REASONABLE RELIGION

Reasonable Religion

Tracts for the Times

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A SERIES OF TWELVE

Tracts for the Times

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CONTENTS.

The Principles and Ideals of the Unitarians.

YOU have many of you listened on the last six Sunday evenings to expositions of the principles and ideals of six several groups of Christian believers, as given, either in person or by letter, by those identified with the various groups.* To us of Hope Street Church it has been a great delight to find that the time has come when men of such various schools are willing, through the medium of our free pulpit, thus to set forth the positions which they hold sacred. I believe that we all have heard much more that we agree with than that we dissent from. It has been as a new Pentecostal day, and it has seemed as though Catholics and Protestants, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and Unitarians, we did all "hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." I trust that it may be given me so to speak to-night that this happy harmony of sentiment amid diversity of creed may not be marred.

The position of this Church and of the kindred churches throughout the land must be clearly stated. They trace their lineage from the great Presbyterian exodus from the Church of England, which resulted from the Act of Uniformity in 1662. On the day of St. Bartholomew in that year, two thousand clergymen left their parsonages rather than conform to a mode of worship which their consciences could not accept. "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often," these men spent the days, till the scanty liberty was allowed them in holes and corners, in garrets and in cellars, once more to gather their followers round them. From them and their associates all the older congregations now commonly called Unitarian

* See note at the end of this Tract.

descend. These men were rigidly orthodox in their personal belief. But they left the churches which they founded free; and from that day to this no theological bondage has been laid upon them. And so, for the most part, through Arminianism and Arianism, with steady forward pace, they have gradually reached the Unitarian conceptions which are now generally prevalent among them.

But you will see that historically they are not Unitarian Churches, but free; the freest churches in the world. Neither is any minister or worshipper among them at the present day pledged to Unitarianism; he is only pledged to truthfulness before God and man. If you hear of some of us even now refusing to call our churches Unitarian churches, it is not that we are afraid or ashamed of that most unpopular name. On the contrary, we are proud of it, and of the stand for freedom and for truth with which it is associated—the prouder of it that it has been so much reviled. But we wish to guard the perfect comprehensiveness of these churches even at the present moment, as welcoming on equal terms all men who care to enter our fellowship, be they Unitarians or not; and we wish to guard the perfect freedom of these churches in the future, as no more bound to the Unitarianism of to-day, if God should give some brighter light, than we are bound to the Arianism of yesterday, or our Arian grandfathers were bound to the Arminianism or the Calvinism of the old time before them. Should any one of you wish to enter our fellowship, neither I nor any other would ask you any question whatsoever as to your opinions; nor should I, as minister, ever desire to know any more of your thoughts on the highest themes than you might in the course of time be moved to confide to me in the intercourse of private friendship.

Indeed, we value beyond all price this principle of perfect intellectual freedom in our churchmanship, both congregationally and individually. And every one of the ordinary methods by which other churches strive to secure some sort of theological unity within their territory, we absolutely and unhesitatingly reject. We have no subscription to any Articles of Faith, like the Church of

England and the Presbyterians. We lay down no creeds to be recited in public worship, like the Church of England. We have no prescribed order of worship, like the Catholics or the Church of England. We have no statements of doctrine in our Trust Deeds, like the Congregationalists and the Baptists. We put no doctrinal questions to students in our colleges, or candidates for our pulpits, or persons desiring to become members of the Church, like most of the Baptists, and, I think, all the Congregationalists. We have never expelled any man from fellowship with us for doctrinal unsoundness, like the Quakers. If a minister and a congregation so radically disagreed, whether in theology or in anything else, that they could not work together to their mutual good, they would naturally part. But neither would have any right or any desire to call the other heterodox. The only undertaking of the minister is that in the worship of God and in all his teaching his language shall be true to his own inmost thought. We are theologically the freest religious communion in the world. Our critics say that the freedom is more in theory than in fact. The answer is our history for the past two hundred years. A smaller answer, but not, I think, less striking, is this present course of lectures. If there be in Liverpool any other pulpit as free as this one and those kindred to it, let a similar course of lectures be inaugurated there. My congregation could to-morrow serve me with notice to quit, and invite Father Nugent, or Mr. Lund, or Mr. Hamilton, or Mr. Aked, or Mr. Russell, or Mr. Turner, to become minister of Hope Street Church in my stead. It is sympathy, and sympathy alone, that binds me and them together.

What then, you will ask, has been the result of this boundless freedom? Surely, you will say, dissension, chaos, outbreaks of theological differences among a people rallying round no common standard, pledged to no common confession of their faith. On the contrary, I do not think that any other group of churches in England has from first to last enjoyed so remarkable an immunity from theological convulsions. Other churches have been from time to time thrown into tumult and alarm by the sudden outbreak of

new modes of thought and statement. "Essays and Reviews" shook the church of England like a tree in a storm. Dr. Dods and Dr. Bruce have set agog half the Presbyteries of Scotland. The "Down-grade" among the Baptists filled the late Mr. Spurgeon and his pupils with alarm. Thomas Toke Lynch had hard times among the Congregationalists. In America, Theodore Parker suffered in much the same way from the Unitarians of his day, whose churches had not the same traditions behind them as ours. But we in England have no similar records interleaved in our history. As philosophy, and physical science, and literary and historical criticism have disintegrated old beliefs, and pressed new forms of thought on the mind of educated Europe, our fathers and we have quietly, sometimes almost unconsciously, discharged the old ideas which had become inconsistent with the new knowledge, and, assimilating the new thought, let it silently penetrate our religious conceptions, always making them purer and sweeter, and bringing God more near. Even the unparalleled revolution in science and criticism of the last thirty years—a revolution more rapid and complete than the world has ever seen before—has only accelerated the rate of development of our thought a little, has caused hardly any friction, and has left those of us whose minds it has most thoroughly penetrated, with clearer vision than we had before of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man and the gracious power and loveliness of the character of Christ.

And not only has our freedom resulted in this gradual evolution of opinion amongst us; but I believe that you would at the present moment find a closer sympathy in our religious views uniting us to one another than you will find in any church which has attempted to secure theological agreement by formulas of doctrine to be signed by candidates for the ministry, or to be recited in public worship, or to be incorporated in trust-deeds conditioning the tenure of property.

The whole trend of opinion in our churches has been towards simplicity. The Unitarianism now prevailing with us is the simplest, as I believe it also to be the truest and

the sublimest form of Christian faith. Our process of development has been a gradual throwing off of secondary doctrines and a parallel concentration of emphasis on the central fact of religion, the eternal relation between God and Man.

Around that supreme and central fact historical Christianity has ranged all kinds of outworks, which have been thought to be safeguards of the central truth itself. Thus the Catholic has set up the infallibility of the Church. The Protestant has set up the infallibility of the Bible. Catholic and Protestant alike have set up the doctrine that God can only be approached through the historic Christ, and have even elevated Christ himself to Deity that men might feel they could approach the Father through that gate only. These and many other outworks of the central citadel of religion, we Unitarians have gradually given up. Onlookers have thought this a process of negation and destruction. To us it has never been so, but always a process of affirmation and construction—not pulling down, but building up. For these things have slipped away from our minds just in proportion as brighter and stronger and fuller and surer has been borne in upon our minds the assurance of the central fact of religion, the one transcendent truth which is the religion of the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount, and the whole series of the Parables—with that of the Prodigal Son at their head—the transcendent, all-encompassing truth that God is our Father and we are his children. As more and more we have realised all that that supreme affirmation contains, how it opens up the brotherhood of Man, the infinite care of God for each and every soul, the power of every soul to enter into direct communion with God, no mediator intervening, as a little child with its loving parent,—I say all the dogmas which were supposed to safeguard this central essence of the teaching of Jesus, but have in fact obscured it and distorted it, have melted away from our minds, leaving us face to face and heart to heart with the Infinite and Eternal Love. You may call that a process of destruction and negation. But if so, then this also is a process of destruction and negation: the melting of the ice-crystals on the margin of

the pond and the coverlid of snow that hides the tender plants, through the breaking of the April sunshine upon the world to waken into new life and loveliness the grasses and the flowers of the spring.

And so I come to speak—and I would that for this God would give me the tongue of men and angels—of that central truth which warms the heart of Unitarian Christianity, and was, in our view, the very fire that glowed in the heart of Jesus, and by the brightness of its shining made him the transcendent Teacher of the Ages.

That truth, as I have already said is the Fatherhood of God, and springing from it by necessary deduction, the Brotherhood of Man. This may seem to you much or little. To us it seems to be a gospel all-embracing in its scope, and sufficing in its contents for all the spiritual needs of the human soul. At any rate, whether you deem it enough or not, we have Jesus of Nazareth on our side when we lay on this tender relation between Man and God and among the children of God themselves all the stress and emphasis of our religion. Have you not read how the lawyer came to him, testing, cross-examining, as lawyers will, asking him, according to one story, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" according to another, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And the answer ran not in terms of ritual or creed, made absolutely no reference whatever to himself, the Christ, laid down no conditions of approach through Christ to the Eternal God, but rang out upon the air, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." In those supreme words, and in those alone, is embraced the only Christian orthodoxy. I for my part accept no authority in religion, save such reason and conscience and fellowship with him as God has given me. But if, like the theologians all around me, I sought a text as authority for my belief, I would found myself on that, the supreme religious utterance of all the ages, and, with faith builded on that rock, neither flood nor wind should ever prevail against me. On these, said he, the Master, "hang all the law and the prophets"—all the sacred literature, that is, of Israel, all for which the orthodoxy

of the day contended. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets; without these they have no worth, no meaning; from these they draw their only value.

The Fatherhood of God: what does that mean?

They tell me, my orthodox friends, that this Unitarianism, this simple love of God and Love of Man, this unelaborate doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood and growing out of it, the Human Brotherhood, is "vague," "indefinite," "insufficient;" and they would add on many other doctrines to make the complete Christianity.

That seems to me as though men should say that the wide waters of the great ocean are insufficient, and should fetch a pailful from the pump to add to it. It seems to me as though they should say that the vast skies, studded with the myriad stars are insufficient, and should add to it the star-spangled strip of cloth from the mast-head of an American steamer. It seems to me as though men should say that the ether spread out through the spaces of the universe is insufficient, and should go to a chemist's shop to buy some more.

What does it mean, this Fatherhood of God?

No doubt, on the lips of Jesus it was in some sense but a metaphor, a figure. For there is no speech of human language which can adequately define what the Infinite God is to the human soul. But depend upon it, the simpler the language, the nearer it goes to the heart of the matter. You will not mend your account of what God is to man if you supersede the Nazarene's word "Father" by the most ingenious creed that ever prelate or synod framed in words. A metaphor, yes, this word "Father;" but a metaphor which, taken in its simplest sense, teaches more of what the Eternal is to us than the most learned metaphysics that ever issued from Alexandria, from Rome, or from Geneva.

What does it mean, this Fatherhood of God?

It means, O my brothers and my sisters, that the Unseen Power behind the Universe, the Omnipotent, the Everlasting, the energy by which all the hosts of worlds arise and have their being, that flashes in the shaft of light, that moves through the storm and pulses in the sunshine; the

Living Energy by which, myriad-fold, life arises on this earth of ours, by which life struggles from the dim sensation of the mollusc or crustacean up into the regal faculty of man; the one power upon which all science strikes and can know no more, which all philosophy finds behind phenomena and calls by names that are strange and cold, before which all religion trembles with unutterable awe—it means that this Universal, Everlasting, All-energising Power, to which there is no small and no great, which thrills in the petal of a flower no less than it sends its currents down the orbits of the vastest suns—it means that this power, Supreme, All-controlling, Unescapable, is not dead but lives, is not a Terror, but a Love ineffable, is not a far-off Sovereign, inacessible, implacable, but the Father of my spirit and of yours, caring for us, tending us, loving us, protecting us, listening to the faintest whisper of our hearts, answering with celestial love each cry of our sorrow or our need. He is not far off, but here. He is not long ago, but now. He is not in his exaltation out of touch with our weakness; but his everlasting strength bends over us with understanding sympathy, closer, dearer, holier, more healing than the love of any friend on earth. It means that on the purity of our hearts alone depends the closeness of our communion with our God; and that he will help us to make pure our hearts. It means that nothing can ever come between Him and his human child; that even sin cannot hide us from Him or alienate His love; that though a mother forget her child, He can forget us never; that whenever the prodigal, with a cry of sorrow, stretches forth his hands to the Father, and yearns to be reconciled with Him, the Father is ready always and receives him with the healing mercy of his love.

And all this is not theory; it is fact. It is not doctrine; it is life. It is not conjecture; it is experience. It is not voted by concourse of Divines at Nicæa or at Westminster. It is the story of human life read in the light of the words of the man Christ Jesus.

Do you call it vague? Ask the prodigal who has been received back to his Father's house if it be vague. Do you call it indefinite? Nay, but it is the statement of divine and

human love; and love is not indefinite. Do you call it insufficient? Is the mother's love insufficient for the little child? His heart glows in response to the mother's smile, and in his childish troubles he flies to her for comfort. In all the experience of life, my joys, my sorrows, my upward strivings, my darkening sins, I want no other religion save the sense that my Father's love is with me through it all.

But you will wonder, perhaps, that in expounding Unitarianism I have not yet touched on that difference between it and the popular theology which I find all my orthodox or semi-orthodox friends regard as the deepest line of cleavage between us. We Unitarians do not believe that Jesus Christ was God. No; it is true. We believe him to have been Man,—purely and only Man. But we believe in the dignity of Man. We believe that Man is no worm, no mere fleshly animal, but an Immortal Spirit, declared by Christ himself to be the child of God, and so akin to God himself. And so to us it is no depreciation of the mighty Teacher to say that he was Man. For we think that if a child of God live through his days faithful always, obedient always to the highest that God breathes into his spirit, there is no finite language too reverent or too august in which to speak of such a Son of our Heavenly Father. And we who know that we ourselves are men and only men, rejoice to see in Jesus that to which pure Humanity may reach by the help of God; and we take fresh heart of grace praying that we too in this or some other life may rise to like spiritual stature with him, our Elder Brother.

Why it is that we cannot hold the post-Apostolic doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth was God I shall try to show in a future lecture.* To-night I wish to say only this, that to us it seems that the Deification of Jesus has drawn away the love and trust of men from the Father whom he preached, just as later on the elevation of Mary drew away the love and trust of men from Jesus. There can be no doubt that Jesus himself prayed always to the Father; no doubt that he taught the disciples also to pray to our Father. The Lord's

* See "The God Christ or the Human Christ?" by Rev. R. A. Armstrong. British and Foreign Unitarian Association, Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand. Price ½d.

Prayer all Christendom accepts as the model which he laid down—and it contains no reference whatever to Christ himself. All the stress and fervour of his teaching was to make men trust the Father and go fearlessly to Him in every need.

And I often think that, with the exception of human sin, nothing would grieve and wound Jesus more to-day than to find men saying their prayers to him instead of going always to the Father; looking on him as a friend who will intercede; distrusting the Father's love unless sought through the name of him, our Brother. "When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Jesus does not add, "But the Father will not hearken unless thou ask Him to hear thee for my sake."

From our views of the Father's love follow other divergencies from the popular theology, which I must briefly note.

In "The History of David Grieve" Mrs. Humphry Ward makes this reflection: "*Redemption—Salvation*—the deliverance of the soul from itself—thither all religion comes at last, whether for the ranter or the philosopher." It is true: the deliverance of the soul from its own selfishness, its losing of itself in love and service, that is necessary before the peace of God can rest within it. But here we have two words for that deliverance, "Redemption" and "Salvation." Now "Redemption" means a buying, a purchasing, a transaction in which something is received in consideration of something given. But "Salvation" means only saving, and there may be saving without any bargain or any buying. The orthodox theology always makes the saving of the soul, in some form or other a redemption, a purchasing, consideration given for the paying of a price. The older theology taught that Christ on the Cross paid the price of men's souls to the Devil, and that so these souls were saved. The newer theology, which Anselm introduced, has taught that Christ on the Cross paid the price of men's souls to God, and that so these souls are saved. The Unitarian does not believe that souls are saved in virtue of any price paid by Christ to God or Devil. He does not believe that our salvation is bought at all by any vicarious scheme. If he uses the word Redemption, he can only use it in a

somewhat vague and inexact sense. He believes that the Father loves every child into whom He has breathed the breath of life. And he believes that each one of us is accepted of God just in the measure in which he has drawn into the love and practice of all things good and pure. There is no "scheme of redemption," no "plan of salvation" at all; schemes and plans belonging to the limited faculties of man, not to the spiritual laws of God; but the relation of our Father to us in this matter of the eternal life is exactly figured in the incomparable parable of the Prodigal Son.

If the popular theology were true, how would the parable read?

All through the earlier part even as it actually does. But if Jesus held the current doctrine of Atonement, then should we have to read; "And he arose, and came to his father. And though his father saw him when he was yet a great way off, yet he went not forth to meet him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants, Thrust him forth into outer darkness, for he is not redeemed. But his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he saw his brother weeping in the darkness of the night. And he had compassion, and ran and said unto his father, Father, lay upon me the punishment of this my brother; let me bear the burden of his sin; so shall he be redeemed, and dwell with us in the house. Then the father said, Be it as thou wilt. And he said to his servants, Lay on this my elder son many stripes. And they smote him sore till he cried aloud, My father, why hast thou forsaken me? Then the father said to his servants, Call in my younger son from the outer darkness, for now can we make merry and be glad, for his chastisement has fallen on his brother."

Yet not so read I the famous story. Rather is it the perfect parable of an infinite love that is ever waiting, as a father waits for his erring child, ready the moment the heart is turned to receive it back to peace and joy.

But it is urged upon us that the facts of history can

only be explained on the theory that Jesus Christ is God. To me, I confess, such a contention seems most marvellous. If Jesus was simply Son of Man, as I believe, then I grant, nay, I myself insist that there is no other fact in history comparable to the influence which he has wielded over the foremost nations of the world. I believe that he indeed sowed in the world the seed of a new and lovelier spirit, and that it has borne fruit a myriad-fold. But I know no reason why we should set any limit to the influence which a Man may wield over the peoples and the centuries if his heart be pure. I know no reason why we should be astonished that the Spirit of God working in the soul of a child of man has revolutionised the life of Europe. It shows the power with which God endues a great and tender and heroic soul; and that is all. And I admit the influence of Jesus to be the most momentous single factor in the evolution of our race. But if you make the infinite leap from Man to God, if you say that it was the Infinite and Eternal God Himself who wore the flesh of men and trod the field-paths of Capernaum and the white pavements of Jerusalem, if you say that it was the Infinite and Eternal God Himself who was nailed upon the Cross and suffered agony that sin might be conquered and the human race redeemed—then I am compelled to say: "The effort has been the most terrible failure the heart of man can conceive." Is sin conquered? Is mankind redeemed?

Is sin conquered? Luxury, pride, self-seeking, have they been destroyed? Visit the rich man's palace and see. Drunkenness, lust, and cruelty, have they been done away? Go into the slums of our seething cities, and see. Take the world as it is to-day, nineteen centuries after the birth of God in flesh. Take the world as it has been at any time since the Cross reared its head against the lurid clouds on Calvary. Is this world, with its age-long struggle between righteousness and sin, with its greed, its sloth, its fraud, its filth, its myriads of children teemed out amid a carnival of vice—so many lost, so few saved—what you have to show for thirty years of Godhead clad in flesh, and the nailing of the Creator of the world upon the Cross? The slow, sure conquest which good is achieving over evil, for a Man

to have played so great a part in that as the Man of Nazareth, that indeed crowns him Prince of the human race. But this chaos of happiness and sorrow, of righteousness and sin, of love and hate, as the result of the one unique effort of Almighty God for the salvation of mankind, that would be a mockery of God, which to me would make it impossible ever to worship Him again as the supremely good and great.

No, my brethren, believe me, that is not God's way with us. Slowly, surely, He leads the generations on towards that which Man shall be. Now he raises up a Moses, now an Isaiah—now a Zoroaster, now a Buddha—now a Socrates, now a Plato—now, greatest of all, a Jesus, and the word and life of each work through the ages that come after. Always He is our Father. Always He stoops to our prayer. Always He is ready with the inflowing of his grace and love to the open heart. And just in proportion as we trust in Him, our Father, and obey and love Him, will He give to us of his peace and strength, and grant it to us to bring his Kingdom nearer to the hearts of men.

[The Rev. R. A. Armstrong invited local representatives of the Roman Catholic, the Scotch Presbyterian, the Wesleyan, the Congregationalist, the Baptist, and the Quaker communions, and of the Anglican or High Church and the Broad Church movements in the Church of England, to expound from the pulpit of Hope Street Church, Liverpool, which is by trust-deed doctrinally free, the "principles and ideals" with which they are respectively associated. Failing that, he invited his correspondents to write him letters, which he might himself read from the pulpit and make the basis of remarks of his own. His Anglican and Wesleyan correspondents courteously declined the invitation in either form. The Revs. Father Nugent (Catholic), W. Hamilton (Scotch Presbyterian), and T. W. M. Lund (Broad Church) responded with valuable letters expository of their several

positions. The Revs. C. F. Aked (Baptist) and F. A. Russell (Congregationalist), and Mr. W. E. Turner (Society of Friends), consented to lecture in Hope Street Church. Mr. Armstrong's own lecture on the Principles and Ideals of the Unitarians is given above, reprinted from the *Liverpool Pulpit*, April, 1892. It was delivered on the evening of March 13th.

The Rev. C. F. Aked not only accepted Mr. Armstrong's invitation, but gave him a cordial invitation to his own pulpit in exchange; and of this fraternal arrangement Mr. Aked's congregation, both before and after the event, expressed the heartiest and most unanimous approval. The Baptist Union, however, at its spring meeting in London, passed, almost without dissentients, a resolution arising out of this occurence, and generally understood as condemnatory of exchanges between Baptist and Unitarian ministers, and intended to prevent them in the future. Mr. Aked himself, indeed, would appear not so to have interpreted the motion; for he spoke and voted in its favour. But broadly speaking, it seems impossible to understand the action of the Union otherwise than as a pronouncement that those who "think" otherwise of Christ's person and nature than the members of the Union are unfit for religious fellowship. Mr. Armstrong has published in *The Christian World Pulpit* (May 11th, 1892,) a sermon earnestly protesting against this "new separatism;" and that sermon has probably fallen under the eyes of many members of the Baptist Union. It has been thought that it might be useful to submit to Baptist and other readers Mr. Armstrong's plea for Unitarian Christianity, that readers might the better judge whether they who hold it ought to be excluded from the spiritual fellowship of Christian men.]

The Nativity.*

THE story of the Birth of Jesus, of the birth at Bethlehem, and not at Nazareth, of the Vision of the Shepherds, of the adoration of the Wise Men, is part of the story which long after Jesus was dead, gathered slowly round his memory and his life.

It arose from the necessities of the case; from the natural desire of the Jews who became Christians to prove that he was the Messiah, the King to whom all the Prophets pointed; from the equally natural desire of the Gentile Christians to prove that he, too, like their ancient heroes, was born in a supernatural manner. There was no fraudulent design. It would have been a fraudulent thing in such an age as ours. It was a natural, almost a necessary upgrowth in an uncritical age and among uncritical persons. It grew like any other myth. At first when men were near to the life of Jesus, the story did not exist. Not a single apostle or early disciple knew anything about it. Even in the second generation, and partly in the third, the story only existed in exultant hymns, in the outbursts of joy in the preacher's mouth, in the realm, that is, of art and symbol, not in the realm of history. At this time it was *desired* that it should be true; it was not accepted as true. Nor was it yet made into a connected tale. It existed in broken parts, in the symbolic expression of poets and preachers. But men wanted it, and in the next generation or so, that which had originally been poetry and symbol, came to be accepted as fact. And *then* it was

* Two Sermons preached in Bedford Chapel, London, Dec., 1891.

believed to be history; it was wrought out into various forms, and after a longer time it took its best form, that which most fully represented the religious passions and needs of the Church, and was, as such, in full belief of its truth, inserted into the Gospel.

This is a brief sketch of its upgrowing, and it entirely disperses the accusation made—that if we hold this view we are accusing the early Christians of a literary fraud. Even now many stories of this kind naturally grow up in villages remote from criticism, that is, in villages in the same state of mind in which the generality of men were in the days of early Christianity. To make this plainer I will put what I have said into an imaginary conversation, and a visit to a preacher of the time just previous to that in which the story crystallized into history. This will bring you face to face with the reasons why the story grew, and with the emotions out of which it grew. And these emotions are the actual historical thing at the back of the legendary story.

Many centuries ago, towards the end of Vespasian's reign, two Christians met in the market place of Corinth. One of them was a Greek, a stone cutter who worked on the repairs of the harbour; the other was a Jew who had belonged to a strict sect, but who had been converted many years ago by Paul. He carried on his business, which was that of a jeweller, among the Gentiles, because the opposition of the old Jews to the Christian Jews had greatly increased in virulence since the destruction of Jerusalem. It was evening, the time of work was over, and the two men, who were friends, walked together and talked in this fashion:—

"You will come with me to-night," said the Greek, "to the house of Apollodorus." "Why?" said the other. "Have you not heard?" answered the Greek. "The Brethren meet there to hear the aged disciple of Paul, the friend of Peter, who has just landed from Rome. They say he was present at the last with both when they witnessed a good confession, and entered into the joy of the Lord." "Most gladly I will go with you," replied the Jew; "I need to be strengthened, for my own people have been very bitter of late against the Faith. Three of my old friends met me to-day, and began to mock me and to laugh to scorn the Lord

Jesus. 'Still serving that impostor?' they said. 'He the Messiah! Hanged on a tree! Did he give the kingdom to Israel or return to save Jerusalem? The Holy City is sown with salt, and we are outcasts. Is this our Prophet? Was he of the house of David? Was he born at Bethlehem? Was he a King? He deceived you and you are deceived.' My heart sank at these words, but the Lord gave me strength, and I remembered that I had heard from Aquila that all the prophecies must be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, and though we knew nothing of his childhood, yet that doubtless he was born in Bethlehem, because it had been said, 'And thou, Bethlehem—out of thee shall come one who will rule Israel;' and it was likely Mary and Joseph, whom we believe now to have been of David's line, went up from Nazareth to the town of David at the Census; and that they must needs have gone to Egypt, because it had been said, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.' So I spoke of these things, the Lord helping me, and though they ceased not to scoff, they had no answer to give."

"I know not," said the Greek, "if these conjectures be true, but they seem fitting. Certainly Aquila did not say the thing was so, but thought it ought to be so; but I should be glad to believe it, for it unites the Lord by descent and by feeling to all the religion of his own people. It is right that the prophets and holy kings of your race should have foreseen and spoken of the Christ, and that the links of the chain of our religion should be perfect. The present is then knit to the past. We Greeks love order and harmony and continuity. At any rate, even though I do not know the facts—and, indeed, as we know nothing of them—to say that the Lord was born at Bethlehem is a good symbol of the truth that he fulfils in his doctrine and life all the Law and the prophets." "I know nothing either of the facts," said the Jew, "and I see the matter from a different side from you. Harmony and continuity, of those ideas, which are Greek, we Jews understand but little; but it would be a happy thing for me, a Jew, if I could think that Jesus was the actual descendant of David, and born, as the Prophets say, at Bethlehem: and the more I think of it, the more true it seems. But you do not seem sad, but quickened with a

kind of joy. Have you had any trouble, for I have observed that when you are the hardest beset you are brightest?"

"Well I have had an experience somewhat like your own. You know that almost all my fellow workmen at the harbour are idolaters; and as the Greeks discuss all matters freely, and try different ways of life and thought, I spoke to many of them a little while ago of the way of life that the Brethren followed, and of the teaching of Jesus, and of his doings among men, and of what he said of God, and especially of how he came to save the poor, and the sick, and the restless, and those whom the world cast out as worthless and wicked. And many listened, and said they would think of the matter and hear me again; but to-day some of the baser sort, and of the philosopher class, joining together, asked me with scoffing what proof I had that the Master I followed was the great Teacher or knew anything of the gods. 'We have heard,' they said, 'that he was a carpenter's son, born without any wonders, that he followed his father's trade, and was crucified by the Romans. He is divine, you say, the Son of God! Did the world ever hear of such a Son of God? A carpenter's son! Our heroes, our great men were born of Zeus; great and marvellous stories are told of their birth and childhood—nay, it is even related of Plato, who was only a philosopher, that he was born of a virgin. Be sure when the gods send a man into the world, who is their son, he is in truth their son, and they make that plain by their wonders.' And then they laughed, and cried out, 'The Son of God, the carpenter's son!'"

"And what did you say?" said the Jew, "for I have often thought myself about this thing. A Jew cannot live among Greeks, as I have done all my life, without thinking somewhat in their way. It does seem fitting that the Lord Jesus should have a heavenly birth, and many say so now. Last year when Aquila was with us, he spoke of this very matter. He said the prophecies, which must needs be fulfilled in the Messiah, spoke of his being born of a virgin, as your friends say Plato was, and of God being his Father, and he discoursed most eloquently on that phrase in the Prophet —'Who shall declare his generation?' So that, though he did not say that Jesus was wondrously born, I went away almost persuaded that this was the truth."

"That may be so," answered the Greek; "I could gladly believe it; but it is not stated anywhere in our new writings with authority, and I could not speak of it. Were it true, it would help us greatly with my people. But I did not answer them in that fashion."

"In what way, then?" said his companion.

"I told them that, whatever was his birth and life, and whether there were divine wonders about them or not, it was plain that he was alive now, and having wonderful power. For that not only at Corinth, but, as they themselves knew by the report of many voyagers and merchants, men of all classes had been brought together as brothers, and the rich helped the poor, and the poor did not envy the rich; that Greek and Jew, Roman and barbarian slave lived together like men of one nation; and I asked 'What hero or philosopher has done this?' Was not that divine? for the bond that united them was not self-interest, but love of one another."

"Then I told them of the power of his words over the lives of men, and how love of him enabled men to redeem the lost, to give peace to the weary, to lift the sinner into righteousness, to give hope and joy to the slave in the worst of miseries, for it was to the poor and the sinners he spoke with love, and to those who wanted peace that his words were of most avail."

"'You know,' I cried, 'many of the men who are now Christians. What were they before? What are they now? This is the power of our Son of God, these are the wonders which belong to him. He is now alive for evermore, and we, though dead, shall live with him hereafter, as we live in him now by love. 'Love one another,' he cried, 'and you are living men—live, to die for one another.' That he did himself. And as I spoke this it seemed that he himself was with me, and I felt uplifted by joy and faith, and stretched out my arms to heaven, where I seemed to hear the angels sing of joy! Then my fellow workmen were silent, and said:—'There is a God with him.'"

"It was a good answer," said the Jew; "better than mine; but here is the house, let us go in." They entered and took their seats in the long, low room. It was a strange

congregation. Men of all ranks in Corinth sat there together: the slave beside his master, the wise man beside the repentant jester, the Rabbi near the outcast, the Roman and Greek matron of the great house with the dancer who had left her evil life, and with the water-seller. All were at one in Christ. It would be no wonder to any one there that the shepherds and kings and wise men should kneel together in a cave of the rock, such as, in fact, they worshipped in at Rome, before the child Christ. But there were not many rich or wise. The most of them were poor, from the lanes of the city, sellers in the market, slaves who wrought in the gardens or the fields—but since they felt that they were rich in spirit, uplifted with the thought that their Father and King was the Almighty God; since they knew that the heavenly host were their friends, and that their Master had said, "Blessed are the poor"—it would be easy for them to think that God himself had sent His messengers to tell the Gospel to the poor shepherds of the hill—nay, when the story grew up, it would express their passionate conviction.

As the two friends looked round they knew the history of almost all, and they saw on every face the expression of joy and peace. All who were there had been saved from a sinful life, or from vain and bitter searching after good, or from vainer and oppressive ceremonies; wandering sheep whom the Master had found and brought to the fold. Out of the ineffable peace of this salvation flowed a deep and personal love of Jesus, so that the very name of Saviour was to them music and unutterable joy, only to be expressed in a burst of angelic song. The daily life they lived they lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved them and was in them. And their love and faith and joy was raised to a white heat by danger and by persecution, so that they realized the Lord as their Shepherd, who had laid down his life for them, and called on them to die for him. On the very walls of the place where they worshipped they saw him painted standing or sitting among his sheep. The shepherd symbol, drawn from ancient prophets, and from the stories of Christ himself, was always present to their minds.

And mingling with them—as they believed—unseen but ever present, were the dead who had died in the Lord—other

sheep, not of the earthly but of the heavenly fold, who sang along with them their songs of praise. And with the dead other listeners, other friends, were, they thought, present. All the angels, all the heavenly host, who ministered to them and rejoiced in their joy when they spoke of salvation, peace, and love, when a new soul, a sinner that repented, was added to their little flock.

Put yourselves into their place; feel with the emotion of the people, with their temper and thoughts; sit between the Jew and the Greek who had talked of the birth and divine origin of Jesus, and then listen to the preacher. He is a Jew, but with a Greek education; one of themselves in intellectual temper; saved, like them, perhaps, from deeper depths; thrilling with their emotion and his own; possessed with their thoughts. He has companied with Paul, and seen him die; but has since passed through many cities and known many opinions and men; so that he brings the collective thought of the Church to Corinth. And whatever is most fitting to stir Roman or Greek he uses in his teaching of Christ, and whatever is prophetic and poetic in the Old Testament, in whose language he is steeped since boyhood, he applies to illustrate the life and doctrine of his Master. He tells his own story, and how everywhere the Gospel is prevailing. He makes the hearers feel their communion with Rome and Jerusalem and Ephesus—with all the redeemed. And then he speaks of their own lives, of their poverty and danger, of the trials coming on the Church; but also of their joy, of the heavenly life, of the guiding presence of their Shepherd Christ. "They were poor, but the angels were their companions; they were unwise in the wisdom of the world, but wisdom, said their Lord, was to follow after a little child. To worship love was light and life. And wisdom, light, and love were in their King Christ Jesus. He was born to bring God's salvation; he, the son of David—the root, as said the prophet, out of the stem of Jesse—of David who had fed his flocks at Bethlehem, and listened there to the voice of God. Bethlehem meant the House of Bread, and Christ was the Bread of Life. It may be he was born there—nay, it were but fitting that the prophecy of its name should be fulfilled. And what a night

that must have been when he was born. Be certain that then the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And the shepherds on the hills, like David, heard the cry, and saw heaven opened and heard angelic hosts praise the Lord; for there were tidings of great joy in the courts of God that night. A Saviour was born who was Christ the Lord. Had you been there that hour"—and he turned with fire to the people—"you who have felt his power, you who have been saved, whose peace is like a river, whose will is good to all mankind—would you not have sung, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace'?"

And when the preacher broke into this cry, all the congregation rose and sang, "Glory to God, peace on earth, goodwill to man—Christ is born." And as the Jew and Greek went home, already the new story, which satisfied their needs, and gave them new power over men, and symbolized their inner life with Christ, had taken form in their minds.

The preacher had not said that Jesus was born of a virgin, born at Bethlehem, that the shepherds had heard the angels declare his birth, that they had worshipped him, that he was the supernatural Son of God. The preacher and the hymn had only expressed the spiritual wants and desires of the time concerning Jesus, the deep emotions which clustered round his name in the words of ancient prophets and songs, in an impassioned rush of symbolic eloquence, in poetic passion; but he had left behind him in souls already prepared for belief by the wants of the time seeds which afterwards would grow up into the completed tale, and fix it into fact.

Now, not in one place, but all over the Roman world, such scenes were occurring, such things were thought and felt. The union of feeling produced unity of symbolism; and at last, out of many forms of it, one story, the most simple, and the most poetical, was written down by some man of genius who believed it, and, after a time of transition, accepted by the Church as true.

The feelings, the thoughts out of which it arose, may be ours, and their symbolic form brings us delight, and I will speak of this hereafter. But now we take two

thoughts, and find the truth beneath their symbolism. We, too, moved by the same desire to turn ourselves back to all the life of God in the human race, and in that life to feel our unity with man, cry out that Christ was not only born at Bethlehem that he might complete the revelation given to the Jews; but also in India, Greece, and Rome, France, and Italy, in all countries where mankind has lived towards the Father of all Spirits, and in the scattered tribes of the islands of the sea. Wherever God has spoken to man, there he who has spoken most clearly of God's life has been born for us. There is a Bethlehem in every nation.

Son of David also; yes! Child and finisher of all the Jewish thought of God; but also son of all the kings of spiritual thought among mankind, completer also of all their thought, speaking now in all men and women over the whole world who tell the truths of love and justice, faith and the mastery of the soul over the forces of nature and the world. "Christ is born in every man," we cry. "Whoever takes his stand against sin and self, and for righteousness and love, in him there is a new Bethlehem." In this thought, in which indeed Bethlehem is again a symbol, all the spiritual life, past and present, of the race is brought together in Jesus into a whole. Mankind shall yet feel itself in Christ, one in life; one in aspiration towards its God, crying out with him, "Our Father which art in heaven." So we, too, can sing with the early Christians, "Jesus is born in Bethlehem"; but we mean much more now by the saying than the ancient Church meant then. Then it but symbolized the thought that the doctrine of Jesus was the fulfilment of the spiritual life of the Jews, of that kingdom which the name of David symbolized. Now we universalise that symbol. The religious life of the whole world is continued and completed in the life and teaching of Jesus.

Yet the more that we mean grows out of the same desire, out of the same true spiritual longing for continuity and unity of spiritual history that those two, Jew and Greek, had in the market-place of Corinth. Nor do we less want

to realise that there has been one of us who was worthy to be called, and was, a Son of God; and to realise it, not through a miracle, nor by an article of faith that robs him of our humanity, but as Greek, Roman, Syrian, Goth and Gaul realised it, when they put their desire to be at one with God, and their belief that man was born to have that sonhood, into poetic truth, and said, "They were sons of God among men—prophets, heroes, warriors—in whom God's life breathed, and who did the work of God, whom all other men were to imitate and love and strive to equal."

It was natural, then, that Jesus should be derived straight from God by the late followers of his steps. But that was not the derivation of which Jesus himself thought, if he called himself the Son of God. His sonship was spiritual—likeness of character. And his title and right to sonship to God was that he was a man, not a God. In all the myths of sons of God it was this truth of the natural sonship of man to God that rose again and again into isolated heroic forms. Jesus made the truth universal. Not only heroes, great kings, and prophets were sons of God, but everyone in the world was, by right, a son of God, and would have to become one in fact, by becoming one with Love and Righteousness. It was a new thought—yet rooted in old thinking, when Jesus, universalising for all that which had been only allotted to a few—said, "I, a man, am a son of God; so are ye. Live the life of Love—live as I live. God is my Father and your Father, my God and your God." That answered to the long desire of the human race, embodied it simply, and made it the foremost power of a new life. Take it to you this Christmas time. It is the faith which exalts and rescues life. We are here, prisoned in sense, baffled by problems, wearied with vain seeking for truth, restless as a lark in its roofed cage and as beaten down when we try to soar; weak with trial, worn with temptation, hopeless with sin. But when we know that man is born to be at one with the Divine Goodness—and it is a man who was at union with it who tells us so, who proved his truth by his life, and his life by his death of love,—when we believe this and live by it, we set free the soul, we save it from sin through

love, we are at rest, we find the heavenly world, we break the bars of the cage, conquer temptation, have power to become sons of God, and rise into life eternal.

This was the thought that thrilled, inspired, and glorified the life of the early Christians. There had been a Son of God, and they were to be changed into his glory to live his life, to die his death, to rise again with him They put it into form and linked it naturally to miracle. We as naturally take miracle away from it. But the thought remains, and its power, and the passion that flows from it; and it is the mightiest thought of the human race. "Who shall declare his generation?" said the preacher at Corinth; who shall declare our generation and know our father and mother? For we have an infinite Father, and we know nothing of true life till we are certain that we are sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, and live worthy of that lofty lineage.

But when we know it, then in the joy of the hour and of the life that issues from it, a song arises in our hearts as if the angels sang therein, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." It is the old, old cry which has broken like a psalm of praise out of a thousand thousand hearts for many hundred years; its source for ever the same, its beauty and its emotion one and the same through all the history of Humanity, and still to be unchanged in joy and love and peace as long as Man is Man. Hear its music; believe its truth; kindle with its emotion; let all your inner life be changed by it from darkness to light, from self-will to obedience and love of God; embody the belief, emotion, love, aspiration which it creates, in your life with men. Love one another as Christ has loved you, and then you are, though eighteen hundred years have rolled away, brothers in thought, brothers in emotion, with the Jew and Greek assembly, who sang so long ago in Corinth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!"

II.

