we should call an impartial cultivated mind. The result is that, viewed from a purely critical standpoint, many of his commentaries and interpretations of Old Testament ideas are strained and fanciful. But what a testimony to his spiritual genius is the whole Pauline theology of later times!

The teaching of the Gospel which bears the name of St. John is the next prominent illustration. In this we breathe to some extent a new atmosphere. That a new intellectual influence

has come into play is patent to the most ordinary reader. To the historical student it bears unmistakable marks of contact with the cultivated Greek thought of the time. It is, indeed, not so much a "Gospel" in the plain narrative sense like the others. It is already to some extent the expression of the Greek mind in presence of the Christian facts. The Doctrine of the Logos was alone sufficient evidence of this.

For we must remember that, as Edward Caird says in his Gifford Lectures, while

> "To the barbarians conversion meant an absolute intellectual surrender, it had not been so with the earliest recipients of the Christian faith. The Greeks and Romans when they were converted were not overpowered and enslaved by the new religion. For though Christianity might transform their lives, they were not previously altogether strangers to the things of the spiritual world, nor could they receive the teaching of the Church without bringing it into relation with the elements of their previous culture. It therefore neces-

sarily awakened in their minds many questions, which they tried to answer by means of the philosophical ideas which they brought with them. It was, indeed, just this effort of theirs to bring the new matter under the old forms of thought which gave rise to the development of Christian doctrine in the first five centuries."

The Greek thinkers had been for centuries the Western world's masters in philosophy. By them the Christian Incarnation was regarded as the completion and crown of a spiritual process in the history of man, dating from the Creation, not an abrupt break in the continuity of man's moral history, or a remedy for a catastrophe by which humanity had been severed from its affiliation with God.

And when we once move beyond the simple, pregnant words of Christ Himself, no ardent profession of anxiety for "the faith once delivered to the saints" can blind us to the fact that the first rational or philosophical interpretation of the life and teaching of Christ by cultivated minds outside the Jewish

race was that here outlined. Clement and Origen are typical of their age, and their Christian philosophy cannot be ignored. To use the graphic words of M. Sabatier:

> "Paul had scattered the Christian seed with open hand over the vast fields of Greek civilisation, of which a long fallow time had redoubled the fecundity. You know of what deep layers this rich vegetable soil was composed. There had been deposited one after another the plastic material of ancient Greek poetry, of the philosophy of Socrates, of the science of Aristotle, the morality of the Stoics, and the wisdom of Alexandria. The pure gracious plant which, tender and meagre, had flourished on the rocky and dry hillsides of Judæa, here assumed, at once, unexpected proportions and forms so novel that at the end of three centuries it could hardly be recognised. It became a great, wide-branching tree. Then appeared the luxuriant vegetation of the Gnostic systems, the theology, *si verte et si touffue encore*, of the Clements and Origens, all

that theory of the Logos derived in direct line from Philo, the first of the Fathers of the Church, a theory from which sprang soon the dogmas of Nicœa and Chalcedon."

It is the more necessary to press this point because of the very marked departure from this first current of Christian thought, which later on characterised the teaching of Augustine and the Latin Fathers who followed him. There need be no question of the object they had in view, in the one case more than in the other. To bring God and man together was the common aim of both. But the Greek mind had never surrendered the thought that God was really in human nature, and, therefore, to them there was no strain in believing that Christ was "the pure manifestation of this indwelling God in humanity." The conception of incarnation was familiar to both Greeks and Orientals. Paul and Barnabas found in their own missionary experience the same familiar conviction springing spontaneously to the lips of the people of Lystra when they cried, "The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of

men." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," was to a Greek a more or less congenial truth to hear, while to know that in this blameless and self-sacrificing life there was a sure historical warrant for it, was "life and peace."

The Latin Fathers, on the contrary, departed widely from this vein of thought, and brought in their train a whole host of misconceptions. The Latin theology is, in fact, a denial of this early form of the doctrine of the incarnation.

God was not in humanity. Humanity was corrupt.

And this doctrine of man's total depravity has brought with it down to our own day, and as a necessary counterpoise, the doctrine of irresistible grace and all those theological ingenuities and distortions which are inseparable from any theology so based.

The Baconian philosophy was in its own way the forerunner and to a large extent the inspirer of that counter current of thought which has given rise to our modern religious attitude. Bacon himself, though he was inspired enough to call "Fact the voice of God revealed in things," had no thought of the

possibility of applying his method in spiritual things.

It is little wonder, therefore, that theologians themselves had still less. But the governing conception of his philosophy was, that only in Nature herself shall we find the record and explanation of her laws, and that by herself alone must all attempts to explain her be made. In that there lay the germ of a return to true natural religion as well; for if this be true of material nature, what but blind timidity hinders us from seeing that it is tenfold more true of the spiritual world?

It, too, is self-explanatory. The foundations of all religion are to be found in the only spiritual being we have any immediate knowledge of —our own mind and heart.

The influence of Bacon was early felt in Psychology, which, since the Reformation has been free from the control of the Church. The scattered mystics, too, from the medieval ages on, have nobly kept alive, by sheer spiritual force, the instinct and faculty of the seer, which is after all the true spiritual *novum organon*. It is the steadily spreading influence of the type of thought which predominates in the mystics that

has gradually brought again to the front the very same attitude towards the fundamental conception of the Being of God, which was taken when outside thought first came in contact with the early plastic Christian faith.

This thought, then, apparently so natural to the Greek mind, whether viewed as the doctrine of the Logos, closely akin as it is to the great typical ideas of Plato, or in the more tangible form of the Incarnation, though by the predominating influence of the Latin mind it was long suppressed and ignored in Europe, has never been wholly forgotten.

There is a deep human instinct, passionately shared by seers and prophets everywhere, that cannot suffer it to be eclipsed. It is the soul's demand for God. It is more often expressed in vivid objective form as by the Psalmist, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

But it gradually rebels against and corrects its own anthropomorphism, and falls into that richer undertone of the "God-consciousness" which is heard and seen to the full in the words and life of Jesus.

CHAPTER V.

The Message of Jesus.

"Omnium maxime in Jesu Christo."—Spinoza.

"He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God."
1 John iv. 16.

Jesus, fortunately, was not in our sense of the word a philosopher. He was, as He said Himself of even John the Baptist, "A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet." "He stands nearer to heaven than we, and looking in tells us what He sees: and we holding His hand feel the thrill of celestial electricity."

He was the purest manifestation of man's consciousness and vision of God. He did not express Himself in terms of human learning, but, like all His spiritual kindred, in terms of vivid metaphor and of the most entire assurance. He saw and felt and knew, and in the strength of that oneness with God He spoke and lived, and bequeathed His blessed assur-

ance to the world for ever. It was this that enabled Him, speaking as from the very presence of God, to proclaim a truth which we can see to be the bond of all religions, the one thing vital for each. And it is the true glory of Christianity that from the very first, though all too feebly and intermittently, she has put in the forefront just such a message. The revelation of the eternal nearness of God to the heart of man, and that Divine Presence made for ever intelligible to us by the immortal parable of His Fatherhood, is surely the crowning message of Jesus to His fellowmen, and the high water-mark of spiritual perception. It is a message so simple that the very ties of nature conspire to whisper it in the ears of the child, and so profound that the greatest thinkers are content to acknowledge it as the solution of all their searchings, and to feel themselves perpetually uplifted by its marvellous grace.

It assures us, as Bishop Ewing says, that—to speak in terms of philosophy—"Man is a child of God in virtue of his being a man," or—in terms of theology—"that men are under forgiveness whether they know it or not." It is by the spiritual attraction of this forgiving

grace that man turns his face to God and becomes veritably "a new creature."

And lest it should seem, even in these endearing but spiritual terms, to be too intangible for daily food, the Church in the lurid language and solemn act of her most sacred ceremonial, has tried for ages, in her own daring and marvellous way, to bring this profound truth of the Real Presence home to humble and, it may be, dull souls.

> Panis angelicus fit panis hominum.
> O res mirabilis! Manducat Dominum
> Pauper, servus, et humilis.

Let no Christian soul irreverently cavil at such language. "The greatest music is scarcely reverent enough to accompany these and such like poor blundering rhymes."

Needless to say, this message of Jesus is one that has as many facets as there are minds to grasp it. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," is a truth that every successive advance in human thought only shows to be deeper in its meaning, and more commanding in its range than we have previously imagined. The very vision of God, Jesus tells us, is

possibly only to "the pure in heart." Have we ever yet fathomed the intensity of meaning that lies hid there? To those who feel themselves driven to accept the more impersonal and pervasive form of the Being of God with which modern science and modern psychology have so familiarised us, how restful is the thought that we are thus being gradually led not away from, but towards a more experimental understanding of the "intensity of meaning," as we have called it, that lies hid in this pregnant saying of Jesus.

Translated by the Christian thinker from the region of metaphysics and psychology in which modern philosophical thought leaves it, how inspiring and consoling is the thought that when we feel ourselves in our every-day life moved by a true brotherly, unselfish impulse, or our souls stirred by a heavenward aspiration, we are in the most literal sense in the immediate presence of God, "seeing Him" in the *only way in which He can be seen*, and worshipping Him who "is a Spirit in spirit and in truth."

It is in this way that the religious intuition of Jesus shows its universality and power. For

it can stretch itself to cover and assimilate every expanding thought of our time, not in the spirit of mere strained accommodation to changing circumstances, like the ambiguous wisdom of the ancient Delphic oracles, but in virtue of its marvellous insight into both the Divine Nature and human need and capacity. "He knew what was in Man." Surely, here is the ever-growing vindication of His own favourite title, "The Son of Man," the typical man. Because in His entire self-abandonment to the will of God and His absorption (if we may so speak) of the love of God, He showed us once for all the range of man's spiritual gamut, and earned for ever the right to that endearing title. In the words of Mr. Ruskin,

> "The soul of man is a mirror of the mind of God. In that flesh-bound volume is the only revelation that is, that was, or that can be. In that is the name of God printed, in that is the law of God written, in that is the promise of God revealed. Know thyself, for through thyself only canst thou know God."

Moral character is the one touch of a common

nature that makes both human and Divine kin. The Kingdom of God which only he who is "born again" can even "see," is not anything external, here or elsewhere, but "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

A less objective and more profoundly spiritual and internal conception of the Being and Presence of God could hardly be conceived. And just because it is so, we find as modern scientific and critical thought develops, that this suffusing and sustaining Presence of God is being gradually seen to be the harmonising element in all knowledge. On its poetic side it has fed the souls of the world's seers in all ages; and made Nature to the poet's eye but the garment of the living God.

> "I assert for myself," says William Blake, the poet-artist, "that I do not behold the outward creation and that to me it is hindrance not action." "What!" it will be questioned, "when the sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea? Oh! No! No! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host

crying Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord God Almighty!"

