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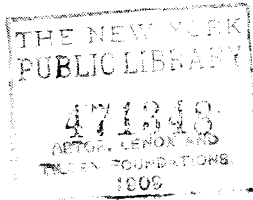
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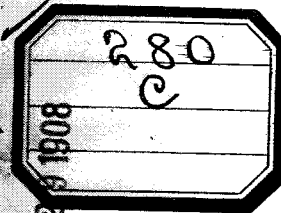
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PREFACE

It is related that the sacred Ark of the Jews was on one occasion sent forth by the Philistines to be carried whithersoever the cattle might be Divinely guided to bear it; either further into Philistia, or back to its own place in the land of Israel. With some such feelings as those which may have swelled in the hearts of the men of old as they watched to see whither their holy treasury was borne, we must surely in our day look forth over the fields of human thought and seek to discern in what direction our Ark of Faith is going forth, and in what region of opinion it will rest at last. That it is in truth moving onward, there can be little question. The tabernacle where our fathers worshipped has visibly been lifted up, and no longer stands

on its old ground; and with it the innermost shrine of our religion — our Belief in God himself — our Tables of Moral Law — our blossoming Staff of Hope of Immortality — are all moved from their resting place and carried onward to some far-off bourn. Well may we strive with straining eyes to discover what manner of land it is whither we must follow them — a land of green pastures and still waters, where our souls may dwell in peace; or a land of fiery dragons, and scorpions, and drought, through whose interminable arid wastes we must wander evermore.

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PART II.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT PROBLEM.

BENEATH the multiform religious controversies of our time, it seems possible to discern an underlying principle of unity. There is the same object at heart among the advocates of the oldest and of the newest, of the broadest and of the narrowest, systems of theology pressed on our attention. More or less distinctly all have perceived that a profound and radical change is taking place in the whole current of human thought; and more or less vividly all have apprehended the danger that this change may reach even to the ultimate grounds on which religious belief has hitherto been founded. Faith in the existence of a righteous God, — faith in the eternal Law of Morality, — faith in an Immortal Life, — this triune faith is the great treasure of the human race, which each perceives to be threat-

ened, and which each would, in his own manner, and to the uttermost of his power, secure forever against the dread invasions of doubt.

True, that beyond these primary articles of belief many are striving to obtain the acceptance of other and more recondite spiritual verities, old and new. There is in our time a double action going forward, — both a disintegration of all which seemed most solid in the beliefs of antiquity (scientific and historic, no less than theologic), and at the same time a crystallization of certain other ideas which hitherto have floated undefined in the atmosphere of human thought. We doubt many things which our fathers never doubted, and look on things which they accepted with unquestioning confidence, as, at the very best, beset with difficulties. But, on the other hand, we hold certain moral and spiritual truths as familiar and recognized principles, which, to their minds, never assumed any form or consistency, even if they unconsciously underlaid much of their feelings and conduct. Still, however valuable these truths may be, however earnestly they may be preached, they are wholly secondary to the fundamental axioms of religion of which we have spoken; and their most ardent apostles must more anxiously strive to secure for us, and for mankind forever, those ultimate grounds on which they, and all our holiest interests, depend, — the belief in God, in Virtue, and Immortality.

Not by any means on the surface, however, lies this great motive of our controversies. Few — even of the recognized teachers of religions, who are most ready to denounce the “infidelity” of the times — would be willing to acknowledge how far the doubts of the age have actually advanced towards questioning these great truths. A few years ago, it was remarked in some provincial town in England, that, on the same day on which the clergy were holding a discussion concerning the Gorham controversy, and the mode in which baptism operated in regeneration, the working men of the place were debating in their hall the question, “Whether there were any proof of the existence of God?” Just in this manner are learned men writing and preaching now throughout the land, arguing as if the only opinions threatened were such matters as the authenticity of certain portions of the Bible, and the bearings of modern science on some scriptural narratives. Underneath this thin ice, over which the controversialists perform their evolutions with more or less grace and vigor, there lies an abyss — the abyss, cold, dark, and fathomless — of utter scepticism.

Yet not without influence on the deeper questions which lie beneath them are these controversies concerning sacred books and scientific discoveries; and doubtless, with a latent consciousness that such is the case, are they carried on by those who could not

otherwise expend on them such labor. The security of faith in the fundamental truths of religion, while it is the object nearest at heart to nearly all thinking men, is yet sought for by them in the most opposite ways; and accordingly as they seek it, they are inevitably enlisted on one side or the other of the present controversies. Let us endeavor to understand this matter clearly.

The possession of religious faith by mankind may be attributed either to an historical revelation or to some other source. It may be maintained that we owe our knowledge of God mainly to his supernatural revelation of himself in past times, or mainly to his natural revelation of himself at all times, through conscience and reason. Briefly, we may describe these two sources of belief as the *traditional* and the *original* revelation.

Now if a man regard tradition as the main source of belief, it is inevitable but that in looking round for means whereby it is to be secured in a period of convulsion, he will conclude that on the safeguard of the tradition will depend its perpetuation; and that the task of all friends of religion must be to remove the objections against, and enforce the evidences in favor of, the tradition.

On the other hand, if he regard belief as mainly original, it is equally inevitable that in looking round

for means whereby it is to be secured, he will conclude that on the strength of the religious consciousness must depend its perpetuation; and that the task of all friends of religion must be to enforce reverence for the sanctity of that consciousness, and remove every obstruction to its fullest and highest development.

To a certain distance these two may work together, and the same theologian may write *Evidences of Christianity* and of *Natural Theology*. But a time arrives (and our generation beholds its commencement) when this harmony is no longer possible; and in the face of the approaching armies of doubt, each man must range himself definitely under one banner or another. Is the traditional revelation to be our main ground of faith? Then we must admit it to be our *ultimate* one, and hold it up against any argument drawn from the opposing consciousness of mankind. Is the original revelation our ultimate ground? Then we must face the conclusion, that, however fallible that ground may seem, *here* lies our sole reliance; and that where tradition opposes itself to consciousness, it must be abandoned.

Thus we have inevitably two parties in religious controversy,—the Traditionalists, whose line of defence tends to depreciate consciousness; and the Rationalists, whose line tends to depreciate tradition. It is a necessity of the case that the friends of the one system

should become the antagonists of the other. The first look to revelation as the Ark on which the salvation of humanity, in the approaching extremity, must depend, and which they are bound, by every means, to strengthen and secure; restoring whatsoever may have been wasted by the waves of time, or worn by the abrasion of the rocks of science on which it has of late been often cast. The other party looks to the universal religious sentiment as the Life-boat which can alone float triumphantly over the floods of doubt, and which they desire to cut loose from the sinking vessel of tradition, entangled in whose wreck it might for a time be submerged. Neither party, Traditionalists or Rationalists, — none who believe in God and his perpetual providence, — can seriously fear that faith in him will ever be suffered wholly to die, and be lost to mankind. To believe in God is to believe in the eternity of religion. But such belief, even when firmest, does not necessarily exclude the fear that a long “eclipse of faith,” a long period of wide-spread and most terrible scepticism, may at any time intervene. The friends of tradition feel assured that God will never forsake his Church; but they also believe that an anti-Christian power may overspread the minds of men, and succeed in driving the Church into the wilderness. The believers in the veracity of the religious consciousness of man are assured that their

ground of faith is wide and deep as human nature itself; and that unless the Creator miraculously transform and degrade that nature, all the generations of the future, as of the past, will believe and adore. But even they cannot but fear that if the lessons of that religious consciousness be persistently tied up and entangled with a mass of opinions and dogmas, of which the advance of science and philosophy compels the rejection, then to the millions who lack time and patience to dis sever the two, there will arrive a transition period of great difficulty and danger.

Well may the contest be a long and hard one, in which such interests are involved. Worthy of all our attention and study is the question at issue. No choice more solemn can be given us in life, than the decision whether by the one path or the other we shall find for ourselves the shelter wherein we may abide while the storm-clouds of doubt or passion sweep over our souls. No controversy in which we can engage can entail more awful responsibility than that which shall make us either the upholders of a false and rotten system, ere long to betray those who have trusted in it to all the terrible perils of a broken-down creed, or else the advocates of that blessed faith which shall yet be the salvation of our race, — the “builders up of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in.”


In the following pages it will be our aim to en-

deavor, not, indeed, to presume to determine this great and solemn question, but to clear up some of its preliminary positions, to enable ourselves better to judge of the bearings of the contest as it is now carried on upon both sides. Though the controversy may be resumed, as we have said, into the question between tradition and consciousness, — between an historical and a traditional faith, — yet it has many subordinate phases, many marked differences in the lines of thought followed out by those who virtually fight under the same standard. To enable us to judge in any way fairly of each great party, it is but just that, instead of confining our attention to any section of either side, we should endeavor to understand the standpoint of every one, the arguments they rest on, and the practical results of their views. Though one section, or many sections, of either Revelationists or Rationalists may stand on grounds which we perceive to be untenable, yet still if other more advanced sections of the same party should prove, on examination, to hold a different attitude, our conclusions ought to be modified to meet such a discovery. In the hope of obtaining some such fair and true estimate of the various religious parties now existing around us, we shall try to sketch the position which each appears to occupy, both as regards the others, and especially

as regards the great question at issue, — the true grounds on which God (as we needs must trust) will hereafter lead mankind to rest the faith in himself and in his holy law, and in a life beyond the grave.

CHAPTER II.

THE SOLUTIONS OF THE PROBLEM.

UCH has been said and written of late on the due influence of tradition in matters of religion. The truth seems to lie a little behind the usual view of the question. The tenure by which a truly devout man holds his faith in God, is one which may dispense with any evidence which his fellow-men, past or present, can afford him. He "*knows* what he has believed." The existence of One who hears his prayers has become a matter of immediate consciousness; and he no more looks round for further proof, than for that of the friend by his side, or of the sun over his head. Nay, if by any chance the evidences, historical or metaphysical, on which he at first relied, break down, and he finds his Church erroneous, or his philosophy untenable, he is no whit disturbed. The scaffolding may fall, for the

temple is built. But before this blessed state of things can be attained, there has been a period inevitably passed through during which he could *not* have dispensed with some such assistance. Till the experience of religious communion has been gained, and even repeated often enough to exclude the doubt that it was a mere imaginary and self-reflective phenomenon, there is imperative need of some external assurance which shall enable a man to *try* for himself the veracity of spiritual truths. He must, by some means, have enough belief *given* him to help him to make the first step, and then he may walk on his way with growing confidence. Now the help by which this first step is made, is almost universally a traditional one. Albeit the instinct is assuredly latent in the child's breast (else could no power awaken it); and although, if left unaided, there is evidence to show that in many cases it would awaken of itself, and feebly feel after the Great Power above it, yet the ordinary and natural course of humanity is that "one generation should declare God's work unto another," and show his mercy. It is the great, the thrice-blessed TRADITION OF PRAYER which has taught us all. Our mothers were our first prophets. They showed us the path of the sky as naturally as the parent bird teaches its young to soar; and trusting ourselves to their guidance, we lifted our fluttering hearts on high, and found that we *could* rise into the upper air.

But in a general sense, for a nation at large, this tradition of religion is embodied in a Church. The religion of the community is assured by the tradition of the community. Here is the unquestionable utility of churches, — to convey, to sustain, to enforce with the equal pressure and vast weight of the representatives of the religious consciousness of a whole community the faith of all upon all. The philosophic opponent of an historical revelation must himself admit that, for *this* purpose, the service done by the churches is incalculable, and indispensable to the religious interests of mankind. Even if philosophical systems hereafter should slowly displace the belief in miraculous revelations, yet not until piety should have permeated the whole spirit of the age, and every man become a true minister of religion, could the world afford to dispense with an institution which is the embodied tradition of religion itself. Thus we find in human nature a want which points distinctly to *some* traditionary system, and which may most easily be understood to point to a system guaranteeing a past *supernatural* as well as natural revelation of himself by God to man. And beside this natural and real want, many artificial ones have been alleged for such a system. It has been asserted that human instincts and reasonings are all utterly unreliable, and human nature itself so “depraved” that all its tendencies are rather to falsehood than to truth.

Rationalists may assert that these doctrines are little more than premises which have been found to suit the foregone conclusion, that God *has* given a revelation transcending the natural faculties of man, and that therefore those faculties *must* have been unfit to reach the vital truths of religion without it. But, in any case, the natural and artificial needs for a traditional system being actually added together in the majority of men's minds, it is no wonder that they should look exclusively to the maintenance of such a system as the means of preserving religion. Lose this, and — in their opinion — all must be lost. The isolated family traditions of piety, the vague and faint individual instincts of devotion, the difficult evidences of natural theology, which will yet remain, will in a short time run dry, evaporate, and be forgotten. The invasions of doubt and of passion can no longer meet sufficient resistance, and a millennium of scepticism and sin must be inaugurated.

We shall hereafter consider the legitimacy of this conclusion, and examine how far the natural need of a tradition of prayer is the same thing as the need for an historical, supernatural revelation; and also how far the need of an external revelation can be logically deduced from the alleged inadequacy of the internal revelation of himself by God in the soul. Our present concern is only to trace out the results of this view, whose origin we have explained, — namely, the opinion

that a traditional revelation is the primary source of faith, and that to its maintenance we must look for the security of the belief of mankind in the great truths of religion.

Assuming, then, that an historical revelation is the basis of sound faith, we find the party who upholds it placed in a peculiar attitude as regards the thoughts of the age. There is, of course, only one historical religion to be considered in our time; and this — Christian — religion involves a great deal more than the assertion of the primary truths of the existence of God, of virtue, and of immortality. We should much misconstrue the position of Christian advocates if we forget that, precious as they deem these primary truths, they by no means think them sufficient for mankind. The historical revelation, in their view, has added to these fundamentals many other doctrines "necessary to salvation," — the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, and many more: in a word, the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Thus they hold, as we may say, a double cause, — the cause of simple religion, as taught by revelation, and the cause of the more complicated system of theology involved in the same revelation. Here arises the collision with the spirit of the age. These peculiar Christian doctrines, in numberless ways, run counter to the philosophy and science of our times. The most superficial observer perceives that the two

are not in harmony. A gulf has opened up wider and wider, century after century. The ideas of the writers neither of the Old Testament nor the New, of the Fathers of the Nicene Council, nor yet of the framers of our own Thirty-Nine Articles, were in natural concord with those which are current among us now, and which breathe through our literature. Here, then, the adherents of an historical revelation are brought up face to face with a difficulty which, by one means or another, they *must* dispose of; for the machinery of religion can by no means work when its wheels are forever caught and reversed by the current of thought in which they are placed. Two ways are open to them: either they may keep firmly to the doctrines of the past, and compel, as well as they can, the new ideas to harmonize therewith; or they may modify the old doctrines in such manner as shall fit them to meet the new ideas.

By one or other of these processes alone can some harmony be established, and an historical revelation enabled to continue its influence on the thought of the age. By one or other of these methods, then, does each advocate of revelation, more or less consciously, and more or less logically, contend. We shall, for convenience of brevity, speak of all those who endeavor to maintain the old ideas, at the cost of the new, by the name of *Palæologists*; and of those who seek

to modify the old ideas, so as to enable them to meet the new, by the name (so vaguely applied on all sides of late) of *Neologians*.

The party of the Palæologians might logically possess as many standpoints as there are distinctive doctrines traceable in the various elder times of Christianity, — doctrines Pauline or Johannic, patristic or reformed. Practically, however, they are divided in England, at this time, into those who hold pretty closely by the standard of Laud, and that of those who hold by the Puritan party which succeeded him in power. In other words, we have an Anglican and an Evangelical party; the former exclusively belonging to the National Church, and forming the "High" section thereof; the latter embracing both the "Low" section of the Church, and nearly the whole body of "orthodox" dissenters. Vast are the differences between these two, — differences so great that they have colored the whole tone, taste, language, and literature of the two parties, — differences both of the old ideas each wishes to maintain, and of mode of treating the new ideas each desires to compel into harmony with the old. We shall first consider the position assumed by the High Church party, with special reference to the great controversy concerning the grounds of religious faith.

CHAPTER III.

THE PALÆOLOGIAN SOLUTION.—HIGH CHURCH.



ASSUMING the basis of religious faith to be Traditional, such tradition can be derived logically from any one of three sources, — a living Prophet, a Church, or a Book. If it is to be an infallible faith, then of course the prophet, church, or book must be infallible also. Of these three bases, since Christian times we have had in Europe a few obscure instances of supposed inspired *prophets*, — from Montanus to Joseph Smith and Brother Prince, — the most remarkable and respectable of all being unquestionably Swedenborg. We have had in the Church of Rome the most complete instance of a supposed infallible *Church*; and lastly, in extreme Calvinism we have the type of a faith founded on a supposed infallible *book*. All the other churches and sects of Christendom necessarily hold a less logical position than

either of these three, and shift their ground between a church and a book and the fourth great basis of religion, which is independent of tradition, and by no means to be harmonized with any such authoritative principle, namely, the natural reason and consciousness of mankind. Thus we find these churches holding one doctrine because the Church teaches it, and rejecting another because it is not to be found in the Bible, albeit the Church taught it for a thousand years; and again, taking one doctrine out of the Bible, and insisting on it being literally true, because it is the infallible Word of God, and interpreting another doctrine, found in the same infallible Word, in the most metaphorical manner, because reason is opposed to the literal interpretation. In one sect there is a little more of Church authority, in another a little more Bible, in another a little more reason. But why the Church is to be listened to for this doctrine, the Bible for that, and reason for the other, it would usually be hard to show, and all the controversies between them are consequently conducted in the dark.

The High Church section of the Palæologian party occupies what may be termed the "extreme right" of the traditional school, next to the Church of Rome. It is the farthest removed from the sects who rest much weight upon individual reason, and it recognizes both the external authorities of Church and Book. It

is the one in which the antagonism of the principles of ancient authority and modern thought comes out in fullest light, albeit in many particulars it justly boasts of superior enlightenment to the other branch of the Palæologian party. The sacramental and priestly theories of religion, whether true or otherwise, are unquestionably most remote from the common feelings of our age, and belong essentially to the spirit of an earlier time. Types and symbols mark invariably the first stages of human thought, and are neglected in advanced civilization; and the principle of Authority, most needful and beneficent in the childhood of mankind, seems only to trammel the development of its manhood. All history displays to us the same tendency to advance from Allegory to Literalism, from Authority to Self-government, from Sacrifices to Commemorations, from Incantations to Prayers. The Prophet merges in the Teacher; the Priest in the Minister of religion.

Thus, then, the Church which insists on a priestly and sacramental religion, belongs essentially to the past, and stands as its truest representative, calling on man to return to the state of feeling and opinion which such a religion properly befits.

The theory of the High Church branch of the Palæologian party may be briefly stated thus: "THE BIBLE AUTHENTICATED AND INTERPRETED BY THE

CHURCH." While it is affirmed that in the Bible are contained "all things necessary to salvation," it is equally maintained that we can neither know that the Bible is true save by the testimony of the Church, nor arrive at a right comprehension of its doctrines save by her interpretation. The principle of Luther, and so many others of the early and later reformers, that we may know the Bible to be true by the "inward witness of the Spirit," is denied, first, on the grounds that it is manifestly incredible that the Spirit should afford any witness about historical facts; secondly, because such "witness" in different men has varied most importantly; thirdly, because such an argument applies only to the individuals who confess to feeling the "witness," and is inapplicable to all others. Nor will the principle of the eighteenth century apologists suffice, and permit us to establish the authority of the Bible on a chain of arguments drawn from our historical knowledge of the writers of the various books of the Bible, the authenticity of their writings, and their personal veracity and reliability; or from the internal evidence of the veracity of the books, drawn from collation of one portion with another. To such arguments the High Churchman replies that they are all unsatisfactory in the highest degree; that for many of the books of the Bible we can obtain no external evidence whatever of authenticity and reliability, seeing that we do not

even know the names of their writers; and that the evidence drawn from internal harmony, in favor of some books (e. g., of St. Paul's Epistles, by Paley) has been turned to a precisely opposite result in case of some other books (e. g., of the Gospels, by Strauss).

Thus, for the *truth* of the Bible we are driven to the testimony of the Church. And for its just *interpretation* we are no less compelled to sit at her feet. The principle of the Evangelicals, that any honest and prayerful student of the Bible is sure to be guided into all truth thereby, is refuted by a mere reference to the fact, patent to the most common observation, that such unlearned and unauthorized interpreters have deduced a great number of *different* doctrines from the Bible; and that if truth be *one*, it is quite clear many of them must have erred in finding it.

The only satisfactory ground on which we can rest our faith in the truth of the Bible, is the testimony of the Church. First, the Jewish Church testified to the Old Testament; then the Christian Church to both the New and the Old. This Christian Church, Christ himself promised should, to the end of the world, be guided by the "Comforter" "into all truth," and remain "founded on a rock." One of its great offices has been to testify to the Bible; and in doing so we may be assured, therefore, that it has the assistance of

the Holy Spirit. It does not assume to *authorize* the Bible. It *testifies* to its truth. Even humanly speaking, it supplies the one sufficient argument for its support,—a long chain of witnesses of the highest moral rank, connecting in one the Apostolic Age and our own. The Church is not only “a polity possessing illumination and guidance, but also a body of competent historical witnesses.”* And again, the only reliable *interpretation* of the Bible is that authoritatively set forth by the Church. Without this, experience proves that the most earnest students continually arrive at opposite deductions of doctrine. The same divine guidance promised to the Church, and authorizing it to *testify* to the truth of the Bible, authorizes it also to *interpret* the Bible; to declare not only what the Bible *is*, but what it *reveals*. Thus the theory of the High Church party gives to the Church of England, as a legitimate branch of the Catholic Church of Christendom, the position of the Witness and the Interpreter of the Scriptures; and it declares further, that in these Scriptures are found “all things necessary to salvation.” Therein are found the doctrines of catholic theology, and the ordinances of the Sacraments and constitution of the Church. Everything which the Church teaches, it is authorized to teach,

* *Catholic Antidotes*, by Rev. W. E. Heygate, pp. 6 and 12.

either directly from the Bible, or in virtue of the powers delegated to it by Christ, and specified in the Bible.

We shall hereafter analyze more precisely the logical tenability of the position thus assumed by the High Church party. It cannot be doubted that, in a certain broad and practical way, it has very considerable force. Men instinctively and justly look to the character of witnesses in every case of the kind; and none will pretend to undervalue that which is possessed by the universal Church of Christendom, represented in no degree unworthily by the great Church of England.

It is a great mistake, however, to estimate the strength of any religious party merely by the logic of its theory. Feeling, and not Thought, is the life of religion. No error is more flagrant than that of the section of thinkers which has been named the “Hard Church,” which assumes that, at the end of a chain of argument must arise the appropriate sentiment, and that men may be won to a faith, or driven from it, by an army of syllogisms. The great power of the High Church party undoubtedly lies in the strong appeal it makes to the feelings of a large proportion of mankind. There are those to whom a high and definite authority, clothed with the dignity of age, is of incalculable support and comfort; so great support and comfort, that it may be questioned whether the awful paths of spirit-

ual solitude, which to the strongest are terrible, could ever be trodden by them without their hearts failing them utterly. Again, there are those who belong by nature to that order of mind of which we have spoken as characterizing an earlier age than our own. Belated denizens of a primeval world, they find themselves on all sides out of harmony with the order of things around them; and wrangle with all the progressive tendencies of the age, because all their own instincts are retrograde. To minds of this class, forms and symbols are dear, — appointed teachers, appointed days and hours and ceremonials of worship, fasts and feasts, and sacraments and rituals, are all positive aids whereby, as in steps hewn for them in the rock, they climb up to heights otherwise inaccessible to their souls. Again, there are those to whom the artistic refinement, the hereditary culture (if we may call it so) of a Church whose pedigree ascends through fifty generations of saints, are things almost indispensable. Their religious sentiments expand naturally in the *cultus* of such a Church, while they shrink in the conventicle of an upstart sect, as in a lower and congenial social element. And again, there are those who, from natural temperament, seem impelled to seek in one form or another of asceticism, the girdle which shall strengthen the weak loins of duty; the corrective bitter which shall remedy the over-rich sweetness of a

too easy life. To these, again, the Church which ordains, sanctions, and regulates with authority, such asceticism, is the most welcome of physicians.

All these classes of minds are instinctively attracted to a Church assuming great authority over the conscience, regulating strictly the worship of its disciples, possessed of a long-established and unquestionable claim to respect, and countenancing a tendency to asceticism in those with whom it is inherent. When to these general grounds of acceptance, the actual Church of England is able to add the personal excellence of many of its leaders, the marvel is rather that its place should not be even higher than it is in the affections of the nation. Which of us is there who has been born in her communion, whose foreheads have worn her seal of baptism, whose infant prayers were lisped in her solemn and stately words, whose earliest associations with holy things are Sabbath memories of the village church where our fathers and mothers worshipped then, and where perchance their bones are resting now; who, in the fervor of youth's blessed piety, knelt before her altars, and took her words of peace and pardon to our souls; which of us is there who has felt these things, and who does not know the power of that Church? Ay, when all is over, and faith has broken down utterly, and we have loosened ourselves,

with tears and struggles untold, from her arms, — and yet never lose our tenderness for her, never hear a few words of her majestic liturgy, but our hearts grow soft, as at the sound of some dear, old tune; and our lips, unbidden, follow out to its close the solemn collect, or stately psalm, or grand, sonorous chant of praise? It were vain and superfluous to speak of the claims of the Church of England to the respect of the world and the affection of her children. When the day arrives — doubtless yet far distant — when she must share the fate of the rest of all our little systems, “which have their day and cease to be,” the heritors of the yet more glorious Church of the future will look back to her as having held a place in history with which no other may compare for breadth of doctrine, and for a certain manliness, as well as depth of piety, unique among the sects of Christendom. And to these merits, belonging to the whole Church, the High Church party may lawfully add, on its own account, a strict and scrupulous conscientiousness, a lofty conception of a devoted life, great delicacy and refinement of taste, freedom from many forms of vulgar cant and ignorant prejudice, keen appreciation of the ludicrous, forming a successful barrier against the absurdities of many other sects, and finally, an extent of learning and culture far surpassing that of its rivals. If every son of the Church of England may be a *man* as well as a

Christian, the High Churchman has a peculiar right to that other title, hardly less dear to our English ears, a *gentleman* also.

Now, shall we say that this great party bids fair to form the origin of the Church of the future? Can it offer to us the ground whereon we may build a faith against which the gates of hell, the doubts of earth, shall never prevail?

Let us examine for a moment the logical value of the High Church theory, “the Bible authenticated and interpreted by the Church.” That we may not err in the statement of it, we shall quote the words of a church dignitary of unquestionable orthodoxy and deservedly high reputation: “We have,” says Canon Wordsworth (for our belief in the Scriptures), “the authority of God himself, declared to us in the uniform consent and practice of his own people, acknowledging the Bible to be his Word. We have that acknowledgment authorized and confirmed by the Son of God when he came down from heaven and dwelt among us. And for our belief in the inspiration of the New Testament, as well as of the Old, we have the testimony of the Son of God, speaking by the voice of God the Holy Ghost in the Church Universal, to which he has promised his presence and his guidance even to the end.”*

* The Inspiration of the Bible. Five Lectures delivered in Westminster Abbey. By Christopher Wordsworth, D. D., Canon of Westminster. p. 106.

An array of authority such as this, all three Persons of the Trinity being called in as witnesses, is truly a solemn matter. The inquirer is overawed by the appeal beyond all reach of question or doubt, and asks himself — is he really demanding to be satisfied respecting the veracity of books which God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost have each separately stamped by their authority? If he venture, however, to proceed further, and ask more precisely *how* this divine authorization has been granted to the books, he will surely be not a little surprised to find the grounds for asserting that they have ever received anything of the kind very far from conclusive.

In the first place, the claim for the Old Testament is, that it has "the authority of God himself, declared to us in the uniform consent and practice of his own people acknowledging the Bible to be his Word." But, divested of its impressive phraseology, what does this signify other than that the Bible must have divine authority, because the Jews thought it had divine authority? We will not quibble as to the amount of our knowledge, — the passages in Josephus, Philo, and the few other authorities extant, concerning the opinion of the Jews on their law. Let it be granted fully, if desired, that we can ascertain their "uniform consent" to the divine origin of the Old Testament; still, to what amounts such "uniform consent" of the Jews?

We know that, at the time of Christ, the Jewish Church held the most monstrous and ridiculous opinions upon a variety of subjects, interpreted this same Divine Book by the principles of Kabbala; and honored, more than the moral law of Moses, those traditions of the Rabbins which Christ peremptorily condemned. To affirm that one of all their multitudinous opinions (namely, the one concerning the divine origin of their Book) can be said to bear the "AUTHORITY OF GOD," while all the rest — about angels, devils, the resurrection, Abraham's Bosom, Kabbala, and so on — were all absurd and superstitious, is truly an assumption of enormous magnitude. The Moslems speak precisely in the same high strain of the Koran,* and the Parsees of the Zend-Avesta, as the Rabbins of the Old Testament, yet their opinion influences us not at all. The Brahmins, three thousand years ago, said of their Vedas more than ever Josephus said of the Hebrew Scriptures: "To angels, to deities, and to men, the Vedas are an eye giving constant light; nor could the Veda Shastras have been written by human

* Labid, the first Arabic poet of his day, confessed himself a convert to Islam, because no one *without divine inspiration* could have composed such poetry as the Koran. A curious counterpart, truly, to the argument for the Bible from the "inward witness;" and a story suggestive of the reflection, that *if* such a poor book as the Koran could make such an impression on Eastern imaginations, what *must* the glorious poetry of the Hebrews have done?

agencies, nor can they be measured by human reason. All systems, which are repugnant to the Vedas, are founded on darkness, and shall utterly perish; their modern origin proves them vain and false."* The Sikhs not only seek divine guidance in their Adec Grunth, but find therein the promise that their Khâlsa (church) shall forever bear the divine light through the world. We merely smile at all these claims of heathens for their sacred books, and count their opinions of no consequence whatever. What is there in the opinion of the Jews that should render their judgment of so much more avail, — nay, the "AUTHORITY OF GOD?" That we find these books, beyond all comparison, superior to those of the heathens, and that the Jews were God's "own people," is nothing to the purpose. The argument rests on the *opinion of the Jews*, not on ours, as to the merit of their books; and as their being God's "own people" did not prevent their erring on a thousand other matters, it is hard to say why it should prevent their erring on this one. We demand a proof of the infallibility of the opinion of the Jews as to the infallibility of their books.

As to "the Son of God, when he came down from Heaven," having "authorized and confirmed" the "uniform consent" of the Jews, the facts appear to

* Institutes of Menu.

be that Christ frequently quoted and occasionally read the Scriptures; that he never discussed, or gave an opinion about, their authority; and that he freely replaced Mosaic tenets by his own nobler morality. It is certainly stretching a point to style this "authorizing and confirming" the current ideas of his contemporaries.