THE subject of which I last spoke was the legend of the Nativity of Jesus, the manner in which it grew up and was added as a supplement to the "Tradition." When I called it legend it seemed to me that many might justly feel some sorrow, because so much that was beautiful and bound up with so many arts, passions, acts, and memories of religious life, might be, when it became no longer fact, lost to us for ever. His would be a cold heart, not worth either friendship or love, who, having once cared for this story, would have no regret if we could sing no more the old hymns and read no more the lovely stories of the child born among the poor, of the shepherds on the hills awakened by the heavenly host, of the star that shone to lead the Eastern kings and sages to the infant King. And feeling that sorrow in others and in myself, I said that when we got down to the root of these stories, to the truth of their origin, we gained their true beauty, and the power of retaining them as symbols, though we lost their beauty as fact; and so much the better, for their beauty, as fact, had now decayed. What their real beauty is, or rather the way to feel it, is my present subject.

Can anything be beautiful or worthy of reverence which is not founded on truth? Certainly not! But then we must distinguish what we mean by truth in this matter. If we take this story as history, then all that is said must be true to actual occurrences. If we take it as a symbolic legend which grew up out of religious needs or feelings belonging to the time at which it arose, then its truth will be in its correspondence as a symbol to those needs and feelings, and its fitness to their representation. And its basis of fact will be the fact—as human as possible—that those needs were felt, and those feelings widespread. The emotions which created them, the universal religious passion of the Church concerning Jesus, of which they were the art-representation, this is the historical fact behind them. Out of these two views of my story—the first which takes it as actual history,

the second which takes it as a symbol of spiritual thought and feeling—we may get two kinds of belief. In one case we believe in the actual facts; in the other we believe in the actual feelings and thoughts out of which the poetic tale was made, and make them, in turn, our own.

(1.) This story has been accepted by many generations as historically true, and there are many who so accept it still. These retain its charm and its power over life, and no one has any desire to disturb their faith. But there are many, on the other hand, who either suspect it to be false or smile at it in secret; and yet who still profess a public faith in it, either from sentiment for the old or from fear of the new, or from a wish not to disturb themselves or others. This is dressing up the untrue in clothes borrowed from the wardrobe of truth. I cannot say that these persons will retain the beauty or the spiritual power of the stories; nor do they deserve to retain either. They keep up—more especially when they are religious teachers—that dishonesty of thought in matters of faith which repels so many outsiders from religion. They marry truth to falsehood, and think in vain that the union will be happy and its children beautiful. It is a union fated to abrupt divorce, and its children to deformity.

This will not do. In order to keep the beauty and power in things of religion we need to be true, in them, to our own convictions, whether of reason or conscience, and to have a rigid moral reverence for truth itself. We need frankness of self-confession within, clearness of view without. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

(2.) There are others who do not believe in these stories as history; but who like them as they like a picture or a piece of music, because they are pretty, and because they win from them a kind of emotion, arising either from association or from the emotions of others around them. They use the stories frankly as anniversary means of sentiment, and they have a right to their artistic feeling so long as they do not call it, or mistake it for, religion. But they will not keep the beauty of the stories. The

want of any basis, of any truth of any kind at the root of their feeling, acts like a solvent on their pretty castle in the air, and after a time it dies away. We see what will be the fate of such mere sentiment in the history of art as employed upon this story. When faith in the tale as history died, art still used it as a beautiful subject; but the want of any sense of truth behind it killed its use. After a time of transition, no beautiful rendering of it, except in the music of believing Germany, appeared in art for more than two hundred years.

(3.) With us here, however, it is not a question of sentiment or art. It is a question of religion, and if we dismiss historical truth from the story we must find some true things on which to rest it, else we shall first lose reverence for it and afterwards lose its beauty, for beauty in religious matters depends on our being able to honour them.

And those two things, since here we are excluded from actual fact, must be either human feeling felt profoundly in the past, and possible to be felt in the present, with regard to God and man; or moral and spiritual ideas which have power to produce noble conduct or spiritual aspirations. And the feeling of these ideas must be historically connected with the story, and historically embodied in it.

Now, with regard to this tale, how do we arrive at these things? Can we bind up these elements with the tale? I will answer that through an analogy. It is plain that stories which have no historic truth at all can be beautiful, and awaken the high emotion which produces action, can influence men nobly, can win reverence and create around them, art. This has been the case with the heroic legends of Greece and other nations. While the legends were thought historically true, their loveliness was felt, and their power endured. But the time came when they were no longer believed in as fact, and then, with the passing away of faith in their truth, passed away for a time also their power and their beauty. But at various times in history, and of late years in England, the sense of their glory and loveliness, of their moral and spiritual power

has again arisen. Why? Is it because we believe in their historic truth? Not so, but for a very opposite reason! Because we have come to disbelieve wholly in their historic truth, and have fixed our minds on their origins. We have sought for another kind of truth in them than that of outward facts. We have proved that they were tales which grew up into the form in which we possess them—first, out of the poetic imaginations of a simple and childlike folk concerning nature; secondly, as the nation grew into a higher civilisation, out of its desire to embody in form moral principles; and thirdly, out of deep feeling for the sorrows, and for the longing towards higher ideals of men and women in the past. And when we have found the sources of the stories in the minds and affections of men, we have found truth. Yes, and historic truth also, truth even more important than the mere record of events. That is our basis of truth, and the moment we rest upon it, beauty arises again like sunrise round the stories, and their power returns. We do not believe in the story of Œdipus as actual fact, but we do believe in the deep and passionate emotions concerning human sorrow and fate out of which it grew, in the grave and intense thinking concerning human life which was embodied in it. It is historically true that the Greeks had these feelings and these thoughts, and the tale of Œdipus is one witness to their actual existence. We know, with a greater certainty than we know any date or event in Grecian history, that so certain Greeks felt and thought. And the same thing is true in the same way of all the great stories of the world.

So we get down to human reality—we feel the beating of the human heart—we see the thinking of the human intelligence. And then we enjoy the stories again, and enjoy them more than we did before—feel them and are animated by them to action, imitation, and creation, because we enjoy and are impassioned by the very same feelings and thoughts which those had who built up the stories. The way, it is true, in which we think and feel these things is modified by the passage over us of all that Time has since brought forth; but the fountains of

thought and feeling are the same in them and us. We, too, standing on the cliffs at dawn see the Sun's white horses leap upwards and his arrows fly before him, and his glorious head arise, and feel, not less but more deeply, the same kind of emotion out of which the symbol sprang into words. Nor does our knowledge of the real facts of the case forbid our emotion, or make us care to alter the symbol. It is only if we turn the symbol into fact and prose that we lose its beauty and power. Keep it as poetry, realize in yourself the human emotions out of which it flowed, feel them as truth, place yourself at one with those emotions which the whole congregation of the Greek people felt, and you have gained—yes, gained tenfold—the beauty you had lost.

The application is plain. In the story of the Nativity we are in contact with a legend or myth which grew up in the way I indicated in the foregoing sermon. We can no longer get out of it the beauty or the power which follows on believing it as historic fact; and at first it seems then as if beauty and power had left it altogether. But that is only so when we persist in not being frank in our confession of its mythical origin. We try then, as many do now, to read our own meaning into it, to treat it as half real, half spiritual, to make it mean what our theological need or fancy asks. And that kind of thing breaks down. It has no ground in truth, no backing, nothing which explains the story or fits its details. We are left in the vague, and the story itself becomes vague. And when we have got to the point of saying, "I don't know what to make of it, but I can make anything I like out of it," we are precisely at the point of thought at which we are certain to lose all sense of beauty in it, all influence over life from it, all union with the past through it, and, finally, all care for it at all. It is only a passing touch of sentiment that we gain from it at Christmas, an event that comes less from the story than from long association. That is the position of a great number of persons at this moment, and it is that vague and useless position which many liberal Christians in the Church unintentionally either produce or encourage.

I do not ask you to read any fancies or feelings of your own into the story. I ask you to seek truth; to find out by study and realize by imagination based on study the human sources of this story; to get at the very thoughts and feelings and needs of men, women, and children which, passing into form in pictures, hymns, sermons, prayers, slowly created the story. You will get then at things which actually were; which though not in history made history; ideas which filled the whole Church with movement and work, feelings which were as fire in the souls of men, impassioned enthusiasms, which bound together a little congregation in a Greek village in the same way as they bound together all the congregations of the Christian Church over the whole world. And when we have done that, then we shall find that these thoughts, emotions, and excitements of the spirit are, in their central life, thoughts which we can love, emotions which are able to thrill us now, enthusiasms which are passionate with humanity. Instead of being able to feel the beauty of these stories less, or to realize their power less, we are, when we grasp these historical emotions out of which they grew, able to feel more deeply than before their beauty and their power; and all the more deeply because our human life and our religious capacities have been expanded by the experience of centuries. Then, when we have done this work, we shall turn to the story, and freeing it from all that is temporary, controversial, and miraculous, find in it a symbol we shall rejoice to use, a form through which our emotion can justly flow, a psalm of religious life which binds us into one with all the past.

We shall be more knit to Jesus, for we shall feel, as we read the stories, the very emotions, and grasp the very thoughts which those who of old created the tales had concerning him. Historic continuity of emotion—modified by the necessary changes—will belong to us. We shall sing our Christmas hymn, and listen to the ancient carol story with no less delight—but with a changed delight—than we had when we were children long ago. No less delight, but more of certainty! for we were liable, or sure, to lose that delight whenever we were in doubt as to the truth of that

from which it flowed. There are many who must remember how faith in the story faded. We did not confess we disbelieved it, but we seemed to have no more interest in it; it lost reality. The air of thought which we breathed disintegrated it, and we (in the pathetic way Humanity has of searching everywhere for ancient beauty it has lost, as if when once lost it could ever, in that ancient form, be found again) worked up some satisfaction in the customs of Christmas-tide among our people, and imputed our pleasures in these festive humanities to the story. But, in reality, it was the humanity that we loved, and not the supernatural tale; that itself, in its power to produce beauty and joy and faith, was dead.

But the new pleasure which I lay before you links humanity, combined with historic truth, to the ancient tale. The passions and thoughts of men, of which we now know it is the symbolic record, are not far away from our hearts, but close to us if we love the life and work of Jesus. The pleasure they give is of the same kind as we feel when Christmas dawns, and it is not liable to die in us. As our human experience of sorrow and joy, of rest and salvation deepens, our delight in the symbols which record the character of Jesus and his work will also deepen. This new pleasure is then secure. It rests on the known—it rests on human thoughts concerning Christ which have penetrated and transfigured human lives from century to century; on human feelings which have kindled and moved, and still kindle and move the world.

I do not speak to those who think these thoughts and feelings useless or needless. But those who wish to have something of the heart, as of a little child, out of which the story grew; those who wish to mingle God with pure motherhood and fatherhood, and with the little child; those who love the poor and the ignorant, and bring the Kingdom of God to them; those who lead together the wise kings of the earth and the peasants of the hills to worship love and truth and goodness; those who desire to unite all classes in reverence for love and innocence; those who feel the need of a Saviour from sin, of rest in a troubled world, of the prophecy of perfect peace, of faith in a Father whose

glory is to redeem mankind, of the sympathy of the heavenly hosts, of a spiritual life which is the great reality beneath a world of appearance, of a King who shall reign, not by force or fraud, but by love over mankind—these will find it a blessing, when they are driven away from this story by the criticism of Science and History—to gain a means, clear and based on truth, by which they can realize afresh the beauty of the tale, clothe it with true thoughts, feel its power, and add to their lives its deep emotions.

HYMN BY THE REV. STOPFORD BROOKE.

It fell upon a summer day,
When Jesus walked in Galilee,
The mothers of the village brought
Their children to his knee.

He took them in his arms, and laid
His hands on each remembered head;
"Suffer these little ones to come
To me," he gently said.

"Forbid them not; unless ye bear
The childlike heart your hearts within,
Unto my kingdom ye may come,
But may not enter in."

Master, I fain would enter there;
Oh let me follow thee, and share
Thy meek and lowly heart, and be
Freed from all worldly care.

Of innocence, and love, and trust,
Of quiet work, and simple word,
Of joy, and thoughtfulness of self,
Build up my life, good Lord.

All happy thoughts, and gentle ways,
And loving kindness daily given,
And freedom through obedience gained,
Make in my heart thine heaven.

And all the wisdom that is born
Of joy and love that question not,—
The child's bright vision of the earth,
Be mine, O Lord, unsought.

O happy thus to live and move!
And sweet this world, where I shall find
God's beauty everywhere, his love,
His good in all mankind.

Then, Father, grant this childlike heart,
That I may come to Christ, and feel
His hands on me in blessing laid,
So pure, so strong to heal.

So when, far fled from earth, I come
Before thee, happy and forgiven,
The heavenly host may cry with joy,
"A child is born in heaven."

The Story of "Robert Elsmere" and its Lessons.

"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"—JESUS (Matt. xvi. 3).

FICTION is to-day the favourite and most effective literary method on the part of those who would reach and influence the larger public. And what is fiction, in its best estate, but a transcript of human life in the light of the imagination and heart and conscience of the writer? The best novels are those which have a serious purpose, and deal distinguishably with moral and spiritual problems. George Eliot's works, Charles Kingsley's "Yeast," George Macdonald's theological romances, and the writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe, are all concerned with the religious problems of our day. But never, it seems to me, have the spiritual struggles of this generation—the great conflict now going on between authority and freedom, tradition and truth, the letter and the spirit—been so powerfully and impressively set forth as on the glowing pages of this work of genius—"Robert Elsmere."

The wonderful success it has achieved is not due to any adventitious circumstance, or the arts of the advertiser. It is the intrinsic merit of the book, from both a literary and ethical standpoint, and its rare timeliness as an exposition of the theological changes that are now going on,—the spiritual experiences of a generation universally touched with doubt, and yet seeking with passionate earnestness for other and more enduring foundations of faith than the past has bequeathed to it.

When we consider the distinguished literary and social environment of its gifted author, we are not surprised that

such a book should have emanated from such a source. The author, Mrs. Humphry Ward, as is now well known, is the grand-daughter of Dr. Arnold of Rugby. Her father is a professor at the University of Dublin, and is a Roman Catholic in faith. Her uncle was that distinguished critic, man of letters, and radical in religion, Matthew Arnold, and her husband is a well-known literary and art critic and editor of books. Mrs. Ward herself is not only a writer of repute, but is said to be rarely informed in the languages and literatures of the modern Latin races—French, Spanish, Italian—and to possess an unusual culture in all that pertains to art. These distinguished personal antecedents explain somewhat the admirable literary style, the acquaintance with modern thought and the familiarity with cultivated society in England, which render Mrs. Ward's book so fascinating and quickening to its multitude of readers.

The average novel reader, who skims through a book merely to unravel its plot, may indeed find the work unsatisfactory, for "Robert Elsmere" has a serious purpose, and its leading characters move and talk on a high plane of thought and feeling. This does not, however, render the work stilted or unnatural. On the contrary, about the first as well as the most abiding impression one receives from its perusal, is the life-like character of its personages and incidents. In "Robert Elsmere" we see anew that there may be literary realism of the strictest sort, without its characters being low, its incidents commonplace, or its conversation trivial. Her treatment of the principal characters displays something of George Eliot's delicate insight and subtle analysis of the motives which actuate human conduct; and no writer since George Eliot's day gives so much promise of filling her place in modern literature. How rich in colour are her pages! In a simple and beautiful style, she paints for us, with intense vitality and sympathy, the rugged picturesque scenery of the Westmoreland hills and lakes, with their alternating moods of sunshine and storm; the quiet beauty of the landscape of Surrey; the interiors of humble cottage-homes, with the painful privations and wild superstitions of the peasantry; the comforts, limitations and humours of rural life among

the gentry; the splendours of English manorial halls; the squalor and misery of the London poor; the worldliness and emptiness of fashionable society; the studious atmosphere of Oxford—relieving the sombre chapters of her story with artistic contrasts of life and love, which can find no place in my present discussion, but which conduce to the charm and interest of the book.

Her principal characters are drawn with a delicate yet firm hand. They stand out from the crowded pages with distinctness and linger vividly in the memory. And this not only because they are interesting in themselves, but because they each represent a separate and recognizable type of the intellectual life of our day. Everywhere we meet with refined yet clear portraitures of men and women as they exist on the higher planes of thought and social intercourse—portraits so real, so life-like, that it seems impossible to us that they should not have actually breathed and moved round the authoress in daily companionship, or, at any rate, to have been suggested by persons in her circle of acquaintance.

Of none of the characters of her book is this more true than of its central figure, Robert Elsmere, in whom it is no mere fancy of mine, I must believe, to discover an idealized representation of her distinguished relative, Matthew Arnold.

It will always be one of the most gratifying recollections of my life that on the occasion of Mr. Arnold's first visit to America I was privileged to meet him and hear his discourse, so rich with the affluent culture, refined insight and well-matured convictions of a gifted and earnest mind. For more than a week I met him almost every day, and took long walks with him on the surf-beaten cliffs of old Newport, listening with profit and enjoyment to his conversation, which was

> "Of such sweet breath combined
> As made the things more rich."

In Mrs. Ward's portrayal of her hero, I seem to trace the physical and mental resemblance to her illustrious kinsman, Matthew Arnold. The tall, loose-jointed, yet

agile frame, the irregular, strong and attractive features, the speaking eyes, and ruddy tint, and fondness for athletic sports, especially the exercise of walking. In his mental make-up, also, Robert Elsmere reminds one of Mr. Arnold —the keen, alert mind, so eager for knowledge; strongly self-assertive, and with the courage of his convictions, yet humble and simple as a child; the cheerful and buoyant disposition, with strong affection for his family and kind. The very opinions on theological, biblical, and philosophical questions, to which Robert Elsmere attains through struggle and suffering, are those which his great prototype has so eloquently and convincingly expressed in his literary and critical works. But here the resemblance comes to an end. Robert Elsmere is, as I have said, an idealization of Matthew Arnold, and in the sphere of moral action, the hero of Mrs. Ward's story displays a vigour of conscience, a breadth of sympathy, a steadfastness of faith, which was sometimes wanting in that fastidious critic and conforming Churchman, Matthew Arnold.

In attempting to treat of the lessons of this notable book, I am embarrassed, I confess, because I do not know how many of those whom I address are familiar with the work in question. To render myself intelligible to the larger number who are not, as well as to refresh the memory of those who have read it, let me undertake a brief abstract of the book, so far at least, as it treats of the spiritual history of Robert and Catherine Elsmere, and, so far as possible, also, in the language of the author.

Robert Elsmere's father, the rector of Murewell in the county of Surrey, dies early, and leaves his widow and son to face the world together. The mother, Mrs. Elsmere, was an Irishwoman by birth, with irregular Irish ways, but with one of the warmest hearts that ever animated mortal clay, and a nature as responsive as it was vigorous. Life was delightful to her; action, energy, influence were delightful to her. Her life was a perpetual giving-forth. Daily companionship with such a mother could not but impress itself deeply upon the disposition and character of the promising boy, in whom many of these maternal traits reappeared. The time finally came when Robert was to

leave the loving care of his mother and enter Oxford University. Here, with his mother's delight in living, his athletic instincts, and the freshness of a young and roving curiosity, he makes many mistakes, alike in friends and pursuits; but his love for his mother, his strong literary tastes, and his own strength of will and tyrannous conscience, kept his charm and pliancy from degenerating into weakness, and made it not only delightful but profitable to love him.

His future is most notably affected by two friends, both older than himself, and tutors at Oxford. The first of these, Edward Langham, was Robert's tutor, and as Mrs. Ward has portrayed him, is one of the most unique and delicately drawn characters in the whole range of modern fiction. It has been inferred, with great probability, that Langham was suggested by the French critic and dreamer Amiel, whose melancholy yet fascinating journal Mrs. Ward translated and edited a year or two since. Edward Langham is described as of exceptional personal beauty, and eminent as a scholar, but a profoundly melancholy, irresolute, cold and critical man; at once thorough-going sceptic and thorough-going idealist; ever haunted by the vision of the great things which he had not the courage or the self-confidence to attempt. Such characters as Langham are to be found, doubtless, in the bookish centres of crowded, conventional Europe, but are more rarely met with in our free, hopeful and intensely practical New World civilization.

The other friend whom young Elsmere is influenced by, is one with whom he comes in contact less frequently, but always to be seized and penetrated and filled with a fervour and an admiration which he was too young to analyze, but which was to be none the less potent and lasting. This was Henry Grey, in whom the critics have easily recognized a pen portrait of the author's friend, Thomas Hill Green, late Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, to whom, indeed, with another friend, whose characteristics, it is said, in part reappear in Catherine, her book is dedicated. Henry Grey is described as of noble presence, with massive head and sunken eyes, and Midland accent, strongly suggesting the rude strength and simplicity of a peasant

ancestry, and a wondrous fire and spiritual beauty flashing through it all, which overflowed of necessity into the barrener lives of those around him, kindling and enriching. It was known that after having prepared himself for the Christian ministry, he had remained a layman, because it had become impossible for him to accept the miraculous element in the prevailing creeds. The whole basis of Grey's thought was ardently idealist and Hegelian. He had broken with the popular Christianity, but for him, God, consciousness, and duty were the only realities.

A very different type of free thought this from that embodied in the melancholy cynic, Langham, and one, we may believe, more congenial to young Elsmere's fervent and believing temper.

To a young man of Elsmere's temperament it was the most natural thing in the world to rally to the Established Church. Towards the close of his undergraduate course he confides to Henry Grey that he has made up his mind to take orders. "You feel no difficulties in the way?" "No," says Robert eagerly; "I never had any. Perhaps," he adds, with sudden humility, "it is because I have never gone deep enough. It has all seemed so plain." "You will probably be very happy in the life," returns Grey, and then adds, with what seems like a fine touch of irony, "the church needs men of your sort." Langham is less easily reconciled to his decision, but remarks, characteristically, "Well, one may as well preach a respectable mythology as anything," a remark which Elsmere's young ardour resents, and a discussion on Christianity ensues, in which it soon appears that while he had got hold of all the stock apologetic arguments, the intellect had precious little to do with Elsmere's Christianity. It was something far different from intellectual conviction; it was moral passion, love, feeling—in short, mysticism. "He imagines that he has satisfied his intellect," says the most melancholy of sceptics, "and he has never so much as exerted it." His mother, too, is none too well pleased with his choice, but loyally aids him in it. Robert now begins his four years' course in divinity. His antecedents and temperament save him from becoming a High Churchman, but to the English Church, as a national

institution for the promotion of God's work on earth, no one could have been more deeply loyal, and none coming close to him could have mistaken the fervour and passion of his Christian feeling. He throws himself into his theological studies and charitable work—coffee palaces, popular lectures, and visits among the poor—with characteristic vigour. He preaches occasionally, and has visions of a self-denying ministry in the poorer districts of London, when a sudden break-down in health changes all his plans, and compels him to accept the timely offer of a relative to the Surrey living which his father had occupied before him. Before entering upon his new duties, however, he visits connections in Westmoreland, in quest of health, and here meets and wooes the heroine of the story, Catherine Leyburn.

One of the most admirable gifts of Mrs. Ward is her ability to paint a woman. All her types of womanhood—unlettered peasants, fussy and meddling vicars' wives, the butterflies of fashionable society, and the nobler representatives of culture and character, are drawn with a fine touch, and move and breathe like real personages and not as mere lay figures.

In Catherine Leyburn we have portrayed, with rare skill and charm, the descendant of a vigorous, if rude, yeomanry, and the eldest daughter of a scholarly, but narrow mystic and solitary, who, in later life, shocked by the prevailing rationalism of the English Universities, fled from them to bury himself and his family in his boyhood's home in the North country. The austere and melancholy recluse has brought up his eldest daughter, in whom he recognizes a temper akin to his own, in the strict, ascetic spirit of his own belief, and, dying, has solemnly committed to her care the amiable but weak mother and two younger sisters. The sacredness of this responsibility ever presses upon the devoted, heroic spirit of Catherine, and lends a still more sombre aspect to her nature. She is described as of rare personal beauty, although of a severe type, and of singular purity and moral force. In her, indeed, the author has incarnated the Puritan ideal of goodness and piety, in contrast with the æsthetic element as it appears in her gifted sister, Rose. Catherine's nature is austerely devout and

self-renouncing. She holds rigidly, unquestioningly, to the narrow creed of her fathers. She has all the Puritan's distrust of personal joy. "Man is not here to be happy," she says, and devoutly believes with the ancient mystic, that "man approacheth so much the nearer to God the farther he departeth from all earthly comfort."

Her sister Rose, on the other hand, with her remarkable musical attainments, is an embodiment of the æsthetic nature. Impulsive, imaginative, self-indulgent, wayward and capricious—she learns only through the stern discipline of trial and suffering that self-control and self-sacrifice which are Catherine's by her very constitution.

Upon Robert Elsmere Catherine exerts a singular and lasting fascination. Her beauty, her purity, her moral fervour, her life devoted to works of duty at home and of charity among the lowly poor, win him to an admiring affection, which, in spite of their great differences of nature, —she so self-restrained, self-repressed, so distrustful of all personal happiness, and he so full of life and joy,—never departs from him until the breath departs from his body,—and then is glorified beyond the stars.

I may not dwell upon the scenes of passion and trial in which the writer so graphically describes the conflict in Catherine between her loyalty to her father's solemn charge and the new and rising sentiment in her breast. The struggle ends with lifting clouds and sunny skies, and Robert and Catherine—united for life and eternity—depart together for the Surrey village of twelve hundred souls and the quaint old rectory, which for little more than a year is to be their home, and the scene of spiritual wrestlings, sufferings and trials, such as are not often visited upon our frail humanity, but which, as depicted on these eloquent pages, make duty real, truth supreme, and obedience easier to thousands of earnest men and women of our day, who read and ponder and take new heart again.

Installed in his new charge, Robert Elsmere throws himself with characteristic ardour into the duties of his vocation. Besides his pulpit and pastoral work, he seeks to ameliorate the moral and social condition of his humble parishioners. He visits them in their homes to comfort and inspire; he

founds an institute for the young people; he instructs them in natural science; attracts them by his remarkable gift of telling stories, and encourages a Sunday cricket club and other healthful recreations. In all his wife is his loyal helpmeet. It is a time of intense activity and unalloyed happiness for them both. Meanwhile, his studies are not neglected. His own literary instincts and Grey's parting advice to him to keep up with books, lead him to set aside a portion of each day for reading. He also begins the composition of an historical work on the fall of the Roman Empire and the introduction of Christianity. In his researches he is greatly aided by the gracious permission of Squire Wendover, the owner of the splendid Murewell Hall, in the parish, to freely use, during his absence, the famous Murewell Library. This great collection of books not only contains priceless treasures of ancient lore, but is also rich in modern works, especially in those German critical, historical, and philosophical treatises which have so profoundly affected recent thought.

His religious thinking is mightily influenced, too, by the comparative method of his favourite scientific pursuits. The philosophy of evolution is beginning to tell on him. Darwin's books are a revelation. But his religious feeling soon recovers its balance. "There is no need for panic," he says. "After all, we are not saved by the gospel according to Darwin. Not every one need be troubled with new facts. I should never press them on my wife, for instance. It would distress her. She holds the old ideas as she was taught them, and why should I, above all, distress her?"

Thus, day by day, the old traditional bases of the orthodox faith within him are being undermined by more thorough investigation, by new knowledge and larger conceptions of the world-order and Providences of history. Over the young idealist soul there sweeps a dry, destroying whirlwind of thought. Elements gathered from all sources, from his own historical work, from the Squire's books, from the secret half-conscious recesses of the mind, enter into it. "I have neither learning nor experience enough—yet," he says to himself. "Of course, it can be met, but I must grow, must think, first."

To the silent disintegrating forces contained in the library of Squire Wendover is now added the still more potent influence of that great scholar himself. Wendover is one of the ablest and most radical intellects in Europe. His scholarship is profound, his acquaintance with the great men of all countries extensive, his conversation, in spite of a certain harsh and rasping tone, is brilliant and fascinating. Squire Wendover believes that the world, so far as it has lived to any purpose, has lived *by the head*. To Robert he represents that absorbing and overgrown life of the intellect which blights the heart and chills the senses. He is at once repelled and attracted by the Squire. To one, like himself, filled with the hunger to *know*, the company of the great scholar proves invaluable, since he is a storehouse of information on the very topics Elsmere is studying. The Squire, for his part, enjoys Elsmere's company as a relaxation from his solitary literary labours. The two men take long walks together, on which they review in conversation the great topics of religious controversy, the Pentateuch, the Gospels, Tradition, the Fathers, Protestantism and the Broad Church movement. Little by little, Elsmere feels his old foundations of faith crumbling before the arguments and facts of the Squire.

His wife begins to have misgivings as she sees him in the constant company of a man whom she looks upon with dislike, as an infidel and apostate. By chance she opens one day one of the new books her husband is reading, and recoils with horror from its sceptical utterances. In the meantime, Elsmere's parish work goes on even better than before. Never have his sermons evinced such passionate earnestness and yearning faith. In the midst of all his thoughts and perplexities of mind he sometimes has reassuring visions and moments of ecstatic belief which sweep away all the misgivings of his intellect. In his conversations with Wendover, he still passionately insists that he is a Christian, and believes in the incarnation, resurrection, miracles and revelation. But a great debate between them sweeps away his last remaining bulwarks of faith, and becomes the turning point of his life. "That night, in the stillness of his room, there rose weirdly before him a whole new mental picture,

effacing, pushing out innumerable older images of thought. It was the image of a purely human Christ, a purely human, explicable, yet always wonderful, Christianity. He gazed upon it fascinated, the wailing underneath checked awhile by the strange beauty and order of the emerging spectacle. Only a little while. Then, with a groan, Elsmere looked up, his eyes worn, his lips white and set. 'I must face it—I must face it through. God help me.'" And quick upon his new-made resolution comes the thought of his wife. "But she shall know nothing of it—yet." The next three months were the bitterest in Robert Elsmere's life, marked by an anguished mental struggle and a consciousness of painful separation from the soul nearest his own. Again and again, his religious antecedents, his love for his wife, and the rich emotional life within him, sweep him back into the old ways of belief. But the new activities of mind and conscience within him, the fresh knowledge he is daily gaining, and his honourable loyalty to truth, carry him forward again, until, at last, the goal of his new faith is reached, and he goes through a desperate catechism of himself.

"*Do I believe in God?* Surely, surely! Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!

"*Do I believe in Christ?* Yes! in the teacher, the martyr, the symbol to us Westerns of all things heavenly and abiding, the image and pledge of the invisible life of the spirit—with all my soul and all my mind!

"*But in the Man-God;* the Word from Eternity, in a wonder-working Christ, in a risen and ascended Jesus, in the living Intercessor and Mediator for the lives of his doomed brethren?"

He waited, conscious that it was the crisis of his history, and there rose in him, as though articulated one by one by an audible voice, words of irrevocable meaning. "Every human soul in which the voice of God makes itself felt, enjoys equally with Jesus of Nazareth the divine sonship, and 'miracles do not happen!'" *

It was done. But now there came the reminder to cast him down in the midst of his spiritual victory—"Oh, God, my wife, my work!" It was all plain to him. He must

* Matthew Arnold.

give up his living and his orders. In other men it might still be possible to live on in evasive and cowardly conformity. To him it was simply impossible. "Conviction," as Henry Grey had said, "is the conscience of the mind;" and he was no more capable of trifling with his intellectual than with his moral conscience. Squire Wendover, indeed, scoffs at his scruples. "Will he be the first parson in the Church of England who looks after the poor and holds his tongue?" he asks. But Henry Grey, in that supreme moment, proves a better and more sympathetic counsellor, and kindles anew the drooping life within him.

"I know," Grey says, "it is hard, it is bitter; I have gone through it. But take heart,—it is the education of God; He is in criticism, in science, in doubt, so long as the doubt is a pure and honest doubt—as yours is. *Reason* is God's like the rest! Trust it,—trust Him. All things change,—creeds and philosophies and outward systems,—but God remains!"

But now comes the terrible trial of breaking the truth to his wife. Catherine, for some time past, has observed her husband's spiritual eclipse and realized that the atmosphere of their home life was changing. But never had she the smallest doubt as to the issue of the crisis, or that her husband would return again in faith to his Redeemer's feet. And now, the woman who had said in reply to a question from her sister Rose, "I could never have married a man that did not believe in Christ. To me it would not be marriage," must hear from the wan lips of her idol the painful confession that he no longer believes in the God-man, the bodily resurrection, or the miracles. With infinite pity and tenderness, he tries to reassure and comfort her, even while he avows the great change that has taken place in him. "For six or seven months, Catherine,—really, for much longer, though I never knew it,—I have been fighting with doubt,—doubt of orthodox Christianity,—doubt of what the Church teaches; —of what I have to say and preach every Sunday. First it crept on me, I knew not how. Then the weight grew heavier, and I began to struggle with it. Many men, I suppose, in my position, would have trampled on their doubts, —would have regarded them as sin in themselves, would

have felt it their duty to ignore them as much as possible, trusting to time and God's help. I *could* not ignore them. The thought of questioning the most sacred beliefs that you and I"—and his voice faltered a moment—"held in common, was misery to me. On the other hand, I knew myself. I knew that I could no more go on living to any purpose, with a whole region of the mind shut up, as it were, barred away from the rest of me, than I could go on living with a secret between myself and you. I could not hold my faith by a mere tenure of tyranny and fear. Faith that is not free—that is not the faith of the whole creature, body, soul, and intellect—seemed to me a faith worthless both to God and man! . . . Help me, Catherine; help me to be an honest man—to follow conscience—to say and do the truth!"

But she, horror-struck, feels all the wild forces of condemnation and resistance rising in her—the world is turning around, her home is threatened, her soul and his and their child's are in mortal danger. Alas, for Catherine! She still belongs to a past generation to which all unbelief was sin. She could not understand the new and higher teaching of our age, that God holds no man responsible for the attainment of a correct belief, but only for an honest search after it. She had not had that complex training which had brought him so irresistibly to where he stood. She pleads with him piteously and passionately for her cherished faith. In awful agony of spirit she asks, at last: "So, to you, my father, when I saw the light on his face before he died, when I heard him cry, 'Master, I come,' was dying deceived, deluded!"

I may not linger on the pathetic and powerful scenes in which the author has described the soul-agony of these two intensely conscientious and loving people. Through all, though with bitter travail of spirit, Robert insists on his righteous purpose, and Catherine, the nobler, wifely nature in her rallying, follows him loyally and dutifully to their new home in London. So bravely, piteously their new life is born.

Though outwardly united, the two are yet not reconciled. Catherine never held her old views so strongly, intensely, as now that her faith is challenged. Never for an instant does she surrender the hope to lead her husband back again to

the cross of Christ. Meanwhile, she withdraws more and more from the mention of certain subjects, or anything that may lead to them; she will not talk with him on the topics most interesting to him; she ignores the philosophical book he is reading; she prays and thinks alone,—always for him, of him,—but still alone, and utterly miserable. Each day it becomes more apparent that the links that unite them are breaking one by one, and their relation to each other is altering. He, for his part, does not dare to insist, lest he rouse the latent antagonism, the fanatical possibilities of her religious nature.

Robert now determines to devote his life to the poor of East London, that vast chaotic aggregation of toiling, suffering humanity, on which the churches have as yet made so slight an impression.

At first he tries to work under a Broad-Church vicar, but finds his position false and unsatisfactory. His opinions are in the main identical with those of the Vicar, but the latter's policy of prudent silence and gradual expansion from within, to save the great "plant" of the establishment, leads him, as Robert holds, to endless contradictions and practical falsities of speech and action. His whole life is thus one long waste of power, simply for lack of an elementary frankness.

A kindly Providence one day brings Elsmere into contact with a talented, earnest young Unitarian minister of the radical school, named Murray Edwardes, who powerfully attracts him. Robert listens eagerly to him and his story of his East London ministry. He had never known much about the Unitarians, and had never felt much attracted towards them. Unitarianism of the old sort had always seemed to him the most illogical creed that exists. The common thinness and aridity of the Unitarian temper had weighed with him, and certainly it had never been a gospel for the poor. But here in the person of Edwardes, the representative of modern Unitarianism, it was as though he saw something old and threadbare revivified. They talked long and earnestly, Edwardes describing his own work and the changes creeping over the modern Unitarian body. "You cannot work with the Church," said Edwardes; "it is

impossible. Come to us. There is no other opening like it in England just now for men of your way of thinking and mine." "I will," said Robert; "it is the opening I have been pining for. I will give you all I can, and bless you for the chance."

To Catherine this decision is a new source of bitterness. The Unitarians had always been a special aversion to her, and now her husband would soon be one of them, perhaps a Unitarian minister himself.

Robert Elsmere feels that his one chance of success lies in appealing to the upper class of working-men, mechanics, weavers, potters, etc. He accordingly founds among these a people's church, which he calls the New Brotherhood of Christ. Three floors of rooms in a great warehouse are brightly furnished, well-lit and warmed. There is a large hall, for Sunday and weekly lectures, concerts and entertainments, rooms for the boys' club, a library and reading-room, open to both sexes, a naturalist club and gymnasium. The Brotherhood has no creed, except the two mottoes which hang upon its walls:

"In Thee, O Eternal, have I put my trust."
"This do in Remembrance of Me."

It is Elsmere's mission, as he believes, *to reconceive the Christ* in his simple yet divine humanity. He tells his hearers: "God only draws closer, great men become greater, human life more wonderful, as miracle disappears." Contrasting the Jesus of history with the Jesus of the churches, he declares: "The life of Jesus is wrought ineffaceably into the higher civilization, the nobler conceptions of Europe," and he seeks to bring the character and life of this human Christ into real and cogent relations with the life of his hearers. It was out of such a frame of mind as this of Robert Elsmere's that Matthew Arnold wrote:

"Christ," some one says, "was human as we are."
"Well, then," thou answerest, "who for Christ can care?"
So answerest thou; but why not rather say,
"Was Christ a man like us? O let us see
"If we then, too, can be such men as he."

With this ideal before him, Robert Elsmere gives himself, heart, soul and body, to the work of helping, inspiring and saving his humble brethren, in the spirit of a re-born Christianity—a Christianity freed from the miracles, superstitions and thraldoms of the past, and centred in the humanity, love and hope of Jesus of Nazareth.

In this spirit of human love and self-sacrifice, while away on a brief vacation, he risks his life to save that of an old bath-house keeper, who has been carried away by the waves and is sinking for the last time when Robert throws himself into the water, swims out and brings him safely to shore. It is a noble deed, but the shock and chill, and subsequent exposure in wet garments, while trying to restore the half-drowned man, are too much for him, in his delicate state of health. A violent and gastric fever sets in; for days he is dangerously ill, and symptoms of a lung trouble are developed which is finally to cost him his life. Thus, day by day, he illustrates the gospel of Jesus, and gives his life a ransom for many. He saves others,—himself he cannot save. Mr. Gladstone, in his adverse review of the book, makes this noble and notable admission: "It is impossible to conceive a more religious life than the later life of Robert Elsmere, in his sense of the word religion. And that sense is far above the sense in which religion is held, or practically applied, by great multitudes of Christians."

In the spirit which possesses the New Brotherhood of Christ and its heroic and devoted founder, one may find the practical fulfilment of the beautiful prophecy and pledge which Matthew Arnold uttered in another of his sonnets entitled—

EAST LONDON.

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead,
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said—
"Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?"
"Bravely," said he, "for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, the living bread."

O human soul, as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee, if thou roam
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night,
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

Even Catherine's stern convictions cannot resist forever the constant marks of her husband's nobility and religious fervour. When she learns from a friend the story of a poor, crippled artisan, who, run down by a heavy dray, is tenderly carried by Robert to his miserable home to die, and with tears running down his cheeks, blesses Elsmere, who is watching over him as a mother might—"I cared about nothing, when you came—You've been God to me—I've seen him in you,"—when Catherine hears this, weeping and wrestling with her God, at last her heart relents. Her eyes are opened, and with piteous self-accusation she meets her husband—"You were right—I *would* not understand. And, in a sense, I shall never understand. I cannot change. My Lord is my Lord always—but he is yours, too. It is the spirit that quickeneth. I have dared to think that God had but one language—the one I knew. I have dared to condemn your faith as no faith. But oh! take me back into your life. Hold me there. I will learn to hear the two voices; the voice that speaks to me and the voice that speaks to you."

And now the saddest trial was over for these two—and reunited henceforth in tenderest love and duty. Thus, thus it ever is in our day. "'Unbelief,' says the orthodox preacher, 'is sin.' But lo! while he speaks, the saint in the unbeliever smiles down his argument, and suddenly in the rebel of yesterday, men see the rightful heir of to-morrow."

Elsmere works on with redoubled energy. A friend writes of him at this time: "His personal effect, the love that is felt for him, the passion and energy of the nature—never has our generation seen anything to equal it. But he is so ailing and fragile. There is the one cloud on a scene that fills me with increasing wonder and reverence." As for Catherine, he continues: "She, poor soul! is now always with him, comes down with him day after day, and works away. She no more believes in his *ideas*, I think, than she

ever did, but all her antagonism is gone. Her face often haunts me. It has changed lately; she is no longer a young woman, but so refined, so spiritual."

"Love, and her husband and the thousand subtle forces of a changing world had conquered. . . . She was not conscious of change, but change there was. She had, in fact, undergone that disassociation of the moral judgment from a special series of religious formulæ which is the crucial, the epoch-making fact of our day."

