

# THE NATURE AND METHOD OF REVELATION.

## I.—REVELATION AND THE BIBLE.



IN Chillingworth's famous work, "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation," occurs a sentence which passed into an adage: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." In the sense in which the phrase was used by that acute logician—a writer who had outgrown the narrowness of the school of his godfather Laud, in which he had received his early training—nothing can be more true. It is not from an infallible church that a Protestant derives his creed. With him the Scriptures are the rule of faith. They are the guide, at once authoritative, and sufficient or exclusive, on all matters pertaining to religious belief and moral conduct. These are the customary formulas, and the saying of Chillingworth is a strong assertion of the Protestant position, which stands opposed, on the one hand, to that of the Church of Rome, and, on the other hand, to the rationalism which substitutes, in matters of religion, a subjective standard, be it one's own reasonings or feelings, for the Bible. Statements like this aphorism of Chillingworth have the value and attraction which belong to any terse enunciation of an important principle. They serve as watchwords in defensive warfare when adversaries approaching from opposite quarters are to be repelled. There is small danger of extravagance in praising the Bible, as every one will allow who appreciates what the Bible contains, surveys the influence of this book in the past, and knows its indispensable service in awakening and supporting the life of religion in the souls of men. It is the simple truth, and no mere conventional compliment to the Scriptures, to say that Christian piety cut off from contact with their light-giving and life-giving power would wither away like plants robbed of the sunlight.

But we need not examine the Bible long to become aware of problems and perplexities which the current axioms relative to the sufficiency and authority of Scripture do not clear up. The searcher for truth, on opening its covers, does not find between them a dogmatic and ethical treatise in which are methodically set down the articles which he is to believe and the things which he is to do. His Bible is not a Tridentine Creed, nor an Augsburg Confession, nor a Westminster Catechism; nor

does it wear the aspect of a systematic account of "the whole duty of man." To be sure, doctrines and precepts are strewn, here and there, along its pages. But they must be picked out; and when thus collected they do not always appear at first to agree with one another. The reader discovers that numerous commandments were issued at epochs far back in the past; that they were addressed to a specific people, or to particular individuals, and have no very perceptible application to present circumstances or to himself. The Bible, from which he is expected to ascertain the purpose of life and how that purpose is to be fulfilled, turns out to be a voluminous collection of miscellaneous writings. They emanate from numerous authors, not all of whom are known even by name. These writings were all of them composed long ago, and at different times—a portion of them at dates extremely remote. Here are histories, some of them traversing the same ground, and with striking differences in the point of view, to say the least, from which they were written; poems, among them a copious collection of devotional lyrics, and one metrical drama which may be styled, in the better sense of the term, erotic; likewise, a book filled with dirges, besides a considerable number of other compilations of discourses by ancient seers; another drama, dealing with the mystery connected with the allotment of evil by Divine Providence; a collection of proverbs, also; letters of Apostles to Churches; the whole ending with a book made up of visions. This multifarious literature, so far as the older grand division of it is concerned, the ancient Jews distributed into three departments—the law, the prophets, and the hagiographa, or "psalms"; the last of the sections being a group that was brought together after the others, and is more diversified in its contents. In the later or New Testament division, several narratives of the ministry of Jesus and one narrative of the labors of the Apostles are followed by the Epistles and the Apocalypse. In neither of the two main divisions of the Bible are the component parts united even by the external tie derived from the order in which they were written. In cases not a few, the date of books is unsettled. Differences of opinion on this point prevail among the scholars who are versed in such inquiries. With reference to certain books,—for example, the first



six historical books of the Old Testament,—this diversity of opinion is very wide. No doubt the disagreement on these questions of date is owing partly to the influence of a dogmatic bias in one direction or another, to subjective leanings which are void of scientific value, but rather stand in the way of an unprejudiced verdict. But when the refraction due to innate or acquired prepossession is discounted, there is left still no small residue of uncertainty on the topics adverted to. Each of the various authors whose productions have been brought together in the Bible is plainly marked by personal traits which are reflected in both his thought and his style. Obvious limitations belonging to time and place, and to varying types of mind and culture, are stamped upon their pages. The peculiarity of the composite volume which we call "the Bible"—even this title, it is worth while to remark, was originally a plural—is strikingly felt when it is compared with the sacred books of other religions. The Vedas, the ancient Brahmanical Scriptures, are mainly collections of hymns. The Koran is composed exclusively of communications alleged to have been made by an angel to one person, Mohammed, and all within an interval of a little more than twenty years. These oracles, flowing as they do from the single mind of the founder of Islam, are identical in their style and their general spirit. It is only a minor portion of the Koran that consists of narratives; and these are only stories of the patriarchs, drawn from degenerate Jewish and Christian sources, without any direct acquaintance on the part of Mohammed with the Old Testament records. Islam is preëminently the religion of a book, held to be supernatural in its origin, with nothing before it, or beneath it, or after it.

Various as the books of the Bible are, however, in authorship, themes, and style, it is no exaggeration to say that one spirit animates them. He who approaches them in a merely critical, much more in a carping, temper, may miss the perception of it. A certain activity of conscience and moral sensibility may be requisite for the discernment and appreciation of it. This is not to fall back on a mere subjective impression, invalid save for the individual who experiences it. A deaf man, or a man with no ear for music, might as reasonably bring the same objection to one who is thrilled by an oratorio of Handel or a symphony of Beethoven. A noted American champion of disbelief, as I am credibly informed, not long ago, on his way home from a visit to Europe, made the remark with all sincerity that the admiration expressed for the masterpieces of the great painters and sculptors is all a pure affectation, having no better ground than a contagious fashion, and that there is really

