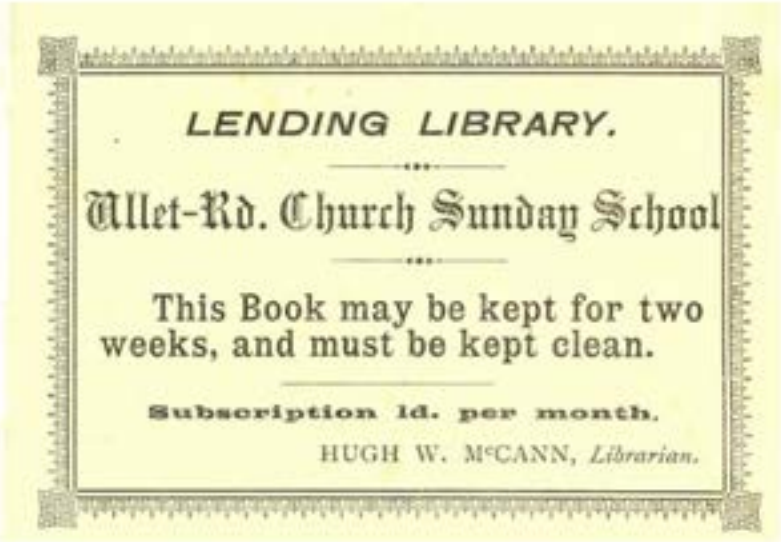
Converging Lines of Religious Thought

SYDNEY HERBERT MELLONE



CONVERGING LINES
OF
RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

BY
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PREFATORY NOTE.

In the following pages an attempt is made to trace the main lines of growth in that deep change of religious thought which is now proceeding in the modern world. The Author's plea is for a whole hearted allegiance to the principles by which that change appears to be governed. These principles he endeavours to bring together and describe in as clear and simple a form as possible. The point of view from which this task is approached could not be better described than in George Eliot's words: 'What is it to be rational—what is it to feel the light of the Divine Reason growing stronger within and without? It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate Change as a Dependent Growth—yea consecrate it with kinship; the Past becomes my parent, and the Future stretches towards me the appealing arms of children.'

S. H. M.

Holywood, Belfast, Ireland,
September, 1903

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Chapter I.

INTRODUCTION.

RELIGION is a very complex fact in modern life, and if we try to estimate its future growth, we find there are several questions to consider. How can the Church be organized into some sort of living unity? What should be the place of the Church in the life of the nation, and its attitude towards the social problems of the future? What are the truest aims and methods of public worship? Yet, vastly important as all these are, there is something more important still. If Religion is to be anything for us, it must have a meaning for us; and its meaning must be not only practical, influencing conduct; it must be known to be True. We

fully admit that Religion is practical, and must issue in action. We fully admit that Religion is based on Experience—or Feeling, if that word be preferred—but Feeling by itself is blind. Man is made not only to act and feel, but also to think; and a Religion which neglects thought is in a hopelessly decadent condition.

We may, without fear of effective contradiction, affirm that the influence of any Church on the life of present-day men and women will depend above all on the thoroughness and helpfulness of its thinking. The Literature of a nation, said Professor Edward Dowden, reflects its life; and the Literature of the Victorian era 'is the Literature of a time of spiritual difficulty, trial, and danger, and its greatest representatives have been before all else seekers, in matters social, moral, and religious, for some coherent conception or doctrine of life which shall bring unity to our emotions and law and impulse to our will.' There were two well-known religious teachers of the nineteenth century whose convictions were far asunder—Spurgeon

and Phillips Brooks. We by no means set them side by side as equals, but they resemble one another in ways which illustrate our point. Each was in the true sense a great preacher by his very instincts and natural endowments; but the power of personal gifts, the magic of personal influence, the outlook on life which they possessed in varying degrees, does not account for all of what they did. Their teaching was a power because it rested on what was, to the teacher, a foundation of vital saving truth. Spurgeon, as we know, gloried in standing immovably by the landmarks left by the divines of Westminster. The theology of Phillips Brooks is never formally stated; it is implied or suggested, it remains in the background giving light to the foreground. But the thousands who hung upon his words were made to feel that religion was before all things a living truth. The attentive reader of Phillips Brooks' published sermons will find that all his teaching rests on a framework of consistent thought. This foundation is what we need.

The present writer is one of those who

count it a privilege to serve the little group of Churches known as Unitarian; and he may be asked, Is not this foundation of which you speak provided by our Unitarian Theology? We reply, first, that the Theology which is to hold the future must be of a particular kind. Not the kind which could ever be stated as the creed of a sect against other sects, or as the protest of an isolated body. It must be an expression of the Ideal to which religious thought is visibly though slowly moving. Religious thought, like everything human, lives and grows; we need a statement, such as the present stage of our intellectual and spiritual development admits, of what the outcome will be. Now we may claim for Unitarian Theology that it alone has within it the *power to become* the pioneer of the theology of the future; but in order to become this it will, we believe, have to be regarded wholly in the light of one great central idea, that its aim must be to search for and realise the Truth of God wherever it is found.

The implications of this statement are not obscure. While a belief of long standing

may not be wholly true, in that it *is* of long standing it cannot be wholly false. If we search deeply, we shall find a reason which justifies it, or some element in it. From this it follows that if we simply *deny* the various doctrines which Christendom has hitherto regarded as fundamental, we are leaving truth behind us and 'advancing' to nothing. Hence we cannot separate Religion from its history. It is the past out of which we have grown which has helped us to whatever of wisdom we possess. From the nineteen hundred years of Christendom we have a heritage containing that within it which is of everlasting worth. It is well to have our eyes fixed on the future and the vision of things yet to be; but that vision will be most truly seen by him who can most truly estimate the increment of truth received from many generations of men. And in doing this, he will have to be critical in the true sense of the word. While doctrines held by great multitudes through long periods cannot be wholly false, it by no means follows that they are wholly true. Stress must be laid on both

these points. The creeds and dogmas of Christendom were not made through mere perversity, through some bias of original sin in man's intelligence; they were made first of all in order to give expression to deep convictions about what we are, and why we are sent into this world. Now it is scarcely possible for anyone to put into precise language the whole of any belief which is vital, *i.e.*, is part of the man himself and a sign of what his character is growing to be; and it is equally hard for a community to express in a similar way some new or deep current of experience or feeling. Our intellectual expression of these things which mould our life can only be partial and imperfect. This is one chief reason for the variety and divergence in the statements of religious belief. It is of the first importance to remember that such a statement must contain truth and error mingled together; and if we want a physical analogy for this, we must say that they are mingled together not merely in the way of a mechanical mixture, from which the error could be sifted out, but in the way of a

chemical combination, where both elements are transformed by their union. This of course makes the separation a much less simple and easy process. This being made clear, we find that there is a tendency in the history of human thought, which may have a temporary utility, but in the end is productive of nothing but evil. Quickening truth tends to harden into a crust of tradition, morality to stiffen into routine. It then becomes the interest of ecclesiastical bodies to uphold and perpetuate the tradition and routine as inviolable truth. Hence we have the truly preposterous claim of finality, made on behalf of various statements of faith.

Our difference with Orthodoxy is thus two-fold: we banish this idea of finality, if indeed it is not already nearly gone; and we try to break down the irrational limitations and qualifications by which Orthodoxy conceals the real meaning of the truths which most of its dogmas embody. We need to universalise the truths which, even in the imperfect forms in which it holds them, give to Orthodoxy its strength and power over the

human heart. The task of universalising them has already been taken up by liberal thought within Orthodoxy itself. Ought we not to welcome this, and carry it forward with energy and enthusiasm?

The fact which we have just referred to is the real meaning of the remarkable movement of 'liberal' theology which is tolerated and encouraged in bodies supposed to stand by the letter of the old creeds. This is sufficiently obvious from the writings of such men as Wilberforce, Rashdall, Fremantle, Cheyne, Bruce, G. Adam Smith, Bernard J. Snell, John Watson, and R. J. Campbell. And if we ask what is the state of things among the 'lesser lights,' impartial observers concur in statements like the following, made to the writer by an intelligent layman: 'In pursuance of my business I have to travel a good deal, and have done so for the last forty years. During all that time I have spent hundreds of Sundays away from home. I have attended services in different churches, and I do so still. But I hardly ever hear now the doctrines that used to be preached as the

very vitals of the Gospel. Do ministers, I ask myself, believe now in the doctrine of three persons in one God? If they hold this to be true, why do they never preach it? Much the same might be said about other doctrines. Why are they kept in the background, or spoken of only to be explained away?' Even those churches which profess to stand immovably on the old landmarks have not really done so; hardly any of them put things as they used to do. The fact is so obvious that it is frequently referred to as a cause of the slow progress of Unitarianism. And the statement has even been made that there is no need for the Unitarian body to exist, for its work, as far as Theology is concerned, is being better done by other people. This is a great mistake. The position of what is called 'Liberal Orthodoxy' to-day is wrapt in fatal ambiguity. Take such a book as Dr. Watson's well-known work 'The Mind of the Master.' Dr. Watson not only repudiates the Westminster Confession, which is the nominal standard of belief in the Church to which he belongs, but he rejects the main

tenets of ordinary Evangelicalism; in fact he went so far, that a few ministers, zealous for 'Evangelical truth,' tried to secure his condemnation for heresy, but the attempt was a complete failure. This is an instance of the ambiguous position into which liberal Orthodox bodies have drifted, in demanding formal assent to creeds and confessions which in practice are quietly ignored.[1] We do not mean to say that all the adherents of 'Liberal Orthodoxy' emulate Dr. Watson's boldness. On the contrary, most of them move reluctantly; they touch the newer thought as if they were afraid of it. Still they do move, and they do touch the newer thought. And in Dr. Brooke Herford's words: 'This movement needs to be interpreted not by those who are afraid of it, but by those who are not afraid of it; by those who have always believed that there should be some going forward, and who, instead of looking away from it, have all along frankly faced it.'

Still, there is reason to believe that all those religious bodies which, like the Unitarian, have the power to outgrow their own

limitations, are now through that power passing into a new phase of growth, in which their teachings will be at once rational, spiritual, and free; and it is not improbable that the development of liberal Orthodoxy, and that of Unitarianism, will gradually converge towards the same point, which will be a religion Christian and Catholic in the true sense of the words.

In the meantime, the realisation of this Ideal is made more possible just in proportion as we avoid the two opposite but related errors of which we have spoken. On the one side there is the principle of Orthodoxy, by which we mean not any particular theology but the dogmatic principle that 'there can be only one way of right-thinking, which is necessarily a way of like-thinking,' so that people in quest of it might be sure they were astray if they allowed any latitude.[2] The various creeds and confessions in their origin were honest attempts to express great truths about God's relation to man: it is not the attempt to state these truths that is mischievous, but the idea that any such state-

ment can be *final.* On the other side there is the danger of forgetting that, while religion appeals not to the 'mere thinker' but to the man, it is still a 'man thinking.' It cannot work by taking account of feeling and conduct only, and leaving out the need for truth. Is our intelligence to be forbidden to act in the highest subjects? If not, then it must act in the light of the two facts, that with truth as with every other Divine dispensation, development is the law of life, and that we cannot begin to see the direction in which that development is moving unless we can justly interpret the venerable monuments of the past.

CHAPTER II.

BELIEF IN GOD.

I.

'PROVE the Existence of God, if you can.' A plausible demand; yet it is a thoroughly unreasonable one. As a matter of fact, no such proof could ever be given; for if anyone sets out to 'prove the *existence* of God,' he finds himself—just in proportion to the thoroughness with which he thinks the problem out—thrown back on another question, as to the meaning of the existence which we assert of Man and the World. And the questions which he finds himself then compelled to raise are not easy to solve,—the meaning of Evolution, the relation of Mind and Body, the origin of Knowledge, the origin

of Morality. In the following pages we make no claim to conduct the reader through these labyrinths.

We may, however, venture on the general statement, that 'existence' is never a matter of merely logical proof; it is first of all a matter of experience. But experience is not limited to what our bodily senses reveal. If that were so, there could be no Theology; there could only be Physical Science.

II.

Physical Science rests on the evidence of the senses and on logical inferences therefrom,—'Observation and Experiment.' Now there is obviously a large class of beliefs, including some of the most commonplace convictions of daily life, which could never be conclusively proved or disproved by what scientific men call 'Observation and Experiment.' Here are one or two instances of the class that we speak of—your belief in your own power to resist temptation, your belief in your friend's sincerity, your belief in the progress of the human race in knowledge

and goodness. There are of course facts to appeal to in support of these; but if you do not wish to believe them, the facts—and you may admit them to be facts—cannot convince you. If the proverb affirming the futility of convincing 'a man against his will' is true even of things which the evidence of our senses might settle, it is above all true of things like these. If then you do not want to believe in God; if you think, quite apart from the question of its truth or falsity, that we should be better without the belief; then argument to convince you that 'there is a God' is waste of time. If we may judge from the tone of recent discussions among so-called 'free-thinkers' and scientific atheists to-day, many of them would regard the disappearance of belief in God, and every other theological belief, as pure gain to the human race.[1]

III.

Have we admitted that there can never be sufficient evidence of God's existence, and that some visionary desire or longing, or mere

prejudice or fancy, may decide the question? No. We have not only admitted but insisted that physical facts, facts of sense-observation, cannot decide the question either way. But the prejudice is on the part of those who will admit no further evidence, and make such statements as the following: 'No methods of investigation save those of Science are admissible, because the experience of the race has proved beyond doubt that knowledge can only be gained by observation, corrected and verified by experiment.' 'If God "may be known, however imperfectly, by those who diligently seek him," this knowledge must form an actual or potential part of Science, for Science includes all knowledge. But in such a case, Science can no longer remain indifferent or neutral. The so-called knowledge must be submitted to the tests of observation and experiment; if it is knowledge at all, it is capable of verification (by these tests), and the verdict of Science on the subject must be final.' The reader will form his own judgment as to the worth of these dogmas. We may contrast the following,

from one who has a genuine right to speak in the name of Science: 'When I wrote this book (*A Candid Examination of Theism*, in which the conclusion is an extreme agnosticism), I did not sufficiently appreciate the immense importance of human nature, as distinguished from physical nature, in any inquiry touching Theism. But since then I have seriously studied anthropology (including the Science of comparative religions), psychology, and metaphysics, with the result of seeing that human is the most important part of nature as a whole whereby to investigate the theory of Theism. This I ought to have anticipated . . . and should no doubt have perceived, had I not been too much immersed in merely physical research.'[2] We must be well grounded in Humanity before we can study Divinity to any good purpose.

IV.

The fact that the 'existence' of God is not a thing to be proved or disproved may be further illustrated from a statement made by two of the most thoughtful of those who in

recent years have defended 'Atheism.' Mrs. A. Besant, writing, in her *Autobiography*, of 'Atheism as I knew and taught it,' refers to 'the vulgar error that the Atheist says "there is no God,"' and quotes from a pamphlet of her own, written in 1876, the following: 'Atheism is *without* God; it does not assert *no* God.' Then, quoting from Charles Bradlaugh, she continues: 'The Atheist does not say "There is no God," but he says "I know not what you mean by God; I am without the idea of God; the word God is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me."' In another place she says: 'No man can rationally affirm "There is no God," until the word God has for him a definite meaning, and until everything that exists is known to him, and known with what Leibnitz calls "perfect knowledge." The atheist's denial of the Gods begins only when these Gods are defined or described; never yet has a God

been defined in terms which are not palpably self-contradictory or absurd,—never yet has a God been defined so that a concept of him was made possible to human thought.' This is practically an admission that our knowledge of God is a matter of experience; for what Leibnitz called 'perfect knowledge' is not merely to 'know about' a thing. As George Eliot said, we might know a great deal 'about' the scent of a violet, without ever having experienced it. 'Perfect knowledge' may be roughly explained as that knowledge which *includes* a direct present experience of the thing; and as this able inquirer, at that time, strictly limited 'real experience' to reflection on the facts given to us by means of our bodily senses, she is quite right in saying that there can be no thought of God on that basis by itself.

V.

What then do we mean by God? For the purposes of the practical religious teacher, the most useful idea is simply the old one of God as the Creator, Preserver, and Moral

Governor of the world. This thought of God is the most practically useful one, because it attaches itself naturally to the ideas of the 'plain man.' There is little practical difficulty in thinking of a personality who is simply a magnified man,—a being like ourselves, only indefinitely greater and larger, and of course not embodied in any physical form such as ours, 'who of his own will and pleasure creates a world in which his infinite wisdom and power are manifested'; and again it seems easy to think of the world as having 'a reality as distinct from God as that of a human machine or work of art from its contriver, a freedom and independence as real as that of an earthly kingdom in relation to its sovereign.' The verdict of modern thought on this ancient idea has been well summed up by the late John Caird: 'There is much in this view of God, and of His relation to the world, which recommends it to popular thought; and so long as it is regarded simply as a figurative, analogical, or pictorial representation of spiritual things, it is of no little practical use as an incentive to religious

feeling; but when closely examined, it is inadequate as a rational solution of the great problem we are considering (God's relation to the world).'[3]

We say, then, that the thought of God as Creator and Ruler has sufficient truth to be practically useful, but that it is only a figurative idea.