In the midst of all these dawning hopes and happy, if exhausting labours, Elsmere suddenly breaks down a second time, and little encouragement is held out for his recovery. His New Brotherhood is taken in charge by Murray Edwardes, who promises to give himself heart and soul to the work, and, with sad and ominous partings, he sets out with his faithful, but heart-broken wife for the milder clime of Algiers. There, as he lies fevered and weak, his wife makes one final attempt to bring him to accept the one-timed comfort and help—the Lamb of God sacrificed for him. But he, with tender caresses, says: "My weakness might yield—my true, best self, never. I know whom I have believed. Submit, my wife. Leave me in God's hands." With a quick burst of tears and inexpressible self-reproach, she yielded. They had had their last struggle, and once more he had conquered. The man who had lived so fast was not long in dying, and soon after fell asleep in the arms of his wife, whose love he hopes to meet beyond the tomb.

Catherine returns to London. Every Sunday morning sees her with her child, worshipping in the old ways. Every Sunday afternoon she sat motionless, veiled in black, in a corner of the hall of the Brotherhood of Christ. In the week she gave all her time and money to the various charities which he had started. Many were grateful to her, some loved her, but none understood her. She lived for one hope only, and the years passed all too slowly.

I have thus narrated, at disproportionate length, I fear, the spiritual history of the two central personages in Mrs. Ward's notable book. But I have not imparted a tithe even of the light and shade, the colour and animation, the richness of incident, the subtle characterisation, the passion and

pathos of the work. To appreciate these, it must be studied. It is, indeed, a sad book, in some respects, and one could wish that its hero might have lived to longer enjoy his new-gained freedom and faith. But the story is true to the facts of life, if not in conformity with our desires. Human life is sad often in proportion to its earnestness and consecration. It is because of such martyrs to truth and humanity, such heroes of the spirit as Robert Elsmere, that free thought in religion becomes easy and popular to succeeding generations, and that we are able to enjoy in peace the liberty of conscience which they have made possible. The causes for the remarkable popularity of "Robert Elsmere" are not difficult to find. Aside from its intrinsic power as a work of fiction, it reflects as no other work of recent times the spiritual experiences of many thoughtful persons at the present day. As one has remarked, "Robert Elsmere" is representative of the modern mind, of its doubts and convictions and hopes; it is the type of a generation universally touched with doubt, yet as sensitive to the need of faith as any that have gone before it. Numbers of thinking men and women of our day have come to see how unfounded are the claims of the Christian Church to divine right and infallible authority. They realize that historical Christianity rests on human testimony, and that no valid testimony has ever been produced by the church to sustain the huge edifice of dogma and rite which it seeks to impose on the mind of man. In the clear light of scientific knowledge and the critical reason, the myths and miracles of the past are seen to be crude products of the imagination and the feelings, which grew luxuriantly in the infancy of the race, and far outran the judgment and reason. Hence such persons declare with the Apostle: "When I was a child I thought as a child, but now that I have become a man I would put away childish things." Biblical wonder-stories, childish philosophies of the universe, puerile conceptions of God or human duty or heavenly hope, no longer satisfy the enlightened minds of our day. As a natural consequence, we see multitudes of the most thoughtful people, both in and out of the churches, doubting, questioning, and seeking to find a new and more enduring basis for their faith; articles

of belief, simple, rational and spiritual, which shall satisfy their reason and conscience as well as their heart.

Mrs. Ward has not advanced any new arguments against orthodoxy, but she has popularised these arguments; she has put them in the hands of the people. Where one person reads Hume, Rénan, Strauss, Theodore Parker, Spencer, or even Robert Ingersoll, a hundred read "Robert Elsmere." The majority of the good people of the churches, and especially women, would as soon pick up a live coal as one of these radical books. But Mrs. Ward presents these arguments in a popular form, with romantic features that attract attention and insure a large audience. As Mrs. Julia Ward Howe remarks, "Robert Elsmere" is as "epoch-making" in its particular field as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was in furthering the anti-slavery sentiment.

The clergy seem strangely unconscious of this condition of things. Entangled in their ecclesiastical establishments they cannot free their minds sufficiently from the external and mechanical functions of their office to enable them to look with a prophet's vision upon the signs of the times as they appear on the spiritual horizon of the modern world. They glorify the material increase of the Christian Church, which having inherited the ecclesiastical "plant" and impetus of former and believing ages, throws up ever new accretions of worship and service. To their eyes it seems destined always to possess the future as it has swayed the past. But as Robert Elsmere so strikingly affirms, "The decisive events of the world take place in the intellect." When belief in church or dogma or rite is dying, then the establishment is doomed also. Never was ancient paganism so rich, influential, confident; never were the temple services more splendidly conducted, or the priesthood more powerful and arrogant, than when the worship of Zeus and Apollo and Minerva was tottering to its fall, undermined at every point by the unbelief of the age, and overthrown at last by the power of a superior spiritual principle incarnated in the gospel of Jesus. And now, in turn, dogmatic Christianity is hastening to its fall, to be superseded in turn by a new world-order, a new philosophy of God and duty and immortality, a new, or at all events, a transformed church, based on freedom,

reason, righteousness and love;—the old, eternal principles of morality and religion, but framed in doctrines and rites and symbols more intelligible to the mind and heart of present and coming generations.

"Where you see ruin and sin," says Elsmere, "I see only the urgent process of divine education, God's steady, ineluctable command to put away childish things, the pressure of his spirit on ours towards new ways of worship and new forms of love."

Note, too, the admirable moral teaching of the book on the subject of an honest avowal of opinion. When Elsmere can no longer believe, he no longer pretends to believe. In the midst of the evasion, conformity and double dealing, which sometimes confronts us among the more intelligent clergy, how refreshing it is to hear this gospel of sincerity so unswervingly set forth—set forth as if it were the most natural and inevitable thing for a noble nature, as indeed it should be. Whatever else in his change may have caused him to hesitate and debate, this duty of a full and fearless avowal of his new belief, and a surrender of its emoluments Elsmere never questioned. Not all ministers, alas! are as frank and fearless as this. Some years ago, in a celebrated church trial in a western city a certain clergyman was asked if he ever knew any of the clergy to object to the baptismal service in the ritual of his church. "I have known some clergymen," was his facetious reply, "who, when they came in the service to the passage under discussion, were seized with a violent fit of coughing, and did not recover therefrom till they were quite beyond the objectionable words." Imagine Robert Elsmere indulging in such tricks to evade the protest of his reason and conscience!

Therefore, I say this straightforward honesty which is inculcated is one of the best features in the book, and a needed corrective to acquiescent and timid spirits both in the pulpit and in the pews.

Consider, too, the great significance that lies in the fact that a woman has written this powerful protest against the established church and creed. For if Catherine Elsmere represents one type of womanly faith, Mrs. Ward represents another, and the stronger and nobler of the two. Catherine

was the victim of her ancestry and her defective training in the religious life. In this respect, the book is a powerful plea for woman's equal education with man, and the necessity for husband and wife to keep pace with each other in the intellectual as well as the moral life.

But Mrs. Ward is another indication that woman, as well as man, is breaking away from the thraldom of the old creeds and conventionalities, and will be no longer satisfied with a merely sentimental Christianity. Let the churches take warning—when woman grows disaffected and departs, the "mene, mene, tekel" is written upon their walls, and their overthrow or transformation is inevitable.

Finally, it will be permitted me, I trust, as a Unitarian minister, to allude to the connection of Robert Elsmere with our religious fellowship, as it is described in this book. Robert Elsmere does not, indeed, unite with the Unitarian body during his brief ministry in Elgood Street. But he finds it, in the most critical moment of his clerical career, the fellowship most congenial to him, the only door open to him in all England where he may enter and speak and labour according to his advanced convictions. With Mrs. Ward's criticism of the older school of Unitarians as illogical, I am only in part agreed, for surely the form of religious philosophy which could produce such illustrious types of piety and enlightenment as W. E. Channing, A. P. Peabody, and the poet Longfellow cannot be altogether "thin and arid" in temper. But the new school—R. W. Emerson, Theodore Parker, James Martineau, William C. Gannett, M. J. Savage—the school which Murray Edwardes represents in the practical work of the ministry, this can be open to no such cavils.

We are not destined, I imagine, to be the ultimate church or doctrine. Ours is simply the voice of one crying in the wilderness and confusion of existing religious thought—"make straight the paths of the Lord." Ours is the only church to-day in America or England which bases itself distinctly on the religious capacities in the soul of man and not on traditions and dogmas; which uses the method of a free reason to arrive at truth, and which makes not opinions but personal character the arbiter of man's earthly welfare and heavenly hopes. To all free minds, as to Robert

Elsmere, the Unitarian Church opens wide its gates, and it recognizes in the authoress of this noble book one of the most powerful of its latter-day prophets and preachers, proclaiming the eternal gospel of trust in God and love for man, in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth.

NOTE.—The following sentences from a Leaflet by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong on "Robert Elsmere and Conformity" form a fitting note to the Rev. C. W. Wendté's Essay:—

"The theological and religious issues raised in *Robert Elsmere* have excited an extraordinary interest throughout the English-speaking world. The book, however, touches also a moral problem which, if I mistake not, constituted one of the most powerful motives in the mind of the authoress; and, delicate though it be, that problem can hardly be passed over by one who would weigh the teachings of this profoundly interesting romance.

"Having arrived, rightly or wrongly, at the theological conclusions indicated, did Elsmere act well or ill in quitting the Church of England?

"To him, as we know, such seemed to be the only course open to an honest man. Yet we also know that many justly loved and honoured have, in like case, elected to retain their orders and continue their ministrations within the walls of the Establishment. Many an earnest and pious man says to himself that he does more good by remaining where he is than he could hope to do if he abandoned his position. Elsmere, at any rate, found means of doing good outside the Established Church. But even if a man had a right (which I deny) to balance results in deciding for or against absolute truthfulness, I must still deem the Broad Church decision wrong. What the world needs most of all to-day is undimmed sincerity of life and word in the men who set themselves to be its teachers. Each professor of Christianity who even seems to fail in that, thereby imperils the survival of Christianity, and undermines the hold of religion on the mind and conscience of his time. Each

man who, for truth's sake, has made the great renunciation, has redoubled the force of his own personality by knitting more firmly together the strands of character, and, though doubtless reducing his influence to narrower, or at any rate obscurer channels, has infused into that influence an intensity and an enduring vitality which nothing else can give. From my own knowledge, I can bear witness to the mighty call towards fidelity to truth and principle, in moments of bewildered conscience, which a son may derive from the sacred memory of a father's abnegation.

"I am persuaded then that, while the reformation of theological opinion is of vast importance, it is of still greater moment to quicken the conscience of our time to the duty of the most absolute truthfulness in every religious utterance.

Fifty Years Since Channing.

AT the hour of sunset, but with his face turned to the east, as it had ever been in spiritual concerns, Dr. Channing died in Bennington, Vermont, Oct. 2, 1842. A few weeks before, still radiant with the energy of his last public utterance at Lenox, Mass., he had said that, given better health, he would "harden himself for a life of wider experience and more earnest struggle." Could the years of Hedge or Martineau or Furness have been granted him, he would have had ample opportunity to fill up the measure of that hope. Dr. Hedge's term would have brought him to 1865, when "the war-drums throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled," and slavery was destroyed, and Dr. Furness's attainment up to date would have brought him to the fall of the imperial charlatan at Sedan, and have found him, at the fall of the Bourbons in 1830, and as ever, "young for liberty," we may be sure. Thus, without longer life than that which has been latterly allowed our Unitarian saints and heroes, he would have seen all that has been most significant in the half-century since his death, and have been a part of all concerned with our denominational and national life.

We are less prone to exaggerate than to depreciate the times in which we live; but without any exaggeration, and even with so much depreciation as we generally bring to our contemporary history, the last half-century may well appear of such importance that, to find another period of its length crowded with such great political events, such changes in men's processes of thought, such applications of these pro-

cesses to social and industrial and religious life, we must go back to the last half of the eighteenth century, including the proximate causes and the catastrophe of the French Revolution, or to the first half of the sixteenth, in which Luther's voice and hammer rung, or to the half-century which began when Jesus of Nazareth was about thirty years old, and in the simplest fashion set about the most important business that has ever fallen to a fellow-labourer with God. What I should like to do would be to indicate very briefly the processes and the results which seem to me to justify this liberal appreciation of the last half-century, and then to ask, How has our Unitarian body and our Unitarian spirit been related to the great and moving time, and what is the comment of this time on the word that Channing spoke, the spirit of his life and work?

When Dr. Storrs lectured upon "Seven Years of European Change," Beecher told him (at least, so runs the tale) that for the first two hours he was afraid that it was going to be dull; but there has been little dulness in the actual course of European politics during the last half-century. 1848 was a year of revolutions. Hardly a throne was there in Europe that they did not shake. And when to that period of sanguine hopes succeeded the crime of 1851, and Napoleon the Little made himself president for ten years and a year later Emperor of France, and everywhere the event seemed but a mockery of the hope that had shot up like fire, it seemed that nothing had been gained. But as the half-century before had seen the gradual adoption of the principles of 1793, which for a time seemed buried deep with Robespierre and the other Terrorists in their dishonoured graves, so the principles of 1848, the principles of democracy and constitutional government, have gone on conquering and to conquer from that time to this. Already the French Republic has had a longer lease of life than any government in France since 1789; while in every larger State, except the incorrigible Russian's and the unspeakable Turk's, the people have assumed the conduct of their own affairs, and are shaping them to the ends of personal liberty and the public good. Meantime, as incidents or eddies of this stream of tendency, we have had such matters as the

Crimean War, the Franco-Austrian of 1859, by which Italy was unified, and the great wars of 1866 and 1870, by which Germany attained a like result, and the temporal dominion of the Papacy was shrivelled to the proportions of a brace of churches and as many palaces. Contemporaneously, the government of Great Britain has undergone a change through the extension of the suffrage, together with the intimate dependence of the government on the popular will, that makes it, in the judgment of every thoughtful publicist, a much more democratic and much less conservative government than our own, for all its royal dignities. Here are events and changes which, measured as they ought to be, by their dynamic energy rather than by their static bulk and weight, it would be much easier to undervalue than to overrate; but they must not detain us longer from those things which touch us more nearly,—those of our own national history.

When Channing died, the slavery question was just coming fairly into politics, to go out no more while slavery itself should last. For ten years the moral agitation had gone on under the lead of Garrison with ever strengthening force, and then had come upon a time of separation among friends, to which various elements contributed their parts,—the itch of certain abolitionists for political activity, the perfect willingness of the Clay Whigs to make the glories of hard cider less pre-eminent, the conviction of many that without political machinery slavery could not be destroyed, the fear of Orthodoxy that the slave might be redeemed and Christ not have the glory, the inability of Garrison to be "a man of one idea" when so many public wrongs were pressing on his private heart. Then came the Texan Annexation and the Mexican War for the acquirement of more slave territory; and in 1848 the Liberty Party Vote, now called Free Soil, was two hundred and ninety-two thousand, two hundred and thirty thousand more than it had been for Birney in 1844. But how unreal this numerical triumph was, and how largely it was the fruit of personal revenge, is shown by the fact that in 1852, when the infamous compromises of 1850 should have quadrupled the vote of 1848, it fell off to one hundred and fifty-six thousand. Surely, never in the course of history

did the proverb, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad," find apter illustration than in the eight succeeding years. It was the madness of the Slave Power, ever like the insatiable daughters of the vampire crying, "Give, give," that wrought for its destruction, when political anti-slavery, embodied in the Republican party, made good the saddest prophecies which Garrison had ever made by coming round to the position occupied by Daniel Webster in his great bad speech of March 7th, 1850. You will search in vain on the Republican platforms of 1856 and 1860 for any word of reprobation for the Fugitive Slave Law and the aggregate of iniquitous legislation of which it was a part. The party virtually pledged itself by this policy of silence to support that legislation, and to leave the District of Columbia, where Frémont had twice voted that it should be left, under the slave-owner's feet. But, thank heaven, it also pledged itself to resist slavery in Kansas and the Dred Scott Decision; and so much was enough, with the election of Lincoln, to make secession, threatened off and on for thirty years, a reality concrete as "blood and iron." To these henceforth the appeal, and then the words of Webster in the thirties, declaring the true character of the Union, after long germination in the darkness sprang up armed men; and then the abolitionism in the Republican party, but not of it, and in the North at large, which Garrison had educated by the sublime insistence of his impassioned moral purpose, welded the war-power of the government into an axe that hewed straight to the centre of that tree whose leaves had been for the disease and poisoning of our national life. Yet was it still uncertain, when Grant and Sherman had writ large the proclamation on which Lincoln had invoked the blessing of Almighty God, whether the triumphant party hated slavery or the negro more, seeing that it was proposed, and by a great party leader, James G. Blaine, to permit the South to exclude the negro from the suffrage on condition that he should not be counted in the basis of representation. Thanks to Charles Sumner, never an abolitionist in his construction of the Constitution, but always an abolitionist in his heart, the progress of this thing was stayed; and it speaks volumes for our political forgetfulness and for our growth in

grace that, when the same proposition was recently resuscitated as a cure-all for the practical disfranchisement of the negroes in the South, it was greeted with a chorus of malediction, as if the devil had engendered it, when it was in fact a child born of the legitimate marriage of Blaine's fertile genius with a great party's zeal for the perpetuation of its political power.

New occasions were to bring new duties, if they did not make the ancient good uncouth. It was no political Pharisee, no impracticable theorist, it was Abraham Lincoln, shrewdest of politicians, while greatest among statesmen and noblest among modern men, who, just after Richmond fell, pointed to a crowd of office-seekers that was swarming at his door, and said: "Look at that! Now we have conquered the Rebellion, but here you see something that may become more dangerous to this Republic than the Rebellion itself." May become? In its promise and its potency it was already that, as Charles Sumner possibly surmised when, April 30th, 1864, he introduced the first bill for the regulation of the civil service by competitive examinations and promotions on merit. Since then we have had many questions of great public interest tossed into the political arena,—reconstruction, honest money, revenue reform,—but we have had no other of such interest and importance as that which Sumner and Lincoln appreciated at its true value nearly thirty years ago. Good government has and can have no worse enemy than the spoils system of civil offices rewarding partisan activity. It demoralizes and corrupts the service, it makes men, born to be honest, idlers and knaves, it is the leverage by which the political bosses hoist their vile instruments into the seats of power, it drains off the strength of legislators and the Executive from their proper work. With what scornful laughter and what acrid sneers the partisans on either side have greeted the numerical feebleness and the moral earnestness of the champions of this unpopular reform! But, while they have been amusing themselves, the fire of the new anti-slavery has burned over a tract of 30,000 offices: so many have been rescued from the spoilmen's greedy hands; and now a House Committee has agreed upon a bill by which the heads of 61,000 fourth-

class postmasters shall be safe from the official guillotine, once they are appointed, so long as their duties are honestly and faithfully discharged. Were this bill, which is no River and Harbour or Chinese Exclusion Bill that it should recommend itself to the powers that be, merely a sign of that hypocrisy which is the homage which vice pays to virtue, the homage would not come amiss. But it is much more than this. It is a sign that there are men inside of politics as resolutely bent on the destruction of the spoils system as any who assail it from without; and, if their name is not yet legion, it will be that some day.

Declining for the present any question as to the relation of our Unitarian people to this political development of fifty years, let us consider what the scientific development has been in the same period. Any detailed account would occupy too much space; and, naturally, I shall place the emphasis upon those particulars which are most significant from a religious point of view. There are two of these which in their scientific value, do not fall much, if at all, below the discoveries of Copernicus and Newton, and have, as obviously as the former, and much more obviously than the latter, a distinct bearing on religious thought and feeling. I need hardly say that I refer to the doctrines of evolution and the conservation of energy. There were men before Agamemnon and evolutionists before Spencer and Darwin. As philosophers, they were as old as the splendid Greek anticipation of the modern mind. As men of science, the earliest were eighteenth-century men, arriving at definite conclusions only as the last years of the century turned all received ideas upside down. They were Lamarck and Treviranus, and subsequently Goethe and St. Hilaire, and then Robert Chambers, publishing two years after Channing's death the long anonymous "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation,"—vestiges which did not invite the steps of any careful student of the facts. It is too little understood or too wilfully ignored that Darwin's "Origin of Species by Natural Selection" was only a tremendous incident of a development of evolutionary thought, no formulation of the general doctrine, any more than Wallace's simultaneous statement of the doctrine of

natural selection. Spencer shares with no other the initiative of modern evolutionism as Darwin shares with Wallace the initiative of natural selection. As early as 1854, four years before Darwin and Wallace first published their results, he had argued for the development hypothesis as applicable to man as to all other animals as clearly as Darwin ever did; and in 1857 his Psychology clearly announced his general scheme of evolution,—little imagining what a magnificent double confirmation and illustration of it was then close at hand. Even more central to his general scheme was that law or principle of the conservation of energy which had, as it were, been fashioned for his use by Grove and Mayer and Faraday, to whom Tyndall and Thomson and Joule and many others have since brought abundant confirmation. Carrying along with it the indestructibility of matter and the persistence of force, it was the most philosophic, the most unifying, word that science had yet spoken to the intelligence and imagination of the world. Newton's great doctrine was of one all-pervading force, but here was a doctrine that made all forces one, each but the other with its vizor down, and so irresistibly led the mind to the persuasion of a force of forces at the heart of things.

Meantime the unity of the world has had a hundred minor illustrations. The same laws of development have been discovered in the elementary forms of vegetable and animal life. These separate aspects of the world have revealed to patient observation innumerable subtile intimacies and relationships. If the insect feeds upon the plant, the relation often is reversed. And well the insects pay the plants for all the kindness that they show. It is to those blithe go-betweens, the bees, that we owe the beauty of our gardens and the sweetness of our fields. To them flowers owe their scent and colour, yes, and their shapes and the arrangement of their parts, God in this way choosing the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, but only for a time. If it is less sure than it seemed formerly that God has made of one blood all nations of the earth, it is amply sure that he has made of like substance all the stars of heaven. This is the story which the spectroscope has told: Sirius sixty times bigger than our Sun, a hundred

million million miles away, and every second getting twenty miles further from us, yet not so big, nor so far, nor fleeting so fast, but that its secret has been caught, with that of many another star wandering upon the outmost verge of heaven, the *homoiousia* of an assembly of which seventy-five millions have been already catalogued by the astronomers,—had been ten years ago. Sixty years ago the minor planets numbered four; ten years ago there were two hundred and twenty on the roll; since then I have not kept the count. Sixty years ago, seventy thousand animals had sat for their pictures; ten years ago, three hundred and twenty thousand. Sir John Lubbock thinks that half has not been told, and that more than two million animal species have diversified the geologic periods with their variety of waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Nothing has been more significant of the fifty years since Channing died than the pushing back of that manifestation into an immemorial past. There was no church in Christendom to which in 1842 the suggestion was not abominable that man's arrival on the planet antedated the creation of the world according to the Biblical chronology. But now it would appear that even the Pyramids are older than Archbishop Usher's world, and they are but of yesterday in comparison with that earlier dawn when man first stood erect, his face toward heaven. We have "all the time there is," and there is much greater danger of allowing man too little than too much for his development. Wallace's conservative estimate is 500,000 years. Extremely interesting and pathetic are the indications of the anthropologist and archæologist as to what man was doing in that enormous period upon which human history is the thinnest superficial scale. Flat and unprofitable are the fossils of the earth compared with those imbedded in the language of the early world, with their histories of what men have thought about the world in which they found themselves engirt with wonder and surprise.

But it is man's recent history, that of the last few thousand years, that is the important matter. The shell-heaps and the kitchen-middens are nothing to "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome," nothing to the literature

which reflected these and the life and thought of the Semitic world.

Before Channing died, Niebuhr and Arnold had applied to Roman history a critical method, the extension of which to the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures has been one of the most striking incidents of the last half-century. And this period has almost exactly synchronized with studies of both the Old Testament and New which have been fruitful of the largest and most beautiful results. There is no real beginning in these things. Every past takes hold upon another more remote. Of the most radical revolutionists it can be said that other men laboured and they entered into their labours. Especially had De Wette, the translation of whose Introduction to the Old Testament was the *opus magnum* of Theodore Parker's scholarly performance, gone far in his anticipation of the higher criticism of a later time, not only in his disintegration of the Pentateuch and his assignment of Deuteronomy to the seventh century B.C., but in his suspicions of the Pastoral Epistles. But there was nothing in De Wette so germinal and so prophetic of the future course of criticism as Vatke's "Religion of the Old Testament," which, in virtue of one of those coincidences which history dearly loves, was published in 1835, the same year in which appeared Strauss's "Life of Jesus," the most important book its subject has inspired since the New Testament. As the oak is folded in the acorn's tiny cup, so all the studies and results of Graf and Kuenen and Reuss and Wellhausen were folded close in Vatke's fertile teaching that the legislation of the Pentateuch is not the work of Moses, nor an actual primitive rule from which the people basely fell away, but the ideal construction of a later time. Had not Vatke's book been handicapped with much Hegelian philosophy, it would have made a better run. Certain it is that he had no immediate successor. Ewald's "History of Israel" appeared in 1843, and it is Pfleiderer's opinion that that "didactic romance" retarded the healthy study of the Old Testament by a whole generation. It disintegrated the Pentateuch into several documents, but it made the Deuteronomist's the last; and of the development of the religious consciousness of Israel it had nothing to say. It was not till 1866 that

Vatke's doctrine found a public advocate in Graf, a pupil of Reuss, at Strasbourg, developing his master's thought which he (the master) had reached independently of Vatke, but had held back from publication, anxious, like Darwin, to answer the opposing critics in advance, and to that end to anticipate every possible objection. Even before Graf's publication Kuenen had come to doubt the priority of the priestly portions of the Pentateuch; and, when Graf's book appeared, he parted from it at the point where Graf distinguished between the priestly code and the priestly history, and assigned to the former a much earlier date than to the latter. That both the priestly code and history are subsequent to the prophetic books and histories was the heart of Kuenen's exposition in his "Religion of Israel," published in 1869–70. In 1878 Wellhausen's "History of Israel" recommended this doctrine to the German mind with so much cogency that it fairly swept the field, though leaving here and there some standard of inveterate prejudice to flaunt over a desperate few. That the first might be last, Reuss published his results, at length fully elaborated, in 1879 and 1881, dating his first intuition of the theory from 1834, a year before the prophecy of Vatke saw the light. It is not too much to say that this theory which assigns the extensive priestly code of the Pentateuch to the ninth century after Moses and the fifth century before Christ is to the Old Testament and to Hebrew history what the Copernican astronomy was to the sidereal universe. It gives it a new centre, and about that centre books and fragments which before went "wandering at their own sweet will" fall into harmonious order, rationally related to each other and to the central fact, and in their total manifestation furnishing another illustration of the principle of evolution, as true of history and religion as of astronomy or biology,—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn.

I have said that Vatke's book was published in the same year with Strauss's "Life of Jesus," 1835. Because Strauss's mythical theory has not prevailed to the extent which he anticipated, it has been too much the habit to disparage his entire performance. Especially do our Progressive Orthodox hold high their skirts as often as they pass this

way, and assure their gentle readers that there is no smirch of Strauss's method or of Baur's upon their garments. Nevertheless,

> "We sit here in the promised land
> Which flows with freedom's honey and milk;
> But 'twas they won it sword in hand,
> Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk."

Not in its entirety, but to no mean extent, the mythical theory of Strauss, which never attempted to impeach the historic actuality of Jesus, has been taken up into the subsequent criticism of the New Testament and made a vital part of it. Its most brilliant recent application has been that of our own Martineau, with whom it is an instrument that demolishes the Messiahship of Jesus, though leaving some of us, if I may dare to say so, unconvinced. But Strauss's negative achievement was his better part which cannot be taken away from him. He made impossible any scholarly belief in the New Testament miracles as supernatural transactions. He made ridiculous the naturalistic makeshift of Paulus, which made every miraculous story the perversion of some worthless actual event; as, for example, the devil in the wilderness was an agent of the Pharisees endeavouring to entrap Jesus, and the wine of Cana was a stealthy present made by Jesus to his friends. The conscious critic must have seen himself and blushed when Strauss's book appeared. The judgment of Pfleiderer upon Strauss, that he rescued criticism from the blind alley in which it had been wandering and by a thorough and consistent criticism cleared the way for a scientific method, is a judgment that will surely stand. For myself, I cannot think without emotion of what Strauss did for me in my divinity school-days. Thirty years ago this very time I was wrestling with him in the dark, and I did not let him go without his blessing. It was deliverance from the bondage of uncritical corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of reality and truth.

It seems almost impossible that Kuenen, in beginning with the *terra firma* of the prophets, and pushing out cautiously into the mysterious sea that moaned disconsolate on every side, should not have had in mind the method of Baur

in beginning with the Pauline Epistles of most undoubted genuineness, and working his way out from them into the *terra incognita* of the other books. Certain of Baur's particular results have been amended by his disciples, a more liberal allowance of Epistles being made to Paul and his doctrine that Mark was the last of the Synoptics to appear having been absolutely reversed. Unquestionably, moreover, he pushed too far the *tendency* of the New Testament writings to reflect the varying aspects of the controversy between the Judaizing Peter and the universalizing Paul. But, when every proper abatement has been made this *tendency* remains as central and interpretative to the New Testament as the tendency to priestly or prophetic interpretation is to the Old Testament, like that marshalling the different books in their right order and giving a splendour of dramatic interest to the whole body of literature which it never had before.

Strangely enough it was in 1835 that Baur published his work on the Pastoral Epistles proving their second-century anti-Gnostic character, so doing his part with Strauss and Vatke to make that year altogether the most memorable in the history of critical science. His criticism of the Fourth Gospel appeared in 1844, and it denied its Johannine authorship and its historic character. We have lately been assured by Dr. Lyman Abbott that the New Orthodoxy decided twenty-five years ago that this criticism was not sound, and that the matter ended there. Hence it would appear that the subsequent work of our own Dr. Ezra Abbot was a wasteful slaying of the slain, and that all the criticism of the Fourth Gospel, for or against its authenticity, has been useless all these years. So it does not appear to all, and notably to Dr. Emil Schürer, the little finger of whose scholarship is thicker than the Andoverian thigh. As he reads the riddle, the reaction from Baur's position, which was of a piece with the general reactionary temper midway of the century, reached its term just about twenty-five years ago, when a new tendency began, headed by the magnificent work of Keim,—a tendency which has been gathering force and volume from that day to this, and which has swept away everything of the Johannine authorship except a few

traditional elements of fact and phrase which may have derived their original impulse from the "beloved disciple." This is the "sifted sediments of the residuum" of that claim which Schleiermacher made for the Fourth Gospel as the work of an apostle and eye-witness, and as such always to be preferred to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

You will not forget that I am speaking of these critical matters as illustrations of the scientific development of the last fifty years. They are as much a part of it as the work of Agassiz and Darwin and Wallace. But what has been more remarkable, perhaps, during this period than any special method or result, whether in physics or biology or criticism or any particular field, has been the infusion of the scientific spirit into every form of thought. Science and metaphysics have not yet kissed each other, but in their hostile meetings they are continually changing swords. And metaphysics likes the feel of science's shorter weapon, and nothing will serve but that her own is made more and more after that fashion. Mr. Spencer aims at a philosophy which shall be what Theology once thought herself, *Scientia Scientiarum;* but the philosophers who cherish no such aim are thickening up their systems more and more with scientific facts. The metaphysicians feel themselves obliged to reckon with science as they go along. The old metaphysical contempt for the concrete things of science—"so much the worse for the facts!"—is falling into general disuse. Such "up in the air balloon-work" as the Nature-Philosophy of Hegel, such a beginning at the far-end to reach the meaning of the world, would be impossible to-day for any philosopher outside of a lunatic asylum. Nothing is more characteristic of our later philosophic thought than the amount of science which it holds in solution. Fifty years ago the dominant philosophy here in America at least was that of Locke. The Transcendentalists, with their idealistic and deductive methods, were a feeble folk. Long since, their doctrine, at first anathema to both Unitarians and Orthodox, became much more precious to the latter than to the former, in the hands of Hamilton dishonouring reason at the expense of intuition, in the hands of Mansell proclaiming the absolute imbecility of the human mind in

dealing with the ultimate realities. The old sensationalism had never served the supernaturalist better for making revelation the demand of intellectual despair. The argument was distinctly, "Seeing that you cannot have anything without a supernatural revelation, open your mouth and shut your eyes and swallow that awhole." The trouble was, this *argumentum ad terrorem* encountered minds that could not be *scared* into believing anything, much less that which was obviously irrational or immoral. Among these was the younger Mill, in whom sensationalism reached its last refinement, some have thought at the expense of its essential character. A hundred repetitions cannot stale the quality of the splendid scorn with which he repudiated Mansell's doctrine of religiously accepting as if they were true conceptions which are revolting to our intelligence and moral sense. But who of us can forget the joy of coming on it unforwarned, and how our hearts leaped up to meet the generous challenge as we read, "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that word to my fellow-creatures, and, if such a being can send me to hell for not so calling him, then to hell I will go"? That moral certainty commended Mill to many whom his fundamental scepticism might otherwise have repelled. Two and two might not be four everywhere and always, but only good was good forever in all worlds. It was Herbert Spencer's unspeakable misfortune to come immediately after Hamilton and Mansell in the line of philosophical evolution, and to make their philosophic ignorance the basis of his theory of knowledge. Hence his "Unknowable Absolute," which should have been a pure negation according to their doctrine of the "Unconditioned," but which for him, though unknown, was well known, with such predicates as infinity and eternity, and manifesting its energy (another predicate) in all the marvellous variety of the natural and human world. With Hamilton and Mansell he insisted on the unthinkable, and consequently unknowable, character of all the primary concepts of both science and religion. In this common ignorance was their reconciliation. If Science could call Religion an Agnostic, Religion could say, "You're another." And it is this aspect of Spencer's philosophy which relieves

it of all those dreadful consequences with which it has been charged. If so much scientific knowledge, in despite of fundamental ignorance, why not as much religious knowledge? That "an unmanifested Infinite could never be found out" is surely the last thing that should trouble men who are living, as Martineau has said, in a universe that is "full of visions and of voices." I have spoken of the shortness of men's political memories, their theological memories are quite as short. For all the othodox, who are so eloquent in their assault upon the agnosticism of our time, seem to have quite forgotten that Hamilton and Mansell were agnostics before Spencer, and that their agnosticism was hailed by Orthodoxy generally with "tumult of acclaim" because it seemed to mean a miraculous revelation or no God and no religion. It was Hamilton and Mansell, orthodox of the orthodox, who raised the Frankenstein, which Spencer fondly hoped that he could tame and to which so many now are crying, "Down!" while still he does not disappear.

Though Schopenhauer was born in 1788 (Feb. 22), and though his first publication was in 1813, and though now the bibliography of his life and writings counts its titles by hundreds, Channing had been dead ten years and more before this pessimist philosopher, hungry for recognition as the beasts that seek their meat from God, saw the beginnings of his fame. Many and often quite incongruous have been the elements that have swelled its rising flood,— a magic style, conservative reaction, the failure of the Hegelian bank to redeem its splendid promises, the despair of the democracy which he hated cordially, the dregs of Paul's theology, smatterings of Buddhism in sympathy with the conscious hell of men's unsatisfied desires, the surfeit of the over-fed and *ennui* of the pampered darlings of society, here an agony of personal experience and there an itching for some novel fad. Without ever having been the main current of philosophy, the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Hartmann has been at once the inspiration and the report of widespread sentiments and opinions. They have appeared in various forms of art,—painting that is contemptuous of beauty, and is only happy when it makes us sick or sad; fiction that, when Renan pleads for a flower on these

manure heaps," declines to make the incongruous concession. Doubtless there is sympathy with human misery in these developments, but there is also evidence that the glut of luxury has no more abiding satisfaction in it for the human heart than the enforced denials of the poor.

Meantime, in Germany there have been retreats on Kant and Hegel, and the new Kantians and Hegelians in England and America have mustered many earnest spirits,—Wallace and Green, the Cairds, and Seth and Flint and our own Everett and Royce; those sitting most loosely to the tradition riding down the choicest game. There is all the difference in the world between the man who finds himself in Kant or Hegel, and who is "to his native centre fast" for all their mighty stress, and the man who makes himself the merest echo of their echoes of the Eternal Word. For those who have conceived that in the new renderings of Kant and Hegel an ultimate philosophy has been attained, it must be dreadfully discouraging for one of the most promising of their set to turn and rend them as does Professor Andrew Seth in his "Hegelianism and Personality," insisting that these two are mutually contradictory terms; that Hegelianism is logically destructive of personality in both God and man. But, when we consider that the personal illustration of this contradiction offered by Professor Seth is Thomas Hill Green, in whom so many have found the largest ethical and religious help and inspiration, we are again reminded that what men's philosophical ideas mean for them cannot be measured by their logical significance. And when the same system of philosophy means everything for Caird and nothing for Feuerbach, everything for Martineau and nothing for Mansell, we are tempted to believe that, after all, the difference is much more in the man than in the system, and that for the man born for religion the most unpromising system will rise to his heart's level, while for another the most promising will sink to meet the stature of his stunted soul.

It is an interesting circumstance in the life of Thomas Hill Green that he showed a steadily increasing interest in the system of Lotze. Other facts with this have been thought to indicate that he had begun to share in Andrew Seth's

distrust of Hegel's logical results. It is hardly time for Lotze to be much in England; for the proverb is that, when systems die in Germany, their ghosts go to Oxford. Not all of them, a certain quota being generally detailed for cisatlantic walks. Let us hope that in the case of Lotze we shall not be obliged to wait so long; that what is now the satisfaction and delight and peace and comfort of a few persons may be all of this to many. For though in philosophy, as in religion, "all life is development, and all knowledge is in part," it cannot but appear to many that Lotze, pouncing upon his own wherever he found it, in Leibnitz, in Hegel, in Schelling, did fuller justice than any who had been before him at once to the particular and the universal, the real and the ideal, by showing, in Prof. Upton's careful phrase, "that the Eternal Thought and Will, which differentiates itself in infinite variety in psychical monads of nature and in the souls of men ever remains in vital union with each and every individual, and thus interrelates and unifies the whole." Here is a pantheistic theism which, while preserving all that the most thorough-going Pantheism could of vital relationship between man and God, does not so merge us in his being that we have no life in ourselves, whether for worship of another than ourselves or for responsible devotion to ideal ends of truth and righteousness. And here, as nowhere else, is that taking up of science into metaphysics, and that preference of life's actual fulness to abstract formulæ, which are getting to be more and more the habit and the charm of philosophic thought.

In my divinity school-days one of the boys of blessed memory, reading his Hebrew patiently from right to left, when he got to the end of the line turned sharp round and began to read the next line from left to right. I propose to follow his example, and, in considering what the relation of the Unitarian body has been to the half-century of philosophical and scientific thought and political change which I have meagrely set forth, though it has taken long, go back upon the line of my advance, taking first the philosophical, next the critical, then the scientific, in the narrower sense, and lastly the political and social aspects of the long and crowded way.

When Theodore Parker preached his epoch-making sermon in South Boston, May 19th, 1841, he was not by any means alone in his adhesion to the Transcendental school,—well named, as teaching that our highest and best knowledge transcends experience. Of the same school were Emerson and Hedge and Clarke and Francis and Ripley and Bartol and Cranch, with others of more modest fame, to whom were added in a few years a group of younger men, to think of one of whom is always to bring pleasantly to mind the whole noble company, Johnson and Longfellow and Higginson and Weiss and Frothingham and Wasson. When Parker wrote in 1839, "There are now two parties among Unitarians," and declared that Channing was the real head of the progressive party, he probably was not thinking of Channing's philosophical position, but of his confidence in reason and human nature, of his deprecation of "a swollen way of talking about Christ," of his regret that "a Unitarian Orthodoxy" had already crystallized. But I have sometimes thought that Channing was the better Transcendentalist of the two, he by the natural bent of his mind, Parker by accident and conscious resolution. To read Parker's writings is always to be glad when he leaves his metaphysics, "as Joseph his coat in the hands of the harlot," and flees to those facts of experience among which he was as one at home. Such as it was, his Transcendentalism was his own, and his own concreteness marked its difference from that of the critical and speculative Transcendentalists of Germany. His philosophical debt was not to Kant, whose God and Immortality were only hypothetical conveniences for the working of his Moral Law, but to the mystical Jacobi, the least critical of the intuitive school. Jacobi stood for the immediate knowledge of God, Immortality, and the Moral Law; and Parker took the same position, most fortunate for the work he had to do, putting, as it were, a private supernatural revelation at his command, and insuring a like privilege to all who should believe on him. But his philosophical thinking was merely the explanation of his own inescapable religiousness, not by any means the cause of it; and, spiritual democrat that he was, he was bound to predicate the certainties of his own heart of all mankind.