On its philosophic side, which it is impossible altogether to separate from its religious side, it is coming to be acknowledged as the *cul de sac* of all our thinking. The authors of "The Unseen Universe," in this, so typical of candid modern science, remind us in the most convincing way that the forces of nature are not only being simplified but steadily unified, and best expressed in terms that may be called the final word of Christian philosophy, the Will and Energy of the Living and Omnipotent God.

And God is not only present in Nature, but enthroned in the very being of man. And leaving aside for the moment the true moral glory of Christianity which must ever lie in its grasp of the Fatherhood, one charm which Christ's conception of God exerts over the cultivated spirit to-day will perhaps best be seen by resolving that conception into what are, to us, its two main intellectual factors, viz :—the Immanence and the Transcendence of God. Was not the

former indeed the underlying thought of much that was distinctive in the teaching of Christ? Is it not one of the main thoughts that was lacking in the old Judaism, which, on the other hand, so splendidly idealised the Transcendence of God? On aspects of Christ's teaching so fundamental as this, Paul himself was unmistakable. When he first came into close contact with the light-hearted Athenium Agnostics of his own day, was not this the very thought he saw was needed to solemnise and win their hearts? "That they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from any one of us." "For in Him we live and move and have our being."

The ideas which these two words cover, are indeed, in one form or another, as old as organised human thought. But they have assumed a more impressive meaning in our day than perhaps ever before, for they begin to come home to us not only as suggestions of the Being of God, but as true pictures of our own inner life. Our own nature is both immanent and transcendent. To ourselves as well as to our neighbours, are we not immanent in all

that we say and do? Has our outward life any meaning save as a picture of that life of our spirit which is its only explanation?

But are we not transcendent, too?

Not only do our neighbours weigh us and judge us as something greater still than all our acts. We ourselves can and do stand above and outside ourselves, and approve or condemn ourselves as our "higher" self shall decide. Personality, in short, includes these two facets of spiritual being. Can we wonder, then, that the same category of thought can be helpfully applied to our conception of God?

There is a Sinai of some kind in every religion. Even among Christians there are entire churches and races who seem inalienably wedded to that objective form of conceiving God and His relations to man; and to whom the assertion of His Immanence seems all but blasphemy.

The Transfiguration and Gethsemane come later. For the consciousness of God in our hearts, called in its most vivid realisation, the vision of God, is the highest attainment of the soul of man.

Was not the object of Paul's preaching and

training just this, that every Christian heart should be a practical embodiment of this hallowing truth, being "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"? (Eph. ii. 22).

But Paul did not leave his young catechumens without clear, definite teaching. Paul certainly knew his own countrymen and shared to the full their intellectual characteristics, hallowed to them as these were by long centuries of possession of "the oracles of God." But he knew the Greek mind, too.

And while he hit them both off in his famous epigram, "The Jews require a sign (or miracle) and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (sophia, philosophy), he in the same breath proclaimed the true Christian eirenicon that could alone satisfy to the full these apparently incompatible cravings, for he adds, "But we preach Christ and Him crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God."

What, then, really is this "Christ crucified" whom Paul felt to be the crown of all

philosophy as well as the *vis viva* of every noble life?

"To preach Christ is to preach Christianity," that is, the doctrines which He taught. In Acts xv. 21, we read:

"Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him." The reading of the Pentateuch was the preaching of Moses. Preaching Christ is setting forth His doctrines in contradiction to those of the world. The world says, "Resent an injury"; Christ says, "Forgive your enemies." If, therefore, we preach forgiveness are we not thereby preaching Christ, even though no distinct mention may be made of His Divinity or of the doctrine of the Atonement? In the Sermon on the Mount there is contained no reference to any one special doctrine of Christianity as we should call it, nor in the Epistle of St. James is there found one word respecting the Doctrine of the Atonement; but if we take this Sermon or this Epistle and simply work out the truths therein contained, tell us, are we

not thereby preaching Christ? "To preach goodness, mercy, truth, not for the hope of heaven or from the fear of hell, but in the name of God the Father, is to preach Christ." And again, "The second advantage in preaching Christianity in connection with a *person* is that it gives us something to *adore*, for we can adore a *person*, but we cannot adore principles. There is implied in this expression, 'preaching Christ crucified,' the Divine Nature of Humility. Paul would not preach Christ as a conqueror, although by that he might please the Jews, or yet as a philosopher in order that he might satisfy the Greeks. He would only preach Him as the humble crucified Man of Nazareth."*

Wherein, then, lay the "*foolishness*" of Christ crucified to the Greek or cultivated mind? In this surely, that it was the proclamation of a new ideal, which it had never entered into the heart of the intellectual Greek to imagine as the sovereign ideal and motive power of man's noblest life. Learning they could have under-

* F. W. Robertson.

stood and appreciated as few else could in their day. Artistic taste they rated as no other people ever did. Love of the fair and the beautiful in all outward forms was their constant delight. And they had masters innumerable in each of these branches of human culture. But to glorify self-sacrificing love, a virtue which they deemed fit only for slaves, and to proclaim self-sacrifice for others' good as not only above all these ideals of theirs, but as the law of God's own nature, and therefore that without which all their art and philosophy were tasteless and meaningless!

This was foolishness indeed. And yet this and nothing else was Paul's Gospel, as it was Christ's. This is the sophia, as Mr. Ruskin says, which

> "Makes common sense unselfish, makes knowledge unselfish, makes art unselfish, and wit and imagination unselfish."

This was the truth which flamed bright in the Fatherhood of God, that the heart of the universe is love and self-sacrifice, and that only as this same Divine love wells up in ourselves in a life of consecration to the good of

others do we come to understand and be "partakers of the Divine nature." As F. D. Maurice says:

> "God is Love" is not a proposition uttered in a sudden ecstasy; it is the final revelation to which all others have been tending. Without it all others are mere deceptions and contradictions; without it there is no ground for individual faith or individual conduct to stand upon. Without it there is no human society; without it there is nothing left for us but Devil-worship or Atheism.

CHAPTER VI.

The Inspiration of Scripture.

"The spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth."
John xvi. 13.

By what authority does Christianity really profess to declare this or any other thought of God? From our point of view such an authority as that of external revelation is out of court. We seek a principle that shall be as applicable to and as much the property of one race and time as of another. We, therefore, accept the teaching of Christ on its merits, not on its "infallible authority."

What, then, do we make of the inspiration of the Christian Scriptures? To that question the doctrine of the Immanence of God, itself supplies the key. It shows us that inspiration is the voice and will of God welling up in our hearts as insight and consecration.

As one of its ablest exponents says:

"In becoming what it essentially is, a

> religion of spirit, Christianity must necessarily learn to dispense with that machinery of external sign and symbol, of authoritative revelation and miraculous interference, which has been the support of its childhood. As in politics we have learnt to dispense with the fiction of 'Divine right,' so in religion it is the problem of modern times to reassert the self-revelation of the Divine Spirit in the world and in and for man, while erasing the absolute line of division with which previous ages had separated priest and prophet and apostle from those to whom they spoke."*

That is to say, in other words, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and *therefore*

> "the mass of religious Scripture contains merely the best efforts which are hitherto known to have been made by any of the races of men toward the discovery of some relation with the spiritual world: they are only trustworthy as expressions of the

* Edward Caird.

> enthusiastic visions or beliefs of earnest men oppressed by the world's darkness, and have no more authoritative claim on our faith than the religious speculations and histories of the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians and Indians; but are, in common with all these, to be reverently studied as containing a portion divinely appointed of the best wisdom which the human intellect, earnestly seeking for help from God, has hitherto been able to gather between birth and death."*

It is the gradual breaking down of this artificial barrier of verbal inspiration that has spiritualised anew our conception of the Christian faith, given a new value to what was wont to be called "profane" literature, and been the means of converging towards the teaching of Christ many of the best minds of our time who would otherwise have been strangers to its influence. And it is not difficult to understand the keenness of feeling, and touch almost, of bitterness, with which some thoroughly devout men feel compelled

* John Ruskin.

to speak of the older view of inspiration which they themselves have banished for ever. Amiel, for instance, a gentle religious soul, says in his "Journal Intime,"

> "For many years past the immanent God has been more real to me than the transcendent God, and the religion of Jacob more alien to me than that of Kant or even Spinoza. The whole Semitic dramaturgy has come to seem to me a work of the imagination; the apostolic documents have changed in value and meaning in my eyes." Again, "The minds which have reached the doctrine of immanence are incomprehensible to the fanatics of transcendence. These latter will never understand that the Panentheism of Krause is ten times more religious than their dogmatic supernaturalism. Their passion for the facts which are objective, isolated, and past, prevents them from seeing the facts which are eternal and spiritual. As soon as their dramaturgy is interpreted symbolically all seems to be lost. They must have their local prodigies, their vanished unverifiable miracles, because

for them the Divine is there and only there." Again:

"Gradually it is becoming plain that historical Protestantism has no longer a *raison d'être* between pure liberty and pure authority. It is, in fact, a provisional stage, founded on the worship of the Bible —that is to say, on the idea of a written revelation, and of a book divinely inspired, and, therefore, authoritative. When once this thesis has been relegated to the rank of a fiction, Protestantism crumbles away There is nothing for it but to retire on natural religion or the religion of the moral consciousness."

As Carlyle said long ago, and before the idea was by any means so familiar as now:

"It is the earth that turns, not the sun and the heavenly spheres. One day the Spiritual Astronomer will find that this is the infinitely greater miracle. The Universe is not an orrery, theological or other, but a Universe, and instead of paltry theologic brass spindles for axis, &c.,

has laws of gravitation, laws of attraction and repulsion, is not a Ptolemaic but a Newtonian Universe."

"So, too; all my thologies, religious conceptions, &c., we begin to discover, are the necessary products of man's God-made mind."

What a sacred sanction does this thought give to the free reverent thoughts of good men everywhere! And surely in this lies one secret of a true Catholicity.

CHAPTER VII.

Christianity an Eirenicon.

"For the healing of the nations."—Rev. xxii. 2.
"Go ye and teach all nations."—Matthew xxviii. 19.

The purest truth the human mind can receive, if it be held out of perspective and maintained to the exclusion or neglect of other vital truth never fails to land us in error. To this the thought of the Immanence of God is no exception. Special sympathy with this conception of the Divine nature has never been a characteristic of European thought, though there have been gifted minds, especially among our poets, who have been wholly carried away by its grandeur.

Deeply earnest men indeed of any creed seem when wrapt in the Spirit to find some form or other of it the only adequate expression of their feeling.

So cool and analytical an Agnostic as the late Professor Clifford calls:

> "Conscience, the voice of our Father man who is within us, the accumulated instinct of the race which is poured into each one of us and overflows us as if the ocean were poured into a cup."

And how strikingly is this matched both in spirit and words by a saintly Christian writer!

> "I know," says Rev. John Pulsford, "that this Divine complaint in me against myself comes from my good Source, my Infinite Father, from the Divine fountain of our Humanity." "God has poured His Son like a river of life, love and light through the heart of the race, through the centre of our souls."

On the other hand, the purest of the Oriental religions have been completely submerged by this thought, so much so indeed as to gradually weaken the sense of moral obligation, and land their votaries in a nerveless Pantheism.

