THE RELIGION OF TIME AND THE RELIGION OF ETERNITY

BY
PHILIP H. WICKSTEED, M.A., Litt.D.

WITH A FOREWORD BY
J. H. WEATHERALL, M.A.
Principal of Manchester College, Oxford

THE LINDSEY PRESS
ESSEX HALL, 5 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.2

THE RELIGION OF TIME AND THE RELIGION OF ETERNITY

THE RELIGION OF TIME AND THE RELIGION OF ETERNITY

Being a Study of Certain Relations between Mediæval and Modern Thought

BY

PHILIP H. WICKSTEED, M.A., Litt.D.

With a Foreword by

J. H. WEATHERALL, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD

THE LINDSEY PRESS
5, ESSEX STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2.

"YET it is not easy to combat these conceptions because of the love I bear to the men who put them forward."

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LTD.
Bungay, Suffolk

FOREWORD

DR. WICKSTEED wrote his *Religion of Time and the Religion of Eternity* in 1899. It was delivered that year as an *Essex Hall Lecture*, and shortly afterwards printed, with a Preface, a Summary, and an Appendix of valuable notes. All of these are included in the present reprint. In addition, at the end of this Foreword, a list is added of corrections or amplifications of the references given in the first printing. These corrections have been taken from his own edition printed in 1903 in *Studies of Theology* by J. Estlin Carpenter and P. H. Wicksteed (*Dent*).

Dr. Wicksteed died in 1927. The deep influence he exerted in his lifetime upon those who cared for him and his work is steadily growing. Some of the reasons for this fact appear in the record of his multifarious mental interests and polymathic expositions in Dr. C. H. Herford's *Philip Henry Wicksteed, His Life and Work* (*Dent*, 1931). Economists are only now finding out the merits of his *Common Sense of Political Economy* published by Macmillans in 1910. Theologians, professional and unprofessional, are only now beginning to find out the merits of his *Religion of Time and Eternity*. It is to meet a repeated demand that the publishers are now re-issuing the Lecture of 1899.

It is an excellent example of both the originality and the profundity of his thought; and it is a subject which has received a fresh significance in our days, when civilization is on its trial; when the religions of outward authority are rapidly decaying; when there is a new appeal to personal

religious experience; and when the mathematicians have been staggering us with transformations of our conceptions of space and time.

The Religion of Eternity is an old religion, and it has been expounded by both Pagans and Christians. It is embedded in Plato and in the Fourth Gospel. But in Christianity at least it has either been inarticulate, or it has been so deeply involved with the dogmatisms of the Religions of Time that it is little understood or believed. Dr. Wicksteed is more impressive in his exposition of the Religion of Eternity because he is not concerned to identify it with any one pattern of the Religions of Time.

Dr. Wicksteed's argument is an emancipation from the troubles which arise in our lives and minds from the idea of progress. He denies that it is better to travel, even hopefully, than to arrive. The reality of progress is now more in dispute than ever it was. We are terrified at the vista of perpetual moving towards receding goals. Even heaven is no longer promised to us as a Rest: it is to be, we are told, "upward and onward for ever." Both in life and in death happiness is always round a corner. Both in life and death man never is, but always to be, blest.

Our troubles are due to a wrong religious psychology. The remedy is in a better psychology by which we shall conceive Eternity as an Everlasting Now; and the Enjoyment of God not as a deferred possibility but as an immediate Experience. We do not need to take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea in order to find him. We are just to dive in.

Some illuminating illustrations are given of the way in which our minds already undergo something like the experience of Eternity in the midst of Time. More could have been added from the literature of mysticism. And any of us can develop the capacities we all have for this kind of experience. Perhaps our present discontent with the thinkings and

religions of Time is very good for us. The religions of power have always been born when man has been flung back upon his Inwardness.

Perhaps at first Dr. Wicksteed's argument will seem difficult. Have patience. Read and read again, till the word Eternity shall have got loose from the suggestion of Past and Present and Future; and till you can translate the word Fruition into Enjoyment without being afraid of the idea of Enjoying God.

There is much delightful lore around and about the main argument. There are bits about Dante which may send you eagerly to read the *Divine Comedy* again. There is (in note H of the Appendix) a lovely account of the Idea of Eternity in Plato and in his successors down to the Boethius, whose definition of Eternity (" the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once ") became the classical definition among the Schoolmen. And there are many other treasures of learning to instruct and delight.

But the main argument is the thing. You don't want to wait for your good till you are dead? There is no need, says this argument. You don't want to wait even till next week for your good? You need not. Nor even till to-morrow. This day and this minute a Scripture may be fulfilled in your ears.

The following corrections of the footnotes are added from Dr. Wicksteed's 1903 revision :—

Page 2, *par.* 4. The note on Renan quotes the exact passage : " J'ai pu seul en mon siècle comprendre Jésus et François d'Assise," and traces it to the *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*, 8th edition, 1883, page 148.

Page 14, *par.* 1. The reference to France receives a note : " Written in the midst of *L'affaire Dreyfus*," with the addition, " Europe is still weeping or indignant, but

not over France. *Piangar ne convien per altra spada.* 1903.

Page 18, *par.* 1. The allusion to Augustine as quoted by Aquinas is now amplified by the identification of the passage in Augustine; namely, "In the thirtieth of the eighty-three 'Questions,' Vol. VI in the Benedictine edition."

Page 23, *par.* 3. A reference to Mozart remains as cited from J. E. Carpenter, *Place of Immortality in Religious Belief.* This is now quoted from a quotation by Prof. William James, *Principles of Psychology*, i. 255, with a note to say that it was to Dr. Carpenter that Dr. Wicksteed owed his first knowledge of the passage.

J. H. WEATHERALL.

March 3rd, 1932.

PREFACE

THOUGH the purpose of this essay is entirely constructive, the writer is aware that he has occasionally fallen into a controversial tone; and though his aim has been to deal with spiritual realities, he is conscious of having put forward many historical judgments which may be open to legitimate challenge.

There may be readers who will detect his ignorance of periods of human thought, a knowledge of which might have corrected one-sided views and shown him that the thing he goes over the sea of centuries to fetch lies near at hand in the very regions where he says that it is not. Others may smile at his insistence on what has always been very nigh unto them in their mind and in their heart and seems to need no enforcing. And yet others may see neither vital power in the ideals he sets forth, nor defect in those he attacks.

Indeed it may well be that he has really given nothing but a chapter of his own spiritual autobiography, while believing himself to be tracing movements in the world's thought. Yet even so, if anyone has been able in maturity to reach what he believes to be clearer thought and higher vitality than his youthful period of storm and stress brought to him, the record of the path he has trodden may be of help or of interest to others. Defects of knowledge and distortions of view will be corrected by the better informed or the more thoughtful; but a certain human interest will still attach to a human experience. The gates of life are many, but life is one.

P. H. W.

May 23rd, 1899.

SUMMARY

MANIFOLD signs of renewed interest in the later Middle Ages (1–3). We are awakening from the misconceptions inherited from the polemics of the Renaissance and the Reformation, realizing that the breach between mediæval and modern times was not so absolute as we supposed, and recognizing in the weakness of the Middle Ages dangers not yet vanquished, in their strength sources of life not yet exhausted, and in both an unsuspected kinship with the forces that move our own lives (3–6). Hence the interest and the importance of a sympathetic study of the Middle Ages (6–7).

The group of religious ideas selected for study gathers round the conceptions of Eternity, Fruition, the vision of God (8–11). Reasons for prominence of the thought of Eternity in the Middle Ages (11–12). The modern conception of Progress (13–15) has so averted our minds from the ideas of Eternity and Fruition as to involve our spiritual life in a self contradiction (16–17). Necessity of recovering the sense of the higher "enjoyment" if we are to rescue our thought from this tangle (18–19). The true significance of Progress as the means of realization, and the false habit of mind engendered by the misconception that dwells on Progress to the exclusion of Fruition in man's life here and hereafter, and in the being of God (19–20). The inevitableness of the conception of Eternity, which this misconception banishes from the being of God, but cannot remove from the constitution of things; and the relief of turning to a religious ideal which finds Eternity *in* the being of God, not behind and above it

(21–22). How our own experience leads us to the conception of the Eternal life (22–24), and teaches us to believe that God is eternal and that we may share in his eternal fruition (25–26). Quickening and clarifying effect of this belief and this experience upon our active life, and upon our devotion to the cause of progress (26–27).

THE RELIGION OF TIME AND THE RELIGION OF ETERNITY

RECENT developments of the High Church movement in England have filled many minds with wonder, some with exultation, some almost with despair. It seems as though nothing were ever settled, as though history were going back upon herself, as though national characteristics and tendencies which we thought had once for all declared themselves, may still veer round; as though, in the current phrase of contempt and reprobation, we were liable at any moment to find ourselves "back again in the Middle Ages."

Yet it is difficult for the reflective mind to acquiesce in a theory of mere reaction or retrogression with respect even to a side current of the life of nations; and the question naturally occurs whether this anomalous appearance of retrogression is in any way connected with other movements or tendencies with which we can more easily reconcile ourselves. And in truth, as soon as we examine our surroundings a little more closely, we find that this modern ecclesiasticism with its elaborate pomp of ceremonial, with its lofty claims for the supremacy of the Church, with its jealous attempt to control education, and to lay its guiding hand upon the inmost thoughts and volitions of the individual soul, is but one out of many evidences that the ideals of the Middle Ages, and more specifically of the twelfth, the thirteenth, and the fourteenth centuries, are re-asserting their attractive force. And when we consider what these centuries produced (the great cathedrals of France, for example), a renewed interest in them

can by no means be put down off-hand as purely reactionary and regrettable, except by the narrowest and least spiritually-minded of the sons of the nineteenth century.

Let us examine, then, a little more in detail some of these other witnesses to a changed attitude of the modern mind with respect to the period of the great days of the Papacy.

Perhaps the recovered sense for the greatness of mediæval architecture, which was condemned not so long ago as barbarous, was the first indication of the coming change; and more recently a similar change has come over our estimate of early painting, so that now once again " the cry is Giotto's." [1]

Again, the revived interest in Dante, to which the printing presses of Italy, France, Germany, England, and America bear unceasing testimony, is universally and properly greeted as a sign of enlarging and deepening spiritual perception as well as literary appreciation.

Renan once said : " Seul dans mon siècle j'ai pu comprend e Jésus Christ et Saint François d'Assise." [2] Before he died a great host of lovers of the Seraphic Father surrounded and outvied him. " A little spark kindles a mighty flame." [3] We do not grudge Renan the credit of having been a few years in advance of his fellows, but he found the world already ripe to understand alike the intimate beauty of the life of the saint of Assisi, and the amazing light which the development of the Franciscan literature will ultimately throw upon the composition of the Gospels.

Once again, when the present Pope, early in his reign, prescribed the study of Thomas Aquinas as the antidote to the intellectual aberrations of our day,[4] I can well remember the amused contempt with which the receipt was greeted in

[1] Cf. Dante, *Purg.*, xi. 95. Giotto's date is 1276–1336.

[2] " To me alone in my century has it been granted to appreciate Jesus Christ and Saint Francis of Assisi." I am sorry I have not been able to find the passage, but it is guaranteed as authentic by more than one student of Renan.

[3] Cp. Dante, *Parad.*, i. 34.

[4] In his Encyclical " *Eterni Patris*," 1879.

Protestant England. For, with the notable exception of Auguste Comte, thinkers of the nineteenth century had been, for the most part, in the habit of regarding Mediæval Philosophy as a negligible quantity. But this too has changed. No doubt it may still be maintained that between Greek and modern thought, between Aristotle and Hobbes, perhaps even between Aristotle and Kant, there has been no essential advance of the first importance in speculative philosophy; but the developed scholasticism for which Aquinas stands is now felt to represent an august system of thought which the historian of civilization and the student of human nature cannot neglect or treat as effete and inoperative any more than he can ignore the analogous attempt to combine the highest thought with the poetry and passion of life which is embodied in the works of Plato.[1]

These are but a few of the many evidences of a re-awakening to the significance of mediæval character and ideals. But it is needless to multiply examples. If we think of the cathedrals, of the fourteenth-century frescoes, and of these three men—Francis, Aquinas, and Dante—it will be enough to make us realize the renewed hold which the later Middle Ages have gained upon modern Europe. The mediæval ideals in poetry, thought, and life are no longer relegated to the rubbish-bins of history, or even to the museums of curiosities. They are recognized not only as august, but as inspiring. And surely few men will be prepared to say that all this is sheer reaction and loss.