Those certainties of immediate intuition were a splendid outfit for the preachers of a new departure in religion. They made it easy to give up the public supernatural revelation. I know that it was so with me. It was incomparably harder to give up those certainties of immediate knowledge for the patient inferences of scientific thought. That was a real wrench, the remembered pain of which I have in many a brother's side. If only we could have held fast conscientiously to those certainties of immediate intuition, it looks as if we might have swept the field. But it was not so to be. We must go forth like the fabled patriarch, not knowing whither;, and we have come at length into a large place.

Doubtless there were those among us who, without any intervention of the intuitive method, passed from the sensationalism of Locke to that of Mill, but there were others who laid down their Transcendentalism at his feet; and I have thought that Mr. Frothingham's elaborate review of Mill's review of Hamilton marked for us better than any other critical event a parting of the ways. What could be so attractive in an idealism equally destructive of matter and of mind, making the former a mere possibility of sensation and the latter a mere possibility of feeling? It was, perhaps, the man behind the system, so simple and sincere; his incidental things, the book on Liberty in particular; and his beautiful devotion to our anti-slavery cause before and in the war. Mill's moral earnestness reflected a beauteous light on his philosophy, when Carlyle's "smoky chimney" wrapped his Transcendentalism in a black and sooty cloud. But Mill, at best, was the greatest in the kingdom of a dying cause. The method of his thought was metaphysical, not scientific, and was not profoundly affected by the scientific movement of the time. It was different with Herbert Spencer's, which, early in the sixties, began to exert a powerful influence upon the Unitarian mind. But there were those who, from the outset, saw that Spencer had put his worst foot forward in his "Reconciliation of Science and Religion," his miserable inheritance from the Hamilton-Mansell combination. I do not know a better criticism of that agnostic reconciliation than Prof. Everett's in the

Christian Examiner for May, 1862. Like Browning's saint, he has, perhaps, "forgot it all." Then, too, it was our good fortune to know Spencer better indirectly, through John Fiske, than at first hand,—a clear gain in charm of style, lucidity of exposition, and in the religiousness of the interpretation, to which Spencer himself has shown a steadily increasing inclination. The criticism of Martineau, also, has been an inestimable help, making the "Unknowable" of Spencer the continent of boundless knowledge. It is the most striking circumstance of our later philosophical development that we can call our own, in Martineau, a philosophic genius second to no other of our time, one that the boldest of the scientific are obliged to reckon with, and to whom those of us who seem to find him inappreciative of the deepest import of the scientific tendency and spirit are still indebted for a constant testing of our opinions and a frequent light on many a stumbling way, while for his religious help apart from pure philosophy our tenderest blessings crown his aged head.

So much for the relationship of our Unitarian body to the philosophical movement of the last half-century. Our relation to the critical movement has not, I trust, been less honourable. Theodore Parker's Translation of De Wette's Introduction to the Old Testament and Frederick Frothingham's of that to the New were clearly in the right direction. So, too, was Dr. Clarke's translation of Hase's Life of Jesus, which, though critical of the Tübingen school, made many notable concessions. For warm appreciation of that school, and especially of F. C. Baur, nothing has been written in America comparable to O. B. Frothingham's elaborate study of his life and writings in the *Christian Examiner*, which many of our preachers who once were young, but now are getting old, remember gratefully. In Edward H. Hall, Baur and his school have always found an independent sympathy, and Dr. Hedge was frequently co-operant to the same end,—the recommendation of Baur's *tendency* theory as a key that unlocks more mysteries than any other in the New Testament. When Strauss's Life of Jesus first appeared, Theodore Parker's criticism of it was hostile in the main. It was the criticism of his youth. Dr. Hedge's "Mythical

Element in the New Testament" was the criticism of his ripe maturity; and, making Strauss his text, he found that element quite as considerable as Strauss had represented it. It is impossible for me to trace the course of our relation to the criticism of the New Testament miracles and the life of Jesus. When Channing died, there were some Unitarians, even in the pulpit, whose Arianism was, like that of Dr. Francis Parkman, satisfied with a Jesus "one iota less than God." Midway of the century our radical position was that of Martineau and Freeman Clarke,—the position to which Dr. Lyman Abbott and many of the progressive orthodox have now come,—that in Jesus there was a perfect revelation of God in perfect man. But long since the enlarging thought of God and the increasing modesty of our knowledge of the deep things of man made such an arbitrary separation of Jesus from all other men irreverent and presumptuous to a degree that few of us can reach. What we have generally come to in the miracle matter is that we believe anything upon sufficient evidence, but must find the old theological, evidential miracle impossible, seeing that any established fact not heretofore included in those generalisations of phenomena which we call laws demands an extension of those generalisations which will include it. It is a far cry from this position to that of those to whom Theodore Parker's South Boston sermon was anathema, because it contended that Christianity did not now need the miracles to vouchsafe its truth. Dr. J. H. Allen has written recently of the miracles, "Not one of us thinks of defining Christian fellowship by the acceptance of them; not one of us would stake a single point of his religious faith upon them; not one of us appeals to them as argument for the spiritual truth." And the American Unitarian Association publishes these statements to the world. Yes, *it does move*, as Galileo *didn't* say, this dear old world of ours!

The relation of our Unitarian development to Old Testament criticism has been even happier than its relation to that of the New Testament. Dr. Noyes made good beginnings for us here with his contention for the dual authorship of Isaiah and the inferiority of Chronicles to Samuel and Kings. Parker's "De Wette" made the late

origin of Deuteronomy as clear as day. Allen's "Hebrew Men and Times" domesticated with us all that was best in Ewald's great advance; and, as for the splendid re-organization of the Old Testament literature by Vatke and Graf and Reuss and Wellhausen and Kuenen, our English brethren, Wicksteed and Armstrong were among the first to give it cordial welcome. Calthrop and Gannett and others of our American students were not far behind; and Prof. Toy, whom now we dare to call our own, has given it his scholarly support and illustration. Its intrinsic rationality and its alliance with a general scheme of evolution embracing every aspect of the world have commended it to us so widely that there is something awful in the loneliness of those who are still fondly hoping that the ancient landmarks are to be restored.

A word concerning our relation for these fifty years to the development of science. If one thing more than any other has characterized this development, it has been the resolution of apparent difference into essential unity. The spectroscope finds mundane minerals and gases in the farthest stars. Agassiz declared an ideal unity in the progressive forms of life. Then came Darwin, and declared the unity to be actual and genetic. The correlation and conservation of forces is another and, perhaps, the grandest illustration. To the unities of nature have been added the unities of language, institutions, and religion. "That they all may be one,"—this is the song which all the sciences are singing. All of the special unities go back into one central unity. All things and men report the unity of an Infinite and Eternal Power. There is no such Unitarian as science. There is no better and no grander Unitarian literature than hers. Unitarianism has been called a movement of thought in sympathy with science. Good! And Science has returned the compliment. It always has been, but never before so obviously as in the last half-century, a movement of thought in sympathy with the Unitarian idea, the Oneness of the world reflecting the Oneness of the Eternal Spirit,—God.

But, if any doctrine was more essential to Channing's doctrine than the unity of God, it was the dignity of human nature. What, then, has been our denominational bearing

toward the Darwinian doctrine of man's origination from the lower forms of life? What a challenge here to Channing's "one sublime idea"? And yet, although there was at first, no doubt, some natural reluctance to accept a doctrine apparently subversive of our most precious thought, it is a fact that we were first among the sects to give to Darwin, first a patient hearing, and then the assent such hearing made inevitable and not to be withheld. Verily, I say unto you, we have had our reward. For what seemed the wreck of our great faith in human nature has been its grandest confirmation. For nothing argues the essential dignity of man more clearly than his partial triumph over the limitations of his brute inheritance, while the long way that he has come is promise of the potency that will carry him still on and up till heaven is over him with all its stars.

What has been our relation for these fifty years to the political changes that have made them of almost unexampled interest in human history? It was James G. Birney who declared the American churches to be the bulwark of slavery, and that terrible indictment was made good over and over again by Garrison and by our Unitarian Oliver Johnson, looking back from the high vantage of his serene old age. Of that terrible indictment we must take our part. We may console ourselves with thinking that some of the other churches did much worse than we; but, then, we might have done much better. Yet must we not forget how many were found faithful in the righteous cause, not only Channing and Parker and Clarke and Furness and the Mays and Simmons and Knapp and Stetson and Hall and Longfellow and Weiss and Higginson and Frothingham and Wasson, but a great and noble company; as long ago as 1843, one hundred and seventy-three Unitarian ministers pledging themselves "before God and their brethren never to be weary of labouring in the cause of human rights till slavery was abolished, and every slave made free." That was a large proportion of our whole clerical force. And there were laymen of an equal mind. Few, indeed, were those who later could congratulate themselves, after the manner of one, that they had never in sermon or hymn or prayer reminded their people of the tremendous contest which was going on.

Lovers of peace, we did our best to soothe the miseries of war; and I do not know of any general whose laurels seem to me more enviable than those which wreathed our Hotspur's honoured head, though they were won not on the embattled field, but wherever the Sanitary Commission did its sacred work or made its strong appeal. And in the less dramatic, but not less important, contest which has since been going on over the civil service, I dare believe that the good cause has found a fair proportion of its faithful friends and helpers in our ranks. Not altogether void of honourable significance for all our captains and lieutenants and the rank and file is, I trust, the fact that it was our Unitarian Sumner who introduced the first bill for the reform of the civil service, that it was our Unitarian Jenckes who, in December, 1865, initiated the first practical reform measure, and that for twenty years the head and front of that offending which the spoilsmen hate as slavery hated freedom has been one who is a vice-president of our American Unitarian Association, and the president of our National Conference of Unitarian Churches, whom I need not name.

> "That such a man could spring from our decays
> Fans the soul's nobler faith until it burn."

And what is the comment of this last half-century and of our part in it upon the word that Channing spoke, the spirit of his life and work? To me it seems as if the years, which have in some particulars, in many, taken us further from his theological opinions, have only drawn us nearer to the power and grace which made him what he most essentially and completely was. It must be confessed that the developments of theological and critical science have made for the destruction of many forms of thought which Channing held to with a tender loyalty, albeit with some intimations of distrust. The years have so wrought and we have been so subject to their stress, that we cannot think of the Bible as he thought of it, nor of Christianity, nor the miracles of the New Testament, nor of Jesus, nor of the mystery of his atoning death. But there has been no change for us which is not easily within the scope of that freedom which he claimed as the inalienable right of that infinite and eternal being which

he discovered in the human soul. The Magna Charta of our widest liberties was written by his fearless hand. And in the exercise of these liberties we have arrived at many splendid confirmations of those things which were to him the best of all,—the unity of God, the unity of God and man, the dignity of human nature, the tokens of God's presence in the universal heart of man. Not long before he died he wrote and preached that the resemblance of Christ's greatness to other human greatness, and of the Bible to other precious books, was much more to him than their difference. How, then, would he have rejoiced in our new science of comparative religion and all the sympathy of religions that it teaches and involves! Of all the great ones who have gone over to the majority (a strange experience for him!) I do not know of any who would have grown old more gracefully than he, or coming back to us would find himself more perfectly at home. I like to think what pleasure he would find in Martineau's last book and such sermons as those of my friend Potter, over which I say, "This is how Channing would have written if he had kept right on." Lover of peace, when slavery chose the dread arbitrament of war, he would have said as easily as Garrison, "God speed the better side!" and, when slavery perished he would have said a glad Amen to Whittier's song:—

> "Not as we hoped; but what are we?
> Above our broken dreams and plans
> God lays with wiser hands than man's
> The corner-stones of liberty."

And he would have taken a serener joy in Whittier than in any other poet of our time. "Old Unitarianism," he said, "must undergo important modifications and developments." It has undergone them, and I think he would approve the change. For we have managed somehow to organise liberty. If he had stayed or if he should come back, I should expect him to be with those of us who would like to purge the creedlet of our preamble of the phrase which would shut out James Martineau from our fellowship, seeing that he does not think that Jesus was or thought himself the Christ. I know he would rejoice in the extension of all noble oppor-

tunities for women,—the most significant of all the social changes from his day to ours; that he would be with those who are endeavouring to make an honest business of our civil service; with those who are striving for the improvement of our prisons and our penal legislation: that he would listen patiently to Edward Bellamy and Henry George as he did to Bristed and Fourier and Ripley and the other social theorists of his time; that we should find him with our temperance reformers, unabashed because the end they seek seems so much further off to-day than it seemed to the enthusiastic Washingtonians. I am sure that he would wonder at our general apathy over the progress of our political ideas in Europe, and those large spiritual eyes would dilate with sad astonishment when he read of the Chinese Exclusion Bill which our National Congress has passed, and which our President, who formerly had more humanity, has signed. He would have been prominent in your Boston meeting a few nights ago which protested against this horrible iniquity, as he was in that which protested against the murder of Lovejoy in 1837. If his appreciation of the elder Garrison was imperfect, the younger would have had his perfect sympathy when he wrote the words of Lowell with an application as complete and damning as they had in 1848:—

> "Massachusetts,—God forgive her—
> She's a-kneelin' with the rest,
> She that ough' to ha' clung forever
> To her grand old eagle-nest;
> She that ough' to stand so fearless
> Wile the wracks are round her hurled,
> Holdin' up a beacon peerless
> To the oppressed of all the world!"

Fifty years since Channing died! Wonderful years! Thank God, and thank the fellow-labourers with him for all that they have done for Righteousness and Truth and Love. Let us be glad for Channing's spirit working in these years, and that we who love his name and cherish his great memory and high example have not been wholly faithless in the work he loved so well. Let us be glad that, if we have surrendered many things he cherished, it has been in obedience

to a law and spirit that he would not have us disobey. And may no past attainment stay our feet, but, so long as there is any truth unknown or any sorrow unconsoled or any monstrous statute unrepealed, may we go on, go on, praying to Him who is the light of all our seeing,—

> "Lift us and light us on our way, that, casting
> Each burden, doubt, and pain before thy feet,
> We may go in progress everlasting,
> Into communion perfect and complete."

NOTE.—Many readers of Mr. Chadwick's Essay may wish to make themselves acquainted with the life and work of Dr. Channing. Biographies, Books and Tracts in great variety are now easily obtainable from the Unitarian Association. The Centenary Commemoration of the birth of Dr. Channing was held on the 7th of April, 1880, and the little volume containing a report of the proceedings testifies to the wide-spread influence of his life and writings. The following words from Dr. Martineau's address on this interesting occasion are well worth quoting :—

"He had opened his ministry in plaintive and pathetic tones, touched indeed with the enthusiasm of hope, but saddened by both the grievances of men and his own shortcomings. Ere he closed it the weight was lifted off. He had conquered his despondencies, not by thinking less tenderly of others or less humbly of himself, for never was his love so quick or his ideal so high; but by the triumph of an assured trust and the vision of an Eternal Goodness. 'Perfection,' he exclaims, 'is revealed to us, not to torture us from our falling short of it, but to be a kindling object to be seized by faith as our destiny, if we are faithful to the light and strength now given.' He was even surprised at his own gladness of heart. 'What mysteries,' he says, 'we are to ourselves! Here am I finding life a sweeter cup as I approach to what are called the dregs, looking round on this fair glorious creation with a serener love, and finding more

to hope for society at the very time that its evils weigh more upon my mind.'

"Such was the spirit in which he looked his last on the green mountains of Vermont in the autumn of 1842. At sundown of October 2nd, while he lay with his face turned to the glow upon the hills, he passed away, as if in pursuit of the light he could not quit, and entered that 'Perfect Life' which had ever moved before his thought, and of which he left us the prophecy and the fore-gleam. Who can withhold the prayer that so may the 'Father of lights'—

'Glorify for us the West,
When we shall sink to final rest!'

"In reviewing the history of this pure and powerful soul, it is easy, from its transparent simplicity, to alight upon the animating principle which constituted its unity and harmony throughout. The single thought of which, from first to last, it was the living expression is this, that *moral perfection is the essence of God and the supreme end for man;* in the one, an eternal reality; in the other, a continuous possibility; in both, the ground of perpetual spiritual communion."

Unitarianism an Affirmative Faith.

AN Affirmative Faith: is that a true description of Unitarianism? I want to show you that it is. And I have chosen this subject, because I am persuaded that a large amount of misapprehension prevails, and that the form of faith which I myself have found above all things helpful and inspiring, satisfying at once the questionings of the reason and the yearnings of the heart, strengthening my will and quickening my spiritual life, is connected in the minds of many people with the thought of doubt and negation, a faith bare and cold, a theology attenuated and pared down to the smallest dimensions, denying a great deal and asserting very little. Those who go by the name of Unitarians have been so often described, either wilfully or ignorantly, as a set of infidels, not believing in the Bible, denying Jesus Christ, and next door to Atheists, that ill-informed people who never inquire for themselves believe these misrepresentations to be sober facts, and now and then evince not a little surprise to find that these dangerous heretics, after all, use the same Bible, reverence the same Great Teacher, and worship God in much the same fashion as their fellow-Christians do. And even men who ought not to be ill-informed have so carelessly adopted popular misunderstandings that they constantly speak of Unitarianism in the same strain, though not erring so widely. Mr. Haweis, the well-known Broad Church clergyman, has characterized it as "a philosophy without a religion," and as "wanting in emotional elements and in body of affirmation;" and a reviewer in the *Academy* described Dr. Martineau as occupying "a temporary resting-place" on

"the journey from the realms of orthodox religion to the domain of simple secularism."

Now, believing as I do that this Unitarian Christianity is specially adapted to the religious wants of our time, that if it were more widely known we should hear less of secularism and atheism, that there would be less bigotry and intolerance in the churches, that men would think more of living pure, upright, devout lives and less of insisting on this or that particular creed, that the world would be every way better and happier; I feel bound to do what in me lies to clear away this ambiguity and misconception and to proclaim what I know from my own experience to be true—that Unitarianism, so far from being a piece of cold intellectual philosophy, is a warm, living faith; so far from being a belief in very little, is a belief in the very largest truths; so far from being a negative religion, is a strongly affirmative one; and that if, as we are sometimes told, it be only one step removed from Atheism, that is a step which would take a man from the firm rock of religious confidence over into the deepest sea of doubt and despair.

It is not, however, very wonderful that these misconceptions should have arisen. It has constantly fallen to the lot of Unitarians to controvert popular doctrines which seemed to them false and mischievous. They were bound to do it, if they would be faithful to the truth that was in them; and they have thus appeared before the world time after time as the deniers of this or that orthodox dogma; and the world has heard a great deal about what they do not believe and hardly anything at all about what they do believe. But if you will take the trouble to examine any doctrine which Unitarians have denied, you will find that that doctrine was itself a denial, a limitation of some larger truth, a barrier to some wider thought; and that in denying the denial, in withstanding the limitation, in breaking down the barrier, Unitarians have been engaged in what is really a constructive, not a destructive work, in maintaining an affirmation, in asserting that God's truth and love are large and manysided, and that his commandment is "exceeding broad."

Take almost any dogma which is now passing into the limbo of dead superstitions and you will see how clearly

this comes out. Who now thinks that to doubt the existence of a personal devil is a sign of a negative faith? And yet, when Unitarians first preached against the dogma, their fellow-Christians thought that they were denying a large piece of true religion and had taken a fatal step towards Atheism; they could not see that just as far as a man believed in Satan so far he disbelieved in God.

Who now thinks that the man who holds every word of the Bible to be literally true believes more than he who interprets it on rational principles; that the faith of the man who believes that the world was created 4004 years B.C., that all men are descended from Adam and Eve, and that the story of Noah's ark is a statement of fact—is a larger, more affirmative faith than his, who, having listened to science and having some acquaintance with arithmetic, sees that these stories are only the dark guesses of an unlearned but devout people? Yet when Unitarians first gave up using the Bible as a fetish, and pointed out its real use and beauty, regarding it as cultured men in almost every church now regard it, they were accused of sacrilege and disbelief of the most dangerous description, and of undermining the foundations of religion.

And what thoughtful man does not feel, as he reads Canon Farrar's eloquent sermons on the Eternal Hope, that that great preacher is proclaiming a larger, grander, more affirmative faith in God, when he denounces the doctrine of eternal torments as a libel on the Infinite Love, than any of his fellow-clergy can, who yet cling to the horrible dogma as though it were a precious part of their faith? And yet Unitarians have protested against so unworthy a belief for years, and it has been accounted one of their negations, one of the instances where they do not believe and other Christians do. But surely it is easy to see that to deny a dogma so dishonouring to God is really to add to one's faith, not to subtract anything from it, and that he who believes that God's love is sufficient to win all men to himself at last, believes *more*, not less, than the upholder of the doctrine of eternal punishment. And you will find that the same thing holds true of all our denials—they are denials of what narrows a man's faith.

Now, it has been almost a necessary consequence of our position that we should constantly have to justify our dissent from other Christians in the matter of these cramping, limiting dogmas; yet still I cannot help regretting it somewhat, because it has compelled us to appear so often in the light of destroyers, overturners of what other people believe, and has drawn attention away from the fact that all the great truths of religion, all the truths that are a power in a man's life, all that is vital in Christianity, we hold as firmly and cherish as deeply as any Christian church. The pulling down has been necessary, I know; and we seem to have been specially commissioned to do it; but the dust it has made has not seldom hidden from the world the beautiful and sure building which we have been rearing meanwhile. The strength and beauty of Unitarianism as a religion for a man to live by lie, not nearly so much in those things as to which we differ from other Christians, as in those great Christian principles as to which we are all agreed. It is not the distinctions that mark us off from our fellow-religionists that feed our religious life. We live, like other churches, on the common food of Christianity. The things which differentiate us from them are important simply because they clear away all dead ecclesiasticism, and admit us straightway to the living spirit of Christ; because they plant our faith on a sure foundation where it is in no risk of being overthrown; because they remove all barriers and hindrances, and give us free access to the same God and the same living bread to which other Christians also go, but through narrower approaches and by more difficult ways. The same truths that are the working principles of their religion are ours also, only we assert them more widely, and do not narrow them down by artificial and dogmatic limitations. Let me try, as simply and briefly as I can, to show you, not what we do not believe, but what we do believe; not the weakness of other people's theology, but the strength of our own; not the foolishness of the dogmas we deny, but the power of the truths we affirm.

At the outset, we affirm with, I think, greater emphasis than any other Protestant Church, the right of every man to think for himself, and to trust the intellect and affections,

the conscience and spiritual instinct with which God has entrusted him. Our faculties are given to us by God; and to exercise them in all matters, to test all subjects by them, to make them the last court of appeal in all doubts and difficulties, is at all times our bounden duty. To make over our right of private judgment to pope or priest, church or creed, is to sell our most precious birthright. The mind should be absolutely free; and to attempt to fetter it is to commit high treason against our human nature. We will bow down, therefore, to no external authority as supreme; we will be hampered by no foregone conclusions which must be adhered to; we will have no creeds, no shibboleths, no articles of faith. Our church is free. No man is asked any question as to his belief. He is only asked to be earnest in good works. We hesitate even to define our faith; we are so determined that no one shall be hindered in any way from trusting his own God-given faculties. Thus our freedom is not a negation; it is something more than the mere absence of restraint. It is the positive and strong affirmation of the trustworthiness of our mental and spiritual powers and the resolve to use them, improve them and obey them. And that is a very grand affirmation indeed.

You might very naturally ask me, here, what, if we have no creed, not even a statement of belief, I mean by Unitarianism. Let me explain, then, parenthetically, that I use the word simply as a convenient, commonly accepted name for the average theological belief of the people usually called Unitarians; and that as we have no authoritative statement of that belief and will have none, I alone am responsible for the meaning I put into the word. With what I say probably most Unitarians would agree, but it does not bind any of them.

Now this very word "Unitarian" has been often supposed to show that our faith is a negative one—that we are united simply by our denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. But this is a mistake. It is quite true that Unitarian does not mean simply a believer in the Unity of God. A Trinitarian believes in the Unity of God, too. There is no question whatever about the Divine Unity. But there is a question as to the Divine Personality. Trinitarianism affirms that

that Personality is threefold; and in so doing denies that it is undivided, or divided in any other proportion. Unitarianism affirms that that Personality is one and undivided; and in so doing denies that it can be partitioned off into three or any other number of parts. Each term negatives the other, but only because it makes a counter assertion. Unitarianism is, therefore, an affirmation as much as Trinitarianism, and I venture to say that it is by far the grander and plainer affirmation of the two. The doctrine of the Trinity is not only mysterious; it is unintelligible. The doctrine of "One God, the Father," is clear as the day. And it is a grand doctrine, because it is in harmony with all the hints we can gather from science. Every new research, every new investigation into the secrets of the earth or sky, every fresh discovery in the realm of natural law, points unmistakably to a great unity of will. But without going into any arguments for or against the doctrine of the Trinity, I am contented with our affirmation that God is one and only one, simply on the ground that it is the most reverent assertion we can make, and that to divide His awful Being in any way seems to me a piece of almost impious presumption. To say that God is one, is to make the simplest and, indeed, the only intelligible, statement you can make about Him. But though my thought of God is simple, it is neither poor nor vague. I am not a Deist, because I am not satisfied with the conception of God as a being who, ages ago, set the world going, just as a man would wind up a clock, and who has left it to itself ever since. I am not a Pantheist, because I cannot be satisfied with a theory of religion which makes the universe co-extensive with God, merges the human in the Divine, and leaves no separate individuality either to God or man. I believe in God the Father, perfect in justice, infinite in love. Him I believe to be a living God, not a past Creator only, but immanent in the world to-day; a living Person, if I may use the word; not a dead Fate or an unconscious Force, but One to whom I can pray and who will answer me; to whom I can give my love, and who will love me again. All the might of religion I hold to lie in this personal relationship between the Father in heaven and His children on earth.

Then, too, I believe that Unitarians affirm the perfect righteousness and boundless love of God with a strength equalled by no other church. Others, of course, declare God's goodness and tender mercy, but not consistently. In the same breath they speak of His unending wrath, or of His anger which can only be averted by an unjust atonement, or even of His selecting a few of His children for salvation and countless myriads for everlasting damnation. But we, I think, without limitation or exception, affirm unswervingly the unchanging goodness, infinite tenderness, and boundless compassion of God. And we find that thought itself, almost all the religion a man needs, giving us confidence in every perplexity, comfort in every sorrow, and strength for all the battling of life.

There is nothing negative, then, about our belief in God; what shall we say about our belief in Jesus Christ? We deny his deity? Yes; because we make the far grander affirmation of his humanity. I do not want now to discuss the whole doctrine of the deity of Jesus. Suffice it to say that it is both unscriptural and unintelligible. The Gospels know nothing of the Godhead of Christ. His disciples knew nothing of it. The Jews knew nothing of it. The whole thing was an afterthought—a mistaken attempt to glorify a life that could not possibly be made more glorious than as it was. The real life of Jesus never suggested to those who witnessed it any such thought; and when the doctrine of his deity did arise, the theologians were put to the most curious shifts to explain how it was that so stupendous a fact, if a fact, was not revealed during Jesus' lifetime.

And the doctrine is unintelligible; because it is almost as impossible to believe that in the one person of Jesus there were two natures, as it is to believe that in the one nature of God there are three persons, unless, like Tertullian, you simply "believe because it is impossible." The doctrine only ends in making the sweetest, most helpful life that was ever lived on earth an incomprehensible juggle and enigma. And this is where I feel the grandeur of the Unitarian affirmation. Jesus, the tempted, suffering, loving, praying man! Jesus, true brother of our own, tempted like as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, persecuted, forsaken, sick at

heart, but victorious at last through faith and prayer! Jesus, carrying the same weight of care and woe which burdens us, buffeting the same strong waves, treading the same thorny path, wrestling with the same allurements to sin, yet in all things more than conqueror! Jesus, saving men by the might of his example, triumphantly winning men's hearts by the sheer force of conquering goodness! I venture to say that that is one of the mightiest, noblest, most helpful thoughts that any man can think. It is a simpler, but an infinitely more exalted and more potent conception than that of Christ a demi-god, whose footsteps it were utterly vain for us to attempt to tread. Break in upon the simple humanity of Christ and you destroy all that is grandest in his life—all the infinitive charm of its beauty, all the saving power of its strength; you take away from his true dignity; you rob him of his true glory. Of what service is his example? What reality is left in his life of trial and sorrow, if all the while he was sustained by his own omnipotence? How does it help you and me, in the darkness and care and sore temptation of our lives, to know that Jesus also sounded the depths of sorrow and vanquished the thought of sin, if he were indeed very God of very God? Surely his life becomes an unreal piece of acting. I care not to know that a God can be tempted like as we are, and yet without sin. What I want to know is that man can; that there has actually lived upon this earth one who, with no weapons or armour that I cannot have too, has fought the fight of life and been victorious from beginning to end, has tasted all life's bitterness and never despaired, has experienced man's deepest cruelty and never hated his persecutors, has been acquainted with untold grief and never lost for one moment his faith in God, has been tried as perhaps never man before or since, and has come out of his trial like silver purified in the refiner's fire. That is the thought to help me in my weakness, to console me in my sorrow, to sustain me in my difficulties, to lift me up and lead me on from earth to heaven, from myself to God. That is the real secret of the influence of Jesus in the world. That is the great truth which has forced its way through the cramping metaphysics of the theologians and touched men's

hearts in spite of the creeds; yet Unitarians only consistently affirm it.

I have heard it said by those who, to make Jesus God, are willing to stultify his humanity, that we Unitarians deny the Christ of God; and the charge makes my blood boil in my veins. Deny Jesus Christ! Never was accusation more unjust. I tell you honestly that, if I have any true religion in me, I have learned it from Jesus; if I have any power to walk along life's narrow way, it was Jesus trained my steps; if I have any insight into things divine, it was he who led me where I could get the vision. And I know that still, when I need some strength in temptation, some encouragement in difficulty, some consolation in sorrow, some light in darkness, I have only to call to mind that holy life; to gaze, as it were, into that loving face; to touch that mighty brother's hand; and straightway there comes to me a sense of confidence and restful peace, "and power is with me in the night"; and I know what St. Paul meant when he declared, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." Deny Jesus Christ! Why he is with me alike on the loftiest mount of transfiguration, and in the lowest depths of human sorrow and sin. He is my teacher, my guide, my friend. I may fall terribly short of the example he sets me, but I will yield to no man in the sincerity of my love for Christ. We Unitarians, then, so far from denying him, affirm that the glorious life of that Galilean peasant was a grand human reality, and not merely a part played by a Deity in these scenes of earth. And, believe me, that is a truth mighty for salvation.

Now to come to another point; it is not at all unusual to find people who will tell you that Unitarians "do not believe in the Bible"; and it is a sort of revelation to them to learn that we read it regularly in our churches. What is at the bottom of this curious impression? It is this: We deny the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. We deny that once upon a time, long years ago, God gave, once for all, a full complete revelation of Himself to man; that He miraculously preserved that revelation within the covers of a certain book; and that now for eighteen centuries He has ceased to reveal His truth to men. We deny that the Bible is an infallible

and exclusive standard of truth. And we do this partly on critical grounds. A very slight acquaintance with Biblical criticism is sufficient to show that the Bible is a collection of books of very different values and with a very small claim to infallibility; that it must be received like other books, tested and interpreted as they are, and honoured for its own sake only and its intrinsic worth. This is the way in which scholars in almost all churches now treat the Bible. It is, I rejoice to say, no longer a peculiar feature of Unitarianism. Looked at in this light, the Bible ceases to be a kind of sibylline oracle and becomes a great reality, a history of the religious growth of one of the most religious peoples that ever dwelt upon the earth, a book containing some of the deepest yearnings, some of the loftiest aspirations, some of the noblest utterances of men; above all, the record of all we know of the life and religion of the world's greatest teacher. We reverence it, therefore, with an honest, healthy reverence, and find it a storehouse of religious experience, from which we may draw forth great spiritual riches.

Well, but we do not believe in a final revelation of God in the Bible for another reason: because we believe in a larger, universal, perennial revelation. The small, narrow doctrine, that God revealed Himself once for all long centuries ago, and that ever since the wells of truth have been dry, is swallowed up in the larger affirmation that God reveals Himself to the pure in heart from age to age; that He is ever showing fresh truth to those who seek it, ever pouring fresh light on waiting eyes, ever watering thirsty souls with fresh streams of inspiration. We do not deny inspiration to prophet and psalmist; but we refuse to limit it to them. We do not deny that there was a revelation in the first century, but we maintain that there is also a revelation in the nineteenth. We refuse to believe that God spoke once to a few favoured individuals and that all we can do is to catch the lingering echoes, and win truth second-hand. We say that if God spoke to men once, He will speak to men now; that if Israel had her seers, so can England have hers; that if Paul and Jesus heard the voice of God, so can you and I. There is no monopoly of divine inspiration. Of course, I do not assert that it is given in equal measure; but I say that

some inspiration is within reach of every man who will open his heart to receive it; that in all ages the listening ear has been able to catch some whisper of the divine voice. God is to us essentially a living God, an ever present God, one whom we need not seek in the dim vistas of the past only, but who is as near to you and me in the streets of Liverpool as He was to the prophets in Jewry; one who has never left Himself without a witness in the world. And so we believe in inspiration more, not less, than those who would limit it to a single period or a single race; we believe in revelation more, not less, than those who would confine it within the covers of a single book.

The full grandeur of this doctrine of a universal and perennial revelation is only felt when one considers that it places the ground and basis of religious faith within the soul, instead of in a collection of writings; thus removing it from an outpost where it was always exposed to the attacks of science and criticism, and securing it within the impregnable citadel of the heart. I believe few of us know how much misery has been caused by the popular notion that religion itself must stand or fall with the infallibility of the Bible. On the one hand it has caused timid men to shut their eyes and call blindness faith; on the other it has driven many a brave, honest soul into the darkness of Atheism. Not until men see that religion can find a sure foundation only on the vision of divine realities granted when now and again the veil is lifted within the heart, and on the inward whisper of God's Spirit heard when the soul is hushed in silent peace,—will they believe that they need renounce neither reason nor religion, but may accept all that science has discovered or criticism proved and keep intact their faith in God. Our grand affirmation, then, that the same Divine Spirit which spoke to the holy men of old bears witness in seeking hearts to-day, goes with healing power to the very root of our nineteenth century unbelief.

If I had time I might take up every point of our Unitarian theology in the same way and show that whenever we deny a popular dogma it is simply because it is excluded by some larger and wider affirmation. Do we deny the doctrine of what is commonly called "original sin?" It is

because we affirm that God is perfectly just, and therefore will never impute to his children a guilt which is not their own. Do we deny the doctrine of election? It is because we affirm that God is infinitely good, and therefore will never predestine his children to everlasting torment. Do we deny the orthodox doctrine of atonement? It is again the affirmation of infinitive love and justice which sweeps the doctrine away. We cannot believe that a God infinitely just will inflict on an innocent victim the punishment of other men's sins, or that a God infinitely loving-hearted will withhold forgiveness from any repentant child. The Lord's Prayer is not a mockery. As we in our highest moments freely forgive one another, so will our Father in heaven freely forgive us. We refuse to think of God as an omnipotent Shylock, demanding every letter of his bond, because we prefer the grandeur of the assertain that "God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great kindness."

Again, do we deny the doctrine of eternal punishment? It is still because of that inexhaustible affirmation that "God is love." Punishment which is inflicted by a loving wisdom is reformatory and proportioned to the guilt. But infinite punishment for finite sin is neither one nor the other. There is neither reformation nor proportion. The doctrine, thank God, is fast losing ground; not, however, so much because Canon Farrar says that the Greek Testament never teaches it as because human hearts are better than human creeds. Men in various churches are begining to realize in their hearts all the glory and meaning of the affirmation that God is love; and so they find it impossible to assent any longer to a dogma which directly impugns God's love. It is not a matter of texts or interpretation. The dogma is dying, because perfect love must always cast out faithless fear.

I think, then, that I have said enough to show that I am justified in making the assertion that our religion is pre-eminently a religion of affirmations. Whether you agree with what I have said or not, you will at any rate grant that I have pointed to an affirmative faith. I can conceive nothing more misleading than the common assertion that Unitarians believe less than other Christians. In no sense is that assertion true, unless you measure the quantity of a man's

belief by the number of articles in his creed. In that case we certainly believe very little, for creed we have none. But why have we no creed? Because creeds always hinder and never help the truth; because they cramp the mind and hold it in bondage instead of leaving it free to follow the leading of God's spirit; because they are the fruitful source of insincerity and evasion. We are without a creed, not because we have no belief, but because no creed is large enough for our belief; and not because our opinions are vague and indefinite, for I venture to say that there is more substantial agreement amongst us than there is amongst the members of the Church of England with all their creeds and articles. We quarrel with creeds because they give us too little to believe in, not too much; and because we will not shut our doors to any fellow-Christian, but will leave every man to decide for himself whether he can profitably worship with us or not. A long creed does not make a large faith. Only believe, in all its height and depth and length and breadth, the one affirmation that God is Love, and all the creeds and articles of the Church of England or the Westminster Confession can add to it nothing. They can only limit it and narrow it down.

But possibly it will occur to you that these affirmations are not peculiar to Unitarian theology; that they appear more or less clearly as the groundwork of every creed; that they are proclaimed more or less broadly and distinctly by clergymen of every denomination. I grant it; and I maintain that this is the highest glory of my faith. It is just the living Christianity extracted from all the creeds. It is the faith common to the devoutest, largest minds in every church. It contains all that is good in orthodoxy—it keeps hold of every powerful, helpful doctrine in a larger form. It drops only the restrictions. Strike off the fetters and limitations, abolish the metaphysical subtleties and mere theological speculations, take only the strong, clear, living religion, which is at the bottom of every creed; and you will find that that is Unitarianism pure and simple.

And yet we are told that this most catholic faith is a philosophy and not a religion, a piece of dry morality, something half-way down between Christianity and Atheism;

that it is not a religion that will touch the hearts and help the lives of toiling, sinning, sorrowing men and women!

Which do you think is likely to be the more helpful faith—that which speaks to a man of the fear of hell, or that which wins him by the love of God; that which threatens the sinner with pictures of Divine wrath and endless suffering, or that which appeals to him by the unbounded compassion, the infinite patience, the tender forgiveness of the Father in heaven? Which thought do you think is likely to be more helpful in the hour of trial or temptation—the thought of Jesus, a Person of the Godhead, parading in mortal flesh, or that of Jesus, our brother, tempted like as we are, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Which theology do you think is more likely to quicken the aspiring soul—that which tells of a revelation completed and a God who once spoke but now is silent, or that which tells of a daily revelation in pure and loving hearts, of a God whose voice can be heard in every listening soul? Which faith do you think is more likely to satisfy a thoughtful and enquiring age—that which shrinks from criticism and yields to science only when compelled, or that which welcomes new truth and new light, come from what quarter they may? Which religion is furthest from Atheism—that which is founded on a church or a book, or that which is built on the eternal witness of God in the hearts of His children.

I, for one, cannot doubt for an instant. Because I believe that love is mightier than fear; because I hold that the thought of Jesus, the man, is grander than that of Jesus, the god; because I prefer to trust in the ever-present Spirit of God rather than in creeds and churches; I cling to the larger faith and hold that it is mighty to help and to save men. It comforts my heart, it convinces my mind, it strengthens my will. It fills me with joy and gladness. It makes me strenuous in the battle with sin.

It is this large, free, most simple, most tender, most affirmative faith, which we are trying to establish and maintain. We want to build it up into a power strong enough to reach every doubting heart, to touch every hardened conscience, to stand, as we feel assured it can, against all the assaults of unbelief and sin. And we want

all who are one with us in this purpose to join hands and help us. If every large, free thinker, if every believer in God—not as shut up in creeds and books and churches, but as living and working in the world to-day, making His special temple in the hearts of His children—if every man who feels that the real test of religion is a true life and not a correct belief, would labour for and bear witness to this faith, with God's help, we might do a noble work in redeeming this land from its doubt and sorrow and sin.

NOTE.—The author of the foregoing Tract, Charles John Perry, was born at Bulwell, near Nottingham, in June, 1852, became minister of the Hope Street Church, Liverpool, in September, 1878, and died on October the 9th, 1883. Early in 1884, there was published a volume of his Discourses with a Memoir, now out of print. In 1885, "Spiritual Perspective and Other Sermons" was issued from the press. The editor, Rev. R. A. Armstrong, points out that by reason of their simplicity and directness and their freedom from marked personal idiosyncrasies, Mr. Perry's pulpit deliverances were of a kind unusually well adapted for use by lay preachers, or parents conducting services at home. The volume contains thirteen Sermons with the following titles:—Spiritual Perspective, The Strait Gate, Self-Sacrifice, Modern "Seeking after a Sign," I will follow thee, but——, The Rush of Life, Francis of Assisi, Sunshine, Is Life worth Living? Indifference, Comfort in Religion, With all your heart, Faith overcoming the World. The first of these sermons concludes thus:—

"To the mourner, sitting in the shadow of bereavement, it sometimes seems as if the lines of love, parallel in this world, had the vanishing point in death. To the patriot, toiling for his country's good, it seems sometimes as though all the efforts of noble, just and upright men ended in disaster and defeat. To all who labour for the Kingdom of God it will appear now and again that the progress of truth and justice and humanity is going to disappear in the triumph

of evil and wrong. Never fear! these are only appearances, the effect of our short-sighted mortal vision. In reality, loving hearts shall go on side by side for ever; truth and justice will never really bend one hair's breadth from their way; goodness shall triumph over evil, blessing shall vanquish cursing, right shall win the victory over wrong, and the Kingdom of God, so far from being extinguished in death or evil, shall pursue its mighty progress through all the ages of eternity."