nothing in these world-famed works of art to merit praise or elicit enthusiasm. But where perceptions, be they esthetic or moral and religious, are confined to no single breast, where they are awakened in a vast number of human beings, and are to a great degree independent of time and place and of peculiarities of race and education, and where, moreover, they stand related to the noblest development of character as their concomitant or fruit, they must be allowed to have a catholic worth. They assume the character of an objective proof. It is vain to decry them as morbid fancies. They are not to be dismissed as dreams of a mystic. They are the voice of human nature—a recognition by man of realities, the denial of which on the part of individuals here or there simply argues an abnormal constitution, or an "atrophy" of powers, an eccentric quality of some kind in the dissenting skeptic. How shall we designate this peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, taken as a whole? It may be denominated the spirit of holiness. It pervades the Bible as an atmosphere. It imparts to it, if one may so say, a supernal quality—a quality not of earth. Here are not speculations uttered by sages about man's nature, duty, and destiny. Here are not precepts such as may be read in the wisest of the heathen—for example, in Plato and Epictetus, and in the pensive chapters of the philosophic emperor Marcus Aurelius. Where there is some likeness in the content, yet the tone is dissimilar. We feel the breath of God. To say that the ethical injunctions of the Bible are "morality touched with emotion" is too vague a description. It is morality inculcated as by a voice out of the unseen. Underlying all is the relation, taken for granted more often than formally asserted, of man to God and eternity. Sanctions reaching out beyond this world of time and space give a solemn emphasis to the commandment. And the distinction here accorded to the Bible belongs to the Old Testament as well as to the New. Attempts have been made in ancient and modern times to sever the two parts of the Book and to discard the earlier collection. Such was the proceeding of Marcion, in the second century, and like views have been brought forward again and again in recent times. It is not the force of a settled tradition that has baffled every such enterprise. It is not even the recognition accorded to the Old Testament by the New which has been the prime obstacle in the way of endeavors of this nature. Rather is it the consciousness that the two parts of the Bible, differ as they may, are not at bottom incongruous and hostile, and a prevailing sense of the fact that grand elements belong to them in common. The same spirit of holiness pervades



them both, unites them, and lifts them out of the category of literature in general. The Bible not only interprets God in his holiness and unfathomable love and pity, to man; it is the interpreter of man to himself. Coleridge tells us that having striven to cast aside all prejudice, he perused the books of the Old and the New Testaments—"each book as a whole and also as an integral part." "And need I say," he testifies, "that I have met everywhere more or less copious sources of truth, and power, and purifying impulses; that I have found words for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and feebleness? In short, whatever *finds* me bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit, even from the same Spirit which of old entered into the prophets." This is not the experience of one mind alone, but of a multitude out of many kindreds and tongues, age after age.

It is true that in thus characterizing the Bible discriminations are to be made. Not all its books are in this regard, in their power to sound the deep places of the soul, on a level. We find ourselves from the beginning in an elevated region, yet a region where there are hills and valleys. It is vain to pretend that, in the quality referred to, all parts of the Bible are on the same plane. Isaiah and the Psalms, John the Evangelist and the leading Epistles of Paul, are among the portions of the Book that rise like lofty peaks in a mountain range. There are many pages within the compass of the Canon which, while not without their significance and value as parts of the collection, lack comparatively the spiritual quality which I have attempted to point out. Most readers of Scripture seldom turn to them. There is another fact to be noticed here. There are parts of the Bible which it is hard to understand. Wholesale assertions about the perspicuity of Scripture have to be qualified. The learning of the most erudite scholars and the sagacity of the most expert critics fail to decipher the meaning of a not inconsiderable number of passages in the sacred volume. Protestants have always been obliged to encounter the Roman Catholic objection to the popular use of the Scriptures, that they cannot be understood by the generality of readers. The only way of meeting the objection is that adopted by Chillingworth; namely, to insist that all essential truth, truth essential to salvation and the conduct of life, is easily discernible on their pages. In this answer it is tacitly conceded that there is left a pretty broad margin which is—to the common man, to say the least—obscure. Even one of the sacred writers pronounces some things in the Epistles of Paul abstruse (2 Peter iii. 16). Why is this so? it might be

asked; why all these dark places in Scripture, if it was directly and expressly written to serve as an authoritative text-book in religion? When one considers the difficulties of the Bible, not in any captious spirit, as if to hunt up materials for an attack, but fairly and dispassionately; when one looks at the difficulties which obtrude themselves upon the attention of those who are at all familiar with modern discoveries in natural and physical science, and with modern studies in history and ethnology; still more, when one takes into view moral difficulties in certain parts of biblical doctrine, especially in portions of the Old Testament, one may be pardoned for inquiring, Was this body of writings, in its primary intention, designed to be a manual of religious and ethical instruction? We may concede joyfully a high providential purpose in connection with the composition of the books which it contains, with their preservation,—although it must be remembered that they themselves allude to lost books which were regarded evidently as of equal authority with those in the Canon,—and with their foreseen place and office in the Christian Church. But this is quite different from saying that they were originally composed with all this in view on the part of their authors. Especially does it leave out of sight a fact respecting the Scriptures which is, in the highest degree, important for the understanding and the right use of them—a fact that furnishes a clue for the solution of the major part of the difficulties which have been adverted to.