Their very forms of thought and speech, parabolic to a degree unknown in European literature, are a standing witness to their vivid consciousness of unseen things. How the

passion for this conception of God has mastered the Eastern mind and given permanent shape to their whole thinking, will be felt from such words as the following, written by an educated Brahman of our own day,* a close student for years of the contact of Christianity with his ancient native faith, and who gave up that faith at the instigation of the missionaries, but is not a Christian.

> "We are still," he says, "outside the pale of Islam and Christianity. We cannot accept religion within a ring fence. We are still professors of the Divine science, searching incessantly for the knowledge of the Supreme Being, One without a second. We admit, provisionally, the conventional world of appearances. We quarrel with no forms of worship, with no miracle, with no sacred history. We recognise the moral significance and disciplinary influence of faith in authoritative creeds. But we are, nevertheless, incapable intellectually of understanding how such things can be conceived as imposing

* Vamadeva Shastra.—*Fortnightly, November,* 1898.

finality, how spirit can be brought into relation with matter, and how the persistence of evil is to be explained, and these problems are debated not as mere subjects for academical inquiry, but as the necessary foundations of satisfactory religious conviction. . . . We are incapable of apprehending a personality, except in the sense of something that masks or represents an incomprehensible notion, and dogmatic systems are to us no more than the formal envelopes of spiritual truth. . . . Vainly you prove to us that the conception of an impersonal, unapproachable Being is ineffectual and ethically pernicious. We recognise the moral danger, but it does not stop us, for we are like mariners whom some magnetic attraction draws ever further beyond all havens into a boundless sea. . . . But I fail at present to see how our Pantheism is to help us when the time comes among our people at large for seeking not only an explanation of phenomena, but a basis of morals."

The Brahmo Somaj, too, is an honest modern

attempt to find a common meeting-place for the religions of the East and West. The Brahmos profess to find it in the purest and most ancient form of their ancestral faith. And from that point they unite in declaring their reverence for the teaching of Christ and its harmony with their own best thoughts.

And what candid disciple of Jesus can deny that there is some substantial ground for the claim?

Strange to say, the bulk of our missionary societies will not tolerate such an idea. But as Max Müller says:

> "If our missionaries feel constrained to repudiate it as their own work, history will be more just to them than they themselves."

Is Christianity to ignore or to welcome a movement such as that? Does it not synchronise with analogous aspirations, even among ourselves?

What, then, has Christianity to give to minds like these?

If words have any meaning, and ingrained

habits of thought are not an imposture, these men, and such as they are but types of, are true "seekers after God."

Are we as Christians to presume to call on them to forsake utterly all that they prize so dearly, and live by the strength of? Is the "intellectual surrender," that is fit only for "barbarians," a just demand to make on such men? On the contrary, can we imagine Christ, Himself an Oriental, attempting to ban and condemn the spiritual convictions of men like these?

Even Paul knew how to deal with minds like these. And with much greater truth could Paul, if he had met them, say, as he did say to their Athenian prototypes, "I perceive that in all things ye are somewhat religious!" For whatever we may think of some of their shadowy beliefs, we cannot deny to the men themselves the character of spiritual minds. And if Christianity be really a message for all time, here is its opportunity. Or, to look for a moment nearer home, probably there are few thinkers more fearless and independent in our day than Mr. John Morley. He is most loyal to what he sees to be the truth. But for reasons common to many highly educated and

able men he stands wholly aloof from all connection with the Church. And yet let us hear him when he has occasion to speak of the spiritual life, and ask ourselves if it be not possible, and if possible, then a positive duty, so to reconstruct our idea of Christianity and Christian communion that it shall embrace as a matter of course such a spirit as his. He is speaking of Comte and the "Imitatio Christi," and he says:

> "Resignation and Renunciation—not sullen, nor frigid, nor idle, nor apathetic, but open, benign, firm, patient, very pitiful and of tender mercy, is not this what we mean by Piety?
>
> Duty does not cover nor comprehend it.
>
> Duty is more, and it is less. . . . Holiness is not the same as duty. Still less is it the same as religious belief. It is a name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit purifying itself of these and independent of reason, argument, and the struggles of the will, dwells in living

patient and confident communion with the seen and the unseen Good.

"In this region, not in ethics, moves the 'Imitatio.'"

The attempt to show itself as the true eirenicon among the varying faiths of the human race, will certainly involve for Christianity the renunciation of some important theological dogmas long associated with its name.

The distorted picture of human nature on which, as embodied in the story of the Fall, the whole Latin theology was founded, must be repudiated. And with that there go by the board all the forensic analogies and contrivances suggested by it, that have seemed to many minds so vital and precious. How ever can such a method of portraying the Divine dealings with man be presented with any hope of success to such men as we have just quoted?

These Brahmans, *e.g.*, acknowledge, as we have seen, "the disciplinary influence of faith in authoritative creeds." Their religious leaders are quite conscious of the practical defect of their own faith in this respect. The only

doctrine they possess that may be said to be of any direct moral value in their lives is that of the soul's transmigration through incessant births and deaths. And "as the accomplishment of this journey depends more or less on a balance of merits and demerits," the conception, they hold, "might possibly be developed into an ethical doctrine."

> "Some of us," the same writer says, "are now endeavouring to find in our ancient writings a warrant for the recognition of a Supreme Moral Ruler, such as is required (perhaps unphilosophically) by ordinary minds as soon as their natural religion begins to fade away." "It is, therefore," he adds, "of the highest importance, if our future religion is to maintain any effective connection with morals, that this doctrine or some refined form of it should survive."

Could any more frank acknowledgment of their ethical weakness be made than that? What have we to give them in its place? Next to His great declaration of the Father-

hood of God, is there any one truth which Jesus so pressed home on His hearers as just this Holiness of God and the perpetual obligation it lays upon us of being conformed to His image? "Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Depart from me, ye wicked servants."

If Christianity excels in any one practical feature of religion, it is surely in its enthronement of the moral ideal. It is thus fitted to electrify with fresh force all that the Eastern mind draws languidly from its transmigration doctrine. For it says with solemn pointed directness, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," and speaks of "the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." And if we want to understand the adaptability of this ideal to all races and climes we see it in its essentially simple human nature. It is not a load of commandments, but a "burden" and "yoke" of the spirit. Unselfishness is its one keynote, and that is a note that finds an echo in every human breast. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain

mercy." And is not the final test of a life's obedience to God laid by Jesus in simple brotherly affection? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

If ever our Christian faith, then, is to take its place as the one bond of peace among the nations, it must learn to come forth in its native strength, leaving behind it all those uncongenial accretions which have grown up about it, obscuring and distorting its pristine beauty.

It must proclaim its characteristic doctrine of "God the Father, who hath made of one blood all nations of men," declaring Him to be manifest in the flesh in every faithful devout soul, and thus the direct source of every aspiration that lifts the soul towards God. And if the instinctive religion of the human spirit is not an imposture, this faith will be the true altar of reconciliation of East and West, "of saint, of savage, and of sage."

For Christ will win the world on his merits or not at all.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Person of Christ.

"I and my Father are one."—John x. 30.
"They may be one, *even as we are*."—John xvii. 11.

One of the leading doctrines which the Church is being compelled by the progress of events to reconsider is that of the Person of Christ. It is not easy for us now to recover the unmetaphysical simplicity of the first disciples. To their intense and most reverent affection no thought of dogmatic definition could occur. But divergent views on this have characterised the Church from very early times, and have been championed respectively by many of the strongest and most saintly minds. As a matter of historical fact the view which for 1500 years has dominated the Church was imposed practically at the point of the bayonet, and was as fiercely resisted as it was in the end ruthlessly enforced. That the best interests of those troublous times, and of the darker ages

which succeeded them, were served by that victorious decision, we need not doubt.

For the rude northern hordes who ultimately formed the backbone of our European civilisation needed some concrete dogmas to which they could bow, and round which their growing faith might slowly crystallize.

But more powerful currents still of human thought have been at work in later times. And the same doctrine comes up again for reconsideration. It is certainly more than merely fortuitous that the other and larger doctrine we have already so freely referred to of the Immanence of God, and of which in any case it is a suggestion, should at the same time be pressing itself more than ever on the European mind. For in that doctrine seems to lie ample compensation for any apparent loss we may incur in our theory of the Person of Christ. The latter is a doctrine that will no doubt be very slow to submit to serious change among European Christians. But it is beyond question that critical and philosophical considerations have already begun to work a wide-spread change. Outside the bounds of the Church the change is comparatively easy and unrestrained.

Inside it is naturally more difficult and hesitating.

Dr. John Caird *e.g.*,—an acknowledged exponent of the advanced Churchman—spoke thus, as Gifford Lecturer, on the great doctrine we refer to :

> "It is true, indeed, that there is something unique in the Person of Christ, and that a participation in the being and life of God can be predicated of Him as distinguished from all members of the human race.
>
> But, however true it be that the relation of the Divine and human in the Person of Christ transcends in one sense all earthly parallel, it must yet be a union *of which*, by its very structure and essence, *humanity is capable.*"

And again :

> "In the life of Christ there is the manifestation of a principle which was not a birth of time, but which had its source and origin in the eternal being and life of God, and which He Himself is represented as describing as 'The glory which He

had with the Father before the world was.'"

These two passages, and especially the latter, if carefully noted, are doubtless more cautious than might at first sight appear.

But listen to the clearer and wider sweep of the younger brother's view of Christianity as a whole.

"The principle of Christianity has come to self-consciousness, and it is therefore capable of being held without that mixture of illusion which was inevitable in an earlier age. In the process of its own history, it has been working itself free of the alien elements which were mingled with it at first, and now, as I believe, it exists in many minds, as a simple faith in God and Man, in God's revelation of Himself in man, and man's capacity to become the further manifestation of God and to work His work—a faith which does not need any extraneous support from vision or miracle."

"The principles of Christ's Gospel—the moral and spiritual truths it contains

> —require nothing extraneous to themselves, nothing but their coherence with the reason and conscience of man to commend them to us, and, indeed, they can have *no valid evidence but this coherence.*"*

The faith of which that can be said with truth is the only kind of faith that need ever hope to conquer the world.

For it takes its stand on that which is essential and universal, and can appeal with confidence to the soul of man everywhere and always.

Indeed we feel it is not irreverent to say that the demand for the formal deification of Jesus seems to be at bottom an unspiritual demand.

It tends to blind us to an even closer presence of God than that. It undoubtedly vindicates in its own way the great truth of the condescension of God to Man. But by doing so in that particular form does it not tend to hide from us the far deeper truth that the real Presence of God is not confined to the unique personality of Jesus the Son of Man, still less to sacraments or chalices or dogmas

* E. Caird.

of any kind, but is in the heart of every faithful man. Tennyson, with the introspection of the mystic, said once in conversation,

> "The human soul seems to me always in some way—how we don't know—identical with God."