VI.

When we try to think of God's relation to the world in a more rationally satisfactory way than by the figurative idea of creation, we find that many difficult questions are raised; and the way seems closed to any one who fails to grasp the distinction between Reality and Appearance, and apply it to the world which he knows. In elementary practical ways, we are all familiar with the notion; most of the child's earliest education consists in learning to make this distinction, as when it finds that one bright object makes a good plaything, while the next one it sees, scorches and burns. We all learn to make it in every mistake or error recognised to be such; in

every disappointed expectation or endeavour. These however are only comparatively superficial 'appearances' proved to be such; and the result is usually that, through these personal disillusionments, we settle down all the more completely on the broad facts of average experience as the solid realities of life. What we can see, and above all what we can touch and handle, is real. The solid world beneath us, the air we breathe, the regular succession of changes shown on the face of the earth and sky, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, life and death; the pleasures and desires of our common human nature; the material aims and tendencies of ordinary civilised life, land, money, trade, with Science as their servant; these come to be regarded as the whole extent of what is truly real. And for many worthy minds, the experience of life has nothing more to teach.

VII.

Science is often the first disturber of the 'faith'—if such it can be called—which we have described. Science tells us that much

of what we ascribe to the real world which our senses show us, is not real, but the effect on our sensitive nerve-organisation of invisible and intangible forces. It traces the history of these forces back through ages without end in the past, and shows their operation through the boundless depths of space around us. It tells us at last of the Universe, where our 'real world' is insignificant as a grain of sand on the shore; and it familiarises us with the thought of one universal invisible Energy in all changes, ever being transformed and transferred from one manifestation to another, from one mode of motion to another, of which it might be said, in the words of the Earth-spirit in *Faust*.

> At the roaring loom of time I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou seest him by.

There is no exaggeration in saying that Science itself leads to the thought which Prospero suggested:

> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit,

are not the sum of Reality, but the Appear-

ance of something beneath them or within them.

VIII.

That moral experience leads to a similar result, is a familiar fact. It has been said that 'the first dawn of religious feeling may be traced to the impression which the experience of life forces upon us of the transitory, unsubstantial, evanescent character of the world on which we look and of which we form a part.' This truth has been truly and beautifully expounded by Dr. John Caird. 'There is a feeling old as the history of man, which the fleeting, shifting character of the scene on which we look, the transiency of life, the inadequacy of its possessions, the lack of any fixed stay, of anything enduring on which our thoughts and desires can rest—which in briefer terms, the contingency and unsubstantiality of the world and the things of the world inevitably awaken in the mind, and which impels us to seek after a reality beyond the world of shadows, an enduring and eternal rock on which, amid the stream

that bears us away, we may plant our feet. Now in this very feeling of the instability and illusoriness of the world, there is something which betrays the presence in the mind of the germ of the idea of God. . . . If we were wholly finite we should never be conscious of our finitude. We could have no sense of imperfection but for the presence in us of a standard of perfection. The discernment of vanity and illusion is already the recognition of a truth and reality by which we measure the world of appearances. That we regard the world only as the domain of the "things seen and temporal" implies at least a latent reference to the idea of an invisible and eternal life, an existence in which there is no variableness or shadow of turning.'[5] This experience, when rightly understood, sometimes becomes the consciousness of intercourse between ourselves and a larger power to which we feel ourselves to be related. It is a fact which connects itself especially with the highest objects of endeavour—Truth, Beauty, Goodness: when something 'ideal,' something which at first seems only a dream

of future possibility, seems to become more than this, and to bring us into conscious relation with a Presence higher than ourselves, ready to help us if we try to make the Ideal a part of ourself. In this we have the real basis of religious belief, and were this foundation to fail, theologies and Churches would speedily become extinct among us.[6]

Phillips Brooks, in one of his noblest and most suggestive utterances—the Sermon entitled 'Come and See'—has dealt with the subject of Religious Experience in a manner at once simple and profound. In this passage 'Christ' means *God revealing Himself in Humanity*, the historic Jesus being regarded as the highest example of this universal self-revelation of God. He first shows that we must finally abandon the idea that there is one fixed point in a man's life when the Spirit of God comes to him for the first time —that before that moment he is an outsider, a foreigner, and an alien. 'If we believe that all men are God's children, and that each of the children from his birth into this world, and how long before we cannot say, is on

the Father's heart and mind; if we believe that every truth and goodness that the most benighted soul finds comes to him from the one only Source of truth and goodness which the universe contains; . . . . if the hour of conversion is the time when the soul comes to God, and not the time when God comes to the soul, that having happened so long before; if all this different idea be true, then the difficulty is not so great. I go to my friend and bid him test Christ [God] by this experience of the inner life, and he answers me as I described, "I cannot come to Him till first He comes to me." The answer is, "He has come to you. All the truth and goodness that you have He brought you. Your coming to Him will only be coming into a consciousness, and so a complete service, of the Saviour who was already with you." When I invite you, then, to the religious experience, I invite you not to something strange, but to something whose rudiments you know already. You have already seen the opening of the paths that lead to Christ [God]. You cannot see the depths they lead

to, but they do finally lead to Him. When I urge you to come to Him, I am urging you to follow those paths out to the end. You cannot see their whole course, but you can see one step at least farther than you have done yet, and so test the steps beyond, so come nearer to the illumination and assurance that awaits you at the end. . . . . If I found a man who believed in a God, but not in any self-manifestation of that God in human life, what would I do? I would do all I could to make that God whom he did believe more real to him. I would waken his conscience until it cried out with the sense of disobedience. He should see that God, awful in his righteousness, more awful in his love, close to his daily life. . . . Only when I found a man who owned no duty which was yet undone, before whom there opened no vista of spiritual aspiration which was yet unfollowed,—only when I found the man perfectly bounded and contented with this earthly life, should I feel that I had found one before whom there opened no way to the Saviour of us all.' 'When,' he adds, 'I urge a man to do the

duty and believe the truth which he has had made known to him, I am leading towards that Christ [God] who is the centre of all duty and all truth.'

The experience of the religious man is not essentially different from that of all men, but a deepened form of the same. Whatever experience the religious man may have comes to him through the perceptions, the duties, the affections, the reasonings of normal human life; it is not something outside of these, but a meaning which, as they are purified and strengthened, they are found to contain.

IX.

Before carrying this thought further, we may return to the idea which science suggested (paragraph vii.), of an Energy manifested in the universe around us. This is the Reality, of which all life and all worlds are the Appearance, the Revelation. We can assign no limits of time or space to it; but every intelligent step that science takes helps us to know that it is *one*, and that all forces of the universe are only varieties and mani-

festations of it. This then is the least that we can mean by the name 'God,'—that which Mr. Herbert Spencer stated to be the absolute certainty,—'we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed.'

All that we know of this Energy points to a further truth of deep significance. It is manifested everywhere as a majestic and inviolable Order; and wherever this Order can be traced we find we can understand it. It never puts us to confusion.

X.

'Is this Power material or spiritual?' A natural question. A brief answer may be given in the emphatic words of Dr. M. J. Savage: 'If you can prove to me that "dead" matter, the matter we find in a brick or a piece of marble, under some mysterious transformation comes to have the power to live, to think, to feel, to love, to hope, to sacrifice itself for another, to aspire, to look onward towards an immortal life,—if you can prove

to me that matter can do that, you have simply changed your definition of matter, and made it coincide with what I call spirit.'[7]

We may take our stand upon this, that *no effect can contain more than the cause which produced it*; and we may judge the great world-power by what it has accomplished. It has produced world-wide order, harmony, and beauty; but far more than this—it has produced life, consciousness, thought, love, and given us ideals which are infinite. Infinite, because the more they are realised, the greater are the possibilities they reveal; the more we know, the more we feel we can know; the more we love, the stronger and deeper grows the capacity of loving. The universal 'Energy' is therefore nothing less than the living infinite Perfection of all human Ideals. This is what we mean by God; and this is in entire harmony with the verdict of religious experience (paragraph viii.).

'But what of the Evil in the world?' It may be said, 'we are to judge the Infinite and Eternal Energy by what it has produced; and it has produced the evil.' We reply that the

world does not consist of good and evil side by side, like two kinds of fruit on one tree; the very life of goodness lies in overcoming evil, just as the life of knowledge lies in overcoming ignorance. The power which has produced the world has produced us, and has given us the ideals in the light of which we condemn the world; if it is the source of the evil in the world, it is also the source of the love that spends itself in overcoming the evil. There are not two separate facts in the world, —good and evil; there is one fact,—good overcoming evil. Only when we doubt the possibility of this fact, is the problem of evil absolutely insoluble. 'I see that, in the moral sphere, life and experience verify this fact; but what of physical evil, due to the inevitable operation of natural law?' No natural law would do us any harm, were it not for our ignorance; ignorance is the real root of physical evil. And here again the fact is not simply ignorance, but ignorance being overcome by knowledge.

We cannot ask, Why God 'made' the world thus and thus, for the world is not yet

made; it is being made, and we have a share in the making.

XI.

Can we say anything more definite as to God's relation to the world than is implied in the statement that the world is dependent on him, or proceeds from or is produced by him? We may vary the phrase, but we shall not go further until physical science has far more knowledge of the 'constitution of matter,' the substance of the material world, than it now has. The best scientific work of the present day does more than suggest that 'matter' is something infinitely more complex than was suspected, and that the account given of it by the physical, chemical, and biological science of the last century shows only a very small fragment of what it really is. It has been well said that 'our bodily senses do but admit us to a perception of the outermost film of the unfathomable reality: even the scientific imagination, though it can penetrate far deeper than the senses, and reach that mysterious all-pervading ether

which altogether evades our bodily senses, still starts profounder questions than any that it solves.' What light will be thrown on these questions in the course of the twentieth century it is impossible to say; but it is not impossible that a revolution of thought may take place as great as that which popular science is accustomed to associate with the nineteenth century, with the difference that it will not be popular or theological ideas of the world that will be revised, but 'scientific' conceptions of matter.

Chapter III.

REVELATION, INSPIRATION, AND MIRACLE.

In nearly every form of religion, higher and lower alike, believers in God or the gods have been believers both in Revelation and in Miracle.

I.

It has always been believed that there are events due directly to the divine action. God himself says something to man—that is revelation; God himself does something for man—that is miracle. If, therefore, we simply deny all revelation and all miracle, we are asserting a God who has nothing to do with us, and who might as well not exist

as far as we are concerned. The Greek philosopher Epicurus and his followers held this belief in an extreme form: they thought of the gods as leading a blessed existence in heavenly regions without troubling themselves in the least about earthly and human affairs.

Every genuine religious belief involves belief both in revelation and in miracle of some sort.

II.

'Of some sort, indeed; but of what sort?' This is the question round which the conflict of opinions has been waged.

A great deal depends on what we mean when we speak of revelation and miracle; let us look more closely at the meaning of the terms, limiting our attention for the present to the former. Revelation has never been held to be an arbitrary act—to be due to what has been called God's inscrutable will. It has a purpose, which is to make good the deficiencies of man's ignorance. The idea is that God tells us things which for our good we need to know, but which we never could

have known 'of ourselves.' The reader will see that this thought has two roots; first, the conviction that we ourselves are ignorant; and then, the conviction that there is a power above us, able and willing to supply the need. What is the relation between these two ideas?

Cardinal Newman and others have tried to 'prove' that there must have been a revelation, and to do so have dwelt on the fact of man's helpless ignorance. But there is nothing in the bare fact of our ignorance to suggest that the need of knowledge will be met.[1] Before we can believe in revelation, we must believe in God who reveals—who is able to reveal because He has in Himself all the infinite treasures of Truth and Wisdom, and is in living relation to the souls of men. If there were 'no God'—that is, if the name 'God' had no meaning—then 'revelation' could have no meaning. To believe in revelation we must believe in a Revealer.

III.

This is not all. We said that revelation is for a purpose—for the sake of man. Hence

to believe in revelation is to believe that man, for whom it is made, is capable of receiving it. Now to receive the revealed truth is not to be merely passive, as the vase when it receives water, or the mirror when it reflects an object. Even an item of ordinary knowledge, such as an elementary rule of Arithmetic, cannot be simply transferred from one person's mind to another's as an object is moved from one box to another. The learner must grasp its meaning and see its bearing on his practical life and on other parts of his knowledge; and until this is accomplished, he does not 'know' it at all. The same is true of moral and religious ideas. As Dr. J. Caird has well said, 'their rich content can only pass into and become nutriment to the soul that by its own spiritual energy appropriates and assimilates them.'[1]

If this is to be possible, the giver and receiver of the revelation must be akin. Truth cannot be revealed to incapacity. We are familiar with this fact in connection with human knowledge, as when one of superior knowledge and mental power 'reveals' to us

truths which we never could have known 'of ourselves.' It is equally true as regards the appreciation of literature and art. However high we may place the genius of Shakespeare, we could never appreciate his works unless there were something, however little, of Shakespeare in us; and the music of Mozart and Beethoven could never move us if there were not in ourselves some faint beginnings of the power by which that music was made. It is most true as regards Divine Revelation. 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit.'

IV.

Is it presumptuous for man in his ignorance to claim insight into the Knowledge and Wisdom of the Eternal? It is true that we are ignorant; but we *know* that we are ignorant, and how is this *knowledge* possible? We shall see the answer to this question by imagining that we are judging our knowledge —or someone else's knowledge—of some particular thing, say the reason and meaning of an arithmetical rule. We may be perfectly

well able to tell whether the particular relations of numbers, on which the rule rests, are understood or not; we may be sure that we do not understand them, and yet sure that if we found the true explanation we should recognise it. This would be impossible if we had not in our minds a standard by which we judge of truth and error in this case. The same principle holds throughout. We are, as it were, able to rise above ourselves, to compare ourselves with others, and pass judgment on our own attainments. Where does the standard come from, on which this judgment is based? It is a sign of man's kinship with God.

This was what the great Greek teacher Socrates meant when he said that the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is to *know* that we do not know, and *why* we do not know.

V.

Important consequences arise from the fact that revelation has both a divine and a human factor (paragraphs ii., iii.) and is a relation between God the Giver and man the

receiver. Whatever we may think as to the 'immutability' of the divine factor in revealed truth, the human factor is subject to the limitations of human nature, and is subject to change, which may or may not deserve the name of Progress. The Divine spirit expresses itself through man, who is an instrument but not a passive one; and because of the imperfections of the instrument, which is the human mind, the Divine message is never given in any final form. But the imperfection of any one revelation is the very fact that makes progress possible, and enables us to regard Revelation as a Divine education of the human race through the ages of history.[3]

The two words Inspiration and Revelation are often used as equivalents: it is well to remember that the former is wider than the latter. We may speak of Inspiration when a man comes to be endowed with new sources of feeling and motives to action, as well as when he gives utterance to new Truth in the strict sense of the word; while Revelation is especially concerned with doctrine. This difference of meaning, however, makes no

difference to the question of distinguishing between the divine and the human factors in Revelation and Inspiration.

VI.

We have seen that there is a capacity for Inspiration which all human beings possess; the man of genius has more of it than other men, but all have it in a greater or less degree. Out of this universal Inspiration the various channels of particular inspiration grow, and on it they rest. It is a class or order of which they are sub-divisions. This thought is finely expressed in Emerson's *Problem*, and Lowell's *Bibliolatres*. Thus, taking men of genius even in the most diverse lines of work: in religion, philosophy, science, poetry, invention and discovery: such men as St. Paul, St. John, Plato, Kepler, Newton, Shakespeare, Milton, Columbus: they all set forth truths not of their own invention, but which they were inspired by God to utter. If this seems hard to believe of scientific discovery, we shall do well to ponder over the great saying of Kepler, that in his discoveries, the result of

many long laborious calculations, he was only thinking the thoughts of God after him. But though all such work is verily inspired by God, the faculties through which it finds utterance are human. Every inspired worker has his own special style of expression and thought, and is liable to error in the form in which he expresses the truths with which he is charged. The discoveries of Kepler, on the basis of which Newton proved his great Law of Gravitation, involved numerous errors; Columbus believed that he was discovering, not a 'new world,' but islands off the coast of Asia; St. Paul believed (at least at one period of his life) in the bodily return of Christ through the clouds of heaven, within a few years (*1 Thess.* iv. 13-18).

VII.