Then as to the New Testament. It is said, "we have the testimony of the Son of God, speaking by the voice of God the Holy Ghost in the Church Universal, to which he has promised his presence and his guidance even to the end." Here is truly an instance of arguing in a circle, which in any science but theology would amaze the reader. The Bible is maintained to be true because the Church Universal affirms it to be so; and the affirmation of the Church Universal must be true, because the Bible says that Christ promised it his presence and guidance! The authority of the Church is based on the Bible, and the authority of the Bible is based on the Church. Truly, in a purely logical point of view, we must admit that the High Church theory concerning the grounds of the Christian faith is hardly one calculated to afford permanent repose to the souls of men in future times.

Turning, however, from this point of the peculiar basis of *Christianity*, to our own concern in this little book, let us inquire how far the High Church system

will aid us in finding the basis for the ultimate faith of mankind in God and virtue and immortality.

The aid proffered appears to be of a somewhat dubious cast. There is considerable obscurity as to *how* the authority of the Church ought to be understood to treat the ultimate grounds of faith. It may, or may not, be apprehended to reach them at all. One view (corroborated strongly by the instructions to their missionaries, of the most orthodox Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) is, that the Church *assumes* the truth of the existence of God and of a future state to be possessed naturally by all mankind, heathen and Christian; and that the office of the Church is simply to proceed on this natural faith, and, like St. Paul, make the "unknown God" more perfectly known through Christ. Another view is that the Church practically guarantees, if it does not first teach, the belief in God and immortality; and that the disciple may consider himself as possessed, not merely of his own fallible and imperfect intuitions, corroborated by those of all other men, but of the definite warrant of the most venerable body, holding its authority in direct succession from Christ; and in his name, and that of all the prophets, apostles, and saints of old, assuring him of the truth that there is a God, since he revealed himself eighteen centuries ago; and a life beyond death, since Christ arose from the tomb.

Now the first view — that the Church *assumes* the truths of natural religion as universally possessed by mankind — manifestly leaves us very much in the same position as if there were no such church, so far as these particular truths are concerned. Nay, the Rationalist has a right to say that the Churchman only brings a fresh mass of doctrines to be believed; and consequently a fresh strain upon faith.

And for the second view — that the Church *guarantees* these fundamental truths — is it possible really to find much support therein? The Rationalist, of course, feels his own intuitions immeasurably strengthened by knowing them to have been shared by mankind in all ages, and by the wisest and best of mankind in super-eminent degree. He reads in the poetry, the philosophy, and the sacred books, of all nations, the assurance that his fellow-men have, like himself, felt ever moving within their souls a sentiment of dependence on a great Power above them; of moral allegiance to an unseen, all-righteous Judge; of hope in a never-failing life, where all the visible evidences of human existence are at an end. He sees over the whole face of the world the memorials which this great faith has built up for itself, in mosque and pagod, Christian church and heathen temple; so that scarcely may any one look around in a land once inhabited by man, and his eye shall not rest on some spire, or dome,

or broken column, or hoary cromlech, to tell him that *there* the souls of his brothers have lifted themselves up to God. From the remotest past to the latest present, from the ruined temple at Ghizeh, older than the Pyramids by which it stands, to the rude chapel which rises beside the first log-huts of the woodsman in the forests of the West, it is the same. Religion is the oldest thing in the world, and also the newest. It has spread its branches the widest, even as it has struck its roots the deepest down into the very core of our hearts. We are glad, we rejoice, our souls swell within us, when the great flood of human sympathy, pouring down from all the ages, bears to us this witness to what has been most deep and sacred in our breasts. Do we feel also that it would be much to us to possess the special warranty of a special Church, however worthy that Church may be? Is a long tradition of centuries, up to the authority of even the holiest name in history, of much avail? The strength of a chain is determined by that of its weakest part. How many weak links should we not find, say between the second century and the twelfth, if we must hang thereon our very souls, our whole faith, that we have a God and Father in Heaven! Let us give the early and the mediæval Church every possible honor; let us recognize that they bore the germ of a spiritual excellence, a divine aspiration after holiness

and communion with God, such as the ancient world never knew. Still, for all purposes of *reliance*, — all solidity of judgment, or freedom from superstition and fanaticism, — all coolness of criticism, all carefulness of statement, — none may pretend to find them either satisfactory depositors or channels of truth. If we must rest on their testimony to know the ultimate truths of religion; to know that there is a God, and that the soul of a man never dies, — then are we forlorn and miserable indeed.*

Practically, the real work of the Church, as regards the fundamental truths of religion, is probably of a different kind from either of the theories we have considered. It seems rather to consist in occupying the minds of its disciples with so vast a mass of doctrines to be believed, so long a series of propositions, that they seldom come in contact with the ultimate doubts at all. What scepticism may be in a man's disposition has an immense field to work in before he comes up near

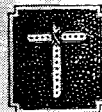
* For an astounding collection of instances of the credulity and folly of the Fathers, see Middleton's *Free Inquiry*. St. Jerome says he saw a satyr. Augustine tells of men with their heads in their breasts. Eight of the greatest of the Fathers quote the phoenix as the *proof* of the immortality of the soul. To decide which books should be canonical, it is asserted that the Nicene Fathers placed all the rolls on the altar at night, and next morning the apocryphal ones had all rolled off of themselves. Two dead bishops also signed the canon. But in this matter of miracles, there were no limits to credulity or absurdity.

to the question whether the whole vast system can possibly want its fundamental truth. The structure is so enormous, so imposing, no spectator will dream of looking to the security of the basement. If any disciple of the Church should, however, by any chance, arrive at the point of asking himself, "How do I know there is a God?" it is hard to see how he will obtain any satisfaction from discovering that he must either rest ultimately this whole foundation of his faith on that same *consciousness*, which is the common ground of the theist, and which (if followed out) contradicts the further doctrines of his Church; or else admit to himself that, after all, he must rest his whole faith in the existence of God on the veracity of the long and feeble chain of ecclesiastical tradition.

It is impossible to believe that *this* can be the Church of the future; that the Anglican ground of faith will be found to suffice when the great "shaking of the earth," to which we look forward, shall arrive. The High Church of England is the refuge — *not* for those who lack faith, and look where they may find it — but for those who possess already a superabundance thereof.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PALÆOLOGIAN SOLUTION.—LOW CHURCH.



THE Evangelical branch of the Palæologian party occupies a position wholly different from the one we have just considered. Embracing both the "Low" section in the National Church, and the great mass of orthodox Dissenters, it brings with it to the Englishman of to-day a force derived from numerical majority, which fairly counterbalances the historical pretensions of the High Church party. That a creed should possess ten million adherents *now*, is a fact of greater cogency to most men than that it should possess the sanction of an œcumenical council fifteen centuries ago. Historical claims impress the students of history, numerical majorities impress every one.

The position of the Evangelicals, as regards the basis of religion, may be stated simply enough. The

formula of Chillingworth stands still for their profession of faith, — "THE BIBLE, AND THE BIBLE ONLY, IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS." Human reason they affirm to be "depraved," and consciousness wholly unworthy of reliance. No visible Church can pretend to speak with divine authority. Our only source of religious knowledge is the Book which God has miraculously inspired to be our infallible guide to truth. With this Bible in his hand, the most ignorant of mankind may attain to a knowledge of all things necessary to salvation. Without it, the noblest intellects and purest hearts will but stumble in the dark, or be led astray to perdition, by the teaching of apostate churches. Here, then, we have a sharp and well-defined position. Of its logical tenability we shall speak hereafter. Not, however (any more than the High Church), does the Evangelical party actually stand or wield its best influence on its purely *logical* basis. On sentiments natural to a large proportion of minds does it fasten; and its argumentative grounds are, in fact, little more than the premises sought for a foregone conclusion. Evangelical Protestantism can hardly be said to be solely the result of reliance on the Bible, since the same Bible has been found to lend itself to very different exegesis by twenty different sects. It is the result of a peculiar form of human feeling which finds in the Bible a sufficient sanction. True, that at the

period of the Reformation, the sudden downfall of the dogma of Papal Infallibility left men still persuaded that some other Infallible Guide was appointed for us, — nay, that religious faith could by no means dispense with one; and the Infallibility of the Bible, therefore, naturally offered itself as the sole available resource. But from that Bible, as we have said, many another scheme beside the Evangelical might have been drawn, and *has* been drawn. The Evangelical one alone meets the spiritual *appetites* (if we may so express it without irreverence) of a vast number of human souls. Let us endeavor to define this order of minds.

It will be a bright day for philosophy when some great student and teacher shall gather for us the materials for a comprehensive, scientific Religious Anthropology. We need immensely to obtain such a basis of facts collected from the history of all past and existing creeds, their rites and doctrines, as shall enable us to determine what is really common and natural to mankind, and what is merely partial and temporary. Doubtless, whenever such a science is inaugurated, many surprising and most valuable conclusions will be obtained. The same ideas and feelings, bursting out under the most varied conditions of civilization and mental progress, will be found to have produced an amazing identity of rite and dogma; and, on the other hand, many pedantic assumptions of universal

wants and desires will be disposed of forever. Among these last erroneous assumptions, one which it would need no reference to remote or ancient creeds to disprove, but only some acquaintance with the real feelings of our fellow-Englishmen of to-day, is the favorite idea of Anglicans, that all persons equally need, and would be equally benefited by, a formal liturgy, a splendid *cultus*, sacramental rites, and priestly authority. We have just spoken of the vast service such a system is calculated to afford to *one* class of minds. It is precisely (as experience proves) equally calculated to *injure* another class. If one man can pray best in a gorgeous cathedral, another can pray best in the plainest chapel, and is merely distracted from his devotions by the appeals which the cathedral makes to his admiration and attention. If one man can best follow the well-known liturgy, whose every word is familiar to him from childhood, another feels his soul lifted up by the spontaneous utterance of supplication and thankfulness of some living man praying along with him; and to him the formal liturgy falls as dead and cold as music performed by machinery. If one man finds comfort and support in priestly authority, and fasts, and solemn rites, another finds them in the mysterious lessons of the inner life, and is only trammelled by the rites which bid him sorrow when his soul is glad, or rejoice when it is in darkness, and is

offended by the intervention of any priestly inspector or mediator into the solemn secrecy of his relation to the Father of Spirits.

These differences are simply *facts* of human nature. It is utterly idle to rebel against them, and for the Anglican to insist on the Evangelical coming for assistance to services which will only hurt his spiritual instincts, and for the Evangelical to condemn and despise those same services which are of vast and true benefit to his brother. We may view the difference as we please, and say that the Anglican is more cultivated, more reverent, more susceptible to æsthetic emotions; and that in finding a method whereby the soul may be raised out of the vulgar realities of life, and attuned to the highest emotions of religion, he has done the greatest service to piety. Or we may say that the Evangelical has grasped so closely the spiritual relation of sinful man towards God, that all he needs for his worship is to be freed from every outward interruption of the senses, and to be enabled to bow his soul in penitence, with no other help than the simultaneous prayers of those who feel like himself. We shall doubtless view these matters in one light or another, as our own mental constitution ranks us in one class of religionists or the other. But what it behooves us all to do is to make room in our systems for both orders, and respect at once those who seek to reach

God *through* form, and those who seek to reach him by dispensing with forms which to them are useless.

To judge at all justly of the claims of Evangelicalism, it is doubtless needful that a man should himself have passed into that atmosphere of feeling, and partaken of those profound spiritual emotions which are the life of the system. As it has been beautifully said, — Religions, like the painted windows of a cathedral, can only be seen from within; from the outside they are dull and colorless. The Evangelical system seen from without is, in a critical point of view, a mass of doctrines, of which hardly one is logically tenable; and in a moral point of view, in as far as it approaches to Calvinism, in so far it is obnoxious to the natural conscience of mankind. But when the Evangelical system comes to be seen from within, the critical objections disappear, and are borne down by the torrent of emotions produced by the affecting ideas presented to the believer's mind; and, in a moral point of view, the obnoxious dogmas become invisible to the mental eye dazzled with the double glare of the lurid fires of Tophet on one side, and the blazing streets of the New Jerusalem on the other. The way in which it is possible for men thus to believe what is rationally incredible, and to forget what is morally odious, is amazing to those who have not personally experienced the power of a vivid creed to silence reason and dull the moral judgment.

The man for whom the Evangelical faith is as natural as is the Anglican for the cultivated, fastidious, and ascetic, is a man capable of intensely realizing religious ideas.* He wants no imposing outward church, no long-descended authority of tradition, to warrant or aid his emotions or his faith. Still less does he need any logical array of evidences. Present to him certain doctrines through the medium of some ignorant preacher, devoid of every single qualification for his office save earnestness, — a preacher to make the Anglican shudder with disgust or smile with contempt, — if those doctrines touch by any chance the prepared fuel in his heart, he takes fire, his whole soul is inflamed. The ideas he has grasped require nothing like evidence, — nay, evidence for them seems an impertinence. By the fact of having so vividly grasped them he is satisfied, and more than satisfied. The "scheme of Redemption," beset at every step with moral and philosophical difficulties to other men, seems to him the perfection (if we may say it without irreverence) of Divine ingenuity. Its resemblance to a human commercial transaction strikes him as the most natural instead of the most offensive thing in the world. Then upon this ground he goes on, and grad-

* Dr. Arnold defines him to be "a good Christian with a narrow understanding, a bad education, and little knowledge of the world." *Life*, vol. i., c. vi.

ually, by the blessed laws of spirit, the entrance into the temple of religion being once effected, he learns higher divine lessons, — lessons of a true penitence, which is no longer mere fear of punishment; a true love, which is no longer mere gratitude for personal redemption, — till at last the faith which began in the reception of a narrow dogma often blooms out into the fullest and sweetest piety. The young Evangelical is as different from the aged, as the green fruit from the rich, ripe one. The whole nature of the man is mellowed and softened. A beautiful type then, indeed, is presented to our reverence and our affection; so beautiful a one that it is hard for some of us to think of religion and virtue under any other form than that of the gentle saints we have known, who visibly “walked with God” before our eyes, their lives all holy, and their deaths all joy.

It is an ungrateful task to seek out the errors in such a creed, the limitations in such natures; yet it is clear enough that through the gate by which *they* have entered the temple, a large mass of mankind can never enter. And why? Because, as we have said, it is a special mental constitution in the Evangelical which enables him to fasten on certain ideas, and live upon them, — without authority, without logical proof, without outward excitements. It is no marvel he believes in the doctrine of Election, for only one born with his

disposition can arrive at his conclusion. Only a man in whom Feeling preponderates over Thought can in our day become an Evangelical Christian. He can hardly be a cautious thinker, a student of great width of learning, an artist-nature, or a man capable of throwing himself into the feelings of others in distant times and varied forms of civilization. His very clearness and strength of conviction depend on his narrowness of view; and all his power in the world comes from the sharpness with which he would plough his furrow into men's hearts. Even his hatred of sin, from which much of his depth of goodness arises, has in it somewhat narrow and Judaic, — scrupulous of evil rather than free, healthy, and inspiring. As to doubt, he has no mercy for it, no room for it in his charity. To the Anglican, Schism is in religion what rebellion is in politics; and he hates Heresy mainly because, among upright men, it leads to Schism. But to the Evangelical, Heresy in any of his cardinal doctrines is high treason against God. He who “denies the Lord who bought him” is outside the pale of his indulgence. There are no promises for such a one, but only “a certain fearful looking for of judgment.” The Christian who has rejoiced with St. John, that he knows he has passed from death unto life because he “loves the

brethren;"* cannot go so far as to love the heretic. Nay, the human pity which would naturally swell in his heart at his deplorable state, is checked by profound indignation at his turpitude; for as all virtue (to the Evangelical) is summed up in Faith, so all wickedness is included in Doubt. Other sects may look on it as a sin; but to the Evangelical it is *the* sin. Other sects are indignant because the sceptic piles difficulties on the path to Heaven; the Evangelical is indignant because he turns men round and directs them to Hell.

It is but natural that these things should be so. Outcries against the bigotry of men who do but logically carry out their most profound convictions, are evidences of superficial judgment on the part of those who make them. Let us but imagine what it must be honestly to believe that *all* virtue and morality, all possibility of access to God, here on earth, all chance of escape from eternal perdition hereafter, must depend on the belief in certain dogmas; and then let us see how we could meet calmly the assertion that those dogmas were untrue. By the very hypothesis of his creed, the Evangelical is bound to treat all Doubt as a

* Taken in a large sense, — the "brethren" understood to be *all who love God*," of whatever creed, — how profound a truth lies in this text! There is no better test of the reality of our religion than this, — can we love *not only* those who agree with us in opinion, but who *love God*, however widely they differ from us in opinion, and even condemn our opinions?

moral offence. He is bound to think the sceptic *must*, in some occult way, have put himself out of the pale of that Divine guidance which else would have preserved him from his fatal wanderings. By the very mental constitution which has made him an Evangelical Christian, he is unable to sympathize with logical objections coming to the attack of spiritual sentiments. If he be a practical philanthropist, the case is even worse. Every worker among the ignorant classes must feel the temptation to dogmatism, to use the downright heavy weapon of authoritative commands from God, against the vices with which he has to contend. It is one of the hardest tasks of the honest free-thinker to keep clear of all such rough and ready moral implements. To every Christian philanthropist, the man who suggests doubts of the authority of the Bible is blunting the weapon by which alone he hopes to combat Apollyon; and helping the poor drunkard or profligate to escape the force of the Divine condemnation on his sins, and to turn round on the reformer, with sceptical questions and reprobate defiance. But to the Evangelical who is not so much aiming to reform men from this or that vice, as to convert them altogether from a natural to a spiritual life, the sceptic is worse than a mere robber of weapons. He is the incarnate Enemy himself, who (as in old Bunyan's glorious allegory) "straddles all across the way of life," and forbids one step of progress.

Will this Evangelical Church, with all its merits and limitations, be the Church of the Future? Does it offer ground of faith in God and immortality, which shall avail when the flood rises, and the Anglican's basis is submerged? Here is the question for us to answer. It has done, and is still doing, vast good in the world. With all its narrowness and mistakes, with some hideous dogmas wherewith it has clouded the face of God and tortured the souls of men, it has accomplished a great work. In the company of saints hereafter how many thousands will have reached the higher mansions of the heavenly kingdom through the path of Evangelical Christianity God alone can count. But our concern is with the near future. Where will this standard of religion be a few years hence — in the vanguard of human thoughts leading us all? or fallen behind in the swift march, followed only by women and the weaker stragglers of the great army?

The *logical* basis of Evangelicalism is clear enough. There is here no doubt (as in the case of the High Church) as to the grounds on which faith in all religious truths is demanded. The Low Churchman cannot possibly pretend to found his ultimate faith on the natural consciousness of man, because his favorite dogma is the utter unreliability, corruption, depravity of all our natural faculties. If the moral difficulties attending the doctrine of the Atonement — or the re-

ligious difficulties attending that of eternal punishment — be urged against him, he invariably turns on his opponent, and cuts the ground under his feet, by asserting that man's moral sense and natural religious sentiments are wholly beneath attention, — so corrupt and false as to be unworthy to be brought into the argument. The "Revealed Word" alone is the ground of any knowledge whatever of Divine things on which reliance can be placed. "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

Here is the argument drawn to a narrow issue. The case lies in a nutshell. If the Bible be true, all is clear; if it be false, there is no residue of faith for man. The whole interests of religion forever are staked on this single point — the Infallibility of the Bible. Alas! are these well-meaning friends of religion wise to stake them thereon?

In the first place, all arguments which commence by denying the veracity of the human mental faculties are patently suicidal. If man's mind be wholly corrupt, and all its conclusions unreliable, no Revelation to him can be either demonstrated or apprehended. The proofs proposed — whether of external or internal evidence — or appeals to conscience, are all invalid, inasmuch as the faculties to which they should appeal are all worthless. That a doctrine *seems* to a man's mind demonstrated, ought to be taken as a reason to

distrust it, if that mind be altogether distorted and unsound. That it strikes home to his conscience is only another cause of rejection, if that conscience be totally corrupt and depraved. We have a perfect *reductio ad absurdum* ready for every kind of argument by which opinions may be enforced by him who denies to us the right of forming our opinions.

But to pass over this stumbling-block, and grant for argument sake that, though a man's faculties cannot be trusted to guide him *outside* Revelation, they may be trusted to guide him *to* Revelation, what have we before us? The Herculean task of demonstrating the authenticity, veracity, inspiration, and authority of all the books of the Bible, as a preliminary to believing that there is such a being as God! There is no escaping the conclusion. If our ultimate faith in God rests on the Bible, we must prove the Bible to be true before we believe in Him; and if we fail to do so we are logically left in Atheism. Every critical research—every philological, or antiquarian, or historical, or scientific argument a man examines, holds out to him the dreadful alternative: If I *cannot* prove this—if this book turns out to be unauthentic, then I lose my whole Religion—I lose my God!

Hereafter (Part II.) we shall speak at length of the special difficulties of this Biblical evidence—the *à priori* improbability that Religion can be founded on

History, or demand the intellectual faculties of historical research for its establishment; and the *à posteriori* arguments afforded by modern criticism and modern science against the actual veracity of the Bible History. At present it is enough if we refer to these familiar objections, and ask whether a basis of religion exposed to such attacks can be safely regarded as the future foundation for the faith of the world? Every year—almost we had said every month—those objections multiply. To defend the Bible at all points fifty years ago was hard, twenty years ago harder, ten or five years ago harder still, but now—where is the mental Goliath who will attempt it? Whose learning and science are equal to the mighty task? Let us grant everything which the most credulous advocate of the History may demand—that this and that objection have been proved false, and that Exodus may be precisely veracious for all its numerical contradictions, and Genesis true in spite of geology, and the four Gospels harmonious notwithstanding all their discrepancies—still the simple fact remains. Even to answer these *disproofs* is becoming every day harder, more and more impracticable. How any man is hereafter to get rid of them all, and then *prove* the Bible by the modern law of evidence, is something incomprehensible.

It is surely clear enough that the *logical* basis of faith offered by the Evangelical Church will not be the

one on which the masses of mankind will be able to rely hereafter. It is precisely, on the contrary, the instability of this basis which is driving them at this moment on the road to the last final scepticism.

The establishment of their creed by such a process of criticism as we have supposed is, however, the last thing which a true Evangelical is likely to contemplate; nay, singularly enough, albeit logically, his whole faith is so manifestly dependent on profound criticism, it is exceedingly rare for an Evangelical to interest himself much concerning criticism at all. His study of the Bible is wholly of another sort from that of the Apologist and author of *Evidences*. Here, as everywhere else in religious parties, *feeling*, and not logic, will be found to afford the real strength of the party. The appeal made by the Christian doctrines to the human conscience; the obvious splendor of Christ's character; the adaptation of the "scheme of Redemption" to man's spiritual wants; these are the grounds which, consciously or not, underlie the belief of the Evangelical. He *feels* that his faith *suits him*, and concerns himself extremely little to inquire how he came by it. Here, then, again returns our question: Will Evangelical Christianity continue to suit men — continue so far to satisfy their feelings as to dispense always with logical demonstration?

It is one thing to be able to hold a creed *without*

evidence; it is another to be able to hold it after it has been disproved. The progress of doubt, and multiplication of objections, has hitherto gone on slowly, and so far (as we may say) underground, that it was not difficult for those who *wished* to close their eyes to it to do so effectually. Evangelicals habitually ignore the literature of the day, both professedly sceptical, or even merely secular and scientific, and feed their minds with the productions of their own school, wherein both statements and arguments are too often arranged with less regard to truth than to the support of their favorite positions. The manner in which scientific discoveries and critical conclusions of the clearest kind continue for years to be ignored in this literature, and the arguments of opponents misstated for the facility of refutation, is equally painful and notorious. But nothing of this kind can go on forever. We may close the shutters, and draw curtains and blinds as close as we please, they will but keep out the moonlight, not the morning sun. When a certain amount of knowledge becomes public, it reaches even the best guarded minds. Before many years are over, before the rising generation has grown old, there will hardly remain many survivors of the class so common now — men and women who honestly *do not know* that science and the Bible are at variance. The position of their successors will be very different. They *will* know that if they

persist in believing the Bible, it must be in the teeth of science; they must rest on their feelings, not only without sufficient rational evidence, but in defiance of rational evidence to the contrary.

It is impossible not to foresee that here a great change must supervene. The sense of the suitability of the Christian doctrines to a man's wants must be doubly strong to enable him to achieve such a task as this. And will he be able to double its strength? Rather, on the other hand, must we look to a different process becoming common—the gradual weakening of that sense by the discovery that the suitability is a very partial one. It is not to be calculated how vast a force Evangelical Christianity has derived in our country from the position it early assumed, and long claimed undisputed, of being the only form of a really *spiritual* religion. It is undoubtedly a spiritual religion; in its higher and riper developments a very spiritual one. There is no false claimant here. The man who has experienced the influence of the system knows he has really been admitted into a true temple, where Divine communion, and holy, spiritual influences, and pure moral guidance, is to be obtained. Shall he leave it at the bidding of any intellectual doubt, and go elsewhere? Where else shall he go that he may count on obtaining the same sacred privileges, and may hope to live the same vivid inner life? He

knows not; nay, he has been assured always that there is no such other temple. He must continue to kneel *there*, or rise up and journey onward to know such holy influences never more. Who has not felt the tremendous power of such a threat? Who has not clung to the creed of his youth, even with desperate hands, while his whole intellect was in rebellion against it, for this one reason, that he believed that only by holding it he could keep close to God? Which of us that has passed through the dread ordeal of transition, has not offered up at such times the insensate prayer, which God in his love and mercy denied, that he would sooner take Reason from us than suffer it to drag us away from the Cross to which we clung?

Relieve this direst fear—remove this error—teach men they may pray to God without the walls of the churches, and that the deepest, warmest inner life is more than ever open to them *after* they have obeyed the commands of that intellect which also is God's gift, even as the religious sentiment, and what will happen? The struggle will be at an end; no man will grasp his old creed with such heart-wrung vehemence, when he knows it is *only* a creed—only a way of thinking about God, not the sole admission to Divine communion. He will pray to God as the God of Truth, the God of the Reason as well as of the Soul, his loving, unchangeable Creator, who will guide him

into all truth if he do but seek it faithfully. When a man has once uttered that free prayer, and learned what answer it receives, the days of his belief in the old creed are numbered. The suitability of Evangelical Christianity to the wants of the soul is but a partial one. Its one great dogma of Redemption requires for its reception a condition of mind and soul not natural, but artificial; and its minor lessons, so far from suiting human nature, invariably cramp and narrow its development. These are bold allegations, but we believe they can be made good.

The Doctrine of the Atonement, as it is the keystone of Evangelical Christianity, so it is commonly believed to be the strong point of the system. The best argument put forward by its most enlightened disciples may be stated thus: "The doctrine must be true, independently of all proofs, because, at a certain stage of religious life, when the sense of sin has become sufficiently vivid, every man *feels the need* of an Atonement with God; and every man perceives that the sacrifice of Christ precisely meets that want of his soul." Let us try to analyze this argument with all the tenderness and respect it deserves, as coming from the hearts of many of the saintliest men and women in the world.

A deep and vivid sense of sin — of our own sinfulness — is the correlative of a high and clear sense of

the Holiness of God. The one involves, and is produced by, the other: in proportion, therefore (we may almost say), as is the sense of sin, so is the whole strength of that deepest side of religion which concerns our moral relation to a holy God. Nothing that can be said by any Evangelical can go beyond the immense importance and the supreme sanctity of this sentiment. We are content to admit that *if* human penitence, in its most profound development, *did* demand some Sacrificial Substitute for the soul, and *could not* feel itself forgiven without the belief in such a thing, then, indeed, we should possess the most powerful argument for the veracity of the doctrine of the Atonement.

But let Christians reflect to what lengths it commits them, to affirm that penitence does make such a demand, and cannot be pacified without its fulfilment. They are affirming that penitence needs what Christ, when he drew its fullest description, in his most solemn parable, never so much as hinted it could need. They are affirming that it cannot be pacified, as Christ represented the Prodigal to be pacified, by his Father's free and unbought pardon.

It would seem, truly, that to those who profess to found their entire religion on Christ, and on the record of his life in the Bible, this Parable of the Prodigal ought to be a sufficient refutation of the theory both

that man feels the need of an Atonement, and that an Atonement was ever intended by Christ to be taught as the sole means of pardon. If it *had* been a real need of human nature, if it *had* been the sole means of pardon, on what imaginable hypothesis can we account for its absence from this solemn Parable, wherein Christ formally, and at greater length than ever elsewhere, exposed his "Theory of Reconciliation."* This is an argument which we confess we see

* If Christ had intended to convey any doctrines ever so remotely resembling those popularly taught in his name, must he not inevitably have given them here some place and mention? It would be instructive to consider what the Parable of the Prodigal *ought* to have been, on the hypothesis that Christ taught the doctrine of his own Mediation in the popular sense. Without irreverence, — rather with profoundest reverence for the holiest words in the holiest of books, — may we not suggest that, *if they had been meant to teach the Atonement*, — nay, to leave room for a Doctrine of Atonement, — they must have been changed from their sublime descriptions of simple, Fatherly love, to words on this wise: —

"And when he was yet a great way off, his Elder Brother met him:

"And he fell down at his feet and said: O my brother, entreat the Father for me; for thou art his well-beloved son, and all that thou sayest unto him he will do.

"Then the elder brother had compassion on his younger brother, and went in unto his Father, and said unto him: O my Father, thou knowest that I am always with thee, neither disobeyed I thy commandments at any time, but was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore for my sake forgive my brother, and turn away thy fierce anger against him, and blot out his transgressions.

"Then the Father hearkened unto his Elder Son, and was

not how a *Christian* can escape. But to put the matter on broader grounds.

The assertion that a certain sense of need is always experienced at a certain depth of religious feeling, is manifestly an assertion incapable of proof or disproof. Its upholders may always argue, "We have experienced it; if you have not done so, it is because you have not reached that depth where it is experienced." On the other hand, its opponents may argue, "We have examined our own consciousness; we have inquired of the most profoundly religious of our friends, and we have come on no trace of such experience. If you have believed that you have felt it, it is because you expected to feel it, trained yourself to the want first, and the satisfaction afterwards. Those who do not expect it never feel it." Such arguments are endless, and can decide nothing one way or another. The only real light we can obtain on the subject is by a fair consideration of the manner in which such ideas have arisen in the world, and then of the natural effects on men's minds of the preconceived idea that they *ought* to feel certain wants and satisfactions.

entreated for his younger son, and forgave him, and suffered him to dwell in his house.

"And the younger son feared his Father all his days, and was obedient unto him.