And it is evident that such a doctrine as this of the Immanence of God in human nature, once it finds a place in our thoughts, must colour all our thinking. While appearing to be merely a metaphysical doctrine concerning God, it is practically an assertion of the essential kinship of the divine and human natures—one of the most pregnant elements of Christian thought. As F. D. Maurice says:

> "What if the Incarnation is a fact? What if the Union of the Godhead and Manhood in Christ is involved in the very existence of man, in the very order of the universe?"

It not only teaches our kinship with God, and thus gives a philosophical foundation for Christ's great parable of the Fatherhood. But it teaches, too, Christ's spiritual union with us,

and thus gives the Brotherhood of man its true scope and meaning.

To use again the language of Amiel:

> "To our pusillanimous eyes Jesus would have borne the marks of a hateful Pantheism, for He confirmed the Biblical phrase, 'Ye are gods'; and so would St. Paul, who tells us we are 'of the race of God.' Christianity if it is to triumph over Pantheism must absorb it."

This spiritual kinship of man with God is, of course, more often lovingly apprehended from the historical side, than taught from the theoretical. Edward Irving, who so idealised in his own peculiar style the old-world Evangelical conception of the "office" and work of Christ, yet so fused all this with a passionate portrayal of the human side of His nature as virtually to pave the way in Scotland for the more purely natural view that is now being gradually adopted.

John Macleod Campbell's "Nature of the Atonement," though in form it retained one of the worst features of the old forensic view, which it aimed at supplanting, yet by its

unflinching assertion of spiritual as opposed to legal considerations, was a long step in advance towards a simpler conception still of that subject. The human analogy which it utilised as an explanation was in its essence an act of brotherly sympathy, and this alone raised it far above the view it endeavoured to replace, and undoubtedly tended to bring Christ's life and work more directly within the category of a true human experience.

Are not these but transition stages in the march of rational Christian thought on this subject?

What other Mediation or Atonement can there be than that which is involved in the very nature of man? How can a man be brought nearer to God in conscious sonship but by the holy persuasion of some one stronger and more God-inspired than himself?

When such an one, "brother-man or sister-woman," comes to us, takes us by the hand, and imparts to our duller souls something of that more buoyant faith, that clearer vision and stronger love which they themselves have reached—does such an one not bring us "who were sometime alienated" nearer to God? Is he

not in his own measure "our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition"? What else is the work of "salvation" but just this at-one-ment? And does not the bewildered human spirit rest with unwonted peace and satisfaction when it comes to grasp this simple human relationship to God as the real spiritual protoplasm of all the endless theories of Atonement?

We know, too, with how much mystery and exclusiveness the doctrine of the "Sonship" of Christ and that of "believers" has generally been taught. But Dr. A. B. Bruce, speaking from the most conservative church in Scotland, declared years ago, that whereas

> "Paul's conception of Sonship which he called adoption was somewhat technical in form, Christ's was a distinct declaration of the essential unity of the divine and human nature," and this was what he laid down as the fundamental basis of Sonship.

As M. Sabatier beautifully says:

> "If humanity were not itself potentially to some extent an Emmanuel (God with us), never would there have sprung from

her bosom He who bore and revealed that blessed Name."

And it is neither necessary nor wise in a subject of this kind to confine our attention merely to professed theologians. When we enter the region of fundamental ideas like this, the power of dialectics is something, but the strength of a man's spirit, and the purity of his vision are more. For the consciousness of being "possessed" of God is vividly possible only to the "pure in heart" and strong in spirit. And in respect of spiritual vision a poet like Browning or a nondescript like Ruskin, is a better spiritual guide than the most scholarly theological adept.

It has been well said that

> "Poetry, Philosophy, and Religion are all outcomes of an ecstasy, the essence of which is common to both God and man." *

And with as much literal truth as genuine reverence may we adopt the words of a man of this type:

> "Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the

* Lionel Tollemache.

mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished by its beauty, He lived in it and had His being there. Alone in all history He estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates Himself in man and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of His world. He said in this jubilee of sublime emotion, 'I am Divine; through Me God acts; through Me speaks. Would you see God—see Me, or see thee when thou also thinkest as I now think.' But what a distortion did His doctrine and memory suffer in the same, in the next and following ages. There is no doctrine of the Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding. The Understanding caught this high chant from the poet's lips, and said in the next age, 'This was Jehovah come down out of heaven; I will kill you if you say He was a man.' The idioms of His language and the figures of His rhetoric have usurped the place of His truth, and churches are not built on His principles, but on His tropes."*

* Emerson.

It is in a more natural—because more spiritual—presentation of the Person of Christ that our hope lies of Christianity ever being acknowledged as the universal religion which it claims to be. And there is already ground for believing that even the Church is beginning slowly to see through and beyond the deification of Jesus, to that of which it is but a vivid suggestion, the essential spiritual kinship of the divine and human natures. It is only a faith and a spirit such as we have now attempted to defend that can enable us to appreciate at its true spiritual value such a scene as this. The picture is French, but typical of all races and stages.

> "Here in one of our temples is a great crowd assembled for worship. There are among them perhaps some poor old women, very ignorant and rather superstitious, men of the middle classes superficially educated, savans and philosophers who have studied Kant and Hegel, even theological professors penetrated to their very marrow with the critical spirit.
>
> "All bow in spirit and adore. All speak the same tongue, learned in childhood, all

repeat by heart and with the lips, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty.'

"I don't know if there is on earth a spectacle more touching, more near to heaven.

"All these diverse minds, so incapable perhaps of understanding one another in the sphere of intellect alone, have real communion with one another, the same religious feeling penetrates and animates them. The moral unity of which Jesus spoke when He said 'That they may be one as We are one,' is for the moment realised on earth. But do you imagine that this word God, pronounced by so many lips, calls up the same image in all their minds? The old woman who bears in mind the pictures in her big Bible sees the figure of the Eternal Father with a great white beard and with eyes brilliant and burning as a fire. Her neighbour smiles at the naïve anthropomorphism. He holds deistical notions, confirmed by the logic of his philosophy course at college. Even this notion will seem gross to the disciple of Kant, who knows that

every positive idea of God is a contradiction, and who, to escape the contradiction, takes refuge in the idea of 'the Unknowable.' Nevertheless, for them all, God remains, and it is because God is present and living among them all, that the word lends itself to so many different interpretations. But remember, the word is only alive because it serves as the expression of a piety that is real and common to them all.

"The life of the dogma is in the *piété*."*

* A. Sabatier.

CHAPTER IX.

The Doctrine of Sin.

"The things that I would I do not."—Paul.
"Good in the making."

We cannot hide from ourselves that by the "Evangelical" mind everywhere, there is one great fact before which such a faith as this of ours is regarded as dumb and helpless.

Sin and Atonement, which to them are so all important, are believed to be ignored by this conception of Christianity, and it is ruled out of court accordingly. No charge or taunt could be more groundless. And fairly to estimate or even understand the serious difference between the two conceptions of Christ's teaching, we have to go back (as we have here done) to the point where the divergence first took shape, and we there see the false step that was then taken. Paul himself built much of his theology on strained and unimportant analogies from Old Testament story. And though he bathed it in

a sea of Christian conceptions that largely purified it from these associations, he is mainly responsible for after developments.

Augustine, who had himself had an experience of base and sensual life such as only Solomon had matched, and who was at the same time of Roman descent, and largely influenced by the Roman ideals of civil law and order, as well as a wearied philosophical student, at last setted his Christian Philosophy on the great basis of human sin. Sin was his fundamental postulate. And a Gospel of fear was the result. The Christian revelation was represented as a kind of Divine afterthought, a plan for remedying a fatal blot, not a manifestation of the grace and truth of God's eternal and unchangeable character. Our modern orthodox Christian philosophers all follow suit; the whole Evangelical view of Christianity hinges on this doctrine of Sin. Sin is regarded as a great "intrusion" on God's purpose and work, and a defiance of the personal will of God. The result is, we are told, that "man's actual relation to God is abnormal," and, as a consequence, that "for the rectification of these abnormal relations between God and

man," some "bio-dynamic action of God is necessary," the communication, in short, of spiritual energy—divine grace.

But the world's spiritual thinkers have not been all Evangelical in this sense of the word.

> "Plato regarded moral evil as involved in the material basis and conditions of human life; the soul by reason of its incarnation in a physical body becomes to some extent the slave of Matter.
>
> "The Dualistic doctrine of Zoroastrianism accounts for the existence of a consciousness of Sin by the conflict of two antagonistic principles of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. 'I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things.'—ISAIAH XLV. 7.
>
> "Buddhism also regards Sin as inevitably involved in the finite character of human existence.
>
> "A somewhat similar explanation of the origin and meaning of Sin has been advanced also by certain philosophers of modern times. According to Fichte, the

Sense of Sin is due to the failure of the Ego to conquer circumstances, and compel them to subserve its own advancement and development.

"Hegel teaches that man has not only the life of the animal but the breath of a higher life in him, and when the lower nature so prevails as to thwart the instincts and impulses of the higher nature, he is conscious of self-degradation —Sin.

"Schleiermacher also contends to the same effect." ("Philosophy and Revelation." By J. M. Hodgson, D.D.)

These men had no special theories to uphold. These were independent thinkers outside and inside the Church.

We have, in addition, the whole volume and force of modern science, modern acquaintance with the marvellous order and simplicity of the Cosmos. Nay, more important still, we have the doctrine (for it is no longer a mere theory) of Evolution, which has so coloured and dominated all our thinking as to make the idea of an "intrusion," or break in the order

of the universe, superfluous and all but unthinkable to the modern mind.

> "The cardinal ethical truth is, that it is the self-sacrifice of obedience and love by which man is released from sin and guilt, and becomes participative of the peace and freedom of a child of God." *

What "bio-dynamic action" does man want? What can he ever get but just the energy of this truth and the assimilation of it into his heart and his life?

The child's first thought towards its parent is not duty, not merely dependence even, but the joy of trust, which (though not yet as a matter of clear consciousness) is born of oneness of nature. Let us begin with that, and Sin will be much more easy of explanation, and its cure much more direct and simple.

Christ's teaching began and ended with the Father in Heaven, the revelation of whose love is the one antiseptic and cure for the erring heart of man. What then was Christ's own method with sin and sinners? "Evangelical"

* Pfleiderer I., 256.

theologians profess such an insatiate anxiety for the safety and honour of God's moral law, that one might imagine that law had been entrusted (as the ancient oracles were to the Jews) to their special care.

> "They conceive," as Bishop Ewing says, "that provision must first be made for God's honour and the security of His government ere pardon can be bestowed. Is it not self-evident that by this conception we deprive the death of Jesus of its grace, and God's manifestation of His love, of its gratuitousness, and put Him far off by the very means He Himself took to draw near?"

Had Christ no care for the moral law? Was He lax with sin? What was His answer to Simon on that memorable occasion when the woman "who was a sinner" appeared in the house of that most highly respected Pharisee, and washed Christ's feet with her tears? Not a word had passed Christ's lips to the woman. But He had seen at a glance that "the expulsive power of a new affection" had completely sub-

merged her sin, and the word went forth to Simon "Her sins which are many are forgiven for *she loved much.*" So far was He from being lax with the moral law, love was here, as always, "the fulfilling of the law."