What is the meaning, then, of this renewed vitality in mediæval ideals, good and bad, reactionary and progressive? To answer the question we must go back to the times of the Renaissance (especially Humanism) and the Reformation. The two great movements so designated run parallel; allegiance to them is often combined, as in the case of Melanchthon, in a single individual; and a more or less developed sense of a

[1] See Appendix A.

practical community of interest between the two covers a far wider area than that of their actual spiritual coincidence. Hence it is customary in modern histories, at any rate in Germany and England, to treat them as the two related sides of a single movement. Yet on a closer inspection they appear to be not only distinct, but to a great extent mutually hostile and destructive. What could be less like than the stern Puritan and scriptural ideals of the Reformers, with their intense moral earnestness and passionate religious conviction, and the genial culture, toleration, and sense of humour, or the pedantic devotion to "letters," or the frank paganism, that characterize the various manifestations of Humanism?[1] Why then are they regarded as allies? Because both alike, though for very different reasons, and in very different directions, represent a reaction, contemptuous or impassioned as the case may be, against the ideals of the Middle Ages. Both alike regarded the whole period, from the fall of the Western Empire up to their own time, as a regrettable parenthesis in the history of humanity. The formula of life they found in over-leaping this middle period and going back, in the one case to the Greco-Roman civilization, in the other case to primitive Christianity. It is true that primitive Christianity and the Greco-Roman civilization stood in sharp contrast to each other; and hence the Humanist and the Reforming ideals of life were really opposed to each other in principle. But their common antipathy to the Middle Ages inspired them mutually to ignore their own fundamental hostility and to combine in their attack upon that long stretch of ages during which they had reacted upon each other, and had been welded into an august ideal system of government, of religion, and of life.[2]

It is strange how successful the combined movement has been in imposing its theory of history upon posterity. The man in the street still devoutly believes that the Middle Ages

[1] See Appendix B. [2] See Appendix C.

are a waste period of human history. He not only knows nothing about them, but does not so much as desire to increase his stock of knowledge. For him the Scholastic Philosophy means attempts to decide how many angels can dance on the point of a needle. Mediæval history is merely a storehouse of " properties " for picturesque masking and charading, and if he chance to know or to have been told that Dante was a great poet, or Francis a great saint, he thinks it was amazingly to their credit, " considering the times in which they lived." We consider that we ought to know something of general European history from about as far back as the middle of the fifteenth century, and then we make a great bound and concern ourselves with nothing more till we get back to classical or Christian antiquity, to which we imagine our religion and our culture directly attach themselves.[1]

But the current version of history is quite a different thing from history itself; and a very little examination will convince us of a fact which general principles would lead us to anticipate, viz. that no generation of men can by any possibility sever themselves from the beliefs and ideals of the generations that immediately precede them. " Nature makes no leaps "; [2] and whether you glance at so early a work as Petrarch's *Epistolæ*, or so late a one as Bacon's *Organon*, you are quite as likely to be impressed by its mediæval tone, as by its affinity to modern conceptions. An attempt to make a violent breach with the past may appear successful to itself far beyond the warrant of facts, partly because of our profound unconsciousness of the most fundamental obligations we are under to our education and to the atmosphere of thought in which our minds have been formed, and partly because when we have crushed down the expression of any special mode of thought we usually think that we have dried up its sources. We can only trace the origin of that portion of our beliefs which we have consciously adopted. We do not recognize the origin of those far deeper

[1] See Appendix D. [2] See Appendix E.

beliefs which we have unconsciously absorbed. Thus Luther and his followers might know that the monastic and papal systems had been forced upon Europe by visible and palpable agencies against which they could rebel; but (to say nothing of the development of the Pauline teaching, and the perversion of the teaching of the Gospels into the elaborated "scheme of salvation," or of the beliefs as to heaven and hell) such articles of faith as the doctrine of the Trinity, and the fearful systems of demonology,[1] had sunk into the tissues of their minds. They knew not that they owed them to the Church and to other mediæval agencies. They were content to attach them here and there by a slender thread to some hook or nail of Scripture, and they mistook these ornamental connections for the supports and binding girders of their edifice. And in like manner the fundamental doctrine of a Church divinely appointed to supplement and interpret Scripture was far more suppressed in expression than superseded in fact.[2]

Again, in those periods of human history in which actual changes in the currents of thought and newly acquired aspects of truth assume exceptional magnitude and prominence the limitation of the human mind seems to involve the realization of the new truth being gained at the sacrifice of some aspects or portions of the truth realized and recognized of old. To say, therefore, that the classical and scriptural reaction of the fifteenth and following centuries, so far as it was valuable and successful, was bought for a price, and involved a certain blindness to the beauty of mediæval literary and spiritual ideals, is not to depreciate the gain it brought, but merely to say that that gain was acquired under conditions which human nature cannot escape.

These considerations, which are of an entirely general character, are sufficient to suggest a point of view from which the re-assertion in our day of the potency of mediæval ideals may be regarded as in no way anomalous. Where the Renais-

[1] See Appendix F. [2] See Appendix G.

sance and the Reformation were right as against the Middle Ages, they gained an appearance of victory largely in excess of the reality, and it is only natural that we should have to fight the battle again, and yet again—for in such matters there is hardly such a thing as conclusive victory. And where the Renaissance and the Reformation were relatively wrong, that is to say, where the combative stress they laid upon one side of truth amounted to neglect and depreciation of another, the neglected aspects of the truth are sure to avenge themselves. So that even the true children of the Reformation find in the study of the Middle Ages much to explain what was obscure, and much to supplement what was defective, in their spiritual life and ideals, and are amazed to discover exaltation, beauty, and earnestness where they had been led to expect nothing but sordidness, grotesqueness, chicanery, and frivolity.

It is no wonder, then, that we are called upon once more to take arms against dangers which we supposed ourselves conclusively to have overcome, and are at the same time invited to garner life-giving thought, aspiration, and example from literatures and from ages which we supposed had nothing to teach us. And happily these two claims may draw us in the same direction, for we can most wisely combat the errors of any system when we most profoundly and sympathetically appreciate its truth. A true understanding of the permanent place in the human mind of the mediæval ideals, and the spontaneous or deliberate combining of them with the best elements of modern life,—a combining which will itself constitute a transformation, perhaps a transfiguration of both the factors—is the surest way of disarming all reactionary attempts and of carrying forward the true spirit of those reforming movements which once again demand our active championship.

It is to this task of making some contribution towards a better appreciation of the permanent religious significance of certain great mediæval conceptions that I would address myself.

When we think of mediæval religion, probably most of us think of it under its gross and material aspects. We think of a religion of outward observances and of formal regulations of conduct; of remission of sins on a fixed scale of penance, if not a fixed scale of payment; of relations between God and man conceived on the principles of a court of justice, and a theology constructed out of legal quibbles. It is easy to gather historic and philosophical justification and illustration of these conceptions in any quantity that may be desired; but it is to a far different aspect of mediæval religion that I wish to call your attention. For there is a sense in which mediæval theology is contrasted with current conceptions of the Deity precisely because it is so profoundly philosophical, so exalted in its dignity and worthiness, and so far removed from those anthropomorphic conceptions which are for ever seeking for easier terms of sympathy between God and man,—not by striving to raise man to "think the thoughts of God," but by degrading the conception of God to conformity with the limitations of human experience.

The group of mediæval religious ideas which I have in mind gathers round the conception of Eternity, as elaborated in the Greek schools of philosophy, as adopted into the Christian thought by such as Augustine, as formulated by Boethius, and as inspiring the deepest thought and the most glowing piety of the Christian centuries down to Aquinas and Dante.

To the mediæval thinker Eternity is not endless time, but a state in which perfection is found in the *co-existence*, not in the *succession*, of the parts that make the whole. Time, in its thin succession, drops one thing to grasp another, and ever conscious of the incompleteness of the present experience reaches ever on and on, and so "imitates by going that fullness of life which it cannot grasp by abiding." When Augustine speaks of God's eternal "now," to which all our past and future are present, when Dante speaks of God as him in whom "every

where and every *when* are focussed in a point," [1] that is to say to whom every season is *now* and every place is *here*, they are not using mere vague phrases, but struggling to express their sense of the inevitable limitations which the conceptions of time and space set upon human thought, and the belief that the absolute life of God transcends such limitations, and " by abiding grasps " that which we " strive after by going." [2]

And connected with this conception of Eternity is the kindred conception of Fruition; that is to say, the belief that truth is not only worth the winning but worth the having, the belief that the bliss of communion with God is not something in the encouragement and refreshment of which we can go along with our active life, but is the absolute goal in which that active life itself finds its meaning and in which at last it shall be swallowed up. For the mediæval saint believed that to see God is to see as God sees, and that just in so far as we rise into true communion with him and do in truth see God, so far shall we see things not in their fragmentary imperfection, but in their combined perfectness. Bonaventura [3] says that no one can share the life of God supremely in the absolute sense, but each one may share that life supremely relatively to himself; that is to say, granted that each human soul is something less than God himself, and therefore has certain limitations which it can never transcend, within those limitations it may rise to perfect and unclouded communion with God, and seeing as he sees, may rejoice with him in the universe wherein he rejoices and in his own eternal being.[4] Thus when the supreme vision is granted to Dante, and he lifts his mortal eyes to look into the light of God, he sees all things, and sees them in all their relations, not as fragmentary imperfections, but as a single perfect whole; yet what he sees is but one simple flame—the flame of love; for therein " all the scattered leaves

[1] *Parad.*, xxix. 12.
[2] See Appendix H.
[3] Commentary on the *Sentences*, Bk. iv., Dist. 49, pt. 2, question 6.
[4] See Appendix I.

of the universe are bound by love into a single volume." [1] Thus to see the Universe is to see it in God, and to see it as God sees it; for the soul that has reached this highest life of knowing and of loving is altogether emptied of itself and poured out into God. This is fruition; this is the life eternal, the self-realizing in self-losing of true love. This is the life worthy to be lived, not for what it leads on to, but for what it is. It is the life eternal.

This loss of self and finding of self in God differs from what we are told the Buddhist *Nirvana* signifies, in that the latter is the loss of self-consciousness in unconsciousness, the former is the transfiguration of self-consciousness into God-consciousness; the self is not lost, neither does it rejoice in the fulfilment of its own will, but rejoices that the will of God has now so transmuted it into itself, that it flows without hindrance or friction through it. "His will is our peace"; we live the life, we think the thoughts, we love the love of God.[2]

Such is the religion of Eternity as we find it in Augustine, in Scotus Erigena, in Bernard, in Aquinas, and in Dante, but which seems to vanish from the main stream of religious thought and of sacred poetry with the Renaissance and the Reformation; [3] to reappear, in its germinal conception at least, in Wordsworth when he feels

> "Incumbencies more awful, visitings
> Of the upholder of the tranquil soul,
> That tolerates the indignities of Time,
> And, from the centre of Eternity
> All finite motions overruling, lives
> In glory immutable."

Or where he recognizes in mathematical truth

> "A type, for finite natures, of the one
> Supreme Existence, the surpassing life,
> Which—to the boundaries of space and time,
> Of melancholy space and doleful time,

[1] *Parad.*, xxxiii. 82–90.
[2] Bernard, *De diligendo Deo*, cap. x. Dante, *Parad.*, iii. 85.
[3] See Appendix J.

