THEOLOGY IN SCOTLAND

ALEXANDER WEBSTER

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REV. ALEX. WEBSTER
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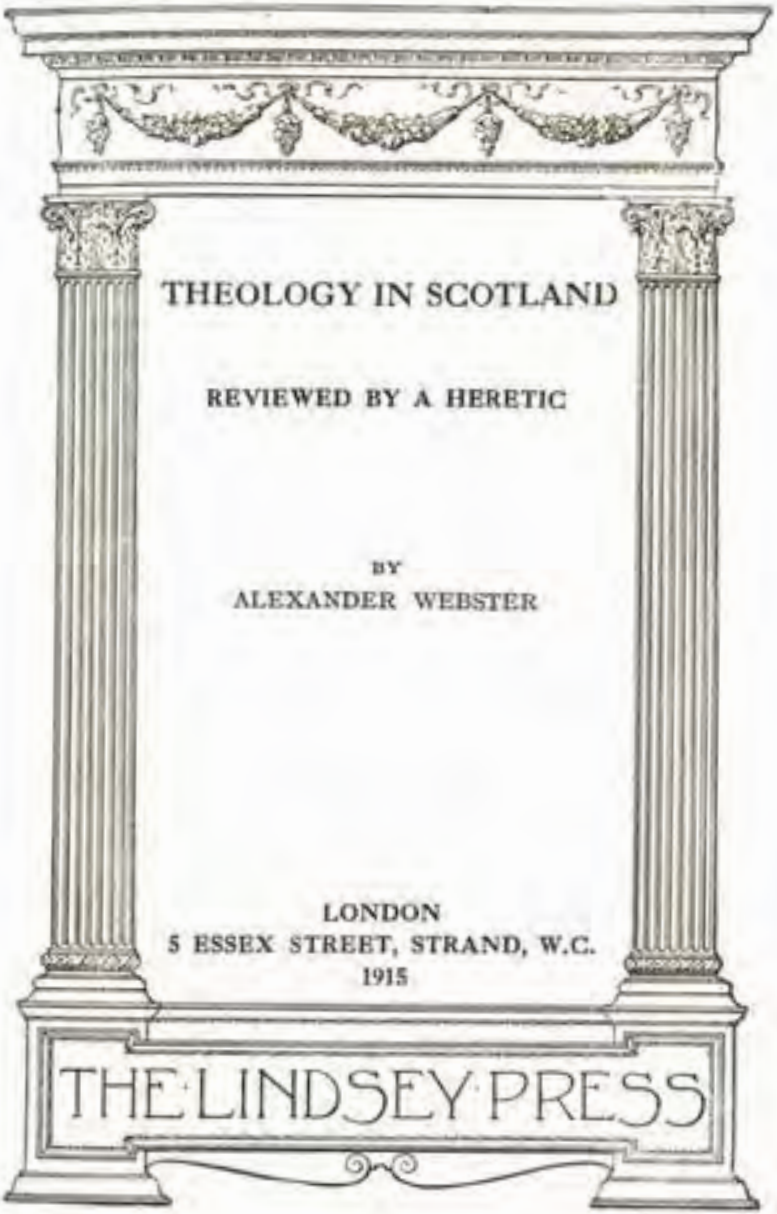

THEOLOGY IN SCOTLAND

REVIEWED BY A HERETIC

BY
ALEXANDER WEBSTER

LONDON
5 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.
1915

THE LINDSEY PRESS

PRINTED BY ELSOM AND CO.
MARKET PLACE, HULL.

PREFACE

BEING a Scot who, in the 'hungry forties,' had to undertake a lonely and painful revolt from the austere Calvinism in which I was bred, I have ever since been interested in the action of the forces at work disintegrating Orthodoxy; and being minister in several Unitarian Churches in Scotland, I presented my view of these forces from time to time to my hearers.

The chapters of this book (with the exception of the first which is part of an Address delivered in Boston, Mass.) were spoken at various times in the course of my ministry, and are gathered together here after publication in tract form so as to focus the heterodox activities and to express retrospectively my confirmed faith in the liberating and uplifting influences divinely re-creating theology and religion.

I have printed some verses at the end of the book which I wrote one Sunday a few years ago while spending a holiday in Deeside.

ALEX. WEBSTER.

Cults, Aberdeen,
13 *January*, 1915.
(My 75th Birthday.)

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O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, Oh, may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile;
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

ROBERT BURNS (*The Cotter's Saturday Night*).

I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY IN SCOTLAND

WHAT may be called the Authorized National Theology of Scotland is embodied in the Confession of Faith adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647.

It was the laboured product of the Divines whose sittings at Westminster occupied five years. Several times in the preceding hundred years various vain attempts were made to construct an authorized National creed. The country was fiercely divided ecclesiastically. A presumptuous prelatic party opposed the Presbyterian party, and, apart from these factions, there was a papistical unsubdued remnant and a considerable body of Quakers and others who liked not any of the fighting sections. At length, the Presbyterian party got the upper hand and, leagued with the Puritans then in the

ascendancy in England, they produced a Confession of Faith which by their power became the law of the land.

In England, circumstances favoured the Presbyterian movement in Scotland, and its leaders were delighted with the invitation to 'propound, consult, trial, and conclude,' with the Southern Reformers 'in all such things as might conduce to the utter extinction of Popery, Prelacy, Heresy, Schism, Superstition, Idolatry, and to consider as to the settlement which was so much desired of a union of the whole island under one common catechism, one directory, and one confession.'

There was a great deal of sectarian finessing and political diplomacy in connexion with the work of the Assembly; and though the six Scots commissioners were astute and determined Presbyterians they had to acquiesce in a Confession not altogether to their own liking. Indeed they were outwitted. Twenty thousand Scots had crossed the border to join the fight against Charles I, and in the expectation that England would become Presbyterian, but the diplomatic promise given to the Scottish ear was broken to the hope.

On its presentation to the General Assembly, the Confession was objected to on some points, especially with regard to its Erastian deference to the Civil Magistrate; but it was approved by the majority and became the creed of the nation. The Assembly enacted that a copy of the Confession, the catechisms, and the directory for Family Worship should be in every house. There were many who would not acknowledge the Confession as representing their religious faith, but it was forced on those who held office.

As a matter of fact, the Confession of Faith did not become in any intelligent and deliberate sense the creed of the people. It originated as an arbitrary, official, ecclesiastical thing. It was never more than a sectarian manifesto, and as such it only represented the zealots.

As a dogmatic statement it had more dignity and weight than any of its precursors. In the circumstances it was inevitable. Nothing but a new Papacy could have cast out the old. The autocracy changed name and place but did not dissolve. The Presbyter was but the Priest with another title and residence. It is very difficult to measure

exactly the influence of the Confession of Faith on the National character. Buckle makes the Presbytery more powerful than the Parliament. We know from Burns how keen the people were on Kirk matters.

> They lay aside their private cares
> To mind the Kirk and State affairs
> They'll talk o' Patronage and Priests
> Wi' kindling fury in their breasts.

But the Kirk was not really so mighty as Buckle thought.

Every Sabbath there was to be seen the listlessness described by R. L. Stevenson in his 'Lowden Sabbath Morn,' following the announcement of the text :—

> For noo's the time when pows are seen
> Nidnoddin' like a mandarin ;
> When tenty mithers stap a preen
> In sleepin' weans ;
> An' nearly half the parochine
> Forget their pains,
> There's just a waukrife twa or three ;
> Thrawn commentators swear to gree,
> Weans glowrin' at the bumlin' bee
> On windie glasses
> Or lads that tak a keek a glee
> At sonsie lasses.

J. A. Froude credits the Presbyterian Standards with being the source of the

'conscientious fear of doing evil' in the Scottish breast, but that is an exaggeration.

The primary influence of Calvinism is traceable to the Shorter Catechism. Every child within the Presbyterian fold had to learn that Catechism. Burns hit off the glibness piously praised:—

> Wee Davock
> Tho' scarcely langer than my leg
> He'll screed ye aff Effectual Calling
> As fast as onie in the dwalling.

The task defeated itself. The learning was not congenial and frequently produced repugnance rather than respect. Yet the language of the Catechism haunted the mind with a weird authority.

The tenacious hold of Calvinistic theology for two hundred and fifty years in Scotland, with more or less tightness, is accounted for socially by the strength of feudalistic conceptions and customs. The Scotch are clannish, conservative of tradition, and put seriousness into their habits. Our poets have made patriotism a glory. Wallace and Bruce are great political heroes in our imagination. The Tales of the Covenanters are still a power.

The main factors in the making of the

Scottish character lie apart from speculative doctrine and are mainly climatic and economic. Partly by a rigorous climate, and partly by religious training the Scot was made a reflective person. His life was largely subjective. He brooded and became intensely introspective. The picture of himself which Burns drew fitted thousands of his lowly countrymen :—

> Ben i' the Spence, right pensivelie
> I gaed to rest
> There lanely, by the ingle-cheek,
> I sat . . .
> All in this mottie, misty clime
> I backward mused.

In such musing self-knowledge came. Every such reflector, even one of the 'unco guid,' might say—

> God knows, I'm no the thing I should be
> Nor am I even the thing I could be.

Before the Confession of Faith was framed, the Scot had his special characteristics. The struggle for independence and all that lay behind it had produced a distinctly marked type. The portraits of fifteenth and sixteenth century Scots betoken the high cheek boned, intellectual, perfervid, dour type

familiar all over the world. The Confession of Faith emerged in the political drama in which the Scottish people were engaged. That drama represented the uprising of democratic sensibility and idealism. There were possibilities in the Scottish mind and heart stirring for expression. The Scottish soul was moving 'in worlds not yet realized.' The force of tribal rule and clannish autonomy had broken up: the ancient feudalism had spent itself in pride and blood, and a hardy individualism vaguely sought its opportunity. The leaven of intelligence was working upon the old ignorance; mind was stirring in the masses; the idea of personal and national freedom was rising.

A reconstruction of theology accompanied the reconstruction of politics. A new Confession of Faith in God arose along with the new oath of allegiance to the Monarch. The Sovereignty of God, which was the dominant note of the Confession, was the theologic correlative of the supreme monarchy accomplished by the Revolution. The new King was empowered by the victorious section and was supposed to rule and legislate in their interest. He was to maintain Protestant Presbyterianism. Presbyterians were his

favoured people: all others he reprobated and doomed to dishonour. The Confession of Faith in all its details reflected the political treaty marking the era of Presbyterian power. The Confessed Deity was the projection of a Monarch partial to an elect number, head of his heavenly court as the King was of his earthly court.

The reform of the State accomplished by the dominant sect was expected to issue in measureless happiness to the mass. The country purged of Papacy and Heresy would enter upon a new bliss. The Heaven of the Confession is that imagined bliss transferred to Paradise. Its saints and holy angels are glorified Covenanters.

The Presbyterians regarded themselves as instruments in God's hands for purging the country of false religion. They took hold of the Hebraism of the Bible and sought to establish it. To them the promise of God had come. They were the chosen people, and to them was committed the task of making a Christian theocracy. The men of the Covenant were possessed of an enthusiasm which made them heroic. They were fanatical over their ideal and fought and bled for it rapturously. Their Confession of Faith

had in it the self-satisfied assertion expressed jauntily in the Blue Bonnet song :—

> That the haill world may see
> That there's nane in the richt but we
> O' the auld Scottish Nation.

Wallace had prepared the way for Knox. The fight for physical liberty was the prelude to the fight for spiritual liberty. Freedom of conscience came after freedom of arm. Free politically, Scotland must be free ecclesiastically. The Solemn League and Covenant was a sequel to the Treaty of Independence.

But the Reformers did not reckon with their own dogmatism and autocracy. They did not see that in casting off one tyranny they had taken on another. But so it was. The Confession became a constraint; and the Infallible Bible involved a bondage as close and sore as the Infallible Pope had proved. The movement for the liberation of the mind from bondage to autocratic authority was arrested from within.

The direct result of these restrictions was that thinkers who desired liberty worked outside the Church often in a hostile way. Philosophy and science, as well as spontaneous literature, were found beyond the juris-

diction of the Kirk. The revolt of the native spirit from Calvinism is plainly traceable in the Scottish literature of the eighteenth century, and onward in growing intensity.

The spontaneous Scottish literature is not Calvinistic, but humanistic. It has expressed the living thoughts and feelings of the growing soul of Scotland. Orthodoxy was in antagonism to the native philosophy and poetry. To the philosophers of the school of Hume it gave special opposition. Yet the philosophers have had more to do with the development and adaptation of theology than the theologians. The dogmatists tried hard to make philosophy in the Universities the handmaid of Calvinism. Freedom for philosophy was won, and in the Universities the law of variation in philosophic thought has shown itself. Francis Hutcheson the moral philosopher was an avowed opponent of Calvinism; and in later years, in the same University, John and Edward Caird in their Hegelianism were influential modifiers of orthodox theology. At Aberdeen the synthetic method had a brilliant representative in Alexander Bain. He stood outside the churches, and declined the ecclesiastical touch even for his grave.

But everything has its compensation. The Scot has never been so great in physics as in metaphysics. The objective study was denied to him, and he avenged himself by being metaphysical. The repression of natural studies by the Church had certainly the effect of throwing the mind back on itself. Nature was made diabolic by orthodoxy. Every extraordinary or uncanny occurrence was regarded as satanic. To search nature was to find Satan. He was usually

> Yont the dyke . . . humman
> Or, rustlin thro' the boortrees coman.

So the people kept indoors and trembled. In these circumstances investigation of Nature was not undertaken. Later, when there was more courage, and the geologist ventured forth among the rocks, discoveries were made that staggered the pious searcher. When Hugh Miller realized the age of the Red Sandstone and thought of the six days' creation in Genesis, and Usher's chronology, his brain reeled, and madness ensued.

The Reformers did, indeed, in their exclusive way, promote learning, but it was all to be subdued to orthodox belief and practice. To what they regarded as mere secular learn-

ing they were opposed: it was a distraction and a dissipation.

The pursuit of literature was profanity of intellect. The one thing that learning was needed for was the interpretation of the Bible. In the Canon of Scripture was all knowledge, and its study was the only holy and sacred labour.

And so it came to pass that culture was separated from religion and condemned. It was driven into a kind of paganism, and we find it in the next century after the imposition of the Confession in avowed revolt from Calvinism. It stood out against the Hebraism of the Church with a humanism which was directly inspired by French thought. It sought other ground for moral philosophy than that which the orthodox theology presented. It turned eagerly to human nature, to find in its intuitions the sanction of ethics. There was a complete breach between philosophy and theology. The Theologians regarded the Philosophers as infidels. In the Biography of the Haldanes we have a characteristic lamentation regarding the heretics. 'The infidelity of David Hume, Adam Smith, and their coadjutors, first infecting the Universities, had gradually

insinuated its poison into the ministrations of the Church. Some had altogether thrown off the mask, like the eminent Professor Playfair. . . . Other ministers, with more inconsistency, exhibited the same infidelity, while they still ate the bread of orthodoxy. Dr. McGill, of Ayr, had published a Socinian work . . . yet even he was absolved by the Assembly. Dr. Robertson, the friend of Hume and Adam Smith, was not without reason more than half suspected: while Dr. Blair's Moral Sermons had shown how in Scotland, as well as in England, the professed Ministers of Christ could become (in the words of Bishop Horsley) "little better than the apes of Epictetus."'

But these infidels were the needed critics and correctors of orthodoxy, the representatives of rationalism,. From their work the evolving energies proceeded. Moderates (as they were called), were the mellowers and modifiers of the severity and bigotry of orthodoxy. It was inevitable that they should to some extent go to the other extreme and introduce a latitudinarianism and a laxity which tended to intellectual and moral libertinism, but on the whole they exercised a healthy, liberalizing influence.

Reproachfully it was said of them by the biographer already referred to: 'They were utterly careless about the merits of any Creed or Confession . . . their sermons generally turned on honesty, good neighbourhood, and kindness. They were free from hypocrisy: they had no more religion in private than in public. They were loud and obstreperous in declaiming against enthusiasm and fanaticism, faith and religious zeal. But though frightfully impatient of everything which bore the semblance of seriousness and sober reflection, the elevation of brow, the expansion of feature, the glistening of the eye, the fluency and warmth of speech, at convivial parties, showed that their heart and soul were there; and that the pleasures of the table, and the hilarity of the light-hearted and the gay, constituted their paradise, and furnished them with the perfection of their joy.' Over against that we may set the reference of Burns to

> Shaw and Dalrymple's eloquence,
> McGill's close nervous excellence,
> McQuac's pathetic manly sense.

These genial and liberal men, reproached as wine-bibbers and associates of sinners, helped in a kindly way to relax the 'rigid

feature' and relieve the tyranny of austerity which took to itself the warrant of piety. They blessed the natural affections that were banned by the preachers of total depravity, and encouraged the poetic spirit. From them we trace a line of intellectual and ethical revolt within the Church itself against the theology of the Confession. That line indicates the path of learning, originality, and progress. The Church marked it as the way of disloyalty and placed its sternest censure and severest punishment there.