What was His answer to the palsied man whose friends pushed their way with him into the presence of Jesus? "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" It was the declaration of God's forgiveness, of the highest name of God—"Love."

And is not the parable of the Prodigal His standing rebuke to all barbaric and forensic conceptions of the character of God? We are indebted for it, as was so often the case, to those undiscerning Scribes and Pharisees. "This man receiveth sinners" was their blind taunt. "Yes," replies the parable, "for God receiveth sinners," not by some circuitous, theologically-devised route, but in the direct exercise of that compassion which is the highest manifestion of the Divine nature. Did ever a human father, worthy of the name, treat his erring child in any other way? "If ye then being evil" . . "how much more shall God?"

The critical refinements and suggestive

metaphors of Paul will be appreciated at varying values by different readers, and will continue to be interpreted and construed in diverse ways; but it can hardly be questioned that many of his metaphors and expressions have been grossly strained and misunderstood.

They are responsible for many a cloud of theological mist, for hosts of "vicarious" notions, "all at variance with the fundamental postulates of the moral sense, and as little like any heartfelt reality as a chancery decree is to a law of nature." * By Christ's own simple *recipe* must they all in the end be tested. The moment they are brought into close contact with the penetrative simplicity of Jesus, they either disappear altogether like mists before the sun, or are seen in their true meaning by the light of that pure compassion which He taught as of the essence of the Divine nature.

It used to be well said by some of the old divines, when met by difficuties regarding "Fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute," that we must pass through the grammar-school of Free Grace before we attempt the University of the decrees.

* Dr. Martineau.

And similarly the real meaning of sin, as an element in human character, cannot be understood, save in the light of the Divine grace. Sin is not the starting-point of a true theology.

The legend of the Fall enshrines a great fact as to man's condition. But that fact is not inconsistent with man's spiritual evolution. On the contrary, it marks its beginning. The grace of God is not an afterthought, not an unexpected throb of the heart of God, designed to overcome unforeseen human sin.

Grace is of the essence of the Divine nature, and what we call sin is the consciousness of our comparative blindness and insensibility to this encompassing atmosphere of grace. "O ye of little faith!" "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed"; or, in its more developed form, it is our total unconsciousness and scorn of the Divine goodness. "O faithless and perverse generation!" And nothing but the gradual growth of the spiritual consciousness can ever reveal our sin even to ourselves, and at the same time enable us to cast it, as God Himself does, "behind His back."

Sin is, therefore (to speak in the language of metaphysics) in the direct line of evolution,

though that is the one thought that is fatal to orthodox theology.

The self-manifestation of God is the Divine *raison d'être* of evolution, that which, in every branch of natural history, from the primordial germ of unconscious life to the spiritual "stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus," sustains the process and gives it meaning to the mind and spirit of man.

Sin is only possible where there is the possibility of more or less direct contact and sympathy with the Divine, and therefore of a corresponding alienation from the Divine. In the words of A. J. Scott ("On the Divine Will"):

> "The question is about the compass of the scale of created powers, what is their highest note? The question is whether the all-upholding energy of the All-originator does anywhere uphold a power not like the others, a passive, undeviating effluence of His own power—but, on the contrary, capable of turning itself against Him, of being and doing the very contrary of what God would be or do, or would

> have done. We affirm that every revelation God has made has been addressed to such a power, designed for its illumination and right direction."

Besides, this doctrine of Sin, so imperious and positive in its theological form, is not wholly beyond the reach of analysis.

It has coloured the whole literature of the Church for ages, and is in evidence from the book of Genesis to Revelation. It needs no inspired Scripture to remind us of it, or to enforce its terrible penalties.

It has been the villain of the world's greatest dramas from Aeschylus and Job to Macbeth, and in later times the dominant note in all the Puritan theology of our own country.

But we must not forget that it has been, like all the others, a *developed* doctrine.

Its very existence rests, as we have seen, on a fundamental, but simple, fact of human consciousness, and the sense of it grows with the growth of that consciousness. For it is the standing witness to and expression of man's divine discontent with himself, his craving for

an unknown, unperceived something purer and nobler than his best achievement—and the sure guarantee of his spiritual progress. This is a feeling that never altogether leaves him, in his lowest depths of sin.

The trouble is that theology persists in attempting to exploit this great natural fact, and to be the exclusive interpreter of its spiritual import. It is this and her refusal to rebathe herself from time to time in the unsophisticated spiritual experience of the race, that account for, though they do not justify, her greatest errors.

The closer we come to spiritual realities, the more, not the less, essentially anthropomorphic in expression do we become. For just as the softened heart makes both the offending child and the offended parent one, so does that "perfect love" which "casteth out fear" redeem from sin, and become the only atonement worthy of the name. And what can ever beget that love but just the realised Fatherhood of God which Jesus lived and died to proclaim?

> For the love of God is broader
> Than the measures of man's mind,

And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

CHAPTER X.

The Rationale of Conversion.

"Except ye become as little children."—Matthew xviii. 3.

In a faith such as this, then, does "conversion" lose its meaning? From the general point of view, indeed, what is the necessity for conversion at all? Is the fear of missing it, which has so haunted the Christian world, but a meaningless nightmare of the spirit after all? Is "regeneration" but a fitful phase in the working of man's weak, wayward heart?

Nay, surely not. But the contact of the Divine Spirit and the human which the word conversion vividly suggests is something simpler and more adapted to our daily human experience, than any merely dogmatic theory has yet propounded.

The rationale of conversion must lie in something as universal as the religious instinct itself.

That item of spiritual experience which is

common to all who give evidence of having been "spiritually enlightened" must be the one essential element in all conversion or awakening. It is the exception that tries the rule. And probably the shortest way to discover this element, if it is to be found, will be to look for it in some of those cases which are freest from the technical features of popular "conversion." John Stuart Mill's account of the "Crisis in his Mental History" is in this respect most interesting.

> "At this time," he tells us, "there seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew, and create in a mind now irretrievably analytic, fresh associations of pleasure with any of the objects of human desire." He wearied of life itself. It was the accidental reading of a passage in Marmontel's Memoirs "relating his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt, and made them feel, that he would be everything to them—would supply the place of all that they

had lost," that moved Mill to tears, and gave him a new motive and zest in life. He learned to feel that "those only are happy who have their minds on some object other than their own happiness, on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life."

He became thereafter what he himself describes Comte as being, "a morality-intoxicated man." The elevation of his fellow men was his one purpose in life. And of a man with such a motive who will refuse to speak the Master's words, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it"?

Carlyle, on the contrary, was instinctively spiritual in his conception of things. And his "crisis," as described with even more than his wonted fire in "Sartor Resartus," had a different turning point. The apparent rigidity of the "laws of nature," and the dissolving tendency of the teaching which led to the "utilitarian theory of morals," were his chief intellectual

and spiritual bugbears. Of the former he cried,

> "Oh, the vast gloomy, solitary Golgotha and Mill of Death!" "Men ask now where is the Godhead? Our eyes never saw Him." Of the latter, "Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some Passion, some bubble of the blood, bubbling in the direction others profit by? I know not; only this I know: If what thou namest happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray."
>
> "I lived in a continual indefinite pining fear, it seemed as if the heaven and the earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured. But at this there rose all at once a thought in me, and I asked myself, What art thou afraid of? And, as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul, and I shook base fear away from me for ever. Then it was that my whole Me stood up in God-created majesty and with emphasis recorded its protest. Such a

protest; the most important transaction in life, may that same indignation and defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The everlasting No had said: Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's), to which my whole Me now made answer, I am not thine, but free, and forever hate thee! It is from this hour that I incline to date my spiritual new birth; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a man."

This settling of his spirit he scruples not to call conversion. "Blame not the word," he says, "rejoice rather that such a word, signifying such a thing has come to light in our modern era, though hidden from the wisest ancients."

"The Old World knew nothing of conversion. Instead of an Ecce Homo, they had only some "Choice of Hercules." It was a new-attained progress in the moral development of man. Hereby has the highest come home to the bosom of the most limited.

"What to Plato was but a hallucination and to Socrates a chimera is now clear and

certain to your Zinzendorffs, your Wesleys, and the poorest of their Pietists and Methodists."

Mill's experience is in one point curiously paralleled by that recorded of Chateaubriand. The author of the "Genie du Christianisme" had been an irreligious "prodigal," sadly mourned over by his mother, who suffered sorely during the Revolution. His mother died poor, and on her deathbed charged one of his sisters to recall him to that religion in which he had been brought up. "My sister conveyed to me my mother's last vow. I became a Christian. I did not yield (I must admit) to great supernatural light. My conviction came from my heart. I *wept* and I *believed*."

In another respect Mill was anticipated by the great Augustine himself.

The first shock which began his conversion came from a "profane" author. He chanced one day in his reading on a philosophical dialogue of Cicero called "Hortensius." "In reading it," he says, "I felt myself quite another man. All the vain hopes I had

hitherto pursued fell away from my mind, and I experienced an incredible passion to consecrate myself to the search of wisdom and thereby to win immortality. I rose, Lord, to direct my steps toward Thee!" (Confessions.)

What, then, is the common element in all these diverse cases? Probably Mill's cool analytical description of it is the best generalisation of the spiritual experiences of them all. He learned at that crisis to feel that "those only are happy who have their minds on some object other than their own happiness," "on the happiness of others," on "the improvement of mankind."

The power to love is indeed the paramount fact in the development of the human soul. Neither Augustine nor Carlyle, not even Mill ("sawdust to the masthead," as Carlyle called him), would ever have shown themselves the men they became, would ever have risen to the height of their own powers, but for this inner change. And these and such like cases bear to the popular conception of "conversion" something of the relation which the diffused but vital light of heaven bears to the lightning, which "cometh out of the east and shineth

even unto the west." For fireworks are always more popular than even sunrise, the greatest firework of them all. In each of these notable cases the moral centre of gravity was transposed and placed permanently *outside of self*. And as has been beautifully said :

> "Who gets out of self gets into God, and of such an one men and angels say He is not here, He is risen." *

Presuming these, then, to be all cases of conversion, is conversion merely the widely varying outcome of the accidents of our human lot? What comes then of "Effectual Calling," or the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit, of justification and adoption, and all the other carefully-defined "stations" of the penitent soul? These and such like phrases, so far as they represent realities at all, do not stand for fiats of God *ab extra*. They are merely attempts to describe *sub speciê divinâ* stages in the ripening of man's spiritual conciousness.

And we might as well ask a healthy man, What has come over the atmosphere which he

* Stopford Brooke.

inhales almost unconsciously at every pore, and without which he could not survive a moment? The Divine Spirit is a *constant* vital factor in man's spiritual life, and, therefore, for the purposes of analysis, a *silent* factor.

The struggles of the human spirit toward light and love are the active index of this perpetual Divine working.