"But he loved his elder brother greatly, and called himself by his name."

Two ideas—a true and a false one—are very closely blended and confounded in the ancient and widespread idea of Atonement to God. There is the true idea of Sacrifice, and the false idea of Vicarious Punishment. Sacrifice is the oldest, and it will be the latest, the simplest and rudest, and the most sublime and complete of all religious ideas. Human love, gratitude, homage, all show themselves spontaneously in sacrifice, in the ready gift of our wealth, our labor, our lives, for a mortal friend or benefactor. Love, gratitude, and reverence towards God have the same language, only a louder one. From earliest primeval times till now, the desire to give some most precious thing to him who has given us everything, to devote life to the Author of life, has struggled in men's hearts, and assumed sometimes the most beautiful, sometimes the most terrific forms, in accordance with the creed under which it has worked. As men grow to think of God more spiritually, so their sacrifice rises from the material to the spiritual,—from the offering of the life of the body to the life of the soul. Moriah's awful drama is repeated no more, but the Christian kneels to commemorate the martyr-death of Christ, and offers "his soul and body to be a reasonable, holy, and acceptable sacrifice." Religion will reach its zenith for us all, only when that prayer becomes the familiar breath of our lives.

But with this great and true idea of Sacrifice comes forever, confused and mingled down the stream of history, the false idea of Vicarious Punishment. Men wish the Sacrifice to be made to God, or feel that it ought to be made, but they desire that another should make it for them. In rude conditions of civilization, when the sense of justice is but crudely developed, and the angry passions of mankind have yet learned no curb, and are blind like those of the child and the brute, human vengeance often receives satisfaction from the punishment of a substitute of the offender, and the "Avenger of Blood" is content if he slay the son or brother of his enemy. In China, as we all know, to this hour the transference of punishment is legalized, and a rich offender buys his substitute on the scaffold, to the apparent satisfaction of such moral feeling as exists in the land. Rude men living where such ideas were prevalent as regarded human justice, easily transferred them to the justice of God, and imagined (in spite of all that the higher souls of prophets could tell them) that it was possible to "make an atonement unto God" for a brother's offence. The desire to escape deserved punishment necessarily urged men to look round for such substitutes, and history is full of instances of Sacrifices * (voluntary or involuntary) per-

* One of the most remarkable of these is in Hungarian history. An old heathen chief (we quote from memory) feared that the an-

formed with this view of procuring for a man or a nation the remission of a Divine penalty. Higher thoughts of justice and of God's character would, in the nature of things, have dispelled this early delusion. No one would dream of finding in God's great government of the world a principle we regard with astonishment and contempt in the wretched jurisprudence of China; nor would the soul which had ascended to any spiritual life, hesitate to face, with humble fortitude, whatever chastisement for its offences the Divine Father might see best in his justice and mercy to inflict. But this progress to a just and filial conception of punishment was early arrested in the Christian Church.

cient gods would avenge on his country the neglect of their worship, on the conversion of the land to Christianity under St. Stephen. To appease them he ordered his retainers to bury him alive as he sat on his war-horse on the banks of the Danube, — a solemn, voluntary sacrifice to the old Divinities.

The remark of Cicero on the death of the Decii is not a little curious, viewed as the spontaneous judgment of a philosophic mind on the doctrine of vicarious punishment. "You believe that the gods were appeased by their death? How great, then, was the iniquity of the gods, who could only be appeased by such noble blood!" (*De Natur. Deor.*, lib. 3.) It is worthy of remark that the Eastern idea of a Representative Man incurring guilt for all his race, or, conversely, winning a blessing, has been curiously transferred to the animals and even to the plants. We have ravens turned black for betraying secrets; serpents condemned to crawl in the dust for tempting Adam; the ass marked with a cross for bearing Christ; the johndory stamped by St. Peter's fingers; the cross-bill stained by Christ's blood; and the rose turned red by the tears of Eve. To convey "original sin," or "original benediction," in these cases there was no need of parentage.

There was no room for it where men believed that the punishment due to all sin was absolutely infinite and eternal. None could be found to face the possibility of such a doom: for no amount of religion and virtue can ever enable a man to renounce religion and virtue through all eternity. The best felt that there *must* be found some escape. The principle of vicarious suffering must be admitted. Only, as men's consciences became in some way clearer, and their reasoning more acute, this vicarious suffering must be represented in such supermundane shape as should serve to give the change to the natural sentiment of justice. By the age of Anselm the work was done, and the Christian Church provided with that elaborate "Scheme of Atonement," which has ever since been at once its stronghold and its weakest point. Strong to the imagination: weak to the reason.

Now, when a system like this has existed for ages, and is enforced from childhood on the minds of all men, what is the result? Ordinary minds assume all the monstrous premises, as if they were axioms beyond examination. That the sins of finite beings deserve infinite punishment; that God's justice cannot be satisfied without such infinite punishment; that one being can bear the punishment of another, and satisfy justice thereby; that the death of an INFINITE Being (whatever "death" might mean to a Being who was at the same

moment living through all worlds) is equivalent to the eternal perdition of any number of *finite* beings; that physical "blood" has a definite relation to and can be weighed against moral guilt; all these astounding assumptions are, as we say, imprinted on the minds of most men in childhood, and accepted without inquiry ever after. Then come the theories, also taught them from childhood, of what we may denominate the physiology of repentance and restoration. They are told they *ought* to feel that their sins deserve eternal perdition, and that they cannot truly repent till they do feel so; that they *ought* to feel a need of an Atonement and a Mediator; that they *ought* to receive satisfaction and assurance of pardon from the belief that such an Atonement has been made for them; that if they can attain to feeling such assurance they are safe and secure, but, if they fail to do so, no amount of love to God, or grief for having broken his laws, will be of the least avail to reconcile them to him. When men's minds are saturated with such ideas from earliest childhood, and have them brought strongly forward by those to whom they turn for aid and counsel in the first feeble beginnings of a religious life, it is no sort of wonder, but much the reverse, that they should persuade themselves, consecutively, that they feel all the wants, and receive all the satisfaction, which they are prepared to experience. The *true* phenomena of penitence — an

immeasurable sense of sinfulness and helplessness, dependence on God for aid, and the blessedness of restoration and regenerated life — *underlie* all the mental mistakes, which do but very partially affect the great and sacred mystery itself.

The argument, then, for the veracity of the doctrine of the Atonement, drawn from its supposed suitability to human nature, cannot surely be admitted to be of weight. The alleged experience in its favor is perfectly to be accounted for by the laws of educated feelings. If we want further disproof we may collect, from nearly every type of false religion extant or of past times, instances of doctrines which each would undoubtedly have received from its adherents the same testimony of entire suitability to the wants of human nature.

This argument has extended to a great length; but the importance it possesses in the minds of thousands of the best men and women would justify volumes in which it might be treated more worthily.

With regard to the minor suitabilities of Evangelical Christianity to human nature, there is much less to be said. The evidence is directly against the system. So far from developing the lower and more purely human functions in the natural and beautiful proportion which it is manifest that Providence has designed, experience shows that Evangelical Christianity has a totally oppo-

site tendency. It cramps, narrows, and very visibly distorts Nature. A deeply-feeling Evangelical is a man full, indeed, of many high spiritual gifts, and often devoted to the religious benefit of his fellows; but he is rarely, if ever, a man whom we can look at as a fair type of humanity, such as we must believe God has meant it to be. He is not "free of the universe," as every son of God should be, enjoying with thankful heart and happy countenance the delights prepared for the senses, the intellect, and the affections. Rather in his sad and downcast looks and solemn voice, — ever "silent and shy in public, and only garrulous in private,"* — we read the logical result of his gloomy conception of the character and destiny of his fellows. Intellectual pleasures he rarely seems to enjoy; and it is but natural it should be so, for every discovery of science, every new result of learning, *may* be (and most often is) a new difficulty for his faith. He dreads the full enjoyment even of the most sacred domestic affections, and talks of "idolatry" even in a mother's holiest love. Art has hardly any charms for him, —

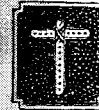
* Minutius Felix thus described the Christians in his day: "In publicam muta, in angulis garrula." Truly fifteen centuries have made little difference in this respect. As a rule, to this day all Christians of the Evangelical type seem to find a difficulty in talking to more than one person at a time, and impede the free converse of our social gatherings accordingly. These straws are very significant when they all blow in the same direction.

may, by some mysterious chain of sequences, he seems to be drawn by his creed into disliking beauty, variety, color, and ornament. His house, his dress, his place of worship, his buildings of charity are usually monotonous, dun, disproportioned, ugly. Flowers, and pictures, and statues, and bright clothes, and graceful architecture — he eschews them all. Then as to mirth and jest, if he do not condemn them on principle, he is nine times out of ten practically incapacitated from enjoying them. How or why it is so, it is hard to guess; but the fact is patent, that as we descend through the Evangelical to the extreme Methodist, the whole sense of the ludicrous seems lost, till the man will use in his worship hymns and prayers so grotesque that to other men they seem nothing short of profane. Features like these, constantly recurring in the disciples of the same creed, cannot be looked on as individual or accidental. Either gloomy and inartistic natures prefer Evangelicalism, or Evangelicalism makes men gloomy and inartistic. When we observe how many, originally of a different character, become so moulded on "conversion," we are led to the last alternative. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that, as creeds approach to Calvinism, their tendency is to make men averse to learning, averse to beauty, averse to wit and humor, averse to social pleasures, and distrustful, at least, of the purest natural affections.

But if this be the case, what shall we say of the suitability of such a creed to human nature? Have we not proved that it is utterly unsuited to it, and never can have been given by the Creator of man as the universal faith of humanity? It would seem as if no more conclusive argument against any religious views than this one, can possibly be found. We have, as it were, worked the sum by a short method, and proved the calculation false. If the results of a special form of religion, tried on a large scale, prove that it fails to develop human nature on all sides healthily, but on the contrary warps and contracts it in many important particulars, then surely it is impossible that that form of religion can be the one intended by God for the acceptance of mankind.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEOLOGIAN SOLUTION.—FIRST BROAD CHURCH.



THE Neologian party we have ventured to designate as the one which strives to effect the reconciliation of the ancient doctrines with modern thought, by modifying the old to meet the new. Not avowedly (at all events by some of its teachers) would such a process be carried on. Rather would they affirm that their doctrines are the oldest of all, — a mere return to the earlier and more spiritual lessons of the apostles. But actually (whether such assertions could be made good or not) the fact is patent, that the ideas of the party are mainly the current ideas of modern times, unknown in Europe a century ago; developed rather in the schools of philosophy than by the churches, and now uttered in sacred formula which never were understood to convey them heretofore. As

the High Church Palæologians deferred most to the Church, and the Low to the Bible, so the Neologians, while professing to harmonize with both Church and Bible, attach more weight to Reason than the other two. The theoretical distinction, however, is this, — that whereas the Palæologians maintained that the Church and the Bible must be held intact, whatever may be done with science, the Neologians maintain that the Church and the Bible must be *interpreted* differently from what they have hitherto been, to meet every successive discovery of science.

These characteristics may sufficiently define the whole Neologian or Broad Church school. It has, however, two subdivisions within the National Establishment almost as marked as the High and Low of the Palæologians, besides several parties outside of the Church, and some minor varieties of opinions within its bounds. There is the First Broad Church which, descending through Coleridge and Arnold, has been for the last twenty years prominent in English religious thought, — the party to which the Rector of Eversley and the Lecturer of Lincoln's Inn perform that dual leadership which, it would seem, ever since the days of Moses and Aaron, religious movements have been wont to require. This school we shall call the "FIRST BROAD CHURCH." Secondly, there is the more recent school of which the publication of *Essays and Reviews*

was the "Declaration of Independence," — a school not as yet clearly defined, and perhaps divided into almost as many shades as it has teachers, — the school of which the Oxford Regius Professor of Greek is the foremost leader. This school, commonly called that of the *Essayists*, we shall denominate the "SECOND BROAD CHURCH."

Besides these, outside of the National Church are — the Unitarians, themselves divided into Old and New Schools; the Swedenborgians; and a number of individual thinkers of considerable weight, A. F. Scott, McLeod Campbell, R. H. Hutton, and others. The late James Robertson of Brighton, albeit a clergyman of the Church of England, appears to have exerted his vast influence equally outside and within her communion; and a special admiration for his ideas seems almost to constitute an unacknowledged school of itself, and bond of union among persons of nominally very different churches.

Our primary concern is with the First Broad Church, — the party of Kingsley and Maurice.

The Church of England has never been without its Latitude men, its broad and liberal thinkers, who, holding their own opinions more or less definitely, have left room in their systems for divergences on many sides. Perhaps it might not be unfair to reckon that some of them, like Tillotson, bore to Theology the

position which Cicero and the New Academy did to Philosophy—holding their doctrines as *the most probable*, but not as absolutely demonstrable, or exclusive of a certain share of probability admitted in those of their opponents. The Broad Church inaugurated by Coleridge, is a very different thing from Latitudinarianism. Perhaps its most salient feature, on first acquaintance, is its extraordinary conjunction of dogmatism—of positive assertion and contemptuous denial—with a professed reverence for the natural reason and conscience of men. Not the High Churchman himself, from the altitude of his eighteen centuries of tradition,—not the Low Churchman with his absolutely infallible Scripture in his hand,—ever uses more unqualified *ex cathedra* statements of doctrine. And this, be it observed, not on the ground of such doctrines being the intuitive consciousness of the speaker (and therefore properly to be announced after the simple, prophetic fashion), but as being the only true *Christian* doctrines,—a matter on which the Latitudinarian would admit the right of all other Christians to form an opinion.

In theory, the First Broad Church occupies a position which may, perhaps, be stated in the formula: “*The Bible and the Church, both interpreted by Reason.*” The Bible is the Revelation (or, as some prefer to express it), the Record of the Revelation of God. The Church has inherited Christ’s promise of his constant presence.

Interpreted by Reason, Bible and Church convey to us the truths of religion with supernatural authority. All current errors (and they are many) have come from unreasonable and false interpretations of Bible and Church.

Of course the grand difficulty of Traditional Religion lies in the problem here assumed to be solved: *How can Reason interpret whatever contradicts Reason; and how can any authority beyond Reason be subjected to Reason, and afterwards retain its title to implicit acceptance?*

As regards the great question with which we are concerned in this book, “How are men to find ground for faith in God?” the Broad Churchman (albeit getting rid of a few accretions of difficulties) stands on no vantage over the High Churchman or the Low. Equally he must look to History for his Christianity, and to Consciousness (neither more nor less than the Theist) for his ultimate faith in the existence of God.

Practically here, as in the Palaeologian parties, sentiment is the powerful attraction, even though the loudest claims may be made for the rationality of the system. The First Broad Church necessarily gathers to its fold those minds which feel deeply the peculiar beauty of some Christian ideas, and yet equally revolt from High and Low Church peculiar claims. The Broad Churchman does not, with the Anglican, feel the need of a

great authority to support him, or of ascetic ordinances, or a splendid *cultus*, to assist his devotional feelings. Neither does he, with the Evangelical, rest content with vividly receiving some religious ideas, and feel satisfied to accept literally and absolutely a book full of difficulties to his reason as his infallible guide. The formalism of the first, and the somewhat narrow, uncultured spirit of the second, are equally foreign to his tastes. He asks to believe in the leading Christian doctrines, — the Incarnation and the Trinity, — and then outside of them to be left at liberty to interpret in the Bible or the Church whatever (like the eternity of future punishment) may shock his religious sentiment. He desires to feel at the same moment, that he is in harmony with the whole great Catholic Church of Christendom, and also that his intellect and heart are perfectly free and untrammelled. His teachers affirm that this wondrous combination can be effected; that their views do actually harmonize everything; that they can prove the Athanasian Creed itself to be the “Charter of our liberties,” absolutely consistent with the last results of modern philosophy! Is it any marvel that a school which opens with such a programme should find many scholars?

The First Broad Church is spiritual, even as Evangelicalism is spiritual. It insists, above all, on personal relation to God, and preaches, as its peculiar

lessons, many of the highest religious truths. It teaches that the Divine Love is the great principle of the Divine government, and will be triumphant hereafter over sin and evil; that “the abyss of Love is deeper than the abyss of Death.” It teaches that human souls — even the poorest, narrowest souls — are all of infinite value, loved by God and to be valued by men. It teaches a morality not appealing to hope of reward or fear of punishment, but founded on pure love of God and goodness, and it nobly rebukes the “otherworldliness,” which transforms virtue into interest. It asks, —

“Is selfishness, for time a sin,
Stretched out into eternity, celestial prudence?”*

And the result of these high lessons is manifest in its disciples. In no party of Christians does religion assume a healthier type; in none has morality tended to produce so noble a philanthropy. While the Anglican strives with most self-denying energy to bring the peasant and the savage to partake of the benefits of his Church and sacraments; while the Evangelical strives no less eagerly to bring all men to his technical conversion, — the Broad Churchman labors rather to elevate them *as men*, improving their sanitary and social conditions, educating them to think for themselves even on the highest topics, and so leading them up to religion,

* Kingsley, *Saints' Tragedy*.

rather than making their first concern their attendance at Church ordinances, or acceptance of the "terms of salvation." Spiritual, large-hearted, with purest ethics and devoted lives, the First Broad Church party cannot but claim our respect. Can we also look to it as a party likely to grow, and spread the existing representation of the Great Future Church? We must examine more closely its pretensions.

In the first place — this grand assumption of reconciling the doctrines of Christianity with modern thought — is it tenable? Broad Church teachers give us *readings* of each dogma of the Atonement and Future Punishment, which sufficiently accord with our present philosophy, and remove the principal moral objections to those doctrines. Are we to accept joyfully such a reconciliation, and be satisfied that, if the doctrines and our moral sense can be harmonized on any hypothesis, we may take that hypothesis for granted? There is undoubtedly a temptation to jump at such a conclusion, which is almost irresistible to many minds. But is the process justifiable? An Historical Creed must needs be judged historically. Where is the *historical* evidence for the new readings?

If a new editor of Plato were to come to us now, and say, "The exegesis which has hitherto been received of the leading doctrines of Plato is quite erroneous. I have found out the true exegesis. It is quite in ac-

cordance with our modern views, in fact a remarkable forestalling of Scotch metaphysics and utilitarian morality." How should we meet such pretensions? If we were very liberally disposed, and inclined to give much respect to their author, we should perhaps reply, "Your assertion is, to say the least, very improbable. It is most *unlikely* that one of the greatest of human writers should have failed to make himself understood, and that all the thousands of minds which have studied his words should have perpetually misapprehended them for two thousand years, and that it should have been reserved for any man in our day to find out what Plato really meant to say. Most improbable of all does it seem when you, with your mind already prepossessed with Scotch metaphysics and utilitarian ethics, profess that you have found them expounded by the great philosopher who has been hitherto understood to teach quite opposite doctrines. However, the thing is just *possible*; you may be right, and all prior expositors wrong. Let us see on what grounds you found your assumption."

But if instead of Plato the new expounder take up the Bible, and make the same assertion of discovery of its true meaning, what answer shall we make to him? Surely there can be but one: "Your pretensions cannot be entertained for a moment. *Plato* may have failed to make himself understood; but when God

transcended the laws of mind to give to his creatures an inspired Book, which should teach them the truths of religion, it is *impossible* he could have failed to convey the meaning he designed them to receive. The Maker of the Intellect can have made no mistake in addressing the Intellect. We are not concerned to examine the grounds on which you affirm you have discovered the original doctrines of the Bible. Those which the great mass of Christians have drawn from it for eighteen centuries must either be what God meant them to draw, or else he did not inspire the Book, and we are not interested in the question."

This response is surely logical. There is no visible mode of escaping such a conclusion. Theories of "development" will not answer here. The doctrine, for instance, that Hell is not eternal, is no "development" of the doctrine that it *is* eternal. One thing or the other must hold. The old sense of the old words, or else the admission that they were not miraculously given by the Creator of the human mind for its instruction.

The attractions of the First Broad Church views are undoubtedly great, but they would seem to be transitory. The idea of a possible conciliation between orthodoxy and freedom, harmony with the great body of Christians, and reservation of all the rights of the intellect and conscience, — above all, the maintenance of

those sentiments towards Christ so deeply rooted in the heart, along with a faith in God's goodness which should exclude the hideous doctrine of hell, — these ideas are, indeed, attractive beyond description. But after a time the compromise by which such a conjunction is effected can hardly fail to be unsatisfactory. Ordinary men go forward; timid ones draw back. Only peculiarly constituted minds seem capable of resting permanently in such a "half-way-house," unless it be that the vigor which in youth led them so far becomes exhausted before they go further, and they are content to rest where they can find such pleasant pastures for the remainder of their days. Some of the minor characteristics of this First Broad Church school are peculiarly liable, it would seem, to be thus transient. Its great merit of recognizing the sanctity of physical laws, as no other religious party had ever done, seems to have been the origin of that very curious development of it under one of its leaders which has been denominated "Muscular Christianity."

In the person of the great Founder of the Christian religion, no one can doubt that there were combined perfect manliness and dignity, with extreme gentleness and forbearance. Tenderness is the natural complement of strength: none are so truly mild as the most powerful natures. It might have been predicted that the recognition of Christ as the Exemplar of humanity,

would have led to an equal attempt to copy both characteristics — his manliness and his gentleness. But two causes seem to have interfered. Contemplating him no longer as a man but as a God, the dignity in his behavior was put aside, as if peculiar to himself, and unfit for imitation by his human followers, for whom nothing remained but to copy his gentleness and obey his precepts (expressed with Oriental exaggeration), of "turning the left cheek" to him that should smite the right. Secondly, it can hardly be doubted that the introduction of Christianity into the Roman world, chiefly through the medium of slaves and women, tended early to give it an impress of servility and effeminacy, to bring out the side of humility and endurance, and to keep away the manlier virtues which had been cultivated by the heathens around. Very soon priestly pride and priestly arts came in still further to crush down natural self-respect, to make self-degradation a virtue,* and to carry favor with despotic power, by making religion a tool for the control of the masses, and inducing men to submit to human tyranny as an act of obedience to "God's anointed" kings. From that time till now Christian priests have too often been found to

* St. Pacian advises penitents "to weep in sight of the Church, to fall prostrate, to fall down before the priests," etc. (*Parænesis S. Pacian.*) In the Middle Ages, the Church seems alternately to have defended popular rights and sanctioned royal oppressions.

play into the hands of tyrants and slave-owners, and Christian men and (above all) women have believed that in sacrificing their wills, and abandoning their natural rights of self-government, in manhood and womanhood, to their superiors, parents, and husbands, they were performing a duty peculiarly Christ-like, and peculiarly acceptable to God. A review of Christ's own conduct to his mother and to the "Church authorities" of his time, would probably teach a very different lesson.

The type of a Christian saint, developed in men's minds by this long teaching of humility, is undoubtedly not a manly one. His courage is all of a passive sort; his patriotism small. He walks about, rather "fearful of offence" than hopefully active in good; rather sad than joyous. We are startled if we hear him laugh; we hardly believe in him if he holds his head erect. Even in England, where the national character is utterly at variance with this ascetic type, and the National Church has done nothing to foster it, these ideas have still great influence, while elsewhere in Christendom they are almost universal. Only in the honest, homely land of Martin Luther is St. Christopher a popular saint.*

* Probably the most ancient picture of Christ in existence is a fresco disinterred lately in a subterranean church in Alexandria. When I visited this place, the fresco was still clear and uninjured, and displayed a noble and majestic countenance and figure, with

The Broad Church very early set itself to correct this monstrous error, and, by inculcating reverence for the natural laws, has done a great work in overturning it. The High Church had preached *both* Enjoyment and Mortification; both Festivals and Fasts. The Broad Church insisted that all the laws of matter were, beyond mistake or doubt, the direct expressions of the Divine Will concerning our bodies; and by so doing, it struck at the root of mortification and fasting. The free enjoyment of all the pleasures of physical strength and activity, has been one of its great contributions to the progress of human nature from superstition to a happy and rational religion. We cannot but think, however, that in taking this true step forward, the Broad Church leaders have, in some degree, overshot the mark, and fallen into a kind of error opposite to asceticism, but not always preferable thereto. That characteristic of the school which has been jocosely termed "Muscular Christianity," appears liable, at every turn, to degenerate into most obnoxious qualities — bluster and dogmatism, and a perpetual *talk* about manliness, which is as much the reverse of real manliness, as the *talk* about purity, and the constant

strong, dark brows and hair, and commanding attitude. A century or two served to change this type into the ideal one with which we are familiar — the type where all force is lost in mere sweetness and softness.

reduction of the relation of the sexes to its lowest denomination, is the reverse of real purity. There is a *tendency* — we do not say that it is always or often followed, but assuredly a *tendency* — to this most painful caricature of the unconscious courage and simplicity of true virtue, traceable through the most brilliant writings of the First Broad Church party.

And, in curious contrast with this "muscularity," appears another characteristic of the school — the practice of a somewhat exorbitant kind of self-depreciation. The old heathen Greeks and Romans boasted of their virtues in a manner no modern Christian, of the most undoubted merit, could venture to do. We should be shocked, if not disgusted, to hear of Washington writing, like Cicero, that his birth was fortunate for his country; or of Shakspeare repeating the boast of Ovid, that he had secured fame through half eternity. But in abandoning the habit of boasting of merit, the Englishman of our time has also abandoned allusion to his own defects and delinquencies. That sentiment of moral modesty which old St. Gregory the Great beautifully likened to the covering ordained to be placed over all the vessels of the Hebrew sanctuary, forbids a man of deep feeling to throw open to his fellows that penitence which lies at the very bottom of his heart. Now, inasmuch as the practice has prevailed in the Broad Church, of the preacher beginning

by blaming himself, for the purpose of afterwards blaming others with better grace, does it not seem that a false tone has been struck — a tone which, like that of blustering “muscularity,” needs must fail to be echoed in the future?

Lastly, there is a third peculiarity of the First Broad Church, which appears inevitably detrimental to its final success. That grand programme of harmonizing Church and Bible with modern thoughts — how is it worked out practically? It must be owned that the promise is usually kept in a most unsatisfactory manner, by evading each point of special difficulty, or rather, by conducting the student to the verge of such difficulty, and then suddenly proffering him, instead of an explanation, some beautiful moral or spiritual truth, rather remotely connected with the question at issue.* The inquirer for bread receives, not an ordinary stone, but a diamond or ruby, and is generally so pleased thereat as to forget to press his demand for food any further. Now, all this kind of treatment of the great difficulties of theology must needs prove, in the long run, altogether unsatisfactory. Men who anxiously climb the arduous path of truth, grow weary of being contin-

* We have heard this process wittily described as the “cuttle-fish line of argument.” The pursuer, when he imagines he has grasped his enemy, suddenly finds himself enveloped in a cloud of ink, and is wholly unable to discover him again.

ually wrapped in a luminous haze of thought, out of which they only emerge to find themselves far from the road on which they desired to tread. Beautiful as the cloud may seem, with its golden lights and warm and tender atmosphere, they ask to have it uplifted, to be given a clear and lucid vision, if it be but of the rocks and precipices with which they are surrounded. If their teachers have recourse continually to logical haziness, in the hopeless task of reconciling the irreconcilable, they will at last forsake their guidance. Theology is the most difficult, as it is the most profound, of all themes of human thought; and that it should be doubly embarrassed by vague treatment and ambiguous language is utterly insufferable. What we all need is a man who will deal honestly with the difficulties of the subject. We do not ask for the final and absolute solution of those difficulties, for this is beyond human powers; nor can the awful mysteries of our Creator's nature be set forth in exhaustive analyses, like the gases which compose the water or the air. The gross presumption which once attempted to construct such “symbols” is now, we trust, passed away, although we still fall back on the formulæ of old, as if men of the third century might have accomplished what it would be profane presumption for us to attempt to accomplish now. But what we do need is a man who will deal with the difficulties of theology

with all the clearness, all the honesty which are attainable; a man who will, at least, leave us in no error as to what *he* may think, although his thoughts must bear the limitations and liability to error of all our poor human systems. We need a man who will evade nothing—cover up nothing under vague words or old consecrated phrases, applied for the nonce in a new meaning; we need, in a word, a man who will *put the new wine in new bottles*. That the First Broad Church has failed to do this—has either put it into the worn-out skins of ancient formulæ, or else poured it out vaguely and wastefully upon the dry ground of historical controversies, is reason sufficient for us to conclude that *this*, at all events, will not be the Church of the Future. Its theoretical basis—that the old doctrines ought to be so interpreted as to meet modern ideas—is, *à priori*, incredible, since it assumes that God has taught those doctrines for eighteen centuries in language which the creatures he addressed have never been able to comprehend. And its practical spirit, along with all its vast merits, has involved elements which, in the course of time, cannot but render it unsuitable to the general feelings of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEOLOGIAN SOLUTION.—SECOND BROAD CHURCH.



THE party which we have termed the Second Broad Church—the second great division of the Neologian School—constitutes the “Extreme Left” of the Revelationists; the farthest from mere Authority, the nearest to Reason. Though there exist considerable distinctions between the opinions held by various leaders of the School, they all differ widely from those of the First Broad Church, who in truth seem especially anxious to avoid being confounded with them. To define the position of the two is not easy, seeing that neither have very clearly specified their standing-ground as to the main questions at issue. The following differences, however, we believe to lie at the root of each system.

The First Broad Church maintains that the doctrines

of the Bible and the Church can be perfectly harmonized with the results of modern thought by a new but legitimate exegesis of the Bible and interpretation of Church formulæ. The Second Broad Church seems prepared to admit that, in many cases, they can only be harmonized by the sacrifice of Biblical infallibility. The First Broad Church has recourse, to harmonize them, to various logical processes, but principally to the one described in the last chapter, — of diverting the student, at all difficult points, from criticism to edification. The Second Broad Church uses no ambiguity, but frankly avows that when the Bible contradicts Science, the Bible must be in error. The First Broad Church maintains that the Inspiration of the Bible differs in *kind* as well as in *degree* from that of other books. The Second Broad Church appears to hold that it differs in degree but *not* in kind. This last is the crucial point of the differences of the two parties, and of one of the most important controversies of modern times. Let us endeavor to examine it closely.