In his review of the legal and other aspects of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith the searching and candid Principal of St. Andrews University says, 'I ask my readers to consider whether it is reasonable to expect that cultivated men can subscribe these Articles as Articles of their own faith'; and he adds the grim reflection: 'The men who framed the Confession of Faith . . . if they had been alive in the present day would no doubt have rejected three-fourths of the special doctrines of the Minority Free Church,' that is of their own Standard. Dr. Donaldson admits with some pride that the Presbyterian sects have all more or less 'deviated' from the Standards.

The advanced group of preachers that presented 'Scotch Sermons' as an illustration of 'a style of teaching which increasingly prevails among the clergy of the Scottish Church' indicated clearly the line of departure. They declared that their work is 'the work of those whose hope for the future lies not in the alterations of ecclesiastical organization but in the profounder apprehension of the essential ideas of Christianity; and especially in the growth within the Church of such a method of presenting them as shall show that they are equally adapted to the needs of humanity and in harmony with the results of critical and scientific research.'

Unfortunately, Church politics have absorbed the main attention of the sects. The Disruption in the United Free Church put a stop to theological development. That Church had to fight for its property and status, and its anxiety for some time will be chiefly politic. Its plight has affected the position of the Established Church, and its concern has also to be directed to temporalities. Meanwhile progressive theology in Scotland is in the background: it waits on adjustment of subscription to the Confession.

The crisis is serious and calls for the wisdom

which is from above. The reconstruction of creeds and of trusts will delay the influence of a wider scholarship and a larger theological culture, but that higher work will have to be done. The men who will accomplish it are in the making, and the necessity for it will gradually become evident. The consciousness has come to the soul of Scotland that, after being for two hundred and fifty years like a sealed fountain, theology cannot have health and truth except it is in living contact with spiritual energies that make for development. The thistle is stubborn, but will at last 'break into glossy purples, which outredden all voluptuous garden roses.' In that day the repentant Scot, leaving his hard dogmas, will say with our National poet, altering his words a little—

All hail, Religion! maid divine!
I join with those
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain
In spite of foes,
In spite of creeds of olden time,
In spite of black dogmatic grime,
In spite of bigotry's long crime,
Thy worth and merit
At last will brightly, purely shine
With Freedom's spirit.

II

THE REVOLT AGAINST CALVINISM IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

A REVOLT against Calvinism and the general thought and temper of the two preceding centuries is manifest in the Scottish literature of the eighteenth century. The spirit of those centuries was papal and feudalistic. Its ecclesiastical and political influence was autocratic. It repressed thought and aspiration. It was unfavourable to literature and art. It fostered haughtiness among the upper classes and servility among the lower. There was no democratic movement: the people had not risen to social consciousness. Life lacked integrity. The Church and State were both corrupt.

But the close of the pre-reformation period in Scotland was strangely marked by a brilliant, meteoric literary display. There

was a brief golden age of poetry which faded into darkness and silence.

With the Reformation a new spirit arose calling for veracity and serviceability. As an essential condition of fitness it demanded liberty and unity. Scotland at the dawn of the Reformation was not a whole. The Protestant ideal had broken in upon the Papacy, and there was civil war.

The Reformation did not directly promote literature. At its inception it had but one definite purpose—to cast off the trammels and corruptions of Popery. That engrossed the time and power of the Reformers. But the liberty and virtue they promoted involved more than they intended.

Their main appeal was from the Pope to the Bible. They merely changed authorities, but the change involved the evolution of a new type of mind, virtually a new manhood. The people were united in their reverence and study of the Bible. The Scriptures as the sole divine authority had to be examined and understood. For that purpose intellect was called into requisition; the rational faculties were stimulated to seek spiritual illumination. Reason was set in subjection to Scripture, but it was enfranchised. The ability to read was

desired for the common people. The first fruit of the Reformation was the public school.

The Reformers, however, limited liberty and restricted learning. The freedom they granted did not extend beyond their own dogmatic boundaries; the learning they countenanced was Calvinistic. They gave no leave to literature of a comprehensive and humanistic kind. They liberated reason from papal bonds to give it over to Presbyterial subjection. Against the narrow, autocratic, dogmatic supernaturalism of Covenanting times, the freer minds of the eighteenth century revolted. They were Naturalists and Humanists touched by the scientific and the sympathetic spirit.

The theory of evolution had not then risen, but they had reason to believe that man was not a ruined and helpless creature but a respectable being capable of self-control and elevation by deliberate determination. They advocated culture and promoted the study of human nature. They had but little taste for dogmatic theology or Biblical interpretation. They disliked bigotry and persecution, and sought fraternity and progress.

The purely theological literature of the

eighteenth century gives clear evidence of the changed attitude. It is plain by it that the dawn of Naturalism had come and that the old Supernaturalism was fading. Blair's sermons reflect the transition, while the heretical discourses of McGill, Simpson, and others show that the roots of revolt had spread deep and wide.

When we enter the field of eighteenth century Scottish philosophy we find the revolt strongly marked. There is discernible a deliberate strenuous turning away from the Calvinistic conception of human nature. The Hutchesonians dissociated Moral Philosophy from Theology and built up a system of morality based on natural sanctions. They had a theology of a deistical sort, but it was not the ground of their philosophy. They took experience as their basis, and wrought from the supposition that in human nature itself there was material and motive sufficient for a perfected humanity. 'Touch the natural springs of action properly,' they said, 'and the emotions will vibrate harmoniously. Bring intelligence, apply reason, co-ordinate the sentiments, and human character will become proportionate and fair.' They were charged with 'infidelity,' and scornfully

pointed at as those who resorted to 'gumlie dubs' of their 'ain delvin,' but the Genius of Philosophy acknowledges them as her prophets.

The course of Scottish philosophy ran outside the Church and in a contrary direction to orthodoxy. The philosopher was kept or driven out of the Church by the action of the Covenanters in making all schoolmasters and collegiate teachers, and also all students, on their passing examinations for degrees, sign the Covenant. The result of the creedal requirement was the divorce of philosophy from the Standards, and the taking up by its representatives of an attitude antagonistic to orthodoxy.

The philosophers, with Francis Hutcheson at their head, were actually outcasts of the Church. They exalted reason above the letter of the Bible, and applied it critically to the Biblical narratives. They were the first of the Higher Critics. Hutcheson set the daring example of ignoring the Standards and going direct to Jesus himself. Hume carried the scepticism of reason into consideration of miracles and shocked orthodoxy by his arguments against the miraculous.

Paine's 'Rights of Man' was in demand

among the people. Burns had it, and Thomas Muir of Huntershill was made a felon for circulating it. Even common belief was in revolt. Philosophy had evidently left the dogmatic position and gone on to scientific and progressive lines. It desired to be practical, to be of immediate service. Thought of heavenly things was exchanged for thought of earthly things. Political and social questions were elevated to prime importance, and Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson led the way to economic and historic spheres hardly yet realized.

Perhaps the philosophers trusted human nature as it was too much; perhaps they expected from reason more than it could give by itself; perhaps they overrated the power of liberty, but they were deliverers, pioneers, regenerators. The French Revolution startled them as it did others, and made them revise their theories. To them the credit belongs of raising a reverence for nature and humanity, and of setting thought and action on practical lines. They were precursors of natural science and of serviceable political and social activity.

Connected with them, in the line of intellectual and experimental development, we find

a remarkable array of prophetic scientists, amongst whom Black, Leslie, and Hunter are the most distinguished. In their writings there are notable anticipations of modern biological discoveries. Their reverent regard for Nature and devoted watching of her ways (to say nothing of the revolutionary ideas brought from Nature-study) were regarded as impious by those who, like the framers of the 'Confession of Faith,' despised 'the light of Nature.' On the same practical lines we come upon the writings of Robert Owen and his experiment at New Lanark, and also upon the epoch-making discovery of steam by James Watt.

All these movements were apart from and virtually in opposition to the dominant Calvinism, but they were the animating and advancing activities of the century. While the creed-bound Church was vainly endeavouring to conserve its dogmas, to save the Bible from criticism, and to keep the mind fenced in by its Articles, the thinkers and workers outside were stating their prophecies, hailing the new intelligence, and seeking the practical embodiment of their ideas.

Beside them, but nearer to the people, were the poets and novelists endeavouring

to present the new faith in song and story. In the Scottish poetry which followed the Reformation we find a movement of mind directly expressive of the thoughts and emotions of the masses. It, like the philosophy, shows a reference to Nature which marks a distinct reaction from the Supernaturalism and Inhumanism of the orthodox theology. This is visibly shown in Allan Ramsay's poetry. He introduced a new type of poesy—the spontaneous. Through him the Scottish muse, coming with the hill vigour and the meadow fragrance, moved fluently, and produced a native poetry. He escaped from the imitative temptation and let the Scottish feelings have an unconstrained and truly fitting expression.

Ramsay's Naturalism was vulgar, but it was sincere. Its exuberance was pardonable as an escape from pious repression. The rollicking, uncouth humour which had free scope in his poetry was, in its way, a protest against the galling restrictions set up in the name of religion. It was an expression of the liberated passions not yet disciplined by culture, but rejoicing boisterously in freedom.

Ferguson was Ramsay's literary successor, and with purer feeling and mightier mastery

of form carried up the naturalistic ideal and emotion. He ministered delightingly to a life that had decisively parted from the rigid orthodoxy that sought to shape and rule everything. The freed and uplooking soul had become aware of the infinite significance and sublime charm of Nature, and of the divineness of its own faculties. Its religion and morality had other roots and reasons than orthodoxy supplied. They were nourished and sustained by sympathy with the spiritual energies that circulated mysteriously in

> The light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Comparing Ferguson, as he stands midway between Ramsay and Burns, with a representative Calvinistic preacher of his day, we perceive that the poet and the preacher represent opposite conceptions of life. The preacher was the exponent of a dogmatic, speculative supernaturalism. He spoke scripturally; his matter was textual; he proclaimed regeneration by doctrinal belief, salvation by faith in the Church's creed. The poet was the singer of a conception of natural worth, of life by the exercise of natural

faculty. He got his authority from Nature and felt it to be his mission to glorify the natural. Religion to him was the enhallowment of the human; sympathetic association for work; recreation was a sacrament; and reverence of the true, the beautiful, and the good was worship.

Without expressly declaring war against each other, the poet and preacher felt that they were opponents. The poet was defamed and persecuted by the preacher, and even to the day of Ferguson the declaration in the Preface to the 'Early Popular Poetry of Scotland' applies: 'The dark religious bigotry which distinguished the early Scottish life and character promoted in more than one way the destruction of the popular literature of all kinds.'

But the poet was avenged on the preacher. The difference between them was accentuated very distinctly in the poetry of Burns. In his chief poems the opposition was made clearly manifest; the revolt from Calvinism was avowedly confirmed. The Naturalism and Humanism that bubbled out in Ramsay from a gladsome fountain-head, and ran with blithe, sparkling clearness in Ferguson, deepened and broadened in Burns into a

vigorous stream on whose banks rich verdure and beauteous flowers grew.

The critical power that trembled in Ramsay was strong and courageous in Burns, and attacked the pharisaic orthodoxy of the age with unsparing vigour. Calvinism felt that a mighty adversary had arisen with whom it had to do battle till death.

The poems and songs of Burns gave substance and shape to the latent and cowed aversion to and common uneasiness under Calvinism. He championed the independence that murmured but could not rise against dictatorial authority.

Ever since his day the line of literary revolt against Calvinism has been maintained. It is more or less distinct in all the poets. The only Scottish poet on whom the touch of Calvinism holds is Pollock. He is the solitary poetic representative of the Covenanting belief. All the rest shook off the Calvinistic influence, and in various strains were lyrists of Naturalism and Humanism.

Lady Nairne, though afflicted with a morbid Calvinism, rose above it in her songs. No Scottish lyrics are more inwardly saturated with natural affection than her exquisite songs. The suppressive influence of ortho-

doxy is seen in the fact that she dared not, even to her husband, avow the authorship of the sweet and tender effusions.

Tannahill, Aird, Cunningham, Hogg, Joanna Baillie, Jean Adams, Robert Nicoll, Ballantyne, William Miller, Alexander Smith, David Gray, William and Robert Leighton, Blackie, James Nicolson, Alexander Anderson, James Smith—the hundred and one Scottish lyrists, are all distinctly anti-Calvinistic.

As the poetic and prophetic streams run through the Old Testament Protestantly and refreshingly, so does the stream of poetry run through Scottish literature. It marks the course of vital feeling. The Humanism that came with a strong tidal flow in Burns had in it a vindication of Scottish inspiration as contradistinguished from Hebraic inspiration. It did not belittle the Jewish afflatus, but it showed another independent of it; a Scottish inspiration quite as divine and worthy of its flow as the Jewish. The afflatus made the Scottish man aware that he had a soul, and that inspiration was not past.

That was the great emancipating, enlightening, and sanctifying service which the new anti-Calvinistic literature rendered.

It broke the bonds of Hebraic restriction and secured a place for Scottish thought and a function for Scottish manhood. Thenceforth the Scot could feel that he was God's, and called of him, as well as the Jew, by his own special endowments to think, speak, and act in the line of the divine purpose. Burns made the literary calling and election of the Scottish mind sure. After its manifestation in him no one can mistake its character or doubt its power.

The rising of a distinctly Scottish literature which was destined to be cherished throughout the ages of Scottish life as a source of spiritual refreshment is a remarkable phenomenon. The literature has its source in human nature as reflecting and thrilled by the divine movements in earth, sky, and sea. It consists mainly of expressions of emotion in view of natural things or as touched by social sympathies. It contains an analysis of emotion and direction for it. The source of it is not Biblical; it is not technically pious in its character; it is unconnected with the Kirk. In its spirit it is wholly opposed to sectarianism and stationariness.

When we compare the influence of the poetic literature of Scotland, which reached

its highest watermark in Burns, with that of the literature produced in the sphere of orthodoxy, we see a power and permanency in the one far exceeding that of the other.

The critical poems of Burns that expose the hypocrisies of religious profession have vigorous life in them, while the sermons of polemics are dead and buried out of sight; his poems that reflect the homely customs and joys of cotfolk have a perennial vitality, though the doctrinal treatises of their age are out of existence. His songs of human love are promoted to immortality, while the literature of eternal torment is cast to the limbo of unreason.

The difference in the thought and feeling of the song literature as compared with those of the Calvinistic literature goes all the way through. The orthodox literature, on its theological side, has a severe and wrathful atmosphere; terror and passive submission are the feelings it arouses; but in the spontaneous literature the atmosphere is sunny and sweet, the emotions are those of love and trust, and there is vigorous and aspiring life. The orthodox literature places the chief concern on belief: the other places it on behaviour; the Calvinist prescribes the

creed; the Humanism promotes character; with the one Religion and Morality are separate, to the other they are aspects of the same thing—reverence for the essentialities of life. On its underside that reverence is moral; on the upper side it is religious.

Experience has shown which of the two classes of literature—the Calvinian or the anti-Calvinian—is the more congenial to the Scottish soul. There is hardly an honoured survival of any sort of the Calvinistic literature of the eighteenth century. Even the orthodox Churches have left it behind. They carry their ancient standards without belief and find them impediments. All the creeds were forced products, and they and the catechisms together are now intolerable. They have only a legal existence; morally they are repudiated.

But the Humanistic literature lives on; the development of human nature makes it more and more precious. It is actually imperishable. The two literatures are opposite in their character and exercise contrary influences. There can be little if any doubt as to which of the two influences has been the healthier and greater. Take as representative poems 'The Cottar's Saturday Night,' 'The

Holy Fair,' and 'The Address to the De'il,' and compare their influence with that of the favourite reading of rigid Calvinists, and then say which has had the more truly vitalizing influence on the Scottish mind. Or take as typical lyrics 'Scots wha hae' and 'A man's a man for a' that,' and consider whether these or 'The Confession of Faith' make manifest the line on which Scottish character has most richly and rightly developed.

Again, consider such songs as 'The Land o' the Leal,' 'There's nae Luck aboot the House,' and 'Auld Robin Gray,' and see whether their influence or that of the 'Shorter Catechism' has been the better. The prompt verdict is sure to be given for the songs.

There is one department of Scottish literature that shows a distinction clearly anti-Calvinistic. In the Scottish nature there are veins of strong and fine humour, but their opening was disallowed by Calvinism. By Calvinistic authority humour was profane, and fun, satire, and drollery were Satanic. A smile was hardly permissible, and even a genial laugh was deemed ungodly. The 'rigid feature' was held to be a mark of piety, and was never to be relaxed. All mirth had to seek opportunity out of the Church's

bounds, and was driven into illicit ways.