The thoughtful part of the world is more and more recognising the universality of Inspiration, and the added dignity and worth which it gives to human life; so much so, that we scarcely need have spoken of it here, but for the sake of stating, as emphatically

as possible, a dangerous misunderstanding to which this great truth is liable. 'Has God' we are asked 'really had more to do with the Bible than he has had with the theories of Newton, or the careful working out of Darwin's speculations?' 'Has the Bible any more authority than such a collection of books as the Histories of Livy, Tacitus, and Gibbon, the Letters of Cicero and Burke, the Poems of Horace and Dante?' To answer such questions in the negative is to fall into serious confusion of thought. What should we think of one who maintained that, because men, tigers, oxen, foxes, whales, etc., belong to the same class in Natural History (Mammalia) therefore the differences in bodily form and structure between these creatures are of no importance? Yet it is just as unreasonable to think that because Inspiration is universal, the differences between the various forms of Inspiration are of no account. They are of the greatest importance from every point of view. The illustration from Natural History, which James Freeman Clarke was fond of using, is very suggestive. Living things fall

naturally into a graded series of divisions and subdivisions: thus, a 'species' is a special subdivision of a 'genus,' a genus of a 'class,' a class of an 'order.' So the Old and New Testaments are two *species*, together forming one *genus* of inspired works, of which they are the sole representatives; but this genus belongs to the same *class* as the Scriptures of the Hindoo, Persian, Mohammedan and other religions, and that class belongs to the same *order* as the architecture of the Parthenon and Strasburg Cathedral, the discovery of America by Columbus, and the Law of Gravitation by Newton. The fact that any objects can be classified shows that they *differ* as well as *agree*. What then are the *differences* on account of which the various forms of Inspiration fall into these divisions? They are differences in the *subject* of the inspired work, and its *worth for human life*.

VIII.

The different *orders* of Inspiration appear to be three:

1. The realisation of Goodness in character and conduct.

2. The satisfaction of Intellectual Thought and scientific discovery.

3. The pursuit and creation of the Beautiful.

Which of these has the highest worth for human life? This is not a question to be settled by any clear-cut logical proof, nor by the dogmatism which is the expression of a transient mood; but only by a mature and wide experience of life. And in the highest life which in our best moments we can conceive, there is nothing higher than simple moral goodness of character and will. Truth and Beauty remain as high ideals, which of themselves open up pathways to God.[4] These call for and receive the allegiance of many a heroic life; but there is a simpler way to God, which may be 'hid from the wise and prudent' while it is 'revealed unto babes.'

All human life is supernatural (chapter II. paragraph viii.); but merely to acknowledge the truth of this, is not enough. We need by living experience to realise that our life is supernatural. The life that falls short of that

living experience is after all but a 'natural' life. To make the natural *itself become* the supernatural, is the ideal of all vital religion to-day. And that widening and deepening of the natural into the supernatural is nowhere more evident, and nowhere possessed of greater power, than in the moral life. It is least evident, and made with greatest difficulty, in the life of intellectual thought and discovery, because there all our work consists in finding inviolable laws. Dr. Martineau has explained the distinction as clearly as could be wished. 'The Divine Life in relation to us presents itself as two-fold, like our humanity; *natural*, so far as we are creatures subject to necessary laws and part of a determinate order; *supernatural*, so far as he has endowed us with spiritual capacities and affections, open to his free appeal, and to our own responsive insight and direction under it. From this immediate communion of Spirit with spirit, in which the initiative is with him and the answer with us, no soul is shut out; in the struggles of conscience, in the silent dawning of higher ideals, and in countless

experiences of faithful lives, as well as in the awful warnings of shame and remorse, the pleading of the Divine Love is felt directly addressed to the individual's need, and following all the windings of his will. As it is on this side of our divine relations that all Religion lies, all Religion is supernatural, and there is a revealing Presence of God in every soul that is not sunk in slavery to the mere 'natural man.' But the closeness and intensity of this union between the human spirit and the Divine may vary in indefinite degrees; and the saints and prophets in whom its higher measures appear are the great instruments for clearing and opening the darkened windows of unawakened natures.'[5]

IX.

This brings us to the meaning of Authority. There is no need to fall into the confused disputes which have been carried on round this subject. He whose experience has been wider than mine is an authority to me. Take the simplest case: he may have been where I have not been, and seen what I have not

seen; then, provided I believe him trustworthy, I may learn from him. And I judge his trustworthiness by the experience which I and others have had of him. This is a matter of 'common sense.' So, in the case of a man of spiritual genius, whose gifts make him a channel of high inspiration: he is an authority to me, if I can see and know his inspiration. How may I know it? Common sense is enough to distinguish those who are authorities, and those who are not, in the things of common life; here it is not enough. But if there are in us some faint beginnings of the power which lives in the spiritual hero, then we may see and know his inspiration.

Our 'authorities,' like our 'inspirations,' fall into various orders of worth. One may be an authority to me in science who is not in matters concerning the beautiful or the good; and one may be an authority in the moral and spiritual realm who is quite the reverse in matters of scientific fact. We compare their worth as we have already done. A modern schoolboy has offered to him, every day, knowledge of which Plato and Socrates

never dreamt; and we do not say that the schoolboy is therefore greater than they. But moral grandeur is for ever supreme, and only as they are great in this greatest sense, do the sages and thinkers of the world deserve and receive deep and abiding reverence from men.[6] 'Am I admitted into the company of greater and purer men, who move among the upper springs of life, who aim at what had scarcely visited my dreams; who hold themselves, with freest sacrifice, at the disposal of affections known to me only by momentary flash; who rise above the fears that darken me, and do the duties that shame me, and bear the sorrows that break me down? The whole secret and sanctity of life seem to burst upon me at once; and I find how near the ground is the highest I have touched, and how the steps of possibility ascend, and pass away, and lose themselves in heaven. This is the discipline, this the divine school, for the unfolding of our moral nature—the appeal of character without to character within. The sacred poem of our own hearts, with its passionate hymns, its

quiet prayers, is writ in invisible ink; and only when the lamp of other lives brings its warm light near do the lines steal out, and give their music to the voice, their solemn meaning to the soul.'

X.

From what has been said, it follows that there is no connection between Authority and Infallibility. For anyone to be an authority to me, it is not necessary that he should be infallible; and this is true of the books of the Bible as of everything else.

The notion of Infallibility, which as applied to the Bible comes to the same thing as the theory of verbal or literal inspiration, had its origin in the pedantic lawyer-like theology of the Jewish schools. It is the result of denying the human factor in inspiration, so that the person through whom the revelation comes is regarded as wholly passive, like a musical instrument which is being played upon. It prevails only in an age of spiritual and intellectual poverty, when men cannot find in themselves any trace of

the creative power whose mighty working they discern in the souls of former spiritual heroes. It was revived in an extreme form by the Protestant theologians of the Reformation period, who felt the need of an inviolable seat of authority, against the pretensions of the priests on the one hand, and the vagaries of fanatical sects on the other. But when we look at the facts, we could hardly express the conclusion better than in the words of Freeman Clarke. 'Does the Bible anywhere say of itself that it is inspired in this way? Do any of the writers of the Bible declare themselves to be thus inspired, so that all they say is absolutely true in every particular? Does Christ say that those who are to write the Gospels or the Epistles of the New Testament shall be thus guarded against every possible error? Or is there any evidence in the books themselves that the writers were thus protected? Do they never contradict each other or themselves? Do they never contradict facts of nature or facts of history? To all these questions, we are obliged to say, No. The Bible claims no such absolute in-

spiration for itself. It says that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," but it does not say that the Holy Spirit made them infallible. It says that "all scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine," but it does not say what are the limits of Scripture; and to be profitable or useful for doctrine is surely not the same thing as to have infallible authority over belief.' The Old Testament is an authority because it is the literature of a nation which was a 'chosen people' in the true sense of the words, chosen to work out through centuries of struggle the great thought of the perfect moral unity and holiness of God. This is the subject on which the Bible is an authority—not matters of history or science; and this is a subject of far more importance in its worth for human life than history or science. From this point of view, even the Old Testament contains a Divine Revelation of the highest value, higher than any other literature of the world, save the New Testament. To suppose that because some of the history is legend, or the account of the Creation, for

instance, untenable, therefore the moral and religious lessons of the nation's history as revealed by the Prophets are illusions, is to repeat in a crude form that confusion of which we spoke,—to fail to distinguish the different values of the different orders of inspiration.

XI.

We have spoken of the means by which we may recognise an inspired authority in whom we are to trust (paragraph ix.). The 'Christian Evidence' theory of Paley, Whately, and Andrews Norton (Unitarian) had a simple answer to this question: the 'authority' is proved if miracles are wrought in connection with it. A 'miracle' here means an event 'contrary to the laws of nature,' wrought by the direct agency of God, in proof of the Divine authority of him through whom it is done. This view of the case is now happily fast disappearing. It only takes a little thought to show that the power to work prodigies or portents, and the power to utter divine truth, are two entirely different things, and that we cannot assume either of them

simply because the other is present. Archbishop Trench stated clearly, in his well-known book on *The Miracles of Our Lord*, that though miracles may be an important testimony to the divine authority of a teacher, they are not, by themselves, sufficient to establish his authority, for they may conceivably be wrought by Satanic agency. Hence the doctrine must first commend itself to the mind and conscience; and we must judge the miracle by the doctrine, not the doctrine by the miracle. This view is now the prevalent one. Mr. W. F. Adeney has recently said that the intelligent believer of our own day accepts Christianity not on the ground of but in spite of the miracles; whether he accepts or rejects the miracles, his attitude towards them is towards difficulties, not towards helps.[7]

It is very vague to talk of a miracle as an event 'contrary to the laws of nature.' Theodore Parker distinguishes three meanings of the phrase. 'A miracle,' he says, 'is one of three things. It is a transgression of all law which God has made; or, a trans-

gression of all known laws, in obedience to a law which we may yet discover; or, a transgression of all law known or knowable by man, but yet in conformity with some law out of our reach.' A miracle in the first sense may be dismissed from consideration, for we only know a very small part of the laws which God has made, and we can have no conception of what is or is not contrary to 'all' such laws. A miracle in the third sense may also be dismissed from consideration, because we have no right to say that any laws of the universe will be for ever unknowable by us, although the greater part of them are certainly at present unknown.

A miracle in the second sense would be an 'extraordinary' event, *i.e.,* one outside the ordinary course of things, and which ordinary experience would never have led us to expect. Experience shows us many kinds of orderly succession in the course of events,—as for instance in the succession of day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, life and death. This regular succession of events, in a thousand different lines, ac-

customs us from force of habit to expect that things will follow one another in a regular order, and this expectation is always fulfilled. This constitutes a very strong presumption against any deviation from this order; but it does not follow that a deviation from the usual order is impossible. An expectation, bred by experience and custom, that events will occur in a certain order is not the same as the knowledge that they must necessarily so occur, and we have no such knowledge. We are justified in approaching a narrative of an occurrence which seems to be a new departure in nature with a certain prejudice against believing in it; but this prejudice, and the presumption from experience on which it is founded, would have to give way before sufficiently strong evidence, if such were produced. We should have to believe even the most extraordinary story if the evidence on which it rested were impregnable, though the more extraordinary the story, the more unusually strong would the evidence for it have to be.[8]

XII.

The chief interest of this question to-day arises from the miraculous occurrences narrated in the life of Christ.

We must remember that in the time of Jesus there was among the Jews no thought of the 'natural order' of which we have been speaking. Miracle was in the air. It appears that, so far from finding any difficulty in believing in such portents, people were predisposed to believe in them. Their occurrence was expected. The more remarkable the character and deeds of any man in the public eye, the more easily would stories of the miraculous gather round his memory. But there are special difficulties in applying the theory which is thus suggested to the gospel story. The Gospel of St. Mark cannot, at the most extreme estimate, be placed more than a few years later than A.D. 70; and this Gospel is in proportion to its size fuller of miraculous narratives than any other. Is it possible that they were all unconsciously invented in the course of one generation? We think not,—the time is too

short. But the difficulty arises from assuming that there could have been nothing whatever extraordinary in Christ's mental and physical powers. Surely it is certain that he possessed in a very high degree that power, which nearly everyone possesses to some slight extent, to which we hardly have a name to give,—the power of accomplishing wonderful effects by personal influence, especially in the way of calming wild and excited minds. We must remember also that 'hypnotism' and related facts have made it impossible to set any limit to the power of mind over body, which extends *under certain conditions* to health and disease, and even to life and death. It is far from impossible for one person to influence the bodily state of another indirectly through the mind of the latter. These two considerations give a wide and firm foundation of fact, which—misunderstood and perhaps to some extent exaggerated—account for part of the miracle-stories as we now find them in the New Testament. Another part of them, as many writers have suggested,

may be due to misunderstanding of figures of speech. The feeding of the multitude forcibly suggests the spiritual food which, like knowledge, increases as it is used or transmitted to others; the stilling of the storm suggests the influence of Christ on the storms of passion and ignorance in the souls of men; the water on which he walked may have been the turbulence of the people; the deaf, blind, the dead, who were made to hear, to see, to live again, may have been the morally deaf, the morally blind, the morally dead. The few miracle-stories, the origin of which is entirely perplexing, and which recall the meaningless prodigies so common in other religions, are as follows: the provision of the Tribute Money (*Matt.* xvii. 24); the Draught of Fishes (*Luke* v. 1 ff. and *John* xxi. 1 ff.); the turning of Water into Wine (*John* ii. 1 ff.); and the blasting of the Fig-tree (*Matt.* xxi. 18, and *Mark* xi. 12). The miracle story of the Virgin Birth remains. It is related in conflicting ways by Matthew and Luke, and nowhere else in the New Testament is it even referred to. In all

probability its origin lay in the ancient misunderstanding of *Isaiah* vii. 14-16, which produced the rendering of that passage adopted in the English Authorised Version. The prophet is speaking of a young wife (not a virgin) who is about to become a mother: and to emphasise his prediction of the speedy disappearance, under God's providence, of the two kings who are now attacking Jerusalem, he declares this shall happen before the child (whose name is to be 'God with us') shall be old enough to know the difference between right and wrong.

The miracle of the Resurrection cannot be dealt with apart from the general subject of the Immortal Hope, to be considered in our concluding chapter.

XIII.

At the beginning of this chapter we spoke of a 'miracle' as anything which God directly does for us. This sense of the word is of course wider than the meaning given to it in the foregoing paragraphs; and in this wider sense we may say that all human existence,

all existence whatever, is miraculous. 'From the beginning of the world God has been flowing into humanity,—yea, into all life before there was any humanity,—filling all life full of himself according to the capacity of that life to receive him.' In reference to God's expression of himself through the intelligence of man, this means that Revelation and Inspiration are universal; in reference to God's expression of himself through the whole system of things, the laws of nature and the universe, it means that Miracle is universal. One of Carlyle's finest passages —the chapter on 'Natural Supernaturalism' in *Sartor Resartus*—is devoted to an exposition and defence of this truth.

We found that the principle of the universality of Revelation was subject to a disastrous misunderstanding (paragraphs vii., viii.); and the principle of the universality of miracle is subject to a similar misunderstanding. Even the great thought of God as the Life on which all other lives depend, the Life which is the perfect realisation of all that is best in other lives, may be so understood as

to compel the conclusion that the existence of God makes no difference to any particular thing,—that we need not take account of him, any more than in our bodily life we take account of the pressure of the atmosphere. If this were true, we might have admiring and adoring sentiments, but only about life as a whole, not about any particular portion of it apart from the rest. Professor William James, of Harvard, has characterised this view with his usual directness and force. 'We owe it (we are told) to God that we have a world of fact at all. "A world" of fact!—that exactly is the trouble. An entire world is the smallest unit with which God can work, whereas to our finite minds work for the better ought to be done within this world, setting in at single points. Our difficulties and our ideals are all piecemeal affairs; but if God can do no piecework for us, all the interests which our poor souls compass raise their heads too late.' If this is all the outcome of 'liberal' thought, then it has worked itself at last into a blind corner indeed, 'with a God who can raise no

particular weight whatever, who can help us with no private burden, and who is on the side of our enemies as much as he is on our own.' This would be a return to the thought of God as set forth by the great Greek thinker Aristotle, who spoke of him as the unmoved Mover, moving all life because he is the object of all true desire, whom all seek, if haply they may feel after him and find him, and who *is found* but never *finds*.

Many of those who rejoice in the breadth and reasonableness of the view that Inspiration is universal and all life sacred, are in danger of forgetting that the narrower view has not been clung to with such tenacity, for centuries, without a reason. They show triumphantly how all the paths of human goodness lead to God, and how in searching for the Best we are searching for God; and they forget that God is not God if all the movement is on our side and none on his,—if he cannot move towards us as we move towards him. The root of the old belief in special miracles lay in a desire to reserve this unexhausted freedom of movement on the

part of God. We may contrast Religion with pure Scientific Thought in this respect. When we search for knowledge, for the intellectual grasp of truth, when we try to understand some detail of the world, nothing of what we want to know ever *comes to meet us*; Truth remains, eternal, silent, changeless, waiting to be known, like Aristotle's God. Let us hear a modern Christian teacher's view in contrast with this. 'When a man becomes religious he feels the God who has been always before and under and around his life, and gives himself in conscious and obedient relationship to Him. Do you not see then what must come? The first principle of that man's life comes to be God. Instead of looking for a philosophy, a statement, a law which will comprehend and harmonise his life, now he looks for a person, for God. Religion is the total acceptance by his nature of that higher Nature to which it gives itself in obedience and love.' 'He looks for a person.' Why do we use that word? Because if we abandon it, we renounce with it something which ought not to be renounced.