The thesis to be here propounded is this: It was not the Scriptures that made the religion, but the religion that made the Scriptures. The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are the offshoot of a great historical movement, begun and carried forward to its consummation by an agency, supernatural and divine, yet a movement that is, notwithstanding, an integral part of the history of our race. The roots of the sacred literature must be sought in the historical events and transactions that gave rise to it. It were as strange an error to consider the records of the French Revolution, the memoirs of the leaders and minor actors, the discourses and expositions called forth, at the time and afterwards, by this series of momentous events, the songs and ballads of that stormy period—to consider these multiform writings the Revolution itself, and in a confused way to confound them with it, as it is to identify the books of the Bible with the religion out of which they sprung. To see the justice of this remark, it is only needful to glance at the origin of the New Testament Scriptures. John the Baptist wrote nothing. Jesus wrote nothing. He lived and taught, he gathered about him a



band of disciples, he died and rose from the dead, and the Holy Spirit, the source of a new spiritual power and enlightenment, descended upon his disciples. Jesus laid the foundation for an organization of his followers. He created a society. It was not books that had been written or that were to be written that he styled "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth." It was the men who believed in him and followed him. It was through them personally that the good which he brought to mankind was to be diffused abroad. By them the proclamation of God's forgiveness and love, or the Gospel, was made. Some time elapsed before anything was written — before even the sayings and doings of Jesus got themselves recorded. It was the living interest taken in those real occurrences, a curiosity on the part of Christians to know more of them, and, as we learn from the introduction of Luke's first narrative, an increasing sense of the value of a correct knowledge of them, that occasioned the composition of the four Gospels. The book of Acts owes its existence to a similar cause. As to the Epistles, of course the Churches had to be founded before they could be addressed. It is desirable to remember that Christianity was preached and believed in before anything was written about it. In an age of letters, it was inevitable that the events which form the subject of the New Testament should very soon give birth to writings. We can understand why it was impossible that the American civil war should pass by without giving rise to the composition of letters by those actively engaged in it, and the publication of books of history and reminiscence. There was a like impossibility in the case of the planting of Christianity by Christ and the Apostles. If the number of those who desired to know the facts and to be taught the significance of them was at the outset small, it rapidly increased, and their interest in the subject was deep and absorbing. Of course the creation of the New Testament literature was an act of Providence of essential consequence in its bearing on the subsequent propagation of the Christian faith. Our business is now with the second cause that led to it, and, in particular, with its relation to the historical facts out of which, as from a fruitful soil, it grew up. What has just been said of the New Testament is applicable to the Old. Stretching along, as it were, underneath the heterogeneous books that make up the Old Testament — heterogeneous as to their particular themes and their style — is the groundwork of history, of the history of God's dealings with the nation of Israel in earlier and later times. This history is related in specifically historical writings. But the historical situation determines the character and gives color to the form of

the books which do not belong under this head. For example, the prophecies of Isaiah are a series of fervent harangues having reference to the circumstances of those to whom they were in the first instance directed. Psalms and Proverbs embody the devotional sentiments and the practical philosophy of living men at definite epochs in the career of the Hebrew people. It need not be said that we do not forget the inspiration of the prophets and the quality of their utterances, which is dependent upon it, although the fact of the Divine call of the several prophets, in the exigencies in which they appeared, is part and parcel of the series of historical events. It is simply meant that, be the peculiarity of the Old Testament writings which is derived from supernatural influence what it may, the discourses of Isaiah, and the Proverbs of the wise man or men who were the authors of them, have an historical basis not less real and substantial than is true of the sermons of Jonathan Edwards and the maxims of Franklin in "Poor Richard's Almanac." When the first martyr Stephen spoke for the Christian cause before the Jewish council, he spread before them an array of historical occurrences. He went back to God's disclosure of himself to Abraham in the far-off time, and passed in review, one after another, leading personages and facts of the past down to the mission and death of the Righteous One. In the same spirit, the Apostle Paul traces everything back to a person — to Abraham and to his personal convictions respecting God. He was "the father of all them that believe," the founder of a people becoming more and more numerous, and finally bursting the confines of national kinship.

At the same time the Apostle Paul understood the value of the Scriptures. It was the signal advantage of the Jews that to them had been committed "the oracles of God." A sacred deposit had been intrusted to them. The promises of God recorded in the ancient Scriptures were in their hands. It is not alone as inspired interpreters of the facts that prophets and apostles are the organs of revelation. They are inspired to look forward and partly lift the curtain that veils the future. Thus they discharge an office in opening the way for subsequent scenes and events in the drama of Providence as it gradually unfolds itself.

The fundamental reality is not the Bible. It is the kingdom of God. This is not a notion. Rather is it a real historical fact, and the grandest of all facts. No other kingdom or commonwealth ever had a more substantial being. It is older than any other; it has proved itself stronger and more enduring than any other; if there is any good ground for the Christian's faith, it will embrace or overspread them all.



What is this kingdom? It is the society of believers in God—the society of his loyal subjects and children. In its immature stage, under the old dispensation, it existed in the form of an organized political community. Among the nations there lived one people which had true thoughts respecting God, into whose hearts he put true thoughts respecting himself. They became conscious—it was he who inspired them with the consciousness—of standing in an immediate, peculiar relation to him. That they were a “chosen people” was a conviction ineradicably planted within them. Has not this conviction of theirs been verified in the subsequent history of mankind? They were made to feel that they were not thus distinguished for their own sake, or on account of any merit of their own, but were chosen to be witnesses for God to the rest of mankind. There was a divine purpose of redemption, in which the entire race were to have a share. The civil polity and the laws of the chosen people were to reflect the will of God, as made known from time to time through holy and inspired men. The whole course of their lives was to be regulated by prescriptions issuing from the same divine source. After the monarchical form of government was established, revelation still remained the source of law. Side by side with the kings there stood the prophets to declare the divine will, to rebuke the iniquitous ruler, and, if need be, to exhort the people to disobedience. The one supreme concern of this Hebrew nation was, and was felt to be, religion. Their function among the nations of the earth was consciously wrapped up in this one interest. As they well knew, other religions besides their own were national. All ancient religions were national.