Indeed, the pathetic, as much as the humorous, was repressed by the authoritative sternness. All natural feeling was regarded as corrupt and had to be restrained. Especially when emotion took a dramatic form it was to be rigidly repressed. Plays, whether comic or tragic, were regarded as the worst form of literature. Songs and poems intended to glorify human passion and to arouse affectionate or hilarious feeling were stigmatized as evil.

All the recreative emotions—the pathos that enlarges and purifies, the mirth that vivifies and gladdens, the fire and flame that rise indignantly against harshness and glow reprovingly around folly—these were declared to be improper, if not wicked, and the people were driven from them to their psalm books and Bibles. But the humorous literature has justified itself, and along with the pathetic has risen to immortality. These together form permanent part of the spontaneous literature of Scotland.

We may glance now particularly at Scottish fiction. From Walter Scott to John Douglas Brown the line of novelists stretches far. In the great literary wizard we find a Ger-

manic influence which met and qualified the French influence affecting earlier writers. The German spirit touched Scott with a genial romanticism. His tales and poems mark a turning-point in Scottish literature. His genius for romance introduced an element needed for the correction of Calvinism and of the drier Humanism also.

Calvinism, on its literary side, was bound to textual methods: the letter held it in bondage. The little imagination and poetic feeling which it had were subdued to a stiff literalism. Its intellect wrought within a cramped dogmatic area, and was pragmatic and mechanical. All its thoughts, its manner, its symbols, its ideas were hardened in conformity with its cast-iron system. Its pious prose was monotonous, heavy, cumbrous, and its religious poetry was rigid, bare, and unmusical. It lacked spirituality and ideality: the imagination that fulfils the real. It needed the touch of romance, the saving grace of poetic sensibility. In its system Humanity was a ruin, a corrupt remnant of a pristine perfection, fit only for abhorrence. Romanticism saw nobleness and beauty in humanity, and arrayed it imaginatively in the virtues of its enthusiasm.

Scott discerned the solidarity of the human race, and loved to show the action of the compassions that dissolve social distinctions and unite men as human beings. He was cosmopolitan in his treatment of men. He virtually set aside the theory of a single select people, and glorified the truly human in whatever nation it was found. Like Shakespeare he was for mankind. He found the heroic, the magnanimous, the self-sacrificing spirit in all classes, and delighted to represent its action. He revived the romantic favour for strength and valour found in the old ballads and folk-songs, and showed a prowess and chivalry which was not of ecclesiastical make or connected with orthodoxy.

Without deliberately intending it, Scott was anti-Calvinistic in his treatment of human nature. He takes us into the company of swineherds, gipsies, and outlaws, and shows us traits of character that are admirable. To the Calvinist such are fit for hell only: he thinks that even to look at them favourably is to become partaker of their wickedness.

The Romanticist redeemed even the 'Jolly Beggars' from scorn, and brought them into the pale of the human with a saving sympathy. With Scott there came also the

touch of poetic insight needed for the interpretation of the Bible. In his day there was no true insight into the Bible. The dogmatist was blind to the real nature of the Biblical literature. It is mainly romantic and poetic, and its best interpreter is the poet and artist. The Creed-maker is the worst of all Biblical interpreters.

Scott's attitude to the Covenanters indicates an aversion to their narrowness and bigotry. He had more sympathy with the culture and statesmanship of Claverhouse. He had a devout mind and large compassions, and his influence as a story-teller, so far at least as the conception of human nature is concerned, is opposite to that of Calvinism.

An examination of the writings of Scottish novelists, from Miss Ferrier onwards, would detect an anti-Calvinistic interest in human beings. The lady who introduced the domestic novel had no scorn of human character. She analysed compassionately, and even in her satire was kindly, like Burns before her. Galt, in his parochial way, found heroes and heroines in villages, and while he dealt with common tragedies he did not see any reprobation on God's part. In Allan Cunningham and James Hogg we find a fresh naturalism

and genial humanism far apart from Calvinistic thought and feeling.

The 'Tales of the Borders' that delighted our forefathers so highly were intensely humanistic. They were in the romantic vein, but there was a pathos and humour in them of a couthie and hopeful kind. Laughter and tears followed wonder and terror in the reading of them, and the mind and heart were stirred to admiration of the heroic and compassion with the distressed. Even these were forbidden by the strictly orthodox, for it was instinctively felt that their attitude to human nature was not that of the Confession. They were actually an antidote to Calvinism: they gave scope to thought and sanctity to affection, and prepared the people for a theology with reason in it.

In the line of these tales we have those of Robert Louis Stevenson. He too was a romancer and loved to present his heroes in striking situations and gather round them the weird and awful. In him and the other story-tellers we have a style utterly unlike the stiff, stilted style of orthodox dogmatists. That alone is much, for it indicates a new and higher spiritual taste. In Stevenson's poetry we find traces of the heretical which manifest

a mystical rationalism beyond all the creeds. It is not Calvinism that he sings, but another faith born of the science and spirituality of the nineteenth century. His prayers prove that he was more with the mystics than the dogmatists. They are the simple, trustful outbreakings of a childlike soul.

George Macdonald's tales and poems more directly than any other nineteenth century writings express the revolt of the Scottish mind from Calvinism. His early poems, 'Within and Without,' 'A Hidden Life,' 'The Disciple,' etc., are decidedly anti-Calvinistic. Indeed, he was the first of the poets after Burns who gave specific expression to the new Protestantism. He sang the struggles and sorrows of the Scottish soul in the cell of Calvinism, and gave it light and cheer for its exodus. His poems are saturated with the spiritual satisfaction that proceeds from the idea of God's Fatherhood. That idea marks the line of cleavage between the Calvinism and the Humanitarian theology. Macdonald was well aware that the Calvinistic system is based on the conception of God as Sovereign. Its atmosphere and apparatus are despotic; its procedure is legal; its whole build is autocratic. God is throned in al-

mightiness: human beings are his subjects to be elected and blest or reprobated and tormented as he wills. He rules by might and judges in wrath. The relation between him and his creatures is entirely official: there is no moral standing between them, and hardly any legal sufferance, for his will is arbitrary. He acts solely as he pleases, and being absolute must not be questioned.

With God, the Father, as George Macdonald represents him, we are in a home; the relation between us is constituted by affection; we are not subjects but sons and daughters. It is love that rules and judges, love that directs and forgives, love that educates and destines. God is not the sovereign official clothed with despotic might, but the Perfect Father, holding his children by the sympathetic power of a supreme love.

Though Barrie does not express himself theologically or give an explicit indication of his attitude to Calvinism, his dealing with ministers, elders, and kirk folk is such as shows that he does not favour the sectarian and dogmatic temper of orthodoxy. His characters have the Calvinistic cramp upon them, and he intends us to see and dislike it. The blithe humour, the gentle affection, the

native strength of mind, the trust and courage which Calvinism suppressed are the things he delights in. The dour, bigoted, superstitious side of Scottish character which Calvinism superinduced as a parasitic second nature is not the one that Barrie brings into view. His characters are Calvinistic in their circumstances and in their make, but he redeems and transforms them, and sets them in the light of natural goodness.

Crockett and Ian Maclaren do the same. The new light shed by the Fatherhood of God is on the men and women they glorify. In the radiance of that light they show the promise and potency of a nobler manhood and womanhood than Calvinism could produce.

No review of the literature of Scotland would be complete without a reference to the unique writings of Carlyle. In him, as in Scott, we find a Germanic influence, but with the Craigenputtock thinker it went deeper. It gave him at once a spirit and a style as a writer. He had all the Covenanters' spiritual earnestness to be right with God, but along with that he had philosophic passion, and could not be content till the question of the soul was settled. He grafted the Calvinistic

sourness on to a large philosophy and evolved a sweeter and brighter flower of faith. His phraseology is Calvinistic, but his philosophy is not: in fact, he, more than any other Scottish writer, helped to transform Calvinism from the philosophic side, and to develop concern for at-one-ment with God into a rational and ethical religion. He roused an ethical passion which regenerated the soul.

The crossing of Scottish Calvinism with German Philosophy was the best thing that happened to the Scottish soul in the nineteenth century. The Scotchman had been taught to dread investigation, shun criticism and renounce reason, as things that destroyed religion; but Carlyle showed the possibility of having a lofty and sincere theism and a robust religion along with the most thorough rationalism. His introduction of the German thought to the Scottish soul was its deliverance, and the opening to it of a new world of intelligence and faith. The regenerative effects of that introduction are still proceeding.

The influence of Carlyle made for enthusiasm in truthseeking, sincerity in believing, and earnestness in living. After it came the enlarging and enriching influence of

physical science. That influence gave the intellect a fresh field and a new hope. It produced in Scotland a succession of scientists, all of them more or less heretical—Brewster, Lyell, Geikie, in the first rank; Miller, Dick, and Edwards, in the second. In that greater and more complex world to which physical science has introduced us, we need more than ever the fervent earnestness of Carlyle, and there are symptoms of its return with even a loftier and a more joyous faith.

Our review of Scottish literature has shown us that the really native and spontaneous portions are not Calvinistic; that the Scottish mind and heart take more naturally and kindly to a faith which 'blends with the light of rising and of setting suns, with the flying cloud, the singing bird, and the breath of flowers,' and has its sanction in reason and affection. Only when Scotland has set herself to develop her own divine endowments, will she have a religion and morality worthy of her land and people. Let her take deeply home to her heart the sage counsel of her greatest poet:—

> Preserve the dignity of man
> With soul erect,
> And trust the Universal Plan
> Will all protect.

III

ROBERT BURNS

SCOTCHMEN generally affirm that the Scottish Muse gave her fullest inspiration and her fairest crown to Robert Burns, and accept his poetry as the most perfect expression in their own tongue of the thoughts and feelings native to the Scottish soul.

The admiration of the poet, which has grown with the increasing years, has justified his way of looking at things and proved how congenial his ideas and emotions are to the Scottish mind and heart. His humour and pathos, his wit and wisdom, his freedom and reverence come home to the soul of the enthusiastic Scot as the bird to its nest and the bee to its hive. His sayings have become part of the classic literature of Scotland, and his spirit is a vivifying influence in the very constitution of the Scottish man. No discussion regarding his sentiments is possible;

they have in their favour the intuition of a century. His writings represent the mother-wit of the Scottish intellect. Being thus universally accepted, the works of Burns form a ready basis on which some things necessary for earnest-minded Scotchmen to hear and consider may be freely and fitly said.

The words that follow are written from the point of view of Burns as a prophet having an important religious and moral message to deliver to the people of Scotland. He set forth an ideal religion and morality which are as yet unrealized.

The theology of the orthodox churches of Scotland, as represented by their Standards, is not that which he believed and sang. The religion which is conventionally upheld is not that with which he was in sympathy. The social conditions existing in Scotland to-day are not those of which he gave the glad forecast in the lines which were his prayer for brotherhood. Scotchmen sing his songs, recite his poems, raise monuments to him, buy luxurious editions of his works, and drink to his immortal memory, and yet uphold the very things which he set himself to pull down. This is to our shame.

Burns still stands before us speaking to us

more directly and deeply than any Hebrew bard. His words are in our 'mither-tongue'; they correspond to our character; they are in the direct line of our spiritual evolution, and therefore are to us 'sacred writ.' They come to us with more than Attic point: they carry with them the sacredness belonging to the sanity of our reason and the holiness of our affection. They confront us like our native mountains and streams; we cannot ignore or gainsay them.

The epistles of Burns are to us more homely and applicable than any of the epistles of Paul. We naturally look with more interest to Mossgeil than to Tarsus. Ayr is more real to us than even Jerusalem can ever be. We do not place his writings on a level with those of the New Testament, but still we may affirm that they have proved their right to be regarded as part of the 'Bible of the race,' regarding which Lowell says:—

> Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
> Texts of despair, or hope, or joy, or moan.

In the *Cotter's Saturday Night* Burns explicitly deals with the religious side of the Scottish character, and very distinctly expresses his thoughts regarding it. The poem

was written on a wintry day, at Mossgeil, in 1795, as a memorial of his father's intelligence and piety. The scene in the 'Aul' Clay Biggan' at the taking of the book by his father made a profound impression on his memory, and after his father's death the remembrance of the solemn hour came up before him with pathetic freshness. While toiling with pain of heart on the luckless farm and thinking of boyish days spent under the most thoughtful, fatherly care ever experienced by any boy, the picture of the lowly worshippers formed itself vividly in his mind and was put into words in all its sublimely simple graphicness.

No incident round which poetic concern ever gathered could be lowlier than that which took place in the kitchen of the now famous cot, but Burns elevated it to a national importance in his treatment of it. The central figure in the scene is the poet's father—the 'toil-worn cotter,' the 'sire' who, with 'patriarchal grace,' turns over the pages of the 'big ha' Bible,' the 'saint' who prays so devoutly. In William Burness, thus immortalized, we have set before us a type of 'God-fearing Scotchmen.' The ingle round which the Cotter's family 'formed a

circle wide,' represents the Altar-fire of Scotland, round which Scottish piety gathers worshipfully. Though the incident is particular and the details are local, Burns let us see that in his purpose the worship has a wide reference. He thinks of the night on a national scale, and says :—

> From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs.

And so the piece grows from the loving account of a Cotter's homely devotions, to the dimensions of a drama representing the pious acts of a reverent people.

The hero of the poem, in his genial solemnity, engages our interest. From him the poem takes its significance. In the light of his strong character the deeper meaning of the piece is seen. There is a touch of severity in his countenance, but it is subdued by the kindness which draws the 'expectant wee things' forth 'wi' flichterin' noise and glee' to meet him, and which also evokes 'his thrifty wifie's smile.' We discern that he is a man of orderly habits, serious disposition, and stately integrity, having in him withal a tender compassion and a deep undercurrent of paternal affection.

But the chief thing which we should know

is that the father of Burns was a heretic in theology and religion. If he was not actually a Unitarian, he was next to one. It may be that he took the seeds of heresy with him from Montrose to Ayr, for it was at Montrose, in 1781, that Unitarianism first appeared in Scotland in organized form But in Ayr, itself, in his day, the 'New Light' views shone out in the teaching of Drs. Dalrymple and Macgill. These divines were in close touch with English Unitarian preachers, and were treated as 'Socinians.' The Burns family, as Carruthers tells, were regarded as Unitarians. One notable book by a Unitarian divine—Taylor's *Original Sin*—is very specially mentioned in one of the letters of Burns. That volume would have a strong interest for the inquiring Cotter, for in it all the texts cited in the *Larger Catechism* to prove the dogma of the *Fall* were critically examined. Whether it was that book, or his own reflections, that made William Burness resolve not to teach his children Calvinistic views, we cannot discover, but we know that he prepared a manual of devotion for his family of a heretical kind.

There can be no doubt that Burns was reared on Unitarian lines. And his reading

of such works as that of the Norwich controversialist would enable him to take the part described by himself in the polemical discussions then so common in the west, in which he 'scored heavily' against the upholders of Calvinism, and raised the cry of heresy around him. A remarkable admission of the heterodoxy of Burns was made in an orthodox journal ('British Weekly,' 11 February, 1897). In the 'Correspondence of Claudius Clear,' and in the course of a review of the Chambers-Wallace edition of the works of Burns, the writer said:—'It might not be too much to say that both Burns and his father were Unitarians.' It is likely that they had read other Unitarian works besides the one on *Original Sin* which they prized so much, for it would be sure to whet their appetite for more of the same sort. Six years before he wrote the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, Burns mentioned the name of Joseph Priestley in a letter, and we may infer that he had read some of the theological writings of the learned scientist.

In one of his later poems—*Epistle from Esopus to Maria*, he associated himself in a very plain way with the notorious Thomas Fyshe Palmer, Unitarian minister, Dundee,

who was banished along with Thomas Muir for political heresy. He describes himself thus :—

> The shrinking bard adown the alley skulks,
> And dreads a meeting worse than Woolwich hulks:
> Though there, his heresies in Church and State
> Might well award him Muir and Palmer's fate.

The presence of Unitarian books in a Scottish Cotter's house, then, is a very significant thing. It proves that the father of Burns was an extraordinary man, open-minded and courageous. His composition of a *manual of devotion* for his children also marks him as a man of unusually advanced opinions and force of character.

Well might Burns revere his thoughtful parent and lay his tuition deeply to heart. That reverence was the rock out of which there came the spring of rationalism and hatred of hypocrisy which we find flowing all the way with Burns as a writer. He was an apt pupil, and his own thought ran readily on the lines of his father's ideas. The embodiment of his thoughts in his poems gave to the heresies a scope far beyond that ever dreamt of by his father when he took pains to express his religious ideas for his children's sake. It is not too much to say that the work

of Burns could not have been what it was but for the Unitarian leaven which came to him through the teaching of his father.