We use it, not because we would ascribe human passions or anything merely human to God; but because we cannot admit that God is anything less than a Living God, who comes to meet the soul's desire to find him. 'Omniscience' does not afford what is needed; there is nothing divine in the thought of an infinite Impartial Spectator of the multitudinous panorama of human history, even if he sees and knows every detail in it. God loves us, God claims us, God is 'our Father'—what do these words mean but this, that the Life of God comes to meet ours with the power of all that Being can feel towards dependent being, with the intent to communicate and repeat himself, to fulfil imperfection in perfection, to turn evil to good?

XIV.

If this 'freedom of movement' as we metaphorically called it, is to be possible on the part of God, he must be greater than nature, and his resources are not exhausted or fully expressed even in the whole universe of created life. 'How shall we have strength

to glorify the Lord? For he is himself greater than all his works. Many things greater than these are yet to be revealed; for we have seen but a few of his works. . . . When therefore ye glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as ye can, for even yet will he exceed; and when ye exalt him, put forth your full strength, be not weary, for ye will never attain' (*Ecclesiasticus* xliii. 27 ff.) There is nothing presumptuous in this claim; we are not beyond our depth in confidently making it. We should be beyond our depth in denying it, for to deny it is to assert that the visible universe *does* 'exhaust,' in the sense of completely covering, the whole ground of the Divine resources. In rejecting this assumption, we leave room in the unexhausted possibilities of the Divine Life for a genuine *self*-revelation and *self*-communication of that Life to men.[9] And also because the life of God, though it is the 'Life of Ages, richly poured,' is also unspent and free, it is possible for its self-communication to take those special and intense forms of which we spoke, which constitute the power of Genius,

in its various kinds (paragraphs vi.-ix.), and which provide us with our natural *authorities*, who guide us because they stir up the first beginnings of like powers in ourselves.

The theology of the past has always insisted on the need of a *mediator* between man and God, to bring them together. All the associations of the word belong to the theory of Revelation which we have seen reason to reject, *i.e.* that it is the communication of Divine truth to an utterly undivine nature, so that the Divine has nothing to appeal to; a process as impossible as teaching the higher mathematics to an ape, or making it appreciate the music of Beethoven. But if we rid the word of these misleading associations, we may use it to express the true value of our authorities to us, for they become mediators between ourselves and God, when, according to Dr. Martineau's suggestive metaphor, the Divine messages written in invisible ink in our souls steal into view in the warm light of those higher lives. It is impossible that there can be, strictly and literally, but One mediator between man and

God. There may indeed be One supreme mediator, of such transcendent spiritual glory that all others sink into insignificance beside him; but the others in their small ways are mediators too.

Chapter IV.

THE INCARNATION AND THE TRINITY.

We have frequently referred to Dr. Martineau in explaining the view of religious truth discussed in the preceding chapter: for no one has done more than he to enforce and defend that view. All indications point to the fact that it is the position to which thoughtful persons in every religious body are moving.

I.

We quote from Dr. Martineau one more statement of it, which is very instructive. Writing in 1846, he says: 'I can find no rest in any view of Revelation short of that which

pervades the fourth Gospel . . . that it is an appearance, to beings who have something of the Divine Spirit within them, of a yet diviner without them, leading them to the divinest of all, which embraces them both.'[1] In this statement two things are made clear. (i.) The seat of the authority is always at first external. Its first source is the higher mind of a fellow-creature, one who is, with us, a son of man, but 'higher,' because more of the Divine is expressed through him. And inasmuch as none of us have entirely effaced the Divine Image within us,—inasmuch as we have something of the Divine Spirit,—it is possible not only for us to appreciate him, but for him to stir up the Divine elements in us into stronger life. Thus we instinctively look up to him as our Master. (ii.) In doing this, he makes the seat of the authority become internal. He ceases to be our Master. What happens is that our moral life consents to his and owns him with ourselves as servants of a higher Righteousness 'which opens its oracles and seeks its organs in us all.' Both of these views are true; but as they are conflicting

truths, they cannot be held on the same terms. They are expressions of two different stages of human progress.

(i.) The first is a fact of universal experience. Men need help from stronger higher natures, and they need that help constantly renewed. There is a materialism which is not a matter of theory but of habit and practice, which the conditions of modern life do much to promote, and which so submerges the spiritual factors of our life, that we have come to take it as a matter of course for a man's common sense of right and wrong to be dulled by the drudgery or pressure or rush of the struggle for existence to-day. In such a state of things, where our higher nature slumbers save where its deeps are broken up by trouble, all appeals to what is Divine within us must be insistent and constant if they are to waken it into life. And the mass of mankind have found this help in the Bible, and most of all in the appeal made by the life and love and sacrifice of Jesus, because it has held the mirror up to their consciences, has comforted them in sorrow, and deepened

in them the feelings which spiritual truths express. (ii.) The second stage is admittedly the higher, but it is an ideal, not a fact of human nature in general. It was the ideal of devout Israel: 'Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!' 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.' 'They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.' It was the ideal of St. Paul; that apostles, prophets, teachers are needed 'till all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' It was the ideal of the seer of Patmos: 'I saw no Temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it; and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it.'

In the latter part of his life, Dr. Martineau

wrote as if he had almost forgotten how much of this is ideal, and how little is actual fact,—how great is our need of moral and spiritual help and guidance outside ourselves. Hence arises what we may call his theological 'individualism.' Each man is regarded as an individual complete in himself, drawing all his greatness and goodness from certain resources of his own: the whole burden of the discovery of truth being thrown on his own reason, and of obedience to duty on his own conscience and will. On this theory, Christ might still be regarded as the supreme moral revelation of God; but this would mean only that he gives us the type of moral harmony with God, which we recognise on the authority of our own conscience, and which we are to realise by our own wills. Religion reduced to these terms cannot meet the needs of present day men and women.

II.

Before we go further, we must consider the principle which has been expressed by the phrase, 'Back to Jesus.' Dr.

John Watson, in his well-known book, *The Mind of the Master*, says that only by a perennial return to Jesus can Religion retain its freshness. In what sense are we to 'return'? If morally, it means that by a truer knowledge of Christ's person and character we deepen our ideal of the Christlike life; this is excellent, but the problem of how to realise that ideal in *our* lives, still remains. If intellectually, it can only mean that we are to fit together Christ's own teachings into an account of our duty, origin, and destiny,[2] and that this is to be the whole of our religion and theology. But what of all the gradual growth of the teachings of the Christian Church?[3] We are told that this is all a superfluous excrescence on the original idea of Christianity, and where not superfluous, positively mischievous. It is a veil woven round Jesus of Nazareth, which we must remove. This thought has the high authority not only of Dr. Martineau, but of Professor Harnack of Berlin, the greatest living authority on the history of Christian doctrine. The

world has good reason to be grateful to Harnack and Martineau for presenting with such deep insight the moral and spiritual side of Christ's mind, so far as we can discern it; but it is impossible to follow them in their view, which Martineau carries to an extreme, that the history of Christian thought is the history of a growth away from the Mind of the Master,—a lapse from the ideal. 'The same authority,' said the late R. H. Hutton, 'which spoke to the conscience of man through Christ, spoke no less in the gradual development of Christian worship and the gradual growth of the confessions of the Christian creed.' It hardly need be repeated that we do not deny what even a Roman Catholic writer admits, that the conceptions which the Church offers us as revealed dogmas are not truths fallen from heaven and preserved by religious tradition in the form in which they appeared at the beginning.[4] And we fully admit, with Phillips Brooks, that 'it is not conceivable that any council, however ecumenically constituted, should so pronounce on truth that its decrees should have any

weight with thinking men save what might seem legitimately to belong to the character and wisdom of the persons who composed the council. Personal judgment is on the throne, and will remain there,—personal judgment, enlightened by all the wisdom, past and present, which it can summon to its aid, but forming finally its own conclusions, and standing by them in the sight of God, whether it stands in a great company or stands alone.'[8] But just as little can we treat it all as a process of corruption, a baseless fabric of mere human invention, as Dr. Martineau does; we say that the work of the modern thinker is not to destroy ancient dogmas, but to discover and enlarge their deeper meaning, which underlies the defects or errors which may disfigure the form of their expression.

III.

Let us try to take a general view of what the history of Christian doctrine has accomplished.

Recent Christian thought has done well to repudiate the idea that Christianity can be

treated as a philosophy merely, with only an accidental connection with the historical life of Jesus. This view underlay Hegel's exposition of Christianity; it was worked out by F. C. Baur, the original founder of the advanced school of New Testament criticism, and it has largely influenced Dr. Edward Caird's treatment of the subject in his Gifford Lectures. The Christ of the philosopher is always an *idea* rather than a real person. But the beginning of Christianity is the personal life and teaching of Jesus, which are matters of historic fact. The teaching *by itself*, in the then condition of the world, could not however have created Christianity or achieved universal significance. Much of the teaching was not even new. What was new was the person who taught. It was not by what Jesus actually taught that this creation took place, but by what under his influence his followers come to feel about him. We have then the original source of personal influence arousing the religious instincts of the earliest followers, and through them transmitted to the Greek and Roman

world of the early centuries, where the original tradition had to find its place, and find expressions adapted to ways of thought and feeling utterly foreign to those of Palestine. This process of blending the primitive tradition with contemporary ideas led to centuries of confusion and conflict in doctrine, but through it all one stream of tendency can be discerned, moving directly towards one end, and gathering strength as it moves. That end was, to make Jesus *at once* true man and true God. Forces of all kinds, good and bad, passion, partizanship, political expediency, religious instincts and aspirations, were gathered into the stream and worked towards the same end. It is a story of the 'ascension' of Jesus in another sense, which took four centuries to accomplish. We see him first as the Son of Man, with a new and revolutionary interpretation of the Messianic idea; then, as the Man from Heaven (in the Pauline Epistles) and as the Word from Heaven (in the Fourth Gospel); later, as God the Word, subordinate to God the Father; and then, as being more

and more equalised with the Father in existence, in eternity, power, and dignity, without separation from his human nature, which was asserted at every step of his apotheosis.

In this stream of tendency there were certain side streams setting off, moving in the direction of minimising, now the divine, now the human element, or again in the direction of separating the two. But the leaders of Christendom, as if by an instinct, insisted on keeping both the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus, and when they could not logically explain their statement of the connection, they held to it the more firmly, but declared it a mystery.

IV.

The great crisis in this development was the struggle in the fourth century which culminated in the conflict between Arius and Athanasius at the general Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Previously to this, the doctrine that Jesus the Son was subordinate to God the Father had been in common acceptance, but had been understood in very various

ways. Arius took up this thought, and defined precisely in what the subordination consisted. It consisted, according to him, in this: that the Father is uncreated, but the Son is a created being; on the other hand, he is the first of all created beings, made before all life and all worlds; he is thus different from and inferior to the Divine nature, and different from and superior to human nature. Athanasius, on the other hand, expressed what afterwards proved to be the real tendency of Christian thought, though at the time it appeared to be an innovation: that the Son was never created; he existed eternally with the Father; not that there were two Gods, for the Son is one in 'substance' with the Father, and is distinct from him only in having been 'begotten' of his substance. 'Consubstantial' was the watchword of the Athanasian party. The issue at the Council was doubtful for many days; but the emperor Constantine interfered, for political reasons, and secured a victory for Athanasius, whose party promulgated what is now known as the

Nicene Creed. This did not of course end the dispute, which may be considered to have lasted over half a century longer, until the time of Theodosius I.

But with the acceptance of the Deity of Jesus in the Athanasian sense, his humanity still remained to be defined. Apollinaris, a friend of Athanasius, gave an explanation of Christ's person which made the human nature less real than the divine. His views were officially condemned, and the real human nature of Jesus asserted. How then were the two natures combined? Nestorius held that there were two *separate* personalities in Jesus, the human and the divine, each complete in itself. Eutyches raised the question whether Jesus as man could be ignorant of what he knew as God, or could say as man what as God he would not have said. In reply a general Council at Ephesus declared that the two natures were not simply joined together but were *one*. Attempts were again made to explain the human nature as consisting of impersonal or unconscious qualities; but a Council at Chalcedon repeated and empha-

sised the former decree, declaring that Jesus united in his single personality the two natures, without confusion or separation, each nature preserving its own proper qualities. After this the Eastern Church exhausted itself in dreary disputes arising out of the attempt to make this signal contradiction intelligible, one of the most serious difficulties being to explain the union of two *wills* in one person, as required by the theory that the divine and human natures were each complete.

To follow out this history in detail is not a pleasant task, for the first suggestion it makes, and makes with no little force, is that the energy of the Church was being wholly taken up with metaphysical subtleties and logical contradictions. Yet this would be an entirely superficial and one-sided view. The mischief arose because from the end of the second century Christianity was being made into an Orthodoxy of a more and more elaborate kind, each pronouncement being taken as final and incapable of modification even in form.

V.

What was the underlying motive which made the Church insist on combining the two natures in Christ?

Every man who has any manhood in him is oppressed by a sense of failure to fulfil his highest destiny, and of estrangement from what is really his highest Good; and the consciousness of this estrangement was intense when Christianity began to spread. The philosophers could bring no help, for they had made the highest life a divine ideal more and more removed from the natural life of this world. Profoundly dissatisfied with the actual world, men tried in Stoicism and kindred systems to escape from it by withdrawing into themselves: 'Abstain, endure, be sufficient for thyself!' This relentless resignation is only an expression of defeat,—it is not to 'overcome the world.' What was needed was what Christianity accomplished,—to bring the divine and the human into real relation with one another. 'I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest deliver them from the evil.' God

had been a Spirit beyond the stars; now he was in the world as a Source of strength whereby even the weakest might in his measure overcome the world.

We may regard the victory of Athanasianism as providential, when we consider the view to which it was opposed. The late Professor T. H. Green of Oxford said that in his opinion, if Arianism had triumphed in the great controversy, the theology of Christianity would have become of a kind in which no thinker who had outgrown the demonism of ancient systems could for a moment acquiesce. If Athanasius had been in conflict with a belief resembling that of the primitive Church, that Jesus was *a human being become divine,* our verdict would be different; but the whole meaning of the doctrine, familiar to us from the fourth Gospel and the Epistles of John, that *God was in Christ,* had been lost; the only way to save it was to insist, against those who said that Christ was a supernatural being in human form, that he was no such intermediate being, but God. Athanasius, it is true, declared that the Son's being in the

Father is quite a different thing from our being in the Father, that the nature of the Son is not as ours, and we must never expect to be as the Son is. The objections to this are familiar: that it makes Christ's declaration of his limitations in knowledge and power self-contradictory, his temptation unintelligible, his human sympathies and sorrows unreal. But Arianism is open to the same objections, with the addition that it separates Jesus more completely from our sympathies and our reverence than Athanasianism does, and makes his apparent human life a delusion. Arius could indeed say that the Son was united with a real human body; but in that body dwelt nothing either human or divine; what dwelt there was an intermediate being, supernatural yet not divine.

Athanasius, in teaching that Jesus had been 'begotten of the very substance of the Father' saved the thought that there was a vital union between God and man.

VI.

Now Athanasius held that this relation was a unique one, never to be realised in any one but Christ. It is obvious that if this idea is taken seriously and thoroughly carried out, Christ's human nature becomes of no importance; and we have seen that tendencies to reduce it soon began to arise. But the Church instinctively felt that belief in the genuine humanity of Jesus must be saved at whatever cost of logical difficulty. Athanasius, it appears, did not see the importance of this; he was absorbed in defending the belief that Christ's relation to God was a real, vital, and intimate one. We hold that the firmness with which Christ's *real human nature* was asserted is a striking example of the soundness of the deep motives underlying the development of Christian thought at this period. Athanasius had said that Jesus was God, and therefore unique; but when it is added that he was also *perfect man*, this cuts off his absolute uniqueness, and relates him to the rest of the human race. If Christ is perfect man, then what he has been is a type of what

all men may be. He becomes—as Dr. J. Drummond well says—'the revealer of our own spiritual relations and the pledge of our spiritual destiny.'

What then is our conclusion? Simply this: we distinguish between the forms which the successive stages of Christian doctrine assumed, and the instincts, aspirations, and fundamental beliefs which those forms expressed. The instincts were sound, the forms beset with insuperable logical difficulties. The final form of doctrine, as decreed by the council of Chalcedon, is as absolute a self-contradiction as the notion of a round square. The contradiction is not in the union of two different natures; it is a matter of common experience that each of us unites many different natures, covering all degrees from the angel to the devil. The contradiction lies in asserting that one historical person united in himself *perfect and complete* manhood with *perfect and complete* Godhead. When Jesus used the pronoun 'I' he must have meant either the perfect man or the perfect God; and we affirm that not once does he use the

word 'I' in such a way that the Infinite God could be regarded as the speaker.