Jesus Christ.

"WHAT think ye of Christ?" There is a sense in which this is the deepest and most urgent question which theology can ask. And that not merely in the minds of those who regard Christ as the only manifestation of the Divine which human faculties can adequately grasp, and to whom therefore an investigation into his nature is equivalent to a search into the deep things of the character of God. For there are others, of whom I own myself one, who look upon Christ as the most signal manifestation of that infusion of the human with the Divine which is an universal fact, and who find in him the typical example of the method and finest achievement of human goodness. But it is something more than a mere theological question. Upon the answer which we give to it depends our whole interpretation of human history for the last 1800 years. For putting aside all specifically theological considerations, and looking at the matter from the simply human and historical point of view, Christ is the strongest, most enduring, most vivid force that was ever introduced into the world. I will not waste your time by familiar contrasts between the humility and obscurity of his origin, and the imperial part which he has played in the development of man's destiny: measured by the mere amount and weight of their actual influence, the greatest names pale before his. Plato has not moulded so many minds: Alexander did not so change the course of history: the unity which Rome imposed upon civilized peoples extended over a smaller area than the unity of Christendom: Buddha and Mahomet won their triumphs over only the secondary races of the world. It was the strangest and most unexpected of in-

tellectual revolutions—a revolution which Seneca and Tacitus would have contemptuously pronounced impossible—that Jerusalem should teach Athens and Rome; now stranger still to us, for we recognise it as the religious blending of Semitic with Aryan thought. Sometimes for good, sometimes for evil, Christianity has moulded mediæval and modern history: it civilized the barbarians when decaying Rome fell of its own crumbling bulk: it alternately disparaged and preserved the monuments of ancient literature: it preached the peace of God, and kindled a thousand wars: it has kept alive the flame of holiness in innumerable hearts, and has built up the Papacy; art owes to it its finest inspirations, but it has usually turned a chilling face towards science: it has put the Bible into all men's hands, and with the Bible the image of Christ, and it has given birth to an Inquisition and lighted the fires of Smithfield. But always it has been, and is still, the most moving thing in the world—exercising men's minds, calling out their controversial energies, rousing their passions, swaying their conduct, filling them with immortal hopes, bearing perpetual witness to the unseen. From what fountain flowed this mighty stream? Are we to go back only to the carpenter's cottage at Nazareth, and the noble and sweet traditions of Hebrew thought amid "the poor in spirit;" or must we dare a dizzy flight to the ages before time was, when the Father took counsel of the salvation of a yet uncreated world with the Eternal Son? And yet, again, who cannot but regret that such a dust and turmoil of controversy, theological, philosophical, historical, should rise about the gracious figure of the Son of Man, whose words, whenever we are able to listen to them with unprejudiced ears, strike with such a kindling power on the conscience, wake such unsatisfied longings after goodness in the heart? Would that the old days could come again, in which disciples, yet undisturbed by controversy, yet unperplexed by speculation, and forgetting all the responsibilities of the future in the happy peace of the present, hung upon the lips and followed the footsteps of him who spake "as never man spake"!

Two theories as to the nature of Christ unequally divide mankind: according to one, he is human, human in birth,

human in nature, human in passion, human in temptation, human in death; according to the other, perfect God and perfect man, one Christ "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God." There was once a third theory, usually associated with the name of Arius, which assigned to Christ an intermediate station, overtopping the human, yet not attaining the full and underived majesty of the Divine. It is older than Arius, though perhaps not in the distinctively Arian shape: as I have generally described it, it was the faith of Paul, as well as of that latest Evangelist whom we call John. No other theory can allege so much scriptural evidence in its favour, and yet it has long ago disappeared: even in contemporary churches which profess above all things else to be scriptural, there are no signs of its revival. And the reason is, that if it saved the absolute and undivided Deity of the Father, it was at the same time fatal to the true humanity of the Son. Only in its worst and darkest times has the Church been willing to let the Son of Man go: even when his Deity was conceived of as most necessary to the completed work of Atonement, men felt that God was infinitely far off from them if they could not claim a real unity with Christ. Throughout the first ages, double and opposing forces were acting at the same time upon the Christian mind: on the one side, natural affection and awe, tending as years went on to the apotheosis of Jesus, and a systematizing feeling that a belief in his Deity would round off and compact the structure of Christian doctrine: on the other, the echo of his human voice vibrating in tradition, the sight of his kinsfolk still tilling the ancestral fields, the local associations with his wanderings, his teaching, his death—in a word, the recollection of all that had made him a man among men. So the Church took refuge in the conception of a God-man, in which it has rested, with comparatively little protest, ever since. If you question the abstract conceivability of such a being, no one has any answer to give you; the mind necessarily attaches itself first to one side of the conception and then to the other, but practically gives up the impossible task of combining them into an intelligible whole. But the conception remains a testimony, on the one hand, to the

desire of at least the first ages for a visible and conceivable God; and yet, on the other, much more a testimony to the invincible reluctance of the church, in all ages to let go the humanity of Christ.

The intellectual history of the second and third centuries is that of the development of the theory of Christ's nature contained in the Proem to the fourth Gospel, into that Athanasian doctrine which is formulated in the Nicene Creed. Three explanations may be given of this process. The first, the ordinary Protestant view, can hardly be called an explanation at all, and is besides contrary to the facts of the case; it holds that the assertion of Christ's Deity was plainly in Scripture from the first, and that all that the Church did was to define it, in answer to doubts and heresies. The second, the Catholic theory, at least explains facts, if only it can be supported by evidence; according to it, the Church, divinely guided, and always preserved from error by the indwelling Spirit of God, presided over the gradual development of religious truth, from the hints and indications of it given in the New Testament. The third, or philosophical view, finds this process of thought analogous to processes which are always going on in the intellectual world. New ideas suffer modification from ideas already accepted, and, if they conquer at all, conquer only by compromise. Fresh forces are deflected from their path, and suffer diminution of their energy from forces that have been long at work. The characteristically Semitic idea of an infinite gulf fixed between the majesty of God and the littleness of man—an idea which is Mahommedan as well as Jewish—mingled in the minds of Gentile converts with recollections of gods who held converse with men, to whom they were little superior: of heroes, the offspring of a divine and a human parent, who climbed the shining heights of heaven in the strength of courage and self-sacrifice: of an Olympus, so easy to human access, that the meanest and wickedest of Roman emperors found the way. Philosophy aided the process for which mythology had smoothed the path: from Plato to Philo, from Philo to John, from John to Athanasius, the line of intellectual influence is easy to trace. And we can count every stage of the development.

Try to make the ante-Nicene Fathers humanitarian or trinitarian, in the full sense of either word, and you are distorting history to force it to serve a theological purpose. But estimate the strength and the direction of the intellectual forces which beat upon Christianity as it emerged from the obscurity of Judæa into the full stir and turmoil of the Gentile world, and then weigh the conditions under which its triumph was alone possible, and you will understand, I think, how the peasant Prophet of Galilee became the "very God of very God," who when the fulness of time was come was "made man."

Not the less does the theology of the fourth Gospel as it stands contain, if also it contains something more, the speculative explanation of the facts narrated in the first three. Whence this brilliant manifestation of the force and beauty possible to humanity? Whence these pregnant and piercing words, this winning charm of goodness, this inspiring faith in human nature, this completeness of self-consecration, this sureness of ethical touch, this clearness of religious insight, this abiding sense of God's help and presence? What shall we call the force that has moulded a human life into such harmonious unity, into so symmetrical a strength? How does this manifestation of Divine power stand related to God's general dealings with mankind? When we look at Christ, what are we to think of patriarchs and prophets of old, of all sweet singers in Israel, of the strength of the hero, and the whiteness of the saint, and the wisdom of the Rabbi? Still more, can we bring into relation to him the old Greek sages, with their earnest, childlike search into the mysteries of the universe; and Socrates, with his homely human wisdom; and the reverent yet pitiful awe of Æschylus and Sophocles before the mysterious sadness of human destiny; and the sweetness of him—the Buddha—who, more than any other, preceded Christ on the path of self-sacrifice for man? The latest Evangelist supplies the answer. All wisdom, all goodness, all strength, are but manifestations of that Word of God, that Divine Reason, which is His Essence. The true light is known by its universality: it is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It shineth in darkness, and the

darkness comprehendeth it not; it cometh to its own, and its own receive it not; but not the less is it the source of all truth, the inspirer of all goodness, the light of all our seeing, the life of all our strength. No human soul but is warmed and illumined by some spark of this divine fire, a fire that, however neglected and quenched, can never be wholly extinguished; while there are those whom it kindles into heroism, or moulds, after long discipline, into saintliness, or inspires with thoughts that breathe and words that burn. And Christ is the finished manifestation of what God can and will do for a faithful human soul. He is the perfected type of a process which is begun in every man, yet complete in none. He is the most signal proof of the fact that God is not only about us and above us, but in us. Humanity finds its highest realization, not in stoical self-reliance, but in childlike trust: *he* is most truly man who stands in closest union with God. Christ is the first-born of many brethren: humanity claims him as its own; his strength is our strength, his victory our victory, his God our God; the help which was his waits for us also, and he leads us into the presence of the universal Father.

We shall again do something to define our characteristic attitude to Christ, if we ask and answer the question, Does the centre of gravity of the Christian system lie in his life or in his death? in the charm of his character and the wisdom of his teachings, or in the interpretation put by Apostles and evangelists on his cross and his resurrection? For it remains a fact that it is very difficult to find any trace of what are called the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel in Christ's own word; and that if Paul's Epistles had never been written, and the world had been left to the sole instruction of the evangelists, what is called Evangelical Christianity would never have existed. The doctrine of the Atonement and that of the deity of Christ are more closely associated than may always have been seen at first sight: it was not without a meaning that Anselm laid down those lines of the vicarious sacrifice, which so many centuries accepted, in a treatise on the Incarnation—*Cur Deus Homo* —Why was God made man? Both conceptions belong to be same order of ideas: the logical necessities of the Atone-

ment demand the God-man. From this point of view, then, Christ's appearance upon earth is a divine transaction, the fulfilment of a plan conceived in the secrecy of the Eternal Councils before time was. It is the answer to universal and secular needs of humanity: only in appearance has it anything about it that is local or temporal. The "fulness of time" is no more than an arbitrary expression of the Divine will: all that is human in Christ's life sinks into a secondary place: its significance is focussed in the one burning point of the Agony and the Cross. Paul was resolved that he would not know Christ after the flesh; and accordingly his letters, the earliest literary records of Christianity, contain, with the exception of the words at the institution of the Supper, not the faintest echo of Christ's living teaching, nor preserve for us a single trait of his character. His interest in Christ is all on the divine plane; as the interest now of Christians who pride themselves on being Pauline is in an Almighty Saviour, who secures them against the wrath of God and the pains of hell. Whereas, on the other hand, if you leave on one side the anger of God, the wiles of the devil, the flames of the pit, the universal depravity of man, as figments of the theological imagination, you may conceive of Christ's life as simply, naturally, beautifully human. You may trace its wisdom to its sources in the clear insight of psalmist and prophet, and the large and liberal philosophy of Hillel. You may fancy him growing in strength and beauty in his Galilean home, as a flower accepts the nourishment of rains and dews and kindly earth, and graciously unfolds itself to the sun. Through the transparent veil of myth which the Evangelist has hung round his entrance upon public life, you may watch him encountering and vanquishing the temptations natural to his age, his powers, his purposes. Throughout the whole of his career he may be measured by human standards, judged of by human analogies: he has his seasons of depression, his moments of exaltation, like weaker men: his nature responds, with a truly human sensitiveness, to the love that is lavished on him, and the malice that lies in wait to trip him up: and his faith in the indestructibility of human goodness is, it seems to me, not the faith of an immortal and serene benignity, but of a mortal fellow-feeling

that has itself known trouble and temptation. But why do I waste words any more? I claim this life in all its strength, its beauty, its symmetry, for humanity: without it, my conception of what humanity is and may be would be maimed and incomplete. I cannot consent to make it a mere factor in a divine transaction; I want to feel its inspiring, soothing, liberating influence on my own soul. And that cannot be if I am to conceive of Christ as a mysterious being, altogether without parallel in the world's history: in whom was a side of strength to which nothing that is in me presents any analogy: who, while mortal, was immortal; while ignorant, was omniscient; while confined within the bounds of a human personality, was the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, the Infinite, the Absolute. My sorest need is for the strong, bright, beautiful Son of Man.

I am ready for the objection at this point, that a perfect man is as much out of the course of nature as a Man-god, and that whoever accepts the one can hardly, at least on grounds of abstract reasonableness, reject the other. But I have not advanced the doctrine of Christ's sinlessness. I do not know what sinlessness means as applied to human nature; and it is impossible to predicate sinlessness of a life which is known to us only in fragments. Imperfection is of the very essence of humanity; while at the same time the characteristic of human excellence is an imperfection that knows itself, and constantly strains towards the perfect. Who can doubt that in those secret places of Christ's nature into which his disciples could not penetrate, and of which therefore they have left no record, there was an awful sense of the infinity of holiness, and of the impossibility of completely fulfilling the exceeding broad commands of God? From any true apprehension of the humanity of Christ, the element of progress cannot be excluded: a perceptible interval separates the mature prophet who saw, with resolved mind, his career end in disappointment and death, from the eager reformer who in the first flush of success beheld "Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven." And growth implies at least relative imperfection: a present stronger than the past, a future completer than the present. Nor have I any theological interest in the abstract doctrine of Christ's sinlessness:

in so far as it detracts from the genuineness of his humanity, and makes *that* difficult of apprehension, I am swayed the other way. But then it will be evident, from all that I have already said, that I find no fault in Jesus. To criticise his words—to subject his actions to keen, dissolvent analysis—to form another estimate of his career than that which lies on the surface of the record—are things which would never have suggested themselves to me: I am content to abide in the admiring love of a disciple. But I have read many criticisms, I have formed a judgment upon many cavils, and they do not touch me. I am ready to believe that even in words of Christ which I only half understand, there are unexplored depths of wisdom. I do not wish any speech of Christ's unspoken, or any deed of his undone. To me, words, character, life, are blended into full harmony, and unite to form "one entire and perfect chrysolite." I do not ask what untrodden heights of holiness still towered above the Jesus whom I love: I do not anticipate a Christ that is to be, in whose glories the Christ to whom so many ages have looked up shall be hidden. When new religions ask my allegiance, or philosophy assures me that in the light of fresh knowledge it is time to have done with religion, I am content to say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

But apart from the inspiring and elevating effect upon humanity of such a human life as this, the strength and beauty of Christ's character stand in very close relation to his authority as a teacher. For it must be remembered that not even morals, and much less religion, can be practically taught on any scientific method. Men have admired for more than two thousand years the clear discrimination, the keen insight into human nature, the local precision, of Aristotle's Ethics; but how many have been the better for them? Analysis is wholly without inspiration; and the most careful abduction and classification of instances prick no conscience and fire no heart. I do not mean that men are not as curious as ever about the basis of ethics; but that very fact implies that they are eager to find intellectual justification for what they feel compelled to do, whether they can justify it or not, and that conscience is before and

above the methods by which it is sought to be explained. But the really great teachers—not the men who build up systems, but the reformers who make revolutions—are they who speak out of the fulness of their own hearts, the depth of their personal experience. They do not argue but assert. They do not forge a logical chain, equally strong in every link, with which to bind the reason, but make their clear appeal to the conscience and the heart. The sign that they have prevailed, is not that the hearer knows his last objection to be beaten down, his last doubt to be removed, but that his conscience echoes the word, and his heart leaps up to perform it. So, in like manner, the characteristic office of the religious seer is to report of the Eternal Realities what he has himself discerned: if he does not live with God, he cannot speak of God: if the awful touch be not upon his own soul, his words cannot convey to others the awe of the Infinite. Presently it may be the business of the theologian to reduce, if he can, these stammering revelations to form and system; though I think we are learning every day how little form and system are possible in relation to matters which in their very nature not only transcend the powers of the human mind, but even seem to confound them in hopeless contradiction. But the men who give the world a fresh impulse towards God, who revive churches, who cleanse society, who impose upon their fellows new and higher ideals of duty—the men in whose path heroes and saints are born, as flowers follow the footsteps of the spring—derive their power from the fact that they speak of that which they know, and have put to the test of living, and have found to be their own strength and peace and joy. If among living men they are to be life-giving spirits, it is on condition that it is their own heart that they pour forth, their own life that they share. Why does the same word of exhortation come heavily weighted with persuasion from these lips, while on those it awakens only weariness and disgust? The teacher must be behind the word, the life must support and illustrate the doctrine. When a good man, who has made trial of various experience, and has grown stronger, calmer, more patient, more pitiful, as the storms and the sunshine of life have beaten his head, tells us that goodness is the secret of

living, it is hard not to believe him. Shall we not believe Christ upon his word, when he speaks to us of the deep things of God—Christ, upon whom the steady brightness of the Divine Presence habitually rested, and whose life was lived in the strength of a childlike trust?

It is all the easier to believe Christ when we have fully realized that a reproach sometimes made against the gospel is, if it be a reproach, nevertheless true;—namely, that in its morality there is nothing new. I do not mean that the ethics of the New Testament have not a colour of their own which sufficiently marks them off from the stoicism of Epictetus or that latest of all systems—I hardly know what to call it—which we owe to the ingenuity of Herbert Spencer. But the practical principles of ethics are in all civilised ages almost the same; and the special tone of systems arises, not from any new discovery incorporated in any, but from the prominence given to this or that side of morals. It is possible to make an anthology from Greek poets and philosophers, from Roman moralists, from the traditions of the Rabbinical schools, from the records of Indian wisdom, in which every moral precept of the New Testament shall find a place. Such an anthology could not indeed be substituted for the New Testament; it would have neither life, nor fire, nor constraining force; but it would show that upon the ethical field little had been left for Christ to discover and proclaim. But that is so far from being a weakness of Christianity, as some persons thoughtlessly suppose, as in fact to constitute a large part of its strength. For it is not the nice distinctions of casuistry which sway men, or any unfamiliar reading of the facts and obligations of life, were such possible, but the moral impulses which have been slowly accumulating in the blood of many generations, and are ready to wake into action at a powerful voice of inspiration. A great writer of our own century died with the simple words upon his lips, "Be good, my dears: be good." It is the one thing needful: we all understand it: there can be no intellectual originality in the statement of it: but how to utter it with so persuasive a voice as to touch the heart, and quicken the conscience, and steel the will? This is precisely the marvellous power of Christ: not that he saw life in an

ethically new light, but that he poured around all affections and obligations a light and a charm all his own. And this it is too, which makes the universality of his moral claim. His distinctive principles, if he can be truly said to have any, are as wide as human nature. They underlie differences of age, race, sex, circumstance, and go down to those depths of humanity in which we are all alike. There is no uncorrupted heart which they do not make to throb with a quicker pulse. There is no unspoiled conscience in which they do not wake an answering echo.

No doubt it may be said with truth that, in opposition to the prevailing ethical sentiment of a fierce, a cruel, a selfish age, Christ brought into vivid relief the softer and humaner virtues; the Gospel throughout is true to its first words, which promise the kingdom of heaven to "the poor in spirit." But it is in the conception of the kingdom itself that I should find the focus of Christian ethics. It was the habit of classical antiquity—a habit from which Christianity is to some degree a reaction—to think more of the state and less of the citizen than we do: for the old publicist, the citizen existed for the commonwealth; with us, the commonwealth is only the aggregate of citizens. So Plato had his ideal state as well as Christ; though the one, full of recollections of the palmy days of Athens, called it Republic, while the other, going back to a time when only Jehovah ruled in Israel, named it Kingdom of God. But what, in the Republic, external laws and regulations, minute, innumerable, coercive, were to do, was to be accomplished in the other by the spirit of love, and duty, and self-sacrifice, living in every single heart, and spreading from heart to heart by silent ethical contagion. It seems to me a wonderful thing—which we should all see to be wonderful had not long custom dulled our sense—this conception of the practical oneness of individual regeneration and social reform; this thought that laws cannot produce character, while on the other hand, character supersedes laws and all but makes them needless; this belief that if once you can touch every single heart with the awe of God and the love of man, the highest objects of social life are potentially accomplished. Who cannot see in the pages of the earlier Gospels how this thought of the

kingdom of God was constantly in Christ's mind: how it was the centre round which his ethical system, so far as he can be said to have one, crystallized: how he laboured to fix it, in all its aspects and applications, in the minds of his disciples, by metaphor and parable: how it summed up in a word all that he lived and died for? Nor can any heavier indictment be brought against historical Christianity than that it has been faithless to Christ exactly where faithfulness was of highest worth: that now it has narrowed the kingdom to mean the church, a walled garden of the Lord, outside of which the unransomed children of God live hard and sad and unlovely lives; and again, has denied that earth can never be a kingdom of God at all, and has referred souls pining for liberty, and hearts crushed by intolerable wrong, for satisfaction of their longing to a dim and distant heaven. And all the while men only need to believe in a kingdom of God, possible here and now, in the very midst of sorrows waiting for consolation, and wrongs crying out to be redressed, to make it a blessed reality.

In like manner I must honestly confess that I know nothing of what are the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. This complete depravity of human nature, this Divine wrath lowering over a disobedient earth, this universal incapacity of pleasing God, this transaction between God's Justice and His mercy by which the innocent pays the penalty and the guilty go free, this appropriation, by the believer, of merits not his own, this world lying in darkness and the shadow of death outside a ransomed and rejoicing Church, are conceptions which cannot be co-ordinated with that of Christ's genuine humanity. These things were they true, would make a break betweeen the Old Testament and the New which would be difficult indeed to bridge over, which in fact theologians have attempted to bridge over by expedients which are the disgrace of reasonable criticism. For myself, I feel it necessary to be able to unite Christ, in an organic unity of thought, with psalmist and prophet—not merely to bind together the old dispensation and the new by elaborate intellectual carpentry of prediction and fulfilment, metaphor and fact, type and antitype. Christianity is the consummate blossom of Hebrew faith, in which new elements had slowly

been developing themselves in the centuries between the Evangelical Prophet and the coming of Christ: Jesus lived and died a Jew: the faith and worship of his fathers were enough for him at the very moment that he was transmuting them into a world religion. He knew, I am persuaded, that after he had poured the new wine into the old bottles, the bottles might be trusted to burst of themselves; that whatever in right and usage was local and temporary would drop off, and the essential and universal be left to do their work and win their widening way. So I look far beyond the complicated doctrinal systems of the Reformation, beyond even the Creeds in which an earlier Christianity strove to crystallize speculation, to Christ himself, in proof of the simplicity of all true religion. That there is one God and Father of mankind, whom we are to love with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; that all men are brethren, bound to one another by inseparable ties, making on one another indefeasible claims; and that the one Divine spirit lives and moves in us all, strengthening us for service and kindling us to love,—to believe this is enough for life, for toil, for hope, for trust, for death. For it was when men began to think about religion more and to feel it less, that they hedged it around with definitions and built it up into the symmetry of a system.

Shall we say, then, that Christianity was no more than a finer Judaism? or was there nothing in Christ's Theism—to use the theological language of our day—which gave it a colour of its own? Yes, the characteristic theology of the gospel is shut up in one word, which has just, almost inadvertently, escaped my lips: God, the infinite, the Omnipotent, the Eternal, the Maker and Ruler of countless worlds, is the Father of mankind, in the hollow of whose hand we lie always, who has numbered the very hairs of our heads, who watches over us with a very perfect love and a compassion that cannot change. No one will ask me to prove that this is an idea unknown to ethnic religions and philosophies, but it may not have occurred to you how there is in the Old Testament only the faint adumbration of it. The great religious poet to whom we owe the 103rd Psalm, does not speak of it except in the hesitating voice of metaphor: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the

Lord pitieth them that fear Him." The later Isaiah comes nearest to it when he says, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." But these utterances, which stand almost, if not quite alone, in the old Hebrew literature, beautiful and touching as they are, fall short of the grand and infinitely pathetic thought of Christ, that there is no weak, ignorant, sinful, rebellious son of Adam but may lift up hands of supplication to the All-holy with the cry, Abba, Father! and that as no earthly father who was worthy of the name could ever close his heart to the son of his flesh who, whatever his offences against the sweet sanctities of home, longed with the longing of genuine repentance for return and pardon, so God is not only always waiting to be merciful, but goes out to meet the prodigal on the way. This, to me, is the centre point and heart of Christianity. It differentiates it from all religions before or since. I should look upon faithfulness or unfaithfulness to it as indicating the true relation of a man or a church to Christ. It was an easy thing to believe once —hard, too hard, now. We, unhappy, come upon our Theistic faith, if we have any, from another side; and God, for us, withdraws Himself behind a machinery of laws, through which it is difficult to see a Father's face and to feel the touch of a Father's hand. We are hastening back to the old Jewish thought: we are no longer members of a family, but subjects of a government; and God, who was our Father, once more looks down upon us in the stern majesty of a King. What egress we are to find presently from this sad practical perplexity, I cannot tell; nor is it for me to discuss these difficulties now. But Christ tells me, and I have an unspeakable joy in believing him, that in God I have a Father, who watches over my individual fate, to whom I can confide all my joys and sorrows and temptations and sins, and upon whose faithful heart I can rest my weary head when the burthen of my life is greater than I can bear. And it seems to me that in so far as this scientific age abandons this thought, it is wandering away from Christ.

What, then, did Jesus come for, do you ask, if he accomplished no atonement, if he burst upon the world with

no elaborate system of theological truth? From the intellectual side, I might reply that the development of Hebrew thought had been one long preparation for the birth of a world religion; and that he took what was universal in the faith of his fathers, and fusing it into deeper unity in the fire of his own soul, proclaimed it in such a way as to catch and charm the ear of humanity. There were Hebrews who could not divest it of its Hebrew shell, to whom in their seclusion in the wilderness beyond Jordan it was always only a finer form of Judaism: the Gentile mind soon laid hold of it, and fashioned it into some likeness of familiar speculation. But, in my view, it would never have passed the gulf between the Semitic and the Aryan mind, except in that simplest and most universal form which it took upon the lips of Christ. You know the old, well-worn story: how it spread in the synagogues of Asia Minor and in the Ghetto of Rome: how the poor in spirit everywhere welcomed it with eager joy: how women by its help rose into a true human dignity, and slaves forgot their stripes and chains: how the sinful drew from it the hope of better things, and the sorrowful found comfort, and behind the lurid foreground of Roman war and greed and lust, the faithful discerned the bright dawning of the kingdom of God. The gospel spread because it was indeed good news. And men, saved from sin, from doubt, from despondency, from despair, looked up to their Saviour with eyes of grateful affection.

And shall it not be so yet again? This is a religiously disturbed age, full of scepticism and hesitations, putting its doubts and denials strongly, but reticent as to its faith; sometimes inclined to wonder whether religion be not a remnant of childish habits of thought which will slowly fade out of the blood, and again clinging with a pathetic reliance to some Eternal Realities, though *what* it can hardly tell. But on the whole it seems to me to be resolved on two things: first, that in religion, as in every other department of thought, it will affirm no more than it surely knows; and secondly, that whatever else may change or pass, the moral law remains, one, changless, eternal. If this be so, the days of elaborate theological systems are gone: let men who would willingly have the ninth century back again, sing the

Athanasian Creed; let those for whom the scientific development of the last three centuries does not exist, pin their faith on Calvin's Institutes; the disciples of the new time must have simpler beliefs, ethics as wide as humanity, a God equal in grandeur to a freshly revealed universe. New world-philosophies, new social systems, have sprung up in abundance in these latter years; wild and foolish efforts, sparing nothing established, no matter how sacred, have been made to re-organise society on new principles; but has any fresh moral ideal been presented to men? Do not all reformers alike strain after that equal justice, that mutual helpfulness, that assured peace, that universal happiness, which Christ summed up in one word as the kingdom of God? No human ingenuity can get outside the universal: the true conditions of life were discovered long ago, nor can any subtlety of speculation take away from or add to them. I know that there are philosophic systems which leave no room for religion as Christ conceived it. If we, and all that we are—quick mind, warm heart, keen conscience, fixed will—are but parts of a material machine, which grinds on for ever towards its destined dissolution, it is difficult to see what better right we have to a religion than the puppets in a village show, which simulate life when their strings are pulled, and seem to speak with a voice which is not their own. If this is the worst of all possible worlds, and death a welcome escape from a life which no man can make either noble or happy, it is idle to talk of a God whose love is as unreal as His power is bounded. But there are other and more hopeful searchers after truth than these, who, while facing every fact of science, and lending an ear to all deliverances of philosophy, feel the necessity of an Eternal stay and a hope that will not die to-morrow; who would fain leave the world a little better than they found it, and, if they might, would see before they go the grey dawn in the east of a brighter and happier day. And these men are learning more and more every day that they cannot escape Christ. Their social objects are his, whatever the methods by which they strive to realize them. The simpler their faith in Divine Realities, the more does it put on the likeness of his simplicity. They look back through eighteen centuries,

darkened with the dust and deafened by the noise of controversy, and discern, that after all, the secret of eternal life is to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. And soon, I doubt not, these children of the newest time, keen-eyed with its knowledge, yet perplexed with its mysteries and its hesitations too, will find themselves standing side by side with the simple, the sorrowful, the poor in spirit, and drinking in the consolation of the Master's promise, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

The Future Life.

IN approaching a subject, the difficulty of treating which is only equalled by the responsibility of doing so and by the momentousness of its own issues, I wish to state distinctly the intended aims and limit of this lecture. I propose to dwell with much insistence only on those arguments which, if not undisputed, are still unexhausted and certainly unoverthrown: and yet I do not wish by any omissions I may make of usually advanced proofs, thereby to appear to slight any ground of hope in favour of the reality of a future life that has ever brought conviction or comfort to a single human soul.

In discussing a subject so vast, so impalpable, so out of all ordinary human range, nothing is narrower and few things less excusable than to insist on the reception by all of the particular arguments, which are strongest to our own minds, and on the absolute rejection of those which appear to us weak. The strength or weakness of an argument on so distant and removed a subject as this, where the hope entertained is an individual possession, and the hope not entertained an individual loss,—the strength or weakness of an argument is after all not so much what it may appear to others, or perhaps even be in itself, as what it is to the individual constitution of mind which assimilates it or is insensible to it. Nor do I wish to ignore or even to undervalue a single objection made by any doubter, often in unwillingness and sorrow, against the probability of such a life.

The future life seems to me to mean simply and exactly

life in the future. What I believe in is life. Time, place, modes are mere incidents. We may and do and perhaps must think and speculate about them, but they are incidental, collateral, and often in themselves very uncertain. What I believe in is our life, and that that life is continued, from age to age it may be, and from world to world, but continued somewhere and in some manner, after its removal from the present earthly stage. Both thoughts are well expressed in the language of the Scriptures, the one in the evangelic utterance, "Neither in this world nor in the next,"* and the other in the epistolary expression, "The power of an endless life."† This is all to which I absolutely commit myself in the present argument—to the fact and the truth of the continued life, not necessarily to any one of the received theories of its nature and character.

At the same time it is obvious that that life must have characteristics of some kind in itself; and in order to realize it at all to our minds, we must have, if not some knowledge, at least some intimate persuasion what those characteristics in the general are likely to be: and, on the other hand, what in the eye of reason and common sense and common feeling it is unlikely, or even morally impossible, they should be.

First, then, is death the end of our personal and individual being? As far as the body is concerned, I think it is; not, however, that even the body is annihilated, for each element of it passes, as far as we can see, into some other form, and a few centuries would show it dispersed into, and constituting a part of, ten thousand other forms of bodily or material existence: but the individual body is dispersed, and is no longer the special aggregate of materials which constituted itself and made it a separate personal entity. Then what reason have you to suppose that such is not the course and the end of the whole being man? Because the body is not the whole being man. This seems to me one of the plainest and most certain facts of our existence. I must deprive myself of all powers of observa-

* Matt. xii. 32: οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, "Neither in this age, nor in the coming."

† Heb. vii. 16: κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου, "The power of an indissoluble life."

tion and of reason before I can cease to be sure that there is in each of us a form of being quite different from our merely bodily being. You may call it thought or mind or soul, or what you like. It is indifferent to me. What I mean is, that there exists—and I should have antecedently thought that it was clear to every man's consciousness that there did exist—a second nature in him, call it a spiritual nature, which has qualities quite apart and distinct from any visible bodily quality; a something which I do not say is here and now actually or always independent of the body for the means of its manifestation, but which certainly is distinct in character from any and every simple attribute of the body—which often manifests its existence, and not through the body—and which sometimes, though manifesting itself otherwise, could not possibly be manifested through the body or any of its senses or organs. Thus, therefore, there are two distinct classes of emotions and passions in our complex nature; and though we may use the same phrases to designate both, they are mutually different if not opposed, and distinct, if not entirely unconnected. The hunger or thirst of the body is one thing; the hunger or thirst of the soul another. The hunger or thirst for bread or for water is one thing; the hunger or thirst after righteousness, another. Though we often thus apply the same terms to the bodily as we do to the spiritual appetites and emotions, speaking of desire, love, energy, in both cases, the difference is certainly more than metaphorical—it is real. They differ in character. They differ not only in sphere and object, but in nature. If there be any difference at all in things anywhere, there is one here; and we all, I should think, know it and feel it.

But granting this difference in kind to be a real one, even these more spiritual forms and conditions it is said come through, are dependent on, and therefore must live and die with, the bodily organism. I doubt that either the fact or the conclusion is correct. There is as much evidence that the spiritual or thinking power is sometimes independent of the bodily organization as there is that it is always and inevitably dependent on it. The frequent instances of periods of mental aberration ceasing, and the

normal condition of the spiritual and intellectual man returning, and that often to all appearance through causes acting simply on the mind and feelings, are surely as much in favour of the idea of some power existing that is not entirely dependent on the body, as the opposite cases, when the mental change appears closely connected with some bodily change, are in favour of the necessary connection between the two. The cases of mental and spiritual power existing and acting triumphantly above and beyond all outward circumstances (disease, loss of sight, hearing, and the power to move), are at least as clear and certain in themselves as any instances of that power being wholly destroyed by these unfavourable conditions.

You have probably known, at least I know that I have, instances of persons lying at the moment of death expressing, though only just audibly, the clearest intellectual, moral, social, personal and emotional thoughts that their souls had ever conceived in the best and strongest days of their lives, and while the bodily life was on the very verge of extinction using its last remaining function to exhibit the entire health and vigour of their mental nature, showing the absolute contemporaneousness and co-existence of a perishing body and a strong healthy soul. Say not you have known many instances of the contrary. So have I. But one single instance of the kind I mention demolishes the dictum that the mind inevitably shares the fate and fortunes of the body. Indeed, it is just as difficult—to me it is far more difficult—to understand how abstract thought, the love of justice, of mercy, of truth, of God, can be produced through and by "the grey tissues of the brain substance," as it is to believe in these, invisible it may be, but real thoughts and affections, as possible entities apart from these tissues; and it is just as difficult—to me it is far more difficult—to see how the brain can force these spiritual realities to rot with itself, as it is to conceive of them, when once created, continuing to exist in a spiritual independence of their own.

It is nothing that the manifestation of the spiritual man disappears when the body dies, because that spirit never was visible when the body lived, and always seemed to be dealing with a world *not* this, even while outwardly con-

nected with the world that *is* this. So that without saying that there is nothing in the facts and reasonings which are supposed to go for proof that death is the end of the whole being man, I do say that they are not conclusive—that we must not regard this statement as proved—that there are many indications that it is by no means incontestable—that at least we are not prevented by the supposed presence of an irremovable objection on the threshold, from entering on other considerations in favour of the view we hold. So that to those whose possibilities of thought are limited to the range of material supplied by the five senses, we say, that even on their own grounds we do not concede them an indisputable victory; and that as there is another region of facts—facts of consciousness, facts of history, facts of moral reasoning—which is at least as real in itself (some able men have maintained more real) as the region of the five senses, we shall have no reason to be deterred by any supposed insurmountable objection, such as that I have described, from presently entering upon that region.

But in the mean time the objector stays our progress by the presentation of a further difficulty. Granting, he says, that there be such a thing as the spiritual immortality you plead for, what is the sphere in which, what are the limits within which, it exists and takes effect?

Now I beg to remind you of the limitation with which I began. What I believe in, I stated, is the continuance of human life after death. I am very much interested in all questions arising out of, or involved in, the development and application of this truth, but I am bound to nothing but the fact itself. I am responsible for no details whatever. I may enter into such from an irresistible fascination, from an irrepressible curiosity, as matters of legitimate and interesting speculation. But my experience is, that with insisted-upon details we import illegitimate difficulties, the incurring of which, and the encounter with which, are perfectly gratuitous, because with details it is impossible for us in the nature of things to deal. They are entirely beyond our sphere. We can exercise nothing but surmise and conjecture in reference to them. They form no part whatever of our argument. Of a life, the conditions of which are

utterly unknown to us, and from our present limited capacities even inconceivable by us, we can draw no picture that shall be wholly reliable. The utmost we can do is to approach the conjecturally probable.

But as the question just asked about the extent or the limits of this immortality is part of the fact, though incapable of precise answer or solution, I may briefly state the point of view in which the subject presents itself to me. I do not, then, believe that we can assign, even in theory, any limits whatever. These are knowable only to, and can be imposed only by, the Supreme Creative Power. What in the world are we to know of the infinite series of quantities and qualities ranging between Omniscience and what we call instinct? and how are we to mark the point at which one series or one individual is fit to live on, and another only fit to die off? It seems to me mere presumption and vanity in us to affect such knowledge, to affect anything indeed but interesting conjecture. And therefore I disown any obligation to answer this question. I simply say this. There is a spiritual life, partly formed and fashioned, it may be, at one stage through the agency of outward and material organisms, but in itself, and finally at least, distinct from these in their present forms. When this begins, I cannot say; in what cases it does not fulfil the conditions of continuance, I cannot say. There are various degrees of vitality. There may be various degrees of immortality. And the vitality here may be the measure of the immortality hereafter. It is possible to conceive of annihilation or of absorption, and it is as possible to conceive of individual immortality. I cannot prescribe limits to the spiritual chemistry of the Creator. There is an apathy in the mixed natures of earth which is akin to a non-personal existence; there is a subsidence into the material so gross, that there seems to be no reason why it should not stay there and be absorbed in it. There are natures of an iniquity so extreme, that there seems no reason to suppose they should not be suicidal, that they should not extinguish themselves, and fall and perish beneath the corruption of their own rottenness and the weight of their own depravity, exhaling themselves, like fœtid vapours, into the purifying elements around them, and with the like

effect. The annihilation and disappearance of certain natures is not at all incompatible with the idea of the immortality of others. The old theory of the divines, that all are alike and equal in heaven, is an incredible monstrosity of thought. You might as well say—supposing some spiritual power in animals surviving their death—that all the inhabitants of heaven would still be equal, the weasel and Shakespeare. Where does immortality begin? is no wiser and no more difficult question than, where does virtue begin, where does knowledge begin, where does sin begin? The question of my hypothesis would be, where does the fitness for survival begin? and this must be decided by some fuller means of judgment than ours.

In truth, the firmest basis for our hope of continued life rests on that Judgment, rests on that Benignity, that Justice, that Consistency, and that Wisdom, which exist alone in the great Creator, and with whom we leave the whole host of these questions of detail to us insoluble. I have indeed known men of a profound piety, and, amidst sorrows and persecutions and almost perpetual bodily anguish, of an unswerving faith in God and His goodness, and giving up their lives to the search after religious truth; other men, too, whose lives have been throughout lives of purity, kindness, and human service, unable to realize this hope, and willing to accept as the best for them, if God so willed it, the termination of their being with the present state.

But I confess I am myself unable to rise to the height of this self-abnegation and surrender. There is so much in my life I wish had been otherwise—so much I wish to make up for and amend—that if I were denied all opportunity of compensating in a renewed life for the shortcomings, the errors, and neglected duties of this, the remorse which at times overwhelms me now would become intolerable, and make the remainder of my days a misery. And I cannot, too, give up my claims on my Maker. I am here a spiritual being created by Himself, and, in a sense, in His own image. To speak it reverently, I am now a being as well as He. I cannot consent to my own destruction. I am as a son, grown up, who has rights from the Father that gave him birth. And I say, if He has justice and goodness, He will

not rob me of my legitimate expectations, legitimate because created by Himself.