These things are stated here simply by way of showing the real source and nature of the heresies of Burns. These heresies have been attributed to an undisciplined mind and a wayward will. They have been regarded as the irreligion of a debauchee. Generally they have been minimized and passed over. Mr. Wallace says Burns 'did not believe in the Confession of Faith, and probably regarded the prevailing theological and ecclesiastical system as a delusion,' but the religion of the poet was not of a negative character.

Unfortunately for the reputation of Burns, the dictum of Carlyle regarding his want of religion has been accepted; but his religion was actually a very real and pronounced thing. In fact, so far as a positive religious influence could do it, the pious power of his father formed and inspired the soul of Burns in a lasting way. His religious emotions were early and strongly touched in his father's cot, and his religious ideas came to him in the atmosphere of a home made vital by the intelligence of a truth-loving guardian. He

breathed certain thoughts in his childhood with every breath of his soul, and made them his own by reasoning in his manhood. They were the most vital elements in his mind, the saving ingredients in his conscience.

It was with no light, profane, debauched power of mind that Burns wrote his reformatory religious poems. They are not pot-house effusions, dashed off to feed a wanton hilarity, but pieces written in the seclusion of his own chamber, with the most serious intent that ever moved a pen. They are corrective and heretical, and therefore not liked by orthodoxy. Their significance and worth for us lie in their heterodoxy. The reformatory work which he was set to do for religion and morality was allied not only in spirit but in actual connexion with the Unitarian movement of the period. He was an enthusiastic missionary of the New Light, more powerful as a poet than its leading propagandists were as preachers. The cot opened up to us in the hour of worship is really a heretical sanctuary, and the conductor of the devotion is a pronounced heretic. There is nothing whatever for Orthodoxy in the poem. The virtues of the home cannot be claimed by Calvinism. It was not from

the *Shorter Catechism* that the writer of it got his theology. He is the child of heterodoxy, and is its spokesman.

There is a remarkable element in the poem which John Ruskin discerned and which casts a sidelight on its heretical character. Speaking of children in Art and Literature, and of the influences which 'compelled our painters to represent the children of the poor as in wickedness or misery,' he says, 'I am not able to say with whom, in Britain, the reaction first begins—but certainly not in painting until after Wilkie, in all of whose works there is not a single example of a beautiful Scotch boy or girl. I imagine in literature we may take the *Cotter's Saturday Night* and the "toddlin' wee things" as the real beginning of child benediction.'

That the reaction happily called 'child benediction' should be traceable in that way to the *Cotter's Saturday Night* is a very notable thing. And there are connexions of the fact equally notable. Modern Humanitarianism of which 'child benediction' is a branch, originated, on its religious side, with heretics, mostly Unitarian. The first Sunday School in England was started by Theophilus Lindsey, the Unitarian clergy-

man of Catterick. It is in the 'Aul' Clay Biggan' that we find the Scottish counterpart of that school. In the case of William Burness we have the first historic attempt of a Scotch layman to give original religious instruction to his children. Why was it left to a heretic to take this initiative? Why was Burns the first to depict 'child benediction' in literature? The reason is plain.

Calvinism taught the *depravity* of children and the reprobation of infants even. Unitarianism taught the *divinity* of the child-nature, and gave a moral worth to every child. Thus it awakened an educational interest in children, and revived the thought 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' William Burness was taught the benediction instead of the curse of children by Taylor's book, and we may well suppose that his affectionate treatment of his own bairns influenced Burns in writing the lines in the *Cotter's Saturday Night* noted by John Ruskin.

An orthodox parent could not but look upon his child with dread lest he should not be among the elect, and therefore go to hell. To think of educating a nature wholly evil was not permissible; learning would be worse than thrown away, it would only make

children 'clever deils.' The Unitarian parent had no such fear. He looked with respect on his child, saw in it divine capacities, and felt it to be his duty to culture these. Hence various efforts for 'child benediction'—Sunday Schools, Ragged Schools, Domestic Missions, Reformatories, etc., originated with Unitarians.

Very remarkable in this connexion is that Saturday gathering by the Cotter's 'wee bit ingle,' at which the younkers, in homely educative fashion, were warned to obey;

And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
  And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
  And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
  Implore his counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright.

That might well be set up as a model Sunday school lesson. It is simple, thorough, and immediately practical. It is not the admonition of a dogmatist seeking to indoctrinate the mind, but of a compassionate man having more regard for qualities of character than for shades of opinion. It does not express care for creed, but concern for conduct.

Another touch of heresy in the poem is found in the action of the worshipful Cotter as he 'wales a portion' of Scripture 'with judicious care.' He does not open the book at random and take any passage which comes to hand. He knows that it is not all for edification, that some of it must not be read to children, and so he is careful to select. Even from the Psalms—the part which offers itself most appealingly to his pious purpose—he is aware that he would be obliged to omit many verses of an imprecatory character. The New Testament also needed brains for its understanding, and his 'waling' has to take effect there as well.

That 'judicious care' of his was a precursor of Biblical Criticism. The dawn of Biblical Science had manifested itself in Paine's *Age of Reason*, of which the sturdy Cotter may have heard. But the roughly critical sally of Paine would have shocked him by its rudeness, albeit he was himself a keen critic. Taylor had taught him how to examine the Bible, and saved him from textualism. He used his reason in his Biblical reading, and got out of bondage to the letter. Before Tübingen was heard of, the 'higher criticism' had arisen in a Scottish cot!

Still farther we see into the mind of the hero of the poem by the prayer which he breathed in private. In that prayer we have the touch of nature, and nothing of scholastic theology. It corresponds with the *Sermon on the Mount*, but not with the *Confession of Faith*. We see that the saintly man has taken the advice of Jesus and observed the birds of the heavens and the flowers of the field, for he prays :—

That he who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

The *Cotter's Saturday Night* sets before us a man who is entirely out of orthodoxy, but who is sincerely devout ; one who has thrown off the creeds and put on the newer thought ; who is a Nonconformist, but has a gospel in his conscience and a church in his house. He is a Scotchman by birth, but a revolter from Calvinism ; a solitary heretic, yet in touch with the men of the progressive movement ; exercising liberty 'when 'twas treason to be free' ; an unknown man, but the father of a son whose writings are destined to be

an inspiration to thousands of earnest men. We boast of our heroes, of our covenanters and martyrs, but there is not one more deserving of rank with the most heroic than William Burness, the heretic of Doon-side, of whose intelligent piety the *Cotter's Saturday Night* is an admiring memorial.

Those who have had to give up orthodoxy as a species of theological falsehood, and beat out the truth of God in agony of soul, know what it must have been to that toil-worn man to re-examine all he had been taught in school or church, and dismiss whatever insulted his own soul. They can enter into sympathy with the writing out of his ideas for his children's guidance, to save them from what he suffered, and present to them a rational theology such as would correspond to Nature's holiest teaching and keep their souls in religious trust throughout all the experiences of life.

There was in William Burness the strong intellectual fibre, the sturdy integrity, the courageous activity of the men who make revolutions. Verily a revolution has to be dated from the writing of his *Manual of Devotion*. That piece of writing, intended for private use only, was as fateful as Knox's

Book of Discipline. It marked a new era in Scottish theology and religion. From it we may date, not only the spiritual birth of Burns, but the beginning of the decay of Calvinism. It was the herald of the most powerful counteractive and regenerative force of a literary sort that ever acted on the mind of the Scottish people. The *Cotter's Saturday Night* repays the *Manual of Devotion*: the reverence of the son expressed in the poem embraces the solicitude of the father manifested in the chart.

An endeavour has been made to prove the orthodoxy of the poem by means of the fifteenth stanza which thus begins:—

> Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
> How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
> How he who bore in heaven the second name,
> Had not on earth whereon to lay his head,

but the words do not furnish the proof required.

There are many explicit statements in the letters of Burns which prove his heterodoxy beyond a doubt. He tells us that the cry of heresy was raised against him in his youth on account of his puzzlement of Calvinists. In a letter dated 14 February, 1790 (the year in

which he wrote *Tam o' Shanter*) he said: 'If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am damned past redemption, and what is worse, damned to all eternity. I am deeply read in Boston's Fourfold State, Marshall on Sanctification, Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest, etc., but there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there for me.'

His thought regarding Jesus Christ is clearly expressed in a letter to Clarinda, in which he writes of him as 'a great personage, whose relation to God we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is Guide and Saviour.' That is not the language of an orthodox man. To Mrs. Dunlop he confessed his faith in Jesus as 'from God' on account of the 'sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts,' but added nothing indicative of a belief in the Deity of Jesus or in vicarious atonement.

If, then, we read the lines of the *Cotter's Saturday Night* which refer to Jesus in the light of these explicit declarations, we shall see that they are not to be taken in an orthodox sense, but as having quite a different import. The theology of the poem is essentially unorthodox. Though we have

the fear of the Lord spoken of, the feeling indicated is not the abject dread of the slave in presence of the despot, not terror before an angry Deity who can cast into hell, not a fear of any cowering sort, but the natural and healthy awe of the finite facing the Infinite. It is a trusty reverence given to him

> Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us;
> He knows each chord its various tone,
> Each spring its various bias,

one to be looked up to, therefore, with filial confidence.

Wherein for us, then, does the essential meaning and message of the poem lie? The poem is first of all an argument for personal liberty in religion. It says to the Kirk and the Presbyter: 'Stand off with your dogmas and leave the individual free to think for himself and come to his own conclusions.' It is a correction of the Protestantism which, in its turn, had become Popish by setting up a creed as an absolute authority over the conscience. It is a vindication of the right of reason in the sight of God, a plea for personal religion. The deep-seeing Cotter saw that the first thing to be respected for re-

ligion's sake was not the Kirk, nor even the Bible, but personal faculty, the constitution, the spiritual power of the individual.

He discerned that Truth comes in different ways to different men and different ages, and therefore it was absurd to set up a perpetual dogmatic standard to which all must conform their thought. Each mind, having its own form and quality, should be free to assimilate Truth according to its particular characteristics; and each age, according to its own intelligence, should be at liberty to have its own ideas. An enforced uniformity of belief is a suppression of natural faculties, the reduction of all minds to an unhealthy flatness.

The Cotter studied his own children and became their teacher and priest. For their sake he thought out the theological question and made a speciality of religion in his training. The solution of religious education is here. It belongs primarily to parents to educate the religious faculties of their children, to watch their dispositions, and evoke the religious spirit in the line of their particular faculties. If they cannot do it themselves, they should secure its doing by others. By parental indifferentism children are com-

mitted to the dogmatists and are taught the authorized falsities. Thus, as has been truly said: 'Every year rolls up its steady average of abuses unreformed, evils unchanged, falsities laughed at and maintained.' Religious progress is made, but 'it is as nothing compared with the progress that would be made if all the thinkers and educated people of the community were to seriously set themselves to the work of securing to their families, especially their children, the full benefits of their best knowledge, treating every attempt to teach them fashionable falsities as they would an attempt to indoctrinate them in sorcery.' That is the example set before us in the *Cotter's Saturday Night*—an example as prophetic as it is admirable.

The poem is not an argument for stated times and forms of worship in the home, but is an example of parental concern regarding religion, of serious thought on religious questions and of earnest effort for religious education. Taking the words of the poem in a large sense, it must always be from that sort of spiritual solicitude that 'Scotia's grandeur springs.' The real grandeur of Scottish religious history and the virtue of Scottish

character are not to be found in their dogmatism and conventionality, but in the spirit that always resisted these. Not in the line of Conformity, but of Nonconformity, does the glory of Scottish religious life lie. From its heretics, not from its creedalists, has the vitality come which regenerated the Scottish soul. Always from the rationalist, the reformer, the pioneer, do the new light and life come. Multiply men of the stamp of William Burness, men who think for themselves, who take pains to verify their thoughts and teach their children to be rational in their piety; make such men the majority in our country, and there would be a new Scotland, a land with a real religion, a piety without bigotry, a worship with great truth in it.

Orthodoxy has terrified people against thinking by saying: 'If you cast off the creeds, you will sink into Atheism; if you doubt what you have been taught, you will become an infidel; if you begin to pick and choose in the Bible, you will grow into a blackguard.' We can call William Burness to testify that it need not be so. He cast off the creeds, doubted and criticized, and was all the more truly religious and all the better morally. The only real safety of

religion and morality lies in such rationalism as he manifested, in such freedom as he achieved, and in such thoroughness as he exemplified.

The deeper moral of the poem points not only to freedom of thought, but to *thought worthy of freedom*. It is not enough to be free to think; there should be deep, persistent, strenuous thinking. Intelligence is the first ground of liberty. A learned nation cannot be enslaved either by king or priest. The poem also points to progressiveness in religion. Though the Cotter prepared a manual of devotion for his children it was not a dogmatic document, but was designed to stimulate and direct. That manual cut those who used it away from the creeds, but it connected them with the living God whose manifestation in Nature was continuous, and whose inspiration of humanity was constant. It showed them principles that were better than dogmas, and presented to them a method of knowledge the application of which led them into a boundless region of Truth. It taught them open-mindedness, comprehensiveness, and sympathy, and gave them the stimulating hope of 'More Light.'

And in this connexion we see in the genial

reasonableness of the Cotter a prophecy of that

> Mightier church . . . whose covenant word
> Shall be the deeds of love. Not *Credo* then—
> *Amo* shall be the passport through its gates.
> Man shall not ask his brother any more
> 'Believest thou?' but 'Lovest thou?' and all
> Shall answer at God's altar, 'Lord, I love.'

And, deeper than all, the poem stands for the scientific method in religion. The superstitious, traditional, and dogmatic method was discarded by the Cotter. The 'Aul' Chay Biggan' was open to the 'New Light' from whatever quarter it would come. The Cotter was not afraid to read heretical books and meet modern views; he had no dread of reason, no closed faculty. He read his Bible with his brains, and sought for all manner of helps to the mind. There were books in the 'Biggan' such as there were not even in Judge Auchinleck's library at Dr. Johnson's visit, when Burns was in his fifteenth year. There was Biblical Science and much else extraordinary in that little sanctuary before the like was heard of elsewhere, and all on account of the enthusiastic mental vigour of one man. The most radical need in religion to-day in Scotland is men of mental

determination like his. A virtuous populace would rise from such.

Ought we not, as countrymen of the Cotter and admirers of the poem in which his integrity is enshrined, to cultivate a religious freedom and earnestness like his, put reason into religion, let science touch the soul with its broadening intelligence, make our homes sanctuaries of high thought and pure affection, and our country a holy land? Shall we not help to raise the 'wall of fire around our much loved isle,' by building up the 'dignity of man,' and making the 'man of independent mind'—the man with 'soul erect,' the man of the future?

IV

GEORGE MACDONALD

GEORGE MACDONALD is a representative of a type of mind which though born and bred in strict orthodoxy departed from it. Like Thomas Carlyle and Robert Louis Stevenson, he is a notable example of variation from Calvinism. His heresy is not a 'sport' but an 'effect,' more or less direct, of subtly working natural causes.

He first saw the light in a circle of the severest Scottish Calvinism; in his childhood and youth he was subjected to the repressive influence of this circle, and yet when he started to express his own deliberate convictions he showed that his thoughts were not those of his fathers. By his earlier writings we see that his departure from the sphere of spiritual bondage was caused partly by a constitutional disposition towards freedom, and by irresistible outdrawing influences operating in the atmosphere of his time.

Seven years before Macdonald entered the University of Aberdeen, Charles Darwin returned from the voyage in which he discovered the new world in which science now lives. At the same time, Ralph Waldo Emerson published his first work, 'Nature,' which set forth his spiritual vision of the law whose reality the intelligence of Darwin demonstrated. These two, emerging from different and distant points were pioneers of the way of the new thought which required the regeneration of Theology and Religion.

By the make of his mind Macdonald was likely to be more attracted and more deeply influenced by spiritual philosophy like that set forth by Emerson than by the physical theories of Darwin, but it is evident that he was a reflector of both. He is quite Darwinian in the verse which occurs in 'The Diary of an Old Soul':—

> Leave not thy son in half-made beastly guise,
> Less than a man with more than human cries—
> An unshaped thing in which Thyself cries out!
> Finish me, Father; now I am but a doubt,
> O make thy moaning thing for joy to leap and shout.

But while open to the declarations of the physicist, Macdonald had the constitution of

a spiritist. He had the poet's divination, and was saved from the tyranny of Calvinistic creeds by his fine imagination. Out of the prison of the Catechism and Confession he emerged with the song of a new faith. His earlier poems are full of the Naturalism and Humanism that Calvinism forbade; but his express protest against Calvinism, in the form in which his countrymen could best understand it, was made in 'Robert Falconer.'

The chief value of the group of northern stories of which 'Robert Falconer' is the most special theologically, lies in their portraiture of persons living in a Calvinistic atmosphere. Born and bred in that atmosphere, Macdonald knew it by experience, but having escaped from it, he turned upon it analytically, to identify its elements and compare its products.