Inspiration was said by the old Rabbins to be of seven degrees. Between their time and ours a gradual narrowing and hardening of the idea conveyed by the term has been going on, — and especially in the last two centuries, under the peculiarly matter-of-fact spirit of English Divinity, — till it has now assumed the

sharpest form as the doctrine of "Infallible Inspiration." The Archbishops and Bishops of the National Church, in addressing their protest to Bishop Colenso in 1863, do not hesitate to say that "all our hopes for eternity, the very foundation of our faith, our nearest and dearest consolations, are taken from us if one line of that Sacred Book be declared unfaithful or untrustworthy." Slight shades of difference exist, — the Low Church go to the extreme point, and declare belief in *verbal* Inspiration: "every word, every letter, every grammatical construction" in the Bible, they maintain to be absolutely perfect. The High Church generally content themselves with the theory of *Plenary* Inspiration, and leave a little room for possible flaws in numbers, or other wholly unimportant matters. The First Broad Church go farther yet, and recognize the necessity for the aid of criticism to determine the proper exegesis of the Inspired Book. On the main point, however, all three parties are in harmony. They all alike maintain the principle that the inspiration granted to the writers of the Bible was *unlike* the inspiration granted to any other men, and that the narratives in the Books of Chronicles or Esther, or the worldly-wise maxims in Proverbs or Ecclesiastes, were delivered by God in a different manner, and bear with them a more sacred character than the sublimest thoughts of Plato, or the enraptured hymns of Milton.

No theory is proffered as to *how* the Biblical Inspiration was vouchsafed in this supernatural manner; * nor, consequently, how it is to be understood to differ from the divine lessons granted to faithful souls in all ages. Whether the old Hebrew "*Bath Kol*," spoke in direct words from the Infinite, Invisible Dictator to his human amanuensis; or the brain, or the tongue, or the hand, of the Scripture Writer were miraculously guided, no one professes to know; much less to know how *we* are to be certified of such a process having been actually gone through in the case of any given Book of the Bible. Still, by *some* means (although such means are unknown and unknowable), it is peremptorily affirmed that God has conveyed to the Sacred Canon a character separating them entirely in

* There are abundance of *similes* offered to us to elucidate the inspiration of the Biblical writers. They were "carried along like a ship by the wind;" they were transfigured like Moses and Elias, without losing personality; they acted as earthly channels through which the Divine stream flowed freely, taking the form of the banks; they were pens with which God wrote; flutes through which he breathed; harps on which he played. Scripture is like the tribute-money, — the silver is divine, but the image struck in Cæsar's mint. It is like the aqueducts of the Campagna; it is a candle, of which the Church is the candlestick; finally it is like Jesus Christ, Divine and Human, and yet absolutely perfect. All these are poetical images; but they do not advance us a step towards an hypothesis of how the human mind, without being absolutely superseded or overturned, could receive "plenary inspiration," — in a word, how "to prophesy" and "to be mad" were not the same in fact as they are still in the languages of the East.

kind and nature from all other books in the world, past and present. This, we say, we understand to be the doctrine of all parties in the Church of England, except only the one we are considering, — the party of the Essayists, or the Second Broad Church.*

The doctrine of the Second Broad Church on the

* It seems to have been decided by Dr. Lushington that it is the *orthodox* doctrine of the Church. In delivering judgment (25th June 1862) in the case of the Bishop of Salisbury *v.* the Rev. Dr. Rowland Williams, he said: "I hold that in the phrases (of the VIth and XXth Articles), 'God's Word written,' and 'the Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation,' is necessarily implied the doctrine that, in all matters necessary for salvation, the Holy Scriptures emanated from the *extraordinary and preternatural* interposition of the Almighty, — the special mode and limit unknown to man. I must hold, therefore, that any clergyman who advisedly maintains, whether in direct or indirect language, that the Holy Scriptures proceed from the same mental powers as have produced other works, or *vice versâ*, — even with the qualification that these works in the one case and the other differ in *degree*, — impairs the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures: does, in fact, maintain that the Bible is not God's Word written, but is the work of man; and thereby contravenes the VIth and XXth Articles of Religion." (*New Reports*, No. 8, p. 294.) Dr. Williams had also said (*Essays and Reviews*, p. 61): "In the Bible as an expression of devout reason, and therefore to be read with reason in freedom, he finds a Record of the Spiritual Giants whose experience generated the religious atmosphere we breathe." On this profound passage the Court of Arches also determined that, "To characterize without qualification the Bible as an expression of devout reason, is inconsistent with the doctrine that it was written by the interposition of God, which doctrine is an indispensable part of the VIth Article." (*New Reports*, p. 206.)

subject is manifestly different from this. What may be its most accurate definition we do not presume to decide, but it would appear that we cannot greatly err in describing it as teaching that the Inspiration of the Bible *differs in degree, but not in kind*, from that of other good and holy books.*

* "The word 'inspiration' has received more numerous gradations and distinctions of meaning than perhaps any other in the whole of theology. There is an Inspiration of Superintendence and an Inspiration of Suggestion,—an Inspiration which would have been consistent with Apostle or Evangelist falling into error, and an Inspiration which would have prevented him from erring,—verbal, organic Inspiration, by which the inspired person is the passive utterer of a Divine Word,—and an Inspiration which acts through the character of the sacred writer. There is an Inspiration which absolutely communicates the fact to be revealed, or statement to be made, and an Inspiration which does not supersede the ordinary knowledge of human events. There is an Inspiration which demands infallibility in matters of doctrine, but allows mistakes in facts. Lastly, there is a view of Inspiration which recognizes only its supernatural and prophetic character, and a view of Inspiration which regards the Apostles and Evangelists as equally inspired in their writings and in their lives, and in both receiving the guidance of the Spirit of Truth in a manner NOT DIFFERENT IN KIND, BUT ONLY IN DEGREE, from ordinary Christians. Many of these explanations lose sight of the original meaning and derivation of the word; some of them are framed with the view of meeting difficulties; all, perhaps, err in attempting to define what, though real, is incapable of being defined in an exact manner. Nor for any of the higher and supernatural views of Inspiration is there any foundation in the Gospels or Epistles. There is no appearance in their writings that the Evangelists and Apostles had any inward gift, or were subject to any power external to them, different from that of preaching or teaching which they daily exercised; nor do

This theory demands our most serious investigation. The question which concerns us is not its agreement with Church formulæ or articles, but its intrinsic value. Can it be philosophically maintained? And, if maintained, will it so far remove the difficulties and enforce the claims of Historical Revelation, as to enable us to build thereon the religion of the future? There is no small presumption, apparently, that so it might be.

The theory of Biblical Inspiration resembling *in kind* the inspiration granted at all times to great and faithful souls, involves at once an enormous change in the aspect of the whole Historical problem. At once it makes away with all the hosts of difficulties which beset the science and philosophy of the Bible; nay, we might almost say with all difficulties whatever. For what do we understand by an Inspiration resembling *in kind* that which is granted to all faithful souls? Assuredly not an inspiration which shall exclude human errors regarding science or philosophy,

they any where lead us to suppose that they were free from error or infirmity." (*Essays and Reviews*, p. 345.—Prof. Jowett's Essay.) "If such a spirit did not dwell in the Church, the Bible would not be inspired, for the Bible is before all things the written voice of the congregation. Bold as such a theory of Inspiration may sound, it was the earliest creed of the Church, and it is the only one to which the facts of Scripture answer. The sacred writers acknowledge themselves to be men of like passion with ourselves, and we are promised illumination from the Spirit which dwelt in them." (*Essays and Reviews*, p. 79.—Dr. Williams's Essay.)

or even morals and religion. It is merely the in-breathing by the Divine Spirit of *some* high and holy thoughts; it is the influx from God of *some* share of Heavenly light. No one conceives that all the inspired person's thoughts are thenceforth high and holy, nor that every region of his soul is perfectly illumined. We have altogether transformed the character of the mystery. In the old view the central idea of Inspiration is purely a negative one—the exclusion of error; in the new view it is purely positive—the admission of truth. Even when we stretch this idea of Inspiration (as the Second Broad Church demand in the case of the Bible), and admit that the Sacred Writers possessed it in a measure far transcending that which has ever before or since been granted to man, the rejection of obnoxious doctrines and false science remains clearly open to us. There must have been *some* limit even to prophetic and apostolic inspiration, if it resembled in kind that which is granted to other men, and, if so, wherever we find a blot we are entitled to believe that there it fell short.* Whatever is disproved by science,

* This is fully admitted by the Second Broad Church leaders. "To the question, 'What is inspiration?' The first answer is, 'The idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it.' It is a fact which we infer from the subject of Scripture,—not of one portion only, but of the whole. It is reconcilable with the mixed good and evil of the characters of the Old Testament; which, nevertheless, does not exclude them from the favor of God—with the attribution to the Divine Being of actions at variance with

that we are called on to reject as the human element betraying the limits of the Divine Inspiration.

That this doctrine may be proved historically valid—that it may be shown that the writers of the Bible never claimed any Inspiration inconsistent therewith, does not concern us in this place, but only its philosophical tenability. Viewed in this latter light, it seems above the reach of controversy. That God, who is omnipresent and omniactive in the material universe, must also be omnipresent and omniactive in the souls of his creatures, none attempts to deny. How vain and idle, then, are the scholastic and wire-drawn distinctions which divines endeavor to draw between this constant and universal influence of God on all souls, and the supernatural influence they claim for the writers of the Bible? God can doubtless make his divine lessons more clear, more deep, as he may please, and as the receiving spirit may be large by nature and faithful by obedience. But all the differences we can conceive are differences of *degree*. To suppose that He, "in whom we live and move and have our being," should find it

that higher revelation of himself in the Gospel. It is not inconsistent with imperfect or opposite aspects of the truth, as in the Book of Job or Ecclesiastes; with variations of facts in the Gospels, or the Books of Kings and Chronicles; with inaccuracies of language in the Epistles of St. Paul: for these are found in Scripture. Neither is there any reason why they should *not*, except a general impression that Scripture ought to have been written in a different way from what it has." (*Essays and Reviews*.—Essay VII., pp. 345-46.)

desirable to address our hearts otherwise than he does every hour of our lives; and by some other more marvellous, and apparently less spiritual process, inspire words or thoughts, is an idea which will be found difficult of acceptance in proportion as men learn to revere the natural mode of his instruction. Here also, as in every other field of human thought, the recognition of the sanctity of natural laws involves the distrust, if not the exclusion, of the supernatural. At the very least, the hypothesis that such a different mode of Inspiration was at one particular epoch of history vouchsafed to certain men, needs the clearest historical evidence. We require to be told *how* this supernatural Inspiration was given; how the receivers were assured of its divine origin; how *we* may be assured that they made no mistakes concerning it. When it becomes manifest that there is actually no historical evidence of the kind, not even a floating hypothesis put forward to describe how the supernatural Inspiration was distinguishable from the natural one on the one hand, and from the insane ecstacy of Eastern Sufis on the other, it seems superfluous to attack the tenet — a tenet, be it remembered, which entails with it the enormous charge of defending, as the immediate dictation of God, all the scientific mistakes and moral errors of the Bible.

By exchanging the theories of Plenary or Verbal In-

spiration for that of Natural Inspiration — by denying a difference of *kind*, and only affirming a difference of *degree*, between that of the Bible and of other books, the Second Broad Church men have at once got rid of a host of difficulties, and planted themselves on an unassailable philosophical position. *A priori*, it was probable that the same real but limited Inspiration should have been given to mankind in all ages; *à posteriori*, the Bible bears precisely the character of such real but limited Inspiration. There is no need for them to seek in stray passages of the Rabbins, or Josephus, or the Fathers, evidence of what men (confessedly fallible and superstitious) thought of the authority of their ancient books; that, on their fallible opinion, we may erect the doctrine of the infallibility of the books. The profoundest consciousness of the human heart bears testimony to the Divine Light which gleams out from the Bible. Neither is there need for them to torture texts and facts to bring them into harmony, and so save the appearance of error in the Infallible Book. Admitting the Inspiration to have been of the same kind as that vouchsafed in all ages to faithful souls, the residue of error was inevitable, and affects in no way the Divine beauty of the eternal truths with which it has been blended.

The absolute truth of this theory will (we must believe) become more and more apparent as time goes

forward. Once the minds of men have accustomed themselves to its simplicity, the doctrines of Plenary or Verbal, Infallible or Supernatural, Inspiration will seem extravagant; exaggerations of language, which the supreme excellence of the Bible naturally called out in a period of immature philosophy, but which can by no means bear examination. Nay more, the belief that the Inspiration of the Bible is the same in kind with that of other ruder Bibles, will, instead of lowering our estimate of it, enable us truly to comprehend its wonderful greatness, as it was impossible for us to do while regarding it as actually the verbal dictation of God. Not even the holiest words of Isaiah or Christ seem marvellous if we listen to them as coming direct from God: and many parts of the Bible appear wholly poor and unworthy contemplated in such a light. But *if* we give up such an immediate Authorship of God, and look on Prophets and Apostles as men struggling like ourselves, receiving like ourselves (only more than ourselves as they were more faithful) God's light and guidance, *then* all their words become to us inexpressibly noble and powerful. Those same laws of justice, purity, love, and truth, which we find written on our hearts, we see were written on theirs in fiery light two thousand years ago! That same God — the Holy and the Merciful, who "heareth prayer," and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity — he whom we

find in the depth of our consciousness — *they* found also, and worshipped and adored. Every burst of praise, every cry of penitence, brings to us the echo of our own hearts' voice, repeated to us stronger and louder from the wild Judæan hills and far-off rocks of Sinai. We read the Bible with a new interest, and a new impression of its solemn truths. The mistakes and errors trouble us no more. The eternal verities assume a power hitherto unknown. No man really feels how *great* a book is the Bible till he ceases to read it as a supernatural one, and studies it as the record of the noblest souls whom God has indeed sanctified and enlightened, but not rendered mere mouthpieces of his oracles.

The analogy between the Moral aid which God grants to his faithful servants, and which we denominate "Grace," to the mental aid which he also grants, and which we call "Inspiration," may be carried out absolutely. To introduce any difference between the mode of either of them, and suppose the latter may be perfect while the former is admitted to be always imperfect, is in the highest degree arbitrary and unphilosophical. God gives his creatures "Grace," but he does not render them *impeccable*. He gives them "Inspiration," but he does not render them *Infallible*. The Grace which should make the recipient *impeccable*, and the Inspiration which should make him *infallible*,

would equally remove him out of the sphere of our sympathy and our comprehension. As we should admire no virtue in a man who *could not* sin, so we should admire no wisdom in a man who *could not* mistake. Like the old legends of knights clad by beneficent genii in invulnerable armor, the highest achievements of the gifted person become thenceforth poor and tame. It is not *in spite of* the human element in the Bible that we genuinely revere it, but *because* the existence of that element leaves it within the scope of our interest and our admiration; and the amount of the Divine element which it contains is never so manifest as when we avow it to be of the same kind with the inspiration of other books, and, *by comparing it with them*, perceive its enormous superiority.

But though the great theory of the Second Broad Church may be in itself absolutely true and philosophical, it remains to be considered what relation it can bear to the existing forms of Traditional Religion, — what influence it may exert upon the future faith of mankind.

The question is simply this: Admit the Inspiration of Prophets and Apostles to have been substantially the same with that always granted to faithful souls — admit, therefore, the existence of a human element in Revelation, can we still look to that Revelation as the safe foundation for our religion?

To this question the leaders of the second Broad Church answer unhesitatingly — “YES! It has been an egregious error of modern times to confound the Record of the Revelation with the Revelation itself, and to assume that God’s lessons lost their value because they were transmitted to us through the natural channels of human reason and conscience. Returning to the true view, we shall only get rid of uncounted difficulties and objections which prevent the reception of Christianity by the most honest minds here in England and in heathen countries. We shall preserve all that is valuable in the Bible, and revere and honor it with tenfold sincerity. Christianity can afford to look all the discoveries of modern science, all the results of modern philosophy, honestly in the face. If she could not do so, she must, in the long run, inevitably perish — for true facts of science and criticism are God’s teaching, and it is hopeless to war against them. But we are assured there is no cause or excuse to do so in the interest of real Christianity. Let us take this clew, — that the inspiration of the Bible is true, but not infallible — natural, not supernatural, — and we shall need no juggles to escape objections. The *true* history will remain, to be judged and criticised like all other histories, and then from out of it we shall draw a theology which shall give to us the real Revelation which God made to mankind through the words

and deeds of Moses and Isaiah, of Paul and of Christ."

Whether this promise can or cannot be made good, is a question of profoundest interest. It *may* be that it can — that historical Christianity, relieved from the overwhelming weight of difficulties in which, by the theory of plenary inspiration it is involved, may rise up to a new and glorious life. It *may* be that all the essential doctrines of absolute religion may be traced to the traditional creed, and while every holy truth of consciousness is absorbed in the great system, every error hitherto taught in its name may be rejected and cast out. It may be that these things can be done. None may yet foresee the results of so fundamental an alteration in the *method* of Christian theology as is proposed by the Second Broad Church School. To those outside the pale, it naturally seems that the chances are against the saving of the Historical faith, even by so radical a reformation as this. It seems to them, that once the records of the supposed Revelation are placed on a similar (though superior) footing to other books, their authority will no longer be adequate to support *any* doctrines, beyond those of natural religion, already provable on other grounds. All that is peculiar in Christianity must thus fall gradually away, the differences between it and Theism becoming every day more evanescent, till in time they disappear.

Historical Religion will then be to the Christian only what it is to the Theist — the corroboration of the religion of consciousness. But though these results naturally appear the most probable to those who already stand outside the Christian fold, to those within it, on the contrary, it may well seem that an entirely opposite conclusion is far more to be expected. The beautiful and sacred lessons of Christianity, which have so long appealed to their hearts, and to the hearts of millions for so many centuries, they believe can never fade away. "Let the difficulties (they say) which have gathered around them be dispersed (as they *can* be dispersed) by the Second Broad Church theory of Inspiration, and the lessons themselves will survive and spread with tenfold vigor, and a pure and enlightened Christianity, in harmony with every most advanced thought of humanity, will become the creed of the world."

It is not for us to decide which of these previsions will be realized. One thing alone presses itself on the unbiased inquirer, and that is, that here, at all events, lies the *best chance* for the permanent reconciliation of tradition and science, — the establishment of Historical Religion on a footing which will permit it to become the faith of future ages. If the Church is to be saved, nay, if the whole system of Historical Religion is to be saved, it must assuredly be by some such theory of

the interpretation of Scripture as that proposed by the Second Broad Church School. The desire of every honest heart must be : "In God's name let it be tried ! Give this new 'Method' every fairest chance. Then, when it *has* been tried on a large and befitting scale, the truth will be made manifest. If Christianity be that truth, let it stand forever. If it be *not* true, let it pass away (as it would do under such circumstances), slowly, calmly, and without peril or eclipse of faith."

All the Reformers of religion since the world began have been persecuted — the greatest the most bitterly. If we are to measure the importance of the reform proposed by the leaders of the Second Broad Church by the amount of acrimony with which the weapons of such persecution as are not yet wholly rusted, have been directed against them, their work will be a great one indeed. That each of the other parties in the Church should forget their own exposure to the charge of trespassing against her formularies, — the High Churchman against the Articles, the Low Churchman against the Liturgy, and the First Broad Churchman against the doctrine of the eternity of Future Punishment, — and attack the theory of the Second Broad Churchman, concerning the Interpretation of Scripture, as the very worst of all the heresies of the day, is evidence enough of their consciousness that it strikes deeper than any of their favorite tenets. The

simple fact appears to be, that here the collision between the principles of Palæologians and Neologians, of which we spoke in the first chapter, comes out in full. Those who think to uphold Historical Religion by maintaining the *status quo* of High or Low Church, and replying, like the chief of Roman Catholicism, "*Non possumus*" to every proposed reconciliation between their doctrines and the thoughts of the age, are naturally alarmed beyond measure at the enormous compromise proposed by those who offer, in behalf of the Church and Bible, to give up their whole status of immovability and infallibility altogether. Time, however, will show which has the truest faith in his Church, after all ; he who deprecates with vehemence all attempts to bring her into competition with modern science and modern philosophy ; or he who urges the most radical inquiry into her claims, and believes that she *can* afford to look every truth in the face, and will come forth strengthened by every ordeal.

Besides the great central doctrine of Inspiration, the Second Broad Church appears disposed to teach the subordinate theories which naturally flow from an exegesis conducted in the spirit of scientific inquiry. Theories concerning miracles ; the Geology and Astronomy of science as compared to that of the Bible ; the finality of Future Punishment ; and the Salvation of heathen nations, are all treated in the *Essays and*

Reviews from the most enlightened point of view. So far as it has yet been developed, the theology of the school would, in a word, combine the most devout philosophy and the most advanced science of the age; and without pretending (like the First Broad Church) to find them both in the Bible, would maintain them as *true*, and leave aside in the Bible whatever may contradict them. From the special doctrine that the Inspiration of Scripture differs only in degree and not in kind from that which God has ever since been granting to his faithful children, would follow the consequence, that all truths arrived at by good and wise men *now* are as much Divine truths as those arrived at by other good and wise men two thousand years ago; and that we are bound to expect such continual revelations of new truths, and to open our minds ever to their reception. Thus, in the view of this party, a Minister of Christianity should stand foremost in the search for religious truth, gaining light from every attainable source, and so soon as he has obtained it, like the Professor of any other science, be the first to announce and to expound it. It is needless to add that they desire the abolition of religious tests and subscriptions, and would, with the Erastians, desire to make the Church only the religious agency of the State — the expression of the religious sentiment of the nation, susceptible of advancing step by step with the advance

and culture of that sentiment.* In matters of *feeling* the Second Broad Church has already begun to develop some peculiarities. It has no Anglican Asceticism, no Calvinistic gloom, no First Broad Church "museu-

* One of the subordinate theories of the Second Broad Church, which seems likely to have a large future influence, is that concerning the nature of miracles and prodigies, which, although never clearly stated in terms, may be traced through Canon Stanley's admirable book on the Jewish Church, as underlying his interpretation of every event. This may be called the PROVIDENTIAL theory. Hitherto, the Palæologians have treated miracles as "interruptions of the laws of nature," and the First Broad Church as "interventions of a Higher Law;" while those outside the Christian pale have either considered them, with Paulus, as natural events misconstrued by the spectators as supernatural; or, with Strauss, as pure "myths," having little or no substructure of fact. But Stanley's theory is widely different from all of these, and deserves careful analysis. There have long existed two hypotheses as to the Divine Government of *individual* lives. It may be believed that God, in appointing certain natural laws, through whose fixed web the woof of human free will works its way, has provided for the *great* ends of his beneficent purposes, but left millions of lesser ends to be inevitably sacrificed to the immutability of the natural laws. This theory supposes that for some reason it was impossible to fulfil all ends, great and small, at which Divine Mercy might aim; that the details were of necessity postponed to the greater purposes; and it calls on us to endure the ills which may befall us with cheerfulness, as our share of sacrifice to the universal good. Or, contrariwise, it may be believed that in appointing His natural laws God could and did foresee and intend all their results, great and small, forever; and that each one of these results is especially designed by him for his beneficent purposes. This theory maintains that all is perfect in the great machine of the universe, — the second hand and minute hand, no less than the hour hand of the clock; and it calls on us to bear our griefs as each one of them especially sent us by our Father in Heaven, and

larity" or vagueness. It has the simple manliness natural to those who are striving to speak out unpopular truths, and believe that they have got reason and

designed by him for the most merciful ends. The former of these theories is that most commonly received, perhaps, by the clear, strong heads amongst us; the latter by the most warm and sensitive hearts. The former certainly makes strongest appeal to the understanding, troubled as it must be in all of us by the sight of the sorrows and agonies of the world. The latter approves itself to the religious sentiment, and often becomes to pious souls so much a matter of personal experience that they feel no theory needful to substantiate it. It appears to them, as A. J. Scott says, that God constantly "makes objects and events answer to a crisis in the history of their consciences."

The work of Stanley has been to apply this latter theory of the Divine Government of *individuals* to the Divine Government of *nations*. He believes (as we understand him) that the great wonders of Jewish history were not myths, nor yet supernatural events, nor yet natural events happening fortuitously to coincide with the needs of the Jewish people. He believes they were natural events which occurred PROVIDENTIALLY, by the design of God, when their occurrence should aid his purposes towards the nation of Israel. The bearings of this theory on many portions of Sacred History remain to be seen. They can hardly fail to be worked out ere long, and to produce very important results.

Viewing the case philosophically, it is probable that all our popular ideas concerning the laws of nature and their relation to God, are on the eve of revolution. Probably we shall soon admit that all discussions as to prearrangement of such laws for special ends are superfluous; for that the laws are nothing but modes of Divine action, and are immutable only because God unchangeably acts in the same manner. We shall cease to debate concerning the *Omnipotence* of God, and recognize that he is rather to be regarded as *Solipotent*. Our heathen forefathers dimly discerned a great truth when they called their God "Wuotan" (Odin), the "MOVER" of all things.

science on their side. And further, it would seem that it has a tendency to a form of piety which has been stigmatized as "mystical," but which in truth is inherent in every very deep and heartfelt religion. The attribution to God of actual Fatherly sentiments,—the belief in actual *transactions* between our spirits and his,—is common to all Christian Churches. As a rule, however, much mental enlightenment has too often (for reasons to be hereafter examined) tended in the direction of reducing all such belief to the lowest degree, till the deplorable paradox was reached, that to find those who actually believed that God loved *them*, we had need to seek those whose low and dark creeds left them also to believe that he hated their neighbors! As the creed was narrow, so was it vivid. As it became wider, so did it lose its most vital elements. It is assuredly one of the most hopeful features of the Second Broad Church that in broaching the most intellectually advanced theology, it has, at the same time, preached the warmest personal religion. We would instance Canon Stanley's sermon on "Grieving the Spirit," as employing anthropomorphous expressions hardly to be defended from the point of view of intellectual theology, yet conveying to the heart feelings which possess doubtless a deeper truth and are more really suited to our relation to the Father of Spirits than those which are often called out by the most carefully weighed religious terminology.

To return to our original question. What influence can the Second Broad Church exercise on the future religion of the world? What answer will it supply to the doubts of the age, and whereon would it rest our faith in God and Immortality? The reply seems to be brief. The Second Broad Church would, like all the other parties in the Church, call on us to rest our faith on History. But in this case it is History *corroborated* by consciousness, not *opposed* thereto. In the next Chapter it will be our effort to show that under *no* conditions is it probable that History can afford our ultimate grounds of faith. Meanwhile, it must appear that if any form of Historical faith may escape such a conclusion, and approve itself to mankind in time to come, it is that which is proposed by the Second Broad Church, and which it worthily presents—to the intellect by its learning, and to the religious sentiment by its profound and tender piety.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SOLUTION BY THE PARTIES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.



WE have now reviewed the present position of religious faith as held by Palæologians and Neologians—the High and Low, the First and Second Broad Church parties. These may be said generally to include the great mass of the English nation—all the Members of the Establishment being more or less attached to one or other of the four parties; and the Evangelical party embracing not only half the members of the Church of England, but also the three great sects commonly termed Orthodox Dissenters, the Independents, Methodists, and Baptists.

There remain four bodies, comparatively small in their numbers, but important from various other causes, whose position it would lead us too far in this little work adequately to review. These are the Jews, Roman Catholics, Quakers, and Unitarians.

Each of these sects bears testimony, however, to the fact with whose observation we commenced our inquiries. Everywhere we come on the evidence of the same widespread restlessness with which men are witnessing the war between old creeds and modern science; everywhere we find the same efforts to arrive at harmony by one or other method of reconciliation.

Among each of these four sects there exist at this moment an Old School and a New—a party of Palæologians of wholly conservative tendencies, and a party of Neologians endeavoring to reconcile the elder doctrines and the younger thought.

Among the Jews we have one school still holding to strict Mosaism, and another to Talmudism, like the Low Church and High Church parties among ourselves—and again another school, with Phillipsohn at its head, doing precisely for Judaism what Maurice and the First Broad Church would fain do for Christianity; interpret it in harmony with the philosophy of the age.* And again beyond these, among the most educated Jews, we find men and women viewing theology from the highest standpoint of rationalism, and only holding by the creed of their fathers because they identify it with the purest theism.

* See Phillipsohn's *Development of the Religious Idea in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity*. Translated by Miss Ann Goldschmidt.

Again, among the Roman Catholics themselves there exist, not only the old Palæologian party standing on the old ground, but a newer party, whose courage is equal even to the stupendous attempt of reconciling Popery and the philosophy of the nineteenth century.*

The Society of Friends, no less, is divided into new and old schools; the old holding most by Scriptural authority: the new doubtless preparing to push their grand distinctive doctrine of the "Inner Light" to the full consequences, developed by the Second Broad Church party in the National Church.

Most distinctly of all, however, do we naturally find the "Vanguard Sect" of the Unitarians displaying the tendencies of the times. There exists even here a Palæologian party which is striving to stand still almost on the ground of Priestley and Belsham—the ground of the Infallibility of Scripture *when interpreted in a certain manner*. And there is a vast body of Neologians, more or less "Broad," who have clearly perceived that this old ground is fairly submerged, and that they must go forward and adopt altogether new theories of inspiration, if they are to retain their distinctive doctrine of the Unity of God, and be justified in rejecting the dogmas of the Atonement.

* Their present organ in England is the *Home and Foreign Review*. (See George Sands' Preface to *Madame la Quintinie*, for a remarkable sketch of the state of religious feeling in France.)

ment and of Eternal Hell. The old Unitarians have done their work — a great and noble one in its day. But it is over now, and, as a mere *negation of error on erroneous grounds*, can have no further influence on the age. It remains to be seen how far the New School will have the courage to go forward and form a nucleus round which all the more advanced thought of the time may gather. Its leaders already possess so many great truths, and are so worthy to put them forward, that the spectator is tempted to ask, Where is it they fail? How is it that men like these, with such words to speak and willingness and power to speak them, have failed to reach the heart of England, as Theodore Parker, with doctrines hardly ostensibly different from some of theirs, reached the heart of so many thousands both in Europe and in America? The answer must surely lie here: that those differences, apparently small, between his Theism and their Unitarianism, really touch the root of the matter. Parker worshipped One God alone; — our *only* Moral Lord — our present Teacher — our future Judge. The Unitarians, while giving to him alone the *name* of “God,” and jealously reserving it and all acts of worship for him, have yet persisted in giving to Christ that position which, practically to us as moral beings, is a Divine One; namely, that of our Moral Lord and Teacher, and future Judge. This doctrine involves in itself the essential evil of Trinitarian-

ism; nay, goes beyond it. It signifies exceedingly little to us, in a spiritual sense, whether more superhuman Beings than One have a right to the title of “God,” or what we think about the Eternity or Self-Existence of the Deity. What *does* signify to us spiritually is the question, Who is *our Moral Master*? To whom do we owe allegiance? Who has taught us (whether internally or externally) the law of Duty? Whom do we obey or offend, as we regard or disregard that Law? Who watches our obedience now? Who judges us now and for all eternity? These questions touch the very heart of Religion. To present to our minds a second Lord, another Master, Teacher, Judge, destroys for us the whole *moral* value of the doctrine of the Unity of God. Nay, with all respect, I would urge the question on Unitarians, whether they do not here fall into an error worse than that of the Trinitarian? If we are to believe in two Moral Lords, — a Great Lord and a Lesser Lord — a King and his Vicegerent, — is it not better to believe that these Two are One and the same Lord? From this persistence in holding by the doctrine of the Moral Lordship of Christ after they have rejected that Trinitarian hypothesis on which such a doctrine could be properly based, the Unitarians may surely trace their small hold upon the minds of men, as compared with the claims they might otherwise justly make upon the largest sympathy. That one half note wrong in their

beautiful psalm seems to have made it lose all its reverberating power. To affirm vehemently that Christ is *not* God; not an object of worship; and yet never to allow the soul to approach God without bringing his name into every prayer, is assuredly a fatal mistake. The one great meaning of prayer is, to make the soul feel itself *directly* in communion with God — alone in the innermost Holy of Holies, with his awful eye looking into our hearts. The presence *there* of the dearest or most sacred Mediator, or Witness, forbids the mystery. And in all life, it is in a measure the same. Duty contemplated as done ever at the feet of God and in his immediate presence, is one thing. Duty done under the inspection of His Vicegerent, is another. We have none of us enough love, enough reverence, enough sense of spiritual presences to distract any fraction of them from God.