But other religions were on false foundations and were doomed to pass away. When the political independence of the Israelites was lost, their civil polity shattered, the conquered people dragged off into idolatrous lands, this consciousness of being possessed of the true religion and of a grand and triumphant future awaiting them not only survived but grew more confident. It not only outlived political ruin; under overwhelming calamities it burned with a more intense fervor. More strange than all, there was a foresight of a great advance to be made in the intrinsic character of this divinely given religion, as well as in the extent of the dominion to be gained by it. The basis of the religion was the covenant of God with the people. But the days were to come when there was to be “a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” Religion was one day to become more spiritual; obedience would then no longer be legal or constrained, but spontaneous; the

knowledge of God and his ways would be confined to no class, but would be diffused among all; forgiveness would be full and free. Such is the remarkable prediction of the prophet Jeremiah. Centuries flowed on, but the epoch thus foreseen at last arrived. The Person through whom was to be achieved this vast revolution and expansion of the kingdom, dimly discerned from afar in certain grand outlines, at length appeared. Jesus, the Christ, became the founder of a spiritual and universal society. Whoever will look into the Gospels will see that it was in this character of the head of a kingdom that he appeared. It was of the kingdom of God that John, the forerunner, spoke as near at hand. It was for professing to be a king, however the nature of that claim was misrepresented by his accusers, that Christ was put to death. The prophecy began to be realized when he began to teach and to attract to himself disciples. The kingdom was there. This he taught when, in answer to the question when the kingdom was to begin to be, he said, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation”; “lo! . . . the kingdom of God is within you,” or in the midst of you. The kingdom was constituted by Jesus and the group of disciples who acknowledged him as Lord and Master, and who, like him, were devoted to the doing of the Father’s will. This last was the criterion of membership in the kingdom and of a title to its blessings. Those who were one with Jesus in this filial allegiance were hailed by him as brother, and sister, and mother. Yet the consummation of the kingdom lay in the future. Hence the kingdom, although a present reality, was a kingdom in the bud, and therefore a kingdom to come—to come in a double sense, in its moral progress among mankind, and in mysterious final scenes of judgment and victory. So that the prayer of all disciples was still to be, “Thy kingdom come”—a supplication that points both to the continuous progress and transforming influence of the Gospel in the world, and to the goal of that progress, the final epoch. Precisely how “the kingdom of Christ” or “the kingdom of heaven” should be defined is a point on which all are not agreed. It was declared by Jesus not to be a “kingdom of this world.” Its origin was not earthly, but from above. It was not, like human sovereignties, to be maintained and spread by force. The end of the Founder’s mission was to bear witness to the truth. The kingdom was to be made up of those who heard his voice, who believed and obeyed the witness which he gave. In the ancient era of the Church there was the Byzantine idea, which tended to regard the Christian state, with the Roman emperor at its head, as the realization of the



kingdom. In the West it was the Church in its visible organization under the Papacy that was identified with the kingdom of Christ. A broader view would bring within the circumference of the kingdom all the baptized, in whatever Christian fold. A still broader view is that which includes within its pale all souls who, accepting Christ as their Lord and Saviour, live to do the Father's will. Passing by the dispute about boundaries, the existence of a society which sprung out of Judaism, but is spiritual and universal, is an unquestionable fact. One might as well doubt whether the sun is in the sky as to question the reality of that new creation which gives its distinctive character to "the Christian era." It may be added here that all organized bodies which hold the Christian faith, including the Church of Rome as well as Protestants, unite in pronouncing that the complete deposit of revealed truth was with Christ and the Apostles. The Church of Rome makes tradition an authorized channel for the transmission of this truth. But all agree that Christianity is the absolute religion. There is a progress in the understanding of it, from age to age. But the religion itself is not defective, and, therefore, is not perfectible. Christianity is not to be put in the same category with the ethnic religions, which contain an admixture of error and are capable of being indefinitely improved. The religion of the Gospel is absolute. The allegiance of the follower of Christ is unqualified: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am."

Keeping in view this historic kingdom, which stands forth as an objective reality, beginning in the distant past and carried forward to its perfected form by Jesus of Nazareth, we have to inquire what is the relation of the Holy Scriptures to it. The answer is that they are the documents that make us acquainted with the kingdom in its consecutive stages up to its completed form. In the Scriptures we are made acquainted with the facts and the meaning of the facts. And, as in the case of all documentary materials, viewed in contrast with literary products of later elaboration, we are brought face to face with the historic transactions and with the persons who took part in them. This is the peculiar character of the Scriptures, and is at once the secret of their transcendent value, and the occasion of countless obscurities and difficulties. By no other means could we become possessed of knowledge so immediate and so vivid. Yet they give occasion for the same sort of inquiries that always devolve, in historic investigation, on those who delve in the sources.

Let us take an illustration from secular history. We will suppose that the later narratives, such as those of Bancroft and Palfrey, by which

a New Englander learns the origin and growth of the communities to which he belongs, and their historic relations to other parts of America, had not been written — the narratives, we mean, which are based on documentary materials, including under this head older accounts whose authors stood nearer to the circumstances which they relate than the historians of to-day. We are shut up, we will imagine, to this mass of documentary materials. There is Bradford's pathetic story of the Pilgrims, of their flight from their English home to Holland, their voyage across the Atlantic, their settlement and their experiences at Plymouth. We have other writings also — the "Compact of Government" drawn up in the cabin of the *Mayflower*; the diary and the letters of John Winthrop, the Massachusetts governor; the earlier and later codes of colonial law; the "Bay Psalm Book"; Cotton Mather's "Magnalia"; later still, the history of Hutchinson; and, along with other productions, we have discourses of the most influential preachers in the successive generations. As we approach the epoch of the Revolution we have the letters and speeches of the patriotic leaders; the records of the first congresses, local and general; the Declaration of Independence; contemporary accounts of the war that followed; the Constitution of the United States, and expositions of it by Madison and others who took part in framing it; official papers of the first President and his Cabinet, etc. Imagine a comprehensive collection of these documents. It would consist of prose, and poetry, of orations, disquisitions, letters, and so forth. Obviously there would be inconveniences, especially to an untrained, unlearned student. There would be things hard to understand, obscure allusions, apparent and real discrepancies of more or less consequence. A consecutive history prepared by a modern student of sound, critical judgment would plainly have its advantages. But one superlative advantage it would fail to have. The reader would not, in anything like an equal degree, be brought into the atmosphere of the former days. He would not, in anything like an equal degree, come into living contact with the events and into direct personal intercourse with the participants in them. His impressions, if in some particulars more exact and more systematic, would lack the color, would want the vividness, which are to be caught alone from the documentary sources. The difference is like that between a treatise on geography, or even the descriptions of a traveler, and an actual journey through a country which we seek to know. Let one read either of the numerous lives of Jesus which have been written by learned scholars in recent times, even when imaginative power reënforces the erudition of