His pictures of northern village life are unsurpassed in quaint vividness. He had a strong touch of the power that Burns showed of making his characters stand out in full individuality; much also of David Wilkie's skill in grouping. He saw the sombre humour and stern pathos of northern life; its grey grimness as it struggled with

the forces of a rigorous climate; its subdued aspect under the fear of God. With a gentle sympathy for mirth, and a keen eye for drollery, he is never away from the seriousness of life pressed upon the people by the Creed which ever kept hell before them.

He caught the Calvinistic atmosphere at its change, when a softer and balmier air was coming upon it, and its austerities were yielding to the larger hope. He saw the artificial severity of character produced by the fear inwrought into the spiritual constitution of the people; the sensual baseness which the fear drove into darker haunts; the hypocrisies accompanying the irrationalities that men were required to believe; and withal the gawkiness and unfinishedness of the common folk.

In 'Robert Falconer,' he depicted the soul of his people struggling to be free from the Calvinism that had bound and confined them. If he did not deliberately set himself to show the breaking of the meshes, he instinctively saw that the soul was yearning to be free, and that a larger and sweeter sphere of life was being prepared for it.

In Robert Falconer's grandmother we have shown the type of character formed

under the influence of Calvinism. Her mental peculiarities are thus described. 'Her conscience was more tender than her feelings. The first relation she bore to most that came near her was one of severity and rebuke, but underneath her cold outside lay a warm heart, to which conscience acted the part of somewhat capricious stoker, now quenching its heat with the cold water of duty, now stirring it up with the poker of reproach and ever treating it as an inferior and a slave.

'But her conscience was on the whole a better friend to her race than her heart. She not infrequently took refuge in severity of tone and manner from the threatened ebullition of a feeling which she could not otherwise control, and which she was ashamed to manifest. . . .

'Hence in doing the kindest thing in the world she would speak in a tone of command, even of rebuke, as if she were compelling the performance of the most unpleasant duty in the person who received the kindness. . . .

'To Robert she was wonderfully gentle for her nature and sought to exercise the saving harshness which she still believed necessary, solely in keeping from him every enjoyment of life which the narrowest theories

as to the rule and will of God set down as worldly. Frivolity, of which there was little in this sober boy, was in her eyes a vice; loud laughter almost a crime; cards and *novelles*, as she called them, were such in her estimation as to be beyond characterization. Her commonest injunction was "Noo be douce," uttered to the soberest boy she could ever have known.'

With all her stateliness and sincerity, Mrs. Falconer is not an admirable character. She is rather a kind of ogre, made such by the 'dreadful articles of her creed.' The gentler and sweeter elements in her nature were gnarled and embittered by her Calvinism. She grew in the shadow, and was spiritually stunted and impoverished. The same kind of severity which thought itself pious and showed its rigour in the burning of Servetus, was the motive of her taking away Robert's fiddle from him and putting it to the flames.

Her Calvinism made her miserable. Her belief in election prevented her trust that her wayward son would be saved. She lived in continual anguish regarding him. He was away, she knew not whither, a prodigal, and his fate was heavy on her soul. Her wrestlings with God in prayer for him were agoniz-

ing. Her motherhood instinctively flew to its divine source, but her Calvinistic training forbade trust in her motherly feelings.

She was taught that her mother-love was corrupt, a vain deceptive thing, and though it prompted all that was good in her affection she had to cast it out as a vile inspiration, and bow loveless under the inflexible justice of the Almighty. Thus Calvinism tore and crushed her heart, and made her sceptical of the holy spirit of her motherhood. Mrs. Falconer was a woman of noble character naturally, but at the command of her creed she had to sacrifice her best self, and find her religion in her worst self. Much Evangelical condemnation has been spent on savage religious rites—the tortures and horrors connected with barbaric sacrifices, but under Calvinism spiritual torture and horror have proceeded of a kind more inhuman than any found among 'heathens.' By these the best in Scottish manhood and womanhood was repressed and vitiated.

We see by Mrs. Falconer the fatal illogicality of the separation in the Calvinistic creed of love and justice. She was taught that God's justice was separate from his love, and that while his love was fain to save, his

justice must damn. If ever she thought that love and justice were one: that justice was the effect of right love, she would have been afraid of her thought and been obliged to reckon it a blasphemy.

Her life was a spiritual suicide at the bidding of her harsh faith. No one who had studied the influence of Calvinism in its own circle can doubt that, in Mrs. Falconer, George Macdonald represents in complete veracity a real product of its factorship. It is painful to read his judgment over the product, pronounced with compassion but with candour: 'She felt bound to go on believing as she had been taught; and her submission and obedience led her to accept as the will of God . . . that which it was anything but giving him honour to accept as such. Therefore her love to God was too like the love of the slave or the dog; too little like the love of the child, with whose obedience the Father cannot be satisfied until he cares for his reason as the highest form of his will.'

No severer indictment against Calvinism was ever written than that; and its proof in the fact of a typical character cannot be overturned. But there is worse than that in

'Robert Falconer.' The author shows us the back-wash and debris along with the direct effects of Calvinism. The vagrants, the dissolute, the wantonly wicked: Shargar's mother, 'Dooble Sanny,' Lord Rothie, and the rest of the squalid and ravenous set, appear as the by-products of the fearful creed. It taught men to put a low estimate on themselves, to assume their total depravity and their condemnation to misery, and they believed in accordance with the estimate. They were instructed that good works were regarded by God as filthy rags, and so were prevented from attempting goodness. It was drilled into them that they were 'elect' or 'non-elect,' not for any virtue or vice in them, but solely by God's sovereign will, and so it did not matter for salvation what their character was. The effect was positively demoralizing.

There can be little doubt that the sensuousness which showed itself in illegitimacy and drunkenness was a direct result of the suppression of spirit to which the people were subjected. Denied open and proper means of pleasure, they resorted to secret and vicious means; without resources of innocent recreation, they indulged in reckless wantonness.

'The Symposium' in the 'Boar's Head,' with its scandal and intoxication, is an evidence of the profanity of human faculty which went on among men whom Calvinism set to do nothing better. Much has been said by the apologists of Calvinism for its truthfulness to the Bible, its logicality, and its power of welding a nation, but 'Robert Falconer,' being witness, Calvinism bewildered the Scottish people, arrested the development of their genius, and coarsened and hardened their life and character.

Except 'The House with the Green Shutters,' no piece of Scottish literary work so truthfully shows Calvinism its own grizzly image, as 'Robert Falconer' does. Neither Douglas Brown nor George Macdonald deliberately intended to expose the 'seamy side' of Calvinism, but by simply showing village life under the influence of dogmatic teaching prevailing for ten generations, they did actually make manifest the kind of man and woman and of society produced by Calvinism. No critic of Calvinism ever did so effectually expose the demoralizing tendencies of the system as George Macdonald did in this book. The bewildering and dehumanizing influence of the authorized

Scottish theology is, however, most effectively exposed in Robert Falconer himself, the hero of the story. His spiritual portrait is carefully, sympathetically drawn. Robert was growing intellectually and becoming sensible of cramps and stiflings.

'His was a nature which, foiled in one direction, must, absolutely helpless against its own vitality, straightway send out its searching roots in another.' Of all forces, that of growth is the one irresistible, for it is the creating power of God, the law of life and being. Therefore no accumulation of refusals, and checks, and twinings, and forbiddings, from all the good old grandmothers in the world, could have prevented Robert from striking root downward and bearing fruit upward, though as in all higher natures, the fruit was a long way off as yet.

'But his soul was only sad and hungry. He was not unhappy, for he had been guilty of nothing that weighed on his conscience: he was only much disappointed, very empty, and somewhat gloomy.

'To understand Robert's spiritual condition we must remember that around the childhood of Robert, which he was fast leaving behind him, there had gathered no

tenderness. He had no recollection of having ever been kissed. From the darkness and negation of such an embryo existence, his nature had been unconsciously striving to escape—struggling to get from below ground into the sunlit air, sighing after a freedom he could not have defined, the freedom that comes, not of independence, but of love—not of lawlessness, but of the perfection of law.

'And there now arose within him, not without ultimate good, the evil fantasms of a theology which would explain all God's doings by low conceptions; low I mean for humanity even, of right, and law, and justice, then only taking refuge in the fact of the incapacity of the human understanding when its own inventions are impugned as divine. In such a system hell is invariably the deepest truth, and the love of God is not so deep as hell. Hence, as foundations must be laid in the deepest, the system is founded in hell, and the first Article in the creed that Robert Falconer learned was, "I believe in hell."'

That reduction of Calvinism to a belief in hell shows the incisiveness of the analysis of George Macdonald. Laid completely bare, Calvinism is belief in hell: that is the stark, grim substance of it. What a hideous, hate-

ful thing it thus appears! We talk in horror of heathen idols, but surely there is nothing in heathenism more monstrous and positively horrible than the devil of Calvinism in whose fear the Scottish people have cowered so long. To name God in connexion with that hideous creation of morbid fancy is to profane the name of God; and to assert that the Infinitely Good created such a monster for the purpose of tormenting some of his children for ever, is to blaspheme against goodness.

Like all other Scotch boys brought up religiously on the Shorter Catechism, Robert Falconer was constrained to believe in hell. He had been so instructed that it was inevitable that 'when a thought of religious duty arose in his mind, it appeared in the form of escaping hell, of fleeing from the wrath to come. For his very nature (he was informed) was hell, being not born *in sin* and brought forth *in* iniquity, but born sin and brought forth iniquity.

'And yet (he was told) God made him. He must believe that. And he must believe, too, that God was just, awfully just, punishing with fearful pains those who did not go through a certain process of mind which

it was utterly impossible they should go through without a help which he would give to some and withhold from others, the reason of the difference not being such, to say the least of it, as to come within the reach of the persons concerned. And this God they said was love. It was logically absurd, of course.'

But though absurd, the thought sown in Robert's mind persisted there. 'To him God seemed to lean over the world, a dark care, an unmovable fate, bearing down with the weight of his presence all aspiration, all budding delights of children and young persons; all must crouch before him, and uphold his glory with the sacrificial death of every impulse, every admiration, every lightness of heart, every bubble of laughter.

'No one ever dreamed of saying—at least such a glad word of prophecy never reached Rothieden—that, while nobody can do without the help of the Father any more than a new born babe could of itself live and grow to a man, yet that in the giving of that help the very fatherhood of the Father finds its one gladsome labour; that for that the Lord came; for that the world was made; for that we were born into it; for that God lives and loves like the most loving man or woman

on earth, only infinitely more, and in other ways and kinds besides, which we cannot understand; and that therefore to be a man is the soul of eternal jubilation.

'Robert began to take fits of soul saving. He made many frantic efforts to believe that he believed: took to keeping the Sabbath very carefully—that is, by going to church three times, and to Sunday school as well; by never walking a step save to or from church; by never saying a word upon any subject unconnected with religion, chiefly theoretical; by never reading any but religious books; by never whistling; by never thinking of his lost fiddle, and so on—all the time feeling that God was ready to pounce upon him if he failed once; till again and again the intensity of his efforts utterly defeated their object by destroying for the time the desire to prosecute them with the power to will them. But through the terrible vapours of these vain endeavours, which denied God altogether as the maker of the world, and the former of his soul and heart and brain, and sought to worship him as a capricious demon, there broke a little light, a little soothing, soft twilight, from the dim windows of such literature as came in his way.'

The one dread subject of Robert's thought was 'the devil.' Why did God make him? Why did he not convert him? He read in Klopstock's *Messiah* of a repentant cherub, mourning over his apostasy, haunting the steps of Christ, and desiring to return to his place in heaven, and the idea of the repentance of Satan got hold of him.

'Shargar,' he said one day, suddenly, to the helpless lad he had befriended, 'What think ye? Gin a deil war to repent, wad God forgie him?' 'There's no sayin' what fowk wad dae till ance they're tried,' returned Shargar, with instinctive caution; and Robert knew that he could get no light on the question from Shargar.

In his confidence with Eric Ericson, the Caithness student, Robert ventured to state the haunting question:—

'Do you think, Mr. Ericson, do you think if a devil was to repent, God would forgive him?'

Ericson turned and looked at him. Their eyes met. The youth wondered at the boy. He had recognized in him a younger brother, one who had begun to ask questions, calling them out into the deaf and dumb abyss of the universe.

Ericson himself had intellectual difficulties, and there were rifts in his theology. So he somewhat enigmatically replied:—

'If God was as good as I would like him to be, the devils themselves would repent.'

Robert was sorely troubled with the answer, and 'choking with a strange mingling of horror and hope, he said:

'"Then ye dinna believe that God is good, Mr. Ericson?" "I didn't say that, my boy," replied the gentle student. "But to know that God was good and fair and kind—heartily, I mean, not halfways, and with *ifs* and *buts*, my boy, there would be nothing left to be miserable about."'

With Ericson, Robert's thoughts about God began slowly to crystallize. But Ericson went away, and he was left alone with Grannie.

One Sunday afternoon, being set to it by the 'botched-up' sermon he had heard, and the chapter about Benjamin's sack that he read, Robert broached the mighty subject.—'I hae been thinkin' o' a plan for maist han' toomin' hell.'

Grannie was startled, but being curious to know what had been moving in his mind let him proceed, while she watched 'ready

to spring upon the first visible hair of the old Adam.'

By a circular route Robert led up to his plan. 'Weel, gin I win in there, the verra first nicht I sit doon wi' the lave o' them, I'm gaun to rise up an' say—that is, gin the Maister, at the heid o' the table, dinna bid me sit doon—an' say, "Brithers and sisters, the haill o' ye hearken to me for ae minute; an' O Lord! gin I say wrang, just tak the speech frae me, and I'll sit doon, dumb an' rebukit. We're a' here by grace and no by merit, save his, as ye a' ken better nor I can tell ye, for ye hae been langer here nor me. But it's just ruggin' an' rivin' at my hert to think o' them 'ats doon there. Maybe ye can hear them. I canna. Noo, we hae nae merit, an' they hae nae merit, an' what for are we here and them there? But we're washed clean and innocent noo; and noo, when there's no wyte lying upo' oursels, it seems to me that we micht beir some o' the sins o' them 'at hae ower mony. I call upo' ilk ane o' ye at has a frien' or a neebor down yonner, to rise up an' taste nor bite nor sup mair till we gang up a' thegither to the fut o' the throne, and pray the Lord to let's gang and do as the Maister did afore's, and beir

their griefs and carry their sorrows doon in hell there; gin it may be that they may repent and get remission o' their sins, an' come up here wi' us at the long last, and sit doon wi's at this table, a' throuw the merits o' oor Saviour Jesus Christ, at the heid o' the table there, Amen."*

Half ashamed of his long speech, half overcome by the feelings fighting within him, and altogether bewildered, Robert burst out crying, and ran out of the room up to his own place of meditation, where he threw himself on the floor.

The boy was suffering the divine pains of soul travail, but dare not be satisfied with the higher thought striving for birth.

His grannie was deeply touched, but could not permit the humanity in her to come fully out. When tea was ready, she sent Shargar to look for him, and when he appeared she was so gentle to him that it woke quite a new sensation in him. But after tea was over she said:—

'Noo, Robert, let's hae nae mair o' this. Ye ken as weel's I do that them 'at gangs *there*, their doom is fixed, and naething *can* alter't. An' we're not to aloo oor ain fancies to carry's ayont the Scripter. We hae oor

ain salvation to work oot wi' fear an' trimblin'. We hae naething to do wi' what's hidden. Luik ye till't 'at ye win in yersel. That's eneuch for you to min'.'

So the earnest soul of the boy seeking light was rebuffed and consigned to darkness.

In the person of Mrs. Falconer we have a pitiable illustration of the utter incompetence of Calvinism to minister to a growing mind. Its dogmatic rigidity and inhuman spirit make it the stifler of thought and the slayer of emotion; and it says much for the native strength and health of the Scottish mind that under the influence of Calvinistic autocracy it sank not into atheism or madness.

What was done to Robert Falconer was done to every Scotch boy forced to learn, say, and accept the Catechism, and we see in him what went on in the mind of every one who thought and tried to resolve what he was taught into a faith for his own reason. The agony, the spoiling, and the degradation of it are terrible to think of.

Thanks to George Macdonald and other brave critics it is almost past now. The atmosphere of theological thought and religious aspiration is changed, and the con-

stitution of the mind is altered. Such women as Mrs. Falconer are hardly possible now. Relics of Calvinism still exist, and the Catechism has a shadowy life, but the make of the modern boy is not due to dogmatism, but rather to liberty.

Compared with the boy of Calvinism, the boy of Liberalism may be less subjective and serious, but he is on the make for better things than Calvin imagined and the framers of the Catechism knew. In his own inimitable way, George Macdonald has described the growth of Robert's soul under the refreshing and reforming influences of nature and youthful human sympathy, and in his development we may see what Scottish manhood could become when set into communion with the Infinite Love.