With some the meeting-point with the Divine is high in the meridian of spiritual aspiration, within speaking range, as it were, of God Himself. Some of weaker wing mount only where intellect can carry them, and content themselves with reasoning after God. Others grovel in the depths of fear and distrust. But some ray of the Divine light and love reaches even the feeblest. And only by means of and in the measure of his own spiritual capacity can the most gifted prophet see for himself or reveal to others the hidden things of God. This change may seem in many cases instantaneous and overpowering, though even then it may be but the first coming to light of a long-hidden germination.

And whether we prefer to speak of it as from the Divine side, and describe it in terms

theological or mystical, or treat it purely from the consciously human side as the natural expansion of the soul, whether it be silent and slow, or instantaneous and overpowering, it is equally the touch of God in either case, and a true touchstone of a noble human character.

And under the guidance of whatever doctrinal device it first rouses the human spirit, that spirit rests, sooner or later, for its inspiration and its peace on the conviction that

> Blessing, not cursing, rules above,
> And that in it we live and move.
> That to believe these things are so,
> This firm faith never to forego,
> Despite of all that seems at strife
> With blessing, all with curses rife,
> That this is blessing, this is life.

This conception of conversion is doubtless treated by rigid Evangelicals as mere moral varnish or metaphysical æsthetics, not touching the spiritual vitals of the subject.

Even professedly liberal thinkers among the Evangelical theologians persist in asking in this connection,

"What is the nature of the action put

forth by God, the supreme Factor of the universe, on the factor man? Is it merely personal action of the kind described as responsive breathing, inspiring, revealing, self-unveiling communion, fellowship? action that is morally, spiritually stimulating? Or does it consist *also* in the bestowal of vital energy, veritable power, which becomes ours when and as we seek it, and when and as He sees it wise to bestow?" *

This is a straight and pointed question. Does it admit of a similar answer? If the message of Jesus has any meaning, surely it does. For what call is there to distinguish at all between these two things? Does not all contact with the mind and heart of God, however made conscious to us, result in an access of spiritual energy? And is that not the very thing, and the only thing, required to "energise" (as it is called) man into "newness of life"? If God's giving of Himself does not sway the heart of man, what ever will? And what is the unveiling of

* Dr. Simon. "Reconciliation by Incarnation."

God in the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus but this very giving of Himself that can alone "energise" and redeem man from the vanity and emptiness of visible things, from the hardness and wilful blindness of his own heart?

How can this Divine self-sacrifice ever be brought to bear on human perversity save through the very faculties that so often seem hermetically sealed against all such influence? And what a libel on the truth of God, what a misconception of the nature of that word which is "the sword of the Spirit, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit," to contend that there must be *over and above this* some "bestowal of veritable power" some wonder-working force, in short, that shall practically compel the conversion of man!

God appeals, He cannot compel. "Come, let us reason together." "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?"

What "vital energy" can ever match, still less surpass, that "life eternal," which, we are told on the highest authority, consists of "the Knowledge of God"?

Let us drop juggling with words. Let us

cease raising unnecessary fog round sacred things. Let us rather grasp the true meaning of that "touch of God," that consciousness of Himself and His love, which has been the inspiration of prophet and psalmist and poet alike, and must still be the "energising force" in all conversion. "The truth shall make you free." "Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace."

In the words of one of the most discerning Christian spirits of our age:

> "We are told that the Spirit takes of the things relating to Christ, and presents them to the soul. We may gather from this that the Spirit never acts except through the medium of the doctrines of the Bible. He uses them as instruments naturally fitted for the work. He does not produce the love of God, except by the instrumentality of that Divine truth which testifies of the moral excellency and kindness of God. He does not excite feelings or emotions in the mind independent of reason or an intelligible cause. The whole matter of the Bible is

addressed to the reason, and its doctrines are intelligible causes of certain moral effects on the characters of those who believe them. The Spirit of God brings these causes to act on the mind with their natural innate power. This influence is one which probably can never be distinguished, in our consciousness, from the innate influence of argument or motive." *

Or, in briefer terms, by Professor Pfleiderer:

"This work of grace is as little an arbitrary working as is that of omnipotence. As the latter is regulated by the laws of the natural world, so is the former by the laws of the moral world."

This is the simple psychological fact on which the vivid scripture metaphors of conversion are based, and of which they are expressions, *e.g.*, "A new creature," "Born again," "Born of the Spirit," &c.

These metaphors and all those instinctive cries to God for His quickening Spirit with which Scripture abounds are not only allowable,

* Thomas Erskine.

but inevitable and helpful, both in prayer and worship.

But this cannot alter the fact that the action of God on the human spirit is mediate through motive and impulse and aspiration; in other words, through the contact of that which is common to both God and man, and constitutes the possibility of all religion.

In this way moral and spiritual evolution is the crown of that great natural process, as man is the crown of the creation as known to us, and the explanation of all lower grades of created things.

CHAPTER XI.

The Church of the Future.

"I saw a new . . . earth, and I saw *No Temple* therein."—Rev. xxi. 22.

"Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."— 1 Cor. iii. 16.

Our main object in these pages may now be said to be served. It only remains that we should ask ourselves what practical outlook there is for a religion such as has now been roughly outlined. Is there any sign in what is going on around us that such a faith can really stand the wear and tear of modern life, and in any effective way bridge the intellectual and moral gulfs that still separate nation from nation, and help on the true purpose of religion?

We have tried to show that, however natural and necessary in their own way have been the warring discords of the sects, as well as the greater national struggles for the faith, in times

past, however surely they have been the means of enabling men to spell out word by word the creed of the present, the final object of religion is not to be the depositary of a creed, so much as the embodiment of a spirit.

If the point of view we have occupied in the preceding pages be a sound one, we are even now, like the receding wave in the flowing tide, only returning to the point from which we started. But like the receding wave in this also, that we do so with renewed impetus and still wider outlook than was then possible. For Christianity began with the Spirit of Jesus, and as we trace the arc of the world's spiritual progress since then, we find that it is still the same centripetal force that can alone explain its course and give meaning to its sometimes unintelligible movements.

The innumerable battle-cries and watchwords that have done duty in the long strife of the past ages of Christianity alone, are themselves evidence of this. They have all, even in the most cruel and oppressive periods, been testimonies to that faculty of the human soul which may almost be said to have been a creation of the teaching of Jesus, the Christian Conscience.

And just as we are learning through the trying intellectual experience of modern times to find the permanent warrant for our faith in the abiding instincts of the human heart, so are we slowly coming to see that religion does not reach its true aim till it finds it in the welfare of the race as a whole. And the history of the Western world alone is sufficient to show us that this, which is the only object worthy of religion, cannot be effected by mere paternal or authoritative methods. We may, *e.g.*, give our modes of government any nominal description we choose; the fact remains that the governing conception of all our civilisation has become more and more pronouncedly democratic. Even when we were victims of the Divine right theory, the embodiments of that theory, in so far as they owned the guidance of any moral principle at all, exercised it in the name of "Conscience," and professed, at least, to aim at the good of their people.

But conscience is common property. And *pari passu* with the evolution of the democratic idea there has gone the steady growth of enlightened conscience, popularly called public opinion. In ignorant ages, and among rude,

fierce peoples, conscience is always more or less in chains. And many a good turn has the Church done at such times by her firm guidance and exercise of that sacred instinct. But it was inevitable that that sacred trust should, bit by bit, slip from her hands. When it does so slip finally it is only that it may be resumed by its rightful owner. The true Church is wherever this Christian conscience is in action. And this truth is the surest index we can have to the locus of the modern Church.

There can be no trifling on issues so serious as this. The Church, we are told in one of those grand metaphors which immortalise the Christian Scriptures, is "the body of Christ." And the only way by which we can identify this "body of Christ" is by asking ourselves where is that Christian conscience most clearly exemplified, which is the "soul of Jesus" in humanity?

Where His soul and spirit are, there only can His "body" truly be. This is the Real Presence made visible and permanent among us, the true reign of the Spirit. The Church has the answer to this question in her own

hands. Is she prepared to be guided in her thought and life by this Spirit of Jesus? Is she prepared to forget every minor and petty interest, however apparently important in its day, which had so enthralled her energies in the past, and even to-day so belittles many even of her prominent members, and throw herself unreservedly under the power of the Spirit of Jesus? If not, she is doomed to give place to those who will. For the Spirit of Jesus will reign more unmistakably than ever in the Church of the future.

If the Church fails, there is no want of claimants for the succession. Some of them have nursed their enmity to the effete methods and ideas of the Church so persistently that they have all but extinguished in their own hearts the spirit they aim at asserting.

For this the Church has herself largely to blame. For these men are usually philanthropists, thinkers or reformers of one type or another. And no true man with the love of his kind can ever be repelled from the Spirit of Jesus.

If prophecy is "the spirit of the world dreaming over things to come," where are the

prophets to be found to-day? Are they all within the walls of the Church? What means the whole unrest of our times but just this instinctive prophetic dreaming of better things to come? Is not the brotherhood taught by Jesus the real touchstone and goal of these modern movements? What were the words which Jesus Himself, on a memorable occasion, and in the synagogue of His native place, adopted from His ancestral faith, and electrified with a meaning that we are only now beginning to realise?

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me
Because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings
to the poor;
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

What is that but the very keynote of all our modern intellectual, social and political unrest? What gives modern propaganda its point among the nations of Europe but just the conviction of the masses that it is to them and in their behalf that this modern gospel is being preached? And what discerning Christian soul will say the spirit of the movement Nay?

We may be told that, however laudable all such movements are, they ignore the "salvation" of the individual soul, and are therefore superficial and profitless. And "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We need not again labour this point. No man liveth to himself, least of all in the deep things of the spiritual nature.

It remains that neither "they without us" nor we without them "can be made perfect." Not only is there no limited liability in salvation, but as Professor Wallace said, in a most real sense, "A man's soul does not *exist*, until and except in so far as he comes to feel himself related to and in sympathy with his fellows."

> "For there is a certain spirit of goodness and kindness which passeth from one man to his neighbour and gathereth strength as it passeth. But when a man is alone and without neighbours, it cannot in this way gather strength. For it is a spirit of Love —wherefore our Master teacheth that the Holy Spirit is present in some sort in the

intercourse between man and man whensoever men do aught together as children of God." *

For a man to gain the whole world and lose this most true life of the soul, is the most profitless investment possible.

Or, again, we may be told that this justification of modern unrest is a weak attempt at compromise and a departure from the original ideal of Christianity. On the contrary, it is this faith in the leavening power of our Christian faith that gives it its true dignity and shows us the possibilities of its future.