If Unitarians will but preach a *Moral* as well as a *Natural* Unity of the Deity, then (we cannot but believe) the warmth of feeling in religion, the depth of doctrine concerning sin, — with whose lack they have always (though often unjustly) been reproached, — will spontaneously arise in their Church, and with the beautiful faith in God's goodness which they have always possessed, they will complete a theology which will reach the hearts of thousands to whom now their enlightened thoughts and noble morality appeal in vain.

To construct such a theology, however, it is clear that the Unitarians must (as they are already doing) adopt the most advanced views concerning the limitations of Scripture inspiration. But when they have done this completely, their position will lie almost entirely beyond the pale of Traditional Religion, for *they* cannot (like the Second Broad Church) still cling to any of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, while admitting the fallibility of the Record. For the Unitarians to admit in full that Christ is not our present Moral Lord and future Judge, and that the Bible is not inspired differently in kind from other books, is so nearly tantamount to giving up Traditional Religion, that we may safely expect all who advance so far to make the further step, and pass into the ranks of those who hold that the foundation of our faith in God and immortality must not be sought for in History, but in the natural consciousness of man.

If the arguments in the foregoing chapters be deemed by the reader to be in some degree satisfactory, he will now have arrived at the conclusion that the Present Condition of Religious Thought in England offers little prospect of any of the existing forms of Traditionalism becoming the final basis of our faith. Neither within the National Church nor outside of it, neither by Palæologists nor Neologists, does it seem that any

clew is held which may guide us out of the labyrinth of our difficulties. Historical faith and modern science and philosophy are visibly sundered before our eyes, and every day diverge wider and wider, with small hope of ever meeting again. Interpreting the History to suit the Science, or the Science to suit the History, it is equally a failure. We shall, doubtless, for a long time to come, strive by both methods to effect the compromise, and wrangle as to which method is the best. But the end must surely come at last. The hunger of the soul for that faith in God, which is its sustenance, cannot forever be put off by husks and chaff. We must have a definite answer to the one great definite question, "How do we know there is a God?" When we find that History can but corroborate our knowledge, and can never be itself the ground of our knowledge, we shall cease to lean upon it. Very slowly, very gradually, perhaps, the change may come. When we view the enormous power the Historical faith still possesses, the outward and tangible greatness of the Churches, and the inward influence and affectionate allegiance they claim over millions of hearts, it would seem as if the prophecy of an end ever coming to such an order of things was to the last degree futile and presumptuous. Yet no principle in human affairs assuredly is more invariable than that which maintains the connection between *discovered* truth and its final

triumph; discovered error, and its eventual relinquishment by the masses of mankind. *If* the observations in the preceding pages be in any way just; if the friends of tradition have failed by any of their various methods to effect its reconciliation with the facts of Science, then the end, though distant, cannot be uncertain. The whole Traditional faith will gradually lose its hold upon the minds of men, and be less and less supported by the well-informed and the sincere. Hitherto it has been actually, as well as professedly, in harmony with men's thoughts. It has rested upon the honest belief of intelligent minds. When it can do this no longer; when men must be wanting either in intelligence or in honesty to support the system, then the hour of its fall is sounded. All the National Establishments and magnificent endowments in the world can only protract, but not alter the end. Far off in the future, we may venture even now to foresee and calculate that end, and ask, "What will be beyond?" The seeming boldness of the prophecy is but the confidence in the immutable principles of God's guidance of the human soul. In that confidence we may rest assured that if Traditional Religion be indeed on the wane, if the hour be approaching when it will have become a thing of the past, then it will but have passed away to give place to a yet purer light, a yet warmer and brighter Faith, which shall remain with us forever. God has not made his

children to believe in him, and worship and adore him, even from creation till now, to leave them at last without faith, or hope, or knowledge concerning him. *He* will not leave us when all our puny theologies have failed us, and all our "little systems" shall have "had their day, and ceased to be." We shall yet praise him who is the light of life, even though the darkness may seem to gather round us now. Christianity may fail us, and we may watch it with straining eyes going slowly down from the zenith where once it shone; but we need neither regret that it should pass away, nor dread lest we be left in the gloom. *Let it pass away*—that grand and wonderful faith! Let it go down calmly and slowly, like an orb which has brightened half our heavens through the night of the ages, and sets at last in glory, leaving its train of light long gleaming in the sky, and mingling with the dawn. Already up the East there climbs the Sun.

APPENDIX I.

BISHOP COLENSO ON THE PENTATEUCH.

SINCE the very recent rise of the Second Broad Church, a book has appeared, whose influence at least equals that of the *Essays and Reviews*, and opens up a new era in the great controversy. The Bishop of Natal cannot be said to have founded a school, or even to have propounded any novel theory of religion. He has entered the field from quite another side from the High or Low, First or Second Broad Churchman, and stands apart from them all. His work is this: simply to announce some discoveries of criticism bearing importantly upon Historical Theology. Others may draw from these discoveries their legitimate consequences. He may, perhaps, do so himself in future books. But now all his task is to prove the facts themselves. These facts are nothing more nor less than evidences that the first six books of

the Bible — the corner-stones of the whole Canon — were not written by their supposed authors, and are not historically true, much less Divinely inspired and infallible.

The mode in which great scientific theories are attained, seems usually to be somewhat on this wise. The facts which form their basis are fallen upon one by one by those engaged in cognate studies. As these facts militate against any commonly received doctrine, they are each treated as either a mistake of the observer, or else an exception to the general rule. By degrees these "mistakes" and "exceptions" crowd together faster than the most easy inquirer can contentedly allow, and then some mind duly impressed by them seizes on the idea that they are neither mistakes nor exceptions, but facts pointing to some underlying truth. This truth, when announced, is met, of course, at first by vehement opposition, but by degrees the slowly accumulating evidence bears down every obstacle. The flakes of noiseless snow, heaped up so long, fall down at length in the thunder of the far-resounding avalanche. Such has been the story of many a modern theory from its origin — of Palæontology, from the days in which fossils were said to be "*lusus naturæ*," or "*relics of the Flood*" — of the theory of the Antiquity of the Human Race, from the days in which all the histories of the world were laid upon the Procrustean bed of Usher's Chronology.

In similar manner, no doubt, we are now made spectators of the rise of a new theory of Bibliology. For ages back, and markedly since the days of Spinoza, facts have been known to learned men utterly at variance with the received doctrines of the infallibility of Scripture, or even of its historical accuracy. But these facts, when they have not been wholly overlooked or denied, were accounted for (precisely like the first discovered fossils) by hypotheses of "*interpolations*," or by such marvellously invented explanatory circumstances and antecedents, as would (as Coleridge said) have made sense out of Shakspeare's story of the "*Men in Buckram*." The time has come, however, when all these facts are gathered up together, and massed so heavily, that their weight can no longer be resisted by any mind candid enough to examine the evidence.

Of course the clamor is enormous; for *this* avalanche bears with it the whole standing ground of millions, and few have yet perceived that after its fall we shall only stand the more securely upon the rock underneath.*

* Bishop Colenso sums up the results of his work thus, as an accumulation of evidences: "*All the arguments drawn from an examination of the Pentateuch point in one direction. There is literally nothing in these books distinctly indicative of Mosaic authorship. The whole force of the argument for that authorship rests upon tradition, and may be referred back to the opinion of the*

Bishop Colenso's work can hardly be over-estimated for importance, when we consider its inevitable influence on the opinions of the masses. Of course the facts of his established ability, his personal character, and his position as a dignitary of the Church, have all, doubtless, had a certain share in adding to the immediate publicity of his work. But in time to come these circumstances will only bear weight as enhancing our gratitude, that to such a man it has been given to have the strength to grasp, and the courage to teach, truths of such deep import; and that in teaching them he has been enabled to display a spirit, at whose mildness and dignity his assailants, fighting under the banner of Christianity, must surely somewhat marvel at the peculiarity of the heretic side in these latter-day contests.* The real influence of his work will go far beyond personal and temporary interests. Even if

Jews, who lived nearly a thousand years after the date assigned to Moses. It is not a question of *balanced internal evidence*, but a case where there is a *host* of indications, all tending to show diversity of authorship and late date, and *none* discoverable by all the ingenuity yet brought to bear upon the subject, which tends decidedly the other way; and the supporters of the traditional view will be found to be constantly occupied, not in producing internal evidence to show that Moses *did* write the Pentateuch, but in trying to account for the existence, on the assumption of his authorship, of so much internal evidence to the contrary." (Preface, vol. iii.)

* That such a spirit had to encounter some trial may be inferred from his quotation from "a single short letter of one of my episcopal brethren, forbidding me to minister in his diocese, in which the

many more of the details be revised by future criticisms than are ever likely to be revised; if the whole constructive part of his book be hereafter rejected on further discovery of critical phenomena, yet the great result will remain. The isolated objections to the historical veracity of the Pentateuch have been marshalled, for the first time, in such array as that their immense force becomes revealed at a glance, and for the first time the nation at large has been admitted to behold the sight. Of the consequences, none may yet pretend to predict the end. The Bishop himself may be as much in the dark as any of us. His part has been *to tell us what he has found*. What use will be made of his discoveries is yet hidden in that Providence, of which the law we can most surely discern is this: "That all truth is God's truth, and that to nothing but Error can it be dangerous."

Among the relations of numbers, the metaphysician finds the first firm ground on which he can work to erect the superstructure of a satisfactory philosophy of human cognition. Among the relations of numbers also doubtless has the Bishop of Natal found firm ground on which to work in the vast field of Biblical interpretation.

following expressions occur, applied either to myself or my work, — "unfounded, false, childish, heretical, blasphemous, abominable, unhappy, blind, daring, ignorant, self-sufficient, instrument of Satan, — poor Bishop Colenso!" (Pref., vol. iii. p. xv.)

It is no wonder that the defenders of the Bible should so loudly denounce an invasion in this quarter, for it is the most dangerous to them of all. So long as any *moral* point was argued, it was always possible for them to deny the right of the human mind to "sit in judgment on the Word of God." So long as any adverse discoveries in science or history were alleged, it was possible to debate every detail and contest every result, till the inquirer withdrew in weariness and disgust from the controversy. But questions of numbers can hardly be deemed beyond the limits of human investigation, neither are they often open to very prolonged debate. Prove the Bible to be full of wrong numbers, and it is proved that in the *one* point open entirely to our investigation it is false. How much confidence the remainder may continue to receive on the convenient hypothesis of inaccurate scribes — scribes who must have played their profane game through all the Scriptures, or (to use a cant commercial phrase) have *cooked* the whole arithmetic of the Bible — is not for us now to determine.

Of the hundreds of Answers to Bishop Colenso which have issued from the press, it would not be within the plan of this little work to speak, except inasmuch as they tend to show the different stand point of those parties in the Church which might have been supposed, from their professions of liberality, ready

to open their eyes to the new light he has (even to the recognition of the great scholars of Germany) thrown upon the science of Biblical criticism. The two branches, High and Low, of the Palæologian party naturally, from their essential principles, denounce his work. Church authority has prejudged the question for the Anglican, and the Infallibility of the Bible is to the Evangelical the corner-stone of all religion revealed to him by the "inward witness of the spirit." But the First Broad Churchman, who has followed from Coleridge to Arnold, from Arnold to Hare and Maurice and Kingsley, — he whose principle is that modern thought and the Bible *can* be harmonized by a true interpretation of the latter, — was there not reason to suppose that from this side Bishop Colenso would have met a different reception? Some of his premises might have been questioned; many of his conclusions might have been judged to have been pressed too far. But the *principle* of his inquiries — the vast residue of result which remains from his criticism after every possible deduction, all this we might have hoped would have infallibly been accepted by the First Broad Church party, with the manliness and desire to be candid, of which they have hitherto not unjustly made their boast.

It is a sad discovery that such hopes should be futile. The First Broad Church seems especially anxious to

dispel any which may have been cherished to such a purpose, and its two leaders have issued each their protest. It is needful to a just comprehension of the leading controversy of the day, that we should glance at these works which represent the answer of the most liberal section of the Church to the arguments of Bishop Colenso. If *these* prove unsatisfactory, those of the other sections need not give us any concern.

The first of these, Mr. Maurice's *Claims of the Bible and of Science*, professes to speak "in plain language about the Bible to English Laymen." It must be avowed, however, that the "plain language" so often fails to convey a plain impression, that it is by no means an easy task to collect the points of the much respected author's arguments. He who has felt the power of the very clear and definite questions propounded by Bishop Colenso, "Were there, or were there not, so many Israelites at such a time? and if there were, how could they have done what the Book of Exodus said they did? Do you believe that every Hebrew woman had forty-eight children, on an average? That every priest ate every day eighty-two pigeons in the Holy Place? That the Levitical regulations could apply to a camp as large as London? That six hundred thousand slaves were suffered by the Egyptians to keep arms, and then fled away in terror before the army of Pharaoh, with all their families,

flocks, and herds, in a single night?" — he, we say, who has felt the force of questions like these, can hardly feel much satisfaction from such reflections as those offered as "plain language to laymen," in the *Claims of the Bible and of Science*. Is it satisfactory, for instance, to be told that "moral demonstrations are more trustworthy than physical demonstrations?" That "numbers are good; weights and measures are good; all honor to them. But man must have *his* honor. His transactions may not be capable of being brought under the rules of arithmetic?" (p. 67.)

At one moment, we fancy we have found some definite sort of answer to Colenso. It is asked, "Is the Bishop's inference that the *history* of the Book perishes, — that it must be disbelieved if we do justice to these stern physical facts, — a reasonable and a tenable one? The more we examine it, the more unreasonable and untenable I think it will appear; unreasonable and untenable, I mean, if the Bishop's own fact test be applied to it. Numerical facts are valuable, important, indisputable. But they do not constitute history. A very great exaggeration in numbers about the expedition of Xerxes, if it could be proved, may make me doubt *the information or even the veracity* of Herodotus. It will not make me doubt the truth of a battle of Salamis and a battle of Plataea. It will not make me doubt the grand truth, that a set of tiny

European republics discomfited the great monarchy of Asia." (*Claims*, etc., p. 74.) Here is, actually, some definite principle, of which we may form a judgment before being again called on to reflect that "you cannot produce faith or understanding by criticism," etc., etc. Let us endeavor to estimate the value of this principle. It is surely simply this: that when a numerical test is applied to a history, and the history fails to bear it, we may lawfully, thereupon, doubt "*the information and even the veracity*" of the historian; but not the "great truth" of the main facts of his history—such as the defeat of the Persians by the Greeks. It is certainly a singular line of attack on Colenso to propound such a principle as this, which grants all that either he or any other sane critic ever dreamed of demanding. Who has ever doubted that "great truth" of the Pentateuch which corresponds in Jewish history with the defeat of the Persians in that of Herodotus? Who has ever doubted the escape of Israel out of Egypt? What Bishop Colenso has doubted, and what he may thank Mr. Maurice for full permission to doubt, is that which fails with the failure of the numerical test, namely, "THE INFORMATION, AND EVEN THE VERACITY OF THE HISTORIAN!" The "Claims of Science" are certainly met, as we shall all agree, by this concession. It may be questioned, however, what those of "the Bible" may be thought

to be by such as consider the "information" therein contained divinely given, and the "veracity" of the historian guaranteed by the quotations of Christ.

In the VIIIth Letter, another answer is given to Colenso, which amounts to this: That belief in Christ is the essence of Christianity, and that *it* cannot be affected by any opinions about the Pentateuch, nay, by opinions about "books" at all—among which, of course, we must class the Gospels. We have already spoken of this argument, which is so convenient and favorite a one with many Christians. Doubtless we shall hear more and more of it, as a safe mode of cutting the knot of all difficulties, as the busy hands of science persist in entangling that knot every day more pertinaciously. But the whole argument is founded on the most amazing inversion of the offices of the human faculties. The knowledge of an invisible Present God may be an immediate fact of consciousness. But the knowledge of an historical personage,—his life, death, words, actions, and character,—can only be known *as history*, through written or oral tradition. It is to mistake the nature of our mental faculties to suppose we can know *intuitively* any thing of the kind. The popular jest against the German philosopher, who "retired into his study to construct the idea of a Camel out of his moral consciousness," is not more deserved than would be one

against a man who pretends to tell us he can dispense with history for his knowledge of an historical personage. When history has put us in possession of the facts of a man's life, then, indeed, intuition may tell us whether such a man were good or evil. But it is a mockery to say we can dispense with the history, or be ready magnanimously to discard its truth of "information," and doubt the "veracity of the historian," on which all the facts depend by which our consciousness must be determined. The remainder of the book seems chiefly to be a reiteration of these arguments. Their purport is simply this: "Good morals can be deduced from the Pentateuch; therefore it is a Divine book; the wrong numbers are of no *moral* consequence." The logic is sometimes very singular. "The story of the Red Sea has given faith to men when they needed something more than fictions to rest upon." (Of course, therefore, we may be sure it was not a fiction they rested upon!) The story of the Deluge has always been "recognized as a message concerning One who punishes men" (therefore it must be a true story). "If you had no associations with the length and breadth of the world, to which it (the story of the Deluge) referred, you would not be inclined to doubt that it had occurred" (p. 111). (Therefore, though our doubts are precisely founded on our knowledge of the length and breadth of the world, they are

of no consequence). "We have made prodigious blunders in our interpretation of Scripture" (therefore, when we interpret the "whole earth" to mean the "whole earth," we are probably mistaken). "It is not the physical, but the historical part of the Deluge which has impressed itself on the mind and conscience of Christendom. The Baptismal service uses the Deluge without reference to its dimensions with reference to God's deliverance of man. And, quite consistently, Bishop Colenso objects to this use of the story, because dimensions are for him every thing; because a small fact is for him no fact at all" (therefore, because the Bishop argues, "The *story* says the flood was enormous, but Science proves it was small, therefore, the *story* cannot be true," we may turn round on the Bishop and tell him that a small fact is for him no fact at all)! We are justified in insisting on the Divine origin of "small facts" narrated in the shape of great falsehoods.

Finally, the *Claims of the Bible and of Science* conclude by many personal reflections concerning what the Bishop of Natal has not done and might have done. We are told that "if he had gone on to exhort us to abstain from inventing theories which shut out God's light, how should we have listened to him as a Father in God, owning that dignity in him all the more readily because he had not the dignity of earthly greatness

and wealth to mix with it." The concession is wonderful, truly! If Dr. Colenso had brought his high and admirable abilities and character to the support of one view of theology, "*we*" should have listened to him, even though he be but a poor Missionary Bishop, — a man who has merely been doing Apostles' work "without the dignity of earthly greatness and wealth to mix with it." But this listening is now out of the question. The Bishop "has invented theories; he has taught us to distrust God's past revelations — those which are the preparations for the revelations of his only begotten Son" (p. 125). Thus (although the speciality of Colenso's work is that he proffers no theory at all, and only states facts) we are called on to condemn him for "teaching us to distrust!" What? "God's past revelations, which are the preparations for the revelations of his only begotten Son." But if Colenso's facts be *true*, the "revelations" are not of God, and we owe him a debt of gratitude for teaching us to distrust them. And if Mr. Maurice were right in maintaining in his Letter VIII. that belief in Christ does not depend on any opinion about the Pentateuch at all, then there is no cause whatever to blame Colenso for teaching us to distrust it. If the Image do not stand on the Pedestal, there is no cause to cry out because the Pedestal is touched.

The second Protest against Bishop Colenso from the

First Broad Church is, *The Gospel of the Pentateuch*, by Kingsley. Full of beautiful and noble thoughts; like all the writings of the School, it deals as usual more with edification than criticism, and applies itself so briefly to the controversy in hand, that we are hardly concerned to notice it here. The principal *points* seem to be these. The main facts of the Pentateuch suffice for all our religious needs; we care not for details. "Let comfortable folk who know no sorrow trouble their brains as to whether 60 or 600,000 fighting men came with Moses out of Egypt. We care not for numbers. What we care for is, not to know how many came out, but who brought them out" (p. 152). It is true enough, unquestionably, that the *religious lesson* of the Pentateuch itself may remain and be useful when all the facts, great and small, are rejected. The Greeks established a festival of thanksgiving for ages to Zeus Eleutherios for delivering them from the Persians, and no doubt might regard such a memorial of national gratitude as a great religious lesson after all the details of Herodotus had been rejected. But the use of the Pentateuch as the corner-stone of the whole vast edifice of Biblical infallibility, that edifice on which the doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, and the like, must inevitably be based, is destroyed if all the details therein be proved fictitious. It is *this* result of his criticism — not any result on moral or

religious lessons — which Colenso calls us to consider. 2dly. Kingsley argues that the writers of the Pentateuch (especially of Deuteronomy) were morally incapable of such forgery as is presumed on the hypothesis of the late origin of the books (p. 231). To this it is hard indeed to reply. No greater shock can well be done to our confidence in humanity, than the discovery that such things may be. But the argument, that “Calvin was a good man, therefore he could not have burned Servetus,” is not more unreliable than the “*high priori road*” of demanding, in the case of the authors of the Pentateuch, what *would* be right and consistent for them to have done, and then assuming they have done it. We know the Jews *did* falsely attribute their books to Enoch, to Solomon, and probably to Daniel and Isaiah. We know that, in a much higher moral stage, the Christians attributed false Gospels to James and Bartholomew; forged false epistles from Paul to Seneca, and even from Christ himself to Abgarus. The only question is, how *soon* these deplorable “pious frauds” began. Their *daring* can never have exceeded that which made a Christian forge the writings of Christ.

The great final argument, however, of Kingsley is this: “The Old Testament tells us of the noble acts of the Lord. But if it be not true, it follows that God has not done the noble acts which man thought he had,

and therefore that God is not as noble as men thought he was” (p. 234). But, in the first place, the Old Testament tells us of many acts which it attributes to God, which are not noble, but much the reverse. And, secondly, if the history be untrue, it does not follow that God may not have done the noblest acts not recorded, or imperfectly recorded therein. He may have delivered Israel from Egypt as he delivered Greece from Persia, although the Pentateuch be no more infallible than Herodotus.

Such are the answers to Bishop Colenso put forward by the two gifted and justly respected leaders of the First Broad Church party. The reader may judge how far they can be considered as satisfactorily meeting his challenge of clear and definite statements.

As to the Second Broad Church, without, by any means, coinciding with all Bishop Colenso's conclusions, it has met him with that candor which befits its own claims to liberality. Canon Stanley's allusion to his book, in his own Lectures on the Jewish Church, will long remain an evidence of that kind of honesty, most rare, alas! in religious controversy, — the avowal, that a most unpopular opinion, which is not altogether that of the writer, is yet deserving of respect, and qualified to be of general utility. As we said of the Essayists, so must we say of Colenso. If the Church is to be saved, it is to be by the honesty of men like

these. Few nobler words have been written for many a day than those with which the Bishop expounds the purport of his work and the scope of his ambition.


"The object of my whole work is to bind the consciences of men more imperatively than ever by the law of true religion, which is the law of life and happiness. But inasmuch as multitudes have already broken loose from the restraints of that traditional religious teaching which they know to be contradicted by some of the most familiar results of modern science, now made the common heritage of every educated English child, I believe that I have only done my duty as a minister of the National Church, in endeavoring to reëstablish a permanent union between the teachings of religion and science, and to heal effectively that breach between them, which otherwise will assuredly widen day by day with infinite injury to the Church itself, and to the whole community."*

Whether this aim can be accomplished by any reconciliation between *Historical* "Religion," in any shape, and "Science," may be an open question; but if it can be done at all, it must assuredly be by some such honest books as the *Essays and Reviews* and *The Pentateuch Examined*.

* *The Pentateuch*, etc. Preface, vol. iii., p. xviii.

APPENDIX II.

RÉNAN'S "VIE DE JÉSUS."

 THE controversy excited in England by the *Second Broad Church Essays and Reviews* was rapidly succeeded by that which arose on the publication of Bishop Colenso's criticism on the *Pentateuch*; and this again is now followed by a commotion raised over the whole Continent by M. Rénan's *Vie de Jésus*. This latter book demands mention in this place, both from its great importance in a review of existing thought, and also because it will doubtless be generally assumed by Traditionalists to be the exposition of the views concerning Christ commonly held by those who reject a supernatural revelation. It cannot be questioned that, for power and skill, for vivid presentation of all the outward conditions of the life of Christ, this book transcends all which have preceded it, heterodox or orthodox, and that the yet future biography of the great Prophet of Nazareth which shall give a really satisfactory portrait to the world, must borrow largely from the brilliant picture of

Rénan, and use in truth the whole *entourage* and background which he has supplied. Nevertheless, that in his principal figure M. Rénan has failed — failed not in the many minor touches beautifully and truly sketched, but in the essential characteristic of his great subject, can hardly be denied. From the point of view of the critic, of the poet, and even of the moralist, he may have succeeded. But there surely remains another side (and that the preëminent one, in the character of Christ) which M. Rénan, critic, poet, and moralist, with all his learning, his vivid sympathies, and his high ethical sentiments, has never touched at all — apparently has never suspected. Is it that the bias towards a semi-Pantheism* he betrays at intervals must necessarily exclude those profounder thoughts of God and man's relation towards him, which belong to the conception of him distinctly as a *Personal* God, our Moral Lord, with whom our souls must have the actual and real transactions of Repentance, Forgiveness, Regeneration? Is it consequently that the treatment of a subject essentially *spiritual* from a merely moral and æsthetic point of view, must inevitably be a failure?† It may be so.

* See p. 74. "Si Dieu en effet est un être déterminé hors de nous, la personne qui croit avoir des rapports particuliers avec Dieu est un 'visionnaire,' " etc.

† In many passages of the *Vie de Jésus*, the intrusion of æsthetic criticism into the profoundest *penetrabilia* of religion, is in the last degree painful, and surely must be held to betray a very

We do not need to decide. Yet that Traditionalists may not, without contradiction, assert that Rénan has truly represented the Rationalist views of Christ's character, it is fit that the writer should here indicate (however diffidently) what would seem to be the real aspect of his life, taken from the standpoint of Theism. A few prefatory observations on the whole subject will not be out of place.

With the removal of the basis of Religion from History to the natural consciousness of mankind, it is evident that the answer to the questions of modern criticism concerning the character of Christ, passes out of the domain of theology, and becomes simply the most interesting as well as the most important chapter in the great tale of the religious development of the human race. No longer will any student feel that the conclusions to which he may be driven by his researches on this matter are of vital concern to his *religion*. His relation to God as his ever-present Master, his loving Father and Friend, his hopes of a blessed immortality, will remain above the reach where the tide of advancing criticism concerning the authenticity

slight sense of the sanctity of the ideas subjected to such criticism. That the Story of the Prodigal could be styled a "a délicieuse parabole," and Christ's pity for the repentant Magdalenes be spoken of as a "jalousie pour la gloire de son Père dans ces belles créatures," seems almost to reveal the inability of the speaker to comprehend the divinest thing in Christ, — his treatment of sin.

of ancient manuscripts or the canonicity of sacred books can possibly ascend. Yet albeit that his holiest faith will henceforth be beyond disturbance, it must remain to him the problem most nearly of all *connected* with religion: "Who and what was that great Prophet who trod the fields of Palestine nineteen centuries ago, and who has ever since been worshipped as a God by the foremost nations of the world?" Still in our time, as eighteen centuries ago, recurs the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?"

When it is recognized that this question is purely an *historical* one, — to be determined only according to the data furnished by the final conclusions of the most advanced critical investigation of History, — it becomes also recognized that we are far from the time when any man will be qualified to form an accurate judgment on the subject. The science of historical criticism is still in its infancy. The results already obtained by its application to the New and Old Testaments only point to further, and, doubtless, to far more important and reliable results to be obtained hereafter. In the case of the four biographies of Christ, there remain all the most important questions yet to be decided — their date and authorship, the relative value of the three Synoptical Gospels, and of that of St. John; and of the three Synoptics respectively; the number and extent of later additions, interpolations, and variations. When men

have fitted themselves by the enormous study the subject demands to determine these questions, then, and not till then, shall we begin to see the way before us to the next process of obtaining a real history of such portions of Christ's life as have been recorded and preserved. At the very best the results of both these steps must, in all human probability, forever remain beset with difficulties, and open to many doubts. The nature of the case hardly permits that it should ever be otherwise, and, at the present stage of the controversy, nothing but extreme ignorance can permit any man to dogmatize positively concerning conclusions, all whose premises are in uncertainty. But on a matter of such interest as this, it is vain to endeavor altogether to forbear from the attempt to form some theory for ourselves, even while admitting that the grounds for such theory are as yet a quicksand. The four Gospels have given us so *living*, if not so *correct* an image, and that image has shone out so long in golden radiance before the dazzled eyes of Christendom, that to admit it may be partially erroneous is the utmost stretch of our philosophy. We still persist in arguing and debating as if it were absolutely perfect. Small marvel, truly is it so, when even the confessed creations of the poet's genius — a Hamlet or a Lear — become to us real persons on whom we argue and debate! Who shall say how *real* is that Ideal Christ whom all of us

hold in our hearts, whom nearly all of us have worshipped on our knees?

We are inevitably, then, driven to form *some* theory. Let us endeavor to do so, leaving largest scope for future verification and modification, and bearing with us always the remembrance that we are *not* proceeding on the certain grounds of an ascertained biography, but altogether otherwise, on the testimony of unknown historians whose opportunities as witnesses, or even acquaintances of witnesses; whose judgment, accuracy, reliability, are all unknown, and whose writings, even as we possess them, may have been altered and interpolated to an unknown extent.