One specific honour belongs to George Macdonald—that of being the first distinctively Scottish writer to popularize the idea of God's Fatherhood. When he began to write, the idea had not got into Scottish theology. The phrase had not become current coin. The Scotch theologian had not emerged from the sphere of feudalism: he still spoke of God as King and Judge. It was only in heretical quarters that the

term Father was used to express the relation of God to man.

Macdonald tells in the dedication to 'A Hidden Life' that he learnt the idea from his father. His acknowledgment of the teaching is thus expressed:—

> Yet most I thank thee, not for any deed
> But for the sense thy living self did breed
> That fatherhood is at the great world's core.

That sense made him shed his Calvinism, and become an apostle of the idea of God taught by Jesus. When he got the sense, his people and his country were in the bonds of Biblical literalism. The authorized faith was built on texts. A Bible word was a spell, an absolute oracle, a doom: it was feared and held as a thing beyond criticism or any kind of rational examination. Calvin had come in between them and Christ. The Calvinistic dogmas had shaped for them their conception of God, of salvation, of eternal bliss and eternal bale. They regarded revelation as finished. The elements of saving faith were to them complete. God's speech was past; his personal presence was withdrawn; we had but an echo and a shadow.

The essence and something of the sub-

stance of the new faith which Macdonald had to sing are discernible in his poem, 'Within and Without,' published in 1855. Therein is evident the Naturalism which was to him a refuge from the artificialism of dogmatic theology. From text and creed he turned his soul to earth and sky and found in their phenomena the presence of an Infinite Spirit.

Naturalism is the fundamental characteristic of his teaching. It marks him as truly Christian in his perceptions and aspirations, for the outstanding thing in the leadership of Jesus is its outgoing attitude, its acknowledgment of the continuous presence of God in Nature, and of the duty of the soul to follow him in natural ways. Julian, the chief character of the poem, escapes from the monastery which had been to him a prison of the soul, and seeks communion with God in the outer world. The monastery in the poem stands for Calvinism or for dogmatism generally, and Julian for a liberated spirit seeking spiritual life in atonement with the Universal Spirit. Amongst the very finest things Macdonald wrote is 'The Father's Hymn for the Mother to sing.' It comes in 'the dusk of the evening' to Julian :—

My child is lying on my knees;
The signs of heaven she reads;
My face is all the heaven she sees,
Is all the heaven she needs.

. . . . . .

Lo! Lord, I sit in thy wide space,
My child upon my knee:
She looketh up into my face,
And I look up to Thee.

The poem was a prelude to Macdonald's riper and richer work; it prophetically indicated the lines of his thought, and made his countrymen aware of the possibilities of new religious life that lay in the soul which had turned to the Living God, and in its rapture said:—

I thank thee, thou hast comforted me,
Thou in whom I live, who lives in me
And makes me live in thee; by whose one thought
Alone, unreachable, the making thought
Infinite and self-bounded, I am here.

He was the spokesman of the slow, dumb soul of Scotland seeking for an Infinite Love. He had the Scottish disposition towards theology, the rare faculty of applying affection to the quest for God, and the art to express his faith in popular form. By poems, sermons, and specially by tales, he

popularized the idea of the Fatherhood of God, the divineness of the human soul, and the certainty of universal salvation. Through his tales he has had a wide and deep influence in modifying the theological thought and religious feeling of Scottish people. He was a preacher without a pulpit, a theological story-teller, a poet of regenerated religion.

Well might the soul of Scotland, which still lingers on an old past, loath to leave the crumbled creeds and the dim domain of dogma, take the advice he gave :—

> And do not fear to hope. Can poet's brain
> More than the father's heart rich good invent?
> Each time we smell the autumn's dying scent,
> We know the primrose time will come again;
> Not more we hope, nor less would soothe our pain.
> Be bounteous in thy faith, for not misspent
> Is confidence unto the Father lent;
> Thy seed is sown and rooted for his rain.
> His thoughts are as thine own; nor are his ways
> Other than thine, but by their loftier sense
> Of beauty infinite and love intense.
> Work on, one day, beyond all thought of praise,
> A sunny joy will crown thee with its rays,
> Nor other than thy need, thy recompense.

V

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND HENRY DRUMMOND

AMONG the revolters from the Articles of Scots Calvinism, there are those who felt their atmosphere stifling, were rebels through the lungs and limbs, and sought another air for the sake of a wholesome and joyous manhood. That kind of rebellion was exemplified by Stevenson and Drummond. Not against restriction of thought did they revolt so much as against constriction of breath. They desired conditions of chest expansion, capacity for more vital breathing, room for a larger heart.

While others, with intellectual uneasiness, rose up against Calvinistic dogmatism, they, with nervous unrest, were in opposition to Calvinistic deformation. To them the air of the dogmatic region was *stuffy*: there was

not enough mental ozone in it: they needed to be out into the open, with the bracing mountain elixir or the saline sea-ether, and the sense of deep draughts of spiritual vigour. Their rebellion was not polemic but psychic. They had a dislike to the kind of manhood produced by Calvinism: it was too lank and grim for their taste. They had an ideal of a fuller and lovelier manliness, and for its realization desired fresh air, evolving emotion, and dignifying spirituality.

Stevenson and Drummond were, indeed, both heretics mentally—unbelievers, wanderers from the orthodox fold; but they were such as men of feeling, rather than as rationalists. They did not attack dogmas in controversial fashion, nor dispute points of faith on logical lines; but they were none the less opposers of the dogmatic temper. They had imagination and the poetic spirit, and looked out on life from another point of view and with other eyes than the dogmatist did.

They are striking illustrations of the radical wrongness of the orthodox conception of uniformity of thought, and of the serviceable operation of the law of variation. Each had an originality for which there was no allow-

ance in the creed bound circle of Calvinistic life, and which inevitably took them out into regions which conventionality had not sanctified. Both were poets and philosophers; each a preacher—Drummond more specifically theological—and both influential in directing thought and inspiring feeling. There is a notable resemblance in their mental make: the same kind of light shines from their books and they arrive on the same eminence.

Stevenson was most prolific as a story teller: Drummond told tales incidentally: both were radiant centres of amusement and education for children and had something to say to students. Stevenson by temperament was a revolter from the confinement and monotony of orthodoxy. Bred in it, and pressed to conform, he early rebelled and went his own way. He could not take to the ultra-Calvinism of his conscientious father. The old man was a critic of the Church, but of a reactionary sort, being in favour of a more rigorous belief and practice than it sanctioned.

Stevenson's nurse was a Calvinist also, and through her his mind was filled with the materials of orthodoxy. As has been said,

'Scotch Calvinism, its metaphysic and questionings of Fate, "free will, foreknowledge absolute," what it invariably awakens, was much with him, in the sense of reprobation and the gloom born of it, as well as the abounding joy in the sense of the elect; the Covenanters in their wild resolution, the moss troopers and their dare devilrie, Pentland risings and fights of Rullion Green: he not only never forgot them, but they mixed themselves in his very breath of life and made him a great questioner.'

O, I wad like to ken, to the beggar wife, says I—
The reason o' the cause an' the wherefore o' the why,
Wi' mony anither riddle brings the tear into my e'e,
It's gey an' easy spierin', says the beggar wife to me.

The reverent attitude of his 'spierin' is humorously shown in his ironical interrogatory—

It's a different thing that I demand,
Though humble as can be—
A statement fair in my Maker's hand
To a gentleman like me:
A clear account writ fair an' broad,
An' a plain apologie:
Or the deevil a deevil word to God
From a gentleman like me.

But much of the Calvinistic influence

passed into his soul and qualified it. His sense of the terrible, the grim, and the ruthless was born of it. His ethical substance, his strenuous determination, his uprightness belong to it also. But even on that basis he could not build according to the pattern of his father. He heard another call, saw another architecture, and moved to another goal.

Stevenson's features were Scotch in their congenital lines: the high cheek bones, the conical head, the large nose, the heavy lip, the subdued chin are unmistakably Scottish. But there was something in the eye betokening a variation—a strange, gipsy-like, heathen glamour which gave his face its characteristic expression. He seemed to be a blend of Hume, Scott, and Rousseau or of John Knox and Prince Charlie. His friend and critic described him—'A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck, much Antony, of Hamlet most of all, and something of the Shorter Catechist.'

In one respect, he was a sport from his engineering ancestry, and in another a complemental development of their lighthouse building power. He felt that, although he wrought in another field, he was a true

successor of his laborious fathers. Emerson says, 'Nature balances each man with his opposite.' In Stevenson we see an effort of Nature to balance the Scottish Calvinistic man deliberately moulded on Hebraic lines. The Hebrew literature, with its pattern man, was taken as the divine instruction as to manhood, and life was piously set on its lines. But God did not intend the Jewish character to be isolated and perpetuated: it was made to blend with others for the sake of the development and perfection of the human. And, as Stevenson's biographer says, 'the Greek element in life must be added to the Hebrew, the lighter facts must balance the darker and more sombre. This kind of manhood, with its all round balance and harmony, Stevenson achieved. As he conceived of it, normal human life was something clean and healthy as well as robust, lived in the open air, freshened by a breeze; and this frank and natural ideal dominated all departments of his thought. It gave their tone to his moral and spiritual judgments, and it culminated in that Gospel of Happiness which is at once his highest and most characteristic message.'

The blend in Stevenson was richer than

that made by the mixture of Hebraic and Grecian elements, for, as Kelman well puts it, 'he had a Hebrew conscience and a Greek imagination, a Scottish sense of sin and a French delight in beauty. Pagan in the frank delight in pleasant and bright things, Puritan in the austerity of his moral judgments, he appreciated the strength of rude elemental virtues and also the delicacy of spiritual refinements.'

Those who have studied the pictures of Scottish life under the influence of Calvinism given by George Macdonald in 'Alec Forbes,' 'David Elginbrod,' and 'Robert Falconer' are aware of the 'belated Hebraism' lingering in Scottish life—the terror, the bareness, the selfishness—and if they turn to Stevenson's writings they will find the antidote which he as a revolter applied in order to free, enlarge, and beautify the Scottish soul. The Hebrew had no humour: oppression made him morose, and his sore struggle for life produced sordidness of the plodding penurious sort; and the Scotsman piously took after him. But the greatest rebel from Calvinism native to Scotland had torrential humour of a caustic sort which delighted in satire; and it was given to Stevenson to

have a sweet, breezy, merry humour which set the lips to smile and the eyes to beam. 'Twas his to show 'a glorious morning face,' to transfigure 'the rigid feature' which the Catechism had given to the Scot.

In his eyes Scottish humanity was ungainly; Scottish theology too severe; Scottish religion too abject, and Scottish morality too bare. He expressed not a little disgust at the whole thing. He revolted early from the pharisaic, vapid, wearisome Sunday. 'A plague o' these Sundays! How the church bells ring up the sleeping past! I cannot go in to the sermon; memories ache too hard, and so I hide out here under the blue heavens beside the Kirk whelmed in leaves.' And yet the obnoxious thing haunted him, permeated his thought and shaped and coloured all his work. Japp says, 'When he reached out his hand with the desire of pleasure conferring, lo and behold, as he wrote, a hand from his forefathers stretched out, and he was pulled backwards so that, as he confessed, his writings were apt to shame, perhaps to degrade the beginnings.'

As the 'Shorter Catechist,' he was prone to casuistry, wistful introspection, and

problems. In its earlier movements, his mind was crossed by terror and joy, and in after years he felt the burden brought by Calvinistic speculation on election and reprobation, even when he had cast off in thought the dogmas relating thereto. He never could get rid of the spiritual effect of Calvinism although revolted from it. He felt the anguish accompanying the endeavour to pull down the old house of faith and build the new—

> Old is the tree, and the fruit good,
> Very old and thick the wood;
> Woodman, is your courage stout?
> Beware! the root is wrapped about
> Your mother's heart, your father's bones,
> And, like the mandrake, comes with groans.

Writing of the religion of an old honest countryman, he describes his own: 'One who has grown a long while in the sweat of laborious noons and under the stars at night, a frequenter of hills and forests, has in the end a sense of communion with the powers of the universe, and amicable relations towards his God. . . . His religion does not repose upon the choice of logic; it is the poetry of the man's experience, the philosophy of the history of his life.'

Stevenson was an out-of-doors man, a vagrant, hail-fellow-well-met with all wayfarers—

> You go with me the selfsame way—
> The selfsame air for me you play:
> For I do think and so do you,
> It is the time to travel to . . .
> *Over the hills and far away!*

We need not go to him for Theology, formal religion, or any pious talk, for he appears contemptuous of God at times, as in 'The Counterblast Ironical,' and a scapegrace; but he has a poet's Theism and the worship of a soul true to its holiest feelings. The man who wrote 'a plague o' these Sundays' lived to write a 'Lowden Sabbath Morn' glorifying the solemn stir in preparation for the Kirk.

Where his Theism appears it is naturalistic. Describing the night in Vailima in which 'we must sit in the dark, while the rain-wind roared and the boughs beat on the roof, and we must sit in silence also . . . in such hours . . . there is communion impossible in any Chapel of Ease, even in any Cathedral. You are alone with God: with one face of him, that is, which he who blinks, blinks at his peril.'

On speculative theological questions he

was all his life 'a bewildered child.' 'As one goes on, the wood seems to thicken, the footfall to narrow, and the House Beautiful on the hill's summit to draw further and further away.' Sad yet jaunty he feels—

> Wheresoe'er the highways tend,
> Be sure there's nothing at the end.

The Calvinism of his early home atmosphere was, in its autocratic pressure, responsible for a spell of Atheism, but his was not the Atheistic temperament. He found that while 'the Church was not right, the Anti-Church was not right either.' He felt he was 'born with a sentiment of something moving in things, of an infinite attraction and horror coupled.' The 'horror' yielded to the 'attraction': he obeyed his own advice—'Revere the Maker: lift up thine eyes to his style and manners of the sky,' and he found God as 'the Master of our pleasures and pains.' Writing to Henley he said—

> Sursum Corda:
> Heave ahead:
> Here's Luck.
> Art and Blue Heaven,
> April and God's larks,
> Green reeds and the sky-scattering river,
> A stately music.
> Enter God!

Ay, but you know, until a man can write that 'Enter God' he has made no art! 'Come let us take counsel together and make some!'

It was by no means easy for Stevenson to say 'Enter God.' As Kelman says, 'In the saddest and bravest song he ever wrote, he turns from the bewilderment of a life which for the time had lost faith and almost lost hope, to strenuous and courageous action as a last resort and citadel—

God if this were faith? . . . .
To go on for ever and fail and go on again
And be mauled to the earth and arise,
And contend for the shade of a word and
A thing not seen with the eyes.
With the help of a broken hope for a pillow at night
That somehow the right is the right,
And the smooth shall bloom from the rough:
Lord, if that were enough?

It was enough for the perplexed hour, but he reached a 'calmer and more assured point'—

So far have I been led,
Lord, by thy will:
So far I have followed, Lord, and wandered still.
I hear the signal, Lord—I understand
The night at thy command
Comes. I will eat and sleep, and will not question more.

Stevenson's life was a rebuke to orthodoxy in several ways. It was a protest against repression of individuality by insistence on conformity to dogmatic Standards. It was a vindication of originality, the right of the soul to put its own interpretation on things and have its own things for interpretation. It was a rebuke to the exclusiveness of orthodoxy, to its arbitrary distinction between sacred and secular, to its outkeeping of scepticism and stigmatizing of reason; and of its disparagement of Nature and scorn of Humanity. The playful style of Stevenson makes his spiritual struggle seem slight, but there are evidences that it was severe. We discern the severity of it in his calling the New Testament 'an unsettling book.' He was aware of the Higher Criticism and had been its disciple in his own way. He made a study of Christ for himself, as all earnest souls have to do, and, in the reaction from the infidelity of Christendom, he took refuge, with a touch of his father's rigour, in a sterner view of the teaching of Jesus.

But it is not for Theology or Christology that we are indebted to Stevenson so much as for his example of liberation from dogmatism, and his abomination of the cant

connected with it. He delivered his soul from 'rank conformity' which suppressed the religious spirit, and expressed his abhorrence of the patent insincerity of the ordinary preaching. In a sweetly persuasive way Stevenson sounded the note of a healthier, loftier life, in which, with the windows of the heart open to the divine blue day, there would be fulness of joy. To that life he calls:

> Forth from the casement, on the plain
> Where honour has the world to gain
> Pour forth, and bravely do your part,
> O knight of the unshielded heart!
> Forth and for ever forward! out
> From prudent turret and redoubt
> And in the millay charge amain
> To fall but yet to rise again!

In Samoa, they called Stevenson 'Tusitala,' indicating demigod, messenger, and bard, and the name would have fitted Drummond as well. In Africa they called Drummond by a name which signifies the gazer or seer, and that title would have equally fitted Stevenson. The men were separate in their career, and differentiated in faculty, yet there was a remarkable similarity in their outlook and work.