Nevertheless, we believe that modern thought can satisfy the instincts which prompted the declaration of Chalcedon in a way which explains and to some extent justifies the doctrine held by the Church of the first century. In Jesus we have the supreme example of a human person *at one with* the Indwelling God. God was in Jesus, as much of the Divine Life as could fill that human personality at that time and place. Jesus was not God; but because he was so full of God, the world-transforming power of his influence is intelligible; and because humanity in general is never without some measure of the Life of God, it is possible for men to learn to reverence and to be inspired by the life of Jesus. Our conclusion may be expressed in words used by Canon Wilberforce in Westminster Abbey a few years ago: 'One of the finest conceivable definitions of the relation between Jesus and God is that given by Spinoza, when he says "The Eternal Wisdom has manifested itself in all things, most of all

in the human mind, and most transcendently in Jesus Christ."' It is this form of the doctrine of the Incarnation which is steadily progressing and taking definite shape in the liberal religious thought of our time.[6]

VII.

The question as to Christ's perfection, as man, easily becomes a mere question of words. What do you mean by perfection? To be a 'perfect man,' must he have had knowledge of all truth? Or can a man be 'perfect' where knowledge is limited? If Jesus is to be regarded as 'perfect' morally and spiritually rather than intellectually, does this mean that never, in all the development of humanity through the eternal ages, never will the spiritual stature of the Jesus who lived in Palestine be exceeded, or that it never has been exceeded on earth? The last is the only question which seems to us to be of any practical consequence. The moral supremacy of Jesus in human history has been denied; but the denial seems to rest sometimes on an uncritical literalism in accepting incidents or

sayings recorded in the Gospels, sometimes on an incapacity to measure the sublimity of his character.

This is the only vestige of truth contained in the traditional doctrine of Christ's 'sinlessness.' A metaphysical inability to sin is an idea of no moral or religious value. Dr. John Caird speaks of Jesus as a Being 'absolutely and immutably good'; but the same thinker has eloquently shown how the best, purest, noblest human souls are just those who are least satisfied with themselves and their own spiritual attainments. Are we then, it has been pertinently asked, to suppose that this 'absolutely and immutably good' being was dissatisfied with himself and his own spiritual attainments? To this question Mr. C. B. Upton has made the only possible reply: 'That the actual Jesus of Nazareth was so dissatisfied, we can well believe; but this dissatisfaction only becomes intelligible and divinely beautiful when the *relationship* of the will and personality of Jesus to the Father within him is regarded as of the same *kind* as that which obtains in the case of

other rational beings who are made in the image of God; and when, accordingly, the absolute sinlessness of Jesus, if it be a fact, arises not from an exceptional inability to sin, but from the perfect and unvarying fidelity of his will to the promptings of the Eternal Will.'

VIII.

The theory of the Trinity, that God is tri-personal, was first suggested by the use of the triad of names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which from very early times had been used together in the baptismal formula. The doctrine arose out of the necessity of defining the relations of these three terms to one another. The Nicene Creed in its original form declared belief in the Holy Spirit, without saying anything as to the connection of the Spirit with the Father or the Son. But the more carefully the connection of the Father and the Son was defined, the more obvious was the need of settling the same question with regard to the Holy Spirit. It appears to have been regarded by some as a

created Being, and by others as a name for the Divine Activity; and the matter remained unsettled until the time of Theodosius I. when a Council at Constantinople reaffirmed the Nicene Creed, and added to it a declaration of the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, with the qualification that, as the Son was distinct from the Father in having been 'begotten' of his substance, the Spirit was distinct from the Father in 'proceeding' from him.' This is not yet the doctrine of the Trinity as we know it; it appears to have been brought into its final form by Augustine. His teaching on this subject is embodied in the so-called 'Athanasian Creed,' as it is printed in the Prayer-Book of the Church of England; but this Creed did not come into general use until more than two centuries after Augustine's time.

In connection with the many attempts to make the doctrine of the Trinity less of a stumbling-block for human reason, great importance has come to be attached to an interpretation of it which is called 'Sabellian.' 'Sabellianism' is a general name for all ex-

planations of the Trinity which deny three distinct persons in God, and speak of three different 'manifestations' or 'modes of being' like faculties, qualities, or characteristics. Sabellius lived in the middle of the third century. There is difference of opinion as to what his own doctrine really was; the Church Fathers speak as if it meant that the Son and the Spirit were appearances which God could put on or off,—*i.e.* God is sometimes Son, sometimes Spirit.

IX.

Among theologians at the present day who wish to make the Trinity rational, two opposed tendencies can be discerned.

The most interesting, and in our opinion the soundest, tendency in contemporary religious thought is a form of 'Sabellianism,' relieved of the shallow view that God's manifestations of himself are like masks or faces. The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not names of three distinct persons, but of three 'operations towards humanity' of the universal Parent Spirit in whom we live and

move and have our being. The Father is God as the Source of all being, the Infinite and Eternal, on Whom all things depend; the Son is Humanity, 'begotten of the substance of the Father,' between whom and the Father there is neither a 'division of substance' nor a 'confusion of persons'; the Spirit is God revealing himself in Humanity as the Inspirer of our higher life. This of course involves the view of the Incarnation defended in these pages, that 'Humanity is the Word made flesh, and the deepest and inmost in man is therefore the self-utterance of God in the Christ.' It is obvious, to any one who comes in contact with the utterances of the religious teachers of the day, as reported for instance in the *Christian World Pulpit*, that an increasing number of them maintain that the indwelling of God in Jesus does not put Jesus in any respect outside humanity, for in all prophetic and heroic souls the Word is in some degree made flesh; and when Jesus is said to be 'unique' it means that in his character and teaching we have the highest moral and spiritual revelation of the Father.

We quote a clear and effective statement of this whole view of the matter: 'The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit . . . . analyse the nature of God, as, first, Eternal Substance, out of whom all forms of existence emerge, who is wholly unthinkable apart from manifestation, and in this connection he is named God the Father; as secondly, the clothing of this Eternal Substance in all forms of matter and men, and the specific embodiment of so much of its moral qualities as can be understood by men in one human form, and in this connection he is named God the Son, as in him the entire race is proclaimed to be an expression of the thought or reason of the Eternal Substance; . . . and thirdly, as the perpetual influence, or atmosphere, or outbreath of the Eternal Substance, manifested in the Christ, pulsing through the spirit of man, blending his life with the life of God, empowering, sanctifying, warning, attracting, and in this connection he is named God the Holy Spirit.'[8]

The other tendency of which we spoke is represented by some able thinkers, including

Dr. Fairbairn, Dr. Forsyth, and the present Bishop of Worcester (Dr. Gore). It is stated in the following quotation from the second of these theologians: 'The question of the Trinity is the question of the interpenetration of persons in a higher personality, the union of more than one in a spiritual personality, as suggested in the solidarity of a race of human individuals, no one of whom exists in an abstract and solitary self-identity.' This idea is certainly not self-contradictory; but it is altogether gratuitous. The assertion that only thus can we avoid the thought of an 'abstract and solitary' God is utterly groundless. Seeing that there is a vital relation and constant communion between God and his rational offspring, he could only be 'lonely' if or when this intercourse did not exist. Was there ever a time when the Infinite God was not calling into existence worlds fitted for the development of lives in whom he might, in gradually increasing measure, reveal himself? There is no reason to believe that there ever was such a time.[9] It is said in support of such an idea as the

one we have quoted, that for God's Love to be real, there must be an object of it within himself, so that a Divine Society may be constituted. This object is 'The Son.' We reply that the object of Love must indeed be united with the Lover, but must also be different from the Lover. This perhaps would not be denied. But is this difference such as to admit of *man's* being part of the 'necessary object' of the Divine Love? In other words, what is the relation of 'The Son' to humanity? These theorists will not admit that the view of 'God *in* Christ,' as we have explained it, is sufficient. They insist that God *is* the personality of Christ, and the personality of Christ *is* God. Hence they *cannot give any intelligible account of his human nature* and therefore none of his relation to the human race. We must also reply that the conditions of a Divine Society are satisfied by *two* persons; there is no intelligible place for the third. We are told that there is the Father, the Son, and a 'relation' between them; but a 'relation' is not a person. The third 'person' has

been well described as 'a merely superfluous and embarrassing member of this imaginary trio.' James Freeman Clarke summed up the case clearly when he said that there are only three possibilities: there is a Trinity of persons, each possessed of consciousness and will, which is tri-theism; or there is a Trinity of manifestations or operations, which leads to some form of the 'Sabellian' view; or there is a Trinity of *somethings* of which no account can be given, which is to use words literally without a meaning.

Chapter V.

THE ATONEMENT, REDEMPTION, AND EDUCATION.

We pass now from the subjects which occupied the theologians of the Eastern Church in the earliest centuries of Christendom, to one whose origin lies in the more practical interests of the Western Church—the Doctrine of the Atonement.

I.

Atonement involves reconciliation, making at one, healing a breach. Between whom is the breach? The answer is, between God and man. In what sense can there be a breach between God and man?

We have seen that God's relation to man is two-fold, and that it has been expressed by Christian thought in the distinction between our knowledge of God as 'The Father' and as 'The Spirit.' God is first the Source of all Being, the Infinite and Eternal on whom all things depend; he is also the Inspirer of human ideals of Truth, of Beauty, and—this being the nerve of the moral relation—of Goodness. Thus, if there were no God, there could be no Goodness; pleasure and the pursuit of happiness there might still be, under the guidance of calculating prudence, but there could be nothing higher to guide us.

Now the breach between God and man concerns not the first but the second of these relations. No man can be estranged from God in the sense of not depending on him for his existence; but morally, he may be estranged from him. 'When some affection higher than your wont has dawned upon you,' says Dr. Martineau, 'if you stifle or defy the appeal, and cling to the ease of your low level, the divine importunity will not return, or at least, can never speak again in that

warning voice.' 'With disuse and rejection, the higher springs of action retire and vanish out of sight, not only abandoning us to our poor performance, but lowering the range of our very *problems*, and leaving us with a sinking standard for our thought as well as an enfeebled vigour in our will.' 'A moving nature, with its attractions set upon an ascending scale, must either rise or sink; nor, in such a constitution of things, is there any fact more natural or more awful than the "blindness in part" which is incurred by all unfaithfulness: so that as our actual becomes meaner, our possibility itself contracts.'[1] The true darkness and difficulty of moral evil is not understood until we understand what Dr. Martineau here says, that sin, though it begins as a wrong act or series of acts, cannot be restricted to this. It leads to wrong desire, and this is something deeper than an act, because it is a habit of the mind. 'Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.' This is the meaning of St. Paul's doctrine that sin, understood as transgression, brought

into the world *death*,—that is, a tendency *towards* evil, and *from* good (*Romans* v. 12).

There is, however, something which Dr. Martineau does not speak of just in that connection where its importance is greatest. *Moral evil cannot be regarded as a purely individual matter.* Human beings are not independent of each other, like trees standing side by side, but like buds on the same tree; there is a common life flowing through them all. The moral meaning of the analogy has been thus expressed by J. Freeman Clarke:—'Let the life of the tree be attacked anywhere—in its roots, its trunk, its limbs—and all the individual buds feel it. Yet each bud has a life of its own; it can be taken from its own tree, put into another tree, and grow. So it is with individual men grafted into the great tree of mankind. No one lives to himself, nor dies to himself. If one suffers, all suffer; the life of mankind, becoming diseased, pours disease into all individual men.' We inherit not our own life merely, but that of our race; and this is the essential truth in the doctrine of the Fall.[2]

II.

We have seen that the lower desires and aims of human nature, if actively pursued, lead to a *type of character which is hostile to goodness and therefore to God.* This is what we mean by Sin or Moral Evil; and this is what the moral breach implies on man's part. What does it imply on the part of God? The traditional theological answer is, that God's Anger is his response to human sin.

In ourselves, anger is an emotion which at best we can only make excuse for, or, in an apologetic way, seek facts to justify,—which is the same thing, for 'justify' in this connection means 'excuse.' This shows that our common moral sense regards anger as something in itself undesirable. How then can we possibly ascribe it to God? Yet many thoughtful and able writers on the Atonement have defended the apparently childish notion of God being 'angry.' Dr. Simon devotes nearly fifty pages to this subject.[3] Let us hear what is said, and try to save whatever truth it may contain. Many utterances in the Old Testament, and a few

in the New Testament, ascribe human passions to God: and in these, of course, the first suggestion that he is subject to 'anger' is found. This is no justification for the notion, except for those who regard the Bible as literally infallible. But Dr. Simon refuses to regard the ascription of anger to God as a metaphor, or an accommodation to the weakness of our intelligence. In fine he says that if God is affected at all by human sin, what can that affection be but anger? And if God is not affected, this leads us back to an alternative which we have already rejected, of a God who is unmoved by what men do. The Divine anger—he proceeds to urge—is 'moral,' without the imperfections which human anger involves; it is personal, or as we may say 'fatherly,' and may exist along with love; it needs to be appeased or propitiated, but the propitiation must be moral too. Carry this thought a little further—further than Dr. Simon is willing to go—and we find the supposed 'anger' becoming the *grief mingled with love* felt by the father in the Parable of the Prodigal,

which Jesus presents as a complete account of man's relation to God. And then, all talk of 'propitiation' or 'appeasement' is out of place; the reconciliation of man to God consists in what the New Testament calls 'Repentance,'—change of mind and heart. The God of Christ does not need to be 'appeased.'[4] And what we save from the notion of God's anger being propitiated is this —the moral reconciliation means a change, not in man only, but also in God.

III.

The point of view indicated in Dr. Simon's work is evidently different from the older one which regarded the Atonement as before all things the satisfaction of Justice. Mr. A. Lyttleton, in a very thoughtful essay on this subject in *Lux Mundi*, after admitting the conception of Divine Anger as a possible one, speaks as follows: 'Anger, so we think, is but a feeling, and may be ousted by another feeling: love can strive against wrath and overcome it; the divine hatred of sin need raise no obstacle to the free forgiveness of

the sinner. So we might think; but a true ethical insight shows that this affection of anger, of hatred, is in reality the expression of Justice, and derives from the law of righteousness, which is not above God, nor is it dependent on his will, for it is himself. "He cannot deny himself"; He cannot put away this wrath, until the demands of law have been satisfied, until the sacrifice has been offered to expiate, to cover, to atone for the sins of the world.' This is the famous 'forensic' view which takes the Atonement to be the satisfaction of the Eternal Justice of God.

In some cases it has been carried so far as to overreach itself, as it were, so that all possible ideas of Justice are emptied out of it; as when the penalty required by Divine Justice for human sin is supposed to be paid by Christ apart from anything done by us:—

'Jesus did it,—did it all,
Long, long ago,'—

the satisfaction offered by Christ being counted to us. Such a transaction would simply be the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, without any change in the guilty. But rarely if

ever has such an idea been logically carried out; for some kind of change in man is always contemplated. On the other hand, when Mr. Lyttleton speaks of the Divine 'anger,' which rests on or springs from Justice, as requiring 'propitiation,' we affirm that the words are misused and lead to a confusion of ideas. 'Propitiation' which means appeasing, making favourable, always implies a change in that which is appeased, and therefore cannot apply to Justice. Justice never changes; *we* change, and then Justice becomes our friend instead of our enemy.

Hence the truth in the Idea of Justice and its satisfaction is this. There are inexorable laws of growth and degeneration in the moral as in the physical realm; these work out the results of our actions; and in them 'God does not deny himself.' The evils in which sin issues, so far as borne by the evil-doer, are his punishment; and no one else can bear them for him, though others, who have not sinned, may be involved in the suffering. When Justice is in question, the real, and the only possible, 'satisfaction' is the

change in man which consists in ceasing to sin and therefore ceasing to suffer the effects of sin.

To sum up the results of what is said in the present and the preceding paragraph: in so far as we think of God as Eternal Justice and nothing more, all the change which reconciliation with him involves must be on our part; in so far as we think of him as Love, Love going deeper than Justice, the change is also in God, for as we approach morally to him, he approaches to us, and the one motion cannot be thought of apart from the other.

IV.

How is this moral change in man brought about? What part can a man's own will and thought take in his moral salvation?

The usual form in which this question meets us, is that of man's Moral Freedom. The explanation of Freedom and of the grounds of moral responsibility have been the subject of such vexed and unsatisfactory controversy, that many people have dismissed the

question as hopeless; and Milton even pictured a 'hill retired' in the abode of the lost, where some of the fallen angels sat and 'reasoned high of Fate, Freewill, Foreknowledge absolute,' and 'found no end, in wandering mazes lost.' Nevertheless all that is of practical importance in the question can be stated simply and clearly. The opinions to be distinguished are three only. There is 'Fatalism,' which means that our wills count for nothing in the course of events, for we are at the disposal of forces outside ourselves. This is partly exemplified in the Calvinistic doctrine of Election by the eternal decrees of the Almighty; but it is a way of thinking more congenial to Oriental than to Western minds. There is 'Determinism,' which means that my will does indeed count for something in the course of events, but what I will to do, is the *result*, and the *necessary* result, of my character and the circumstances in which I am at the time; just as the growth of a plant is the result of the vital energies within it and the conditions of soil, climate, etc., around it. It would therefore be nonsense to say that I

'ought' to have done anything other than what I actually did do, for my every action was unavoidable and necessary. Determinism destroys the meaning of Duty. Finally, there is 'Libertarianism,' which means that a man is able of himself to do what is right. This could not be better expressed than in the words of the great German thinker, Immanuel Kant: *I ought, therefore I can.* Here there is no ambiguity. My personal wants and desires at any time grow out of my character (so far as that character has been *formed*) and out of the influences of the men and things about me; but beside these I recognise the claims of the moral Ideal, for there is always something that I *ought to do,* and an Ideal of character that I *ought to be;* and in cases of 'temptation' (that is, of antagonism between my personal cravings and the claims of the Ideal) it is always possible for me to obey the latter. 'When duty whispers low, *Thou must,*' the soul replies, *I can.*

We believe in Moral Freedom (in the sense just explained) because we believe in Duty;

and if this freedom is an illusion, then Duty is an illusion.[5]

V.