> Superior and incapable of change,
> Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
> And hath the name of God." [1]

But for reasons not hard to understand it is the religion of Time rather than the religion of Eternity which has characterized our modern civilization. To the mediæval thinker the outlook upon time was short. Dante tells us that the proper motion of the Starry Sphere carries it through one degree only in a hundred years, and adds that it will never complete its first revolution, since the end of the world will anticipate by many ages the fulfilment of its first period.[2] Moreover, Time itself was regarded as a creation, and its succession as recording nothing that was essential to the glory or the bliss of the Creator. To the mediæval thinker there was really no progressive development of the world as we conceive it. History was rather a history of corruption and of falling away than a history of progress. At the creation when man came straight from the hand of God, human life on earth already realized its utmost perfection. After that came the fall of man; and sacred history itself was but a long-drawn promise of restoration, together with a foreshadowing of the higher glories to which man would have been almost instantaneously uplifted had he persevered in innocence. And after the Redemption, the one central event of history, came a long period of degeneracy in which the race of men crowded the portals of hell, while (at any rate after the " first love " of the early centuries) only here and there a soul was rescued to fill one of the empty seats in heaven yet left ere the tale of saints should be complete and Time should be done away. Hence the mediæval saint sought refuge from the world and from all temporal things. He looked through the flux and reflux to something abiding, changeless, eternal, to the God to whom the past and the future alike are " now."

[1] *Prelude*, bk. iii. 119–124; bk. vi. 133–139. N.B.—In the last line I have omitted a comma before " God," which is in all the editions I have seen, but appears to ruin the sense. [2] *Convito*, ii. 15, 102–118.

But all this is changed. The world has not come to an end. It is not Time, but hell, with its vaunted eternity, that has been done away. Not that we must exaggerate the significance of this change of thought; it were the shallowest of shallow mistakes to think that with the vanishing of the belief in an eternal hell we have got rid of the terrible problem of evil, and may now, with an easy theistic optimism, excuse ourselves from all attempt to reconcile the existence of evil with the goodness of God. But, nevertheless, the conditions of the problem are essentially altered to us. To the mediæval thinker, what he called, and what we still call evil, was a permanent thing. The deep notes of anguish from the abyss were as abiding as the triumph of heaven. Their discord had a place in the ultimate harmony. It was the business of the saint to struggle against evil; but the struggle was his personal probation, his choosing of the better part. He did not fight with a hope of conclusive victory in any such sense as would involve the extermination of the foe against which he fought. The only way in which he could ultimately deal with evil within the circle of his beliefs was to regard it as in some way so transfigured in the sight of God that the cries of the damned form a part of the divine harmony, and darkness is solved in light.[1]

To the mediæval thinker, then, there was no great outlook upon time; no essential message of love was borne upon its stream, save that very message which it had itself retarded and was still obscuring. The evil in the world must be fought against, but would never be exterminated; it would, in some inconceivable manner, be transfigured to God and to his saints, but would never be annihilated to itself. Meanwhile, Eternity was very nigh at hand, very real and instant in its presence. Already men could believe in it; very shortly they might experience it. When man should see as God sees, then Time, with its flux and reflux, fleeting and changing, would be no

[1] See Appendix K.

more, and the divine All-at-once would make harmony out of seeming discord.

How widely has all this changed in modern times! It is true that till quite within our own day professed theologians have held and have insisted upon the doctrine of an eternal hell, keeping the worst, while losing the best, of mediæval theology. But the vital currents of the world's life, the formative processes which have moulded it, have long ceased to flow through the channels of official theology.

With the revival of learning came an outburst of intellectual activity. The new-found treasures of Greek literature opened up fresh sources of delight, and seemed to multiply the possibilities of the human mind. The earth herself expanded by the discovery of the New World to match man's growing powers and possibilities. The conquests of science threw back the walls of the universe and carried the triumph of human thought and the discovery of natural law into the boundless regions of space. All tended to throw men's thoughts forward to unmeasured possibilities; and the development of the wealth of earthly life, material, intellectual, and æsthetic, seemed the worthiest object of human effort. This earth

> "Where, in the end,
> We find our happiness, or not at all," [1]

became the centre of human interest at the very time when it ceased to be physically the centre of the Universe. New prospects were opened up to enterprise, and life was full of eager hopes. Men's eyes looked forward into the future, where they could see vast and unmeasured changes looming, and undefined possibilities beckoning them on.

Meanwhile, social discontent was spreading through the disinherited ranks of society. Poverty was no more a thing in which mankind was to acquiesce, or a condition favourable to every spiritual grace, but an exclusion from that ample

[1] *Prelude*, bk. xi. 143, 4.

heritage of earthly blessing to which all men had a right. Fiercely as uprisings prompted by this spirit were repressed by the temporal, and bitterly as they were resented by the spiritual leaders of the nations, they were, nevertheless, the half-articulate contribution of the masses to the formulating of the new spirit which the Renaissance and the Reformation had themselves unchained.[1]

And at last the French Revolution stirred throughout Europe the thought that the peoples may be freed; that a finer national character may be developed; that man's lot on earth may be brightened and dignified. So men's eyes looked forward to a future of material and moral amelioration. The greatest testimony that history can bear to the splendour of this gift from France is that the gratitude of humanity survived the bloody horrors with which she accompanied her gift, and will survive the prolonged agony and shame over which at this moment Europe weeps.

And this sense of growth in knowledge and in power has reacted upon our anticipations and hopes for the moral nature as well as the social state of man. The lost prophetic ideal of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, of the golden age in the future, not the past, has been recovered; and the thought has grown that evil can be not only struggled with but overcome. And thus, in the material and the spiritual worlds alike, the expression of our deepest life has been gathered into the word Progress.

Progress! Men's eyes turn to the future, but no goal is in sight, for the pathway stretches too far for any eye to pierce the distance. On and on, with ever-brightening hope! The prospect of the world's life, which seemed so short to the mediæval saint, is indefinitely lengthened. The conception of the life of man on earth has taken an altogether new colouring; and modern religion, too, has become the religion of progress and of the future.

[1] See Appendix L.

The attitude of men's minds towards the problem of evil has changed altogether. Evil can no longer be regarded as a permanent thing; or if our optimism cannot rise to so bold an assertion, at any rate we will prescribe no limit to the possible amelioration of the lot of man by material advance, by intellectual achievement, and by the resultant improvement in methods of education and of social organization. If we are forced to admit that in some mysterious sense it is the will of God that evil should be, we proclaim with deepest conviction that it is also his will that evil should cease to be, and cease to be through our own effort.

It is this general change of attitude toward the future that has destroyed the belief in an eternal hell. The modern mind rejects the acquiescent faith that in the ultimate harmony the keynotes will be struck in tones of joy at one end and of despair at the other. It rests in the belief that those deep, discordant notes shall not be eternal, shall not be prolonged as elements of a future harmony, but shall be annihilated.

We cry with Bryant to the " unrelenting past " : —

" All that of good and fair
Has gone into thy womb from earliest time
Shall then come forth to wear
The glory and the beauty of its prime.
. . . . . .
" All shall come back; each tie
Of pure affection shall be knit again :
Alone shall evil die,
And sorrow dwell a prisoner in thy reign."

Evil shall die. Not only shall it die *to us* by ceasing to be evil to us, but it shall die *to itself* likewise. There is for us no eternal hell. And against the hell of cruelty and wickedness that now is, we fight to win.

Who will not rejoice in the vital gain which this changed attitude of mind represents ? A gain of which it would be difficult to over-estimate the scope and the significance ! But it has not been made without some loss, temporary, let us

hope, but grave enough. And this loss, strange as it may seem, is to the religious life. The inspiring conception of progress, the sense of unknown and unimagined things which the future holds in store for us, the feeling that all that we know and love awaits its fulfilment and even its interpretation from things as yet not seen even by the eye of faith, has not only given a certain vagueness to our higher life, but has even reduced it to a kind of inherent self-contradiction. Like the apostle, we do not "count that we have attained," and we cannot accept as adequate anything that lies within even the furthest stretch of definite anticipation; and so the very idea of attainment has become cramping and repellent to us.

And thus we are in danger of losing the very sense of a truth which is worth enjoying as well as worth seeking, of a life that is worth living as well as worth gaining. In our intellectual and, in a certain sense, in our moral life, we are in danger of degenerating into sportsmen who hunt for the sake of hunting, not for the sake of the quarry. Lessing's motto has become ours. If God offered us truth in the one hand, and in the other hand the eternal search for truth coupled with eternal error, we should choose to woo in vain rather than to win and to enjoy our love. Yet surely this blights with a certain insincerity our deepest life. We seek, not with the hope of finding, but on the understood condition that we shall not find.[1]

The contradiction becomes more glaring when we turn to the moral life, and the efforts for social amelioration which happily form so large a part of our conception of the moral life to-day. We are told, on the one hand, that moral effort is the noblest element in our personal life, and that self-sacrifice is the most beautiful of all things; and on the other hand, that we must never be content so long as there are evil or selfish impulses in our hearts. We must not only act as though we loved our neighbour as ourselves, but must actually

[1] See Appendix M.

so love him; we must not only restrain our evil passions, but must so overcome them that we love only what is sound and true, and are no longer tempted by evil. And in like manner we must never rest content with palliating social evils, or endeavouring to make compensation for social wrongs, but must strive for the establishment of an order of things in which there shall be no social wrongs to right. But if so, then from both sides, by the quenching of the cravings of selfishness, and by removing the occasions for self-sacrifice, we are striving to do away with every need for the moral effort and self-sacrifice which we say are our highest life; so that if the kingdom of heaven should really come, the life most worth living could be lived no more. Thus the moral life is involved in an inherent contradiction. The very characteristic of modern, as distinguished from mediæval thought, on which I have laid stress as such an unmeasured gain—the fact, namely, that we fight against evil with the determination to exterminate it—involves us in a self-contradiction; for we fight and pray for a state of things which, if it came, would put an end to all that we profess most to value. Having lost our conception of a goal, of a life supremely worth living for itself, we lose also the meaning of progress; and when we face the fundamental question, "What shall be done with the victory?" we can only answer, "The battle will last my time; there is enough evil to give reality, at any rate, to my struggles."

But surely no thinking man can acquiesce in this. We may believe that complete success in the moral warfare cannot be thought of as even an abstract possibility for indefinite generations or centuries to come; but, none the less, the man who fights to win, however far off the victory may be, must have in his mind a conception of something to be won that is worth having, or he fights for he knows not what, and obeys, after all, a mere blind impulse.[1]

It is just such a conception of the absolute life, the life in

[1] See Appendix N.

itself worthy, which seems to me to be so largely wanting in our day. Seeley [1] says that most English parents, if asked what their ideals for their children were, would find it extremely hard to say, except that they are to take a proper position in society, that they are to make or to have a suitable income, and that it is hard if they cannot have plenty of amusement meanwhile. And comparatively few of us can give any more intelligent answer to the question, "What is the ultimate purpose of life?" unless, indeed, there lurk in some corner of our memory the answer supplied by the dying echo of mediæval theology caught by the opening declaration of the *Shorter Catechism*, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, *and to enjoy him for ever.*"

Do we realize the meaning of that word *enjoy?* "To enjoy God for ever." The mediæval thinkers say that we "use" that which we desire for the sake of what it leads to, and "enjoy" that which we desire for its own sake. To "use," therefore, is lower than to "enjoy," and since all good things lead up to the supreme source of good, however much and however rightly we may "enjoy" them we yet in some sort "use" them. God only may we altogether "enjoy," and "enjoy him for ever." Augustine [2] declares that "all human transgression consists in enjoying what we ought to use and using what we ought to enjoy." It is a deep saying, for when we reverse the true order of things, making the higher life subservient to the lower, finding our end in what ought to be our means, and our means in what ought to be our end, we are enjoying what we ought to use, and using what we ought to enjoy.

But, in our day, we have strangely reversed our estimate of the useful and the enjoyable. When we speak of "enjoyment" we usually mean pardonable relaxation and amusement, justified only in so far as it enables us to be more

[1] *Natural Religion*, p. 135.
[2] Quoted by Aquinas. *Prim. Sec.*, qu. 71, art. vi. 3.