"In every element of its internal power, in every direction of its external action, it has burst all the proportions, left behind all the expectations with which it was born, and how can we continue to try it by the standard of its origin? Are we to say, then, that having promised one thing and become another it is not of God? That might be well if it had fallen short of its own professions; disappointed us of dreams

* Philochristos.

it had awakend of glory and delight. But if it has been far better than its word, if instead of winding up the world's affairs, it has given them a new career, if for Messiah's Millennium we have the grand and struggling life of Christendom, and for His closed books of judgment the yet open page of human history; if for the earthly throne and sceptre of Christ sweeping away the treasures of past civilisation, we have His heavenly image and spirit, presiding over the re-birth of art, the awakening of thought, the direction of law and the organism of nations; if from the dignity of outward sovereignty He has been raised to that of Lord of the living conscience, not superseding the soul, but exercising it with sorrow and aspiration, then surely, in so outstripping itself, the religion should win a more exceeding measure of trust and affection. Had it only realised its first assurances we should have thought it divine—since it has so much surpassed them, we must esteem it diviner." *

* Dr. Martineau.

And the cool philosophic and yet fundamentally religious spirit, of which Mr. Morley is so impartial an illustration, will surely be one of the important factors in the reconstruction that is now on foot.

> "Whatever form," he says, "may ultimately be imposed on our vague religious aspiration by some prophet to come, who shall unite sublime depth of feeling and lofty purity of life with strong intellectual grasp and the gift of a noble eloquence, we may at least be sure of this, that it will stand as closely related to Christianity as Christianity stood closely related to the old Judaic dispensation. It is commonly assumed that the rejectors of the popular religion stand in face of it as the Christians stood in face of the Pagan belief and Pagan rites in the Empire. The analogy is inexact. The modern denier, if he is anything better than that, or entertains hopes of a creed to come, is nearer to the position of the Christianising Jew. Science, when she has accomplished all her triumphs in her own order will still have to go back,

when the time comes, to assist in the building up of a new creed by which men can live. The builders will have to seek material in the purified and sublimated ideas of which the confessions and rites of the Christian Churches have been the grosser expression. Just as what was once the new dispensation was preached *a Judæis ad Judæos apud Judæos*, so must the new, that is to be, find a Christian teacher and Christian hearers. It can hardly be other than an expansion, a development. a readaptation of all the moral and spiritual truth that lay hidden under the worn-out forms. It must be such a harmonising of the truth with our intellectual conceptions as shall fit it to be an active guide to conduct. In a world 'where men sit and hear each other groan, where but to think is to be full of sorrow,' it is hard to imagine a time when we shall be indifferent to that sovereign Legend of Pity. We have to incorporate it in some wider gospel of Justice and Progress."

It is surely in the spirit of words like these,

a spirit that seems to us *Christianis Christianior*, that there lies any well-grounded hope for the Church of the future.

And can any one doubt that while the institutional force and authority of the Church may be weakened and largely disappear, the real supremacy of the Spirit of Jesus is more and more assured?

But the Church of the future must not only be elastic enough to satisfy the widening outlook of our western civilisation and culture. Her faith must show itself truly cosmopolitan—capable of winning the trust of East as well as West.

And it is surely an encouraging sign of the times to find the thoughts of prominent British thinkers enlisted in this direction. The herculean labours of Max Müller, the Wizard of the East, in this connection are beyond praise, and he has not been ashamed to own his vast indebtedness in spiritual things to the ancient religions of the East.

Dr. Fairbairn, too, has lately, and from a more avowedly Christian standpoint, dealt with the same subject (See Appendix). We cannot say that in this case the writer has done justice

to the materials before him. But it is surely of great importance from our point of view to find even this writer acknowledging that "the kinship and community of gods and men" is one of the imperishable thoughts of the Indian mind, and that the idea of Incarnation, is as it were, native to them. Has a Christian eirenicon nothing here to build upon? Of what moment are some of the age-encrusted dogmas of Christian orthodoxy in face of a fact like this? What visions does it not suggest of the "many that shall come from the East and West and shall sit down in the Kingdom of Heaven"?

If we can only hope with fond imagination to see that day afar off, must we not at least in the spirit of a true conviction bid it God-speed and bless every honest effort to hasten it?

CHAPTER XII.

Résumé.

All roads, it used to be said, lead to Rome. Similarly there is a *Civitas Dei* to which all the pathways of Reason lead, and whose light is the recognised presence of God.

How, then, does it come about that so many reasonable, intelligent men in these days of ours walk the road, but never reach the city, never rise to a realisation of that Divine presence, which is literally, and not merely rhetorically, "the light of all our seeing"?

The writer has numbered among his intimate acquaintances men for whose mental powers he had the highest respect, whose honesty of purpose he had no reason to doubt, and of whose intellectual courage he had most convincing evidence.

These men were keen students of the modern Spencerian philosophy, they fell gradually away from their membership of the Christian

Church, and ended by becoming confirmed and unrelenting Agnostics. In the case of one of them, standing by the open grave of one who was related to him by closest ties of blood, and whom we both had known to be a most saintly and thoughtful disciple and, indeed, personal friend of McLeod Campbell and Thomas Erskine, he declared, in answer to the writer's appeal, his conviction that the whole cherished Christian belief of his departed friend "was a delusion from beginning to end." How are we to account for this? In view of what has been advanced already we cannot but maintain that, being merely the result of intellectual processes, it is an incomplete result. And that incompleteness is often based, as it was in the cases referred to, on the demand for what they call a demonstration of the truth, that is to say, for such a concatenation of visible and tangible evidence as would be irresistible by a rational mind. Now, we do not question the legitimacy of this demand of the reason. We only insist that a conjunct view must be taken of what human reason really is, and of the area of facts from which the evidence is to be drawn.

To limit the reason merely to intellectual

processes and visible facts, is to deny the scope of induction and forfeit our true position in the scale of created beings.

Man's strongest and most far-reaching convictions are, and must be, the outcome of his whole nature. The man who ignores or misreads the deep instincts of his moral and spiritual nature cannot fail to miss the meaning of "the riddle of the universe."

The man, too, who, because the traces of these instincts are in many cases dim and confused, refuses to recognise them as the print of God on the heart of man, may be a logician, but he is in our judgment neither a philosopher nor a spiritually-minded man. What we are conscious of in ourselves at our best, we love to credit our fellow mortal with, in some degree, even at his worst. And if we can conceive anything more Divine than another in the life and teaching of Jesus, surely this feature of His Spirit stands out pre-eminent. This it was that drew the publicans and sinners, nay, the very harlots, to His sacred presence, and made them for the first time conscious of a seed of goodness which He had been the first to discern and appeal to. And is this fundamental fact of

human nature to be ignored, forsooth, by would-be philosophers as beneath their notice, or, worse still, denied because it does not obtrude itself on themselves in the form of a syllogism, or because they have not the spiritual genius to waken it into conscious life in others?

The secret of this power of Jesus we have endeavoured to portray as best we can. We have looked at it from the most rational point of view we can command. And we have found it to lie in His own oneness with the Divine Spirit. We have insisted that this oneness with the Divine is that very feature of His character in which it is absolutely necessary that, in the measure of our capacity, we should share and grow.

Nay more, we have maintained that it is from this spiritual oneness of His with the Divine that the whole force and authority of His revelation proceed—that it is because of this uncompromising assurance of His that we are drawn to His feet in loyal worship, and hail Him as Lord and Master.

To timid minds this may seem too vague a basis for Christian faith to rest on.

But what more really Divine revelation can we have than through a pure human spirit? What a glorification of our human nature to find that a man, "that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," has become the subject of the clearest vision of God, the medium of the purest revelation of God the world has seen!

It is in the light of His life and teaching that we see the real nature and meaning of sin; and find in His marvellous assurance of the Divine forgiveness, its only cure.

By such a faith we have endeavoured to live. In such a faith we are more than ever prepared to die.

Credo.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in the Son, the eternal Self-manifestation of God in the outward world, in the life and spirit of man, and, most of all, in Jesus Christ.

I believe in the Spirit of God which is given to all the creatures He has made, sustaining and quickening them.

I believe in the essential unity of the Divine and human natures, and therefore

I believe and "trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, the fulness of its mercy and the joy of its love."

I believe that in the recognition of God, the conscious enjoyment of His forgiving love, and the reflecting of that love on our fellow-men, are to be found the highest satisfaction of our nature and the sure hope for a renewed humanity.

APPENDIX.

We have already referred, in an earlier chapter, to the possibility of a Christian Eirenicon, as its shows itself even now in our great Indian possessions, with their hoary philosophy and theogony.

And we take the opportunity of further commenting on a fresh and suggestive article on "Race and Religion in India," by Dr. Fairbairn ("Contemporary," August, 1899), the result of his recent visit to India, bearing on this very subject.

The article is of interest chiefly through his attempt to account for (1) the origin of the Pantheistic basis of the great Hindu faith and philosophy, and (2) what he ventures to call the radical difference between the Hindu doctrine of Emanation and the European doctrine of Development.

(1) The first, he explains, as the effect on the

mind of the original Hindu people, of the sub-tropical wealth of nature.

The profusion of life, animal and vegetable, he says, which constantly obtruded itself on their notice irresistibly suggested the conception of nature being self-sufficient—with inherent power of action of all kinds—in short, indwelt by God. This utilisation of Buckle's overstrained creed is perfectly good *so far as it goes.* And we may give the influence referred to its full value without hesitation. But the Pantheistic type of mind cannot be the outcome of mere tropical profusion or of any merely external cause. What man among ourselves, with any insight or range, has not felt its grandeur and discerned it as one of the necessary factors of his own rounded thought? Was Spinoza—that God-intoxicated man—ever influenced by tropical riches? He came of a "transcendental" race, and spent his weary days in most untropical pursuits. And yet his whole spirit was fused with this Pantheistic thought.

Was Tennyson? Was the commonest student of philosophy among us ever much moved by external forces towards his conception of that

Presence in whom, as he feels intensely, "We live and move and have our being"? External nature may touch the strings, but the music is in the soul of man. The germs of these two conceptions, immanence and transcendence, are immanent in every human spirit. And if there is such a thing as a hierarchy in the order of spiritual perceptions, surely by the common, though tardy, consent of even the best European thinkers, immanence is to transcendence much as substance to form, or the primary and essential to that which is, after all, comparatively secondary and mediate.

No doubt there is the painful contrast which Dr. Fairbairn reminds us of, between the ideal Hindu religious philosophy, which is vivid, profound, and intensely spiritual in substance, and the degrading, popular, religious observances. To the Hindu thinker these are but the *pis aller* of the mob. But the same thing, varying no doubt in degree, holds in Europe too, and shows a certain moral blindness or indifference which is in both cases an offence to the religious sense.

In fairness let us take the cultivated religious spirit in both cases, and compare these, and

your German religious speculator and critic will probably be found as far removed from the practical drudgery of the Christian life, not to speak of its observances, as, say, Vamadeva Shastra. But in pure spiritual contact with God and perception of His relation to human life and the visible universe, the Hindu is generally far ahead of his European *confrère*. Is it not safe to say, applying Paul's words to a much more fundamental fact of human nature than that which originally suggested them, "These are more noble than those of Thessalonica"? Their spirits live nearer to the unseen than the harder and more purely intellectual European, who, is only now slowly following in their footsteps. This may be called the fond imagination of an enthusiast. But its truth is impressed on us by the best of their ancient literature. That literature is the distilled essence of ages of spiritual reverie and mental acumen.