In truth, to me, the ultimate ground of my belief in immortality is my belief in God. If I believe in God—that is, in a wise, true, just, and loving Power, my Father, creating and ruling us all—I must believe in a continued life. If there were no such God, if we were the subjects either of some impersonal Power or of a cruel and heartless Creator, then alone would a disbelief in immortality become possible to me. Side by side with all the brightness and gladness and beauty of this world, there still lies a frightful mass of suffering so undeserved, of cruelty so apparently relentless, of justice so incredible, that it is impossible to believe at once in a just and benign Creator, and in this state, so full of pangs and misery and wrongs, being the whole of an individual's existence. The shrieks of innumerable men and women and little children—helpless and harmless, and, as far as we know, not only sinless but often beautifully good—through age after age have ascended, and are now ascending, to the ear of the Power that made them; and if this be the whole of their being, if this be not a part only of a prolonged existence, during which these inequalities shall be explained as a portion of the present necessity of things, and rectified, what ground have we for thinking our Creator good? And if the frightful mass of the corresponding sin and wrong mixed up with and occasioning all this misery, is to pass on with its present inadequate exposure and punishment, violating even man's sense of the righteous retribution due to it, what ground is there for thinking our Creator a Vindicator and just? Both suppositions, that there is not such a God, and that there is not such a continuation of life, are to me alike incredible, and they and their opposites stand or fall together.

Why, indeed it may be asked, are such dreadful things permitted now? I know not. I only know they exist, and I suppose for a time they must continue to do so, as the result of our awful, no doubt, but grand possession of free-will—often, alas! so abnormally, so wantonly exercised—and of our ignorance and of our unfinished training, and of our possession of a nature that may be aberrant, because it is

not and cannot be wholly governed by the laws of any controlling external mechanism. These sad things are parts of a process, such as earthquakes and tornados, ending in good, or there is no possible justification of them. The very argument founded on the justice and mercy of God, which is now making a belief in the hell of the divines impossible, applies with as strong, if with a less intense, force to the truth that God does not part with us here, or we with him.

But passing away from this chamber of horrors into the average life of man, each one of us, even the happiest, is still justified by common sense and the absolute sense of right in saying to his fellow, Has God made you fond of knowledge, and do you think that He is going to close the sphere and opportunity of that knowledge almost as soon as He has opened them out to you? What! does the good teacher teach his child to read, and having taught him close the book after the first chapter, and never allow him to open it again? Has God just unlocked the door of the universe to us, and when we have hastily looked into it with longing eyes and glanced at its unexamined, or, what is worse, its half-examined wonders, will He close the door, and send us back, in the newly-awakened hunger of our souls, into darkness and atrophy? Does He say to the great minds He has caused to grow up in this world, "Turn over the page of the book of knowledge and of life;" and when with eager fingers they clutch to turn the next, say to them, "No more, for ever," and shut up the book before their longing, sorrowing and amazed eyes? Does He say to us, Live here in the exercise of such affections, that after a time your being is wrapped up in that of others, and your loved ones have come to be part of yourselves, and you have been taught by God Himself to love them so dearly that to part with them at all is a sorrow, but to part with them for ever would be like eternal death to you, would rob the sun of all its brightness, the earth of all its verdure—does He say to us, "Bar the gates of your hearts, blind and drench your eyes with tears—you shall never see one of them again"?

I ask my Maker in agony why He made me—why begin,

why plan a failure? Why raise a thirst, and shut up the fountain of supply at the moment the thirst is greatest? What! are there difficulties in accepting this belief in a continued life, and are there none in rejecting it? Even the seed put into the soil by human hands is not put there only to peer above the ground, show a few leaves and die, but to grow up and blossom, and fulfil the uttermost possibility of its being, and bring forth fruit after its kind, and the very best fruit it has by its own nature been made capable of yielding.

The infant contains within itself the germ and possibility of the thoughtful and cultivated man. Why not the man the germ and possibility of a still higher nature?

This is an age of the world in which scarcely a limit should be put to the possibilities of development. We have seen such wonderful exhibition of the before inconceivable applications of simple natural and chemical forces, that our faith in possibilities should become illimitable. Is this an age to believe in the limitation of the powers and resources of the Creator, and that He has come to an end of the possible developments of His noblest work? Why, the addition of a single sense would transmute the world to us! The lens only contains within itself part of the possibilities of the eye. And if we can make one set of glasses by which becomes discernible to us the otherwise invisible star whose place is millions of millions of miles away from us, and another set by which is made visible the minutest fibres in the wing of the minutest insect, is it not surely a possibility in the hands of the great Creator that He shall do with the eye what man can do with a lens? And so with memory, with reason, with imagination, with reverence, with love, with purity—let us rise to a sense of the highest possibilities even of the present, and we shall have the most convincing ground for extending the possibilities, and if so, on moral and intellectual grounds, the probabilities, of the future.

Readily, therefore, can we conceive of the indefinite enlargement of the powers, the indefinite extension of the pursuits, the indefinite elevation also of the spheres of duty and service, and the intensification of the joys of the present. And we believe that this, under a wise and benignant God, is our destiny in the future, and that this life is a stage of

initiatory discipline, leading to still higher spheres and happier conditions of being beyond the mere outward, earthly, transient life now connected with and dissolved with our bodies.

If, to my mind at least, it is impossible to equalize our various immortalities, and to reduce our lives in the great, yet not to any of us distant, future to one level of pursuit, intensity, and progress, so it is not to be expected that the vitality of hope here should be any more equal and uniform than the vitality of mental being there. If there will be various degrees in the intensity of our life in the actual reality of our hereafter, it stands to reason that there should be corresponding varieties in the intensity of our hope of it here. As in the future some must have, by the effect of the natures they carry with them, a higher being and fruition than others, and star must differ from star in glory, so here in some the hope must be weaker and in others stronger. You can no more level and equalize natures on earth that you can in heaven. And accordingly we are not surprised (nay, we should be surprised were it otherwise) that in some men this hope is earnest and ardent, in others faint and cold, and still in others nearly non-existent. The high, spiritual, holy nature has already its affinity with, and almost its life in, that future of joy and progress of which it feels itself a part even here; while a low, base, sensual, and selfish nature, whose almost only developed affinities are with the outward and the material, must hold that hope, if hold it it does at all, in an unrealizing faintness, if not fear. The man whose life has been full of sunshine, prosperous, healthy, genial and glad, and with the circle of his love up to a given moment untrespassed on by death, how are we to expect that he should nurture in his busy and satisfied soul the hope of a life beyond this to him happy earth, with the same passionate longing, the same craving for rest and refuge, the same fulness of persuasion, that sustains the soul, and dries the tears, and soothes the sorrows, of the sick, suffering, and deserted creature to whom earth has given no home and little happiness, and whose only hope is in a future and in God?

It should stagger no one, therefore, to find how unequal is this hope among us. Nay, the reality it represents would

seem less real if it were otherwise. I know that it is possible for us individually to neglect or to drive down this hope into virtual extinction. I know we can do this, as well as many other sad and unhappy things, for ourselves. We can do it with the love of virtue, we can do it with the love of knowledge, the love of man, the love of God, or any other of the higher affections and aspirations of the soul.

This great hope is then, I conceive, as much a subject of spiritual culture as any other affection of our nature, and the man who entertains it deeply will rejoice in calling to mind, for the sake of others if he needs it little for himself, every consideration that tends to cheer and fortify the sacred instinct and the dear persuasion of his heart. He calls to mind, for instance, our intense dread and hatred of extinction and our eager clinging to life which are as much a part of our nature and constitution, and put there as much by the author of that nature, as speech and reason and hope and fear are; and it is seldom anything but a desire to escape the disappointments and sufferings and sorrows of our present life, and to rise to heaven as to our native sky, that reconciles us to death at all. He calls to mind how undying and universal in some form or other has been this hope among mankind all through the records of spiritual experience; through black and white, through savage and civilized humanity, from Kamtschatka to Peru, from Lapland to Del Fuego, through Scandinavia and India, Greece and Rome, the patient inquiring traveller goes, finding everywhere signs, albeit often rough or faint, yet traceable and actual, of this great hope, which therefore seems to be an ineradicable portion of our nature, implanted in it by the One who made us. The only nation I know of which through any great portion of its history seemed to live without any direct and authorized acknowledgment of this hope was the Jewish; and their apparent temporary abandonment of it could only have been sustained, and I think was only sustained, by a system of theocratic ethics which made right and wrong rewarded or punished in this world, and God deal a full and sufficient measure of justice to each one here. This might have been, and indeed was, an incorrect interpretation of the actual providence of God, but it showed the necessity

of a belief in His justice, so that, to the nation who did not receive the belief in a rectifying Hereafter, it was absolutely essential to hold the belief in a perfect justice here. And thus the Jewish belief was a necessary corollary of its disbelief, or its disbelief was only made possible, for a continuance, by its belief, and either way was shown the necessity to them of vindicating the justice of God.

This universal hope has further had its confirmation in the positively asserted and numerously attested and steadily believed instances or signs of the continued existence in a spiritual form of persons who had passed the gates of death. Thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures have borne testimony, and testimony that in any ordinary case would have been deemed by every one sufficient, that they had seen and had speech of friends who had in the body died away from this earth. I cannot, according to any modest philosophical estimate of these facts, refuse to receive them as phenomenal, and possessing their own appropriate weight in any large and just estimate of the presumptive evidences connected with this subject. Doubtless the firm persuasion of the reality of a spiritual immortality may itself have led to some of these real or supposed experiences, but conversely the experiences, themselves have also undoubtedly led to this strong persuasion.

The clear-headed, strong-minded Apostle Paul positively declares, and more than once, that he had seen our Lord, and more than once after his death upon the cross. And this he does deliberately and in writing, and in writing the authenticity of which is undoubted. Several others of the same age bore similar testimony, and the apostles were so persuaded of it that their teaching as a whole rests upon it as the foundation of their faith and preaching. That our Lord Jesus Christ while on earth taught the doctrine of the soul's immortality, taught it and lived it, I adduce not here as an argument in its favour, though to me it is one. It is one to me, because I trust his insight, I lean on his authority, and I love him with my whole soul; and I cannot believe that the sun that rose on Galilee rises on it still, that the mount that overlooked the temple overlooks its site now, that the very brook rolls at its feet, perhaps the very olive grows on its side,

and yet that he who was greater than that temple, more fair than the olive, more living than the brook, who led the panting spirit to the Mount of God, who to this day speaks words of everlasting command to us, and whispers hopes of never-dying comfort in our ears, whose name greets us when we enter into life, whose guidance leads us while we stay in life, and whose beckoning finger summons us to brighter homes when the bed of death is beneath us, has actually ceased to be, is at this moment less in actual personal life than the reptile that crawls or the sinner that still breathes upon this earth. It is impossible! And because he lives, I shall live also.

The admitted fact that the nature of this future life, the character of this hoped-for heaven, varies with varying faiths and climates, only confirms my previous positions, that we can know nothing positively of details, that we cannot go beyond conjectural probability and general principles, and that the future conditions of a continued life can only be realized to our minds through the analogies of the present.

Thus we find, as we should expect, that the delights and sufferings of the future life bear in each nation a close analogy to the delights and sufferings with which they are most familiar in the present. The hell of the Scandinavian Edda is intensely cold. The hell of the East-originating Christian is intensely hot. The wild Indian's heaven is, or was, where there was good hunting. The Mahometan's, where there is undying and never-satiated sensual pleasure. The Christian's, where there is perpetual praise. Swedenborg, while too nearly preserving the vulgar idea of hell, rose, to his great credit, far above that idea of heaven. He describes, for instance, the overwhelming weariness and the paralyzing monotony which would arise from the exclusive occupation of praise, and finally dismisses the priests, who are so quaintly described as continually urging the goaded and wearied sense to incessant praise and worship, with these words: "Do you not know," he asks, "what is meant by glorifying God? Its meaning is, to bring forth the fruits of love, i.e. to discharge all the duties of our calling with faithfulness, sincerity, and diligence: for this, indeed, is the love of God and the love of our neighbour, and constitutes the bond of

society and the public good." Have you never read these words of our Lord: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples"?

And as with nations and religions, so with individuals: the wearied finds his heaven in rest, the sorrowful in comforting peace, the sufferer in having no more pain. To some, the absence of earthly temptations, and, with earthly temptations, of earthly sin and lower doing, and the liberation of the spirit from bodily weights and besettings, and its elevation into an atmosphere more favourable to lofty aims and pure living, is the great charm and the great hope of the future life. To some, ceaseless activity in service, or ceaseless advance in knowledge. These various hopes and longings, felt by individual Christians, seem to be more justly representative of the essential spirituality of the holy Christian faith than other still very prevalent and defective ones; and, if not any of them by itself exclusively true, to indicate the line in which truth runs.

I do not myself believe in any of the current divisions either of people or time or place. I cannot understand an only two-fold division into good and bad, as the distinctive shades of character are delicate and innumerable; a two-fold division of existence into time and eternity, as life is continuous and indissoluble; or a two-fold division of place and condition, as "the mind is its own place," and happiness and misery must have as many varieties of intensity as there are individual souls to share them.

And thus life in the present and life in the future, as we contemplate them, are not two distinct, separate and unequally divided periods of time—seventy years here and eternity there—but parts of each other, the second a continuance of the first, both spiritually homogeneous, governed by the same principles of right and truth, directed by the same law of duty and progress, carrying on the same ever-during process of growth and development; rewards and punishments not relegated to a distant futurity, but present with us now, as the consequences of our own act and thought, and in a sense therefore continuing with us for ever; the possibilities of the future not confined to earth, but extended to heaven; and thus there, as here, room for

growth, for penitence, for improvement, for rectification, for compensation, and for retribution.

The case being so, then, it may be replied, the nature of this future life being in itself so indeterminate, the presumptions in support of its certainty, though so numerous and so strong, not amounting, as it appears to many minds, to absolute demonstration, would it not be as well to leave this matter alone? If life has here on earth a substantive duty, career, and value of its own—if it be of the same genus and order as that which you contemplate after death—if the principles by which it is to be guided, the affections by which it is to be swayed, the pursuit of truth and knowledge by which it is to be characterized—if the justice, right, goodness, and mercy, which we reverence and cultivate here, are to continue unchanged in their essence in the coming state—why not leave matters as they stand, live the life you ought to live here, knowing that this is the best preparation for the life you hope to live hereafter, and not press into undue and disproportioned prominence a hope or belief to many of us not resting on incontestable foundations, and which really exercises, and need exercise, no practical influence upon life as it is?

Why? Because, in the first place, we cannot. Nothing ever has repressed or ever will be able to repress thinking, hoping, believing on this subject. You cannot help its entering into and forming part of the thought of our life. You may drive it out, at least for a time, from your own thought, but you cannot drive it out of the thought of your race. It rises up afresh, as from an ever-bubbling and perennial fount, in every generation. Why? Because life does not and cannot go on the same without it as with it. Its presence or absence is not a matter of indifference. It is the most powerful factor that can be introduced into human life, altering all its proportions and a great part of its significance. I do indeed believe that in the way this expectation of a future life has been manipulated by theology, the influence of pressing and immediate consequences has been greatly underrated, and of removed and distant ones greatly exaggerated.

But for all that, this expectation is by no means a matter

of no practical importance. It is the most active alterative you can introduce into the health of the world. Even here upon earth no man pretends that duration is not a most significant element in his calculations. No man pretends that even here, in this present life, it is the same thing to his views, feelings or actions, whether his residence on any particular spot is likely to be for one year or his whole life. The wandering Arab and the settled European, the chance visitor and the regular dweller, the dying proprietor and the vigorous heir, the restless nomad and the patient tiller of the soil, all differ in the views they take and the value they attach to things. Habits, pursuits, friendships, what we are careless about and what we are anxious about, are all inevitably and materially affected by the element of duration.

Right itself, it is true, does not change its nature, and what is essentially wrong and bad does not change its nature; but the momentous good of rightness and the momentous evil of wrongness cannot but become intensified by the added consideration that they prolong and extend and diffuse themselves along the never-ending lines of an everlasting existence. Bereavement where no re-union is expected is not the same thing as bereavement where re-union is certain. Death is not the same thing. Poverty is not the same thing. Pain is not the same thing. And a mean mind ceases to be the transient and despicable thing, and a pure and upright one the unprofitable thing, and the inner heart, whether good or bad, the indifferent thing, that the aims and results of this life only would sometimes seem to make them. And a man must have lived somewhere out of Christendom at least who has it not in his power to quote some instance or instances within his knowledge of the belief in immortality having soothed a trouble, strengthened against a temptation, assuaged a pain, or comforted and armed for death.

It is in vain, therefore, to say (even on these grounds alone of altered proportions, altered relations, altered estimates and values) that the belief in extended life is practically of no importance to us, and that we may just as well wait and see what will happen.

For, further, this belief in immortality affects us not only in our individual conditions, but it affects us socially,

affects us in our feeling and conduct towards each other and our race. In fact, it would almost seem that this effect of the belief was the more fully accomplished of the two. It would almost seem, by a reference to facts, that we had more evidence of the social and public effects of this belief than of the private. It would not, indeed, be just to decide on such a subject from what *appears*; for what men do for others, as a consequence of this general belief, is of its own nature overt and public; what they do and feel for themselves is often known only to God and their own hearts.

The sorrow borne, and the tear dried, and the trial braved, and the evil resisted, and the comfort and strength derived, are oftentimes things of the inner heart; a stranger knows not of them; they come not by observation. But the cry of rescue to a soul, made for purity, yet steeped in vice —made for happiness, yet corroded by care—made for a free self-ownership and self-command, yet crushed into self-annihilation by the absolute ownership of another—such a cry rings in our ears, and is known and heard of all men. It is incontestable that the belief in man as the possessor of an immortal soul has done more to humanize society, establish private rights, extend mutual regard and respect among men, redeem degraded castes, soften the rigour of punishment and the ferocity of vengeance, and ennoble and purify the whole social organization, than any other belief that has ever swayed the human mind. That man is a being to live for ever, and to live happily or unhappily, worthily or unworthily, seems to have been an active and efficient belief, prompting to beneficence when every other was sluggish. It seems to have supplied motives to exertion when all other motives failed. Passions and affections that have been dormant under all other stimulants, have wakened up into quivering life under the belief that the concern or interest demanded for a given creature, or a given race, was demanded, not for a vanishing-point, but for souls that were to live for ever. Tales of suffering and degradation, tales of ignorance and vice, tales of violence and outrage (their scenes being at a distance), have passed over human ears and human hearts without inflicting a single wound of sorrow, or exciting a single feeling of benevolence and

sympathy, of sufficient depth and force to stimulate to effective acts of remedy while the life that now is only was affected. A few years more or less of misery or of sin (it is a sorrowful acknowledgment, but history forces us to confess it is a true one) was not practically found to be a difference of such importance as to supply men with motive enough to brave the risks and sustain the labour and the loss of removing the evil they saw, and perhaps even mildly deplored. A few years more, and the sinner would offend no longer; a few years more, and the profligate would have died and rotted from the earth; a few years more, and the captive's chain should no more gall him, his groans would pierce no ear, and the degradation of his spirit would terminate with his spirit. Wronged and wronger, sinner and sinned against, would all be swept off the stage of life, their acts and their experiences annihilated with themselves. But directly that these wrongs and injuries, these stains and vices, were pointed out as branding immortal beings—directly the future, the eternal future, of these creatures was seen to be a part of, and indissolubly connected with, their Now—directly it was felt that you were dealing with a creature that was never to die, and was, as it were, thus of the nature of a god—the intensest interest and the most fervid anxiety were aroused, and men were up and doing.

I do not say that men ought to have waited for this super-added motive. I do not say that the grossest misconceptions of its nature did not enter into men's ideas of this immortality, but I am speaking fact and history when I say that the sympathy of man with man, the self-sacrificing energy of his desire to save and serve him, never reached its height, never found its full power, till the persuasion that he was a being of an immortal life and a deathless destiny got full possession of the heart of our humanity. And at this moment, even among those who do not entertain or do not vividly realize this hope, its lingering traces are stamped upon their hearts, their lives, their actions; and they cannot wholly dispossess themselves of the influence of a past, if not to them a present, faith. The very world they live in is deeply coloured by it; the very atmosphere they breathe is sensibly impregnated with it; and isolated as they may feel, and regret-

fully feel, themselves to be from a conscious possession and enjoyment of it, the circumambient air of the human life around them breathes of it, and they live in a world and among a race actuated, moved, intensified by the hopes that "are full of immortality."

The acknowledgment of the fact that the negro slaves of our own Atlantic islands were immortal beings did more to excite and to sustain a solemn and resistless interest in their fate, did more to enlist the patient missionary in their service, and awaken themselves to a sense of the intensity of their degradation, than any reasoning on abstract human rights, or any respect for supposed requirements of justice and humanity, could have succeeded in doing. The fact that, with few exceptions, the people most impressed with this faith were the most earnestly and perseveringly enlisted in that effort, and the further fact, that the greatest thing that helped them from outside was the corresponding faith, newly risen in the slaves themselves, that they, too, were children of God and heirs of immortality, did more, we may be persuaded, for the achievement of the result, than any mere philanthropy and abstract notions of the equal rights of man.

In the case of human manners and morals it is the same. I have travelled through districts of this country with persons who could well remember when, from the violent and brutal ferocity of the people living in them, the most innocuous stranger could not pass without personal danger, without, that is, the certainty of insult and the risk of injury. The inhabitants were little better than savages; the attempt to civilize and reform them was in many instances the perilling of life.

Whitfield and Wesley faced these formidable districts, redeemed these mistaken wretches, penetrated where the only part of civilization that had penetrated before was the law (and not always that), and where moral control and interference were unknown.

Why did they make this attempt? Believe me, it was not because the equipages of the neighbouring gentry could not pass through them without being greeted with stones; believe me, it was not because they were rough and ill-dressed, uncivilized and uncouth; it was not even because

property was unsafe in the neighbourhood, and yet the prison not always sure of having the offender for an inmate. It was because they believed these people had Souls—that they were unwittingly sinning against these—that they were violating their own natures, sinning not only against the laws of man, but sinning against God and their own immortality. And the people listened to these men, and followed them like lambs, only for the same reason. They were placed at once, not under the slight controls and inducements of civilization, but under the solemn and awful control of their own immortal destinies. It was told them what they were and what they were doing to themselves, and they saw its heinousness only when they saw their immortality, only when they saw a world stretching beyond the habitations that surrounded them, and a bar beyond the court of justice on earth.

I could multiply these illustrations of the effect that an earnest belief in a future and immortal state has had upon our life indefinitely. In fact, the book of human biography and human history is full of them; but I think I have at least said enough to prove my point, that this belief is in its effects a practical one; that it is not a matter of indifference to men whether they receive it or not; that it is not a thing to be passed over as unimportant; that it is not our wisest course to leave it uncultivated, unenforced, and unapplied, and quietly wait in silence to see what will happen.

No: I confess with sorrow the low and unworthy forms of the reception of this great hope, taking, and of necessity, their colour from the character of the souls on which it dawns. I confess with shame the capital priests have made of this noble, God-implanted conviction, and how they have too often degraded it into the instrument for establishing a dominion of terror here on earth, by the reflection of the lurid lights of hell, and how they have founded a system of bribes and spiritual subjection on it. I confess with regret how often, even by the influence and action of religious-minded men, it has been made to reduce from its true significance the life that now is, and the importance of the duties and the interests which alone, in fact, are ours, and on the wise and earnest use of which so much of what is to

come depends. I confess with pain how much of life it has, by its disproportioned insistance and a mistaken interpretation, deprived of its natural gladness and brightness, and how much of the death it ought in so many instances to have cheered and illumined and consoled, it has made dreary and abject and dreadful by groundless doubts and fears.

But I regard all these as fogs and mists and pestilential vapours, rising in dimming obscurity from man and earth to God and heaven, to hang between us and the bright sunshine of the real hope, clouds which, thank God! are, before wiser teachings* and a juster knowledge, rapidly dispersing.

And I embrace with an unspeakable gratitude and joy the purer hope that is set before us, saying in the reverent because reticent tones of the Scripture: There is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. There is a home of many mansions for the souls of earth. There is a new heaven, a new earth, a holy city, yet before us. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived, of the joys that God has prepared for them that love Him; but wearied ones shall find rest there, and weepers shall dry their tears; the slave shall no more fear the voice of his master, the wronged shall be righted, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake be blessed.

* Notably in our own day before the fresh heart and the ready illustrative learning of Archdeacon Farrar in his popular Sermons on "The Eternal Hope." Not that the Church or humanity had been voiceless on this matter before. But we owe much to the express efforts of Archdeacon Farrar in the latter part of this century, as in the earlier to the eminent physiologist (and at that time also divine) Dr. Southwood Smith, in his careful and painstaking volume on "The Divine Government," a work which has passed through many editions, and which, considering the present public receptiveness on this subject, deserves to pass through many more.

God or Christ?

IN whatever way we consider Christianity, it was of all religions the most radical. Not only did it strike at the roots of being, but, independent of all systems, it struck at the root of every existent conception of religious life. It was fearlessness itself, or, rather, it was that utter absorption in what it held to be true which allows no thought of consequences. Jesus was the king of sceptics, the prince of radicals. He absolutely disregarded the sanctity of the traditional; while the fine flavour of ancient things, merely as such, had with him no sacred acceptance. He did indeed declare that he had come, not to destroy, but to fulfil; and here it is that the tendency of the genuine radical is so commonly misunderstood. He was there for positive work, to build fairer and larger than any before him. But he must first clear the ground and prepare the soil for the reception of an entirely new growth. In all this, however, he was eclectic and comprehensive. He saw, what the modern radical* is coming so grandly to apprehend, the universality of truth, the necessity for finding in every outgrown fallacy or worn-out statement the germ of an unseen verity. He knew that truth belongs to no man, is the exclusive property of no system. Every earnest mind and every honest formulation needs but a larger view infused into its localized or narrow statement; and he rejected no part of truth already uttered or put into practice. For the old, he seems to have had no undue respect; but he knew that truth is old. He paid no reverence to tradition, but had no quarrel with the kernel of divine verity enclosed in the imperfect human shell.

* This word has here no political significance. The writer, being an American, uses it as descriptive of an advanced religious thinker.

The law, in a certain sense, he accepted, simply because his was in no wise the work of a law-maker. So far as laws were needed, and could in their sphere be successful, he was satisfied with those already accepted. With all their limitations and dangers they played a certain rudimentary part in the elevation of the race. No more were needed; and none could, on the whole, better answer the purpose they were there to subserve. They had already, moreover, a well recognised sanctity, and, so far as they could substantiate what he had to enforce, furnished an authority universally acknowledged, to which he could appeal. Whenever the truth he uttered had already been made current with the stamp of Moses or the prophets, he did not hesitate to convict or coerce them out of their own sacred writings. He had no spiritual pride, no priestly arrogance. He was willing to share the message so far as it had in any degree been grasped by the holy men of earth.

He was, moreover, steeped in the poetry of the Old Testament writings. His evident familiarity with them must have grown out of long and loving study; while his readiness to quote and apply relieves him, in all his iconoclastic work, from any charge of narrowness or jealousy. He was, too, Hebraistic in the character of his mind, as all his expressions show; and the bond of sympathy with the spiritual singers and prophets must, of necessity, have been great. He was not so much unlike, as *more* than they. What came to them in glimpses, was to him a steadily shining light. He asserted from daily consciousness what they barely hinted at in rare and only half-understood moments. But the poetry that coloured his whole life, and ran through his every utterance, was a part of that Hebrew heritage which he shared in common with them.

But the bent of his genius, the entire spirit of his work, was away from all such purely ethical methods. Indeed, Jesus has been as widely misunderstood by those who have narrowed him to the position of a merely moral teacher, as by those who have persisted in limiting Christianity to considerations of doctrinal and ecclesiastical efficacy. He found the principles of morality, largely the same in all times and under the various national systems of religion, already

expressed with sufficient pith and clearness. Their demands would not generally differ from those he as a moralist should make. Incidentally, he added a few, or put in more comprehensive form others which were vastly older than his own system; but this was not his object. The reason why they did not live up to their laws, why the work of the wise teachers they worshipped had become of none effect, was not because they needed more or more perfect moral precepts, but because something else, vastly more radical and effective than ethical principles alone can ever be, was wanted. Their code was well-nigh perfect; but it was written in stone, while he stopped at nothing short of a heart newly made over from the springs and beginnings of conduct to the crowning expressions of the entire nature of man in vital fusion with the highest. He had no greater charge to bring against their law than that it left them dead. It was good as far as it went; and he was glad to have it constitute a part of the groundwork, the bedplate, of his own more sufficient ministry. The principles of morality are largely the property of the race, and the especial work of no one in particular; and he does not need to proceed much further in this direction. But he does see that, while nearly perfect as a written system, Hebraism was abortive as a living and practical reality; that adequate motives were wanting to its proper exercise; that, in short, it was largely a dead letter on the statute books of the State. It was his to supply the needed soul to this shapely but corpse-like body. The law might stand, but, as one of the incidental effects of his own more positive work, it must come to new and larger significance. Spirituality is everywhere seen in sympathy with the highest morality, but it is infinitely more than morality. It is often the most ethical of men who deny both spirit and God. But Jesus, finding so valuable a legal system, accepted its letter, at the same time that, as with everything else, he filled it out with the spirit of his own diviner work. It remains, however, theirs, not his. The characteristic bent of his own calling must not for a moment be confounded with the more superficial sphere of the prophets. "It is written in *your* law," he says,—not ours, nor mine, but yours.

All this was in perfect keeping with the brave and comprehensive task he had set himself to do, which was nothing short of the most positive assertion of the one essential truth of God, joined to the most catholic and liberal spirit toward every form and utterance of it, however partial, which it had taken in men's minds. The singleness of his aim in nowise suffered from the breadth and inclusiveness of his vision. It was no truer of him that his eye penetrated to the supreme centre of truth than that it rested as well on the outermost rim of its vast circumference. And this is the one fact, taken in connection with the quality of his message, and the utter thoroughness with which it was carried out, which has given him his perpetuity of influence in the face of infinite perversion. Least of all disputatious, he saw and used everything which in any degree made for the establishment of his end. He was eminently, though not narrowly, practical. For, while directly at war with the logical results of the Jewish law in social and individual life, he could yet declare that he had come not to destroy, but to fulfil its unseen or forgotten spirit. He saw alike the surface and the centre, but it was the latter alone that he kept always in view.

It is this method or spirit of Jesus which the Jews found it most difficult to understand. He was so near to them, and yet strangely alien to their most cherished convictions; so sympathetic with, and so much a part of them, and yet, withal, so uncompromisingly antagonistic. It was a Jew speaking to them in the common tongue, with the very language of their own sacred fathers; and yet what a strange, incomprehensible message! Abraham, Moses, David, or Isaiah might be heard in what he said; but his strain was not of them, and never rested with their words. Nay, more, it said nothing about himself, except as he chose to consider himself in the light of an instrument or a reflection or a something outside himself which makes for righteousness in all men. It was not his own strong individuality which pushed his opinions, but his opinions, vitally fused and peculiarly imperative, which made him what he was. The strength of his endowment was in the intense and personal relations he enjoyed with God. With him, it is everywhere God that must be considered. They

must not even call *him* good. There is only one good, and that the Father.

But here the spirit of Jesus has been equally misunderstood by the Church, which has since stood, to a great degree in the precise attitude of the people of his time. It cannot harmonise with the radical method of his thought, but stops on the surface, refusing to understand the obvious intent of all his words. It has said, and still says, that historical Christianity is a truer criterion of Jesus' intentions than the primitive and unformed spirit itself, which stands to-day just as it did when first perverted, as plain and as much a first-hand source of authority to us as to the earliest synod that ever met. It says practically, in answer to the question what the Christian Church is to effect, that the end and object of all is Christ. He taught a perverted humanity, a way of salvation, and a possible heavenly state; and all this is only another way of saying *Christ*. He taught himself, whom we are to accept, to live with and for, to eat and drink, to serve in some especial sense, as Head and Lord and King.

Jesus, on the contrary, insisted on one thing, the immanence and mightiness of God. And his conception of Deity was not only strong and forceful, but also new and original. There was no real God in the universe until him. He had neither faith nor fellowship in the abstract Jehovah of Jewish thought, a being relegated to a realm so far distant from any actual, every-day comprehension as to be practically of no account save as an intellectual conception. This being, whose name could have no place in their common speech, for fear that utterance would contaminate its sacredness, to mention whom in any conscious sense of human relationship became a sacrilege, was no part of the paternal discovery that Jesus made out of the needy and loving depths of his own soul. The blasphemy of his familiar expressions of nearness and love startled them into fear and hatred. It was not anything he claimed for himself, in his assumption of the Christ, that aroused their opposition, but his unrighteous handling of a name they themselves hardly dared to speak. The pure, living, regnant theism of Jesus was the chief cause of all the bitterness that assailed him. He was there, not to supplement the statute-books in

their bald statements of the *fact* of Deity, but by reason of what he himself *knew* of God, because of some positive certainty. It was a different God, as well as one realised in his own consciousness, which he brought to their knowledge; an entire change of attitude toward Deity, and the relations which man sustains to him. Before Jesus there was a God, but no God-companionship, no genuine and tender communion. He took religion out of its abstract relations, and made it living and effective. He not only enlarged, but realised the highest conceptions of Hebrew faith. It was not so much the might as the nearness of God; not his power, but his presence, that he saw and rejoiced in. He first established the family relation in religion. Father and Son are the words he loves best. He revels in his own assertion of sonship, coining his highest title out of the simplest realities of his daily communion with God and man. He could afford to ignore their short-sighted charge of bringing God down to men, since he was only conscious of the effort to lift men up to God. He was not here to state, but to realise; not to define God, but to deify man. It was a larger, not a less divinity that he saw. And he saw it with a single eye, and with the one sole aim of bringing men to the point in spiritual experience where he himself stood. He first prayed, and set that divinest prerogative of man's nature in its true light, not as a delegated and formal function, but the nearest and simplest and most natural expression of human life. With a breath of his honest and manly courage, he blew away cant and script and priestly intervention, and said, Let the coming be heart to heart. He taught *God* first and last of all, keeping himself at the same time as far as possible out of sight. They had no claim through him, but a privilege and duty in and of themselves. It was his aim to awaken them to the life in the developed possibilities of which lie the necessities and certainties of spiritual communion. He called out the God in them, so long dormant, that now revealed to them their true selves. Then *he* as quickly and silently as possible withdrew.

In the light of these facts, the answer to the question as to what constitutes the true Christian is simple and sure. Not he who worships Christ, but he who worships the Father.

Every earnest, honest God-worshipper, even if he never utters, nay, even if he never heard of, the name of Christ, is a Christian. He is and must be one with Jesus, amenable to all his methods, and inspired toward the peculiar kind of experience which dominated all his development. A chance, then, for the nameless, Christless, God-worshipper of every land and time? The ban of the churches is dissolved, and every childlike heart comes back to the consciousness of a genuine and tender communion. Nay, more, even he who, while at peace in conscious nearness to the Father, believes himself lost and utterly unfellowshipped in the great communion where he would gladly bear his part, now comes to stand beside the "lonely Jesus," admitted into that inner, smaller circle which is presided over by his spirit. He who, in the tenderest of religious relations with God, feels himself forced to announce the name which has been burdened with so much narrowness and falsity, again rejoices in the title of Christian, from which no bigotry without and no honest scruples within need longer estrange him. If he knows, loves, serves God, he is the only Christian. He may drop the word from his vocabulary, if he will: he cannot lose the fact. He is what Jesus was, and the heir of all his influence, the rightful owner of every privilege his name confers.

There is something singular in this word, which has been so long an all-powerful shibboleth in the world. It has been of vast import in the history of the past eighteen centuries, ranging in significance from geographical and political distinctions to the arbitration of personal opinion and experience. Its force has been felt not only in the privacy of the heart, but in the entire course of human development. It has even gone beyond the mysterious line that separates life and death, and laid exclusive claim to the prizes of eternity. It has been secularized, and prostituted to a thousand uses, and stands to-day in the minds of millions of people the test of worthiness here and happiness hereafter. And all this in the face of the fact of the utter want of assumption on the part of him in whose honour it is worn. To be a follower of Jesus is with him to worship God, to be consciously and vitally related to spiritual things. The objective point in the distinction is God, not Christ. There

is neither desire nor demand on the part of Jesus that his name should be used as a watchword, except so far as it may be helpful and inspiring. His is the way, the truth, and the life: make them ours, and we shall, like him, be one with God; and nothing further is required even for the fullest Christian fellowship.

It has been this which has occasioned the frequent willingness on the part of conscientious thinkers to renounce the name altogether; to exalt comparative religion over the claims of any narrow and sectional school. The significance of the name has been stretched too far; and the spirit of Jesus, offended in the literalism of his would-be followers, transfers its sympathy to those who in brave honesty stand entirely apart from the perverted symbol. But the word is, after all, but the body of something which the later, fuller Christian thought labours to fulfil. It is the bald literalism which no completer spirit can afford utterly to ignore. The spirit can get outward, and cleanse and purify and make new the distorted symbol. The real Christianity exists, breathless and unnoted, beneath the worldly systems that have sprung up in its stead. It is the Hercules that will yet rise up to sweep out the Augean stables of its own great corruption at the hands of men. It will save all the false establishments, the work even of the make-shift synods, by the necessity it will force upon them to be born anew. It is the corrector of its own abuses, and hence a perennial power in the world.

There is, however, one more test that Jesus gives, beyond the fact of intimate and loving relations with the Father; and that is the possesion of the Christ-like spirit. "If any man," says Paul, "have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He cannot be a Christian, and keep any narrowness and exclusion. The spirit of Jesus is everywhere free and liberal. The method and object of his work alike forbid any fatal limitation of the term in its application to all truly religious beings. It is his work to bring together, not to separate, the spiritual elements. There may be outward dissension in the day when the first struggle from lower to higher necessarily becomes a battle, but the ultimate drift of his influence is toward the reuniting of all on the

higher and more enduring plane. He is to re-establish the spiritual family, so long and cruelly divided. In him, all are to be one in God.

The radicalism of Christianity more fully appears when we pass from its relations to the ages of traditionalism from which it sprung to the present, and see how broad is its essential sympathy with the honest iconoclast of to-day.

We feel that Jesus now, as of old, is with every conscientious protest, every profound yearning for free, untrammelled light and life. The simple bond of brotherhood that welcomed all who were willing to live his life, without the slightest reference to doctrinal qualification, reaches down the centuries of inevitable human formulation to us, gathering all earnest souls into the capacious fold of Christ; but only the positive and constructive, only the reverent and comprehensive. Radicalism too often is born out of the exclusiveness that dwarfs and kills. Therefore, it must have no sneers and no reprisals, but open arms and the sweep of the horizons in its outlook. It must be, like the radicalism of Jesus, a cry for more, not less, a progress from negation to fuller affirmation. The higher form is always the more inclusive, and the drift of divine things is never toward a narrowing, but rather a broadening out.

But there is this never to be forgotten in the position of the independent, in the student of comparative theology who scorns all names in his sufficient theism, that, acknowledge it or not, as he may, he is yet, in all his spirituality, the heir of the Christian centuries. He may say, and say truly, that his religious experience is so vital and personal, his relations with God so direct and conscious, as to remain intact, even if the Bible were lost, and the whole Christian record proved a myth. But when he inquires into himself for the sources of his spiritual insight, when he asks whence came the fulness of God-knowledge which makes this ultimate independence possible, he is met by the fact that he is what he is, because Christianity, which has modified the thought and life of the race, was born in him, and was unconsciously absorbed in all the processes of his education. Enough of the spiritual principle of Jesus inheres even in the falsity and superficialness of ordinary interpretation to have made

transmissible all the higher expressions and experience of our race. Christianity has been so far forth true to its purpose that it is in some sort possible in these days to live without it. That is to say, one can be, nay, must be, genuinely religious and like Christ spiritually, if he thinks and lives at all on the higher plane, by reason of the now structural, the inborn and unconscious bent which the ages of Christian influence have supplied. He cannot eradicate the fact from his nature, though he may have lost the original source of its operation. Jesus has so far taken possession of humanity that, even if he were historically disproved, he would everywhere be found actually present. This is because the real Christianity is deeper and more essential than the apparent one. It is the Christianity born in us that thus defies the more superficial one of the creeds.

The fact is, Christianity has fathered all our radicalism. Out of its own truest impulse has come the courage to reject a symbol falsely interpreted. It has tinctured our hereditary thought, given us new eyes and minds and motives, until at last, so near in to the centre of being does it lie, we neither know it from ourselves, nor suspect that it is speaking even in our honest protest or denial. It is written all over our history, and in the more imperishable life of the soul. It had its birth anew when we were born, and in us answers as of old, with its unquenchable fire, the flame of society's fagot. We can go far, but not far enough to escape it. The elevation and honesty of all things confess it. Only the charlatan and the depraved are without something of its saving power. Nominal independence of it may be virtual reliance upon it, while acceptance of it breathes in every true theist's prayer. Wherever men come to God in genuine and conscious communion, it is witnessed anew. It is radical, at the roots of being, because it is the only adequate conception of life, the only actual realization of God. In these two spheres, of God and self, it has found the double solution that has ever eluded the search of man. It makes plain the cause and the contingent, and the arithmetic of the soul is henceforth within the power of man to solve.