"useful" afterwards. We have lost the higher meaning of the word "enjoy" largely because we have persistently turned our minds away from the conception to which it corresponds.

But unless we recover this lost sense of the higher "enjoyment"—enjoyment of God and of human love and of truth and of beauty—unless we recover this sense of a life intrinsically worthy, then the very kingdom of God on earth will itself become to us a thing merely "useful" in anticipation, because it stirs us to effort, but which would bring no "enjoyment" with it did it really come. For if God's will were actually done on earth as it is in heaven, what more, we ask, would there be to live for? Clouds of stagnation and ennui settle down upon our imagination, or we escape by saying that there will be "room for progress yet"; that is to say, that the deadly effects of getting what we profess to want will be counteracted by our still wanting something that we have not got!

Surely we should value progress, not as mere change and movement, but for the abiding treasures which it brings—treasures of knowledge and of love, the *possession* of which is at once the most exalted activity and the deepest peace. If by saying that in the most ideal state of life which we can imagine there will be room for progress, we mean that no conception we can now form of life can exhaust the possibilities of blessedness which will unfold themselves as we become wiser and more worthy; and further, that progressive advance is the law of our attainment of the highest life open to us; then we speak truly and well. But if we mean that life has brought and brings to us nothing of intrinsic and abiding worth, nothing that is good to keep and to live with, only things good enough to go on to something else from; if we mean that attainment is disillusion, and that we ought to desire never really to reach the absolutely highest point accessible to us, because life consists in moving towards what we have not, rather than in "enjoying" what we have,

then surely our aspirations are self-contradictory, and we have lost the true note of life.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we pray. But if we shrink from the heavenly conception of the attained "enjoyment" of God we practically invade heaven with our earthly ideal, and, reversing our prayer, think of God's will being done in heaven as it is done on earth. The conception of the divine vision, of true oneness with God, having all but faded away from our modern theology, and the heaven of the landscape gardener, the upholsterer and the lapidary being naturally found inadequate (whether presented in Milton's elaborate unreality or in the more naïve splendours of Bunyan), we have begun to conceive of the life of heaven as "endless progress." Endless progress to what? To something which only remains interesting so long as we get perpetually nearer to it, but never reach it. Were we there, the illusion would be over. Stagnation and ennui are once more upon us. The endless progress to perfection turns out to be only another expression for the endless deferring of perfection, which indeed is only perfect so long as we do *not* enjoy it.[1]

But this is not all. Triumphant progress has not only absorbed into itself the earthly and the heavenly life of man, but has invaded the conception of Deity itself. Men want a progressive Deity, capable of having his life enriched by successive experiences, and without that terrible finality and attainment which strike a chill to their hearts. A Christ of limited (though it be self-limited) knowledge, a Christ who is an actual participator in the struggles of life and has not won, but is yet winning, his victories, is the God demanded by our age.

We Unitarians might be expected to escape from this anthropolatry, this worship of a man. But it is not so. The idea of the eternal life seems in danger of being banished

[1] Cf. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 508.

from our conception of God himself. God has become to us a being who lives the life of Time, who watches to see what Time shall bring forth, and how his creatures shall exercise the gifts he has given them. We hear of a God who cries pathetically to us for our help in his struggle against evil, much as we cry to him for his help. If we so conceive of God, *he* indeed is not eternal; but Eternity itself is not so easily exorcised. If we banish it from our conception of God, it takes its awful stand behind him. God himself we have entangled in the flux and succession of time, but above him now stands an iron fate which holds both him and us in its grip, dictating the conditions under which he shall strive to gain his ends, holding him to laws and to necessities, which are not modes of his being nor forms of his self-utterance, but necessities to which he must submit. And this awful background of fate, not God, is then the Eternal.

Thank God, such a creed, though it seems to me hard to define it as anything but philosophical atheism, is not in fact incompatible with deep devoutness and an awed sense of fellowship with the Eternal. This whole matter of formulating largely concerns the intellect, and most happily those whose philosophical creeds are to each other anathema may kneel side by side in prayer, and fight shoulder to shoulder in the battle of life, conscious only of brotherhood and of unity. But, nevertheless, it is no wonder that, when such formulæ of religion are current, the minds even of those who accept them, and far more the minds of those who utterly reject them, should turn with a sense of relief and of escape to the thought of the timeless unconditioned being of God and the absolute fruition of life in him. God is eternal. To him every *where* is here, and every *when* is now. He

> Triumphs in conclusive bliss,
> And that supreme result of all.

He grasps all the plenitude of unmeasured life at once.

He "seeth the end from the beginning." To him, in his timeless Eternity, the future hath nought to give; from him, the past hath taken nought away. To his "now," all times are present; and as we lift our souls to him we taste something of the life wherein not the progress of Time but the fruition of Eternity makes us the sharers of his being.

But do these phrases really represent any positive conceptions? Or are they mere grandiose verbiage? Formulæ are dangerous things. It is easy to talk about Eternity as the abiding reality which lies behind fluctuating time, and is itself timeless. It is not very difficult to acquire a kind of knack of using such phrases and working them into a juggling solution of problems which are in truth insoluble.[1] There may be a cant in speaking of timeless and spaceless existence, as there may be in all other things. Let us ask ourselves then, in all seriousness, whether we mean anything, and if so what, by timeless existence.

Do what we will, we cannot think time or space out of an objective existence. Earnest attempts by thinkers, ancient and modern, have been made to accomplish this impossibility; but they have failed, and they must fail; and if we talk of Time itself being swallowed up in Eternity, we are speaking of something which we cannot by any possibility conceive. We may indeed think of ourselves or of God as in a state of existence which has no relations with time, to which time, therefore, has no significance and on which it has no hold. But in the back of our minds we always find a reservation that *time is going on* all the same, even though there be nothing material nor any changing succession of mental experiences to mark its progress. This reservation may be, and I believe is, unphilosophical; but it is human, and it is ineradicable. We cannot then think Time away; but many of our experiences seem to indicate that in proportion as we touch our highest realization, we tend to

[1] See Appendix O.

escape from the dominion of time; so that we must needs conceive of the existence of the Supreme Being as timeless, and our own life, so far as it is divine, as sharing in such existence.

We know that when one emotion of perfect uniformity and simplicity dominates our whole being, the sense of succession is lost and we know not whether it is after minutes or after hours that we re-enter into relations with time. We cannot think away time; but we can think of ourselves as passing out of relation to it.

And many of our more ordinary experiences seem to tell us that the essential difference in the *significance to us* between things past, present, and future, is dependent upon the bodily organization through which our mental experience comes to us. A greater vividness generally belongs to the experiences attached to a present nerve impression than to the memory of a former one. But this is not always so. Often our past is more vivid to us than our present life, and more vivid than it was itself when present. It is a commonplace, too, that experiences when anticipated are sometimes more keen and vivid than when they come, even though they bring no disillusion or disappointment. In such cases past and present, or past and future, seem to reverse their usual significance to us.

But we may go much further than this. Mozart tells us [1] how one of his own musical compositions would sometimes assert itself to him, not as a succession of notes and chords, but as a co-existent whole. And is there not a sense in which the like is true of all of us up to the limit of our musical capacity? When we hear the second bar of a piece of music, has the first bar gone? If it were so, there would be no such thing as continuous music at all. It is because all of the piece that we have already heard is still, in some limited sense, present with us, that we can follow it with

[1] See Carpenter's *The Place of Immortality in Religious Belief*, p. 61.

intelligent emotion. And when we know it well it is not only what we have heard and what we are hearing, but what we are yet to hear, that combines to produce the present effect. And so with literature. Contrast the feverish excitement with which we follow a play or a story because we do not know what is coming, and our feeling as we read *The Agamemnon*, *The Divine Comedy*, or *King Lear*, when we *do* know what is coming. How crude, how shallow and immature, seems the successional excitement in the one case compared with the awful or beautiful sense of co-existing completeness in the other.

And so too with life. Though we know not what is coming, we know what has come, and our deepest and richest experiences gather into themselves the past, and at the same time transform it. So that even that seeming irrevocability which we think of as the great characteristic of the past turns out to be an illusion. The past is not, in any effective sense, irrevocable. We may yet make it, in large measure, what we will. For detached experiences are in themselves mere unintelligible fragments. It is when they are taken as parts of a whole that they have their meaning. And what is the whole of which our past is a part? Is that irrevocably fixed beyond our control? Nay, our past as well as our future shall be what we shall make it. It is a fragment that awaits its interpretation, nay, awaits its full being, its true creation, from the whole.[1]

Thus past, present, and future proclaim themselves even to our own experience as varying modes that draw their significance from conditions relative to our organization, not essential to themselves. The sharp distinctions between them seem to yield to the fusing power of our higher and intenser experiences; and already we may know something of the life eternal.

Can we seriously believe, then, that time has the same

[1] Compare *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, ii.

significance to God which it has to us in our ordinary moments? Can we suppose that it really matters to him whether this thing took place yesterday, takes place to-day, or shall take place to-morrow? Are not the things that shall be as real a part of his infinite life as the things that have been?[1] Does consciousness of one thing need to go in order that the consciousness of another may come? Or is there anything corresponding to the pressure of instant nerve and sense experience which alone distinguishes present from future and past for us, in his august and all-embracing being? Does time in its progress really add to his experiences and progressively fill in his being? Fill it whence? And with what? Are there then sources outside the Infinite, whence he can draw, and so add to his growing treasures? And does he need the solace of the thought that *these* sources at least are inexhaustible, so that he too may for ever "imitate by going, the life which he may not grasp by abiding"?

Nay, God is eternal, and in some measure man may share his eternal life. Creatures of time as we are, we may rise more and more as our life strengthens and deepens into a life to which succession does not indeed cease to matter, but to which it matters less and less, while co-existence matters ever more and more. We too, in our measure, seeing God, may see as God sees. The wild exhilaration of searching and struggling may give place to the deep joy of having found and vanquished. The life of knowing and of loving may be found supremely worthy. We may taste a life not worth the wooing only, but worth the winning and enjoying.

It were indeed a vain and presumptuous thing to say that any one of us can establish himself in a life which shall be independent of all that Time can give or take away; but none the less just those things that Time cannot touch constitute our dearest wealth. Just in so far as we have love which shall survive, though that to which it clings be taken

[1] See Appendix P.

away from us,—in so far as we have wisdom which shall abide, though the knowledge from which it was gathered fade away,—in so far as our fruition has brought us to a sense of the worth of life which will triumph over any downfall or wretchedness that may be in store for us,—in so far as our sorrow has brought us into the wide fellowship of human suffering and anguish, and given us a tenderness that shall endure though years of placid comfort should flow over us,—in so far as we have reached a life not subject to change or the workings of Time,—so far we have some sense of eternal realities, so far we may feel that we see God, and may, though with awestruck humility, ask whether haply in some measure we are seeing as God sees.

Infinitesimal as our attainment may be,—vast as the inexhaustible, even unrealizable possibilities,—relentless as the call to service, and the demand that we should make our efforts " useful " to ourselves and others, and cheerful as our response to it may be—deep as the passion, and penetrating as the need for progress,—we shall nevertheless know what it is to " enjoy "; and shall not only strive after, but shall in some measure *have*, the life eternal.

Thus to conceive of a life in and with God, worth living not for what it leads to, but what it is, thus to think of life as a whole, thus to conceive of love and knowledge as eternal fruition, will surely throw us back into our life of progress and of action with a quickened realization of its significance, with the sense of its inherent contradiction banished, with its daily fragments of intercourse with God, with nature, and with man, deepened into communion.

Progress has a meaning if there is a goal. Fighting against the foes of life, gathering and spreading the means of life has a meaning, if we know how to live. The thin-drawn successions of time have received the transfiguring touch of eternity, and we can live in the present and wear the yoke

of time with deepened faith, with brightened hope, with more glowing love, because we fight not as those that beat the air, but as those who know what it is to live, and who would fain throw open the gates of life that they and their brethren may go in thereat and live the life of God.