We are obliged therefore on moral grounds to regard the denial of moral freedom as a serious error. But to exaggerate the power of moral freedom leads to errors equally serious. If we hold that 'It is possible for a man to do what he ought to do, *no matter what his character and circumstances may be,*' and if we take the last sentence to mean seriously what it says, then our idea of human nature will be at variance with some of the most important facts of life, and we shall inevitably be led to take an inadequate view of moral evil and its remedies. This was the case with Kant, and to some extent with Martineau. There is a special reason for this with men like Kant and Martineau. There are some among us, who by their very purity of heart and stainless integrity of character tend to underestimate the weakness of ordinary human nature and

exaggerate the power of moral freedom. Hence Dr. Martineau sometimes speaks as if Salvation, Redemption, Atonement with God, can be accomplished by each man for himself: 'God's part is done when, having made us free, he shows to us our best; ours now remains to pass from illumination of conscience to surrender of will.' Men are separate units, each complete in himself; the only connection between them is that all are created *alike;* each man is master of himself, and may work out his own salvation independently of the influences of Nature, of his fellow-creatures, and of God. Dr. Martineau plainly teaches that a steady progress towards moral perfection is always possible for the individual man, and that however far a man may have let himself go on the downward way, it is always possible for him to turn and begin a gradual process of ascent.[6]

This is an ideal theory which does not accord with the facts of life. The root of the mistake seems to be in supposing that communities of men are collections of separate units, combining only for the conveniences of

civilised life. *Bodily* each man stands by himself—though even by physical inheritance he is vitally connected with generations upon generations which have gone before; but *spiritually* it is literally true that men are members one of another, that they are penetrated by a common spirit and common life capable of an education that is divine, and capable also of a moral degradation that passes words to describe. Hence sin, even if it begins in the independent acts of individual men, may result in a corruption of character which spreads like a disease, and is utterly beyond the power of the individual will to cure. And we know that there are conditions of life, in the dark places of our 'civilisation,' where this result is the only possible one. Here is the origin of those 'social problems' which are forced on the attention of the world to-day. The best sign of progress is this—along with the discernment that sin is or tends to become a *social fact*, there is growing a *public conscience*, a sense of *social responsibility* to meet it.

The reader will see that in what has been

said, we have not denied moral freedom, but limited its range.

VI.

The fact that men thus, for good and for evil, inherit and share in a common life, is the truth which the dogma of 'original sin' sought to express. And so far as the facts of life compel us to limit the range of personal moral freedom, so far is truth contained in the dogma of 'human inability.' James Freeman Clarke has effectively shown that the doctrine of inability is the practical meaning of that of 'total depravity.' 'Total depravity resolves itself, in the mind of the orthodox teacher, into total inability, and means that man, unable to do right by any power in himself, must throw himself wholly on divine grace. The secret motive of the whole orthodox theory of evil is to lead through a sense of sin to humility, and at last to dependence. Orthodoxy here becomes intelligible, as soon as we perceive that its purpose is not speculative, but practical. As religion consists so greatly in the sense of

dependence, it is a leading purpose in the orthodox system to produce this. That group of graces—reverence, humility, submission, trust, prayer—which lend such an ineffable charm to the moral nature, which purify and refine it to its inmost depths,—these spring almost wholly from a sense of dependence on a higher and better being than ourselves. This being absent, the elevating principle is wanting; the man cannot rise above himself. There may be truth, courage, conscience, purity, but they are all stoical and self-relying. It is only one who relies on a higher power, clings to a higher being, and draws his moral life from above, who can ascend.'[7] This practical instinct which the orthodox dogmas regarding sin express is sound and good; but we can satisfy it without appealing to any unnatural miracle or crisis by which Mercy and Grace are made ours. Once recognise that men are—as we have shown—always dependent on one another, that all are dependent on God, and that what is good in man is God in man: then in every good deed and faithful effort of the human spirit we may find

a ministration of Divine Grace. Professor Pfleiderer has well said that 'The collected fruit of all these deeds and sufferings, conflicts and sacrifices, which have contributed to further the spiritual development of our race, forms the true "treasure of grace" which is transmitted as a most precious inheritance from generation to generation. Every individual who is born into the world of Christian civilisation and reared in it, enters immediately into the enjoyment of this inestimable inheritance, which is laid into his cradle as an unmerited good, and, we may say, as a gracious example of the Love and Wisdom that govern the world.' These words we may heartily adopt as the true account of human redemption, only instead of saying 'every individual enters,' we must say '*ought to be able* to enter.' It is just this true human life from which masses of our fellow-creatures are shut out; and as long as this is so, 'Christian' is what our civilisation cannot be. Yet, we must insist, it is not by any work of revolution or mere destruction that the way can be made open to all; for the same forces, human and

Divine, which have produced this civilisation of ours out of the life of the ape and tiger, are the forces that can make it perfect yet. 'Let everyone,' says Pfleiderer again, 'give himself up willingly to the existing spirit of the good, appropriate it to himself, live into it, and allow himself to be trained by it to true freedom, in order then to work co-operatingly with strengthened power for the furtherance of the common good. "What thou hast inherited from thy fathers, acquire it in order to possess it!" This advancing work of appropriating and communicating spiritual good, of letting oneself be educated and educating others for the good, this dedication of the whole self to the furtherance of the universal good, of the Kingdom of God,—in this work consists the ethical redemption of all.'[8]

VII.

We may now sum up what has been said. There are two opposite errors which must be avoided: to assign to the human will (*i.e.*, the will of any single man) an exclusive or excess-

ive part in working out the salvation of the individual, and to assign to it no part at all. Salvation is not attained—as Dr. Martineau seems to teach—by the independent action of the individual will; neither is it attained by changing the environment only. It is attained by the *interaction* of the individual will *with* the environment. Of the many forces playing upon a man and forming his moral destiny, only a part resides in his personal will. In the totality of forces residing in Society, in Nature, in the past History of the Race, together with whatever may be contributed by his personal initiative, lies the *cause* of which the salvation or ruin of a soul is the effect. There is, then, room both for personal initiative, and for collective action and a sense of collective responsibility, and both are needed; at the present time we have probably more need of the collective sense than of any other.

This brings us to the heart of our subject, —the influence of personal initiative in that intense and powerful form which we call 'genius.' Professor A. C. Bradley, in an unpublished lecture recently given before the

University of Oxford, spoke of the exaggeration in Carlyle's doctrine of heroes and hero-worship. We must admit that the great man in whatsoever sphere, is not a thing independent and apart; that generally he concentrates, intensifies, and realises more fully feelings and ideas which are active all around him; he gives clear and powerful expression to a spirit which manifests itself in the lesser minds of his age; and doubtless Carlyle omitted to lay sufficient stress on this fact. But this truth—said Professor Bradley—diminishes scarcely at all the supreme importance of the man of genius. Imagine him away; deprive those feelings and ideas in lesser minds of that heightening and that utterance which they gain in him; remember in addition that those very feelings and ideas are mainly an inheritance from preceding men of genius; and then see what the world would be without its great men. In truth the man of genius is the main factor in human progress. Be his sphere that of religion, or science, or art, or of practice in morals or politics, or even industry; he

comes, and something hitherto unrevealed breaks into the light. That which he brings, the new insight, begins its work upon the world, too often, alas! in pain and conflict, struggling through clouds, and losing, as it conquers them and brightens on the common mind, much of the ineffable purity and radiance of its dawn. But even so it does its work; like a stream from a mountain spring, the idea divides and spreads. Slowly it distributes itself along the hundred channels of minds less original, and then along the thousand channels of minds less original still, till it has irrigated or fertilised a country or a continent. We *are* in our spiritual substance the spirits of the great dead. Let anyone of us attempt to banish from his own mental being everything that emanates from their influence and he will find left within himself scarcely anything that he would not wish away. What Professor Bradley said is especially true of the prophet, the religious genius, who utters truths that will never grow old, and makes them strike root in the heart and mind of the men around him. Such teachers,

as Cardinal Newman said, are placed upon the watch-towers, and light their beacons on the heights, where others kindle their little lamps, receiving and transmitting the sacred flame.

VIII.

We have come back to a point which we formerly reached (Chapter III., paragraphs vi.-ix.); but we have come back to it for the sake of emphasising the great fact of supreme importance in every redemptive work in the world. That work must be the outcome of personal sacrifice and to that extent of suffering. Even in what appears to be complete success, this is still true. In all good work, the worker must needs *give something that is part of himself*, for his work. And in this respect the life of Christ is the supreme example of the suffering for others which all true work involves just in proportion to its inwardness, depth, and power. We say the *life* of Christ is the supreme example. To isolate the one fact of Christ's death, making that the only means of redemption, as Evan-

gelical Theology in the past has always tended to do, is a strange perversion of the truth. The self-sacrifice of Christ was co-extensive with his life, of which his death was the crowning act. It was indeed the only possible outcome of such a life lived at that time and place.

Self-sacrifice, then, is not a mere incident but a necessary part of the Christlike life. But self-sacrifice alone is never the whole of the Christlike life. Whatever it be—even life itself—that is sacrificed, something is gained: divine power is realised in the soul of the hero, reformer, or martyr, and a divine work is accomplished for men. There is sacrifice, but what is sacrificed is not the best; there is loss, but what is lost is not the essential. The true view of the Christlike life is shown in the picture which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews so finely wrought out, where Jesus is set as the perfect type of the souls who have given away their lives that they might save them, who *died to live*. Hence while it is true that Jesus died for us, it is more true that he lived for us.

IX.

What then is our attitude towards the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth? We have said that self-sacrifice is always part of a true religious life; but is not self-sacrifice possible apart from Jesus, as in the cases of Socrates or Buddha? Is Jesus, then, *indispensable* to the religious life? May we not say that, though he may well be valuable and important to the religious life, yet as humanity progresses in that life it will gradually cease to look to him as the Author and Finisher of its faith?

If the reader thinks over the meaning of these questions, he will see that at bottom they are equivalent to one which we have already raised (Chapter IV., paragraphs i. and vii.). We will divide the solution of the problem, suggested in those paragraphs, into a practical and a theoretical one.

The practical solution is this. While it is true that the highest Ideal of good is the goodness of God himself, and that he both can and ought to be the object of our highest love, it is also true that the one sure pathway

of experience to lead to the knowledge and love of God is the way of *human* goodness. The consciousness of God cannot be so living and clear as to work strongly on feeling and thought, without external influence to arouse it. For human nature as it is, this appeal from without is absolutely indispensable. But the external influence is not that of instruction alone, still less is it that of law or commandment; it is the sight of a personal ideal of goodness such as is set before the eyes of Christendom in the figure of the Saviour, whose love is shown at its height in the crowning sacrifice which love alone led him to make, in surrendering himself to the death which unavoidably lay between him and the full completion of his work. Dr. Pfleiderer has well said what seems to be the central truth in this matter. 'It is the noble personality in itself, the living manifestation of goodness, the visible, comprehensible ideal of true God-like manhood, that with irresistible power lays hold of all hearts that are not completely hardened, and awakens in every breast the smouldering spark of the better self. It is

this that, setting forth goodness not merely as a law that commands but as a living reality and a life-giving force, causes another to feel how much to be desired is that goodness, so that willing surrender to it is no longer a burden but a joy. It is this that extends a saving hand to him whose courage has all departed from him, who despairs of himself; and, by the unselfish greatness and mildness of its forgiveness, help, and healing, encourages the penitent to take heart to believe in the boundlessness of the Divine Love which conquers all, forgives all, and makes all good again. It is this, finally, that by its example of persistent faithfulness in goodness, gives courage to the weak, and inspires him with confidence to arise and walk in a new life. And, true as the experience of all ages shows this to be of every noble soul, it applies in a unique degree to the figure of the Saviour, which has nothing to match it in all history. From the Son of Man of Nazareth a stream of new life issued into humanity which can never again run dry, which gathers to itself in its course whatever else divinely good and

true has appeared anywhere in mankind or may at any time appear,—a stream that ever grows more and more mighty, more and more rich in fertilising and vivifying force for every side of human life.'[9] We may affirm then that the sense of the need of the personality of Jesus in religion—which among us has found most clear and thoughtful expression in the writings of Mr. Stopford Brooke[10]—has the strongest practical justification. Observe that it is by no means on the *weakness* of human nature that this conclusion is rested; we do not need Jesus only because our practical materialism or self-will would hide the highest from us, were Jesus not there to reveal it. We do indeed need him for that reason; but we need him also because we are members one of another. It is no weakness not to be able to do what we may confidently assert men were never intended to do—to realise the divine goodness in isolation from all higher influences of stronger souls. Hence Jesus is our Master, and he when lifted up on high and made clear to all will draw all men unto him.

The theoretical solution of our problem lies in the profound saying of St. Paul: 'Until we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' The fact that Jesus can be a source of moral salvation to men, shows that he and they are morally akin, and that he is what they may become. Is this inconsistent with what we have said? Granting—and it is a great deal to grant—that the ideal which the character of Jesus represents, will ever be realised in the earthly life of men, even then, would it follow that 'while the spirit, the faith, the ideals of Jesus may be reverenced more deeply and prevail more widely, the man in whom that spirit dwelt, the man who so largely realised those ideals, he, the historic Jesus, will occupy less space and may even come to be forgotten?' It would be a strange moral progress which consisted in forgetting those who have done most for us. Is the glory and strength of human nature so shown in the fact that multitudes of those who from age to

age have carried on the world's work and borne life's hardships, have gone beyond knowledge and memory—is this, we ask, so much to our credit that we may look forward to a time when even our highest and best will have joined the great host of the unremembered?

To such questions there can be but one answer. Our human progress will mean not a growth but a decline of that capacity for forgetting those into whose labours we have entered. Moral growth cannot mean less than a growth of men not only into unity but into *conscious* membership of one whole, and in the richness of that spiritual harmony the Choir invisible, but not unconscious, will join with all the depth and power of the life that has proved its power and right to be eternal.[11]

Chapter VI.

THE IMMORTAL HOPE.

A DESIRE to live again, a belief that death is not the end of life, is found in nearly every portion of the human race. We cannot indeed say that it is absolutely universal among men. There have been systems of Religion which assume that when men are sufficiently enlightened, they naturally crave for extinction or absorption in the Absolute—

> 'That each who seems a separate whole,
> Should move his rounds, and fusing all
> The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general soul.'

And it would be a very hazardous assertion to say that all men to-day would even own to a desire for another life. But the fact remains

certain that a large proportion of our fellow-creatures have a strong belief in, or desire for, 'something after death'; and this has been true in every age,—

> 'for since our dying race began,
> Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.'

I.

We must first raise the question, Is this hope something that we can or ought to dispense with,—that is, apart from the logical evidence for or against it?

There is a view of human progress, which has been urged with great force, at least during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and which has been held capable of superseding the hope of an individual immortality. For if individuals perish by the way, still their work survives, even after they come to be forgotten. James Russell Lowell says:

> 'Thoughts that great hearts once broke for, we
> Breathe cheaply in the common air;
> The dust we trample heedlessly
> Throbbed once in saints and heroes rare,
> Who perished, opening for their race
> New pathways to the common-place.'

The reader will be reminded of George Eliot's fine poem, in which she sets forth this view of the immortality of goodness:—

'O may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
Of miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues . . . . . May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty;
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible,
Whose music is the gladness of the world.'

This aspiration is based on the fact of the 'solidarity and continuity' of the human race, which links the separate individuals together, so that the effect of each one's thoughts, desires, and deeds on his fellow-creatures is real and permanent, and goes far deeper than the outward appearance would lead us to suppose: and because the progressive victory

of goodness and truth is the principal thing, it is inferred that the hope of personal immortality may be dispensed with. I am in the service of the common good; and it matters not if I perish, so long as anything which I may have done towards the realisation of that good survives and is duly worked out. As long as this is assured, we may say of ourselves, like Tennyson's Ulysses:—

> 'It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the happy isles;
> . . . but something, ere the end,
> Some work of noble note may yet be done.'

What have we to reply? It is quite true that there is a 'universal life' of humanity which is ever growing, deepening, developing, and through the ages advancing to its consummation; it is true that the results of our individual lives are incorporated into this wider life. The objection to the Positivist doctrine, as regards immortality, is of another kind. It may seem a hard saying—but to regard this doctrine as in any sense a substitute for the belief in personal immortality is mere confused self-deception.

II.