Stevenson came to himself by variation

from his ancestry; Drummond by evolutional conformity. Both were teachers and winners of men, having the same attractiveness and power of charm. Each had an ample gift of lucid, gracious, musical speech. They resembled each other very closely in their childlikeness; both retained the child's heart to the last. Stevenson, in 'The Child's Garden of Verses,' and Drummond in the stories and fables written for children, and in his articles on the 'B. B.', showed that they had the spirit of a child.

Henry Drummond's course of life was largely determined by emergencies, the revival of 1873–5 being the first gripping influence, and the founding of the Science Chair in the Free Church College, Glasgow, the second. He was trained for the ministry of the Free Church, and ordained by the Presbytery of Glasgow, but by some subtle aversion or reserve he never took the title Rev., nor even acted as if he regarded himself as a minister. He remained a layman (and was something of a gipsy as such) though he became a Professor.

What there was in his mind against the ministry has not been explicitly shown. One might suspect it was an antipathy to Hebrew,

for he and a companion in examination hid the Hebrew Bible in the coal-scuttle and so escaped drill in the Jewish tongue. But there was something deeper than that, and it is remarkable that Drummond was an outsider in relation to his Church. His first departure from the traditions of his sect was made visible in his book 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World.' This was in preparation all through his previous career. Though he had no school training in Natural Science, he had a bent that way, and at college followed it. He did not care for Classics, but went heartily for Botany, Chemistry, Zoology, and Geology, and won the class medal for the latter. He followed Geology specifically, and through it was led into consideration of Natural Law. He could not be a merely technical Geologist, but must be a spiritual interpreter of the rocks.

As a boy Stevenson drew a picture of a man. 'Mother,' he said, 'I've drawed a man; now I will draw his soul.' With the same kind of proclivity for inwards, Drummond wanted to represent the soul of the rocks, the spiritual idea which they embodied.

The publication of 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World' was to the Church a start-

ling announcement of a revolution. Nowhere in its Standards nor in its ministry had the Church dealt with Nature except to declare its insufficiency and corruption. Its sole way to God was through the Bible. The function of the preacher was to expound the supernatural revelation. Science was regarded as superfluous, if not Satanic.

Drummond, with quiet initiative, as if led by the Spirit, made the strange endeavour of enlisting Science for Religion. He introduced Natural Law into theological concern, and made it a thing for religious consideration. It was a daring innovation in a Calvinistic circle, and orthodoxy felt it as a portent. The Church quaked and resented the commotion. Drummond was in simple earnest. He felt that his mission lay 'among the forgotten truths, the false emphasis, the wrong accent.' He changed the theological verb descriptive of God from 'was' to 'is.' He had an original prophetic message. Nature had been forgotten, misconceived: he had to set it up for acknowledgment and true understanding. The emphasis had been put on the supernatural, the abnormal, the neonatural; he had to place it on the natural on the scale of universal law. The accent of

conventional theology was speculative and dogmatic: he felt that it should be scientific and evolutionary.

Drummond began his science lectureship with his inbred theology unbroken. He had gone through his university career without any rift of thought. His biographer says: 'At the very point at which a theological student is most disposed to be sceptical—the close of his first session in Theology—Drummond accepted orthodox Christianity, not after any passionate struggle towards the contrary, nor with any strength of original thought, but upon a full knowledge of the issues and after serious consideration. The absence of all trace of revolt is characteristic. Drummond never appears to have passed through a crisis of that kind . . . to him the Christian experience of faith was not so much a struggle as a growth.' But yet he did abandon the grounds on which he thought as a student 'for others not less evangelical nor less capable of defending a true revelation in scripture, but more rational and more in accordance with the facts of scripture itself.'

The prosecution of Professor William Robertson Smith set him athinking about the

Bible on the lines of the Higher Criticism, and led him to abandon the dogma of literal inspiration. That was his first conscious break with the tradition of his fathers, but it was not singular, for the advanced section of his Church virtually made the same departure. It meant much for him. 'His religious teaching was as much based upon the Bible as it had ever been; but in his own practical use of the Bible he exercised a new discrimination, and he often said that the critical movement had removed very many difficulties in the Old Testament which puzzled him, and at once had set him free for the fuller appreciation of its divine contents.'

Drummond was not a Biblicist, nor a Higher Critic; he was an interpreter of Nature. While others took to do with texts he had to concern himself with natural facts. His first essay at the exposition of Natural Law was crude. His poetic sense took the lead. 'He looked at everything with the eye of a poet first, and as a man of science afterwards'; or we might say more precisely he was an idealist in Science.

But there were distractions. Human interests touched him powerfully, and con-

cern for laws had to wait on concern for souls. The burden of sin came upon him and it urged him to take part in revival meetings. At these he was welcome because of his mesmeric power and unconventional address. It was here that his persistence in being a layman held. He had nothing of the parson about him and hardly a manner of the pulpit. He was fresh, sane, human, and his evangel had power. It was a vindication of the method of Jesus with the multitudes and an illustration of its efficiency. Though it seemed orthodox in form it was new in its attitude and regenerative in its spirit. It was in fact essentially revolutionary, but the sincerity and sanctity of the man justified it. The ordinary evangelist denounced doubt and insisted on doctrine. Drummond said, 'Doubts show interest and zeal: pity the man who is cocksure of everything in Christianity. Doubt is one of the most blessed states a man can be in. It is the purifier of thought. Until he has doubted and then thought, faith to a man is mere credulity.'

Sceptics were attracted to him. The 'perplext in faith' got compassion. Those who could not believe the prescribed dogmas

were encouraged. He said—'to be a Christian does not mean that you must believe in all the various doctrines. Many a man with no doctrine is a Christian.' The dogmatists looked askance at him and took counsel to silence or remove him. The students loved him. There was light and life about him. He told them that sins were not bad marks put opposite their names in a book, which some one would wash away and they should be fit for the kingdom. 'There is no more disastrous view that you can possibly take.' It was very heterodox but very human. Drummond made himself a brother to men, but still Nature had him by the heart. The idea of evolution needed to be assimilated by the Church, and he was its spiritual prophet.

When first he endeavoured to interpret Nature his inbred orthodoxy was strong upon him. He imagined Nature was Calvinistic. The Calvinism of Nature assumed by him was practically the thesis of his book. He saw that it was not possible to uphold Calvinism by the Bible only, and took the bold course of asserting that Nature was radically Calvinian. He hoped to win a new and final victory for Calvinism. He, like Stevenson, started literature as a 'Shorter Catechist,'

but in a more elaborate and specific way. But as he proceeded the authority of the Catechism receded. In his preface to his book he gives evidence of its recession. Speaking of his weekday lectures on the Natural Sciences and his Sunday talks to working men on subjects of a moral and religious character, he tells how he got over the necessities of the case by keeping the two departments entirely by themselves. 'They lay at opposite poles of thought, and for a time I succeeded in keeping the science and the religion shut off from one another in two separate compartments of my mind. But gradually the wall of partition showed symptoms of giving way. The two foundations of knowledge also slowly began to overflow and finally their waters met and mingled. The great change was in the compartment which held the religion. It was not that the well there was dried; still less that the fermenting waters were washed away by the flood of science. The actual contents remained the same. But the crystals of former doctrine were dissolved; and as they precipitated themselves once more in definite form, I observed that the crystalline system was also changed.'

The change was vital. Although Drummond continued to speak of Christ, Atonement, and Salvation, and to use familiar terms, his words had a new significance. Indeed they had another sound and were ominous of terrible heresy, when he said, 'Christ never denounced breadth, but often denounced narrowness. He loved to get away from the company of the narrow Pharisees and Sadducees and to talk with inquiring and ingenuous minds. He loved the outsiders; he courted their society,' the bigots knew that he was not of them. Drummond was then in another world than that of the Church, but his entrance into it was so inevitable that it did not seem to be an actual change of sphere. His conversion was all the deeper being unconscious.

The heresies of his book were detected sharply. 'No volume of our time has provoked more bitter and passionate blame. It roused both the odium theologicum and that which is scarcely less savage, the odium scientificum.' But greater opposition awaited his greater book, 'The Ascent of Man.' Time passed with him in mission work and travel, but his masterpiece had to be written. His insight had deepened and the word of the

Lord regarding Evolution came to him for fuller utterance. It was to be the regenerative word for the Church. The orthodox cosmogony and all its belongings had to be abandoned; the whole doctrine of the Church had to be reviewed in the light of the evolution idea, and with an imaginative inspiration he delivered his reconstructive message. He believed it would save the faith of the Church and give it a new hold on men.

Drummond had been convicted of mistake with regard to the inner feeling of Nature and had to put the case anew. He had to show that 'love, or the struggle for the life of others,' is the law most deeply embedded in the whole life of the universe, and that 'Evolution is revelation—the phenomenal expression of the divine, the progressive realization of the ideal, the ascent of Love.'

He introduced a new analysis: 'If I were to define conversion in a word it would be adaptation to environment.' 'Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.' 'That is Evolution. It is the development of the whole man in the highest directions—the drawing out of his spiritual being.'

He alarmed the expounders of scripture.

He seemed to supersede them and take Theology and Religion out of their hands. The thunderbolts of the Church's Olympia were seized and thrown at him. In his simplicity he was surprised that his ideas were regarded as heretical. He had never been a dogmatist. The dry light of metaphysical speculation was not his. He was an evolutionist in religion, a spiritist in doctrine. As a poet he felt and believed: he saw with the soul.

The Church which had staked its dogmas on texts and raised its structure of belief on the Bible, could not suffer the removal of concern to natural laws and the laying in Nature a new foundation for faith. It had practically 'Excommunicated Nature from the moral order and religion from the rational order,' and was not ready to accept Drummond's assertion of 'Nature as the sphere of the God of Love, in which were manifested the characteristic forces of Christian sympathy and self-sacrifice.' That seemed equivalent to belittling or dissolving the sacrifice of Christ. It had no place or function for the man who spoke of Nature as 'a sympathetic background to human life and the kindred revelation of divine intelligence.'

To attempt as he did the affirmation of unity, co-ordination, and adaptation in the Truth of the Christian religion and Nature was (to orthodox thought) not only a waste of time but a distraction, if not destruction of faith. Whatever took men's thoughts from the Bible and Christ was insufferable, and so, not discerning the need of Drummond's work, the bigots of the Church let loose their wrath against him. He was deeply pained. He had put his best work as well as his dearest faith into 'The Ascent,' and was indignant at the assassins who attacked him. He felt, however, that he was heterodox in relation to the Standards, and, for the sake of peace, was tempted to 'trim.' Regarding a conference at which he was asked by Mr. Moody to speak, against the wishes of others, he said: 'At Northfield, I felt a good deal out of it and many fell upon me and rent me. Before the close of the conference I struck an orthodox vein, and retrieved myself a little. But it was not a happy time.'

In the eyes of the Scribes and Pharisees Drummond had committed the unpardonable sin of affirming that 'the principle of the Atonement was a law of Nature . . .

that up and down the whole of God's creation the one law of life, the supreme condition of progress, the sole law of the future is Christ's law of the sacrifice of self.' That seemed like placing Darwin before the author of the Fourth Gospel.

The Church's difficulty was with baggage. How could it, at the call of the Evolutionist, get rid of its dogmatic impedimenta? With what decency could it forsake or put away its Standards? It had raised the 'sappy unction' around Genesis: how could it transfer emotion to evolutionary processes?

Such a situation was amusing to a humorist like Stevenson. In his free and easy way he could look and laugh—

> For who would gravely set his face
> To go to this or t'other place?
> There's nothing under Heav'n so blue
> That's fairly worth the travelling to.

But Drummond was too serious over his case to take it lightly. He took the assassination to heart, and died of its wounds. His book lies at the door of his Church as an indictment of its maltreatment of Nature, and its misreading of human history. Apart altogether from its merits, which are many,

its aim should have secured sympathy for it. Even if it was, as Benjamin Kidd said, 'Not so much science as the poetry of science,' it represented a commendable endeavour. One would have thought his Church would have been proud of a man who could write such a book. There were some in it who honoured him. As his biographer says, 'They were not concerned whether Drummond made out a case for the spiritual laws which he illustrated, nor whether his main thesis, that physical law continues within the spiritual sphere, had been proven. It was enough for them that they encountered a teacher who expounded, defended, and enforced their deepest religious experiences upon what appeared to be the dominant intellectual methods of their generation.'

The Free Church was founded on other methods. It began badly by sacrificing its thinkers to its Standards. Amongst its first acts was the refusal to ordain for its ministry the ablest of the Disruption students, Peter Hately Waddell, because he could not sign the Confession of Faith as a whole. It continued the wrong sacrifice, and silenced Walter Chalmers Smith, the poet preacher, threatened Marcus Dods over his liberal

treatment of 'Revelation,' ejected Professor Robertson Smith, and virtually shelved Drummond.

There was no overt prosecution of Drummond, but there was official suppression of his teaching. That preference of the Standards undoubtedly prevented originality and produced obscurantic theologic thought. It is very significant that the greatest Scots theologian of our day—Andrew Fairbairn—was an anti-Calvinist. And it has also to be noted that the Presbyterian sects have rendered any free and happy expression possible only by modifying their Calvinism, either by 'Declaratory Acts' or allowed variation.

The whole history of the seventy years since the Disruption illustrates the mischief of the dogmatic temper, and vindicates the idealists like Stevenson and Drummond. Drummond would have been the last to assert any resemblance between his book and the parables of Jesus, and yet they are products of the same kind—interpretations of Nature through the spiritual imagination. Kelman, in his book on Stevenson, says, 'Christ was a poet, and no man can understand him whose method is that of mere

logical prose. At every point, Christ's inexpressibleness in formula is manifest. His words elude the literalist, and strike home with a far subtler and more penetrating stroke than anything he can understand.' The Church which persists in treating Jesus as a literalist and making his metaphors into dogmas, cannot appreciate men like Stevenson and Drummond. Yet they are its regenerators.

> Freedom is far, rest far. Thou art with life
> Too closely woven, nerve with nerve intwined:
> Service still craving service, love for love,
> Love for dear love, still suppliant with tears.
> Alas, not yet thy human task is done!

Drummond had his mannerisms and tentatives (his vanities also) but he remained honest and open withal. He acquired the art of touching men and managing boys, and had a pardonable pride in his power. He knew the implications of personal influence and had his invincible rules for his meetings. He was strong-minded but no bigot. When he was in Boston, and looking to Harvard College for students to address, he had an enlarging experience which he thus states: 'Harvard College (the college of Lowell, Emerson, Longfellow, Fiske, etc.) is the

college of the county, and under Unitarian auspices, so that I was told it would be impossible to do anything there, but the work was really better than anywhere. I lived with one of the Professors, a Unitarian, but I found no difference between him and myself, and I never saw a lovelier Christian home. I have come away with a new idea of the Unitarians or at least of some of them.' Prophetically did Emerson say:

> Nor knowest thou what argument
> Thy life to thy neighbour's creed hath lent.

Perhaps the best legacy that Drummond left is his 'men.' 'In nearly every town of our country, in every British Colony, in India, in China, in Japan, converts or disciples of his who gratefully trace to him the beginnings of their moral power, are labouring steadfastly and often brilliantly in every profession of life.' In his last moments Drummond 'talked, half-dreaming, about John's Gospel.' We may imagine that through his darkening mind there flitted a consciousness like that expressed in Stevenson's lines—

> I sit within a blaze of light
> Held high above the dusky sea.

VI

A VITAL RELIGION FOR THE SCOTS PEOPLE

A VITAL religion is a spontaneous, earnest response of mind and heart to the impressive stimulation towards higher life of an Infinite Power. Can it be said that such religion exists in Scotland to-day to any appreciable extent? It is not the religion represented by the Orthodox Churches. The Theology of these Churches is Hebraic and indicates a Deity who was *once* in touch with men, but has now no immediate relation to our world. A truly native Scots Theology has never existed; a Scots Religion is still in the making.

For nearly three hundred years the Scottish people have had bound upon them a foreign theology, a Hebraic conception re-edited by a French dogmatist. They have thought and worshipped in the forms of that concep-

tion; their souls have breathed in the atmosphere of its fear, and their lips have repeated the language of its deprecation. As for its own conception of God, the Scots mind is vacant. Scots divines accepted the Hebraic conception on Biblical authority. They took for granted that the Bible was authoritative as God's full and final word regarding himself in relation to Man, and deemed it their duty to devote themselves to the exposition of its text.

That it is possible to know God apart from the Bible has hardly entered the Scots mind: the Scotsman has been trained to believe that to have ideas independent of, not to say different from or contrary to, the Bible is rebellion against God. All original thought based upon natural knowledge and all critical treatment of the Bible have been treated as profanity and heresy. The result has been an utter suppression of native thought and emotion, an intellectual bondage to Hebraic ideas, an absence of spontaneous spiritual life.

There was once indeed an historic effort made for spiritual freedom; the papal fetters were cast off, but in freeing itself from them the Scots mind placed itself under the no less

restrictive authority of an ancient Book. It was but a change of chains.