the author, and then turn to the pages of the Evangelists. He will feel at once the difference between second-hand and first-hand accounts; between those who see through their own eyes and those who have to use the eyes of others. The modern scholars furnish us with collateral information of value, illustrative of the Gospels; they collate the several narrators; they apply the canons of historical criticism with more or less skill; but where is that living, speaking portrait of Jesus, of his walk and his talk, which the original historians, the Apostles and their companions, give us? It is the difference between the herbarium and the leaves and flowers in field or forest. In the herbarium the classification is better, but we miss the bright hues and the aroma of the blossoms. To the botanist the herbarium is important, and botany is a useful science in its place. But the rose-bush, or a grapevine with the clusters of fruit hanging upon it, has a charm of its own which the botanist not more than the unlettered man would be willing to spare.

The beginnings of old kingdoms and empires are commonly obscure. They start on their career in the twilight. It is not until the day has fairly dawned, until some progress has been made on the path of civilization, that written records arise to be transmitted to later times. Even these contemporary writings are likely to be scanty and fragmentary. Traditions exist and are handed down, but they are subject to the influences that affect the oral transmission of narrative matter from generation to generation. Thus when the past comes to be studied in an enlightened age, there is no escape from the necessity of historical criticism. The historical student, like other laborers, has to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. The facts of a remote time are to be reached only by exploring in places where the light is dim. Great rivers may traverse empires, spreading fertility along their banks, but we have to hunt for their sources. If the circumstances of the rise of the Kingdom of God should be found to accord with this analogy, there would be no cause for wonder. There would be no ground afforded for a naturalistic theory as to the origin of that kingdom, unless indeed it were mistakenly imagined that the primary design of God was not to plant religion in the souls of men, to raise up a people, and to work out historically the redemption of mankind, but rather to produce a body of writings. In this day of critical research it is the early part of the Old Testament history respecting which debates and perplexities most frequently arise. These relate largely to the Pentateuch, and the traditional views relative to its authorship. It is interesting to observe, however, that scholars of

high repute, in what is called the "advanced" school, who assign so great a part of the Pentateuchal legislation, as well as the accompanying narrative matter, to a later than the Mosaic period, do not feel justified by their interpretations of the evidence in questioning the existence of Moses, or the grandeur of his work as a leader, lawgiver, and prophet. For example, Reuss, who claims to have been first in the field with the ideas which his pupil, Graf, independently developed, says: "Moses was for all times the Lawgiver of Israel. . . . There may be a dispute as to what strictly belongs to him. But his spirit—in this proving itself to be a divine spirit—ruled the judgment of the centuries, and impressed on the national development its own stamp and direction. The continuers of his work, even the most gifted and energetic, and at the turning-points of history, did not find it needful to forget or to ignore his name, which a firm and thankful tradition connected with everything that was great and useful," etc. In addition to what he did in revealing a purer knowledge of God in the midst of the barbarism of the heathen, says Reuss, "there belongs to him without doubt the regulation and ordering of the ritual, as it afterwards existed in Israel, at least in its outlines." A critic as little wedded to accepted views as Hermann Schultz finds it unreasonable to call in question the fact of the revelation of God to Moses at Mount Sinai. He styles Moses "the man who was properly the founder of the true religion, the effects of whose influence conditioned the entire religious development of Israel. . . . Moses is, with the exception of Jesus, the most important of the religious personages concerning whom really trustworthy information remains to us." So it continues true, even in the creed of the critics of every stripe, that "the law came by Moses" as well as "grace and truth by Jesus Christ." It is confessed on all hands that when we reach the writings of the prophets we stand on the firmest historical ground. What the religion of Israel was in the eighth century B. C., the great age of prophecy, is clearly and vividly exhibited to us in their writings. Whatever the prophets may not presuppose, they certainly do imply a course of teaching and of revelation, extending far back of their day. Revelation is not magic, and the lofty plane on which the prophets are found to stand was not reached at a single bound. Not until after the sun has slowly climbed the sky does it shine down upon us in the blaze of noonday. Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, uttered his prophecies early in the eighth century. It was to Israel that he spoke, the people whom the Lord had "brought up out of the land of Egypt," saying, "You only have I



known of all the families of the earth." Nothing can surpass the eloquence in which the universal sovereignty of God is set forth. It is "He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought." It is "Him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death" — or the deep darkness — "into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; . . . that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress." In the prophets of that age the nations of the world, even the mighty Assyrian power that was trampling kingdoms under foot, and advancing seemingly to universal dominion, are in the hand of God and are managed for his purposes. "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" The Assyrian, the Lord exclaims, is "the rod of mine anger. . . . Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few." The religion which was full of so lofty conceptions of God, both of his power and moral attributes, and of his providential plan, was not born in a day. The religion which had in itself vitality enough to survive the complete overthrows of national independence, and even to rise to more exalted heights of faith and devotion, must have had a long history behind it. There must have been, as one has said, a tap-root extending far down in the earth. There is no rational way of dispensing with the creative and organizing influence of Moses in the Hebrew commonwealth and religion. But back of Moses, in the mist of a much more remote antiquity, stands the figure of Abraham, the progenitor of many nations. Against the extreme skepticism that would sweep off the stage of authentic history this heroic character, the appeal may be made to the judgment of a scholar like Dillmann, whose unsurpassed learning and impartiality are acknowledged by all the critics. "The possibility at least," says Dillmann, "that out of the period from the twenty-second to the twentieth century before Christ historical personages may live on in recollection of after times cannot on general grounds be contested. We are not surprised when among the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians written historical memorials from those centuries confront us. Why then should not the Israelites, when they appear, somewhere about the year 1500, upon the theater of history, have preserved his-