Of that noblest countenance which once smiled upon the plains of Palestine we possess not, nor will mankind ever recover, any perfect and infallible picture, any sun-drawn photograph which might tell us with unerring certainty he was, or he was not, as our hearts may conceive of him. Rather do we only look sorrowfully over the waves of time to behold reflected therein some such faint and wavering image as his face may have cast on the Lake of Galilee as he leaned at eventide, from the ship of his disciples, over the waters stirred and rippling before the breeze. Some features too often recur to leave us altogether mistaken concerning them, and the impression of the whole countenance is one "full of grace and truth." But of the details we can

decide nothing, nor pretend to speak of them as clear or assured.

One thing, however, we may hold with approximate certainty, and that is, that all the *highest* doctrines, the purest moral precepts, the most profound spiritual revelations recorded in the Gospels, were actually those of Christ himself. The originator of the Christian movement must have been the greatest soul of his time, as of all time. If he did not speak those words of wisdom, who could have recorded them for him? "It would have taken a Jesus to forge a Jesus."*

And, on the other hand, all that in the Gospels most confounds and troubles us, — that which tends to make Christ a heteroclite and incomprehensible being, between a God and a Man — a Prophet who preached himself as often as his God, — all that portion of the Gospels we may with most plausibility attribute, if not to the *invention*, yet at least to the exaggerating homage, of adoring disciples proceeding stage after stage to magnify the Prophet into the Messiah — the Messiah into the Son of God — and the Son of God into the incarnate Logos — himself a God.

Taking our existing biographies in this light as authorities to be accepted provisionally only, the question of the character of Christ becomes a problem, not perhaps wholly insoluble from the humanitarian point

* Theodore Parker.

of view. Approaching it from the side of a philosophy which starts with the principles of the absolute Unity of God, and of the uninterrupted regularity of his natural and spiritual laws, we, of course, place on one side all the ideas which concern only an Incarnate God; a Being whose birth, works, words, and resurrection, were all supernatural. These, in the eyes of a Theist, constitute a series of myths, legitimate perhaps as expressing in the language of fable the exalted power and the moral union with God, which belong to supreme goodness, but whose objective reality no known cumulation of historic evidence could substantiate, much less such wholly defective evidence as we actually possess on the subject.

With the rejection of the supernatural in the biography of Christ, and the renunciation of those doctrines which give to him the place of a God-Man, the co-equal Son of the Father, we are also compelled to renounce much even in our conception of his human character, which has imperceptibly blended itself therewith from the sources of the supernatural. The Ideal Christ and the Historical Christ are, in some respects, so widely different, that he who reads the Gospels for the first time, with the view of distinguishing them, will hardly fail to be astonished at the discovery he will make of how much the heart of Christendom has added to and retouched the picture conveyed to it by

the evangelists. How far *they* in their turn must be admitted to have idealized their long departed Master, we never now may tell. That in him, who assuredly possessed the deepest spiritual experience, and reached the highest spiritual eminence of all the sons of men, his disciples should have embodied the spiritual history of all humanity, is not a matter of surprise. It may be that his life did pass through all the phases of the inner world. It may be that there was a day when the first sense of independent religion awoke in his yet childish heart, and he asked his parents, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It may be there was a long period of lonely thought and ascetic practice upon those desolate burning hills of the Quarantania, closing at last with that same fierce strife with tempting passions and interests, which every strong soul has undergone, and every saint has ended with the same victorious word, "Get thee behind me, Satan!." It may be there was an hour of Transfiguration, when his soul became glorified in the full splendor of God's love, and the spirits of the holy dead seemed not more heavenly than his own. It may be there was a dread night in Gethsemane, when the first warfare of the Temptation had to be won again with harder strife, and deeper prayers, and fast falling tears of blood, till it too closed in victory, still holier and more complete; "Not my will but thine be done."

It may be there was one darkest moment of all, when, in the fainting agony of the Cross, God hid his face— withdrew the conscious Presence which could make all torture endurable, and left him to that uttermost trial which wrung forth the cry, the bitterest which ever broke from human lips: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It may be that the dread darkness of the Passion passed away, and as the end drew on the Christ knew that his Father's work, begun so long ago in the Temple, was accomplished, and that his Father's love should be his portion forever; that, not now Moses and Elias, but the poor crucified thief beside him, should that day be with him in Paradise; that he might pray for his cruel foes, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and then look back over his whole life's task, and bow his head and say: "It is finished!"

It may be that all these things were absolutely true, that in the life of Jesus the great ALLEGORY OF HUMANITY was a real fact taking place under the sun. We can believe that so it was; or if not, then that it had another and more spiritual reality in the souls of those millions who have ever since recognized it as bearing an eternal truth under the veil of holiest parable.

But whether these or any other passages in the life of Jesus be or be not historically true, we yet possess a means of forming an estimate of his character inde-

pendently of them. We may "measure him by his shadow; nay, rather say, by the *light* he has cast on the world." We may judge what great *results* he effected by his words and his life. What was the world before his time? what has it been since? In these inquiries we cannot go very far wrong. The broad and general facts of the results of the Christian movement are clear enough, and do not depend on questions of the authenticity or veracity of special books. Let us obtain the measure of the change introduced into the world by Christianity, and we shall, at the same time, obtain the best measure of the greatness of Christ.

In attempting roughly to form such estimate, we find ourselves on the threshold called on to inquire of what *kind* was the influence of Christianity and of Christ. To form a just estimate of any character in history, it is obviously needful that we view him from the standpoint of his special eminence. To judge an artist from the point of view of the politician, or the man of science from that of the philanthropist, is manifest injustice. The artist's work must be judged as art, the politician's as policy, and so on through every department of human action, if we would recognize the real merit thereof. Applying this rule to the estimate of the character of Christ, it is clear that we must put aside from our view a variety of qualities on which

the claim to greatness is commonly made in the world. The greatness of the sovereign, the statesman, the economist, the commander, the metaphysician, the man of learning, the scientific discoverer, the poet, the historian, the artist; not one of these forms of outward, and, as we might say, tangible greatness, belonged in any degree to Christ. It was altogether in the inward world that we must find the traces of his work, and take the measure of his altitude. But here we may greatly err also, for there are many different aspects in which the inward world may be regarded. A Moral Reformer is one thing, a Spiritual Regenerator another — a very different one. Because the exalted Spirituality of Christ included (as, alas! lesser spiritual eminence has not always done) a transcendently pure Morality, it has happened that those who have regarded him from the Rationalist side, and sought to give him the peculiar human dignity he deserved, have commonly fixed their attention on his Moral teachings, and have proclaimed him the supreme Moral Reformer of the world. He *was* so, indeed, but he was surely something more. We must explain our meaning somewhat at length.

The truest philosophy seems to be that which points to the eternal and necessary Moral Law as the final reason of creation. To produce that Virtue which is its impersonation in the souls of finite free agents, we

believe that God, who is its infinite and absolute impersonation, has made the world. Here (under conditions utterly unaccountable on the opposite hypothesis that we were created for Happiness) — here, in a life of trial, where virtue becomes possible by the coëxistence of sorrow and the presence of temptation — here he has placed us to gain the first steps of that infinite ascent through which our immortal souls may forever approach nearer to Virtue, and thereby nearer to himself, the Holy One.

And the same philosophy also leads us to find in our knowledge of Morals our most sure basis of faith. When all else fails us, and in the dread clouds of doubt even the face of God is hidden from our eyes, and the hope of immortality becomes a dream, even then there remains to the soul the belief in Duty. In the uttermost desolation we may stand firm upon that rock. We say each in the depths of our hearts, "There are actions and feelings *I* call good — true, pure, loving, noble. I know not how I know them, nor who taught them to me, nor whither for good, or evil, they may lead me now or hereafter. But this I know, that I love them — that I desire to do those good actions, and feel those holy sentiments. *I will be* true, pure, loving, noble, so far as in me lies such power." *

* None have felt this truth more strongly than Rénan. In his fine Preface to his *Essais de Morale*, he says: "Il est une base

But this great Moral Law, whose fulfilment is the end of creation, and in whose allegiance our souls find rest amid all their doubts and strivings: that Law is impersonated in the Will of the Great Lawgiver, and it is as *his* Law that we far most solemnly recognize it in our consciousness. Needful as it is in hours of doubt to perceive that it has an existence and an obligation outside of religion, it is yet, as *indissolubly united* with religion, that it assumes its full sanctity. In the great majority of mankind it is as *a part of religion* alone that morality is ever contemplated; and in nearly all of us the view of it as the Will of God is that which gives it power enough practically to achieve the victory over temptation. As a general statement, we may say that Duty is felt by man as the law, taught to him by God as his Creator, and which he is bound to obey as the will of his Moral Lord and Master. And on the other hand we may equally truly say that Religion is felt by all enlightened consciences as primarily a *Moral* relation to God, and that its very essence is a sense of Moral Allegiance to an absolutely Holy Being whose will, and the whole Moral Law, are conterminous and identical.

indubitable que nul scepticisme n'ébranlera, où l'homme trouvera jusqu'à la fin des jours le point fixe de ses incertitudes: le bien, c'est le bien; le mal, c'est le mal. Pour haïr l'un et pour aimer l'autre, aucun système n'est nécessaire." (p. 2.)

Now it would seem that there are two ways or stages of human progress towards this joint acceptance of Morality as a Religious Obligation and of Religion as a Moral Allegiance to God. We might almost liken the growth of human souls to that of the trees of the forest — the exogenous and the endogenous. There are those who grow as it were *from without*, and beginning with the most external moral principles, the mere *negation* of offence, proceed onward every year perceiving the claims of duty to be more positive, more inward, till by slow and steady degrees their whole nature becomes perfected. And there are those who grow *from within*, whose religious life begins in the very core of their hearts wherein the love of God has struck root, and from whence (perhaps at first very irregularly and imperfectly, but yet with unerring certainty) it eventually fills up the full measure of holiness. In the end these two modes of growth doubtless arrive at the same conclusion. But he who grows *from without* may in this life never attain to any inward or spiritual perfection, while the other, starting from the inward piety, may indeed fall short of much outward and social virtue, but has at least the germ of all purest sanctity in his heart. Not to pursue too far such fanciful analogies, we may simply rest upon the fact which has been acknowledged from earliest times, — by Eastern Brahmins no less than Western

Christians, — that there are two great orders in the world of souls ; the Regenerate and the Unregenerate. There are those in whom the sense of God's presence, his Holiness and Love, have become matters of personal experience and immediate consciousness, who have received in their inmost hearts that gleam of a new life which thence may spread and develop through their whole natures. And there are those who have not yet felt any such immediate sense or received such graft, and who perhaps may never experience them in this world. Theologians have made theories to account for this fact. Enthusiasts have insisted that the transition from the one stage to the other must be marked and positive to bring the individuals into the narrow circle whereto they would limit the radiance of God's favor. Formalists have referred back this grandest passage in human existence from the vividest hour of adult life to the unconscious passivity of the infant at the baptismal font. But all that concerns us now is the fact itself. There is, in the lives of thousands, a period when a change takes place more or less outwardly visible and sudden, but attaining in either case the same result — a change wonderful as that which our modern geologists, of the school of Darwin, would have us think may have taken place when the unprogressive animals gave birth to the unknown "primates" of our race, endowed with the first faint twilight of

reason and possibility of progress. There is a change from a lower to a higher stage of existence ; from a condition of rest to a condition of progress ; from stable equilibrium to an unstable equilibrium. To suppose (as pedants have done) that this change consists in a passage to a condition of *perfection*, is to mistake its nature altogether. Rather does the introduction of the new element into life involve apparent fresh imperfection and disorder. The infinite aspirations awakened in the heart throw out of proportion all the former conditions of existence, and time must intervene before harmony can be reëstablished between the inner life and the outer — while, even at the end of all and at his highest achievement of virtue, the regenerated man must feel his own *imperfection*, feel (as while unregenerate he could never do) that there is infinity between him and the perfection of God. Like the asymptote and hyperbola, his virtue may approach the Divine Holiness forever, but can never meet and attain to it. Neither does the great change of regeneration by any means require (as other pedants have also maintained) a correct religious creed for its motive principle. "The wind that bloweth where it listeth," seems to have very little connection with theological opinions. Rather does it appear that the proximate cause of the change is wholly the concern of the soul and conscience and not of the intellect, and that, usually taking place, as it does, under the

influence of some elder born brother of the spiritual world, that brother's opinions (whatever they may chance to be) are adopted and woven into the new life by sympathies wholly apart from any intellectual conviction. Looking over the actual "conversions" known to us, when regeneration and a professed change of creed have been simultaneous, it will appear that nearly always it has thus occurred. The Protestant will have become a Romanist, the Unitarian an Evangelical, or precisely the reverse; *not* because their reasons were convinced, but because their souls first entered the newer and higher spiritual life under the aid and influence of some Romanist or Evangelical, Anglican or Unitarian friend or teacher. All that was needed was that *some* doctrine of their new faith should touch their *hearts*, and not by any means that all its doctrines should satisfy their reason.

If we admit the truth of all this, then it appears that the fact of Regeneration must be admitted to be the most important of all the phenomena of the moral world. Nothing else can compare with it for influence on the whole life and character of man. In judging, then, of the greatness of such a religious teacher as Christ, this one most important fact must not be left out of sight: We must not pass over it, and inquire only of his ethics or his theology. We must ask, had he influence in this matter also? Did he do aught

towards aiding mankind to take that one greatest step from the unregenerate to the regenerate life?

Now it would appear that if we actually estimate Christ by the influence he has had in the life of humanity, we shall find that it is precisely here that we come on the largest traces of his work. Taking the whole ancient world in comparison with the modern, of the Heathen with the Christian, the general character of the two is absolutely analogous to that which in individuals we call unregenerate and regenerate. Of course there were thousands of regenerated souls — Hebrew, Greek, Indian — of all nations and languages *before* Christ. Of course there are millions unregenerate now. But nevertheless, from this time onward we trace through history a new spirit in the world — a leaven working through the whole mass of souls. In the old world, all was complete after its kind; man fulfilled his own ideal, and did that which he aimed to do of beautiful, noble, and devoted. In the new world nothing is complete, but all is straining upward after God and an unattainable perfection of holiness. The language of the old world, speaking to us through its art, its poetry, its philosophy, is all the same. "It is well to create the beautiful, to discover the true; to live out the good and noble. I *have* created beauty, discovered truth, lived out the good and noble." The language of the new world, coming to us through the

thousand tongues of our multiform civilization, is one long cry of longing aspiration: "Would that I could create the ineffable Beauty!—would that I could discover the eternal and absolute Truth!—would! O would it were possible to live out the good, the noble, and the holy!"

The old world grew from without and was outwardly symmetric. The new one grows from within and is not symmetric, nor ever will be; bearing in its heart the germ of an everlasting, unresting progress. The old world built its temples, hewed its statues, framed its philosophies, and wrote its glorious epics and dramas so that nothing might evermore be added to them. The new world makes its art, its philosophy, its poetry all imperfect, yet instinct with a living spirit beyond the old. To the Parthenon not a stone could be added from the hour of its completion. To Milan and Cologne altar and chapel, statue and spire will be added through the ages.

This great phenomenon of history surely points to some corresponding great event whereby the revolution was accomplished. There must have been a moment when the old order stopped and the new began. Some action must have taken place upon the souls of men which thenceforth started them in a different career, and opened the age of progressive life. When did this moment arrive? What was the primal act of the endless progress? By whom was that age opened?

Here we have really ground to go upon. There is no need to establish the authenticity or veracity of special books or harmonize discordant narratives to obtain an answer to our question. The whole voice of human history unconsciously and without premeditation bears its unmistakable testimony. The turning point between the old world and the new was the beginning of the Christian movement. The action upon human nature which started it on its new course was the teaching and example of Christ. Christ was he who opened the age of endless progress.

The view, therefore, which seems to be the sole fitting one for our estimate of the character of Christ, is that which regards him as the great REGENERATOR of Humanity. *His coming was to the life of humanity what Regeneration is to the life of the individual.* This is not a conclusion doubtfully deduced from questionable biographies, but a broad, plain inference from the universal history of our race. We may dispute all details; but the grand result is beyond criticism. The world *has* changed, and that change is historically traceable to Christ. The honor, then, which Christ demands of us must be in proportion of our estimate of the value of such Regeneration. He is *not* merely a Moral Reformer, inculcating pure ethics; not merely a Religious Reformer, clearing away old theologic errors and teaching higher ideas of God. These things he

was; but he might, for all we can tell, have been them both as fully, and yet have failed to be what he has actually been to our race. He might have taught the world better ethics and better theology, and yet have failed to infuse into it that new Life which has ever since coursed through its arteries and penetrated its minutest veins. What Christ has really done is beyond the kingdom of the intellect and its theologies; nay, even beyond the kingdom of the conscience and its recognition of duty. His work has been in that of the heart. He has transformed the Law into the Gospel. He has changed the bondage of the alien for the liberty of the sons of God. He has glorified Virtue into Holiness, Religion into Piety, and Duty into Love.

The further question of *how* Christ accomplished this work regards us in a different way. He who believes that in the Spiritual world there are no more miracles than in the material world, and that the Second Birth of man is natural, even as the first, will feel no special difficulty in apprehending how, without the intervention of any such stupendous, supernatural machinery as men have supposed, this great work may have been done. As in the individual, regenerated soul, when the full time has arrived, the change takes place almost unfailingly through the influence of some elder born soul of the spiritual world, whom God intrusts with the blessed task: so must it have been also

with the regenerated race of mankind. When the fulness of time had come, and the creeds of the world's childhood were worn out, and the restless question was on every lip, "Who will show us any good?" when the whole heart of humanity was sick of its sin and weary of its wickedness, then God gave to one man, for mankind at large, that same blessed task he gives to many for a few. Christ, the Elder Brother of the human family, was the helper and (in the highest philosophic sense) the Saviour* of humanity.

Let it be remarked that the analogy between this regeneration of the *macrocosm* of mankind, and the regeneration of the *microcosm* of the individual man is so far complete, that in neither case was the result any immediate perfection either in practice or theory. The introduction of Christianity, viewed superficially, might for long ages have been justly regarded (as it *was* regarded by the Roman Governors) as the entrance of a principle of disorder and instability; and to the present hour, evils and errors unnumbered have blended with its benefits. Even its theory, while immeasurably transcending the heathenisms which preceded it, has

* The word "salvation" was a favorite one with the old Stoic moralists, to signify a moral conversion from a sinful to a virtuous life. In Plutarch's Moral Works, in particular, it continually recurs. To apply it to mere escape from eternal punishment is a retrograde step indeed.

been full of mistakes, full even of false and injurious views of God, towards whose better knowledge it was so vast a step.

The *manner* in which Christ achieved the regeneration of the world who shall now decide? Was it only by his great, holy words, telling men that God was the Father of all,—of the just as of the unjust,—the forgiving Parent of the Prodigal, the Shepherd, who would follow the wanderer even unto the utmost verge of the wilderness of his wickedness, and bring him home at last with rejoicing? Was it thus, and by telling man that to love God and his neighbor fulfilled all the law and the prophets,—was it thus that Christ touched the heart of the world? Or was it by his life, so pure and holy, that men saw, as in a visible parable, what it meant to be God's beloved son,—to be One with the Father even as all men should be one with him? Was it thus Christ awoke in human nature the unutterable yearning after such sonship and such unity with God? Or was it that words and life all found their crown and end in his martyr death,—that death which transformed forever the world's ideal of glory, and made for all time the Cross of agony and sacrifice the type of somewhat so far above all earthly power and joy, that men ceased to deem it human, and adored it as Divine? Was it on that Cross Christ won the Regeneration of the world?

We know not,—it concerns us not to know. One thing we must believe: that he to whom was committed such a work, he to whom such a part was assigned in the drama of history by its great Author, must have been *spiritually* of transcendent excellence. Of ordinary genius or powers of any kind, he may have had less or more, but of those hidden faculties by which the highest religious truths are reached, and of that fervent loyalty by which the soul is fitted to receive Divine instruction, of *these* Christ must have had a superabundant share. Strictly to define his spiritual rank, he must surely have been *the man who best fulfilled all the conditions under which God grants his inspiration.*

Such are the views of Christ and his work which would appear most consonant with a Theism which holds by the absolute Unity of God, and the unchangeableness of his natural and spiritual laws; but which nevertheless admits all the great facts of the religious experience of mankind, and seeks for their legitimate explanation. It is precisely in the interests of such Theism that the views of Christ's character should be thus exalted, and he who deems to serve its cause by underrating him must surely be in error. God is best honored by the glad admission that the man who has most deeply moved humanity was most fully inspired by his spirit. The regularity of his laws is best vindicated

cated by the assertion that it was not by any accidental synchronism of a corrupted and falling civilization, with the appearance of a specially gifted thaumaturgos, that the greatest moral revolution was accomplished, but rather by the Providential mission, in the fulness of time, of that holiest soul, whose fire was able to kindle in the hearts of man a flame which shall never be extinguished. The spiritual greatness of Christ is the necessary postulate for the whole rationalist theory of Religion. Denying it, we leave the "standing miracle" of Christianity wholly unaccountable, or to be accounted for only on the exorbitant hypothesis of supernaturalism.

PART II.

The Future Prospects of Religious Faith.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RATIONALIST SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.



HERE is Religion in History even as there is Religion in Astronomy. We cannot study either science without finding every where traces of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness. The tale of humanity, from its cradle in ignorance and barbarism upward through the long ages of its education in knowledge and civilization,—this great Tale which we call History is all full of Religion. Every page of it bears inscribed thereon the name of God; nay, God is the Author of the Tale. Some of the pages are even more sacred than the rest, for they tell us not only of God's outward Providence guiding the progress of mankind, but also of his inward workings in the souls of his noblest children; not only of his universal rule over the nations of the earth, but of his special influence over the lives and thoughts, the words and deeds,

of saint and martyr, prophet and apostle. Thus *there is Religion in History*, most of all in the sacred history of the wise and good.

But is History itself Religion? * Must we go to History, not only for corroborations and illustrations of our own religious consciousness, but also for the knowledge of facts concerning God and our relation to him, without which the lessons of that consciousness, and our best endeavors to obey them, will be of no avail, — facts which we must believe when they contradict that consciousness? Are we to hold that all our dearest hopes, our highest trust, must be derived from History? This is the great question of our age — the question whose solution in one way or the other must determine the future faith of mankind.

Let us judge *à priori* if it be *probable* that History is itself Religion — the source of our highest and surest knowledge concerning things divine.

How do we know the facts of History? What faculties of our natures are engaged in examining the evidence for them? What is their highest value in the scale of truths? We know the facts of past history through books written more or less remotely from the scene of the events described; by historians more or less well informed — more or less honest and unprejudiced. When the same history is narrated by

* See Newman's *Phases of Faith*.

several historians, and we also possess contemporary monuments, coins, and the like, we reach a tolerable degree of certainty of their facts. Yet very rarely does it happen that under the most favorable circumstances the evidence is not in some parts contradictory, and the facts consequently uncertain. When we see that in contemporary history, under all the wonderfully advanced conditions for obtaining and spreading information afforded by the press, the telegraph, and our whole complicated system of despatches and correspondents' reports, the facts of any passing events (say of the American or Crimean War) are published in such wholly opposite narrations, and the truth at the bottom of the contradictions is so difficult of verification, we become convinced that to expect accurate and reliable accounts of the history of the past from the historians of those times, with their opportunities of information, is utterly out of question. We may feel that the greater and most public events are tolerably sure, that to doubt the invasion of Xerxes or the assassination of Caesar would be superfluous scepticism. But every step beyond, — the *details* of the facts, the characters of the personages, what they exactly said and did, the numbers of men engaged in the battles, — all these matters we must inevitably hold as mere probabilities; nothing more.

Now, let us see which are the faculties of our nature

engaged in the task of examining these facts and determining their value. They are assuredly the purely intellectual and critical faculties. By the collation and study of the histories, and then by careful judgment and weighing of external and internal evidence, we arrive, as best we may, at our conclusions. The learned man, the acute critic, will obtain the best results; the illiterate and the dull the worst. There is not one moral or spiritual faculty engaged in the whole process. The only duty which can exist in the case is to give the matter the most *complete* study, the most *careful* criticism. This done, there is nothing else for the moral sense to do. To engage it to decide the veracity of any fact from motives outside of their historical authentication—to suppress one set of evidences and overvalue another,—this is not a sacred task, but a most unholy one—the sole moral offence, indeed, of which the case admits.

Let it be remembered that all this refers to the discovery of the *facts* of History: whether a certain person lived, or a certain event took place, or certain words were spoken. When these facts have been ascertained, and we are assured the person did live, the event did take place, the words were spoken, then, indeed, our moral and spiritual faculties may step in, and may instruct us, that the person, event, or words, were good or evil—supremely good or supremely evil.

But *till* the intellectual faculties have informed us concerning the person, event, and words, no such exercise of the moral and spiritual ones can possibly take place.

There is no escaping this conclusion in the special case of Christianity, and bidding us admit that the character of Christ, once apprehended without any historical criticism, ought to win every well constituted mind. The character of Christ, it is true, shines out in the simple pages of the evangelists with the most radiant brightness; and, even more, bears with it the intrinsic evidence of being in a large measure historically true, since, as Parker said well, “It would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus.” Yet we cannot even here escape from the necessary conditions of historical knowledge. We must peruse, collate, sift the evangelical narratives, as all others; and when we find—as find we must—that they are full of difficulties and irreconcilable contradictions, we shall be forced to, admit that though they present to us an image of great beauty and majesty, we are unable to ascertain positively any of the details of his portraiture.

And for the remainder of the Christian records, which from the nature of their topics cannot bear the internal verisimilitude which gives such power to the Gospels (records, however, on which a large share of Christian doctrines depend), there *must* be the exercise of the critical faculty before any exercise of the moral

judgment. The authenticity and genuineness of the books, the degree of inspiration granted to the writers, this must *first* be intellectually decided, even if, *when* decided favorably, the result is to be a blind acceptance of the book as plenarily inspired.* The intellectual examination must still precede and warrant all moral and spiritual action in the matter.

Where, then, have we arrived? Is it not at the monstrous conclusion that, if History be Religion, then the Intellect, not the Soul, is the first authority in Religion? The learned and acute man, not the pious and simple-hearted one, — the scholar, not the man of prayer, — is he alone who can tell us the grounds on which faith is to be built; and thus faith itself must rest ultimately on his verdict. No man in his senses will admit this. No Christian dare do so in the face of all Christ's lessons that it is not the learned and the mighty, but the simple and the childlike, to whom the kingdom of Heaven is opened. But the premise, that History is Religion, can lead to no other conclusion.

The contrary is surely true. The knowledge of Divine things does not come to us primarily through the intellect. It is not the great brain, but the great heart which helps to gain them. We cannot work at the problems of theology in the calm of our libraries,

* Or, on the High Church hypothesis, the authority of the Church to guarantee the authority of the Bible, must similarly be examined.

and arrive at the most complete faith, and put it by on the shelf as a thing gained once for all, and then go on leading selfish, sinful, prayerless lives, keeping our faith all the time quite safe and undisturbed, like our knowledge of Euclid or astronomy. This is not Religious Faith, nor is religious faith to be gained in any such way, or preserved secure in any such life. Let us thank God it is something very different.

Religious Faith, in its high, true sense — faith in the presence of a Heavenly Father, is a thing which God gives, not in answer to studies and researches, but to prayers and deeds. It is a thing which the clearest mind may lack, and the humblest heart possess in fullest measure. It is a thing which we can only gain by prayer — only keep by obedience. There is no winning it by argument, no preserving it by force of logic in a life of sin. Is it not well it should be so? Is it not fitting that the highest and divinest of all gifts should be attainable to all God's children, whether learned or ignorant, wise or dull, if only they be upright, good, and true of heart? Is it not fitting also we should hold this most precious boon by no mere intellectual tenure, gained once for all, and thenceforth inalienable, but by the humbler right of a moral consciousness to be strengthened by every act of obedience, and weakened by every sin?

If these things be so, — if our Historical belief

must be primarily dependent on an Intellectual process — and a Religious Faith ought to be dependent on a Moral and Spiritual one, — then, we ask, is it *à priori* probable that History can be Religion? — that God can have so constituted the order of things as that our ultimate faith shall depend upon history?

These arguments are doubly enforced when a man's experience proves to him that, in the spiritual consciousness of each soul, there lies the natural organ of divine knowledge, and that God therein reveals to the reverent listener, by his "still small voice," all his most high and sacred lessons of love and holiness. It becomes to such a man incredible that any traditional Revelation should transcend in authority this original and perpetual one. The son, who lives in his father's house, and in his daily presence, can ill believe that that father's highest behests will come to him through a letter — unsigned, unsealed, copied over and recopied many times, — a letter transmitted through the hands of many servants, and finally contradicting continually his oral instructions. The apparent uncertainty of the voice of consciousness, the boasted certainty of the written Word will not deceive him, for he learns that the Divine voice in his heart speaks clearly, precisely in the ratio of his own faith and obedience, and that the supposed certainty of the written Word does not exclude, and never has excluded, the most monstrous misapprehensions and mistakes.