Huxley has a trenchantly expressed passage in which he puts the true alternatives before us :—

'I understand and respect the meaning of the word 'Soul' as used by Pagan and Christian philosophers for what they believe to be the imperishable seat of human personality, bearing throughout eternity its burden of woe or its capacity for adoration and love. I confess that my dull moral sense does not enable me to see anything base or selfish in the desire for a future life among the spirits of the just made perfect, or even among a few such poor fallible souls as one has known here below. And if I am not satisfied with the evidence which is offered me that such a soul and such a future *life* exist, I am content to take what is to be had, and to make the best of the brief span of existence which is within my reach, without reviling those whose faith is more robust and whose hopes are richer and fuller. But in the interests of scientific clearness I object to say that I have a soul, when I mean all the while, that

my organism has certain mental functions which, like the rest, are dependent upon its molecular composition and come to an end when I die; and I object still more to affirm that I look to a future life, when all that I mean is, that the influence of my sayings and doings will be more or less felt by a number of people after the physical components of that organism are scattered to the four winds. Throw a stone into the sea, and there is a sense in which it is true that the wavelets that spread around it have an effect through all space and all time. Shall we say that the stone has a future life?'

III.

The charge referred to by Professor Huxley is frequently made by Positivist writers. 'Does the wish to live for ever'—says Dr. Maudsley—'carry more weight of assurance with it, simply as a wish, than there is in the wish to live to old age, which ninety-nine out of a hundred persons have? Is it not merely the barren utterance of human egoism?' It is not to be denied

that the desire for another life as affording 'compensation' has been so held as to become a refined form of selfishness. The phrase 'other-worldliness' is one of which we have grown tired; but, though the thing it describes has undoubtedly prevailed in the past, it is surely disappearing as a practical motive. It would make goodness simply a profitable investment in the Eternal Funds; it is as much a matter of prudence and calculation as any earthly investment, the difference being that in the one case the Funds and the return are everlasting. To seek after righteousness or to submit to sacrifice, for such a reason, is only an extended Epicureanism. To inculcate self-sacrifice by referring to the other side of the account, to the treasures God has in store for those who despise the gold and silver of the earth, is to fall below the level of Pagan virtue as represented by the Spartan Three Hundred or the Roman Decius. But are such 'other-worldly' motives really operative in human life to-day? Let the reader appeal to his own experience of human conduct, and see

in how many cases any career or pursuit has been adopted, any sacrifice undergone, or any common duty done, with the main idea of being personally recompensed in the life to come. We may affirm with confidence that such cases are extremely rare. Even the excessive interest in the salvation of one's soul—the reproach often brought against certain forms of Evangelical piety—is inseparable from interest in the salvation of others.

IV.

When we find the desire for 'compensation' expressed, its real meaning is nothing ignoble or selfish. Frequently we can trace in it a motive like that which animated Milton's great poem, 'to assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men.' It is a desire to *live to see* how so much undeserved suffering is possible if the Eternal Justice never halts. Even when we regard it simply as the expression of man's interest in his own destiny, it is the opposite of a merely personal or selfish interest. The man who

desires the compensation of another life is not desiring anything which he can enjoy by himself, and from which others can be excluded. He only wants to be allowed to go on loving those whom he has loved here; and to go on doing whatever good he has done here, and more. He does not wish for immortal life as a personal reward; in desiring it for himself he is desiring it for others too. Or if you will say that he desires a reward, then—as Tennyson reminds us in his noble poem on 'Wages'—it is the reward of *going on*:—

> 'Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
> Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she:
> Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky;
> Give her the wages of going on and not to die.'

The same thought which is here suggested by Tennyson is expressed in the late Principal Caird's fine words at the conclusion of his Gifford Lectures: 'There are rewards in the spiritual life to which it is no selfishness

to aspire—nay, which it is of the very essence of a spiritual life to seek after. There is no selfishness in a desire or aspiration which is in itself pure and noble, when it seeks for rewards in its own kind—in the desire of knowledge, for instance, when it seeks for ever larger and fuller opportunities and means of knowledge; or in the love of Art, when it seeks by ever new and fairer creations to attain to an ever advancing realisation of the beautiful. And this holds good in an especial manner of the moral and spiritual desires and affections. To seek for an ever richer and fuller satisfaction of this order of desires is free from all taint of selfishness, because it is to seek after a joy which, while it is the sweetest of which the soul of man is capable, is in its own nature the death of selfishness—the joy of absolute self-surrender to the will of God, and of self-sacrifice for the good of others. More life and fuller than we have ever attained, or can hope on earth to attain, deeper draughts from the eternal springs of thought and joy than here we can ever experience—this, so far from being a sordid aspira-

tion is only another expression for the most exalted goodness.'

V.

A charge that seems more weighty is brought against the belief in a life to come. It is asserted that a trust in human improvement and progress or perfection beyond the grave leads to an indifference to the improvement of humanity in this world. We must admit that the belief in another life *may* so be held; we may practically let this belief settle down into a comfortable assurance that 'all will be put right' in the next world—even those things which we ought to put right for ourselves in this world. And this would seem to be the drift of a remark made at a prominent ministerial gathering a few years ago: *the immortal hope solves all our social problems.* Social problems have to be solved here, on this earth, and to this great duty Society at large and the Christian Church itself are slowly awakening. There is no necessary connection between belief in a better world to come after death, and neglect of our duty to make

this world a better world for man's brief earthly dwelling. Accordingly we find that those who have laboured most *effectively* for the perfection of humanity on the earth have believed in its perfection in the heavens.

Yet it is very easy to slip into assertions which appear to give good ground for the charge. Take the following, from a recent able and thoughtful paper on the subject: 'If we are souls, and may believe that little else is of value compared with the soul's culture and development, then life's burdens grow light, its losses cease to be real and become only apparent, and our social and industrial inequalities sink into insignificance.' The apparent though unintentional implication of the last two sentences is, that earthly conditions do not matter; as if such things as starvation, misery, and crime among the lower strata of the population everywhere, —misunderstanding and animosity between employers and workmen,—'Tammany' rule in New York,—'sweating' of workers in East London,—are to go on unchecked because death is not the end of life! It is time, even

for those who would dispense with the belief in another life, to admit that the belief is not bound up with a notion so morally offensive and transparently absurd.

VI.

We may therefore claim that the immortal hope is not open to any objection from the ethical side. We may if we will dispense with it; we may try to meet this life in the stoical spirit of brave resignation which speaks in Huxley's words at the conclusion of his last public utterance: 'We are grown men, and must play the man

'strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,'

cherishing the good that falls in our way, and bearing the evil, in and around us, with stout hearts set on diminishing it.' But we may not, as some 'advanced' thinkers do, pride ourselves on renouncing elements and possibilities in life which never ought to be renounced; and though the immortal hope may have been selfishly or ignobly held, yet

in itself, in its motives and meaning, it is a pure and high aspiration of the human heart.

VII.

We have now to consider the question, What light, if any, is thrown on this question of man's future destiny by the New Testament?

A traditional answer is that there are no indications of human immortality apart from the Resurrection of Christ. This is partly the reason for that tendency, which can still be distinctly discerned, to place the Resurrection at the very foundation of the Christian system of belief. Now before all else, there are two things about which we must be perfectly clear: what do we mean by the 'resurrection' in the case of Jesus, and what is its bearing on the problem of human immortality? Unfortunately, these are just the points which the champions of the traditional view will not or cannot make clear. If their interpretation of the Resurrection as a *rising again* is to be taken seriously, it must mean that the body

of Jesus, which was laid in the grave, was reanimated, or 'came to life again.' Hence the grave was found to be empty. But what became of that body? After having been seen on various occasions, where did it go to? Did it ascend into the heavenly world? That involves an impossible, a grossly material, idea of the heavenly life. Hence it is supposed that the resurrection-body of Jesus was not *the same* as his earthly body, but, when visible, was *like* it. Yet if this is taken seriously, it plainly does away with the notion of the resurrection as a rising *again*, and leaves the fate of the body that lived on earth a matter of indifference: it might have been stolen away, as the priests are said to have feared it would be, or anything might have become of it, without affecting the question of the nature and destiny of the resurrection-body. Hence, again, it is supposed that the resurrection-body was a 'glorified' form of the earthly body; the earthly body was *changed into* it. Changed into what? No real answer can be given. The idea is clung to only in order to maintain the literal his-

torical truth of the story of the empty grave and the appearance of the angels in it.

It is indeed hard to see what light can be shed on the question of man's future fate, by the tissue of miserable inconsistences to which we have referred. Indeed the supposed resemblance between Christ's rising and the resurrection of the human race at large seems broken at the outset, because tradition insists that, while Christ's resurrection-body was some sort of transformation of his earthly body, the human resurrection-body is composed of the very same physical particles which composed the earthly body; and this, in face of the explicit teaching of St. Paul, that *the resurrection of the body is not a rising again of the same body, but the ascent into a higher body.*

If we look at the narratives of the Resurrection as they stand in the Gospels, we find a certain amount of conflict as to the nature of the resurrection-body; it resembled the earthly body, so that it could be recognised by the disciples,—it had the marks of the spear and nails,—it could be touched, and

was capable of taking food. On the other hand, it was not recognised at once by Mary in the garden, nor by the disciples during the whole walk to Emmaus,—it appeared and disappeared suddenly, and came through closed doors. The truth is, that we must first look for whatever natural intimations of immortality there may be in life and experience, and understand these, before we can know how to interpret the occurrences narrated in the New Testament.

VIII.

In this life we do not find it possible to be and to do all that we are capable of being and doing. Every element in the life that now is seems rudimentary, incomplete and preparatory. Life here is a prophecy suggesting its fulfilment hereafter. And they are no small number who find that as their life and experience has matured, their ideas of the life to come have grown deeper, and have culminated in the view that the life beyond death is a further growth and fulfilment of all that is highest in the personal life on earth.

It is quite true that there are human beings in whom the higher intellectual and moral and emotional qualities seem crushed out of existence, and others who show no sign of possessing such qualities. Yet it remains true that every one who has begun to *use* the gifts of his manhood, has begun to find in them possibilities of higher gifts; and the more faithfully he does all that this life calls for, the more he feels that a thousand such lives would not exhaust his powers. Did anyone who has the Love of Man growing within him, or who is possessed by the fascination of Science or Philosophy or Art, ever feel as if his capacity for Love, for Knowledge, or for beautiful creations, could be exhausted? No; the more love grows, the more it feels it can grow; the more Knowledge grows, the more clearly we hear deeps calling unto deeps, waiting to be known. In short, the meaning and purpose of man's intellectual and moral endowments are on a scale immeasurably larger than the needs of this brief life demand.

IX.

We must compare man with the creatures beneath him, in this respect. Plants, we know, come each to the perfection of its kind, and then die: if they do not come to perfection, it is not because the ordinary conditions of physical life and growth are too limited, but because some accidental hindrance or unfavourable circumstance prevents their growth. Animals also, as far as we can see, are able to reach in this world the highest kind of existence possible for them; they are able to do the best which it is possible for them to do, and to feel. In scientific language, their lives are adjusted to their environment, or correspond to their surroundings. It is possible for the animal to live a complete animal life in this world; full satisfaction is given to its powers and possibilities, if we take into account its relation to its fellow-creatures and to its offspring. But it is not possible for man to live a complete human life in this world.

There is one fact which may seem to stand in the way of this contrast between

human life and animal life. Some animals, when closely associated with man, show many truly moral qualities usually supposed to belong to man alone,—particularly affection for man such as a human heart might not be ashamed of. This fact, however, is not in dispute; the higher animals are capable of intense feelings, which are very like some of our human feelings. Yet there is far more difference than likeness, because in man these feelings enter into and are formed by a far wider experience; and man's experience again can be interpreted and controlled by his reason. Reason is far more developed in man than it is in any animal; and human reason shows no sign of ever stopping in its development, while it seems as if the reason of animals had already stopped. Anyone who thought of denying this, would have to meet a difficult question: taking animals as we know them now, could an animal ever be *trained*, by any kind of outer experience or changes in its environment and its bodily organism, to feel and think as Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, St. Paul, felt and thought?

If an objector estimates the powers of animals by taking them at their highest, when trained by many generations of close association with man, then we must estimate the powers of humanity likewise by observing the high-water marks of their rising tides; and the difference lies in the incomparably vaster range of human experience, and human Reason. We can only account for the disproportion between the real possibilities of human nature and the opportunities afforded to them in this earthly existence, by supposing that the life begun here is continued beyond death in another life, where these endowments may find adequate scope and employment.

X.

The reader will see that we have been reasoning from a certain principle which we have taken as granted. We have assumed that the distinctive powers of manhood have a use and a purpose; and that this purpose is not fulfilled until by exercise they have grown to completion. And as they cannot

grow to completion in this life, this life is not the end of any man's existence. Further it will be seen that these assumptions rest on a deeper one, and that apart from it they are groundless. This deeper assumption is that *the universe is rational;* in other words, that it is constructed according to an order or plan on which we can depend. Otherwise, there could be no ground for holding that our powers fulfil any purpose by their growth, or that the incompleteness of this life has any meaning. But these are reasonable suppositions; and to conclude from their *reasonableness* to their *truth* implies that the universe itself is rational. And this assumption or trust is one kind of trust in God. All science depends on the same assumption that the principles according to which our reason works are also the principles according to which the world is constructed.

XI.

Returning to paragraph ix., we must now add that there is another kind of analogy between human and animal life, more weighty in

its significance. The growth of a living thing never stops until the perfection of its type is reached,—unless for some external injurious cause, or at least something due to unsuitable surroundings. We see that this rule holds of vegetable life and of animal life; we expect it to hold of our distinctively human life. Now what we call death does not appear to be a cause sufficient to put an end to the growth of a human soul when it has well begun. On this question we are now able to take up a decided position.

Superficially regarded, the facts of senile decay and physical death are painfully suggestive of the dissolution of consciousness. But the suggestion is dispelled when we remember that the only decay which is observed is that of brain and nerve; while all we know is that, under the present conditions of our existence, in space and time, one mind can only *manifest itself* to others through what we call a system of nerves. Some of the mental functions are dependent on that nervous system, and *they* have ceased. We have no right to conclude from the facts of

physical decay and dissolution that there is a corresponding decay and dissolution on the mental side. If we keep to the facts and avoid speculation—and if we appeal to merely physical facts, we must not 'improve' those facts by speculation or confuse our own inferences with them—all we can say is, that the physical expression of mind has decayed, that is, the only expression that we know of under the present conditions of our existence. This suggestion is strongly confirmed by the fact that in healthy old age the worst sign of decay is only a remarkable facility in recalling the past, and a difficulty in feeling any effective interest in what is going on around.

It is known that there is a general correlation between the action of the mind and that of the brain; for there is good reason to believe that a change in the brain corresponds to every change in the mind. In particular, the different kinds of sensation and mental imagery are especially connected with different portions of the brain. But neither the general nor the particular correlation affords any ground for supposing that death on the

physical side necessarily involves death on the mental side.[1]

XII.

There are questions involved in the belief in another life, which are sometimes put in the forefront of the discussion: but they are really of minor importance. We may ask, where is the place of the departed spirit? And where is the body whereby it is placed in organic and conscious relation with other spirits and with the world in which it finds itself? We may be 'agnostic' on all such questions, without giving up the main principle, that for each person *growth goes on,* and that what we call death is only a stage in life. Yet the fact that so many of the details involved in the question appear insoluble mysteries, need not give rise to a feeling of the hopelessness of thinking about it at all. The physical science of our day has opened up possibilities far larger than any which it has destroyed. The following observations, made by Mr. C. B. Upton in his Hibbert Lectures, express the tone and tendency of the

soundest scientific thought to-day: 'Reflection reminds us that while recent science makes it evident that our actual knowledge of the material universe is but slight and superficial, it at the same time suggests and renders probable the existence of far deeper cosmical resources of whose nature we have at present but a faint inkling. Our bodily senses do but admit to a perception of the outermost film of the unfathomable reality. With acuter senses, a richer world would at once open before our astonished vision; and it is not at all impossible that there exist different aspects of reality from those which we now perceive, to which new senses of a more subtle nature may give our spirits access. Even the scientific imagination, though it can penetrate far deeper than the senses, and reach that mysterious all-pervading ether which altogether evades our sensible perception, still starts profounder questions than any that it solves. The dissipation of force, and the as yet wholly unrevealed secret why, in spite of that continual dissipation, a past eternity has not brought the dynamic activity

of the cosmos to a standstill, suggests a transcendent source of new cosmical life and energy, and warns us that human science is by its very nature intrinsically incapable of reaching an exhaustive and fundamental exposition of the inner life and nature of the universe. And as to the question of a bodily investment for the liberated spirit, it is by no means improbable that, as Swedenborg thought, each soul in this present life, as its character forms, is fashioning its own spiritual body—a body lovely with the beauty of virtue, or disfigured with the impress of selfishness and vice.'[2]

XIII.