torical recollections out of that time?" Then, after pointing out that the oldest Hebrew historians manifest a consciousness of the difference between those old times and the later with which they are conversant, Dillmann adds: "The main thing, however, is that the entire work of Moses admits of no historical explanation except on the supposition of a preparatory, comparatively pure type of religion [*eine Vorstufe höherer Religion*], such as, according to Genesis, belonged to those Fathers; and such a higher form of religion of necessity presupposes personal agents or standard-bearers. As states can be built up only through leading spirits or heroes, in like manner and much more are advances in matters of religion linked to persons rising above their fellows; and the memory of them is wont to abide in the minds of those coming after who have gathered about their faith as a center, and to hold on more persistently than even the recollection of political founders. As the head of a purer belief in God in the midst of the darkening power of heathenism that had already come in, as a man eminent for his sense of God and faith in him, who was accustomed to listen for the voice of God and to follow his guidance in all the exigencies and events of his life; as one who advanced in the knowledge of the nature and will of God, and implanted this higher knowledge in his household and among those about him — thus do the ancestral legends in Genesis represent Abraham. His existence there has in it so little that is incredible, that rather are we obliged to assume it unless we throw overboard, at the same time, as unhistorical the connection of Moses with the God of the Fathers." Dillmann calls special attention to the credibility of the narrative, in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, of the arming by Abraham of his dependents for the rescue of Lot, taken captive by Chedorlaomer and his allied kings. It is a narrative which in various particulars is corroborated by the cuneiform inscriptions. The substance of the narrative seems to have been drawn by the Hebrew writers from written sources east of the Jordan. On the whole, then, until stronger evidence to the contrary shall be adduced than has yet been found, we are justified in believing that Abraham lived and was an immigrant from Chaldea, leaving his kindred to escape from the contagion of the incoming and spreading idolatry. These, be it remembered, are historical questions such as might arise in connection with the rise of Roman power or with the Saxon invasion of England. Even if they are variously answered, the reality of the Kingdom of God, and the office it has fulfilled in the course of human history, remain as undeniable facts.



In the prolegomena to the annals of Israel as an organized community,—becoming such by the leadership and legislation of Moses,—and prior to the story of the patriarchs, we find the opening chapters of Genesis, with their narratives; some of them double, indicative, many scholars judge, of distinct sources—narratives of the creation and of the primal transgression, of the flood, of the division and dispersion of mankind. In these narratives are mingled fragments of ballads, genealogies, etc.—all these materials being strung together on a chronological thread. Here we have the background of Hebrew history. The resemblance of the contents of these chapters to the legends of kindred nations, especially the Assyrians and Babylonians, is too marked to be the result of accident; yet, at the same time, the dissimilarity is equally striking. Both call for explanation—the unlikeness not less than the likeness. There pervades the Genesis stories a pure theism and the ethical quality which are defining characteristics of the Old Testament religion as a whole. They are thus in their inward spirit a piece with Revelation, and even homogeneous with Revelation in the final or Christian stage of its advancement. Without exaggeration it has been said of the first three chapters of Genesis that they contain more moral and religious truth than all other books taken together which have been written independently of the Bible. Whence were these ancient narratives derived? How and when did they originate? That they were brought in at a late day in the development of the Hebrew religion from Assyrian and Babylonian sources is a theory fraught with improbabilities. It would imply that for an indefinitely long period the Hebrews were content to be destitute of any conceptions respecting the origin of things and the early life of mankind. It implies, moreover, that they were ready to borrow mythological tales from their heathen neighbors and oppressors. In the present state of knowledge, no hypothesis is so probable as that when Abraham and his companions left their primitive home they brought with them the traditions and beliefs, as to the past, of the race to which they belonged. In that region these may not then have been disfigured to the same extent as afterwards by the admixture of mythological matter. In the light of the revelation of God made to Abraham and to his descendants, this stock of inherited narrative was purged of whatever dross of heathenism was intermingled with it. The primeval traditions and tales were so transformed as not to clash with the fundamental principles of revealed religion, and were thus left to serve as an adequate vehicle for conveying essentially right

religious impressions, until the age should arrive when physical science and historical investigation should supply the knowledge which then, at the dawn of civilization, it would not have been possible for men to comprehend as it was not the office of Revelation to communicate it. If the Hebrews were left, for example, to share in the belief of their ancestors that the world was made in a week's time, they were not worse off than Christians have been until within a century past. It is well to dispossess ourselves of the notion that the Divine Author of Revelation began with casting out of men's minds the whole stock of beliefs which were included in their inheritance. There was a world of knowledge about the way of creation and other mundane things which natural science and historical study in after times would unfold to view. And natural science and historical study are not alien and inimical to religion. They, too, are methods through which God in another way discloses truth to men.