Never yet has the Scots mind had a Theology of its own nor a Religion by its own spiritual inbreathing. It exists to-day in barrenness, practically irreligious. It has not come to itself nor realized what Religion is essentially. It uses Catechisms and Confessions but they do not express its own thought; they are re-embodiments of Hebrew suppositions, presentations of Biblical statements in a blind, slavish way. But even they are in rags. Belief in them has ceased. Orthodoxy is without substance; it has no vital faith. It seems to have lost constructive power; it has no master-builder ready to raise a theological structure in modern truth. It is paying a heavy penalty for its dogmatic adoption of Hebraic conceptions and its submission to a supposed Biblical Infallibility. It finds itself unable to think, incapable of realizing the present God.

We must not taint the sincerity of the plea for a vital religion by any bitterness of feeling in view of the situation, nor damage the case by any distortion, but we must be honest with facts and admit the rigour of the spiritual need.

The statement of the case for Religion made by Emerson seventy years ago is veritable for us—'In how many Churches, by how many prophets, tell me, is a man made sensible that he is an infinite soul; that the earth and heavens are pouring into his mind; that he is drinking for ever the soul of God? Where now sounds the persuasion, that by its very melody imparadises my heart, and so affirms its own origin in heaven? Where shall I hear words such as in elder ages drew men to leave all and follow—father and mother, house and land, wife and child? Where shall I hear these august laws of moral being so pronounced as to fill my ear, and I feel ennobled by the offer of my uttermost action and passion? The test of the true faith, certainly, should be its power to charm and command the soul, as the laws of Nature control the activity of the hands—so commanding that we find pleasure in obeying.'

As we feel the truth of that 'famine of the Churches,' we agree with the demand made for spontaneity of soul. 'Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Embosomed for a season in Nature, whose floods of light stream around

and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply to action proportioned to Nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past and put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.'

Scots folk have been so long accustomed to pious submission to clerical teaching that to revolt seems wicked, and yet there never was a time in Scotland when revoltive action was more needed than now. The emptiness of the churches is bewailed and the devitalized state of Religion ruefully admitted. We need to reiterate the assertion which is the first condition of spiritual vitality. 'The new man must feel that he is new, and has not come mortgaged to the opinions and usages of Europe and Asia and Egypt. A false humility, a complaisance to reigning schools, or to the wisdom of antiquity must not defraud us of supreme possession of this hour. Our day is come; we have been born out of the eternal silence and now we will live —live for ourselves, and not as the pall-bearers of a funeral, but as the upholders and creators of our age. Now that we are here

we will put our own interpretation on things and have our own things for interpretation.'

But why should the Scots mind assert itself thus? Why should it imagine that it is anything to God and may have its own relation to him? The Scots mind, like every other ethnic entity, has its own divinely evolved characteristics in which its conduct of life is distinctly implied. It is not egotism on the part of the Scots to have self-respect. In their self-realization they have no need to depreciate the mind of any other people or to enter into arrogant comparison with any other regarding mental endowment. The English mind, the Irish mind, the Welsh mind may well honour themselves and claim the utmost possibilities of culture, that they may make a worthy contribution to the development of human nature.

In thinking specially of the Scots mind we may have the persuasion which Mazzini had regarding his people. He said to them: 'God provided for you the means of multiplying your forces and actions when he gave you a country; when, even as a wise overseer of labour distributes the various branches of employment according to the different capacities of the workmen, he divided humanity

into distinct groups or nuclei upon the face of the earth, thus creating the germ of Nationalities. The divine design has been disfigured, nevertheless you may still trace it by the course of the great rivers, the direction of the higher mountains and other geographical conditions. O my brothers, love your country! Our country is our home, the home that God has given us, placing therein a numerous family that loves us and whom we love, a family with whom we sympathize more readily, and whom we understand more quickly than we do others; and which from its being centred round a given spot and from the homogeneous nature of its elements is adapted to a special branch of activity.'

The true character of a people grows out of its natural environment and the free education and exercise of its native faculties. By coercion and artificial influences the legitimate character of a people may be overborne and warped; and history teaches us that, as a rule, we must look for the real nature of a people, not in its submissions to conventional authority and established government, but in its rebellions. It may be accepted as a principle of judgment regarding

the spontaneous and truly characteristic thought of a people that it is to be found in its dissenters and heretics. The martyr on the scaffold and not the monarch on the throne is the likeliest to be most patriotic and representative of what is in the soul of the people.

Take, for instance, the case of the Hebrew nation. We find the Hebrews under priestly domination. Authority proceeds from the altar. The kings are amenable to the priests. The sacerdotal law is autocratic and enforced by severe penalties. The people are priest-ridden. They seek relief through a monarch, but the luxurious throne only added weight to the bloody altar. The prophets alone gave voice to the feelings of the masses. In them, democratic yearnings found a tongue; it is in their utterances that we find the expression of moral ideals and religious convictions. All else is debauched and devitalized. If we take the Hebrew soul as we find it struggling for spontaneous, healthy life in the Biblical records, its true representatives are Samuel, Isaiah, Jesus, not Aaron, Eli, Caiaphas.

It is the same in the Scots case. If we take the period of dogmatic dominance from 1649 till 1843, we find the manifestation of

the native mind in Hume, Burns, and Carlyle, rather than in any of the leaders in the orthodox field. The deeper sincerity and more vital thought came out in expressions which were treated as heretical. We trace the line of spontaneity and verity from one reprobated man to another—the daring thinkers and sayers who stood forth against dogmatic dictation and the shams of conformity. The Church adorned itself with its Standards and imagined it was arrayed for the kingdom of heaven. At the Disruption there was a stir among the phylacteries, but it ended in another sectarian border for the Genevan gown.

The case is plain. The leaders in Religion deliberately put on the harness of Hebraism and were hampered and constricted by it. We may not doubt their sincerity, but we must admit their superstition. They went to the Bible as the slaves of its letter; they dare not question it nor in anywise be rational over it. They were afraid of themselves, terrified of reason as believers in the depravity of human nature. As for any Providence in Scotland, any revelation direct to the Scots people—no such thing could be. To the Hebrews alone had God chosen to

speak, and his word was complete in Christ.

We are beginning to realize the blindness and barrenness of that state of mind. We see the glimmering of the possibility of a Scots Religion—a Religion not eccentric or exclusive, but vital and true to the Divine calling in the Scots nature. Orthodoxy is being pricked into deeper consciousness, and the pulse of a new life is stirring within the veins feeling the need of regeneration.

A revolution of the kind now proceeding in Scotland takes a long time for its completion. All the worldly interests are on the side of the old conceptions. The Hebraic ideas have been so piously pressed on the Scots mind, generation after generation, that they have become part of its constitution. But after a losing struggle with the Higher Criticism, Orthodoxy is obliged to admit that its conception of the Bible has changed. It can no longer regard the Old and New Testaments as the infallible Word of God, but still the Hebraic Theology and Christology retain their grip. Conservatism in Theology dies hard. But the influence of Science is irresistible, and the idea of Evolution presses for assimilation.

Carl Snyder, in *New Conceptions in Science*,

says: 'We may now change the tense of Tyndall's famous phrase and say, "Science has claimed, and it has wrested from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory." There is not an intelligent man on the whole wide earth who longer believes that the Mosaic account of Creation is true, or that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C., or that the sun stood still in Gideon. We are past all that. This is something.'

Slowly but surely the Scots mind turns to Nature for the manifestation of God, and recognizes the action of the living Deity in the evolutionary processes. It is here that we have to realize the vital religion which rises in spontaneous response to the infinite stimulation. The exposition of the Bible is exhausted. The interpretations are wire-drawn, and, at the best, chains of mind. There is no finding of the actual God that way. The Hebrew *Yahweh* cannot be our God. If there is to be a Second Coming of Christ, it cannot be as Paul anticipated. We live in another world of thought.

The tragedy connected with the Hebraic conception is that it has turned out to be a misconception. The priestly representation of a bloodthirsty Deity has become morally

abhorrent, and the sacrificial system as transferred to Christianity is no longer endurable. The only portions of the Bible that hold good for us are the prophetic and poetic parts. These have their consummation in the humanistic theology of Jesus with its fundamental idea of a universal Fatherhood. That idea we have to assimilate and fulfil. The rest belongs to a semi-savage state and is not for us to imitate. To think and worship according to it is to contradict all that the evolving years of God have taught, and do despite to our own conscience. It is right for us to know what the Hebrews thought, and also what the Greeks and the Aryans thought, but the knowledge is for education, not for enslavement.

It would be a new experience to be out of the court-house and away from the shambles, and to feel that we are in the Father's world and have not to think of religion by bloodshed, but of worship through life enhallowed for vigour and beauty. We have to dismiss the priest and call in the naturalist, to let the notion of a vicarious atonement go, and become co-workers with God for further ascension of spiritual being.

There are some things in Hebraism which

it would be good for us to entertain. For example, the Hebrews supposed that they were chosen by God to be a holy people and had the land of their fathers given to them as consecrated ground. The Scots may well suppose that they are chosen by God for some special purpose, and that their land is given to them to hold highly.

There is a natural selection in the native character of every people. Their faculties are a trust given to them for progressive usury. Each people is called to be a holy people. It is a primary condition of Nature that there shall be health. The very first requirement is that a people shall sanctify itself for the utmost of what it is capable. As for its country, that is given to it as a patrimony to use for moral life. Suppose then that the Scots said: 'This lovely land is given to us for health and wealth, and we must have every rood in it consecrated for human service. We must have it well cultivated, its fields fruitful, its cities goodly to live in, and its whole usage fraternal'; would not that be the beginning of a truly human vitality?

Our religion begins at the soil, and labour on it is the first worship. We are placed

among materialities that we may use them morally. We have our bodies as instruments of righteousness and by them can do God service. All the physicalities with which we are surrounded—the elements of existence, the things through which we labour, all physical acts have their religious side; for religion is not constituted by church ceremonies, assent to creeds, or formal adorations, but by serviceable work, the occupation of our own faculties according to natural elevation of usage.

The Scots people have been taught to regard the Bible as the first object of their religious reverence, to prize it sacredly and believe its words devoutly. If each Scots child had been taught to regard his body as sacred, to study it as a divine thing, and keep it holy as the temple of God, religion would have been in the constitution of the Scots people as a spirit by which every organ of their bodies would have been secured for holiness. They have misplaced their reverence. They have placed it on a book instead of on a brain; they have made the past divine and the present profane. They have promoted belief when they should have exalted behaviour, and been more concerned

to have the Catechism learned than to have character cultivated.

As for our country, instead of being a home of brethren, a commonwealth for a happy people, it is the battle-ground of warring sects, depopulated where it might have many homesteads, largely monopolized by mammonists, and having in it a terrible mass of poverty and misery. Yet there has been a boast of Scots struggles for liberty, praise of Covenanting heroes, and an ascription of excellence in piety. The truth is there never has been real religious liberty in Scotland. Dogmatic dictation has always existed; belief according to the Confession has continuously been insisted on by the Presbyterian sects, and penalties exacted for Nonconformity. Though the rack is in the museum and the faggot is in old annals only, dissent is stigmatized, and the dissenter kept out of place.

To three-fourths of Scots children the Shorter Catechism is taught in Sunday schools, and they are obliged to believe that the world was made in six days, that all mankind are under God's wrath and curse, and that many will suffer the pains of hell for ever.

Real spiritual liberty and life have yet to

be in Scotland; they cannot be till each child is taught self-respect, and has its mental faculties educated for the understanding and practice of morality. Whatever potency is native to the Scots soul would be brought out in the freedom of intercourse with Nature. Religion has been made a non-natural thing, an experience apart from common life gained by a conversion of the native constitution, and thus an unreality. If once for all it could be felt that religion is the natural upgrowth of human faculty, the education for the highest of the power to think and love, the soul would open itself eagerly for the divine stimulation and sustenance.

Much lip honour has been given to Jesus in Scotland, but it has yet to be realized that he taught that man's relationship to God is as natural as that of the grass, the flower, or the bird, and that saving provision is made for man by natural providence that he may have life of soul more abundantly. To grow as naturally as the lily is the religious way for man, to assimilate through each native faculty the life sustenance provided for the spirit and rise into communion with the Oversoul highly and beauteously.

We have to live in the courage of our

humanity, to realize the worth of manhood and womanhood, and ascend in the freedom of spiritual culture and the inspiration provided by God for his people in the modern world.

Of that inspiration may we be able to say with Stevenson :—

> It grows—
> By vast rebound it grows, unceasing growth:
> Gift upon gift, alms upon alms, upreared,
> From man, from God, from nature, till the soul
> At that so huge indulgence stands amazed.

THE KIRK SKAILIN'

Upon the Chachan Knowe I lay
At Kirk time on ae Sabbath day,
Watchin' the stripit bummers stray
O'er tufts o' thyme,
And swinging bluebells mak their play
Wi' rustlin' rhyme.

The whin had cast its golden bloom,
The pods were brownin' on the broom,
But honeysuckle's sweet perfume
Regaled the air,
And in its ear the oat socht room
To gather mair.

The sun shone wi' a fruity glow,
The burnie glanced wi' blithesome flow,
The wind passed confidantly low
O'er barley beards,
And whispered 'Hairst' as it wore slow
To odorous yairds.

The Kirk folk had an hour been in;
I watched and thocht the gatherin' thin,
And listened for the sacred din
O' strugglin' Psalm,
Or for the prayer sough o' sin
Wi' eerie qualm.

Nocht heard I but the burnie's croon,
The lark's lilt i' the blue aboon,
The yellow lintie's lyric tune
Sung i' the brier,
The lapwing's wheep as it gaed roon
The plaintive choir.

I wondert o'er the preacher's word,
What message brocht he frae the Lord
And if its saying would accord
Wi' Nature's grace—
How hearers looked—were pleased or bored
Before his face.

But as I mused, the Kirk door swang:
I kent the time had come to gang.—
An' up the knowe the singing' rang
O' closin' Psalm,
A minor strain, wi' Hebrew pang,
Sobbit through palm.

When it was ower, a murmur ran
Wi' benediction as it swam;
An' oot there cam' the folk, ram-stam
As fast's they could,
Hoiterin' wi' the doctrine dram
Atower the road.

The maist their feet for hame did lay,
And hurrit wordless doon the brae,
A few did nod and bid 'Gude Day'
As they gaed by;
The rest their burden bore away,
Silent and shy.

Some groups strayed thro' the green kirkyard,
An' spak' o' who was deid or spared;
Linger'd by graves and saut tears wared
O'er dear anes lost,
Trustin' their souls in heaven fared
Past flame and frost.

The minister gaed thro' his yett,
Ahint his wife wi' canny fit,
His ee wi' spunk o' passion lit,
Frae sermon heat,
And trust he'd weel used Holy Writ
In counsel meet.

A few, at leisure, stayed behind
To turn some knots within their mind,
And set the fautin mill to grind
The preacher's sheaf—
They were the men to lowse or bind
The pulpit lief!

They gathert roon the wast'rn gale,
Set pipes aglow, got out the flail,
Startit to sermon, heid an' tail,
And ca'd it through;
Poor thing! it wisna bricht and hale
But black and blue.

The deacons, done wi' the bawbees,
Cam' roon aneath the moss-grey trees,
To gie the critic-lads a breeze
Or humlin' dunt,
'There shouldna be na sceptic sprees,
Nor Truth's affront.'

And twa-three elders steppit roon,
Wi' gravity they sat them doon,
Becomin' the big farm toon,
Or serious age,
The conversation's en' to croon
Wi' counsel sage.

The bedral lockit up the door
An' cam inbye to join the core,
Weel did he like the critic's lore
An' doctrine crack.
And keen enjoyed the witty score
Polemic 'nock.

They sat an' arguit near an hour,
Wi' positiveness thrawn and dour,
An' rag'd amo dogmatic stour
Till a' were blin'
An' chokin' wi' the dusty smoor
They held their din.

'An' noo ye see,' an elder said,
'What comes o' breakin' gospel bread
Wi' hauns and tongues unsanctified
An' cockit face;
Let's look to Christ the livin' Head
For sense and grace.'

Red-ee'd, but mim, they gaed awa
Resolvin' they would pick their craw
An' settle their provokin' thraw
Anither day,
Maybe the croosest then would fa'
Wi' fell dismay.

I saw them sunder on the road,
Angry on behalf of God,
Striven ower dogma, text or mode,
At the Kirk dyke,
Just where thinking should be broad
Without dislike.

I wondert where the kirkin's good;
If in the hearer's thought or mood
A morsel of true heavenly food
Would ever show,
Or if the thorns and weedlings rude
Would all outgrow.

Let's hope that frae the psalm or prayer,
The chapter read wi' solemn air,
The awe of Spirit present there,
Or preacher's say
Some goodness fell for all to share
And bear away.