APPENDIX

A

HEGEL (1770–1831), in his *Geschichte der Philosophie*, iii. 99, declared his intention of traversing the Middle Ages with seven-league boots, and carried out his design by dealing, for instance, with Albertus Magnus in two pages and with Roger Bacon in exactly two lines. Prantle (1820–1888), as quoted by Professor Seth in his article on "Scholasticism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, declared that there was no such thing as philosophy in the Middle Ages, there were only logic and theology. G. H. Lewes, in his *Biographical History of Philosophy* (1845–46), gave us "Series I., Ancient Philosophy," and "Series II., Bacon to the Present Day." But between Proclus (412–485) and Bacon (1561–1629) he gave us nothing at all. When he elaborated this work into a more systematic *History of Philosophy from Thales to Comte* he remedied this defect; but even in the fifth and latest edition, of 1880, he quotes with approval the remark of Hegel given above (see vol. ii., p. 2), and devotes about 100 pages to the Middle Ages, having given about 400 to ancient philosophy. On the other hand, Erdmann, who, I suppose, is the most recent and the most authoritative historian of philosophy, gives about 200 pages to ancient and more than 400 to mediæval (pre-Baconian) philosophy. (*Grundriss der Gesch. der Philosophie*, J. E. Erdmann, 4th ed., 1896. English translation, *History of Philosophy*, 1893.) It is equally instructive to compare the article in Rees's *Encyclopædia* (vol. xxxi., 1819), on "Scholastic Philosophy" with Professor Seth's article above alluded to in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (vol. xxi., 1886).

Every intelligent student must feel the deepest admiration for the sympathetic sagacity which enabled Auguste Comte to understand, or at least divine, the significance of mediæval

thought at a time and amid surroundings which were as unfavourable as could possibly be imagined to any such appreciation. Amongst the many claims of this great man to respect and gratitude we ought to give a high place to his persistent protest against shallow and chaotic misconceptions with respect to the Middle Ages.

B

The essential difference between the spirit of Humanism and the spirit of the Reformation is too obvious to be overlooked in Italy, the birthplace of Humanism. It is impossible for anyone to confound the movement that centred round Lorenzo di Medici and Leo X with the spirit which uttered itself in Savonarola. In Germany, Holland, and England, the alliance between the two movements was close and widespread, yet after all the attempts of the historians to treat them as belonging to each other the ineradicable impression remains that Luther and Erasmus stood for two completely different things. The strength and the weakness of Luther and Calvin, the good and the evil that came of their work, are alike alien in nature and in principle from the purposes and ideals of Erasmus.

C

I lay stress on the word *ideal*. There could hardly be a more serious mistake than to suppose that the study of the history of the Popes and the Papal court gives an adequate idea of the historical significance of the Papacy. For example, we constantly come upon the influence of the ideal Papacy in Bede's ecclesiastical history, in the organization of Alfred's kingdom, or in such a poem as the wonderful elegy by Bishop Hildebert of Le Mans (born 1075), given at the close of Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*. The idea of the Papacy was a living and forming influence upon Europe of the first importance, and it seems as though the great Popes had power to confirm and deepen it, but the unworthy and insignificant ones had no power to degrade or destroy it. In like manner Dante hurls his terrible invective against one after another of the contemporary Popes, but retains his passionate devotion to the Papacy. He denounces Boni-

face VIII as the " prince of the new Pharisees," but declares that when Philip the Fair persecuted him " Christ was crucified again " in his person. (*Inferno*, xxvii. 85; *Purgatorio*, xx. 85–90.) The power exercised over the faithful by Rome and by the ideal Papacy was as independent of the actual Popes as the power exercised by Jerusalem was of its Saracen conquerors. Boccaccio (*Giorn.* i., nov. 2), by a random shot, indicated one of the most fascinating and difficult of the problems of history when he sarcastically told the story of a Jew who was converted to Christianity by visiting Rome, for there he saw the abominable lives the clergy were leading, saw the whole place made into a " devil's smithy," saw the Pope and all his court toiling to destroy Christianity—and toiling in vain. Truly the religion that could live under such tutelage must be divine !

D

The history of our own island is a little perplexing to us. It is so continuous, so interesting, and so unmistakably significant, that it does not the least fit in with our general conception of the Middle Ages, and except that we vaguely date our historical romances by reference to some one of our kings—by preference, Richard I—I fancy that most of us do not locate the " Middle Ages " in England at all, but in some other place, with respect to which our notions are vaguer—probably Germany or France.

E

Natura non facit saltus. It is worth while pausing for a moment to examine this saying, as the process will throw a good deal of indirect light on the subject of the first portion of the essay. We are accustomed to regard this maxim, usually ascribed to Linnæus, as embodying one of the great principles that differentiate modern from mediæval and ancient science. Harbottle's *Dictionary of Quotations* will enable the reader to look up the reference in the *Philosophia Botanica*, Upsala, 1750, where he will find the phrase both at the beginning and at the end of § 77, used with admirable point (see below). But Harbottle will also enable him to trace the maxim in a slightly different form back to a work

by Jacques Tissot, published at Lyons in 1613, and reprinted by Edward Fournier in vol. ix. of his *Variétés Historiques et Littéraires*, 1859, p. 248. The treatise in question is an essay on some bones which were supposed to be those of a giant Theutobocus, but which modern science pronounces to belong to a mastodont. The treatise is written in French, but the maxim, "*Natura enim in suis operationibus non facit saltum*," is quoted in Latin. Evidently, therefore, it was current in the early seventeenth century. I have not been able to trace it further back in the form of an aphorism, but the principle is taken for granted by Dante as holding good in the physical universe, and is applied by him to the intellectual order. "And since in the intellectual order of the universe we rise and descend by almost continuous steps from the lowest form to the highest, and from the highest to the lowest (just as we observe to be the case in the material order), and between the angelic nature, which is an intellectual form of existence, and the human soul, there is no intermediate step, but the one is, so to speak, continuous with the other in the order of gradations; and between the human life and the most developed life of the brute animals, again, there is no intermediate step; and we see many men so vile, and of so low condition, that they seem scarce to be other than beasts; so also we are to suppose and firmly believe that there be some so noble and of such high condition, that they are, as it were, nought other than angels. Otherwise, the human species would not be continued in both directions which may not be." (*Convito*, iii. 7, 69–88.) It is particularly interesting to compare this passage in Dante with the passage in Linnæus. He declares that "All plants have affinity on every side, like the territories marked on a geographical map." And again, "The absence of specimens not yet discovered is the cause of the Natural Method being defective, and the discovery of more specimens will complete it. *Natura enim non facit saltus*." The treatise being written in Latin, there is nothing in the language to indicate that this phrase is quoted as a current aphorism, but its repetition and the way in which it is used give the impression that it is so.

Setting these two passages together will certainly not make us think little of the progress of science between Dante and Linnæus; but it will help us to regard that progress as a development rather than a revolution, and to find the stress

of the change rather in the altered directions than in the altered methods and principles of human thought.

The same lesson may be taught by Dante's insistence on the principle (popularly regarded as Bacon's specific contribution to thought), that "Experiment is the fountain whence science flows." See *Paradiso*, ii. 95–96.

F

The most terrible development of the demonology of the Middle Ages is not itself mediæval. The trials for witchcraft, says Lecky (*History of Rationalism*, 4th edition, 1870, vol. i., p. 55), reached their climax in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The *Malleus Maleficarum* was written in 1487. The persecutions raged throughout the sixteenth century, there was scarcely any sensible abatement in the seventeenth century (Matthias Hopkins was appointed witch-finder in 1642), and all through the eighteenth century, official executions occasionally took place. See Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, vol. ii. 293–314. It was therefore not the "Dark Ages," but the ages of supposed enlightenment and re-birth that brought this darkest and most terrible blood-guiltiness upon us.

G

Naturally the Humanists and the Reformers, as well as the philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were by no means so free from the influences of the Middle Ages as they supposed themselves to be, and are usually represented as being. Dr. Stallo well observes:[1] "But, although the founders of modern physical science at the outset of their labours were animated by a spirit of declared hostility to the teachings of mediæval scholasticism—a fact which is nowhere more conspicuous than in the writings of Descartes (1596–1650)—nevertheless, when they entered upon the theoretical discussion of the results of their experiments and observations, they unconsciously proceeded upon the old assumptions of the very ontology which they openly repudiated."

My own (very imperfect) acquaintance with Bacon (1561–

[1] *Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics* (Vol. 42 of Kegan Paul's *International Scientific Series*), 3rd edition, 1890, page iv, introduction to the 2nd edition.

1629) began with his *Wisdom of the Ancients*, which (though he wrote it in Latin) was one of the English subjects which I had to prepare for my degree. I shall never forget the bewilderment and scorn with which I read what seemed its utterly fantastic and futile allegories. Bacon's way of looking at things was equally remote from anything classical or modern which I had ever encountered. I have since found the key to it in the elaborate allegorizings of the Middle Ages, and their dim sense that the mythology and devotion of pagan times must have some intelligible place and meaning in the scheme of things. It is interesting to note that Erdmann includes Bacon in the transitional period of *Mediæval* Philosophy.

As for the Reformers, Selden (1584–1654) boldly declares: "Popish books teach and inform; what we know, we know much out of them. The Fathers, Church Story, Schoolmen, all may pass for Popish books; and if you take away them, what learning will you leave? . . . These *Puritan* Preachers, if they have anything good, they have it out of Popish books, though they will not acknowledge it, for fear of displeasing the people." (*Table Talk*, ix. 4.) We Unitarians are certainly not likely to fall into the error of supposing that the Reformers had completely emancipated themselves from mediæval and scholastic traditions.

The combination of conscious revolt against scholasticism with unconscious bondage to it gives curious results, even in so late a writer as Milton (1608–1674). Many readers must have been perplexed by his insistence upon the *bona fides* of the angelic appetite and digestion. Raphael eats not in appearance only

> "But with keen dispatch
> Of real hunger, and concoctive heat,
> To transubstantiate."

(*Paradise Lost*, v., 436 sqq.) It is true he entertained "No fear lest dinner cool" (line 396), but that was only because the dinner was never hot, not because the angel was indifferent to Eve's housewifely care as to the proper preparation of his food. What in the world, we ask, is the meaning of it all? The answer is to be found in the fact that Milton, in spite of his esteeming Spenser above the Schoolmen,[1] has inherited

[1] "Our sage and serious poet, Spenser (whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas)." (*Areopagitica*.)

from Aquinas and his predecessors a developed system of angelology which he vainly attempts to reduce within scriptural limits. The Schoolmen had declared that angels, being pure "form," had no material bodies whatever. But this is unscriptural. Did not angels eat meat with Abraham? These ascetic and unauthorized refinements of the Schoolmen, then, must be denounced, and wholesome scriptural doctrine substituted for them. So Milton misses both the naïveté of the early Hebrew narratives and the elaborate spirituality of the Schoolmen, and the result is strangely gross and incongruous. It may further be noted that whereas Milton apparently intends to throw a slight upon scholastic philosophy by making the devils occupy themselves in philosophical discussions (*Paradise Lost*, ii. 555–569); yet when he comes actually to "justify the ways of God to men" himself, and to place his apology on the lips of the Deity, he has nothing to give us but a jejune summary of scholastic argumentation stripped of the religious awe and reverential sense of mystery, and stripped of the sublime metaphysics which give it dignity when dealt with by the mediæval teachers, from Boethius down to Dante (*Paradise Lost*, iii. 80–134).