From the historical point of view the student—in fact, every one who desires to find out what really occurred in the past—craves contemporary evidence of a trustworthy nature. Those who were immediately concerned in the events, and those who were in a position to be correctly informed in relation to them, are the competent witnesses. Tradition is of no value except so far as their testimony can be reasonably thought to be contained in it. The chief interest which the historical inquirer has in criticism applied to any portion of the Bible is from the bearing of it on this question: Have we contemporary evidence or its fair equivalent? As regards the life of Jesus and the planting of the Church, including both the facts and the teaching, there can be no reasonable doubt. The genuineness of the leading Epistles of Paul has not been questioned at the present day by the most learned skeptics, the starting-point of whose disbelief, be it observed, is commonly the assumed demands of speculative philosophy far more than real difficulties of an historical nature. But these Epistles imply on the part of the Apostles—the pupils, friends, and companions of Jesus—the testimony to the fact of his resurrection. It is in the highest degree improbable that they could have believed it had they not been prepared, by their real or supposed previous observation of exertions of miraculous power by Jesus, for giving credence to so astonishing a miracle. We are not left, however, to inference in respect to this point. The assertion is often thrown out that we have no good evidence of the existence of the Gospels prior to the second century. But the assertion is made, despite proofs that ought to satisfy every can-



did person. There is no reason to doubt, and there are the strongest reasons to conclude, that the first three Gospels were written within the limits of the generation contemporary with the events recorded, and were written by perfectly veracious persons who had the means of knowing what the facts were which they undertook to record. The effort to bring the fourth Gospel down into the second century, and to ascribe its authorship to any other than to the Apostle John, encounters difficulties far more serious than those which it aims to avoid; and the only plausible alternative theory, where the Johannine authorship is given up, is that the book was composed by one of his disciples. We hear it said that in that age, the age of Josephus and of Tacitus, there was no appreciation of the nature and the value of testimony. The statement is sometimes so qualified as to make it applicable only to the Gospel writers. This would imply that Jesus Christ selected twelve persons to bear him company, and to relate to others what they had heard and seen, who were destitute of the essential qualifications of witnesses. Assumptions of this character are overthrown by a little attention to the New Testament writings. Open the earliest of the Gospels, that of Mark, an attendant of Peter. We read: "And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together" (xiv. 55, 56). This looks as if the Evangelist, and those from whom he received his information, had some idea of the need of testimony to substantiate assertions, and of the necessity of comparing it and sifting it. Open the Gospel of Luke, an attendant of Paul, and hear him say that the reason of his writing was that—for so the passage is correctly rendered in the Revised Version—he had "traced the course of all things accurately from the first," having derived his information, as he adds, from "eye-witnesses." This looks as if Luke was aware of the importance of being careful not to mistake fiction for fact, and understood the importance of going to the right sources of information. "Ye are witnesses of these things," are words of Jesus to the Disciples, which Luke also records. Peter, as we learn from the Acts, declared to his fellow-believers that, on account of the defection of Judas, it was requisite to choose another in his place from those who had been with the Apostles all through the public ministry of Jesus, "beginning from the baptism of John." And why from this class alone? Let Peter answer: "To become a witness with us of his resurrection." This looks as if the Apostle Peter understood what the function of the Apostles was, what they

had been chosen for, and what were the proper qualifications for the office. This account of the proposal of Peter is a portion of the book of Acts which has been accepted even by Baur and his followers as authentic history. Notice how carefully the Apostle Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, reviews the testimony of the Apostles to the resurrection of Jesus, and his emphatic declaration, "If Christ be not risen . . . we are found false witnesses." It is evident, as one has said, that Paul was no easy convert.

Christianity is a religion of facts. They are not appendages—ornaments, so to speak, about the neck of a king, with regard to which it matters not whether they are worn or discarded. Luther and the other reformers were wise in feeling "the extreme danger of substituting their belief for the object of it, and so destroying the reality of both." Miracles are more than proofs; they are constituent elements of revelation, which unveils not only the mercy and tenderness, but also the power of God, and his sovereignty over nature. The sign-seeking spirit, the appetite for marvels, the disposition to find nowhere except in miracles evidence of God's presence and of his own mission from God, the demand for an extraordinary, stupendous sign from heaven, Jesus rebuked. But this is all. Especially is the resurrection the perfecting of his own person, the "first-fruits" as well as the sign of the redemption of man's entire being. It is consistent for those to reject the miracles who, like the author of "Robert Elsmere," hold that "personality or intelligence" has no meaning "as applied to God." The real, but often unperceived, issue is between a distinct theism in which the personality of God, as well as of man, is fully recognized, and a real, though it be a vague, undefined Pantheism. The attempt to resolve the miracles of the Gospel into subjective experiences is to dissolve Christianity into thin air. It belongs in a scheme of Pantheistic idealism. The remark that "miracles do not now occur" is of no weight. The questions ought to be whether in case Jesus Christ were on the earth they would not occur, and whether they were not to be expected at the introduction of that spiritual and universal society of which he was the founder. That nature is not supreme and man a slave to blind laws, it was surely well for the divine Head of the new kingdom to demonstrate, and thus to meet the yearnings of the race for the revelation of a power superior to material forces. Unless there is a demonstration that "the world is subject to God and not to chance or nature; that there is an order, far more beautiful and perfect than that of sun and stars, in which men are intended



to abide, and in which everything that is great and noble within them receives its full development—I see not how this materialist superstition can fail to become the creed of every nation and to bring about the decay of all institutions and political life, all feeling, affection, hope.” “If,” adds Maurice, from whom the foregoing passage is quoted, “Christianity be the manifestation of a spiritual kingdom; if it be the satisfaction of the dreams of past ages; if it be that which was to exhibit through all the complications of after ages what is the law which governs them, and who is the Giver of that law—then we cannot see how it could enter the world without miracles, or how those miracles should not be such as the Bible affirms that they were.” If the stories of the miracles of Christ are “in accordance with the scriptural idea of the Founder of a spiritual and universal kingdom . . . we should require evidence to account for their omission in any record proposing to convey the history of such a person. We should have a right to ask, Why did he give no signs that he came to connect the visible with the invisible world; why did he do nothing to break the yoke of custom and experience; nothing to show men that the constitution which he pretended to reveal and establish has a true foundation? Take away the miracles, and there is an inexplicable chasm and inconsistency in these records which it would require a vast amount of wit and ingenuity to explain.”