Schopenhauer said of it—

> "In the whole world there is no study so beautiful and so elevating as the Upanishads. It has been the solace

of my life. It will be the solace of my death."

Max Müller characterises the Vedanta as "the most sublime philosophy and most satisfying religion."

But we are not confined to the hearsay of scholars. Any intelligent reader can judge it nowadays for himself. It is beyond our present purpose, however, to cite. Neither is this ancient literature merely on record. It is to be heard to-day in the living voice of gifted exponents, who are not afraid to come to Europe and have their message tested publicly on its merits. Such a man as Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal, who was lately in this country, has only to be heard to be appreciated. Hindu as he is, one can hear from him more calm, intense, spiritual discernment, more philosophic grasp, more well-ordered thought, and, strange to say, more natural eloquence and even clearer articulation of our own language than in most of the pulpits of our land.

We cannot doubt that Dr. Fairbairn must have met such men in the course of his visit to India. And if he did, it is flattering to neither

his intellect nor his heart that he does not seem to discern in the thoughts which they represent, signs of the times of deepest import to every thoughtful Christian heart. One can understand and be prepared for minor differences of opinion between philosophic minds of East and West. For every nation and race has, within certain limits, an intellectual grammar of its own. But how a Christian thinker should fail to appreciate the remarkable unity of spirit between the fundamental ideas of ancient Hinduism and the fundamental ideas of Jesus is incomprehensible.

And that a professing Christian teacher should so magnify doubtful differences in intellectual expression, and not rather hail with warmest welcome the clear faith and strong grasp of spiritual realities to be found in such men is, to put it very mildly, a most regrettable shortcoming.

I know that many who admit what they would call the dreamy mysticism of these ancient writings have a feeling that notwithstanding this admirable feature, the teaching is, for practical purposes, too metaphysical and merely philosophical.

And this feeling is by no means without some apparent justification.

One of the modern Hindu teachers already named says—

> "For us, salvation comes not by righteousness, but by knowledge; not by the casting out of sin, though we long to be delivered from it, but by emerging out of ignorance.
>
> "Of the two trees which stood in your Garden of Eden, we Hindus should have chosen the Tree of Life, which has been mystically understood to symbolise the wisdom which apprehends reality, whereas by eating the fruit which gave discernment of good and evil, Adam fell down into the region of earthly pains and pleasures of will and desire."

But even if the Hindu has learned to approach God rather from the side of knowledge than from that of righteousness, is this so serious a defect?

Is it a defect at all? Do not our own Scriptures tell us, speaking of the Eternal Wisdom,—

> "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning. I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him"?

And does not the highest authority of all tell us that—

> "This is eternal life, to know Thee"?

that the *summum bonum* of man's highest nature is this knowledge of God?

Is the distinction, therefore, not more verbal than real? If we examine it aright, is not knowledge of God the real source of righteousness? And has not the Vision of God, which is but another name for this same knowledge, been the dream and aspiration of all earnest souls since the world began? And is not that Vision just the Kinship of man with God *become conscious of itself?*

"Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace." Be at peace, that is to say, not as a subsequent and unconnected result, but as involved in the act and fact of that Divine acquaintance.

Does not this Hindu demand for the "knowledge of reality" sum up, though in a somewhat metaphysical-looking form, all the spiritual aspiration of which the human mind is capable? And are we Europeans, and especially we Britons, so clear and discerning in our own spiritual attainments that we can afford to lightly regard this Hindu profession of spiritual knowledge?

It is not of the defects of Hinduism as a religion for the masses that we need here speak. It is its possibilities as a religious philosophy, its need of and capacity for assimilating the distinctive virtue of our Christian faith that we deem of importance.

And it is to this that we think Dr. Fairbairn might have more directly turned his thoughts and indicated his hopes, if he has any.

(2) As to the second point, Dr. Fairbairn recognises, as he was bound to do, that Incarnation is one of the most notable thoughts of cultivated Hinduism.

But he contends that the form in which they conceive this Incarnation is *generically* different from and more nearly the *fundamental opposite* of our Incarnation.

Now, are Emanation and Development so opposed as this? Nay, are they at all opposed? Is it in keeping with Dr. Fairbairn's usual philosophic discernment to say as he does, that "Development is a notion incompatible with any of the recognised forms of Indian philosophy?" He says the Hindu mind has speculated *in the language of mythology*. But what other language than that of metaphor, myth, and parable *can* the human spirit employ when it attempts to body forth the problem of God even to its own consciousness, still more to other minds? The entire universe is but a parable of the unseen reality. And what are the apparently correct and literal attempts of our European thinkers to fix down the problem and its various intellectual facets but the very prosiest of metaphors, the most uninspiring pictures of that which they, too, well know is incomprehensible. Is there, *e.g.*, much inspiration or stimulus for the earnest spirit in such philosophical treasure-trove, such metaphysical empty shells, let us rather say, as "The Absolute," "The Unconditioned," "The Unknowable," &c.? Was not even Comte, whom with almost one mind our correct thinkers ostracise,

much nearer the truth, and certainly more in the track of something that might ultimately stir the soul, when he spoke of and bowed to his *Grand Être?* He, too, was no doubt becoming "mythical," and if so he was in good company, for the mythics and the mystics are first cousins, and no higher compliment could be paid to the Hindu spirit, from a religious point of view, than just Dr. Fairbairn's own words, that "India is a land in which . . . . . the one thing that cannot be destroyed is the kinship and community of gods and men."

This truth is put even more broadly as well as pointedly than this by its own modern exponents.

> "We are not merely made," says one of them, "in the image of God, we are made of the very *substance* of God,"

the *hypostasis*, as the schoolmen and theologians call it, in the muffled tones of Christian metaphysics.

But the fact is, to attempt to contrast Emanation and Development is to contrast

things that are not analogues at all. Development is, strictly speaking, a detail, a process in time, going on before our eyes, though stretching back to protoplasm and on to "some far-off Divine event."

Emanation is an eternal process, connecting us, as St. John says, with the fathomless Being of God; showing us that we are not only *from* Him, but *of* Him in the most literal and unmythical sense. In so far as such a feat is possible to the human spirit, this thought of Emanation may almost be said to unravel "the master knot of human fate," for it seems to mediate between the Divine and the human, bidding us look into the very face of God, whose spiritual kindred we are, and rest secure at the heart of things, proof against the effect of all after "change and decay."

Nay, it goes further, for Emanation is but one end of the process. The great Divine Outbreathing is ultimately to be followed by an Inbreathing, when all things shall return to God from whom they proceeded, and as Paul says, "God shall be all in all." We are thus not only from Him and of Him but to Him. In this double aspect of the

Indian philosophy our Evolution doctrine finds its very apotheosis.

The intelligent Christian must learn to discard all misgiving or fear as to Evolution. It abolishes much, but it brings still more to light. It is Blanco White who says of the galaxy of brightness which the gathering night revealed to the first man's trembling gaze, "If light could thus deceive, wherefore not Life?" So with every apparent eclipse of our current sacred conceptions, such an eclipse is always but the prelude of a still brighter dawn.

Evolution tends not to materialise, but more intensely to spiritualise our conception of things. For with all its commanding simplicity it leaves the universe unintelligible without the instinctive postulate of God's eternal presence as the foundation of the process, that which gives it rational meaning to the human mind. It is carrying us with the force of a great tide of converging thought and feeling towards the world of unseen realities, bringing it very near to our every thought.

Just as we are told in a remarkable passage that "Christ hath abolished death, and brought

life and immortality to light," so does Evolution abolish, not merely the gap between species and species, and between organic and inorganic, but even the boundary between seen and unseen, and compel us to feel the eternal continuity of the spiritual universe, there as well as here.

As Emerson said when challenged as to another world: "Other world! there is no other world. God is one and omnipresent. Here or nowhere is the whole fact."

And if we Christians had but the courage of our creed, we hold the master truth that opens both philosophies and rebinds them into one. For Jesus—mythical and mystic as He was, and oh! so real and simple and penetrating—taught us what our true being is. "I and my Father are one." Afterwards praying that they, his disciples, "may be one, *even as* we are," an exposition at first hand that needs no comment. "I came *forth* and am *come from* God." "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father."

Well might He say, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" And well may the question be repeated to-day in the ears of many of our most correct and positive European thinkers.

May we take the liberty of suggesting to Dr. Fairbairn that the great thought of the *Self-Manifestation of God*, which is coming to be regarded by discerning minds as the best epitome of Christian philosophy, holds these so-called "opposing" conceptions, "Emanation, Evolution, and Incarnation" in the hollow of its hand, binding them together in a harmony that is final and complete, and giving them a spiritual content that makes them all luminous with the light of God? And that it is the duty of all who desire to see a practicable at-one-ment of the Eastern mind and the Western to emphasize the truths that are, and can be made consciously, common property, and thus help to make slowly feasible and real the brotherhood of man?

What a happy revolution in its own way, *e.g.*, did the discovery of the Sanscrit linguistic affinity work on the minds and labours of our European scholars a generation and more ago!

Language is but the garment, the alter ego of thought; the "word" of that miniature trinity we call man. May it not be reserved for our generation to inaugurate a more profound revolution still, by the discovery of a spiritual affinity between East and West beyond the grasp or dream of the mere metaphysician? Happy the man who contributes in however humble a way to the hastening of such an eirenicon!

Dr. Fairbairn says truly, "There is, indeed, no idea so native to the Hindu mind as the idea of Incarnation." Could any fact be more inspiring and encouraging for the Christian missionary?

Even though Dr. Fairbairn's laboured attempt to weaken the fact by eviscerating the word were warranted, which we do not believe, "to use identical terms for derivative notions" is not always "the most fallacious procedure," but, on the contrary, is sometimes the deepest wisdom. Ingenious analysis, in short, is sometimes lame philosophy.

If Hinduism is to be a factor in the composition of the Church of the future she will not come in empty-handed. She may be even more

absorbed in the mazes of ontology and abstract philosophy than our Western thinkers, and that is saying a good deal. But she will bring, we make bold to say, more of the atmosphere of heaven in her religious philosophy than any European philosophy can hitherto boast. Long before the Christian era she had discerned and clasped to her soul the kinship of God and man—the very foundation of religion, which modern Christianity is still so slow to learn. She will receive in return the living conviction of a Father's love, and a Father's guiding and controlling hand, the absence of which has been the one mournful complaint of her best and purest thinkers. Mr. John Morley, as we have seen, looks for "some prophet to come, who shall unite sublime depth of feeling and lofty purity of life, with strong intellectual grasp, and the gift of a noble eloquence," who shall give form to the "vague religious aspirations" of our time.

Could such an one essay a nobler task than we have here indicated? Is anything more certain than that this very task shall yet be accomplished? Is any duty clearer for every thoughtful Christian than to further it in the

most effective way he can, however humble? We thank Dr. Fairbairn for his article, but let him take care lest his own words be with reason turned upon himself. "Our severe literalism makes us often signally unjust to the East."

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