Lastly, as to the Humanists. The service they rendered to culture and general enlightenment by vindicating and recovering the classical heritage which had been so largely abandoned and neglected in the Middle Ages, is of course inestimable; but looked at from another point of view, their efforts during three centuries constitute one huge pathetic blunder. For at the very time when they were scoffing at the Middle Ages they were prolonging a mediæval tradition that had lost its justification. For three centuries they strove to make literature in a dead language, and to throw discredit upon the real literature which the modern languages were producing! In the fourteenth century there existed, in the first place, the almost effete tradition of a Latin *literature* proper; in the second place, the Latinity of the theologians, historians, and so forth, which, within its own limits, was by no means a dead language. It had the power of adapting and developing itself to changing needs, and it had grown up in direct contact with the ideas and purposes it was required to meet. In the third place, there were the vernacular languages which had already been developed into

splendid literary instruments. The idea that Latin was the only language in which a scholar and a gentleman could express himself had received a rude shock at the hands of Dante (1265–1321), Petrarch (1304–1374), and Boccaccio (1313–1375), to mention no others. But Petrarch himself, the first of the Humanists, reinforced this obsolescent tradition by the direction which he gave to the classical revival of which he was the apostle. His own Italian poems, alone of all his voluminous productions, now rank as literature; but he himself treated them as wholly insignificant, and threw the full weight of his unique influence, with extraordinary success, into the attempt to make a more classical Latinity the vehicle of literary activity. It is impossible to conceive a more radical misconception of the actual facts and forces of the time. Instead of seeing that the vernacular languages were now ripe for the highest literature, he considered that the requirement of the age was to reassert the universal claim of Latin; and at the same time he lowered its vitality by reducing it to an artificial imitation of the classics, and robbing it of its power of free development to meet contemporary requirements. Thus the revival of *Letters* threatened for more than a century to be the death of *Literature;* and when, at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, the vernacular poets again rose into significance, they had to contend against the pedantic prejudices of their contemporaries, from which their own minds were not yet liberated. Politian (1454–1494) succumbed; Ariosto (1474–1533) long wavered; and while a Nicodemus Frishlinus (sixteenth century) pathetically bewails his hard fate in having to assure himself that historical precedent exists before he can use a word in his poetry, whereas Virgil could use or make whatever words he chose; a Lilius Gyraldus (1478–1552) enumerates, literally by the hundred, the forgotten Latin " poets " of his times, and then expresses his pained surprise that there are men (and learned men too) who prefer the Italian to the Latin literature of the day! And this when Ariosto (not to mention any others) had lived and written. During this same period, Melanchthon (1497–1560) in his declamation " *De corrigendis studiis*," identifies, almost in terms, the history of Latinity with the history of theology and of civilization. He has some words of respect for Gregory the Great, Bede and Alquin, who struggled

against the barbarism that surrounded them. The Victorines (Hugh, Richard, and others) were " not utterly bad writers " (*non pessimi scriptores*); but after that, " whether prompted by intellectual wantonness or by sheer contentiousness of spirit, men hit upon Aristotle," and then the game was up. " Hence issued the Thomases, the Scotuses, the Duranduses, the Seraphics, Cherubics, and the rest of them." [1] It is amusing to note how the same writer, in his declamation *Eloquentiæ Encomium*, two hundred years after Dante had written the *Divine Comedy*, and at the very time when Luther was flooding Germany with his tracts, urges his students in all sincerity not to grudge the time that must be devoted to the cultivation of a polished Latin style, because if they do not acquire it, they will not be able to make themselves understood. Scotus and the rest he declares are unintelligible because of their bad Latinity. But time brings its revenges. Probably most modern students will find the Humanists, as a rule, beset with difficulties, in spite of their flowing and choice Latinity, partly because they constantly assume that the reader will recognize the context and understand the meaning of every classical phrase and reference, and partly owing to the forced and artificial union between the classical vehicle and the modern thought it is to convey; whereas the language of Aquinas and Scotus, whatever else it may be, is at least of admirable lucidity.[2]

The ecclesiasticism which is the most prominent, though perhaps not the most significant, of the present manifestations of

[1] Melanchthon declares (truly enough) that Aristotle, difficult at best, is practically unintelligible in the Latin translations used by the Schoolmen; but he entirely fails to recognize the stupendous sagacity, learning, and patience which enabled such writers as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, by the aid of old commentators and such other helps as they could command, to decipher and expound their unintelligible text. They did so with such good effect, that the student of the less known works of Aristotle will, at this day, have great difficulty in finding anything more helpful and satisfactory than the commentaries of Thomas Aquinas; and the latest editors of the *Metaphysics* still quote Albertus Magnus.

[2] The passages in Frischlinus, Lilius Gyraldus and Melanchthon (together with an indefinite number of further illustrative passages) may be found respectively in Nos. 7, 10 and 4 of the extremely useful series of *Lateinische Litteraturdenkmäler des xv. u. xvi. Jahrhunderts* brought out under the general editorship of Max Hermann, Berlin, 1891, etc. See specifically *Deutsche Lyriker des Sechszehnten Jahrhunderts*, p. 52 sq.; Lilius G. Gyraldus, *De poetis nostrorum temporum*, p. 85; Philippus Melanchthon, *Declamationes*, pp. 15 sqq. and p. 29.

mediævalism, serves admirably to illustrate the twofold point that the Reformers did not really do all that they thought they were doing, and could not give permanency to all that they actually did. They thought they were abolishing the Church as an officially organized and authoritative body of persons who should interpret and develop revealed truth, and were only preserving the Church in the sense of the fellowship of faithful souls. But in point of fact, not only did they carry over with them bodily from the Church inheritances such as the substitution of the Sunday for the Sabbath, or the canon of the New Testament; but each sect, within the limits of its own power, established by symbols and assemblies a church in miniature which was ready to back its decisions by such penalties and persecutions as it could command. Milton found that

> New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large;[1]

and the creeds which were to bind men's consciences were still drawn up in accordance with the vote of the "odd man" and promulgated on the authority of the "Holy Ghost."[2]

Gradually the untenable nature of the Protestant position has become clear. On the one hand the authority claimed for the Scriptures themselves is seen to rest on a basis no sounder in principle than that claimed by the Church, so that if the authority of the Church is indeed to be annulled, the authority of the Scriptures must be annulled with it; and on the other hand, the hopeless impossibility of regulating faith and morals by a miscellaneous collection of writings, the composition of which stretches over some thousand years, has become patent, so that only an authoritative interpreter can possibly make such a code effective. Thus the Reformers went either too far or not far enough in assailing the authority of the Church and maintaining that of the Scriptures.

Moreover, the anti-social implications of the exaggerated religious individualism of the Reformers, always obvious to the Catholics, are beginning to make themselves dimly felt by Protestants also. The alliance between social enthusiasm and the High Church movement which characterizes our great

[1] See his poem "On the new forces of conscience under the Long Parliament."

[2] "They talk (but blasphemously enough) that the Holy Ghost is President of their General Councils, when the truth is, the odd Man is still the Holy Ghost."—Selden's *Table Talk*, xxx.

cities is not fortuitous, and the felt need of spiritual fellowship is a part of the felt need of fellowship in general. Wiser and less sterile ways of meeting the need will be found; but it is well, not ill, that the need should be felt.

A curious minor current of this movement may be perceived amongst ourselves. As long as the orthodox Dissenters preached doctrines revolting to our reason and our conscience they exercised little influence upon us save by repulsion. It seemed as though the action were all the other way; and we perpetually and reasonably congratulated ourselves on the growth amongst other Churches of the views we advocated. Now the reaction has set in. The repelling features of their theology having to a great extent disappeared, their mere bulk and mass begins to exercise a natural attractive influence upon us, and we are in great danger of being drawn out of our own orbit into a hazy and nondescript theological and christological position which finds its relative justification in *their* traditions and antecedents, not in *ours*. Here again the sensitiveness to the wider streams of spiritual life around us is good, but its manifestations may none the less be wanting in depth and consistency. If it develops our own traditions and makes us dig deeper, it is well. If it substitutes other traditions and makes us abandon our own place in the truth-mine, then the world will be the poorer. We may note, in this connection, that the doctrine of the authority of the Church is being revived amongst us in a vague but very real manner. We no longer discuss how far down in ecclesiastical history the Councils of the Church are to be regarded as authoritative, yet many of us practically accept the utterances of the early Church —if only it is early enough—as authoritative sources of information as to the significance of the personality of Jesus. There is a type of Christology amongst us that seems to amount to this: "It is true that, critically speaking, the synoptic Gospels are our only source of information as to what Jesus said and did, but they are not our only source of information as to what he was and is; for in truth Jesus himself appears never really to have preached his own Gospel, except in the most inadequate and shrivelled form. Paul (who does not seem to have heard or known him and who was warmly opposed by those who had) and the writer of the fourth Gospel (who is not an historian) really knew what Christ was; and the Christian consciousness recognizes the

truth of what they said. The real Gospel, then, is not to be found, in any effective sense, on the lips of Jesus, but must be looked for in the teachings of the early Church, tested and confirmed by the Christian consciousness."

It is a curious indication of how little logic goes for in the formation, or even the formulating, of opinions that Dr. Carpenter's challenge of the validity of the "Christian consciousness" as a witness to the identity of an historical personage with the source of a spiritual experience has (so far as I know) remained without answer—and without effect. (See "The Relation of Jesus to his Age and our own." Essex Hall Lecture, 1895, pp. 7–12.)

There is another aspect of the revolt against ecclesiastic authority, with respect to which we seem in danger of misconceiving the nature, if not of exaggerating the magnitude of the great change that has taken place since the close of the Middle Ages. I refer to the whole theory of compulsion and persecution. Happily there can be no doubt of the enormous advance in humanity which has characterized the Western nations in recent centuries. The frightful recrudescence of cruelty and barbarism into which we relapse when races on different levels of power or civilization come into close contact, as in the Southern States of America, and, in a lesser degree, in some of our own colonies, should indeed warn us that the hideous passions habitually suppressed in civilized communities, lie nearer the surface than we should like to think (just as scientific and industrial callousness to the suffering of animals may be only too easily developed in the midst of a tender-hearted community); but when all abatements have been made, the gain remains real and stupendous. Subject, however, to the limitations imposed by this growing sense of humanity, our ideas of compulsion, not to say persecution, have rather changed their direction than their fundamental theory. We do not (and it is difficult to see why we should), hesitate to apply compulsion wherever we are quite satisfied that a body of persons exist who can pronounce authoritatively as to what is good for humanity at large; but we have changed our minds very considerably with respect to the class of persons and the class of opinions to which we think authority can rightly attach. We compel parents to have their children taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, because, in spite of Ruskin, we are most of us convinced of the extreme importance

of these accomplishments. We persecute the "Peculiar People" because they do not call in, on critical occasions, members of an official class, who we believe are in a position to pronounce with authority on matters of grave consequence to them. And it is only within the last few months that we have allowed parents to choose for their children between what they hold to be the risks of vaccination, and what others hold to be the risks of small-pox. But in none of these matters are we prepared to carry compulsion or persecution to anything approaching the lengths which seemed justifiable to our ancestors. The anti-vaccinationists have already won their victory. If the "Peculiar People" persevere, they will surely soon win theirs. And if Ruskin's views on the relative importance of reading and writing amongst the arts of life were to gain anything like the volume of conscientious support to which their intrinsic merits seem to entitle them, we should have no more cases of little girls relegated from home tuition to the charge of the School Board for not being able to spell *conceive* in the conventional fashion.

There is, however, another and more dangerous aspect of this question. Without going into any abstract speculations on the philosophy of ethics, we may say that morality as conceived by the community, consists in those principles of conduct and habits of mind which the general sense pronounces to be of supreme significance. Now every body of experts is apt to believe, and to persuade those who accept its authority to believe, that the general *opinion* of what is most significant in life must yield to its own *knowledge* of the real significance of things. And so the expert Church declares itself superior to the communal morality. This is the heaviest charge that has ever been brought against the Church of the Middle Ages; and this charge is still brought against our governors and diplomatists, against our police and against our doctors. But the most terrible forms of this evil occur when it is not the statesmen, the police, or the doctors, but the soldiers that thus override the communal morality in the name of the supreme interests of the national life. Our national action, especially our foreign policy and intercourse with the weaker races, is almost avowedly carried on upon principles which the responsible ministers and administrators *know* (!) are necessary and therefore right; but which would outrage the public conscience if nakedly avowed. The

relations in which the police stand, for instance, to receivers of stolen goods or keepers of disorderly houses or of opium dens, are deemed necessary and therefore right, but would be extremely startling to the general moral sense of the community if they were realized. For half a generation the moral sense of the community had to fight against the deeply immoral and futile system of the Contagious Diseases Acts; which were championed by the military, backed by the police and the doctors; and the practices of vivisection and artificial virus culture would not be able to stand for a day against the indignant revolt of the public conscience, were not that conscience still dominated by the idea that a body of experts who really *know* what is important for the welfare of humanity may override and abrogate the laws of morality.