Is God Conscious, Personal, and Good?

WE are, I trust, by this time convinced that God is, that he is eternal, infinite, almighty; that by the method of science,—the only adequate method of human research with which we are acquainted,—we may rationally investigate and hope to know something of his methods, his ways, his manifestations throughout the universe, and in the life, character, and history of man. But we want to know something more than this. The one great thing, it seems to me, for which our human hearts hunger, is to know, not whether we are dealing with omnipotence, infinity, eternity, but whether we are dealing with thought, with a heart. Is it an infinite and almighty and at the same time a deaf and blind and heartless giant with which, like Jacob in the darkness, we wrestle and struggle throughout the long night of our human career? If so, then we inevitably fight a losing battle. However successful it may seem to be for a time, however we may conquer these mighty, dead, blind forces, and for a while make them serve us, still, day by day, week by week, year by year, this mighty power is getting the better of us. We are growing older and weaker; our physical and mental powers are gradually waning and wasting; and, do what we will, the giant will throw us at the last: our feet will slip, and we shall fall into that dark and fathomless abyss that we call the grave. I say what we want to know is whether we must take this view of life,—for we must take it, if God be not conscious, as much as personal, and loving,—or may we feel that, though we are compelled, for reasons as yet at least partially inscrutable, to carry burdens that chafe our shoulders and crush our hearts, there is some one in the

universe that cares? When our hearts sigh in the midst of their sorrow may we believe that there is sympathy outside that notices that sigh? When our hearts ache, may we believe that there is somebody who notices that they ache, somebody who cares that they ache, somebody who would lift off the burden and assuage the pain, were there not some grander, deeper reason that urges silence and waiting until the result of the sorrow be achieved? This, then, is the question: Does God think, does God care, does God love; or are we dealing with forces mightier than we, that we are compelled to think of as heartless, and to which we may cry in vain as long as we will, because they are deaf and unconscious?

In a sermon on Agnosticism, I dealt with the question of our being anthropomorphic; that is, of our being compelled to speak of God and of all things in the world in language drawn from human thought and human experience. That is, I said, if we speak of God as planning, we cannot mean that he plans in the same sense that we do,—recognising difficulties, and devising means by which he may overcome them. This is a figurative way of speaking, drawn from human experience. I said we were anthropomorphic, whether we were speaking of God, or whether we were speaking of a flower or a grain of sand or a star. We cannot help being anthropomorphic, until we can escape the limitations of our nature. I shall speak, then, anthropomorphically to-day, claiming not only the right, but asserting the necessity of this use of language,—only asking you to remember what I called your attention to then, that we must not for one moment forget that all our language is, and of necessity must be, symbolic. It does not express the absolute, the complete, the final truth, when we speak of the infinite; for our language is finite. Our words are coined and minted in human experience and human observation. Finite words cannot be completely true, when we are dealing with these great themes. And yet remember this: although it may not be philosophically accurate for me to say God thinks, because thinking, with us, is connected with the human brain; for me to say God feels, for feeling, with us, is connected with a system of nerves; that God loves, for love is strictly

a human experience, as we understand the word,—though it may not be scientifically correct for us to use these terms, yet they are the best terms, indeed the only terms, we have; and we must either use these, or keep silent. We may remember, however, that, when we say God thinks, God feels, God loves, we are not overstating the reality, but infinitely understating it. We are using a human shadow to express a divine reality, and we know that the reality infinitely transcends the shadow. With this explanation, then, I shall go on and fearlessly speak in these terms of human thought and human feeling, asking you to make due allowance wherever such terms occur.

Our first question, then, is as to whether God may be rightly thought of by us as a conscious being. It may seem strange to some of you that such a point as this should ever be raised. And yet it is one of the great philosophical questions of the world at the present time, over which the keenest intellects are striving. Hartmann, the prince of pessimists, that great German philosopher, the principle of whose system is that this is the worst possible kind of a universe that could be conceived,—Hartmann goes on at length and elaborately, by the use of scientific facts and arguments, to demonstrate that God is a being who thinks and who wills. But it is also the fundamental principle of his system that this great thinking and willing being is unconscious. So his philosophy goes by this name: it is "The Philosophy of the Unconscious." He believes that God thinks and wills, and that he has arranged all this universe, but has done it like a giant in a dream, absolutely unconscious all the time as to what he was about. But the point that I wish to call your attention to, and that which has led me to mention him at all, is this: that he has scientifically demonstrated that there is will and intellect manifest in the universe. I want to spend just a moment over these two points, and then let you see what bearing they have on the question of consciousness.

Is there any manifestation of will in the universe? There is, at any rate, what Matthew Arnold calls "a stream of tendency." The universe, from the first beginning of it that we can trace until now, has pursued a definite and intelligent

line of movement, as though, at any rate, there was a will manifested in and propelling the entire course of universal progress. What do we mean when we speak of will as connected with a man? How do I know, for example that any of you will to do a certain thing? If we have not thought a great deal about it, perhaps we are accustomed to suppose that there is some independent power in us that goes by the name of will, something that sits on a little throne, something that controls the movement of the hand, the foot, the thought. But, if you will only give it a little calm consideration for a moment, you will see that all we mean by it, all we possibly can mean, is that the man wills to do that which he does, wills to think that which he really thinks, and wills to accomplish that which he strives after. That is, the will is simply the resultant of all the forces that make up the being. If we stand by the bank of a river, we see it flowing in a certain direction, north or south. There are eddies, counter-currents and curves and turnings of the river, but on the whole it sweeps with its whole force in a certain direction. So we may observe concerning a man; may observe, as we think, concerning the operations of our own consciousness. There are eddies, there are counter-currents, there are conflicting interests and desires, but at last we will. What do we mean? We mean that the resultant of all these influences and forces is that we move in a certain direction. That is all we mean by will. It is all we can mean in an intelligent use of language. Now look over the universe, look over human history, look over all that we know concerning this wonderful world, and we see everywhere from first to last the sweep of tendency, this intelligible motion onward. And we have precisely the same right to assert of this the existence of will that we have to say that will exists in the heart or the brain of anyone of our fellow-men. Will, then, or that which corresponds to it in man, is demonstrable as a fact, an eternal reality in the universe.

Does intelligence exist in the universe also? Again, what do we mean by intelligence, when we are speaking of its manifestation in men? I cannot get at the movements of my brain to know what intelligence may be in its essence, whether it is essentially connected with the brain or not; and,

if I cannot reach it in my own case, much more I cannot reach it in any of you. What do I mean then, when I say that Mr. A. or Mr. B. is an intelligent man? I mean simply this: that his words and actions correspond to what I call the logical and rational order of my thought. That is all I mean, that is all I can mean. If they do not thus correspond, what do I say of him? I say he is odd, he is eccentric, he is irrational, perhaps insane or an idiot. What do I mean by these words again? I mean only that his words and his actions do not correspond to the logical and rational order of my thinking. All I know then of human intelligence outside of myself is just this,—the force of which I wish you to carefully note,—that the words and actions of people outside of me do correspond to the logical and rational order of my own thought. Now, then, I look abroad over the universe, over its past history and its present condition, and do I not see everywhere a most stupendous order—from the chemical constituents, and their relations, that make up a drop of water; from the orderly arrangement of leaves upon the branch of a tree; from the marvellous and inflexible order and arrangement of the parts that make up a crystal; clear up to the sweep of stars and constellations over my head,—everywhere a stupendous, an infinite, a majestic order, a movement that corresponds, just so far as I can rise to the magnificent idea of it, to the logical and rational order of my thought? If, then, I have a right to say that man is intelligent, I have an infinitely grander right to say that there is intelligence, or that which transcends what we mean by that word, in the universe.

God, then, wills. God, then, is an intelligent being. And I have a perfect scientific, demonstrable right to use these words concerning God in the only sense that they have in the dictionary, in the only way in which they are properly used concerning our fellow-men. Now, then, if there be intelligence and will in the universe, have I not a right to say that this intelligence and this will are conscious? No man has ever yet known anything of the existence of will and intelligence as separated from consciousness. You may tell me, if you choose, that I walk unconsciously, that I perform half the actions of my life unconsciously, and that these

actions betray intelligence. You may tell me, if you choose, of well-authenticated cases of men composing in their sleep, as did Coleridge, and making a beautiful poem unconsciously; or of another man's rising in his sleep, and working out some deep mathematical problem unconsciously. I grant it all; but all these cases are simply the result of habit. In the first instance, the work was conscious. In the first instance, the poetic composition was conscious. The work of applying mathematical principles was conscious work. They are unconscious simply as the result of habit. But, in the first instance, all the activities of man, all the activities of which we know anything,—intelligence and will,—are conscious activities. And, if we reason—as alone we have the right to reason—from the known to the unknown, wherever we find intelligence, wherever we find will, we are forced by the logic of our own reason, as far as our knowledge extends, to assert also that this will and this intelligence are conscious. For lack of time, then, to elaborate further, I leave my first point here. I believe, that carefully considered, these thoughts that I have urged are scientific demonstrations that God is a conscious being.

Now, then, is he personal? That which I have already been saying bears largely on the solution of this new problem. And yet there are certain things about it that I must take up and look at by themselves. In the first place, we must do what, if more frequently done, would make a good many questions clearer than they are: we must settle a definition. What do we mean when we talk about personality? Is it not true that what people really are anxious to know when they are discussing the question of the personality of God is that he thinks, that he loves, that he cares? That is what they mean, is it not?

Now, then, let us look at this word "personality" and see what its significance is. Of course, God is not personal in the sense in which we use that word in our sitting-rooms and on the street every day. We say, There goes such a person along the street: what do we mean? Why, there is a being outlined, having a definite form and shape, occupying a specified locality in space; a being who is sick, who suffers, who hopes, who fears, who is pained, who is troubled; a

being who by and by must die. All those elements go to make up the meaning of the word "personality" as used on the street. Certainly, we cannot think for a moment that we are to attribute these characteristics to God. God is not a person in the sense in which we are accustomed to use that word.

Now, where does this word "personal" come from? It is derived from an old Latin word, which originally stood for the mask of an actor. In the old Greek and Roman theatres, an actor always wore a mask, which represented the character he was to assume; and this mask was called *persona*, the personality that could be put on and taken off. Open Shakespeare, and you will find at the head of the plays the words *Dramatis Personae*, persons of the drama. The word originated then here. It is the character or part which the actor assumes at a particular time or place, which first bore the name "person." But we do not mean that by it now; and if we are to keep that old meaning, then we must think of God not as unipersonal or tripersonal, but multipersonal. For, whenever God manifests himself in any way or form, whatever mask he may assume in the heavens above or the earth beneath, this manifestation becomes a personality in the original meaning of the word.

But though we are not at liberty to say that God is personal, as we are accustomed to define the term, yet—mark this, for the whole discussion hinges on this one thought—we are not at liberty, in denying God's personality, either to say or to think that he is something less than personal. Suppose I close the shutter of my study window, and only let a little, tiny, white ray of light come through. Then, I take a prism in my hand, and I split up this ray into the various coloured parts of which it is composed. I fix upon the red. Have I a right to say that the ray of light is red? No. It is white. And I assert that which is untrue, if I fix upon any one of its specific colours, and say that that represents the totality of the ray. But I assert an equal untruth, if I say that this white ray does not contain in itself the possibility and potency of the red ray. It is not less than red: it is more; for it contains all the colours of the spectrum. So, when I see personality in myself or you,

manifested as one part and outcome of the infinite life of things, I have no right to say that this personality represents the totality of that life. Neither have I a right to say that the totality of that life is not as much as I am. It is infinitely more. So, when I deny personality as an attribute of God, I am not belittling him, I am not taking away something from him, I am not making him smaller and less in dignity and goodness and glory; I am only asserting that personality is a little, feeble, finite, limited word, that cannot sum up the infinite capacity of God. God is unspeakably more than personal. Personality is one of his local, finite manifestations. But is the infinite, that manifests itself as personal, less than its own manifestation? God is unspeakably more than we mean by that world then, while he holds in himself all that is sweet and gracious and tender and hopeful and helpful,—more than that word is accustomed in our thought and speech to cover.

One more thought only on this question of personality. What is the essence, the essential idea, of personality? It is not outline, it is not limitation, it is not location in space. A rock or a tree is outlined, shaped, located at a particular point. I never think of calling it a person. Why? It lacks that which is really central in our thought as supplying personality. It lacks consciousness, it lacks intelligence, it lacks selfhood. John Locke, the English philosopher, says that the central idea of personality is thought and intelligence. Hermann Lotze, one of the foremost scientific philosophers of the world, asserts the same. Conscious selfhood, he says, is the essence of personality. And so we may assert and believe that God is personal, while we eliminate from the definition of that word all that limits, all that locates, all that cripples, all that hampers personality, as we are acquainted with it in ourselves and in each other. And we may rightly, I believe,—carefully defining terms and understanding what they mean,—assert of God that he is the Infinite Person. Now then, passing this question with this necessary brevity and condensation, and yet covering, I believe, all that is essential, I pass to the third and last point that I shall now offer for your consideration.

Is God good? If he is not, he is not God. Prove what-

ever else you may concerning him, if we cannot trust him, if we cannot love him, if we cannot put our hand into his, though his is hidden in a cloud, and walk by his side like a little child by the side of his father in the dark, believing that, though we do not know where we are going, he does,—if, I say, we cannot believe that, then for all practical purposes, for our hearts and our hopes, there is no God. Good? What do we mean by that word? What I mean and what I believe the world is coming rapidly to mean, what the world must mean, is this: God, if he be anything, is king over all things, blessed forever. No definition of him can mean anything to us, as being good, unless it means, some time, some when, some where, an outcome of good for every being that thinks and breathes. And so I assert, without fear of contradiction, that in the popular churches of the day God is not defined as a good being. Assert it loudly as they will, the very definition of their theology contains in itself the elements which contradict the assertion, and will echo and shout that contradiction in its face forever. If there is one single human soul that is to suffer torture forever, then God is not good. It implies then an outcome of good for every one of his children. That is what good means.

Now, is God good? Have we any reason, any rational right, to believe that he is good in so grand and so comprehensive a sense as that? What is the indictment that is brought against him? I would that I might at least suggest to you the way by which we may "justify the ways of God to men." I believe with my whole soul that they are justifiable. What is the indictment against God's goodness? A philosopher, a profound thinker, like John Stuart Mill, will sum up the argument for you, and say that all we have a right to do is to place the evils of life on one side of the account-book, and the good on the other, and assert that perhaps there is more of good in God than there is of evil; and yet that there must be both, because both good and evil exist. That is, Mill tells us, that we must either limit God's goodness or limit his power. Evil, he says, exists. Then, God does not want to get rid of it, or he cannot. That is his argument. If he does not want to, he is limited in his love or his goodness. If he cannot, he is limited in his power.

In either case, he is not the infinite God of whom we are speaking. Let us, then, look at the indictment. What is it? What is it that makes men question whether God is good?

Here, for example, in human experience, are death, sickness, pain, poverty, crime, heartache, tears, all "the ills that flesh is heir to." These make the black indictment that the thought and the heart of humanity bring up against the goodness of God. Either defiantly, or with pain and heart-ache and tears, men assert: "I would not treat people in that fashion. No father could treat his own child as God treats man. He must be different from anything that we call loving or kind, or such things would not exist."

Now, let us look at the problem just as carefully and as fearlessly as we can for a few moments. First take the one item, death. Is death an evil? It may be; but do we know that it is an evil, so that we have a right on the score of the existence of death, to assert a lack of love and wisdom and fatherhood on the part of God? I dare assert, without fear of contradiction from any quarter, that we have no such right. I believe that death is not an evil, but a good. It is universal. Some time or other, every one of us must bow and pass through that arched, low, dark gateway out into the beyond—absolutely universal. If it be an evil, then God is a fiend; for he has put this evil upon the shoulders and the heart of everything that breathes. But I say no man knows that it is an evil; and the heart and hope and trust of the world in all ages have dared to assert, to believe at least, that it is a good, an infinite and unspeakable good. And if that whisper that is in every human soul tell us true,—that death only leads out into something better and higher, that it is a necessary step in human advance,—then it is no more an evil than is birth, which brought us out of the darkness into this wonderful light of life. And I believe that, if death came to us stripped of its accidents, we should never think of it as an evil. When we speak of death, we do not mean the simple act of sleep at last, with a hope of waking up in a higher and better life. That is not what the most of us mean, when we talk about the evil of death. It is premature death, it is painful death, it is horrible death, it is a death of anguish, a death of despair, a death of lingering

torture, it is separation, it is ten thousand things grouped about and connected with the fact of dissolution. If death only came to us as it ought to come, after a long life in which we had tasted all the sweets and pleasures of existence, and, like children at night, were tired and wanted to lie down and go to sleep; if death only came to us as the leaves fall from a tree, without any bleeding, any pain, simply taking on their beautiful robes of colour and falling silently through the air upon the soft bed of earth,—if death came like that, we should never think of its being an evil: it would be simply going to sleep when we were weary, simply stopping when we got through. And, if it came to us in such guise as this, the simple fact that by the removal of the population of the earth every few years to make place for new-comers whose nerves were again to be thrilled with the joy of life, whose glad eyes were to look upon the bright faces of the stars, whose hearts were to thrill with the music of the wind in the tree-tops and of the waves upon the sea-shore, whose hearts were to rejoice in the love of father, mother, wife, child, and friend, whose brains were to be busied with the great, magnificent, inspiring problems of life,—I say this consideration that thus generation after generation were to come and sit down at this bounteous board of life, and then when they had feasted to sail out sleeping into the beyond,—we should say that death might not be an evil at all, but only a marvellous increment of the world's happiness, distributing that happiness to untold millions instead of confining it to the first-comers, a very few. I believe this to be the true conception of death. All these things that make death hideous, the horrible dreams of the beyond that frighten us, the pains and sorrows and lingering diseases, the mangling accidents that accompany and produce it,—these things, did God make them? No, not one of them! They are all preventable accompaniments of death, and no part of death itself,—things for which we, and we alone, are responsible. Death as God made it, and as it comes to those that live the life of God, is no more horrible than the falling to sleep in my arms of my little girl at night, as I rock her in the twilight. God's death is just sinking off to sleep in God's arms.

Leaving that, then, out of the question for a moment, let

us look at this other thing,—I shall have to group them all together,—pain, suffering, disease, poverty, hunger, want, and crime, summed up and put into one account, and that we call evil. And what are they? Are they things that are essential in the conception of this universe? No, not one. They are no part of the necessary laws and life of God. They are every one of them simply the results of human ignorance and perversity breaking those laws. The universe in every part, in all its lawful movement and order, is one grand harmony, beautiful and good; and all evil is simply the result of human ignorance, human passion, human perversity. There is not an evil on the face of the earth that needs to exist.

But still the problem is not settled yet, though we can assert, and assert clearly, that the universe is perfect benevolence toward man. All that we call human civilization is simply man's finding out things that have been true for ever, and applying them to his own use. All that we call truth is simply man's discovery of that which has been true from the beginning. They are nothing that he has created or added to the sum of things. All that we call the moral progress of the world is simply man's discovering and obeying the laws of his own being and the laws of the universe, that are eternal. All these tell us, prove beyond the possibility of a question, that the universe in itself is good, is true, is sound, is real, is the friend and helper of man. In every department of the world, in the stars above and the depths beneath us, the world is the storehouse of God, waiting for man to use it. He calls upon the lightning which had played for ages in the clouds, and it runs as his errand-boy. He uses the stars to guide his ships over the fathomless waves. He taps the earth, and calls out the imprisoned and imbedded sunlight buried there thousands of years ago, to kindle the flames in his grate, and to illuminate his nights in his dwellings and along his streets. Every mountain is a treasure-house, every field a store of wealth. It only needs that man ask intelligently for the things he needs, and this eternal overflowing fulness of God is ready bountifully to supply every one.

But I said a moment ago the question is not settled yet.

Perhaps that which is the most central and important of them all remains. Though the universe outside of man be good, and though it be possible for men to live a life here that is free from all that we call evil, if God really loved man and wanted him to be happy, why did he not create him so that he would live rightly? There is the central, crucial question of all. If God is a father of love, of wisdom, and wants man to be happy, why did he not create him so that he would be? Why did he not give him wisdom enough to know, at the start, everything that he has found out in these long and weary centuries? Why did he not give him power to control nature, to obey all its laws, knowledge to understand them all, so that he might ward off poverty and want and disease and pain and suffering of every kind? Let us think for a moment now, and think very carefully. This resolves itself into another question, a question no less than this: as to which is better, that man should have been created an automaton, a perfect machine, or a being who should progressively learn things by experience. That is what the question means. A man can make a machine in the shape of a child, and so support it, this side and that, that it shall go through the process of walking, and never fall as long as it exists. A child stumbles and falls and hurts itself at every turn, while learning to walk. Is the machine better than the child, because it never stumbles or gets hurt? Babbage, the great mathematician, could make a "calculating machine" that should never make a mistake in working out mathematical problems. Young Newton, who was to tower like a god of intellect over all the possible mathematical machines that science could ever frame, blundered and stumbled at every turn in learning the multiplication-table,—the first rudiments of the figures with which he was to outline the movements of the stars at the last. You go to Italy, and they will construct you a hand-organ so perfectly that it shall be incapable of making a mistake in playing a tune. Mozart, Beethoven, the great musicians, the master-minds of the world, blundered and stumbled at every step in fingering the keys with unused hands, and feeling their way out through the marvellous mazes and intricacies of musical law and sound. We can

construct a machine that, using the sun, shall give you a perfect photograph of the face or a landscape. But the artists Angelo, Titian, Rubens, the great artists of the world, experimented and daubed and laboured for years before they attained the power of creating the masterpieces that alone are worthy to be called art.

I say then, it is a question as to which is better: that God should have made man an intelligent, self-acting machine, never to make a mistake, never to feel hurt, never to be conscious of wrong, never to stumble to rise again, or that he should make him what he is, a being learning from experience, progressing by attempts and trials. Which, think you, is the grander? And, if man is to learn progressively by experience, he must perforce make mistakes, he must stumble, he must hurt himself against the sharp corners of things, he must overstep laws, and find that fire burns, that cold freezes, and that hunger kills. He thus learns to keep within the limits of these marvellous, invisible laws of life, and thus he becomes a free-born king, a child of God, and not a machine. And if, friends,—and no man knows enough to deny it,—if it be true, as we hope and dare to believe, that man by this experience is being fitted for a grander and larger life beyond, that he is to outgrow, slough off, and tread under foot the imperfections and faults of his being, as the child ceases to stumble and to make mistakes and comes to be a man; if, I say, we by and by are to reach up and blossom out into this perfect, grand, glorious manhood,—become the sons and daughters of God,—then our life, however much of suffering or pain there is in it, is not only justified, it is glorified; and it stands no longer as an impeachment of the goodness of God; it may be even the very crowning manifestation of his goodness.

I believe, then, that in the true use of language, remembering that it is symbolical and only shadows forth the infinite reality, we may say that we can rationally believe that God is conscious, personal, and good.

The Revelation of the Spirit.

THE New Testament speaks of "the Spirit" very much as the Old Testament speaks of Jehovah, or "the Lord." Where the Old Testament says, "The Lord spoke," or "The word of the Lord came," to this or that prophet, the New Testament substitutes Spirit. "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness."—"The Spirit said to Philip."—"The Spirit said to Peter," &c. The same thing is meant in both cases, but the different phraseology marks a difference between the two dispensations. The same fact, the same power, is differently conceived. In one case, it is formal, concrete,—an individual. In the other, it is liberal and defusive,—an influence. When the Jew thought of his Jehovah, it was somewhat as the Gentile though of his Jove. He thought of him as a powerful individual, as a wise and strong man. When the evangelists thought of the Spirit, they thought of it as a breath, a vision, a whisper in the heart; a subtle influence informing the mind, inspiring the will, directing the life.

The personification of the Spirit in the New Testament is merely rhetorical; but the Church, not satisfied with a figure of speech, converted the rhetoric into dogma. They constituted the Spirit a distinct person in the Godhead. No harm in this, if by "person" is meant nothing more that a mode of manifestation. But with many the idea of person hardens into that of independent individuality. The Spirit is conceived as a being, distinct from the Father, instead of a character of, or in, God the Father. This was not the intent of the doctrine, as defined by the councils of the

Church. It conflicts with the accompanying doctrine of the "procession," as it is called, "of the Holy Ghost." The Spirit is said to "proceed" from God. And this procession was not once for all, but still continues. It is not a past transaction, a fact accomplished, but a present and constant process. The language is not "proceeded," but "proceeds." The question arose in the ages which developed this doctrine, whether the Spirit proceeds directly and solely from God, or from God through Christ. The Greek Church taught and still teaches, that the Spirit is wholly and only from the Father. The Latin or Roman-Catholic Church maintained, and still maintains, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. And the Latin Church is right: the interior meaning of that doctrine is, that the spiritual creation, like the material, is based on intelligence. There can be no holiness without insight.

The Holy Spirit is that particular agency of God, direct or indirect, which concerns itself with the moral and religious education of mankind. It is God acting in this particular way as distinguished from God in nature.

Self-manifestation—the revelation of himself in rational minds—must be supposed to be the end of all God's doing. The visible universe is one revelation,—intelligible only when viewed as such. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Nature reflects to intelligent minds the divine Wisdom and Love. But Nature could never convey the most distant idea of moral good. The truth which we attempt to express, when we say that God is just, that God is holy; the fact of a moral law, duty, conscience, accountableness,—these have no prototype or symbol in Nature. This is something of which Nature is unconscious. The animal world exhibits something of instinctive love, something of blind attachment, but nothing like justice, holiness. This is "the way which no fowl knoweth," which "the vulture's eye hath not seen," and which "the lion's whelps have not trodden." "The abyss saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me." We should know God only as mighty, wise, and beneficent, never as holy and just, were there not another creation and revelation co-parallel with the material,—the moral creation, the

revelation of the Spirit, in which God is revealed as Moral Law, and as Moral and Spiritual Good.

The element and medium of this moral creation is the moral nature which always accompanies conscious intelligence, here and wherever conscious intelligence is found. Its materials are rational souls. Of these "living stones" the divine Architect, the Holy Spirit, compiles the spiritual fabric which all good men are helping to build, and whose completion will be the consummation and crown of time. The Christian Church, in the vision of the apostles, was identified with that fabric, "Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." The Christian Church, in their theory, is not only the product, but the earthly representative and embodiment, of the Holy Spirit. At once both agent and object, creator and creature, it sends forth the influences which convert the world, and grows and reproduces itself by the influences it sends forth.

If, now, from the theology of the Holy Spirit, we turn to its practical, human side, we find in its action on human individuals a twofold influence. The Spirit acts on the reason and on the will. It inspires the knowledge of moral and spiritual truths, and quickens the moral and spiritual life. We are influenced by it in our perceptions and in our practice.

First, our perceptions,—the knowledge of moral and spiritual truth. All knowledge partakes more or less of inspiration. Our mental faculties are not the sources of truth. In and of themselves, they see nothing and know nothing. They are but organs,—secondary agents. As the soundest eye conveys no image to the mind, until the light from without has touched its nerve; so the keenest intellect can never comprehend the simplest truth, until moved to action by some impulse from abroad. Not that any knowledge, strictly speaking, is imparted. We acquire nothing by passive reception alone. All truth is the product of our own minds. But the mind can produce only as it is quickened from abroad. If this is true in respect to secular knowledge, how much more in respect to spiritual! If the truths which relate to the kingdoms of nature come by inspiration, how much more the truths which relate to the

kingdom of heaven! Why was it that all the wisdom of antiquity failed to penetrate those mysteries which are now familiar to the dullest minds? Why is it that many an uneducated Christian possesses on these subjects a depth of insight which puts to shame the wisdom of the world? Why, but that truths of this order are apprehended by some other faculty than the sensuous understanding. The Holy Spirit is the teacher here. And the fact illustrates the equalizing power of the Spirit, which not only overrules the factitious distinctions of social rank, but sets at nought those intellectual disparities which separate more widely between man and man. More than any scheme of human polity, it levels society by raising the lowest to an equality with the highest in that which in all is highest and best. It preaches its gospel to the poor, and so maintains the equal rights of the mind, without which all other equality is futile and vain.

What, then, it may be asked, is the agency of the Spirit in the communication of the truth? It is the agency of the sun in the natural world. The Spirit is to the mind what light is to the eye. Its office is not to impart truth, but to show it. To those who seek the truth in sincerity, the aid of the Spirit will not be wanting. Let the eye be open, the heart free, and the understanding will be full of light. Doubt and unbelief will vanish away: the Spirit will guide into all truth.

The Spirit is not only light to the understanding: it is also motive and guide to the will. Its agency affects not only the knowledge but the practice of the truth. By it we are filled with holy aspirations, and moved to good deeds. All goodness is from God, just as all power is remotely or directly referrible to him. This divine influence is not incompatible with human freedom. Every act of goodness is still an act of the will. Omnipotence itself will not enforce obedience. Nevertheless, it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do. From him we derive the capacity and the impulse. But capacity is not necessity, and impulse is not coercion. We are moved, and yet move freely; we accept the divine influence, yoke it with our destiny, and choose that the Spirit of God shall reign in our wills. Liberty is not absolute disengagement from all rule. It does not consist in lawless

roving, but in free consent with legitimate sway, in free co-operation with the Supreme Will. Some rule we must obey; but we may or may not elect our ruler. Two opposite currents of influence traverse the world. The one leads Godward; the other, deathward. To move with the former is moral freedom; to be carried with the other is contradiction and bondage. To say that God is the author of our goodness, no more detracts from the power of the human will, than to say that God is the author of truth detracts from man's intellectual powers. He acts upon us, not as compulsory force, but as quickening influence.

The operation of the Spirit is not always a direct action on the individual mind. More frequently it acts through the instrumentality of other, subordinate agents,—through the lips and lives of men, by teachers and books, by instruction and example, by institutions and ordinances, by every influence which moves the soul to well-doing. When we read a good book, and are profited by it; when we listen to discourse that acts favourably on our moral nature, that awakens good impulses in the breast,—we are visited and moved by the Holy Ghost. The Church, and every institution established for moral and religious ends, so long as it fulfils its original design, is a medium of this influence. It is the Holy Spirit made concrete.

But, though this indirect operation is the more usual mode in which the divine influence is communicated, it acts also without the intervention of any visible agent: it acts as direct inspiration. There are motions of the Spirit in us which are not to be ascribed to any external influence: they are the Spirit of God acting on the instinct of goodness in the soul. There is this instinct in every soul. It is not the most patent, but the deepest, of all our instincts. Often neutralized by other propensities, it needs the quickening of the Spirit to give it life. Then it manifests itself in those moral aspirations by which the most thoughtless are sometimes roused to conscientious and beneficent action. If ever, at some moment of solitary musing, we have felt within ourselves a stronger conviction of moral and spiritual truth, a stronger determination to good; if ever we have seized with truer insight the meaning and purpose of our being,

and have formed the resolution to live for duty and for God, —it was the Spirit breathing on the latent spark of spiritual life in the breast, which gave us that vision, and caused those fires to glow. And, if we analyze our experience at such seasons, we shall see how man's free agency may consist with divine impulsion. We shall see that, while the determination of the mind to moral ends is a free determination, calling into action the whole force of our own will, it is still a divine impulse that moves us, and a God that works in us to will as well as to do.

The agency of the Spirit, as now defined, is impartial, in itself considered; but its efficacy in each individual is limited by personal conditions. It is limited by the receptivity which we bring to it. And the receptivity which we bring to it will depend in a great degree on previous training. I do not deny original differences of moral endowment. Some men seem born to goodness as a natural heritage: it is their patrimony. Their way apparently is smooth and free. No obstacle seems to intervene between the purposes they form and the ends they contemplate. The intent and the act hang together by natural dependence, like the links of a chain. We admire the facility with which they appear to glide onward to perfection, while we are constantly thwarted, and pulled back by inward contradiction or external force. Something of this difference may be due to natural inequality of moral constitution; but more is due to self-discipline. If the Spirit of God has greater influence with some than with others, the reason is generally, that, by early obedience and long discipline, they have attained to higher degrees of spiritual life. Their previous habits have disposed the mind to be easily affected by such influences; the will has not been perverted and depraved; the first impulses of the Spirit in them were not resisted, but received into willing minds, and suffered to acquire a permanent control of the thoughts and desires. In nothing is the truth of the saying, that "to him who hath shall be given," more evident than it is in relation to the moral life. Therefore said an apostle, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." By a figure derived from human affections, the divine agency is represented as a friend who wills our good, but may be

vexed and alienated by our opposition or our indifference. Not that we can actually change the purpose of God, or avert his grace. Nothing that we can do can alienate his love, or render the Father of spirits less willing to aid and to bless. He is true to us, however we may turn from him. Nevertheless, we may destroy the efficacy of his gifts in us; and, by alienating our own minds, may virtually alienate his love. The effect for us is the same, whether he is turned from us or we from him.

There is a very remarkable coincidence between this apostolic precept and the *doctrine of* some of the ancient Gentile philosophers. Gentile philosophy taught that a good spirit waits upon all who choose to accept its guidance. The great Athenian personified in this way the nobler instincts of his mind. He spoke of a dæmon (or, as we should say, a good genius) who informed and impelled him. And Seneca, the contemporary of Paul, says more explicitly, as if he had received the thought directly from him, "There dwells in us a holy spirit who watches all our good and all our evil deeds, and who treats us according to the treatment he receives."

Subjectively, then, the Holy Spirit is to be considered a divine instinct in man; a special faculty, differing from reason and understanding, and the other faculties of the mind, in this, that it always speaks with authority: it addresses us, not as argument, but as command. So it appears in numerous instances in the history of the apostles, who are represented as urged and impelled by this divine instinct to do, or refrain from doing, sometimes contrary to their own judgment or their own will. Paul and Timothy, it is said, "assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit would not suffer them." It was reserved for Protestantism, in harmony with its true, original tendency, to follow out these hints, and unfold this subjective side, as the elder Church had developed the positive theological view of the Holy Ghost. Honour to George Fox and the founders of the sect of Friends, who first did justice to the Christian idea of divine inspiration; who re-affirmed the spiritual instinct, and vindicated the inward light! What to the elder Church was a barren dogma, a scholastic abstraction, an hypothesis, the

third person in Trinity,—to them was a spiritual fact. "When the Lord God and his Son Jesus Christ," says Fox, "sent me forth into the world to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was commanded to turn men to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know the way to God; even that divine Spirit which would lead into all truth, and would never deceive." His theory, and that of his followers, was and is, that man, if he will, may have the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God; that inspiration is not a past fact, but a present reality.

"Grieve not the Spirit!" Be true to your highest instincts! Often, in temporal matters, we are warned by a secret voice, which comes to us like a mandate from above, to do or forbear. It is always wise to accept such warnings. We cannot hope to prosper, if we sacrifice our own instinct to formal reasons and the judgment of others. People come to you, when you are hesitating between two courses of conduct, and say, Do thus and so. It is all very well, so long as no instinct of your own prompts otherwise; but if something within you says, Do no such thing, then be sure you do no such thing. If this is true doctrine in matters of temporal import, how much more in things pertaining to our spiritual well-being! Resist not this sacred force! Beware of alienating the divine influence! Whenever you feel yourself prompted to any good work, to any act of kindness or self-denial, to any course of discipline or holy living, accept the impulse, hasten to obey while the fire burns. It is God that speaks in these secret promptings. Harden not your heart when you hear that voice. The Spirit will leave you if you refuse obedience; every warning disregarded is a door closed against future progress. If you do not now the good which you can, the time will come when you cannot do the good which you would.

If we would receive the divine influence in its fullest measure and its greatest force, we must earnestly desire it. God will help no one in that in which he himself is indifferent; he will not give his Spirit except to those that ask it. Other gifts do not wait our entreaty; the common bounties of Providence are not withheld from those who neglect to ask for them; but prayer is an indispensable

condition of spiritual gifts. By prayer I mean not a form of words, but an earnest desire and a fervent affection. No needed gift is denied to the prayer of faith. Everything may be had by him who earnestly desires what he should. If we fail to receive the grace we implore, it is because we ask with a wavering mind, and a lazy desire, and a sluggish faith. It is because we ask as if we wished or expected to be denied; as a man asks a dentist to draw his tooth, or a surgeon to cut off a limb, or to execute any other painful operation which he supposes to be necessary, but would fain avoid if he could. "If we loved truly what we ask for daily," says Bishop Taylor, "we should ask with hearty desires and a fervent spirit. The river that runs slow and creeps by its banks, and begs leave of every turf to let it pass, is drawn into little hollows, and dies with diversion. So, if a man's prayer move upon the feet of an abated appetite, it wanders into the society of every trifling accident, and stays at the corners of the fancy, and cannot arrive at heaven. But, when it is carried upon the wings of strong desire and a hungry appetite, it passes on through all the intermediate region of the clouds, and stays not until it dwells at the foot of the throne, and draws down showers of refreshment."

Pray for the Spirit; for who in this world can do without it,—without its impulse, without its leaven, without its restraining and sustaining power? It has been affirmed that civilization and the progress of society are wholly and purely an intellectual product. To assert this is to forget the gift of God, and what it is that keeps the human heart from dying out, and all the powers from perishing through utter corruption. It is not our laws and our courts, not well-balanced constitutions and social devices, not science and steam and electro-magnetism,—not these alone that have brought us thus far, and made this world what it is; but beneath all these, and above them all, a divine impulse, never wanting to the race of men; a divine Spirit for ever haunting them with those two radical and universal ideas,—truth and duty, without whose penetrating and creative power not one stone would ever have been laid upon another of all our cities, no tree ever felled, no human implement fashioned

for its work. And, if God should now withdraw his Spirit, this proud civilization, with its gorgeous palaces and solemn temples; this shining and sounding culture, with its traffic and its arts, its stately conventions and fair humanities,—would tumble and dissolve; the wild beasts that are caged in these human frames, now awed and tamed by the presence of that Spirit, would creep forth, and rend, and devour; and the civilized earth revert to chaos and night.

The individual no more than society can dispense with the Holy Ghost. The rich requires it as well as the poor. He needs its promptings, and he needs its peace; he needs its strength, and he needs its consolation. He needs it in smooth prosperity, and he needs it in the struggles and straits of life. He is subject to assaults from within and from without; he is tempted to transgress the law in his mind, to obey the law in his members, to forsake himself, to swerve from the right. No earthly power can secure him against temptation, or deliver him when tempted. The Holy Spirit alone can bring him safely through the wars, and save his feet from falling and his soul from death. He is subject to calamity and sharp distress, to grief and bereavement, the loss of his beloved, the wreck of his hopes. No earthly power can avert these woes, or soothe their sting. The Holy Spirit is the only comforter that can reach in those deeps, and make the night seem light about him. This same Spirit is nearer to us all, and more to us, than any soul can fully know in this world, or is willing to believe. What is it, in fact, but the hidden life, the self of our self, which now and then bursts into consciousness, and amazes us with a foreign presence in our private thought? Those lucid intervals in our experience, those clear spaces in our life, when the roar and rush of the world's torrent ceases, and the cloud-rack lifts, and a bit of blue sky struggles through, with revelation of immortal deeps;—these are momentary realizations of the presence of the Holy Spirit, from which at no time we are otherwise sundered than by the wanderings of our own thought and will.

But suppose this earthly world could be traversed, and this mortal life lived, without the gift of the Holy Ghost, how will it be when the gulf yawns toward which we are

momently drifting? No earthly power can bridge that gulf, or ferry us over it. There is no spring in this breast of ours by which it can throw off the clod that is laid upon it, and erect itself out of dusty death. There is no power in this soul by which to extricate itself out of the wreck of this mortal. Let philosophers say what they will, there is no natural immortality. If ever we rise again to conscious life, it will be by no native power, but by the operation of the Spirit of God on souls already possessed by it, and in some degree conformed to its likeness.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is peculiarly Christian. It is not a deduction of the human understanding, but a revelation from "the Father of lights." And, without this revelation, the name of God is only a name, a vague abstraction, having no relation to the heart or life. It is only through his Spirit that God becomes to us a person and reality. You may gather—who does not?—from the visible creation the notion of almighty power and beneficent design. From the course of human affairs you may get—who does not?—the impression of a superintending Providence and an all-present Love. From the experiences of your moral nature you infer—who does not?– a moral government and a righteous law. But all this does not constitute the God of the Christian revelation, the Father of spirits and of mercies. That idea could never be wrought out of those materials. The idea of God is a revelation of his Spirit; and unless the Spirit of God dwell in us, superstition may have an idol, conscience a law, philosophy a name; but the heart has no God.

HYMN BY THE REV. DR. HEDGE.

Blest be the light that shows the way,
And blest the way the light has shown;
We welcome now the brighter day,
And every faithless fear disown.

A tyrant God, the soul's despair,
No more beclouds our earthly lives;
The heavens are wide, and room is there
For every soul that upward strives.

In love to God and love to man
Our simple creed finds ample scope;
Secure in God's unerring plan,
We walk by faith, are saved by hope.