Such, then, is the *à priori* argument of that party which looks to found the religion of the future, not upon an historical revelation, but on the consciousness of humanity. Of the *à posteriori* argument to the same purpose, drawn from the difficulties in establishing the existing Historical Revelation as logically credible, we need say little here. It would be to go over all the controversies of the age to point out the obstacles which beset such a logical establishment of the history at every step. There are the difficulties as to the Age, and Authorship, and Reliability of the Sacred Books — difficulties as to the Astronomy, the Geology, the Chronology, Natural History, and Genealogy of the Books; — difficulties as to Prophecies — difficulties as to miracles — difficulties, above all, as to the theology deducible from the whole, and so essentially opposed to reason and conscience as to seem to break down with its enormous weight the hardly-erected scaffold on which it stands. Every point in this past field of debate may be differently decided in favor of or against the veracity of the History, but the result is simple. If History be Religion, it is clear that the foundation of religion is full of difficulties. So far from having escaped from the fluctuations of consciousness and reached a standpoint of security, the Traditionalist has yet to fight for every inch of his ground; and how to fight for it? With an array of science, learning, and logic

which not one in ten thousand can acquire. Up to the present generation the arguments of both kinds against an historical revelation had comparatively little weight. That natural want of a Tradition of Prayer of which we have spoken (Chap. III.) was easily confounded with the supposed want for a Miraculous Historical Revelation. All the lines of demarcation between the natural and supernatural were slightly drawn in men's minds; the current philosophy tended to overrate the evidence of the senses conveyed by oral or written tradition, and to underrate the evidence of the conscience and religious sentiment. The science of the time had hardly come into collision with the science of the Bible, or, where it did so, was yet weak enough to be easily warped into agreement. The principles of historical criticism were little understood or practised, so that the authenticity of the sacred records remained almost unquestioned; and, lastly, the great moral difficulties of the orthodox theology were rarely brought out so long as men were willing to admit the monstrous doctrine which underlies half the teaching of Christendom, that Good and Evil exist only according to the arbitrary pleasure of God, and that, instead of denying that any act which seems unjust, was really done by God, we are bound to believe that whatever we are told he has done *must*, on that showing, be just beyond question. But all these things are changed in our time. We see

the Divine in Nature so strongly that we have come to feel it can have no greater presence in the Supernatural. Our Evidences of Theology are taken from the *Order* of the world; and the infractions on that order are to us either incredible, or, at best, difficulties — not evidences. We feel that we each need some elder-born soul of the spiritual kingdom to bid us welcome therein, and help us to those first steps of the religious life, after which we can walk alone. But we see that this Tradition of Prayer has nothing to do with any dogma beyond the one, that *if man seeks after God he will surely find him*. It has nothing to do with the long, long story of Prophets and Elders who beheld God with mortal eyes as a burning Fire, or a throned form “like a Jasper or a Sardine stone” — nothing to do with apostles and evangelists who saw, and heard, and touched the human shape in which his Son became incarnate. All the Bible story may be true, or it may be false; but it is not *it* which the soul needs to know before it can lift up its hands “and cry Abba, Father!” Again, all modern philosophy tends to reverse the older valuation of sensuous and of moral proofs. We begin to know that the testimony of our senses, and of the senses of others, their deductions from their information, and the verbal records of all such information and deductions, are all liable at every step to error, mistake, and misconstruction. And we begin also to

feel that our ultimate reliance (not infallible, but still the ultimate one given to us) is on consciousness, and that Oersted was right when he spoke of that worst infidelity which consists in "the tendency to reject all those immediate truths which do not proceed from the impressions of the senses, and to found its entire faith on these and on the decisions of the logical understanding."* The Science of our time and the Criticism of our time are now two formidable powers, the one attacking in front, the other in the rear, the whole camp of Biblical authority. And, above all, the moral difficulties of the orthodox theology are brought to vivid light by a growing reverence for the Right as a principle, not arbitrary, but eternal even as God himself — the test by which we must judge whatever is told us of God's dealings, not the name we are obediently to affix to whatever our teachers assert he has done. Further, our modern conceptions of the universe, with all its million, million worlds, has not more altered the perspective whereby we regard the one great Transaction said to have occurred on this small planet, than our present familiarity with the huge nations of heathendom has altered the picture we can frame to our minds of the Fatherly care which should exclude all their millions for so many millenniums from an "only" revelation. We are thrown out of all our old notions on

* Soul in Nature, p. 60.

these subjects, and are only beginning to find our proper way of judging the objects on this far larger and wider horizon.

All these causes combined have made the attitude of modern thought towards an Historical Revelation wholly different from that of even a generation ago, and not without some justice may the party opposed to such a system argue thus: History is neither *likely* to be the source of our religious knowledge, nor *actually* capable of being satisfactorily established as such. Let us face this truth candidly. Let us renounce the false ground at once and forever, and build as well as we may on what remains. True that with the claims of History we renounce the hope of obtaining an infallible creed. True that the Consciousness which remains for basis is often obscure and variable. True that we are breaking with a thousand sacred associations twined round the fibres of our hearts. True that the transition must be fraught with difficulty and danger. Still, still we say, let it be done! It is worse, and more dangerous to stand still than to go forward. If an Historical Religion be built on the sand, the sooner we learn it, ere the storms beat it down and overwhelm us in its fall, the safer shall we be. There is but one real danger to which Religion can be exposed. It is, that its accredited teachers should so persistently cloak it and wrap it up in the garb of error, that men will strive to


kill it as a foe, when if they but saw it in its own garments, they would welcome it to their hearts. Educated men, calm, studious, passionless men of leisure, may go on patiently, year after year, dividing in their own minds the credible and the incredible in their theologies. But the masses of mankind, the busy, hard-trying men of the field and the office, will never do this. They will make away with the whole matter (so far as man may ever make away with religion) if their teachers will obstinately go on forcing down their throats the doctrines they have once seen to be errors along with those eternal truths they would fain accept and feed upon as the bread of life. Safety here, as in all things beside, lies in the simple truth. Let us tell all men what we believe and what we do not believe, and then leave it in God's hands to preserve his own Truth, without the aid of our falsehoods or suppressions. Truth has nothing to fear from being cast upon the waters, and left to sink or swim by its own buoyancy. It *has* a temporary danger of submersion to fear from being entangled in a net of falsehoods. The faith, then, for which we must contend—the faith which we believe shall be the religion of future ages—must be one founded on the Original Revelation of Consciousness, not on the Traditional Revelation of Church or Book—a faith, not resting for its sole support on the peculiar History of one nation, but based on the nature of man, and corroborated by the whole history of humanity.

If this view be the true one, it becomes a question of profoundest interest how a creed founded on Consciousness will adapt itself to the wants of human nature and of our age. What will this faith prove as a Theology and as a Religion of life? Without a Church! without a Book! without a living Prophet! What form will it take? What consistency can it assume?

The answers to these questions are manifestly beyond the power of any man perfectly to offer. Very diffidently the writer ventures to put forward a few guesses as to the outward form—a few convictions as to the inward spirit of the Faith of the Future.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAITH OF THE FUTURE.

T does not seem probable, nor is it in any wise to be desired, that the "Church of the Future" should arise out of a Sect. It is not probable that the one true religion should be cast in the same mould as old errors. It is not to be wished that it should go through the same stages of fervent youth, and worldly middle life, and cold and declining age, as the sects and churches of the past. Great souls will doubtless arise to aid their brethren as of yore, by written and spoken words of wisdom. But though they may rally around them the hearts to whom they are the rightful leaders, they will hardly form an organized sect, or seek to do so. Rather must we hope that a wholly different process will take place, and be allowed to go forward without too vehement opposition, whereby it might change to somewhat more perilous and revolutionary. Let us hope that the

truths of Theism will gradually permeate the thoughts of the age, leavening them by degrees. The *Theism in Christianity* will then continue to rise (as it seems now to be doing) to more and more prominence, while all that is narrow and dogmatic in the old creed will sink into the shade. Men will think more of justice and love, and less of creeds and sacraments. Preachers will take from the treasure-house of the Bible, not stories of miracles, and prophecies, and dogmas of an Incarnation and an Atonement, but the great utterances of faith and love; the sublime spiritual lessons of holiness and self-sacrifice. Laymen will care less for their priest's "orthodoxy" or Apostolic Succession, and more for his inheritance of one of those Pentecostal tongues of fire which can "reach to the dissevering of the joints and marrow;" less for his fluency of Biblical language and orthodoxy of Biblical belief, and more for his possession of a true spark of that same great inspiration which breathed through the prophets and evangelists. We shall cease to count men religious because they hold correct doctrines and use consecrated formulas, and attend services of devotion; and shall only reckon them pious in truth when the love of God has visibly purified their hearts, and the love of man has become the obvious principle of their lives. And above all we shall change the common dark and gloomy ideas of God for brighter, truer, and more lov-

ing ones ; and as the old Calvinist doctrines of Baxter and Edwards shock us now almost as blasphemies, so the current teaching of our present divines shall grow unendurable, and we shall insist that to the All-Righteous All-Merciful God shall be attributed no longer deeds and modes of government we should abhor as unjust and cruel from a despot of the earth.

When thoughts like these have leavened the opinions of the age, then, by degrees, the old belief will fall into forgetfulness and disuse. The new shoot of vigorous faith will cause the old leaves to drop away almost imperceptibly. The sunrise of a happy Trust in God will cause all the spectres of darkness to disappear. Men will only awaken to the fact that they have ceased to hold the old creed when they have become firmly rooted in a new and holier one.

Such, we hope, may be the progress of human thought, and the process of growth of the Religion of the Future, if it be permitted to expand naturally and beautifully. If, on the contrary, the opposition against it be so bitter, and the forces of Traditionalism ranged so determinately in opposition as to bar every step of advance, then, indeed, none may say what shape the change may take. Reformation arrested becomes Revolution. On him who would stop the wheels of the Chariot of Progress must lie the blame of the inevitable overthrow which will ensue.

For the Theology which the human consciousness will evolve when freed from the *trammels* and only aided by the suffrage of history, we believe it will be a theology avowedly seeking to harmonize and unite the claims of all the functions of our nature : of the Intellect and the Religious Sentiment, of the Head and the Heart. It can stop at nothing short of this, for there cannot be *here*, as in a traditional creed, any fiction of a duty to sacrifice the one for the other, and either warp the verdict of Reason to meet the demands of Faith, or else to divide the kingdoms of Intellect and Religion, and leave our intellectual life without religion, and our religious life without intellect. There is yet much left to be done in this direction, although the work has been already commenced. Among the obvious advances of our time must be reckoned a general recognition of the sanctity of *physical* laws. Another step will bring us to the reverence for *mental* ones. Formerly, not only did professed ascetics of the Romish and Protestant Churches systematically set at naught the laws God has given to our bodies, paradoxically hoping by such disobedience to do him pleasure, but throughout the whole religious teaching of Christendom might be traced the fundamental conception of Piety as a thing antagonistic to all natural interests. The Stoics' old grand ideas of *living according to*

Nature, that is (as Chrysippus explained it) according to the "Nature of the universe, the common Law of all, which is the right reason spread every where, the same by which Jupiter governs the world,"* was precisely reversed by the Puritan. Nature, in his view, was utterly evil and depraved. Even by less gloomy sects it was affirmed to be "very far gone from original righteousness." Such an idea as that we should strive after a life wherein each faculty should have its full and recognized place in due subordination to conscience, was the remotest in the world from any thing which was taught in the churches. Natural faculties and affections were to be subdued or renounced, not developed and harmonized. The Kingdom of Grace was one thing, the Kingdom of Nature another and quite different, and the subjects of the one were the foes and aliens of the other. The ideal Saint was not a true man ascending to the inner sanctuary of religion step by step upon the altar-stairs of his lower nature—of Senses, Intellect, and Affections. He was an ascetic, lifted off the earth in visionary rapture, deeming himself higher and higher as he ceased to rest upon, or even touch, the natural ground of humanity.

Let us be thankful that in our time this error, in its grosser forms, is rapidly dying away. The physical laws of life have begun to receive the attention of reli-

* Diog. Laert. Zero.

gious minds, if they have not yet obtained their due reverence as the clearest expressions of our Creator's will concerning the ordering of our bodies. The domestic affections are fully recognized as innocent, if they be not yet cherished as the appointed stages whereby our souls may climb from human love up to the love Divine. The joy of the artist and the man of science in the beauty and wisdom of creation, is admitted to be worthy of a devout soul, if it be not yet prized as the glorious heritage of filial sympathy in the works of the great Architect, Painter, Poet, and Mechanician of the world. But there is a region wherein the old error still reigns. There is still one part of our natures men hold it is often well-pleasing to God that we should put to silence—the intellect, the reasoning and critical powers: these are in the same category now, that the whole lower nature was formerly. They are things which are supposed to have no religious claims, or at best very small ones, to be regarded but little. Not openly, indeed, is this doctrine taught any longer. We hear often of the "Right," sometimes even of the "Duty," of Private Judgment; but, unless in some miserable controversy of the Churches, who ever sees this doctrine cordially inculcated in its full bearings? What divine bids us apply our Private Judgment to the fundamentals of religion? Who blames the too easy, indolent credulity whereby this duty is forever

evaded? This, then, is a task remaining for us to accomplish — the recognition of the *Divine Right of the Intellect*. We do not want much more “Rehabilitation of the Flesh” in a pure sense — none at all in a sense it is sometimes preached. We may leave the domestic affections, and Science, and Art to complete the assertion of their claims on human nature in harmony with profoundest piety; but we need to establish the Sacredness of the Laws of Mind — the duty of giving to them not an unwilling and enforced obedience as to things we cannot wholly escape, albeit we fain would do so, but the homage of willing and reverent submission as to laws appointed by the God of truth for our guidance into all truth. We need to perceive that it is our part to treat this Intellect God has been pleased to give us as *religiously* as our consciences or spiritual affections, always, as in obedience to him, faithfully and piously. Let us but do this, — let us use our intellects henceforth as if such a thing as antagonism between them and true religion was impossible, — then, indeed, will a new era for theology commence. Then will there be an end, once for all, to our perpetual strife over the “Claims and Conflicts” of “Reason and Faith,” and of “The Bible and Modern Science.” Then will the foundations be laid for a Religion which may be truly the Religion of Humanity — the Pyramid whose base shall be wide as the whole nature of man,

and whose summit shall rise higher and higher towards the heavens as the generations of the future build it up, and as the obelisks of traditional creeds fall from their narrow foundations, and are buried under the sands of time.

CHAPTER X.

THEORETIC THEISM.



HE Theology which will thus harmonize the claims of the Intellect and the Religious sentiment will surely be essentially a system of THEISM. Negatively, it will reject all doctrines of Atheism or Pantheism on the one hand, and of a plurality of Divine Persons on the other. Affirmatively, it will assert not only the Unity and Eternity, and Wisdom and Justice of God, but above all that one great attribute which is our principal concern, his GOODNESS. Here lies the essence of Theism—its practical difference from every other creed in the world. Every religion which has ever existed calls God “good”—applies pompous epithets of moral honor to his nature. Jupiter, the cruel and lustful, was styled “Optimus.” The Yezids approach “Shaitan” with words of flattery. But every existing religion save

the Universalist neutralizes its titles of praise by tales of horrible cruelty and injustice alleged to have been done by these same “Best” or “Most Merciful” beings. Men do not mean it so, and the blessed spirit of the true God in each of his creatures’ hearts continually contradicts the voice of the churches, and teaches a trust and love for which the believer’s professed creed affords no basis at all. But in truth there is a grim and hideous blasphemy in this mixture of highest words of praise and darkest dogmas of despotic cruelty. The priest who in his prayers has called God “merciful” and “good,” the “Father of all men”—who has invoked his aid to make us just and beneficent, and forgiving to all who trespass against us—and who then mounts his pulpit and tells us that this same God is the Lord of Hell—that his “Mercy and goodness” will not save millions from eternal torture, nor his “Fatherhood” prevent him driving his children to endless perdition—that the justice, and pity, and forgiveness with which we have asked him to inspire us have no prototypes in his tremendous nature, and can afford us no clue to his Government of the world—does not that priest add to the hideousness of his dogmas a double horror by prefacing them with his mockery of praise? Better say at once “God is cruel, therefore he has made the pit of fire. God is unjust, therefore he will burn therein forever thousands who have

never heard, or hearing, would not accept his only terms of escape." Better say all this honestly, than go on blending in one frightful string of paradoxes words of love and doctrines of death, till language loses its meaning, and goodness and mercy become terms for cruelty and wrong. Better, if our teachers *dare* not say in words what they mean in fact — better that they explain to us, once for all, that they have a different phraseology from ours — that in theology light becomes darkness, and goodness evil — that an attribute stretched to infinity is transformed and reverses its character, and what would be injustice in a man is justice in God; and what would be pitiless cruelty in us towards our worst enemies is serene mercy in God towards his miserable and defenceless creatures. Better let all this be said openly, and then we may arrive at the result, which under such a creed would be a relief — that Religion means nothing, and can never mean any thing for us — that we have no faculties to enable us to understand it — no power of loving or honoring the Being it presents to us. Then shall we perceive that the boasted faith presented to us is after all utterly null as regards us; for *if* Justice and Mercy stretched to infinity become Injustice and Cruelty, then Truth also in the Infinite One may become Falsehood. Even if the vaunted Revelation brought each of us the oath of the Almighty to our

salvation, there is nothing to hinder that oath from deceiving us. We may be as much mistaken in supposing it means that he will send us to heaven and not to hell, as we should be in supposing that his Justice and Love precluded the existence of that world of agony.*

Theism starts by the recognition of the veracity of the human consciousness — the Divine origin of our intuitions of good and evil. It thrusts away, once and forever, all the shuffling paradoxes of contradictory titles and dogmas. It asserts, If God is good, he is good *in our sense of the word*, — for words do but mean what we have agreed to be their sense. If he is not "good" in that sense, he is not good at all, but something else, which if men dared they would call "evil." If we say that he is good, then we must make our doctrines concerning him and our views of his Government agree with our meaning of goodness. We have no right to say that his goodness will exclude *all* suffering, all sin, from his dominions — nay, great suffering, great sin. These things we can see may be meant for the highest good, and permitted by absolute benevolence for such an end. But what we do affirm is this — there can be no *final* evil to even *one* creature of a God who is good in our sense of the word goodness. We do not fear to affirm this — we do not think

* See Channing's Works.

that by so doing we presume to pass judgment on our Creator. We simply use the intellect and moral sense he has given us, and assert that *by their laws* the creation of a being whose final end shall be evil is not good in our sense of goodness. We simply vindicate our Father's character, and affirm that no act he has made us abhor as "evil" can ever have marked his government of the universe from eternity to eternity.

Here lies the root of a much prevalent mistake. Divines point to the sin and misery actually existing in the world, and say, "See, God's goodness actually permits so much evil now. Who can say it will not permit endless evil through infinite ages?" But it is precisely this which the moral sense of man *does* allow him to say. He cannot decide how *much* evil may be consistent with final good. If the final good is to be very great, very high, very durable, it would seem that the freedom to sin, the possibilities of suffering which must precede it may well be great and terrible and long enduring also. The foundations must be dug deep in earth if the spire is to reach above the clouds. But one thing he *can* decide, and that is, that the evil is to have an end at last—that it is to be an evil *terminating in good*. Evil ending in evil can only be the work of a Fiend. Evil ending in good is the work of a God. The most Divine goodness of all is that which

causes suffering needful to bring out virtue and joy unattainable without it.

The faith of the future will not leave men to their present task of seeking to form an idea of God, accommodating, as best they may, their sense of righteousness with presentations of his character and dealings contained in sacred books and "schemes of salvation." It will bid them descend into their own hearts and find there the ideal of all Holiness and Love. True, that that ideal, even in the best of us, will be but imperfect. Millenniums hence among the stars our conception of goodness will be poor and cold beside the radiant Reality, whom yet we shall have adored for ages with an angel's love. But the image, so far as it can be traced—so far as we can behold the reflection of God's face in that inward mirror of the soul—will be a true picture of him. It will show no feature which is false; it will show actually, albeit dimly and in shadowy sort, what is true. And ever through this life and the life to come will that Divine image grow clearer and more beautiful in our souls, more awfully pure and holy; more Divinely loving and long-suffering. Day by day, as our hearts are "renewed after his image from glory to glory," shall we learn more what it means to say "On the throne of the universe, Lord of Life, and Death, and Joy, and Sorrow, there sits GOODNESS itself—goodness unfading, unalterable:

never wearied with our misery, or disgusted by our failures; but loving us all, the Saint and the Sinner, with one infinite all-embracing love, of which a Mother's tenderness is a reflected ray, a Father's yearning care the faint and far-off type." God help us all to learn that lesson! Our fellow-men cannot teach us it in their poor, cold words. Only God can tell us what God's love must be.

The results of the full acceptance of this doctrine of God's goodness are far beyond our power to trace. Future ages must show them slowly developing further than our eyes now may follow. The whole past story of religion has been a gradual approach to this great truth; from the rude and early thoughts of the Feti-chist and Polytheist, to the supreme inspiration of Christ, bidding us behold in God the Father of All, the Benefactor of the just and unjust. But this approach to truth has been retarded in many ways; retarded by the coldness and faithlessness of our hearts; retarded by the clogging mass of theologic dogmas accumulated around that very teacher who gave us the story of the Prodigal as *his* "theory of Atonement!" How the first natural gratitude to God for his "unspeakable gift" of that great soul to the world gradually changed under the hard hands of systematic theologians into a "Scheme of Redemption," wherein God's part was terrible and dreadful and Christ's alone beautiful and

adorable; how all this came to pass it concerns us not now to trace.*

The theology of Christendom, as it now exists, assuredly cannot claim to show us in the Father an ideal

* The degree to which Christ has been allowed to supersede the Father in the heart of Christendom, is a very sad chapter in the history of religion. He who desired to be the open "door" leading all men into his Father's fold, has been too often made the *closed* one, hiding that Father from their sight. In the formularies of the churches, indeed, the name of the "Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth," is given precedence over that of the Son; but no one who has received Christian education, and felt vividly the sentiments therein inculcated, but must be aware that in practice Christ occupies the whole foreground of religious thought, and altogether monopolizes all the more *tender* emotions of love and gratitude of the Protestant, even as the Virgin does those of the Romanist. That favorite phrase, "*Our Lord*,"—what does it signify? Is not God, then, "*Our Lord*?" Is he to be regarded as the great remote First Cause, far away behind the region of our poor lives? It is precisely as "*Our Lord*," our Moral King and Master, that we, as moral beings, come into our most close and sacred relations with God. He whom we offend when we sin,—he to whom we offer the failing tribute of our obedience,—he to whom we turn for pardon and restoration, strength, and light,—is not he "*Our Lord*?" To give that title to another is to lose sight of the very *point* of religion. The Trinitarians seem of late to be adopting more and more the doctrine which a few years ago was confined to the extremest sections,—that "the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ of the New." Reading some of their sermons and hymn-books, we are tempted to ask what place is left in their religion for the Father? Even his Creatorship,—that one most tender tie, the origin of all our filial trust,—is transferred altogether to the Son. As Kingsley says (*The Gospel in the Pentateuch*, Sermon I.): "You must believe" . . . that "the Babe who is born at Bethlehem, who grows up, as other human beings grow, into the man Christ Jesus,

of Goodness, however constantly it attaches all epithets of benevolence to his name. The God who creates beings who he foresees will be eternally lost—the God who only loves such of his creatures as have believed

is none other than the Lord God who created the universe.” In the more recent devotional manuals (e. g., *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, by W. H. Monk) multitudes of the hymns are direct addresses to Christ as God. Whenever any older hymn or psalm addressed to the Father, is used, it is always concluded by an appeal to the other two Persons of the Trinity; but addresses to Christ are left without such termination. The Liturgy of the Church only very rarely indeed addressed Christ directly in prayer. All this direct invocation is modern. In the Middle Ages the substitution of Christ for the Father was rather the mistake of the uneducated than the deliberate doctrine of divines. Didron tells us (*Christian Iconography*) that the painters and carvers of those times habitually placed Christ in the foreground, and in the most dignified attitude; while the figure intended for the Father, if introduced at all, was in the background, and often in a position altogether contemptible.

The process by which this substitution of a Mediator for the Supreme God, and again (as in the case of the Romish religion), of the sacrificial type of the Mediator for both, is most marvelously paralleled in the history of Brahminism. In the earliest age of the Rig-Veda, Indra, Lord of Heaven, was the supreme object of adoration. Then, again, the Fire (his mediator) took his place, till by the age of the Sama-Veda, the Soma juice, which was used in the sacrifices as the emblem of Agni, was itself invoked as the “Creator of all things, he who made the sun to rise.” In his *Croyances et Légendes de l'Antiquité*, M. Alfred Maury makes these remarks on the subject (translated in *Saturday Review*, Aug. 8, 1863): “The substitution of the libation personified for the supreme God is a singular phenomenon, which is not without its analogy in other religions. Indra, adored by the Aryans, was first, and very early, replaced by a divinity of more human character, more material, the mediator between man and the Supreme. Agni

in a certain tremendous Sacrifice, offered two thousand years ago in Palestine—the God who must be approached through a Mediator—the God *in whose universe there is a Devil and a Devil's Hell*—that God is, at all events, very different from our *natural* ideal of goodness. It may be that the ideal corresponding with these doctrines may possibly be harmonized with the natural one. On that matter it is not our part here to decide. But it is clear that a very great process of accommodation must take place to effect such a harmonizing. The two ideals are primarily widely apart. One or other must be modified to meet the other.

Here then the faith founded on history, and the faith founded on consciousness, manifestly produce a different practical effect on the minds of their disciples.

carried away from Indra (his father) the prayers and homage due exclusively to him. The Aryan believed that he saw in the flame a divinity; and as the flame lent itself more easily than the ether to a human personification, and this flame was supposed to have come down from heaven to earth, to dwell on his hearth, Agni seemed to him more accessible to prayer than the other gods,—more adapted to be our protector and support. Agni appeared to the imagination as a god incarnate, the emanation of the supreme god. Placed less high than Indra, he answered better to the need, of anthropomorphism which was felt by the Aryan people. But Agni, in his turn, became incarnate in the libation itself,—in the offering which was made to him, and which he consecrated; and this libation became his image. The Aryan, as he drank the Soma, believed that there passed into his soul the virtues which Agni possessed; and soon this offering, honored equally with Agni, was confounded with him, and became his sensible image and permanent manifestation.

The historical faith demands of the believer that he accept the ideal of God given him by the creeds of the church, and then give to it whatever love and reverence he finds possible. The faith founded on consciousness, merely requires a man to fall back on his own highest conceptions of the holiest and best of all Beings, and give to *that* Being the spontaneous love and homage of his heart. Whatever seems to him unjust, cruel, imperfect, that *by the hypothesis* of his creed he is warranted to reject as no true representation of God. Whatever seems to him most supremely Good, Pure, Righteous, *that* he is bound to attribute to God with no other reservation than that he must be *more* Good, more Pure, more Righteous, than the highest dreams of man may tell. Can there be much doubt which of these two systems must tend practically to make it possible for us to raise higher and higher our conceptions of God's goodness, and to love Him more fervently and genuinely?

Secondly. From the doctrine of God's absolute goodness, the creed of the future will doubtless deduce the doctrine of IMMORTALITY to be held henceforth in a far happier sense than heretofore. Human Immortality, as taught in the creed of the churches, cannot be called a blessing to the race; but rather the doom of a tremendous alternative of joy or agony which it would be a boon to relinquish altogether for ourselves, and a relief

to believe could be removed from all our fellow-creatures. Habit, and a fund of latent scepticism, which underlies the loudest protestations, enable men to go on living happily under a creed which, if presented to them for the first time in mature life and forced on their real belief, would make existence unendurable. Let us be as well assured as possible of our own security from final perdition, — let us close our eyes as much as in us lies against the destiny of thousands of our fellow-men, — still it is not in the nature of things that such a cloud hanging over half our race shall not darken the whole world in our thoughts. The better we may be, the more dark it must seem to us. Well did Parker say: "If it were true that one human soul was immortal and yet was to be eternally-damned, getting only more clotted with crime and deeper bit by agony as the ages went slowly by, then immortality were a curse, not to that man alone, but to all mankind: for no amount of happiness, merited or undeserved, could ever atone or make up for the horrid wrong done to that one most miserable man. Who of you is there that could relish heaven, knowing that a brother was doomed to smart with ever greatening agony, while year on year and age on age the endless chain of eternity continued to coil round the flying wheels of Hell? I say, the thought of one such man would fill even Heaven with misery, and the best man

of men would scorn the joys of everlasting bliss—would spurn at Heaven and say, Give me my brother's place: for me there is no Heaven while he is there!"*

When these things are pressed on pious Christians, they commonly either evade or deny them, and say that their faith leaves the whole question doubtful. No marvel is it they should say so—they the benevolent, the merciful, who know of no human sorrow but straightway they labor with heart and hand to relieve it—who pray daily to God to enable them to love even their enemies. It *would* be a marvel if these true Christian Saints could defend in its naked horror the doctrine of their churches. But their reticence does not remove the evil—the dogma is still there, clear enough in texts and creeds—clear enough as the ultimate basis whereupon rests that other doctrine of Atonement which is the corner-stone of Christendom, and which yet inevitably loosens and falls when men cease to believe that it is from an *infinite* penalty that vicarious sacrifice would deliver them, and (relieved from such an unendurable threat) are enabled to look with filial awe, not slavish fear, to the *finite* punishment their Father may inflict. The Eternity of Hell is the real postulate on which the whole scheme of Redemption rests, and however much the higher feel-

* Sermon of the Immortal Life. Collected Works of Theodore Parker, vol. iii. p. 20.

ing of our time makes even the most orthodox desire to thrust it back out of sight and cover it up with words of vague hope, or assurances of the "doubtful interpretation" of all the words in which it can be expressed in ancient languages—yet the fact remains. All the churches of Christendom, save the Unitarian and the Universalist, assert in their authoritative formularies, that a portion of mankind will suffer after death eternal torment and reprobation. It is all vain to say (as it has become a fashion to do) that such a doctrine has no real place in Christian thought, no influence on the Christian idea of immortality. When Theists allude to it, they are continually met with an expression of deprecating horror, as if they had trespassed beyond all grounds of lawful controversy, and committed an offence against charity and courtesy in making the faith of their antagonists responsible for this hideous dogma. But in highest charity for our opponents, we *must* drive home the question. Is it, or is it not, true that there is an Eternal Hell?

The horrible doctrine must be abandoned publicly and frankly by the churches who have hitherto preached it, and who must bear all the consequences which will follow its retraction—or else it must be admitted to form a portion of the Christian creed, and, as such, added to the weight of difficulties thrown into the scale against that creed.

It is vain and untrue to dissemble the fact of this doctrine's legitimate place in the faith of Europe, and of the gloom it has shed over the millions of souls who partially receive, and the agonies and madness it has caused to the thousands who have more vividly grasped its tremendous meaning.* Equally vain assuredly it would be to say that the renunciation and disavowal of this doctrine by Theism, and the assertion in its place of the eternal *Salvation* of all men, the boundless everlasting good and glory waiting in God's great scheme for every soul he has made, will not change the aspect of the universe to him whose heart opens to so blessed a truth. The faith of consciousness will do this, for only on the Historical creed rests this doctrine of

* The Court of Arches decided, in the case of the Rev. J. Fendall v. the Rev. H. B. Wilson (June 1862), that this doctrine of the eternity of Future Punishment is an essential one of the Church of England, and that it is heresy to deny it. Mr. Wilson had written in *Essays and Reviews* (art. "The National Church,") as follows: "When the Christian Church, in all its branches, shall have fulfilled its sublunary office, and its Founder shall have surrendered his kingdom to the Great Father, all, both great and small, shall find a refuge in the bosom of the Universal Parent, to repose, or to be quickened into higher life in the ages to come, according to his Will." On this Dr. Lushington gave sentence: "I believe I put the true construction upon this passage when I say it declares a hope must be entertained of an intermediate state, and that finally all will escape everlasting condemnation. I cannot reconcile the opinions thus declared with the passages cited of the Creeds and Formularies, and I must admit the article" (of accusation).—*The New Reports*, vol. viii. p. 220.

eternal death, and the consciousness of God's love and of our own Immortality is the same thing as the consciousness that God has made us to be his adoring and happy children forever.*

Thirdly. The Faith founded on consciousness must look for its MORAL LAW to the intuitions of the soul, and the modes by which experience shows that those intuitions may be best fulfilled, and not to the authority of any written Law, Mosaic or Christian. The result of such a change will not be difficult to foresee.