The word 'immortality' is not a happy one to use, because of its associations. It has become too closely connected with the idea of mere endless existence, which suggests a life like that of a rolling stone whose rollings never cease, which is never worn out and gathers no moss. The notion of existence without end, never getting 'quit of oneself,' is a weariness and even a horror to many

minds; and not unreasonably so, for if we adopt such a view, we have dropped the vital element in the idea of a real life. Hence there have been many who, like Harriet Martineau, have sighed for rest, and confessed that they would tire of the forever. The vitally important factor in the idea is not mere endlessness, but continued growth. It is true, *growth* is the progressive fulfilment or realisation of latent powers or possibilities: it is and must be a process in time. But to suppose that the process is literally *endless* in time, is to go much too far. We simply cannot tell how far the utter completion of our powers will take us, until we have realised them much more than we have yet done. Hence we must not import the notion of mere endlessness into our idea of the life beyond death.

The genius of St. Paul had seized on the true explanation of the connection between this life and the life to come. The Soul of Man is a living growing power, and the future life is a continuation of its growth. All the difficulties which beset the world-old problem

of immortality should be examined in the light of this idea; when some will be solved, others partly met, and others excluded as inadmissible.

XIV.

'Growth' is such a commonplace word; we use it so often without thinking what it means: and hence to say that the soul is always growing does not seem to tell us much. This is what Carlyle would call the deception of custom. In reality the meaning of growth is the central mystery of existence; if we knew all that happens in the growth of a living thing, we should know all about everything. Tennyson has reminded us of this, in lines which, though often quoted, may be quoted once more:

> 'Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.'

To know all about growth—whether in a blade of grass or the soul of a man—would

be to know everything. Still, there are some things about growth which we do know. The dead thing can never grow,—it can only move, and then only when something moves it. The thing which is living and growing is not simply *moving;* it is changing into something new, something more and other than it has been. And yet, all through these changes, it is the same thing. The end is very different from the beginning, the oak from the acorn, yet the end belongs to the beginning; the oak belongs to the acorn, and grew out of it, and nothing else could have grown out of it. All the different stages of its growth belong to one another. This is why we may say that the acorn and the oak are the same thing: otherwise, you might plant an acorn and grow a beech-tree! This unity in growth, through all the changes, is seen most clearly in the growth of our own minds; it comes out whenever we *remember* anything; for then we know that the present self is the same as the past self.

We may apply this thought to a question which weighs heavily on many minds

—so heavily that, even if it does not appeal to ourselves, we cannot turn away from it with lofty indifference, seeing we too are but human. Shall we recognise our friends, our loved ones, again? Will they not have grown beyond us? But they will have grown beyond us *on our own line;* qualities and powers which we have in the seed, so to speak, with them will be in leaf or in flower: if you must use such a spatial metaphor as 'growing *beyond* us' you should add another,—'growing *round* us too.' If a grain of wheat could think and feel, and saw a growing ear of wheat, it might well recognise it, just because they are stages in two growths *of the same type:* 'you belong to me,—you have grown far more than I, but you are mine,—and what you are I may come to be.' 'I know thee, who thou art—the Holy One of God!'—it is not the devil in a being, but the man in him, who can say this; 'and I have all to do with Thee!'

From this point of view the aspiration which Browning expressed in his noble poem *Evelyn Hope*, may be regarded as springing

from an insight keener than any that the inquiring intellect could give of itself alone:

'For God above
Is great to grant as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love;
I claim you still for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Though worlds I shall traverse, not a few;
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.'

NOTES.

Chapter I.

1. The remarkable attitude of the Church of Scotland towards its own nominal standards of belief was shown in the Moderator's address and subsequent debate in the General Assembly at Edinburgh, 1903, when the Confession was denounced as a creed outworn.

2. Martineau, *Life and Letters*, Vol. I., pp. 60, etc. Here and elsewhere Dr. Martineau is speaking of a dogmatic basis of Church union; and he states a position to which he consistently adhered throughout his life. But the dogmatic principle is essentially false, from whatever point of view it is regarded. Observe that in this sense anyone may be 'orthodox'—a Unitarian as much as an Anglican, a Secularist as much as a Plymouth Brother: he is 'orthodox' so far as he holds rigidly to a standard which is merely dogmatic, whether the dogmas are positive or negative.

Chapter II.

1. See for instance Haeckel's recently translated book, entitled *The Riddle of the Universe.*

2. From the late G. J. Romanes' posthumous work *Thoughts on Religion*, quoted in A. H. Craufurd's suggestive volume *Christian Instincts and Modern Doubt.*

3. See John Caird's Gifford Lectures on *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, Vol. I., ch. iv.; and the present writer's *Leaders of Religious Thought*, pp. 185 ff.

4. We must remember that scientific writers tend to water down this conception of Energy into one of mere ceaseless change and motion, so as to get rid as far as possible of all notion of activity or working force in it; but the idea of efficient action is never altogether expelled from it. Hence Dr. Martineau argued that since the only activity we know is in our own will, we are logically committed to the view that the universal Energy is a universal Will: see *Study of Religion*, Vol I., bk. ii., ch. 1, and for a simpler statement, Armstrong's *God and the Soul*, ch. ii. This argument appears not to prove what it aims at proving; see *Leaders of Religious Thought*, p. 115.

5. See John Caird's *Philosophy of Religion*, ch. v.

6. See *Leaders of Religious Thought*, ch. v. This real basis of religious belief is described by Dr. Martineau as 'revealed religion,' in the central and most important chapter of his great work on *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (bk. iii., ch. 2). He shows that 'natural religion' (by which he means 'as much knowledge of God as may be collected by inference from external nature or worked out by meditation within our own') really *rests upon 'revealed religion'* in this sense of the words (p. 312).

7. On the inadequacy of materialism, see Professor W. James' admirable booklet on *Human Immortality*. The most thorough discussion of materialism will be found in Dr. Martineau's two Essays on this subject in the fourth volume of his collected *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*. In his *Seat of Authority*, bk. i., ch. 3, he shows also that the views of the material universe, introduced by nineteenth-century science, are not hostile but favourable to rational religion; see further, Pfleiderer's *Gifford Lectures*, Vol. I., ch. 3, 4.

CHAPTER III.

1. *Leaders of Religious Thought*, pp. 173, 4.

2. John Caird, Gifford Lectures, Vol. I., ch. 1; and Phillips Brooks, Sermon on 'The Dignity and Greatness of Faith,' *Mystery of Iniquity*, pp. 90 ff. Compare Martineau, *Seat of Authority*, pp. 310-11; 'If you deny or disparage the spiritual apprehensions of humanity, your authority has nothing to speak to; if you admit them, it ceases to be *mere* authority, for the revelation verifies and renews itself.'

3. See Martineau, *Seat of Authority*, bk. i., ch. 4, 'God in History,' and bk. iii., ch. 1., 'The Divine and the Human in History'; also Pfleiderer, *Gifford Lectures*, Vol. I., ch. 6.

4. *Seat of Authority*, p. 306 (on vestiges of the Divine in the human intellect).

5. *Life and Letters*, Vol. II., pp. 80, 81.

6. Hence it betrays a strange want in the sense of spiritual proportion, when a Unitarian writer dwells on Christ's 'ignorance' of scientific and geographical facts, and tries to show how 'modern science' has corrected his ideas of God with a telescope (see M. J. Savage, *Jesus and Modern Life*, pp. 50-2, 77-9). Contrast Phillips Brooks' reference to 'Spiritual Wisdom,' *Mystery of Iniquity*, pp. 372-3.

7. Hibbert Journal, No. ii., review of *Supernatural Religion*.

8. On the natural growth and decline of belief in miracles, see Pfleiderer, *Gifford Lectures*, Vol. I., pp. 71-81.

9. This is what is meant by the 'transcendence' of God; see Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. I., Introduction, section ii. The view against which we protest makes God *immanent* and nothing more. The

mistake arises not from the assertion of immanence, but from the denial of anything more.

Chapter IV.

1. *Life and Letters*, Vol. I., p. 131. Dr. Martineau adds that this view is everywhere implicated in the folds of the Logos doctrine. This is excellently illustrated in Dr. James Drummond's *Hibbert Lectures*, lect. viii.

2. One of the most successful presentations of this great theme will be found in Dr. Drummond's *Hibbert Lectures.*

3. We need hardly spend time in illustrating, by reference to the New Testament, the fact that the doctrines of the Deity of Christ and the Trinity did not exist at first. 'Generations had passed before the very terms needed to express these doctrines had been adopted or invented; theology was wrought into clear and precise forms of thought and language through the application of Greek ideas to interpret the deliverances of religious experience.' This verdict of Dr. J. Drummond is sustained by the late Dr. Hatch in his Hibbert Lectures on *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages on the Christian Church.* It is admitted by A. Loisy, in his book *L'Evangile et L'Eglise*, a criticism of Harnack, containing admissions which have seriously disturbed the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church.

A very instructive examination of some of the most important texts of the New Testament bearing on Christology will be found in the Rev. R. B. Drummond's *Christology of the New Testament: five Expository Discourses* (London: Philip Green).

4. A. Loisy, *L'Evangile et L'Eglise.*

5. See his Essay on 'Orthodoxy' in the volume entitled *Essays and Addresses.*

6. Nevertheless there is, among the writers to whom we refer, a frequent failure to see the difference between the doctrine here defended, and the strict Athanasian doctrine that the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is fundamentally different in kind from his Incarnation in even the highest types of humanity apart from Christ. It is disappointing to find, in so many able works professedly written to face this difficult question, a failure to distinguish the two doctrines, or at the most an inclination to the wide view without abandoning the narrow one. Thus, in his Gifford Lectures, the late Dr. John Caird gives an eloquent and instructive statement of the wider view (Vol. I., pp. 14, 15), and a powerful defence of the general position that 'human nature contains in it as a necessary element that union with God or participation in the Divine nature which finds its expression in the person and life of Christ' (Vol. I., lect. vi., vii., viii.; cp. Vol. II., p. 102). But he proceeds to defend a doctrine which would make Christ's nature 'essentially' different from our own, or he at least criticises the rejection of that doctrine (Vol. II., p. 117); he declares that the influence of Christ must be something more than 'the undying legacy to the world' of the moral and spiritual glory of his earthly life, and speaks of Christ *himself* as 'an indwelling and ever present spirit' with us (Vol. II., pp. 94, 95); and he tells us, apparently on no other ground than that of one or two statements attributed to Paul and John, that the union of the human and divine in the person and life of Jesus 'includes an element which differentiates it from the spiritual life and experience of all other men,' because Jesus is said to have spoken of 'the glory which he had with the Father before the world was' (p. 169). Other passages might be quoted which, like these, seem quite inconsistent with the main line of thought.

7. The Eastern Church added that the Spirit proceeded also from the Son, because the formula of Constantinople left the Son too much subordinated to the Father in not being with him the source of the 'procession.'

8. From a remarkable sermon by Canon Wilberforce, printed in the *Christian World Pulpit* of June 10th, 1896.

9. The ablest presentation of the argument here criticised will be found in Dr. John Caird's Gifford Lectures, Vol. I., lect. iii., pp. 73-8. But Dr. Caird does not apparently aim at establishing a trinity of *persons;* and we, on the other hand, do not say that this finite world is 'the only medium of the Divine self-revelation.' There may be worlds upon worlds of life, unknown *to us*, and there may always have been.

On the general subject of the Incarnation, Harnack's valuable article on *Inspiration and the Divinity of Christ*, recently published in pamphlet form by Messrs. Williams and Norgate, should be read.

There are signs that recent Christian thought is beginning to perceive that there is no necessary connection, indeed no connection at all, between the Incarnation and the miraculous birth of Christ. The latter is a merely physical prodigy; the former concerns the relation of Christ's personality to the Divine. That these are entirely distinct matters is effectively shown by Mr. W. F. Adeney (who appears to accept the physical miracle as historical), and by Mr. Stopford Brooke (who rejects it). See Adeney, *Women of the New Testament*, ch. iii., and Brooke, *Early Life of Jesus*, p. 1-11, and *God and Christ*, p. 183-217.

Chapter V.

1. See Martineau's impressive account of the 'decline of conscience,' *Seat of Authority*, Bk. I., ch. ii., p. 55.

2. To apply this principle in more detail to the Orthodox doctrine as contained in the Westminster Confession: we may say with James Freeman Clarke (*Orthodoxy, its Truths and Errors*, ch. vi. sect. 5): 'The creed states truly (ch. i., sect. 6) that our first parents sinned, and also (sect. 2) that by this sin they fell from their original innocence; for this only means that the first *conscious act of disobedience* by man produced alienation from God and degeneracy of nature. This was no arbitrary punishment, but the natural consequence. The creed also says truly (sect. 3) that this corrupted nature was conveyed to all their posterity; for this only means that by the laws of descent good and evil qualities are transmitted; which all wise observers of human nature know to be the fact. It is also true (sect. 5) that this corrupt nature does remain (to some extent at least) in the regenerate, in this life.' The dangerous errors which are mingled with these truths in the Westminster statement, are now being abandoned by all the leading schools of Christian Thought. These errors are: (1) that inherited evil is total, and man 'wholly defiled' in all faculties of mind and body; (2) that this inherited evil is inherited *guilt*, and the ground of our condemnation in the eye of God; (3) that inherited moral qualities are only evil qualities, there being no inheritance of, or sharing in, good. In reality, human progress has for its foundation the progressively increasing accumulation of inherited good from the past, as George Eliot shows in her *Choir Invisible* (see below, chapter vi., paragraph 1).

3. D. W. Simon, *The Redemption of Man: Discussions bearing on the Atonement*, pp. 217-262.

4. See Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 49; and compare A. V. G. Allen, *The Continuity of Christian Thought;* and R. Mackintosh, *Essays towards a New Theology*.

5. If what we have here stated gives the true account of moral freedom, it follows that Dr. Martineau's mode of explaining it requires modification. In point of fact, we are not free to *choose between* what are commonly called *motives*, that is, between different personal desires all of which have grown out of the formed character; we are free to choose between the solicitations of personal desire and the felt claims of the best that we know,—the Ideal,—that is, the immediate influence of God.

On this subject see also Professor Pringle-Pattison's article on *Martineau's Philosophy*, Hibbert Journal, No. III., pp. 131-44.

6. *Seat of Authority*, pp. 106-7. Professor William James, in his Gifford Lectures on the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, describes at length, in all its different forms, a temperament or mood of mind to which the feeling that Dr. Martineau here expresses, is related. He calls it the 'Religion of Healthy-mindedness,' and gives illustrations from Theodore Parker, Emerson, and Edward Everett Hale.

7. *Orthodoxy, its Truths and Errors*, p. 159.

8. *Gifford Lectures*, Vol. I., p. 266.

9. The quotation is from his *Philosophy of Religion*, Eng. Tr., Vol. IV., p. 134 (with a few verbal changes).

10. See especially his contributions to the volume *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. (London: Philip Green.)

11. To sum up these conclusions. (*a*) We have

been led to think of Inspiration as always and everywhere a thing of varying forms and degrees, so that Humanity has never been totally without God, and there has not been *one only* Mediator between God and man. Accordingly we find that true religious lives, and lives of true self-sacrifice, have actually been lived apart from Jesus. And if Inspiration cannot be limited to any time, place, or person, in the past, much less can we assign such limits to its growth throughout the ages to come. (*b*) Yet the influence of the life and sacrifice of Jesus has made possible for men a religion and a life which are morally and spiritually the highest, and which have their living root in a conscious reverence for him. Though Jesus is not indispensable to *all* religious life, he is indispensable to the *highest* religious life; and there is no sign that in the Western world (the world of change and progress) this is likely to become less true, or that the influence of Jesus will survive while interest in or reverence for the personal source of the influence fade away.

Chapter VI.

The most recent aspects of this problem are dealt with by the author in a paper entitled 'Present Aspects of the Problem of Immortality,' which will be found in the second volume of the *Hibbert Journal*.

1. See Professor William James' booklet, *Human Immortality*.

2. The real 'resurrection' of Jesus was therefore his survival of what we call Death, and his continued life in the Unseen World. But the historical problem still remains. Something happened *in the disciples' minds at least*, so that they were no longer a panic-stricken group who had fled from Jerusalem for their lives.

Something happened to convince them that their Master was *still alive*. It was no mere reanimation of a corpse, or visitor from the realm of shades, *sheol*, beneath the earth; but a being in the unseen world. And the realisation of that *unseen world* was what worked a revolution in their lives. What made them realise it? One answer is, that nothing really happened outside their own minds. This view is presented in an attractive form in *The Bible for Young People*, Vol. VI., bk. ii., especially pp. 148, 149, 158. The great difficulty in the way of this is that it seems almost miraculous that the disciples, by any *reflections merely of their own*, should have been able so completely to reverse their Jewish ideas of the world beyond the grave and of the meaning of their Master's life. The only possible alternative seems to be the one suggested by Mr. Stopford Brooke in his *God and Christ*, ch. xv. It is not impossible that some of our prejudices regarding the unseen world may have to be given up. It really seems contrary to elementary reason and common sense to regard the fragments of existence which our senses show to us, as if they were the whole of reality. The world unseen, in the midst of which we live and move and have our being, is not so shut off from us as we have imagined: we may find that though it is unseen, yet influences from it come to us, sources of mental impressions in us, which *under certain conditions* are naturally translated into apparently sensible forms.

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