Then vanish, spectres of the night,
That once enthralled the darkened soul;
Our watchword be the inward light,
The onward march, the endless goal.

Science and Religion.*

WHEN it was kindly left to myself to choose a subject for this address, I felt that I could most fitly select one that would rise naturally out of my own half-century's work as a learner, as a teacher, and as a labourer in the domain of Science; because throughout that time my thoughts have constantly been directed to the relation of Scientific progress to Religious inquiry. As one who may now be considered in some degree a veteran in this service, I have thought that some of the results of that consideration might be fitly offered to an assembly like this.

Now, what do we mean by Science? I regard it as *the intellectual interpretation of Nature*, in contradistinction to the poetic or the artistic interpretation, each of which has its own especial field. The man of Science (whatever his particular department of research) studies the phenomena of Nature with senses rendered acute by habits of observation, aided by instruments capable of revealing to him what his unaided senses do not allow him to discern. He brings to that study perceptive powers trained to accurate appreciation of the indications of his senses, and of the instruments by which those senses are, so to speak, perfected and extended. To those perceptions he applies reasoning powers, cultivated and disciplined by careful training, for the construction of a fabric of thought upon the basis of the facts which he has observed.

The first consideration that I would bring before you, is

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the vast extension of our religious conceptions which Science has given us. I need not go over ground which is familiar, I presume, to all of you. I need not discuss the revelations of the telescope, the certain information which we have gained, not only as to the vast numbers, but as to the vast distances of the celestial bodies—information which gives us the nearest approach to the conception of infinity that our finite minds are capable of receiving. It was said by a great thinker, at a time when we seemed to have come pretty nearly to the end of what we could learn from the telescope alone, that its revelations enabled reason to soar to heights where the imagination could scarcely venture to follow. I think you must feel the truth of this remark; but I would now ask you to follow me to a still greater height, by tracing a few of the steps in the progress of that most remarkable inquiry, which the invention of a totally new instrument, brought to a wonderful degree of perfection within the last quarter of a century, has enabled the scientific investigator to carry out; this inquiry having been prosecuted by the application of the strictest and severest scientific reasoning to the indications given by the spectroscope. If any one, a quarter of a century ago, had ventured to assert that within twenty-five years from that time we should be able to study the Chemical and Physical conditions of every body that the telescope can render visible with the highest powers possible to use,—that we should be able to follow by its means the actual progress of that great Evolution of the physical universe which is now regarded as beyond the reach of discussion,—every one would have believed him a dreamer. Yet, during those years, that which you remember as the Nebular Hypothesis has passed into the condition of an approved and accepted Theory.

It chanced to me not long ago to be present at a Clerical meeting in London, at which the writer of a paper spoke of the nebular hypothesis as one that we never hear discussed now; the difficulties attending it being so great that scientific men had put it aside. I was called upon to speak with reference to this subject; and I ventured to suggest that this reverend gentleman must have lived in a cave during the last thirty years, and was now in the condition of Rip Van

Winkle; for the reason that he did not hear this theory discussed, was simply because it had passed beyond the reach of discussion. It is a thing perfectly well established and settled, not in all its details as conceived by Laplace, but as regards its general features.

What does this mean? It gives us the conception of a Creation not finished and completed, but one which is always going on, and has been always going on from the time when there was but one diffused fire-mist. It gives us a distinct conception of a *beginning;* for it is inconceivable that there should have been an infinite existence of matter in any shape, except in a condition of perfect homogeneousness; and if perfectly homogeneous, it would have remained in the same condition through all eternity. The moment a departure from that state took place, *change* began the great Evolution. What could have produced this change, but the will and the power to disturb the previous homogeneity? There must have been a *beginning;* and the work of Creation has since been going on through all time as a continuous act. We can now study by the spectroscope not only the birth of worlds, but the ages of worlds,—the ages of the various members of our planetary system. We can, for instance, say with regard to Jupiter and Saturn that they are still in an early stage of evolution. We used to be taught that Jupiter is no heavier than water, and Saturn as light as cork; and we used to surmise what could be the material of these globes. We could not suppose Saturn to be really made of cork; but could only speculate as to the materials of which these planets are formed, and whether they correspond in any degree with those of our own globe. We now *know* that they do. We know that the question of their relative specific gravities is the question of their degree of consolidation; and that on their respective degrees of consolidation depends their ability to sustain organic Life. There have been many books written on the question, "Are there more worlds than one?" We can now say with certainty that Mars, and probably Venus, do more or less correspond to our own Earth, while Jupiter and Saturn are not yet in that condition; and that the Moon, on the other hand, having cooled more rapidly, after passing through that

consolidation, is now, in her old age, like dried-up scoriæ of extinct volcanoes.

Such being the revelations of Science, I think you must feel that they tend in a most remarkable degree to the extension and elevation of our Religious thought. For similar processes can be shown to be going on with grand uniformity of sequence, through the vast depths of space, in every aggregation of matter that the telescope can discern.

The unity of Creation is the great fundamental idea which all Science tends to establish. You are all familiar with the first great extension of that idea, from the terrestrial to the celestial, in that identification of the attraction of the Earth for the Moon and of the Sun for the Planets, with the attraction of the Earth for the stone that falls upon it, which we owe to the genius of Newton; and with the subsequent extension of that idea to the Stellar universe, which has been made by the study of the motions of the double stars, which have been found to follow the law of universal gravitation. We now find the same unity of composition, and the same manifestation of continuous, orderly sequence, in the process of consolidation.

And so completely has this idea of *continuity* now taken possession of the scientific mind of the day, that several of our ablest Physicists consider it the better method of studying the history of the evolution of our system, to work *backwards* from its present condition; and, beginning with the action of the Sun and Moon in the production of the tides, to investigate the effect which this *must* have had during the earlier periods of their history, in the determination of the present rates of axial and orbital movement of the Earth and Moon.

These general considerations lead us to Geological inquiry,—that is, to the history of our Earth since the first formation of its solid crust;—and give a new and most interesting direction to that study.

No one now questions that the Earth has cooled down from a molten sphere, a condition like that which Jupiter and Saturn will present when they shall have shrunk by consolidation, we cannot say how many millions of years hence; for *they* have not yet by any means arrived at the

condition in which geology regards the earth as having commenced. Some idea of the vast lapse of time required for geologic change may be derived from simple observation (such as I have just had the opportunity of making for myself on the great chasm of Niagara) of operations that have been in progress during the latest phases of its history. The educated eye can there see with certainty the gradual attrition of the hard rock over which the great cataract flows; and, from the known rate of that attrition, it can be affirmed that at least thirty thousand years must have been required to scoop back this great chasm. That change has been probably made since Man made his appearance on the earth; at any rate, since the general surface of that region took its present shape after the last considerable period of disturbance. I have had again the opportunity of seeing those most ancient mountains of your country, the Laurentian: the study of what I believe to be the earliest form of living existence contained in those rocks, having been the special object that brought me on a visit to Montreal. There we are carried back to periods of time so remote that it is almost impossible to conceive them.—The phenomena of Geology are presented on so much grander a scale in this great Continent than in our country, that our comparatively limited ideas have to receive an extension and enlargement of which we had scarcely a conception. The researches of your Professor Marsh in the earliest Tertiary strata, or those which connect the Chalk with the tertiary, bridge over one of those great gaps, which former geologists were wont to consider the most marked epochs in geological history. Professor Marsh tells us that, in making these researches, strata were brought to light which have to be measured by the mile in thickness, where *we* have them of only a few hundred feet. Think of the enormous lapse of time involved in the deposition of that one comparatively recent formation: and then carry your minds backward through the remote Secondary, and the yet more remote Palæozoic ages, to the elevation of those archaic Laurentian mountains, the slow degradation of which afforded the materials of those old Silurian strata, over which I have been lately passing for hundreds of miles.

The ideas to which Geological Science thus introduces

us, in regard to the immense lapse of time required for the production of the long series of stratified deposits that form the crust of our globe, and to the continuity of the same methods of operation in that production, distinctly imply the identity of the Physical Causes to which they are due, and the continuity of their action. Geological science no longer concerns itself with the great cataclysms which were once supposed to interfere with the orderly succession of formative processes,—sweeping off the animals and plants of each period, and introducing a new series with each new group of mineral deposits. Geological science has for many years completely adopted the principle of *continuity*, and accepted it in its fullest entirety. There may have been more active changes at certain periods than at others, but there never has been a cessation of change. The same processes are in operation at the present time, as when the Laurentian mountains were worn down by ice and water, to supply the materials of the sedimentary strata at their base.

These facts have a direct bearing on Religious thought, in extending our ideas not only of the vastness of Creation, but of the continuity of creative operation; and in leading us to those conceptions of order and system, which strangely (to my mind) have led some to see in all this the result of blind necessity. Yet in every one of those great specimens (if I may use the term) of order and symmetry, that are presented in the architecture of a beautiful building, in the successful operations of a well-disciplined and well-commanded army, in the admirable harmony of a well-directed orchestra, what is that but the result of plan—design? I have never much rested on any individual instances of design, as proving the purposive adaptation of means to ends. For I have seen too many instances of "chance" suitableness (in the fitting of furniture to a house, for example), to allow me to feel that such an argument as Paley's could be rightly based on single incidents of adaptation. But my own mind rests with the greatest satisfaction on the great conceptions of order and uniformity to which we are led by Palæontological science; and on those highest adaptations (as the Human eye, or the eye of the Insect, each perfect in its kind) which have come into

existence and attained perfection through a long series of antecedent changes, all tending in the upward direction.

One great object of the Man of Science is the discovery of *laws* which express these Uniformities of Nature. There is a certain set of scientific men who constantly speak of the Laws of Science as *regulating* phenomena. Against this expression I always utter my protest, fortified by the authority of such masters of the Logic of Science as Herschel, Mill, and Whewell; all of whom agree that a law, in the scientific sense, is nothing more nor less than an expression of the *uniformities* which Science discerns in Nature, without any controlling or coercive power whatever. It is only a mistaken analogy, that such expressions can be compared with the laws of a State. But even a Law of the state does not govern. It is the Power behind the law that governs; and the law is an expression of the Will of that power. Any law of nature, as conceived by science, really expresses in human language the nearest approach that man can form to the thought of the Creator. Kepler, that devoutest of men, when he discovered his great laws of planetary motion, rejoiced that he had been permitted to think the thoughts of God. And it is at the present time the highest privilege of the religious Scientist, to be able to believe that every step that he takes in giving a higher generality, a larger comprehensiveness, to his expressions of the Uniformities of Nature, is leading him nearer and nearer to the Divine Idea.

I come now to the scientific conception of *force* and *power*. It is not so many years ago, that several of our ablest Mathematicians and Physicists were expressing every mechanical phenomenon in terms of *motion*; thus departing from the path marked out by Newton, who expressed them in terms of *force*. I am glad to say that, in this and other departments of Physicial science, men are *now* returning to the thought that it is in terms of *energy* or effective force that the phenomena of nature are to be best expressed. Modern science, moreover, grasps the idea of the Unity of the Forces of nature. There is not one force called Electricity, another called Heat, another Chemistry. These are merely modes of expression of certain manifestations of the great Energy of Nature, which it is necessary to classify and arrange. All

scientific men now accept the doctrine that energy is one, and that there is neither beginning nor cessation of its action.

The Unity of the Physical Forces being thus the highest conception of Science, I side with those who push their speculations as to Physical Causation to the utmost limit, and who hold that nothing ought to check their perfect freedom in this kind of investigation, as long as it is based upon accurate data and carried on upon sound methods. For, after all, it can land us only in the conception of one Force operating under a great variety of conditions, and in a statement of the one Law, or general expression of the conditions according to which that force acts. When we have attained that conception, Science ends. It seems as if, in some directions, we are approaching a Law of such generality as shall include even the law of universal Gravitation in the same expression as other great laws of Physics; and are getting a glimpse of the solution of Newton's great difficulty of "action at a distance" without any intervening medium. We are like observers in a great mill, watching machines in motion, and tracing all this motion to one common force derived from a shaft that comes through the wall, bringing with it the *power* that does this work. Whence that power? We have to go to the other side of the wall to find out its source, and we trace it to a steam-engine or a water-wheel: so that in each case it ultimately comes from the Sun—because the fire that boils the water is maintained by the combustion of the coal that was formed by the light and heat of the sun in by-gone ages, while the water of the water-wheel is pumped up by the solar heat of the present time. In Physical science, we thus get to the Sun as the source of all our "energy." But whence the light and heat of the Sun? We go back to Nebular matter and to Chemical change; and we frame the best theories we can to account for their maintenance—the most remarkable of which is that of Dr. Siemens, who conceives of the Sun as a great self-feeding furnace, continuously regenerating itself. But even there we are led back to a *beginning*,—the first departure from the state of perfect homogeneousness; and of this Physical science can give no account.

Having dwelt so long upon this part of my subject, I must be brief in what remains.—One of the most important of the influences of Science on Religion, has been its emancipation from the trammels of authority. We all know what these trammels were in the Middle Ages. We know it was not merely the Church of Rome with its own dogmata, but the support that the Church gave to the dogmata of Aristotle, that was the great obstacle to progress. If I were to tell you now some of the conceptions which it would then have been heresy to question, you would be surprised that grown-up men and women could entertain notions so childish,—such, for example, as that the Planets *must* move in circles, because the circle was the most perfect figure! So that, when Kepler found that Mars and other planets moved in ellipses, he promulgated it with fear and trembling, lest the Church should proceed against him for upsetting Aristotle's doctrine. And, when Galileo dared to assert that a weight of ten pounds would fall no faster than a weight of one pound, it was so far against the prevailing doctrine, that he had to prove it by ascending the leaning tower of Pisa, from the top of which, in the presence of all the Professors of the University, he let fall these two weights simultaneously, which fell in the same time, according to his prediction. That was the first step in the emancipation of Science. It was then clearly and definitely proved that the authority of Aristotle was no longer to be trusted; and, since then, thought has step by step gone forward.

Geological inquiry has been the last opponent of Theological prejudice. It has happened, rather curiously, that this prejudice has been strongest in Protestant countries; perhaps stronger in Great Britain than elsewhere. And why? You all know that Roman Catholicism was not based upon the Bible. It was based on the authority of the Church. The Church undertook the explanation of the Bible, or of such parts of it as it chose to pronounce upon. But, when Luther and Calvin and Melancthon undermined the authority of the Roman Church they were not prepared to accept perfect freedom of thought. Seeking to base their doctrines on authority, they fell back on the Bible; and so, as Dr. Martineau has told us, the early Protestantism was as

much based on an infallible Book, as Catholicism on an infallible Church. We all know what that idea of the Infallibility of Scripture has led to. We know how Geology has had to fight its way inch by inch, especially in our country. I remember the history of the conflict; and I could tell you of curious occurrences in connection with it.

Let me mention one of the last, which will strike you as most childish. You are doubtless acquainted with a book of considerable value, Dr. W. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. I happened to know the influences under which that dictionary was framed. The idea of its Publisher and of its Editor was to give as much scholarship, and such results of modern criticism, as should be compatible with a judicious conservatism. There was to be no objection to Geology, but the universality of the Deluge was to be strictly maintained. The Editor committed the article "Deluge" to a writer whom he considered trustworthy; but, when the article came to him, he found that it was so excessively heretical that he could not venture to put it in. There was not time for a second article under that head; and, if you look in this dictionary, you will find under the word "Deluge" a reference to "Flood." Before "Flood" came, a second article had been commissioned from a source that was believed to be safely conservative. But, when that article came in, it was found to be worse than the first. A third article was then commissioned, and care was taken to secure its "safety." If you look for the word "Flood" in the dictionary, you will find a reference to "Noah." Under that name you will find an article written by a distinguished Professor of Cambridge, of which I remember that Bishop Colenso said to me at the time, "In a very guarded way, the writer concedes the whole thing." You will see by this under what trammels scientific thought has laboured.

The Antiquity of Man has similarly had to fight its way; but no one now would venture to question that great truth. For a long time, our English geologists were excessively conservative. They purchased their freedom to claim any number of ages that might be required for the pre-Adamite succession of strata, by holding to the date of 4004 B.C. as that of the Creation of Man. On that point any heretic who

ventured to question the accepted doctrine was told to be silent: and it was only when my friend Professor Prestwich, whose leanings were all in the other direction, brought forward, as a thing beyond the reach of question, the fact that in the gravels of the valley of the Somme, flint instruments must have been deposited before the erosion of that river-channel, and that there must have been an enormous lapse of time between the deposit of the upper and the lower gravels in which they are found,—it was not until this was brought before the world in a form which could no longer be denied, that the Antiquity of Man was granted. Then was brought up a mass of evidence which had been long accumulating; and the question was discussed until a conclusion was attained which no one now disputes.

Once more, I would say that one of the most important influences which Science has exercised and is exercising, is the cultivation of the *love of truth for its own sake*. "Prove (test) all things: hold fast that which is good," is the motto of every truly scientific man. The readiness to confess error has been the characteristic of all our most eminent workers. I remember that, when Professor Liebig was taunted with a mistake he had made, he replied, "Show me a man who has made no mistake, and I will show you one who has never worked." Every man of genius who has opened up a new path of inquiry has made mistakes in the early period of his inquiries. It was inevitable that he should sometimes go upon a wrong track.

I could not point to any more notable exemplification of that attribute—the love of truth for its own sake—than was given in the life of the late Charles Darwin. With Charles Darwin, as Professor Huxley said, "the love of truth was the passion of his noble nature." And what has been the result? With a splendid carelessness of personal calumny and of all selfish considerations, he simply followed on, step by step, his great inquiries. Nothing was too small or low for his investigation. The earthworm was not too trivial a subject for his study. Nothing was too mean, nothing too remote from his scientific range of thought. Everything was brought in and combined, by that wonderful philosophic power of assimilation which he possessed in a degree beyond any man

of his time,—perhaps of all time. What has been the result? I attended his funeral in Westminster Abbey, along with, I may say, the greatest gathering of intellect that was ever brought together in our country. The whole of its long choir was crowded with those who had come to do honour to his memory. From those most impressive solemnities in our great National Mausoleum, I went straight to the small gathering of the Council of our Unitarian Association, which happened to be held on the same afternoon at Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand. And there I ventured, with the assistance of my friend Mr. W. H. Channing, to formulate a resolution which should express the feeling of that Council on the occasion. It was a most congenial duty to be requested to convey that resolution to Mrs. Darwin, and to be able to add what might make it of special interest to her. The Darwin and Wedgwood families had been closely associated in early days, as free religious inquirers, with Priestley and Unitarianism. Charles Darwin's father was a seat-holder in the Unitarian chapel at Shrewsbury; and, though Charles Darwin was baptized in the Church, some of his brothers and sisters were baptized by the then minister of that chapel. Knowing this, I ventured to say to Mrs. Darwin that this resolution might come to her with the more interest, as having been framed in immediate sequence to the services at the Abbey, and because it came from a body, however small, that had *never been afraid of any truth whatever*.

"Every man who serves truth serves God; and the unconscious servants are often the truest servants of all." I claim that all who are earnestly devoted to the cause of scientific truth, are true servants of God, though they may not be consciously serving him; for they are striving to promote that ultimate victory of knowledge over ignorance, of truth over error, of light over darkness, which is the greatest work of Science. And it will be through the reflection of that light in Religious thought, that the highest influence of Science will be ultimately exerted; by promoting that victory of good over evil, of right over wrong, which will constitute the real Millennium of our race.

How Does a Man become at One with God?—Catastrophe and Evolution in Religion.

THE subject of this tract is "The Essential and Non-Essential Elements in Christian Experience; or, How does a man become at one with God?" I have also added the title of "Catastrophe and Evolution in Religion," as indicating the two most common views as to the way in which every man in Christ becomes a new creature. This latter phrase is borrowed from geology, in which the two prominent theories of the formation of the earth are that of gradual and continuous development, of which Lyell was the chief supporter, and that which declares that the earth came to its present shape after numerous catastrophes, of which, among others, Clarence King has recently pronounced himself an advocate. As there are these two hypotheses as to the method by which the primitive, chaotic world became a new creation, so there are two similar theories concerning the process by which the chaos in the human soul is transformed into a cosmos of order, and man is changed into a new creature. The church usually teaches that man has fallen into sin, and that his nature has become so depraved that every human being begins his moral career with an inevitable bias to evil rather than to good. However much the old doctrine of natural and total depravity may have been softened, every denomination claiming to be orthodox declares that every child is fatally inclined toward evil rather than good. Therefore, in order to become a child of God, he must be radically changed. He must become convinced of sin, sensible of guilt, filled with penitence; and then, inspired by faith in the promises of the

gospel, he must become converted, and so be made a new creature. Such an entire and radical change is usually violent, sudden, accompanied with deep convictions. When completed, the whole heart is changed,— the man now loves what he hated, and hates what he before loved. After this, his life is wholly altered; having done wrong and gone wrong before, he now begins to do right and to go right, and is in truth and reality a renewed and transformed person. It will be seen that the logic of such a radical change is derived from the assumption of a universal primitive tendency to evil rather than to good. Grant this, and it follows that a catastrophe must take place when man is converted,— a beneficial and blessed catastrophe indeed; like those which changed the raging fires, boiling oceans, and bare strata of the ancient world of death, into these fertile plains, forests and seas, full of life and joy.

Every deep and long-held belief at last passes into language. Thus in the popular churches it is assumed, in the language of the pulpit, that all mankind are divided into two classes, the penitent and impenitent, the saints and sinners, the converted and unconverted, the Christians and the unchristians. As the people come out of the world and approach the gates of the sanctuary on the Lord's day, they seem very much alike: with no great difference among them. There are good people, and people perhaps not quite so good as they; but it is impossible for any man outside the church to draw a line which shall divide them all into two classes. But the moment they enter the building, and the clergyman looks down upon them, at once they are divided into "my penitent hearers" and my "impenitent hearers;" and are spoken of as converted or unconverted, just as they would be spoken of as Germans or Irishmen or Americans. The chief object of the church in all its work is to change the second class into the first, to convert sinners, and to bring them to repentance. It is assumed not only that this vital and radical change is to take place in all persons before they can be regarded as God's children, but also that it is an evident and apparent one, that you can tell a converted man from an unconverted one, just as you can tell a Frenchman from an American. Moreover, this

belief when established works its own fulfilment. If children are taught from the first in their Sunday schools and churches that they are children of wrath, that they are radically sinful by their very nature, that they do not love God and cannot, until they are essentially changed,—what is the natural result? That they do not try to do what is impossible,—they consider themselves outside of the kingdom of heaven. God is not yet their friend, nor Christ their Saviour,—not till they are converted. If they die unconverted, they die without hope. One of two things, then. They become careless and indifferent, hoping to be converted at some future time, but meantime meaning to enjoy this world as much as possible. Or else they try to be converted, and pray and agonise to pass through this mystical experience, till at last a reaction takes place, some rest comes to their mind, some comfort to their heart, and they joyfully take this as a proof that God loves them, and that they are converted to Him. Then they, too, will always think that conversion is something sudden and painful, and will hold to the theory of catastrophe in religion. Generalizing their own history, they will assume that no religious experience is genuine which is not stamped with such marks as these.

And now we ask, What truth is there in this doctrine? It is certainly true that no man can serve two masters. Every one must be going in the right way or the wrong, aiming at truth and good, or not aiming at it. There is always some ruling motive in the soul, some chief purpose, eminent desire, overruling wish, to which, in case of conflict, all others must give way. Any psychology which ignores this fact is fatally deficient. Man was made, not to drift, but to steer. He must choose the good, and refuse the evil. If he does not do so, he virtually chooses the evil; just as a citizen who does not mean to obey the laws is at heart a criminal, ready to disobey them when any occasion comes. In an army, a soldier who does not mean to obey, means to disobey; and is at heart already mutinous. In a nation, a citizen who does not mean to obey the government is at heart a rebel. So a human being, in whom God has placed a conscience, making distinction between right and wrong, if he does not mean to obey his conscience, disobeys it. In this sense, it

is certainly true that he who is not with God is against him. And in all such cases a change, to be thorough, must be a deliberate, conscious decision to do right and not wrong henceforth and always.

Again, it is very certain that a large number of people, even in Christian communities, have no determined purpose of right-doing. Their highest rule is not the law of God in their conscience, but some human law, public opinion, or personal convenience. They are not steering, but really drifting. They have no infinite Master whom they obey, no infinite Father whom they love, and therefore cannot be considered as having any Christian aim. They are children of the world, not children of God. As long as it is easy to do right, they will do it; as long as it is prosperous to be just, they will be honest. But when the rains of adversity descend, and the floods of temptation arise, and the winds of trial blow, they will be likely to fall, for they have no rock of a divine conviction and faith under their feet. Now, these people, though they may be very pleasant and agreeable persons, really need to be converted, just as much as any convict in the State prison, for they are no more serving God than he is. It will not do to assume that all respectable, decent, and well-behaved people are necessarily going the right way. They may be really going down, not up,—slowly, insensibly perhaps, but steadily. And, if so, then they must be called upon to repent, and to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit. And that will probably be a sudden change, even though it may not be a public or open one. It is, therefore, no wonder that there should still be so much of what I have called catastrophe in religious experience. To one whose mind has not been imbued with the sight of eternal realities from childhood, their coming must be often like that of the earthquake, the fire, the hurricane, and the volcano, rather than that of the still, small voice.

What are the essential facts in this Christian experience? They are two,—the two which Paul declared to be the sum and substance of his preaching both to Jews and Greeks; that is, the essence of Christianity, when disembarrassed of any thing merely Jewish or merely Pagan. He tells the

elders of the church of Ephesus that he had kept back nothing profitable, but had taught them in public and private, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith,—these are the two poles of Christian experience, around which it must ever revolve. Call them by other names, if you will,—"sin and pardon;" "determination to obey God, and trust in his love;" "doing our duty, and praying for help to do it right;" "law and grace;" "works and faith;" or, more largely generalized, "the sense of responsibility and the sense of dependence,"—these are the two essential elements of all vital religion. Man, born with a conscience which gives him the idea of an eternal law of duty, of an everlasting distinction between good and evil, light and darkness, right and wrong, knows well that he ought always to choose the good and refuse the evil. This is the doctrine, not of Christianity or Judaism only, but of natural religion everywhere; and this law of obligation is unchanging and everlasting. This law of duty, which is *above* man, is also *in* man, rooted and fixed in the very texture of his soul, and we never can escape from it but by fulfilling it. Conscience sits supreme in every soul, an absolute autocrat, claiming our entire allegiance. We can turn from it, stultify it with sophistry, sear it with sin; but it is there always, ready to reawaken,—and its awakening is terrible. Then there may be a shock like an earthquake, and the whole soul may tremble to its centre, listening to that awful voice as to the trumpet of the archangel. If the man hearkens to it and determines to obey it, and to live for what is right at all hazards, that is the first step of Christian experience. This is repentance or conversion. It is turning and beginning to go the right way.

But that is not enough: that is only half of what all men need for spiritual life and progress. To determine to do one's duty, no matter how hard, in spite of all temptation,—that is the beginning, the *Alpha* of all religion. But what shall help us to fulfil this purpose? We are weak; evil habit is strong; we are beset by temptation without and within, and we cry with Paul, "To *will* is present with me, but how to perform that which I will I find not." We

resolve to do right, and presently we do wrong. We find a law in the flesh warring against the law of the mind. We need help of some sort, strength to *do* what we resolve to do, for a resolution alone is not enough. Then comes the second great fact of Christian experience, "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And what is the essential thing in this faith? Is it any belief about his rank and power in the universe, such as the Greek theologians quarrelled about for three centuries? Is it any metaphysical speculation as to the precise way in which the death of Jesus made it possible for God to forgive sin? Is it any profession of faith, or verbal declaration,—as though merely saying something about Jesus was to save the soul? No. The saving faith in Jesus Christ is to believe as he believed, trust in God as he trusted, hope as he hoped, and love as he loved. Just as we eat and drink food, and it becomes a part of our body,—it is to eat and drink Christ, so that his spirit shall enter into ours, and be the life of our soul. It is to trust in that infinite tenderness in which he trusted; to receive that boundless compassion which Jesus made known; to be pardoned, comforted, and made at peace with God by the truth and the love of which Jesus was the manifestation. If I were to say that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," I should say exactly what I myself believe. But I use the words in no dogmatic and doctrinal sense, but as expressing the fact that what we see of God, as shown by Jesus, is that which brings the soul to him, and fills it with his peace. When we see Christ as he was and is, we look through the character of Christ and see that of God; see, reflected in this human child, something of the love of the Infinite Father. This sense of God's pardoning and saving love is the *Omega*, as the sense of duty is the *Alpha*, of all Christian experience.

But now we must ask again, Is it necessary that this experience should come in a moment, suddenly, and with a great commotion of the soul? May it not begin in the earliest childhood, be increased gradually by Christian education, and thus grow by a slow but continuous process of evolution and development into its full power and efficacy? A large part of the church declares that it may. In the first

place, this is taught by all the sacramental churches,—who believe that the unconscious infant begins its spiritual life when the baptismal water touches its brow and the benediction is pronounced over it. Admitting the doctrine of hereditary depravity, they escape its consequences by the ordinance of infant baptism. The baptized child has become a child of God, just as if it had never inherited the curse of Adam. Now, all that it needs is Christian education and Christian sacraments, to keep it from going astray. And if the only way of escape from the cruel theology which declares every human being to be born in sin, if the only escape from this were to believe that this taint is wiped away at once by the rite of baptism, then I should pray God to enable me to believe it, and I should be glad to join the Roman Catholic and the high churchman in this sacramental rescue of the innocents. Let the evil introduced by one false theology be cured, if possible, by another. Two theological negatives might thus destroy the negation.

The rational Christian, however, takes another and a better way. He admits the fact, apparent to all, that we do inherit bodily tendencies which may be temptations to evil. Both right-doing and wrong-doing become at last habits, and these habits become instincts, and are transmitted from generation to generation. But it does not follow that there is any irresistible bias to evil, or any tendency which may not be overcome by education and example. Faith in Christ requires us to believe that good is stronger than evil, and can overcome it. Instead of taking it for granted that children must go wrong, let us rather show them that we expect them to go right. Let us believe that God has planted in every soul aspirations for goodness, capacities for generosity, the love of truth, the sense of justice,—and let it be the business of the church to develop these germs of a true life,—so that no painful conversion shall ever be necessary.

I suppose it is a matter of fact that the majority of all church-members, even in those denominations which lay the most stress on sudden conversions, have become Christians by education and slow development. It has been repeatedly declared, in Sunday-school conventions, that statistics show the majority of church-members to be the children of

Christian parents, brought up from childhood in the faith and practice of the gospel. The theory may require them to be suddenly converted to religion: the fact shows that they were gradually educated to religion. The proportion of church-members suddenly converted to those who were educated is much as it was at first in the company of the Apostles. Paul was converted in a moment; but the rest of the Apostles were educated gradually by the influence and teaching of Jesus, by keeping company with him, hearing his words, and seeing his works. At the last, there came to them on the day of Pentecost the tongues of fire, enabling them to preach the word with efficacy. But that could hardly be called their Christian conversion. It was the promised power from on high, given them for the preaching of the Word. This history of the Apostles therefore shows that the chief method of the church in bringing souls to God should not be by catastrophe so much as by evolution. We should grow up in all things into Him who is our Head.

Other arguments of the evolutionists, as we shall call them, who are in favour of bringing men to God by a gradual education rather than by a sudden conversion, are these: "Is there not," they say, "something unnatural in the very notion of these violent conversions? We admit that, if men have been estranged from God and Christ, living worldly, selfish, and sensual lives, they may find their return to the right way accompanied with a shock. If people have become lost in a forest they may have difficulty in getting back to the road. But cannot Christians walk directly forward on the highway to heaven, from childhood? Is there not such a way? Did not Christ declare himself to be the way? According to the theory of catastrophes, there is *no* way, no regular method. The Apostles were called the servants of the most high God, who show the way of salvation? Modern Protestant Orthodoxy is in a most unsatisfactory attitude. The business of the church is to bring the world to God. Then it ought to know exactly how to do it,—how to begin, how to go on, how to finish. Such is the case with all other work. If a man is to build a house, he does not bring together his materials, hire his masons and carpenters, and, when all are ready, sit down and wait

for some sudden shock or emotion by which they shall be enabled to go on with their work. If we are merchants, lawyers, teachers, blacksmiths, we do not wait for a revival before we can fulfil our engagements. It is only in converting the world to God,—the most important work of all,—that this strange system is adopted. Here, there seems to be no regular method of growth in goodness; but we must use the means of grace, and then wait for the result. Religion is to be obtained by some supernatural method,—by a spasm, an agony, a struggle,—not by any regular, practical work. If a man wished to become a Christian in the days of the Apostles, he went to them and said, 'What shall I do to be saved?' and they answered at once, according to his case, either, 'Repent and be converted,'—if he was committing some sin,—or, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,'—if what he needed was faith,—or, 'Be baptized,'—if what was wanted was an open avowal. But now, if one asks, 'What shall I do to be saved?' no one can exactly say what is to be done. There is a prolonged struggle, an agony, prayers, tears,—finally there may or there may not come relief and comfort. If these come, it is assumed that the man is converted; otherwise, he must wait and try again. All this confusion," say the evolutionists, "is the result of this false method of reliance on catastrophes. The Roman Catholic Church does better, for that commits no such blunder. No doubt, it admits revivals into its system, and has its seasons of extraordinary attention to religion. But it does not depend on them to create religion in the soul, but only to increase its glow and power. In the Roman Catholic Church, every baptized person is taught to believe himself a Christian, so long as he does not continue in mortal sin, but preserves his Christian life by a regular use of the sacraments. Every Roman Catholic who obeys the rules of his church is taught that he is safe and in the right way. In most Protestant churches, if its children born and brought up in it are Christians, it is, so far as theology is concerned, only a fortunate accident."

Another bad result of this method, say the evolutionists, is that it discourages some and inflates others. He who has not been able, for some reason, to obtain these inward

experiences, considers himself as no Christian, having no part in the hopes of the gospel. He who has been through such an experience, and has attained a hope, thinks himself safe. He is safe, he believes, because of his past experience, not because of his present fidelity. He was converted at such a time, so he trusts that he is right. To work out his salvation by deeds of charity and by growth in goodness would, he thinks, be to rely on mere morality. Therefore, the members do *not* grow in knowledge or in grace, as they otherwise would. Hence, the reproach often made, sometimes unjustly indeed but sometimes justly, that church-members are no better than others. They are not taught that anything depends on being better. Most stress is laid on conversion, little on progress. Thus they are exposed to great temptation, and may be led into spiritual pride, which so often goes before destruction. Is it not possible, it is asked, that some of the moral disasters which have befallen leading men in the church are owing to the false security which such men have felt in consequence of this theory that Christianity consists essentially in being converted, not in leading an upright life? Therefore, say the evolutionists, a wholly different method is necessary. We ought to take our little children at the beginning, and, instead of trying to torture them by an effort to obtain a change of heart, teach them that they already belong to God and Christ, and that they are in the kingdom of heaven now. Teach them that so long as they try to correct their faults, obey their parents, and fulfil their duties, they are in the right way. Teach them to pray to God, not as aliens or outcasts, but as his children, and to grow up from faith to greater faith. Make them understand that, while they are thus living in obedience and faith, they are in the peace of God, and have a right to all the promises and hopes of the gospel. Teach them that the work of life is to get good and to do good. Convert sinners by the same doctrine: make them understand that God is not hidden nor afar off; that he is not in some distant heaven, nor beyond some far-off gulf of space, but very nigh to us all, in our conscience and our heart, ready to help, to bless, and to save at every hour.

These are the two theories in regard to the way of salvation,—which is the true one? One of these theories, it will be seen, lays the principal stress on the beginning of the Christian life,—that is, on conversion; the other on the development of the Christian life,—that is, growth in goodness. Now, according to any theory of Christianity, *both* are necessary. Is Christianity a journey, a "Pilgrim's Progress" to heaven? Then it is necessary to begin the journey, to be sure that we really are intending to go, and that we have begun to go. It will not do not to assume that all men are on their way to heaven. They must adopt a purpose, commence a work, begin to go, put themselves in the right way; and, until this is done, nothing is done. So far, the believers in catastrophes are right. But, on the other hand, what is the use of beginning the journey, unless we go forward? What good in being converted to God, unless we learn to obey God? The object of Christianity is to change this world into the kingdom of heaven; but the kingdom of heaven is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God. Unless we enter this kingdom of truth and love, what good in passing the portal? The only advantage in beginning to go on this journey is that we should keep on and arrive at the end.

Is Christianity a life? Then, in order to live, we must be born; but unless we grow up, what good in being born? The Christian life is one of faith, hope, love, obedience,—the life of God in the soul of man. We are born into that life by a determination to obey God and do his will. We grow up by daily obedience, daily trust, daily prayer.

This life, as we have seen, consists of two parts: one, which depends on ourselves; the other, which comes from God. The part which depends on ourselves begins with repentance and conversion, and goes on by continued well-doing. It is work, all through. The part which depends on God is all of grace,—it is from grace to grace,—grace all through. It was by the grace of God that Christ came. God so loved the world that he sent his Son, our brother, to show the way of salvation. It is by grace that he comes to us, and that we are born amid the promises and hopes of the

gospel. It is God's grace which forgives our sin when we repent. It is God's grace which leads us to repentance by inspiring faith in his love. It is the grace of God which invites us to pray, and it is his grace which answers our prayers, takes the burden from the heart, and fills it with his peace. All we have to do in order to be saved is to work and to trust. There are no obscure mysteries to be believed, no awful burdens to be borne, no sin which cannot be pardoned if we repent, nothing to do but what God will give us strength to accomplish. We are saved by faith, and also by works. If we had not faith, we should not have the courage to work; if we did not work, our faith would soon die,—for faith without work is dead.

Genuine Christian experience, therefore, may be sudden or gradual, or both. *Conversion*, or turning round, is always sudden. If one is doing wrong or going wrong, he cannot too suddenly begin to go right. But going forward is gradual, growth is gradual, progress is gradual. The coming of God's life in the soul is like the coming of spring. A little while ago, all was cold and hard and dead. Now, a soft breath of warm odour fills the air, the life stirs in a million buds, the grass begins to grow green over a thousand miles of meadow and prairie, a wave of verdure rolls slowly up from the south over the northern forests. Every majestic oak, every little bush, shakes out its tender leaves to welcome the coming sun; insects hum, birds carol, the fish flashes through the stream. So is the coming of God's love and truth in the human soul. As the earth, in spring, turns itself upward toward the sun, so we turn our hearts upward to God in submission and trust. As the sun pours down his answering radiance, magnetising every germ into advancing life, so the spirit of God descends softly into all willing hearts, creating a new vitality within. There enters the soul a sense of pardon, comfort, and peace; and out of this there come the flowers of beauty and the fruits of goodness. "The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them; the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." "The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

On this deep foundation of Christian experience all Christianity rests. It is the solid rock beneath the church,—like Peter's faith, which flesh and blood had not revealed to him, but the Father which is in heaven. All belief in Christ and Christianity, founded on hearsay, which flesh and blood have revealed, is unstable. Human teaching; the authority of others; the belief of parents and friends; the outward blessings and advantages of religion,—these are only like John the Baptist, sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Not till we come to God ourselves, by personal submission to the law of right, personal trust in his all-sufficient love, do we have any solid Christianity. After that, if we speak, we speak what we know and testify what we have seen. If men fall away from religion and become unbelievers, it is because they have never really had any true religious experience. For what we have once seen, once known, of God, Christ, duty, love, immortal hope, is a possession for ever. Heaven and earth may pass away; but this Divine word, once seen and known, shall never pass away.

On this solid personal experience, the whole future of Christianity must rest. This is still the rock on which Christ builds his church, and which will for ever resist all that can injure or destroy. Out of this deep, broad, living Christian experience, shall come that future church of Christ which shall combine variety with unity, works with faith; which shall be broad enough to adapt itself to all human diversity, deep enough to satisfy all human needs; so progressive as to walk abreast with all human development; so aspiring as to bring down God's kingdom to this world and make heaven upon earth. But the Christian experience, out of which all this grand future shall grow, will be nothing narrow, nothing formal, and not a mere confused emotion. It will be the vision of God's truth and God's love,—the light of things eternal. It may come suddenly or gradually, but it will be always essentially the same. It will always consist in the Divine holiness, justice, truth, order, and law,—producing obedience,—and the sight of God's pardoning love, saving grace, spiritual influence to redeem and bless,—producing faith, hope, love.

Through all change, within all progress, something will

for ever abide. *Faith* will abide: we shall carry with us into all worlds the same essential trust in the Infinite love which sustains us now. *Hope* will abide: for, whatever heights of being we may ascend, whatever depths of experience we may explore, there will ever open before us new vistas of knowledge, activity, and joy. And *Love* will abide,—the same, but better. Love uniting us with God and all his creatures, lifting us into communion with all goodness in all worlds; love making us, and keeping us, at one with God for ever and ever.

"And so beside the silent sea,
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me,
On ocean or on shore."