But, in England at least, there is room to hope that we are more and more coming to understand that the function of experts is to give evidence, not to pronounce judgment, and that experts do *not* know what is supremely important, just because they are specialists. Specialist morality always gets warped unless it has to justify itself to communal morality; and as there are exceptionally devout men but no experts in religion, so there are exceptionally good men but no experts in morality. Where this is clearly realized, the work of the Reformation with respect to an authoritative Church will have been carried a mighty step further and the Kingdom of God on earth will be visibly nearer.

H

The conception of Eternity is due to Plato and its genesis may be traced with great distinctness.[1]

No sooner had the Greek thinkers issued from the aphoristic stage of wisdom than they attacked the central problem of all philosophy, viz. the relations of unity to multiplicity—of the one to the many. It is obvious that science and philosophy alike are concerned with the problem of finding that which abides under that which changes—that which is one behind or in that which is manifold. The law of gravitation, for instance, enables us to think of all the bodies that constitute

[1] The account of Greek speculations before Plato is partly based upon Mr. Archer Hind's introduction to the *Timæus*, 1888.

the solar system as a single whole with an unchanging centre of gravity, and so forth.

The Greeks, then, boldly attacked this problem of unity in multiplicity; but the Ionian philosophy, culminating in the teaching of Heraclitus, insisted on the perpetual change and flux of all things in such a way as to reduce our knowledge of the one element which underlay all material transformations to absolute nescience. Since we can only know that which abides and since nothing except the inaccessible first element abides, we can know nothing.

Parmenides, on the other hand, with the characteristic audacity of Greek speculation, appears to have deduced from the axiom " nothing can come out of nothing," the conclusion that there is not really any change at all. If nothing can come out of nothing, then nothing can come out of anything in which it does not already exist, for that would be equivalent to coming out of nothing; but if it already exists it does not come into existence at all, but *is* in existence; therefore there can be no change of any sort, and all that we think of as change is non-existent and illusory. And here again, though by another road, we are brought to nescience.

Plato and Aristotle in their different ways combined these two conceptions into systems which attempted to establish the law of relation between the permanent and the changing—the one and the many. Plato, with whom alone we are here concerned, conceived all objects of sense as, to some extent, illusory and unreal, but as deriving a certain measure of reality from their affinity to abiding realities accessible to the intellect though not to the senses. These realities that lie behind the things of sense are the only subjects of true knowledge, and they are unchanging. This is the significance of Plato's celebrated doctrine of Ideas, which, however, he worked out with such wide divergences in his different *Dialogues*, that no interpreter has been able to give a consistent account of his system embracing all his writings, or to escape the charge, at the hands of other experts, of misunderstanding and misrepresenting him in some respect. But in spite of these differences of interpretation it seems very safe to connect Plato's doctrine of Eternity with this conception of an abiding reality lying behind every changing appearance.

For if everything that changes corresponds to something that abides, then time itself, which is but a name for successional

and changing existence, must have behind it some abiding form of co-existence, in which there is no change or succession. And this is exactly the account of Eternity which we find in *Timæus*. After describing the creation of the sensible universe after the pattern of eternal things, Plato goes on to say that the Creator attempted to make the creation as nearly like its living pattern as possible. " Since, then, that pattern is an eternal living existence, he went about to bring out this Universe as far as might be like unto it. Now the being of this living existence was eternal; and it was not possible to accommodate this altogether to that which had been brought into being; he therefore designed a certain moving image of Eternity, and as he ordained the Universe he made an eternal image of the Eternity which abides in unity, which image itself advances by measure; and to this existence we have given the name of Time. As for days and nights and months and years, which were not before the Universe was, he fashioned their genesis at the same time that the Universe was brought into existence; and all these are parts of Time, and *was* and *shall be* are forms of Time which have come into being; and when we apply them to the eternal existence we fall unawares into error, for we say that it *was*, *is* and *shall be*, whereas in real truth *is* alone applies to it, for *was* and *shall be* are only properly applied to that coming into being which proceeds in time, for they are movements. But that which abides without change or movement behoves not to become older or younger by the passage of time; nor ever did it come into being, nor has it now come into being, nor again will it hereafter come into being; and, in general, we cannot apply to it any of those conceptions which the coming into being attaches to the things that appeal to the senses, all which conceptions are forms of Time, which imitates Eternity and circles by measure. And, moreover, such expressions as that that which has come into being *is* that which has come into being, and that that which shall come into being *is* that which shall come into being, and the non-existent *is* the non-existent are none of them accurate expressions.[1] . . . Time then came into being along with the Universe (so that having been generated together, they may be dissolved together, if there ever be such a dissolution of them), and after the pattern of the Eternal existence, in order that it may be as like it as is possible to its

[1] Because *being* can only be properly attributed to the Eternal.

capacity; for the pattern *is*, as existence, for all Eternity; but Time has been, and is, and shall be continuously for all time." (*Timæus*, x. and xi.)

In the periphrastic translation or commentary on the *Timæus* by Chalcidius [1] which was the principal vehicle through which Plato was known in the Middle Ages, we read in Chap. xxv. : "Wherefore the pattern, that is the intelligible world, is eternal. But that which is constituted after the pattern, to wit the sensible world, is temporal. And the characteristic of time is to proceed. The characteristic of eternity is to abide and always persevere identical. The parts of time are days, nights, months, and years. Eternity has no parts. The modes of time, also, are past, present, and future. The being of eternity is uniform in a sole and perpetual present. The intelligible world, therefore, always *is*. This world, which is the image of the other, always *was*, *is*, and *shall be*."

To Christian students of this philosophy, in the early centuries, such Scriptural phrases as "He inhabiteth Eternity," would acquire a wondrous significance. Thus Augustine cries : "Thou art most high and changest not, nor in thee is to-day transacted; yet in thee it is transacted, for in thee are all these things also. For they would have no ways on which to pass, didst thou not contain them. And since the years fail not, thy years are one to-day. And how many already of our days and of our fathers' days have passed through thy to-day, and have received from it their measures, and such being as they had! And how many others yet shall pass through and shall receive their measures and such existence as they shall have! But thou thyself art the same, and all to-morrow's things, and the things beyond, and all of yesterdays, and the things behind, to-day thou wilt do, to-day thou hast done. What is it to me if any understand not? Let him too, rejoice, even though he say : 'What thing is this?' Let him rejoice even so, and let him love in finding not, to find, rather than in finding, not to find thee." (*Confessions*, I. 6.) And again in his conversation with Monica : "And still we were inwardly ascending in thought and speech, and in contemplation of thy works; and we came to our own minds, and passed through them that we might gain the region of unfailing abundance, where thou feedest Israel eternally with the pasture of truth, and where life consists in

[1] Edited by Wrobel, Leipsic, 1876.

that Wisdom by which all things that have been made, and that shall be made, *are* made; and she herself is not made, but is as she was and shall ever be; nay, rather to *have been* and *be about to be* are not in her, but only *to be*, seeing that she is eternal; for to *have been* and to *be about to be* are not eternal. And as we spoke and yearned towards her we touched her for a moment with the whole stroke of our heart, and then we sighed, and left there bound the first fruits of the spirit, and came back to the din of our speech, wherein a word has a beginning and an end. And what is like unto thy Word, O our Lord, which abideth in itself and groweth not old, while it reneweth all things? We said, then: If for anyone the tumult of the flesh should be stilled,—stilled the phantasms of earth and water and air, stilled, too, the poles, and stilled within itself the very soul, and should pass through itself by not heeding itself; and dreams and imagined revelations should be stilled, and every tongue and every symbol, and whatsoever cometh into being by passing;—if for anyone all these should be utterly stilled (as in truth, if any have ears to hear these things, all say 'We made not ourselves, but he who abideth eternally, made us'), if then, so soon as they have said this, they be stilled, since they have turned our ear to him who made them, and were he himself to speak alone, not through them, but through himself, that we might hear his word, not by tongue of flesh, nor by voice of angel, nor by roar of thundercloud, nor by enigma of similitude, but himself, whom we love in all these things, himself we were to hear, without their ministry,—even as now we stretched ourselves upward, and with rapid thought touched the eternal wisdom that abideth above all things,—were this made continuous, and were other visions of fashion far unlike withdrawn, and should this vision carry away and drink in and plunge into inward joys him who beheld it, so that the eternal life should be such as that moment of insight for which we sighed, were not this: 'Enter into the joy of the Lord'?" (Book IX., chap. x.)

In such passages as this, the religious significance of the doctrine of Eternity and its close association with the conception of fruition reach their highest point; but the most elaborate and lucid exposition of the doctrine itself is to be found in the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius. It is interesting to observe that Boethius introduces the discourse in

connection with the problem of the reconciliation of free will with the fore-knowledge of God (see p. 52). "Since then, as we have shown just now, whatever is known is known not by its own nature, but by the nature of those who comprehend it, let us now consider, so far as we reverently may, what may be the condition of the Divine Being, that we may at the same time learn what his knowledge may be. That God, then, is eternal, is the common judgment of all who enjoy reason. Let us consider, then, what eternity may be. For this will reveal to us the divine nature and the divine knowledge at the same time. Eternity, then, is the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once;[1] and this becomes clearer by the comparison of the things of time; for whatever lives in time, itself present, proceeds from past to future; and there is nothing which is established in time, which can embrace the whole space of its life at once; but what pertains to to-morrow it has not yet laid hold of, what pertains to yesterday it has already lost; and even in the life of to-day, ye live only in the fluctuating and transitory moment. Whatsoever, then, endures the conditions of time, although, as Aristotle thought of the universe, it should never have begun, and should never cease to be, and its life should be stretched out in infinity of time, would not yet deserve on that account to be regarded as eternal; for it does not comprehend and embrace the whole space of its life, infinite though that life may be, at once; but the future it hath not yet; the past it hath no longer. That, then, which embraces and possesses the whole plenitude of unlimited life at once, from which nought of the future is absent, from which nought of the past has flowed away, *that* is rightly deemed eternal; and that of necessity, in possession of itself, must ever be present to itself, and must grasp the infinity of moving time as present. Wherefore not rightly do certain who, when they hear that Plato[2] thought this universe had neither had a beginning of time, nor would have an end, deem that, at that rate, the created universe becomes co-eternal with the Creator. No, for it is one thing to be drawn on through an interminable life, which Plato[2] attributed to the universe; it is another thing for the whole of that interminable life to be embraced all

[1] This phrase became the classical definition of "Eternity" amongst the Schoolmen.

[2] *Plato.* So all the editions that I have seen; but the context and the fact alike seem to demand "Aristotle."

at once as a present, which is manifestly the prerogative of the Divine mind. Nor should God be deemed more venerable than created things because of the quantity of his time, but rather because of that which is proper to his single being. For this unmoving present state of life is imitated by that infinite movement of the things of time; which, since it cannot express and equal the other, lapses from immobility into motion, and from the simplicity of the present, tails off into an infinite quantity of future and of past; and since it cannot possess the whole plenitude of its life at once, from the sheer fact of, in a sort of sense, never ceasing to be, seems in a way to rival that which it cannot fill out and express; binding itself to the presentness, such as it is, of this thin and fleeting moment, which presentness, since it bears a certain image of that abiding presentness, gives a semblance of being to such things as it attaches itself to. Since, then, it could not abide, it set out upon the infinite path of time, and so it came about that it stretched out by going that life the plenitude of which it could not grasp by staying. And so, if we would give the right names to things, we should follow Plato and say that God is eternal, and the universe perpetual." (Book V., Prosa vi.)