In the first place, Moral Obligations will assume the solemn weight and sanctity of Divine lessons taught to each of us in our hearts, by him whose own nature is the impersonation of all Righteousness. So long as we look to find our Law in a Book, and to decide all questions of duty by citations of texts and precepts, so

* It is a strange paradox, that Christianity, — the Gospel of the Divine Love, — should be the only one of the traditional religions of the world to teach the eternity of the Divine Wrath. The Parsees believe that the sufferings of the wicked will end after three days of purifying fire, after the general Resurrection, when all created beings, even Ahrimanes himself, shall be restored. (*Zend-Avesta*, Boudchesch, b. ii. p. 413.) Sabæanism (the religion of Baptism, as Rénan tells us it means) taught that the wicked would be pardoned after a purgation of four thousand years. That of the old Egyptians, for whose termination they embalmed their dead, lasted three thousand years. Ages of weary labor expiated the sins of the Peruvians. "He who has gone to the place of misery (say the Buddhist authorities), after he has suffered enough for his miserable sins, it appears that he can become free." — Buddhist tract appended to *Mahawause*.

long must the Divine authority of conscience be thrust in the background, and rendered subordinate and subsidiary to such statute law. And so long as this is the case, there will also be the impression (whether warranted or not by any thing in the Book itself) that the Statute Law is an *arbitrary* law, — an expression of the despotic Will of the Supreme Power, — not having root in the nature of things, nor sway, any further than it may be ordained, but reversible at any time by another Decree, and affording us no clew whatever to the principles which may determine the government of him who has issued it merely for the temporary rule of his creatures. But the moment that we trace our Law to the writing “graven on the fleshy tablets of the heart,” and believe that our Creator has wrought into our nature that sense of Right which is to be our last resort and guide, then also we arrive at a different conception of that Law itself. No longer is it merely the sum of arbitrary decrees delivered to the human race for present direction, but the eternal and necessary Law of the whole universe, — the Law which is impersonated absolutely in God’s own Will, and by which and for whose great final fulfilment he rules all worlds forever.

How vast is the difference of our conception of the sacredness of Morality under these two aspects! The arbitrary Law of an awful, incomprehensible power,

who at his pleasure could make evil good and good evil: what obedience can we give to it beyond that of the hound, or the slave who blindly does the bidding of one more mighty than himself? But the eternal Law, throned in the breast of God himself, and planted by him in our natures, even for the blessed purpose that by obeying it we may grow like to him, and be united to him through eternity: can we not make this thrice holy Law the joy and glory of our lives, — the Law which we not only *obey* but *adore*? Morality changes its aspect when we have risen from such servile to such filial obedience; from submission to an arbitrary decree, to intelligent and joyful acquiescence in an eternal law. And here, as in our sense of the Beauty of the World, we ascend into the relation of children to our Father in Heaven when we transcend ideas of special adaptations to our wants, and recognize that the reason *why* we desire Goodness, and Beauty, and Truth, is because of the spark of Divine life within us; and that *why* the Law of God, and the beauty of his creation, and the truths of science all are “*adapted*” to us, is because “we also are his offspring,” and sympathize, by our very nature as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, with his glorious works and his all-righteous will.*

* The filial relation of the human mind to the Divine is wonderfully exemplified in some of the discoveries of science. The geol-

In the second place, when Morality is recognized as based upon consciousness, it will cease to form the confused and often contradictory system it now presents while isolated traditional dicta constantly force men to jumble opposite principles and distort obvious conclusions. We shall not be stopped any longer in the scientific process of ascertaining the fundamental canons of intuition, then deducing from them the subordinate propositions of duty, and applying these again to the practical details of life according to the inductions of experience from the ascertained result of action. We shall not, I say, be stopped any longer in this process by the demand that we should take a whole

ogist shows it who finds that the same Order which the Natural Historian had discovered to be the *logical* one for the arrangement of animals, has been also the *chronological* one which actually obtained in the past epochs of creation. The geometrician does the same, who calculates that a solid hexagon of a certain angle, measured to the fifty-thousandth of an inch, would be the greatest economy of space for a cell; and then finds that, before man existed, the "Great Geometer who made the bee" had taught that recondite theorem to the tiny insect. Kepler did the same when he conceived the laws of the planetary distances; and then, on referring to the heavens, found those laws ruling therein. Newton applying the principle of gravitation which he had thought out to the lunar motions, Le Verrier discovering Uranus, all did the same. The most remarkable instance, however, perhaps, is that of Alfonso the Wise, of Castile, who constructed the Alfonsine Tables on the then universally received Ptolemaic hypothesis; but dared to make the boast, that if the Creator had consulted *him*, he should have constructed the Solar System far more simply and beautifully,—with the Sun in the centre, and all the planets revolving around it, as God actually *had* made it.

unarranged mass of canons, propositions, and applications, and fit them in as best we may with our scientific results, on the principle that they must stand, whatever may become of our science.

And above all, we shall never again be confronted by the monstrous spectacle of men seeking to find in the professed Word of God himself, the authority for actions which they find it impossible to defend on the grounds of the common conscience of humanity, and defying us (like the Mormons) to show that God did not approve of Polygamy; or (like the clergy of the Southern States of America) that the God of Justice has not passed the seal of his supreme sanction upon the unutterable wrongs and pollutions of Slavery.

These three great principles—the ABSOLUTE GOODNESS OF GOD; THE FINAL SALVATION OF EVERY CREATED SOUL; and the DIVINE AUTHORITY OF CONSCIENCE—are the obvious fundamental canons of the Faith of the Future. How profound is their importance, of how great development they are susceptible, there is no need here to speak. On such a basis it is manifest enough that a religion capable of filling the heart, sustaining the hope, and ruling the life of a man may be erected.

We have hitherto traced the differences between a religion founded avowedly on consciousness, and the existing religions founded on History. As regards each of the three great canons of faith, it will be seen

that these differences are very deep, and cannot fail in their development to arrive at very various results in the feelings of their disciples as regards God, Immortality, and Duty.

CHAPTER XI.

PRACTICAL THEISM.



WE have now to pass to another side of the question — the practical means by which that blessed Faith of the Future will be developed. It cannot be doubted by any one conversant with the existing state of religious thought, that if such a faith is hereafter to be established on the grounds of consciousness, and obtain the suffrage of humanity, it must be, if not a different, yet a far expanded thing beyond the systems which have hitherto prevailed outside the Historic pale. Human hearts cannot find their sustenance upon dogmas, however high and holy. If the Traditional Faith be indeed (as we believe) failing at the root, the Rational one has hitherto stood almost a barren trunk, leafless and flowerless of prayer and praise, and fruitless of the rich crop of deeds of charity it was planted in man's soul to bear. The defenders of the historic faith may

be pardoned for their error, if they have assumed that it must forever remain a merely intellectual system, a Philosophy for the understanding, not a Religion for the heart and life.

But these things are rapidly changing. A new era for Theism was opened—an era whose vast future none may foresee—when Francis Newman, in his noble book of *The Soul*, pointed out that the deepest spiritual truths of Christianity were the common property of all creeds; facts of the religious consciousness of man whose experience all might equally enjoy. The Deism of the last century, with its cold and dry negations of Christianity, has passed away forever, and given place to a Theism which, in the writings of Newman and Theodore Parker, may vie for spirituality and warmth of religious feeling with any other faith in the world. God is no longer to us the “Great First Cause,” discoverable through chains of inductive argument and dwelling far away in unapproachable majesty, where only our awe and homage, and not our prayers and love, might follow him. He is our “Father in Heaven” once more; the God who reveals himself hourly to our consciences and our hearts; who is nearer and dearer than earthly friend may ever be; in whom we desire consciously “to live and move and have our being” here, and in the joy of whose love we trust to spend our immortality hereafter.

But this great and blessed transition of *creed* must have its corresponding transition of *life* among us all if our Theism is to be a Religion indeed. It must cease here also to be a mere negative system—a negation of moral error, as Deism was a negation of theologic error. It must become a positive system, an affirmation of all duty and all love to God and to his creatures. Theists must be more than men of blameless lives, holding an intellectual theology. They must be men imbued with the most fervent piety, laboring in the foreground of every field of human charity.

The reasons why this logical consequence of the faith in God's goodness has as yet been little apparent, deserve our attention. The first is only the cause of popular mistake; the second is the deep-seated origin of a real and deplorable evil.

In the first place, there is obviously much obscurity in the classification of those who are properly to be considered as Theists, and in whom it could fairly be hoped that the religion would produce its fitting results. In proportion as a creed is *intellectually* demonstrable, there will always exist the danger of it being *merely* intellectually received. Men whose reason guards them against Atheism, and also leads them to reject the popular faith, inevitably occupy the *mental* rank of Theists. But it in no way follows that their *feelings* may be engaged in this creed more than the most hard

and careless Christian in the doctrines of his church. Yet these men are naturally pointed out as instances of religious coldness in Theism. Secondly: There is a cause why Theism, even in warmer and better natures, too often fails to draw forth that fervent piety it is qualified to inspire; a cause we cannot too earnestly deplore.

There is one solemn act or rather habit, on which, in great measure, the whole character of our inner life must depend. Prayer—used or neglected—must in the nature of things determine whether we are to dwell in the Holy Place or in the outer Courts of Religion—nay, whether we are to grow nearer to God or drift further away from him every year. Now, when a man brought up in our Christian lands first discovers that the creed of his childhood is no longer tenable, there is the greatest possible danger that in relinquishing it he also relinquishes that priceless habit then more than ever needed. In the first place he has been taught that except through Christ's mediation no prayer has a chance of acceptance on high, and, strangely, he often accepts the sentence of the very Church he has quitted, and rests in self-inflicted banishment till the habit is lost. In the second place, among the most decided conclusions at which he has probably arrived in abandoning Christianity, is the one that prayers for outward benefits, for health, wealth, fine weather, and the like,

are at once unphilosophical and irreligious;—unphilosophical, inasmuch as they assume that God can be prevailed on to change the laws of therapeutics or meteorology, which have been evolving since creation his beneficent designs;—irreligious, inasmuch as they attempt to bend the Will of God to our desires, instead of bending our desires to his Will. The entire distinction between such Prayers for physical good, and other Prayers for spiritual good, very constantly escapes the inquiring mind. The man fails to notice that it is *not* unphilosophical to ask that God should FULFIL his laws of Spirit: those laws by which the soul, which is sickly and weak, growing in solitude and darkness, becomes healthy and strong brought into the light and warmth of God's immediate and conscious presence: those laws by which he has made Prayer the natural "means" of an immeasurable Grace. He fails to notice that it is *not* irreligious to ask that God should PERFORM his Will on us—that Will which we know is our sanctification, our purification from all taint of sin, our elevation to all heights of spiritual good and glory.

Thus, when a man leaves Christianity and becomes a Theist, it too often comes to pass that he simultaneously gives up the idea that he can ask God for aid in his soul's struggles. And what is the result? Surely one of the saddest in the world; that at the

moment he most needs God's light to guide him, and God's arm to support him, he loses his means of obtaining them both, and inaugurates his new religious life in darkness and isolation, when he ought more than ever to feel that God is shining down blessings on his head. Of the evils which follow, many a page might be written. Every spiritual loss and error comes from giving up prayer, even as every spiritual grace and good comes from earnestly practising it. But among these losses to the Theist, there is one which it behooves us specially to mark, since from it we may trace the source of much of that failure we have signalized, to push the true philosophic theology to its legitimate result of a fervent religion.

Our belief in the *Personality* of God is in a peculiar manner allied to the *moral* side of Religion. In proportion as that moral side is developed in us, so, we may almost say, is the clearness of our conviction that it is indeed a Living God who rules the world, and no mere Creative Intelligence. Now, this moral side comes out only in its full luminousness in Prayer. Prayer is, in its essence, the approach of the finite and fallible moral agent to its infinite Moral Lord, to whom it is conscious of owing allegiance, and to whom it comes for forgiveness and strength. In such prayer, all the moral life bursts into vivid consciousness. We feel our own double nature—the spirit striving against

the flesh, and the flesh lusting against the spirit—and we feel (as at no other time) the existence of a Moral Being over us and aiding us. Such a Moral Being can only be known as a *Person*; there is no vague, impersonal Power in question when we meet the One whose Will is our Law; one who holds to us the most definite and solemn of all relations—that of a Moral Lord—to a moral free agent. In Prayer there comes to us the true revelation of the Personality of God. If we abandon Prayer, that Personality recedes away into the dimness of distance. We begin to think of a Creative Power, a World-Spirit, a Demi-urge—the “All of Things.” We have voluntarily closed the one window of our souls which opens to the true view, and we see all the other sides of his nature but that one which before all the rest concerns us as moral beings to see. Theology, pursued intellectually alone, seems invariably to have this tendency. After a few steps of the prayerless path some form or other of Pantheism is certain to appear, and the man wanders away further and further into the wilderness.* It is no marvel it

* If science should proceed so far on the track of the late discoveries regarding the correlation of the physical forces, as to reduce them to one great force, the relation of that force to the Creator cannot fail to open up new and profound views of natural theology. If Gravitation, Electricity, Galvanism, Magnetism, and the Vital Force in animated bodies, be all forms of one and the same imponderable agent working through all nature, then this agent must

should be so. The old scholastic science which attempted to develop optics or acoustics from some assumed premise, without making experiments at all, was less unphilosophic than that theology which closes the eye and ear of the soul, and expects to arrive by ratiocination at a knowledge of those Divine truths which God reveals through his light and voice.

Theism, then, to be a Religion at all, and not a Philosophy leading off into Pantheism, must be a Religion of Prayer. The idle acceptance of the decree of banishment from God passed by the Churches against their outlaws, must be forever set aside. Each Theist

surely hold to the Divine Mind the same relation which our small portion of Vital Force bears to our minds. As a man moves his arm at his volition, the vital force from his brain producing the motion of his muscles, so we may conceive of God moving the systems of the suns, sending light through the universe, causing the growth of every plant, and tree, and animal, and portioning the streams of vitality to all sentient beings, — in a word, doing *all* things through all worlds by that Force which his infinite Mind may use as our minds use a portion of the same force in their finite degree. Such a theory, if science should ever countenance it, would put an end to all Pantheistic dreams. As no man feels his Vital Force to be *himself*, so neither will he think of God as the mere Vital Power of the world. As he realizes that his own mind can act upon matter (using the terms in their rough, popular signification), so he will be enabled, in a certain shadowy way, to conceive of the possibility of the Infinite Mind acting upon the material universe. "A Law of Nature," then, will simply imply the mode in which God always uses the great forces of nature. The immutability of such laws is the simple result of the immutability of God.

must feel that for him, even more than for other men, it is needful to bring into fullest clearness that *consciousness* of God which (corroborated by that of others) is his truest ground of faith, and that on him, too, more than on others, it is incumbent to approach, with love and reverence unspeakable, the Being between whose Goodness and his soul no clouds of gloomy superstition ever more may intervene.

And there are other truths also which Theists need to take to heart, if their faith is ever to be the faith of humanity. If the shadow of the old superstition, that they cannot pray to God save through the name of Christ, have kept thousands of them from praying at all, so the natural recoil from the old gloomy ideas of sin and hell has surely driven many more to disregard far too much that whole most solemn side of religion which concerns our position towards God as *sinner*s and offenders against his holy Law. The bare and shallow rationalism of nearly all the freer teachers of theology has been doubtless a cause why they have failed to touch the hearts of men. Theism must teach us a different lesson, — as in truth it is fitted to do, above all the theologies of earth. The thought which alone truly makes sin hateful, which reveals it in all its hideousness, and thereby brings out that true penitence which has nothing to do with fear of punishment, which is simply *sorrow for sin* — that thought is the absolute

goodness, the Infinite Love of the Being against whom we have sinned. To think we offend against a despotic sovereign, a cruel taskmaster, that is a thing to make a man, if he be cowardly, terrified; if he be high-spirited, hard and stubborn. But to think that we offend against the most loving of Fathers, the tenderest of Mothers, the Being who has made us to be the objects of his love throughout eternity, that is a thing to make the coldest heart melt, the proudest soften. The faith which teaches that God is Good, not in name only but in deed: good as our inmost hearts yet scarcely dare to dream of goodness; good in the sense of a love which knows no bound or measure, which is absolute, changeless, supreme; that faith alone is qualified to teach us also what sin is, how base, how hateful, how full of blackest ingratitude. True, that the creed of Christendom also tells us of a love divine sacrificing itself for the rebellious sinner; and that one doctrine, even with all the monstrous premises it assumes, and the consequences it involves, has been the central power of the churches for nigh two thousand years. But in magnifying the Love of Christ, the greater Love of God has been obscured even to darkness; and every sentiment of gratitude and trust is confounded by the sight of that hideous background of an eternal Hell which stands behind Calvary, and alone explains that tremendous Drama of Propitiation.

There seems no one fact more clearly revealed by the experience of religious men, than that on the depth and intensity of the sense of what has been called "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" must depend also the depth and vigor of the whole religious life. It has been said well by one of the noblest thinkers of the age: "It is in the sense of sin that the finite creature must first approach to the infinite Holiness of God."* The instinct is not a false one which makes us all feel that the emotions of penitence are most sacred of any; that Thanksgiving and Adoration we may speak of to our fellows, but that the deepest prayer for forgiveness is for the ear of God alone. Here is the innermost core of our religion, and if it be profaned by the inspection of a stranger, we feel a sacrilege has been done. And why? Because to us, as moral creatures, our moral relation to God is all in all; because to us, his sinful children, the position we hold to him as our forgiving Father is nearer and dearer than any other. Out of this sense that we have sinned and are pardoned springs every true emotion. This alone places us in the right attitude, and without it, from beginning to end, we are in a false position, either to bear the sorrows or accept the joys, or contend with the temptations of life. There is nothing which ever thoroughly softens the stony ground of our hearts to humility, save

* McLeod Campbell on the Atonement.

the tears of penitence ; and only out of that softened ground of Humility springs the flower of Gratitude. If we imagine we have done little wrong and much good, then all the joys God may give us seem only according to our claims, and all our griefs seem hardships which would justify us in discontent or rebellion. But the knowledge that we *deserve* to suffer changes all this. Every pleasure, then, becomes a gratuitous benefaction ; nay, more, a tender token of the mercy of God. Every sorrow becomes a natural and right decree, tempered with many an inward and outward comfort for which we may be thankful. Nor is it only towards God that the sense of our sinfulness rectifies our position. Towards our fellow-men, also, it places us in the right relation—the true relation, not of harsh judges, but indulgent fellow-sinners, struggling together more or less manfully ; one, perhaps, through the mire of sensual temptations, and one through the clouds and storms of doubts, or of angry passions and discontents ; but all struggling together, failing at times, fainting, and falling oft. To bring, then, this sense of sin into vivid consciousness, is the necessary part of a deep and true religion, and that the creed which best teaches us to love the God in whom we impersonate all holiness will best bring out this sense, we can have little doubt. There will, indeed, be a difference in the repentance of the Theist and of the Chris-

tian. The former cannot be moved by the mental picture of the sufferings of his Substitute, nor terrified by prospects of his own eternal perdition. Simple sorrow for the sin itself, simple grief for having offended a loving Father, must replace all this. But yet further, the *things he is penitent for* will imperceptibly change their character.

When it has happened to any of us in life to lose one who was near and dear to us, what are our feelings as regards our own conduct towards him? Not once, alas ! in a thousand times can we escape regrets. But what are the things we most bitterly grieve over in our memory? It seems that it is not often that the sharpest stings are from recollections of definite acts of unkindness or treachery. If these took place, they were chiefly evidences how far we lapsed from our due love and faith. But what we all regret, and what we shall regret forever is, that our whole state of feeling, our whole line of action towards the departed, was unworthy of him. We did not half recognize his goodness, were not half grateful for his kindness, allowed a thousand trifles to alienate us, or to prevent us from seeking his presence and expressing our reverence and love. This is natural, spontaneous, *human* repentance towards the dead ; and this, then, must be the type of the genuine and unalloyed repentance of the Theist towards God. He will not rest so much on definite acts

of past disobedience, though these perhaps may never be forgotten; nor make it a daily duty, as do many Evangelical Christians, to go over each incident of failure, and strive to lash the languid conscience into an exaggerated penitence. These practices, tending ever to moral hypochondria, and to a narrow, puerile ethical condition — a Morality of the Nursery — he will value but little. But he will turn the full blaze of the Divine Goodness right on his heart itself, revealing every stain and dusty mote, and lighting up the dark recesses of his hidden feelings. He will grieve, *not* that he has broken this or that precept of a written law, but that his whole life has been unworthy of God's boundless love; unfit for the blessed destiny of union with him for which he was created. He will grieve, — ay, with such tears as a rebellious son sheds over a mother's grave, — that he has lived a poor, base, cold, ungrateful, unprofitable life, when every hour his hands should have labored in God's service, and his soul swelled with love and adoration.

Lastly. There remains one principle more which Theism must recognize and enforce if it is ever to be the religion of humanity. If we are to climb up to God, we must bear our brethren along with us. Here has been one of the fatal practical errors of many enlightened men of our time. Imbued, — some with the philosophy of Hegel, some with the rich thoughts

of Emerson, — and nearly always hitherto forced to stand somewhat apart from the social and philanthropic life around them, it has happened that the grievous paradox has come true, and they whose creed alone teaches the salvation of all human souls, have been they who have spoken and acted as if there existed infinite diversities in the value of souls. We hear of those "for whom it is an honor to labor," and those who "only suggest the reflection of their small value" when we are asked to expend our charity upon them.* We hear of "the supreme Caucasian mind," and of miserable "Niggers," for the salvation of whose whole race from unutterable degradation, the blood of a white man would be too dear a price. We hear of noble and mighty men, powerful kings, whom we are to honor for their strength, were it never so misused; and of convicts and criminals who ought to be crushed like venomous reptiles under the heel of society, without pity or hesitation.†

The religion that will leave men to speak and feel like this, will never be, and *ought* never to be, the religion of the world. God forbid it ever should! The humblest and narrowest Christianity which teaches us that "all souls are in the hands of God;" that he makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good, is better than this. Is it hard to recognize the brother-

* Emerson's *Conduct of Life*. † See Mr. Carlyle, — every where!

hood of humanity in the poor peasant and clown?—"the guano races of mankind carted over to manure the fertile fields of America, and rot."* Is it difficult to trace "God's image carved in ebony" in the Negro? Is it beyond all just claim upon us that we should be asked to seek the Reformation, and not the vindictive punishment and extermination, of the criminal? If these things be too hard for us, then is it clear that the love of Him who is Father of the peasant, the negro, and the criminal, has never yet loomed on our hearts. The writer of the Johannic epistles spoke a truth deep as human nature itself, when he said, "If any man love not his brother, the love of the Father is not in him." To love God is to love his creatures, even the poorest and meanest—even the brutes.† Before his eyes we all admit that there must be equality. The noblest intellects and the weakest must be in his sight merely like so many babbling infants—some a little older, some a little less forward than the others. God cannot love more any creature because he has pleased to endow him with greater powers; but rather might we think that as a mother pities most her feeblest

* Emerson's *Conduct of Life*.

† "He prayeth best who loveth best
All creatures great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He makes and loves them all."

Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

child, so the Creator must regard with tender mercy the poor souls which, in the inscrutable purposes of his providence, he has left to go through their earthly way in the twilight of dulness and ignorance. To be in any harmony of the soul with God, we must surely feel like him in these things.

But, again, from the purely human side. If we feel justly how limited and small at the best are all our knowledge and our powers of intellect, and how painful are those limitations; above all, if we feel how, with all the safeguards of education, we have continually fallen into *such transgressions as were open to us*, is it possible to feel afterwards contempt instead of pity for ignorance, or to regard those hapless criminals (who, perhaps, have had none of our safeguards, and have fallen into transgressions far more helplessly and excusably than we) as wild beasts, to be "crushed and exterminated"?*

* The manner in which many have permitted themselves of late to write of the proper treatment of criminals, surely reveals either the cruelty of helpless terror and cowardice, or else such a conception of the deserts of crime and sin as surely no man who looks for forgiveness for his own offences could find it in his heart to utter. If there be one thing piteous and deplorable in the world, it is the lot of a man or woman brought up (as nearly the whole criminal class is brought up) in such an atmosphere of vice, so surrounded from childhood by evil influences, as that purity, sobriety, honesty, and religion are to him or her things utterly unknown. To realize what such a life must be, it is enough to look at the depressed and malformed heads of the hapless children of our reformatories, and watch them displaying the anxious

Nay, yet more. Not only must a true religion teach us to feel that there is no human being below the level

cunning of the animal rather than the reason of the human being; their poor minds tainted already with ideas of vice and practices of crime unknown through life to their happier brothers and sisters in the schools hard by; and yet, with all their misery, bearing in their hearts such springs of love and grateful affection, as, if rightly struck, may water the whole desert of their lives. If these young criminals be not snatched, in early youth, from their depraved parents; or if, on leaving their reformatories, the evil influences of their homes upset the yet incomplete reformation,—they become inevitably those most miserable beings, our regular criminals; the men and women whose lives are a mere alternation of vice, crime, and punishment, drunkenness and debauchery, theft and robbery, the dock and the gaol. How ought we to regard lives like these? How would angels regard them? Should it be with the wish to “crush and exterminate”? Doubtless there are phases of public sentiment regarding criminals worse even than the one which so harshly demands their destruction,—phases from which it is the natural reaction. That moral laxity which confounds innocence and crime in one indiscriminate indulgence; that morbid sentimentalism which regards daring offence with sickly admiration,—both these states of public feeling are deplorable and injurious far beyond any vehemence of resentment. But is there no possibility of our ever rising beyond all these false conditions of sentiment, and recognizing that a criminal is neither a wild beast to be crushed, nor a hero to be admired, nor yet “no worse than his neighbors, only more unfortunate”? Cannot we ever attain to feeling that he is the most miserable of God’s creatures, for whom our charity is demanded,—not in the way of weak and most mischievous indulgence,—but of such correction as our utmost efforts may discover to be best adapted to effect his restoration? The demonstrated success of such carefully adjusted punishment in the “Intermediate System” in Ireland, has placed the possibility of such restoration beyond dispute. It is not the *irreclaimable* wild beast which we are called on to “crush,” but a human being restorable to the ranks of manhood.

of our sympathies; it must make us feel *especially* for all the degraded and disgraced children of God. The sentiment expressed by one of the greatest writers of our day must be altogether reversed, and instead of saying that we “can readily believe in the immortality of the robber chiefs who dwelt in the romantic castles of the Rhine, but for the dull boors who lived in the mud villages of the Rhone, we cannot anticipate any future save such as may await the beaver and the ant;” instead of feeling like this, we shall, on the contrary, avow that it is precisely for these poor, humble souls that we *claim* immortality. For *us*, life has been a great and glorious boon. We have been permitted to look with enlightened eyes on God’s splendid universe. For *us* the heavens have declared his glory and the earth has chanted his praise. If existence were to end for *us* when we lie down in the grave, we must have restored it to the Giver, with overflowing thanks that we should have been allowed to live, to know, to act, and to love, for our threescore years and ten, with the freedom and the joy of a cultured mind. But for those poor, sad ones who have dwelt in ignorance and darkness, or whose years have been passed in the squalor of our great cities, amid vice, and filth, and want, and misery,—for *those*, we say, there *must* be another life in store. We cannot come into true contact of heart with them without feeling it forced on us to bid them be of good cheer, for their hideous courts

and lanes are not *all* God's beautiful universe, nor their years of toil and want their only share in the boundless realms of life. For ourselves, we may *hope* for heaven; for *them* we *claim* it at the Creator's hand.

Theism must teach us to feel truly the bond of human brotherhood in its fullest strength and tenderness, or it will be no religion for mankind. No outward philanthropy will suffice. Nay, outward philanthropy without that inward sentiment is an insult to our kind. We have no *right* to do any man a service in a spirit which (if he knew it) would make it a humiliation for him to receive it. We have no right to approach our brother with our aid, our alms, our counsels, while our feelings to him are such that we, in his place, would feel it pain to accept our benefits. Not till we can look him in the face as brother to brother, and know that he might see into our hearts, and find there only genuine sympathy and tenderness, is it lawful for us to serve him. It must be "blessed" for him to "receive" our aid before it can be blessed for us to "give" it. Theism must teach us this. It must sweep away, on one side, all miserable self-interestedness of beneficence, — all making of spiritual capital for ourselves out of the woes of our neighbors and our wretched efforts to help them. And, on the other side, it must pour the spirit of Love into Duty; must clothe the dry bones of hard acts of justice and almsgiving with the flesh of warm and soft feelings. This is the special

work of religion, — to aid us by the love of God to raise the service of man into a task of love. Without religion we might love what was naturally lovable, and even resolutely obey the "categoric imperative" of duty to *serve* the unlovely. But religion goes beyond these lines. It is its great human task to fill our hearts with a love which shall overflow far beyond such narrow limits, and reach all whom God loves, — all who are his creatures like ourselves. Here is the touchstone of the reality of our own love to God. If we love only those who already love us, or who are lovable in our eyes, we may indeed thank God for the pure joy of our natural and lawful affections, but we cannot think that *his* love has moved our hearts. Had it done so but ever so faintly, we should have loved others also.

And here, finally, is our one great hope of bringing our own souls into true union with God. A life without love, even if it be a life of strictest morality, or of ascetic struggles after Divine communion, will never bring us really into his inner temple. Each step we gain thitherward we shall lose again by the jar of hard or unkind feelings, and at the end of years be further away than at first. To cast out of our hearts all bitterness once and forever; to cultivate, by gentle thoughts and self-sacrificing deeds the power of sympathy; to ask God to pour the spirit of love into our

souls, — these are the means he has appointed whereby we may come nearer to him with unerring certainty. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Our virtue, and rectitude, and sacrifices will avail nothing. We may give our bodies to be burned, and if we have not charity it profiteth nothing. We may hold the purest theologic creed, and dwell in the loftiest region of thought, and yet find God never the nearer. It is not the marble-palace mind of the philosopher which he will visit, but the humble heart, which lies sheltered from the storms of passion, and all trailed over by the fragrant blossoms of sweet human affections.

When we have learned this great lesson of the Love of the unlovely, — learned to feel all the baseness of the sin involved in a selfish, thankless life, — learned to know by experience the unutterable value of Prayer, — then shall Theism become a religion fit for humanity. Then shall our Ark of Faith in the Living God, our Tables of the Moral Law, and our supporting staff of Hope in Immortality, be no more carried about through desert places, but fixed forever in the City of Peace. Then shall the nations from the East and from the West build over it the last great Temple of all, — the temple of an eternal religion, — whose foundations shall be wide as the whole nature of man, and whose dome, reaching up to heaven, shall shelter and overhallow the world.