I

The germ of this conception, as of so much else in the religion as well as in the philosophy of the Middle Ages, is found in Aristotle. He speaks (*Metaphysics*, 1, 2 : 14) of philosophy as the " divinest " and most august kind of knowledge and proceeds to say that *divine* may be taken in two senses, which however coincide. It may mean such knowledge as we may have of the things of God, or such knowledge as God himself may be supposed to have. Thus he suggests the mediæval identification of *seeing God* with *seeing as God sees*.

This conception is perhaps as fundamental as any to the developed religion of the Middle Ages. It is in virtue of it that Dante perpetually speaks of God as " the mirror." It should be noted that this metaphor may be read in two ways. If it suggests to us that God is the reflector from whom all things are thrown upon our minds in their true relations, it seems to have a Pantheistic tinge which is in truth not foreign to the mediæval thought, though it is far from exhausting it.

But we may read it the other way and may conceive of our sight reaching God and then being turned upon the Universe so as to see it with transfigured sight, becoming ourselves, in our measure, as God, and seeing as he sees.

If one may push the metaphor of the mirror, the difference would be that, reading it the first way, things would take their transfigured place along the continued line of vision that looks towards God, and we should see them through him and in him as we see things behind and in the mirror. In the other, we ourselves take our position deeper in the being of God than our eyes at first can reach, and no longer look into him, but look out with him; the divine life and knowledge streaming through us, and making us live his life.

For the rest, the metaphor of the mirror is used in many ways by Dante: the angels are spoken of as mirrors because they throw the light of God upon creation, and in this sense all created beings are in their measure mirrors of God, as is implied in the opening lines of the *Paradiso*, where the word "risplende" (i. 2) strictly means *is reflected.*

J

It is not a little strange that the revival of classical studies should give the signal for the disappearance from the most accredited religious utterances of just those features in Christian theology which rose out of a combination of Greek and Hebrew conceptions. No doubt the note of Eternity and all that is connected with it, survives more or less distinctly in many currents of Christian thought, especially amongst the mystics; but from the great religious poems, for example, that have been taken as typical of their respective ages, it seems to vanish. Petrarch, who still lived under the full glow of the greatest period of mediæval theology, writes elegantly enough in his *Trionfi* of the triumph of Eternity over Time, and has all the proper phrases quite at command; but there is no feeling for the subject in him. And this in spite of his admiration for Augustine. It is significant that in the title of this last of the *Trionfi*, namely the "*Trionfo dell' Eternità*," "divinità," was substituted even in some of the earliest MSS. for "eternità," and so appears in almost all the editions, in flagrant violation of the contents of the poem. "Eternità," apparently, had already ceased to be a word which asserted itself as significant to the

copyists, and they substituted something that appealed more readily to themselves and to their readers.

Coming down to later times we find in the religious poems alike of the southern catholic Tasso (*Gerusalemme*, 1581), the northern catholic Vondel (*Lucifer*, 1654), and the northern protestant Milton (*Paradise Lost*, 1667), a marked absence of the note of Eternity and the Beatific Vision, amounting to a practical negation; and this is the more noteworthy because the echoes of the old phraseology still survive, for instance in Vondel's most celebrated chorus, and in Milton's fine *Hymn to Time*.

Some aspects, at least, of this sense of the Eternal reappear in great beauty in Wordsworth. They answer to the whole trend of Wordsworth's own spiritual nature; but it would be interesting to know whether they had taken form under the influence of Coleridge, who tells us that while still a schoolboy he read the works of Plotinus (205–270), where he would find the Platonic, or rather the Neo-Platonic, conception of Eternity conspicuous enough. It is true that the most striking passages on Eternity in the *Prelude* refer to a period before Wordsworth had met Coleridge; but this is by no means conclusive. (Cf. *Prelude*, Book vi. 237–9.)

K

Probably those who are unacquainted with mediæval theology have an exaggerated conception of the prominence of the thought of hell in the mind of the great theologians. But sometimes, in the midst of passages of the utmost religious beauty, some reference to hell sends a shudder through the reader's soul. We may instance a passage in the *Paradisus Animi*. This is a treatise usually ascribed to Albertus Magnus. Cardinal Manning says of it: "There are three books which always seem to me to form a triad of Dogma, of Poetry, and of Devotion—the *Summa* of St. Thomas, the *Divina Commedia* and the *Paradisus Animi*. All three contain the same outline of the Faith. St. Thomas traces it on the intellect, Dante upon the imagination, and the *Paradisus Animi* upon the heart." (Letter to Father Bowden, p. xxvii of the English translation of Hettinger's book on Dante, 1894.) Now this treatise contains a magnificent passage, in which we are told how the true believer may share in the joy of God, rejoicing with him

in all the blessedness and perfection which is eternally inherent in his being; rejoicing with him that he is in need of nought, but sufficeth for himself and for all his creatures; rejoicing with him in the order of heaven and earth and of all things that are therein, in all his works from the beginning of the world to the end of the ages, in his incarnation, in his revealed and hidden judgments; rejoicing with him "*with respect to the devils, to the souls in hell,* in Limbus, in Purgatory; with respect to the wicked men upon earth. For whatsoever God Omnipotent hath inherently of perfection, of goodness and of blessedness in himself, whatsoever of glory the angels and the saints have in heaven, whatsoever of grace and virtue there abideth in the Church and the faithful have in her; all of this becometh each man's own in that he shareth in God's joy." The passage will be found under the heading *Congratulatio.* The italics are, of course, my own.

L

The feelings with which Luther and Melanchthon witnessed the Peasant War are well known. They are acknowledged and deplored by their warmest admirers. Another striking example may be found in the *Pammachius* of Thomas Kirchmeyer (or Naogeorgus, as he called himself), published in 1538. In this gloomy and powerful drama (No. 3 in the *Lateinische Litteraturdenkmäler* referred to above), Satan's three chief aides-de-camp are Planus (Error), Stasiades (Mutiny), and Chremius (Greed). Stasiades, in reporting his day's work, rehearses a fine socialistic harangue which he delivered in a certain great city, thereby producing a riot suppressed with terrible slaughter. Satan thereon expresses his satisfaction. (Lines 1236–1300.)

M

The passage occurs near the beginning of *Eine Duplik* published in 1778, one of Lessing's controversial writings which sprang out of his publication of the "Wolfenbüttel fragments."

It runs: "It is not the truth which a man possesses or supposes himself to possess, but the honest pains which he has taken to come at the truth that constitutes his significance. For it is not by the possession, but by the search for truth that

he develops the powers wherein his ever-growing perfection consists. Possession brings quiet, indolence, pride.

"If God held all truth clasped in his right hand, and in his left hand nothing but the ever-active impulse towards truth, though coupled with the condition that I must for ever wander in error, and were to say to me: 'Choose,' I should throw myself humbly upon his left, and should say: 'Father, give! The pure truth is for thee alone.'"

But what about the "honesty" of the pains taken to get at the truth by the man who would deliberately and by choice renounce it for ever sooner than have it?

N

The fifth chapter of John Stuart Mill's autobiography (1873) produced a profound impression on the public mind, chiefly because it gave a powerful presentation of an experience usually connected with religious doubt or misgiving, but in this instance manifesting itself in the mind of one who had never had any theological convictions at all. Mill had been brought up to regard certain social reforms as the supreme object of endeavour, and suddenly he asked himself what life would be worth when all these objects were gained; and the answer he was forced to give himself was: Nothing. He did not escape from the consequent depression until his study of Wordsworth revealed to him a life which was not only worth the getting, but worth the having.

"What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings; which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial source of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence." P. 148.

I hold that, in some shape or form, every man thus find his

Beatific Vision, unless his effort is to remain on the level of an unconscious impulse, or to be refined into an organized hypocrisy.

O

Instances will readily occur to the reader. The conception (or rather the want of accurate conception) of "Infinity" as used by mathematicians is a perennial source of the juggling use of formulæ. More recently the Fourth Dimension has assumed the chief rôle. Abbott's "Flatland" is a monumental instance of this abuse of mathematical conceptions, or no conceptions. Much talk about "other planes of existence," and so forth, comes under the same category.

P

I cannot say that I am disturbed by the problem of the reconciliation of man's free will with that Divine foreknowledge which is involved in the conception of God seeing as a co-existent whole what we see as a succession. That I can choose whichever I like of two courses is to me a fact of experience and consciousness; and moreover I seem to observe that the most convinced determinist, by an inherent necessity of his nature, practically, though not of course theoretically, exempts *himself* from the universal law, and is conscious as he speaks and as he plans his future action, of being not a channel only but an independent source of determining influences. Determinism seems to fail in giving any account of the phenomena of consciousness, which constitute the very matter under examination. If, then, the assertion of the doctrine of the free will means a negative declaration that no system of determinism is satisfactory, I give it my hearty assent. But if in its turn it professes to have given an intelligible and positive explanation, or even statement, of the phenomena of volition, I cannot say that it wins my adhesion. I know that "I" can at this moment choose which "I" like out of a number of alternatives. But who "I" am, how "I" came to be what I am, *why* "I" choose this course in preference to another,—are to me matters so profoundly inscrutable, that I am utterly unprepared to declare what are the intellectual implications involved in the fact of my free choice. Nor have I ever been able to get away from the

thought that when the choice comes, I *shall* do one of the things which will then be possible for me to do, so that there *is* something that I then *shall* do. Whether God knows what I shall do or not, I shall as matter of fact do the one that I shall do and not the other. Whatever perplexity is involved in this consideration is not escaped by carrying up into heaven the policy of the ostrich, and conceiving a Deity who does not know the future. Again, when I consider the difference between an oyster and a dog, and the smaller but still considerable difference between a dog and a Shakespeare or a Newton, I confess to being filled with amazement at the certainty with which so many philosophers and theologians define the nature of the knowledge of God. There seems to me to be profound truth in the remark of Boethius (*op. cit.*), that we begin at the wrong end if we strive to determine the relations between God's *fore*-knowledge and human freedom; because the nature of knowledge depends more upon the nature of the knower than upon the nature of the thing known. The idea which a shellfish and a man entertain of the ocean may be presumed to differ more than the notions which a man entertains of the ocean and of the land. If, then, we may reverently enter into such inquiries at all, it must be by striving to form some more adequate conception of the nature of the divine *knowledge*, resting assured that God's knowledge of the future must be less like *our* knowledge of the future, than it is like *his* knowledge of the past.[1]

Since, then, I can form no adequate conception of what free will on the one hand, and what God's fore-knowledge on the other hand really imply, even from the human point of view, I am far indeed from daring to pronounce on the compatibilities and the incompatibilities of the divine conceptions, or to limit the knowledge of God so as to make it fit with any deductions from my own experiences.

[1] Nor is this renunciation of any human capacity to measure the divine knowledge or the divine modes of being tantamount to agnosticism. Analogies, I know, are not arguments, and they may repel one while they attract another; but I cannot help thinking that there may be comfort and suggestion to many a humble soul in the thought that a dog or horse has a knowledge of a man that is perfectly real and true, however inadequate; and that for the very reason that the man has *taught* the animal something about himself, which something constitutes the creature's highest life. Surely, though we may be in a much higher degree incapable of gauging the life of our Creator, yet we may humbly trust that what he has taught us of himself is true.

Nor have I ever been able to find satisfaction in that other common conception connected with the free will, in virtue of which we are taught that the possibility of evil was the necessary price which God had to pay for the free will of man. We are ourselves perpetually engaged in attempting to exterminate evil—not by exterminating, but by developing and enlightening the free will of man. It is clear, then, that we ourselves do not believe that depravity and wickedness are inherently and eternally involved in freedom of choice; and it is strange that we should declare that God could not guard against evils which we cheerfully attempt to guard against ourselves. My own reflections on this awful problem (which, however, do not amount even to an attempted solution) will be found in my sermon *Unitarianism as a Theology* (Essex Hall, 1892), and in an article on "Evolution and the Existence of Satan," contributed, as one of a series by various hands, to the *Christian Reformer*, July 1886 (Williams and Norgate).