It is plain that a great deal of the current criticism of the historical writings of the Bible is affected by a preëxisting bias against the supernatural element in these narratives. There is a prejudice at the start which warps the judgment respecting their date and authorship and their general credibility. This prejudice, when the purpose and scope of revelation are properly conceived, will be felt to be unwarrantable. At the same time it is evident that the wide concurrence of Christian scholars in rejecting the rigid doctrine of an absolute inerrancy in these historical writings is owing to no spirit of skepticism of the sort described. Modified conceptions on this subject have arisen and spread among students of the Bible within the Church who are not lacking in faith and reverence. They have been adopted as an inevitable incident of the conscientious examination and comparison of the writings themselves. That Apostles and Prophets were inspired of God to set forth the contents of divine revelation; that even the historical books composed by them are permeated with the ideas drawn from a supernatural source; that the writings composed by pupils or attendants of the Apostles partake of the same character and are penetrated with the perceptions that

flowed from the authoritative teachers near whom they stood; that misinterpretations of the essential nature of the Gospel were precluded by the agency of the Spirit who was to throw light on the sayings of Christ, and on the events the meaning of which was at first so dark to the minds of the Disciples, but was to become clear in the retrospect—all this is a part of the common faith of Christians. It is another thing to say that beyond this inspiration a certain divine assistance was forever at hand, when Evangelist or other historian took up his pen, to check him by a negative influence—acting after the manner of the demon of Socrates—when the author was about to misplace the date of an occurrence, or to vary from rigid accuracy in matters of circumstantial detail. What a stupendous miracle would be involved in imparting this impeccable character to so large a body of historical writings as the Bible contains—writings which run through so many ages! Of what avail would it be, unless not only the original writers, but also amanuenses and transcribers, were all to be equally guarded to the end of time? Exaggerated statements on this subject are the occasion, at present, of two great evils. One mischievous consequence of them is that the truth and divine origin of Christianity are staked on the literal correctness of even the minutest particulars in the copious narratives of Scripture. The conscientious student, seeing that such views are untenable in the light of fair historical criticism, is virtually bidden to draw the inference that the foundations of the Christian faith are gone. Moreover, some of the most impressive arguments in defense of historical Christianity, which depend on the presence of unessential discrepancies, showing the absence of collusion, and in various other ways confirming the truthfulness of the main features of the narrative, are precluded from being used, whenever the obsolescent theory that the biblical narratives are drawn up with the pedantic accuracy of a notary public is still insisted on. It is a conception of inspiration, it may be added, which the sacred historians themselves do not allege. When Luke will indicate to Theophilus that his narrative is to be relied on, he appeals to the opportunities afforded him for getting possession of the facts, through the personal intercourse which he has had with those who were directly cognizant of them. To the historical student the magnifying of dissonances and the forcing of harmonies are alike obnoxious. They are equally an affront to the moral sense. They both count for nothing when confronted by a critical tact which sees where the truth lies, divines the secret of inconsistencies, and leaves undetermined whatever the documen-



tary source offers no means of settling. Nothing that the human hand touches, no record of the past, is utterly free from blemishes. Lord Mahon writes of the Duke of Wellington: "The conversation turned as to how testimonies vary and how difficult it is to get at a real fact. The duke gave some instances of it. 'Thus there is one event noted in the world—the battle of Waterloo—and you will not find any two people to agree as to the exact hour when it commenced.'" Lord Mahon was an unusually accurate and careful recorder of what he heard Wellington say. Yet he quoted the duke as having remarked that he had counted "the presence of Napoleon at a battle was equal to a reënforcement of forty thousand men." But the duke in a memorandum made a correction. "It is very true," he wrote, "that I considered Napoleon's presence in the field to be equal to forty thousand men in the balance. This is a very loose way of talking; but the idea is a very different one from that of his presence at a battle being equal to a reënforcement of forty thousand men." There is a curious lack of agreement in the contemporary records of the last words spoken by Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, and a consequent difference of opinion as to what he really said. On the whole, there is good reason to conclude that the common account accords with the fact; but this verdict is arrived at only after a careful collation of evidence. Variations not unlike the above meet us in the New Testament historical writings; for example, in the accounts of the denials of Peter, of the crucifixion, of the resurrection. They are not to be gotten rid of by artificial adjustments. Some of the mosaics formed in

this way are mechanical, and anything but edifying. The same critical judgment must be called into exercise that is requisite in dealing with all other historical documents. Is it said that the common man is not possessed of the requisite leisure and skill for such an undertaking? The answer is, first, that neither is he qualified for textual criticism and for making the choice between disputed readings; secondly, that he is under no greater disadvantage than he is subject to in connection with other authentic narratives, including the most approved histories of his own country; and thirdly, that the impression, the aggregate impression, made on the mind may be quite true and adequate, despite a degree of uncertainty in relation to minor circumstances. The presence in the Bible of parallel narratives covering the same field, as in the case of the four Gospels, puts it in our power not only to see how the events appeared from somewhat different points of view, but also to combine complementary accounts and to rectify imperfections. It seems an ungracious task to advert even to slight imperfections in a book so precious as the Bible, as it is an ungracious task in a child to touch on the faults of a parent. But there stands the great saying of the Apostle: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." In the case of the writings and of the men the jewel was not to be confounded with the casket that held it. Some there are who are so dazzled by the treasure that they imagine the vessel to be also of gold. Others, seeing that the vessel is earthenware, hastily and obtusely fancy that its contents are of the same coarse material.

*George P. Fisher.*

## A DREAM.

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight.—TENNYSON.

SURELY I saw thee, Sweet, only last night—  
 The golden hair was heavy on thy head,  
 Thy kissing lips to mine were newly wed,  
 And thrilled my waking heart with dear delight:  
 Thy loveliness was lovely in my sight,  
 And a strange radiance was about thee shed,  
 As if 'mong far fair stars thy steps had sped,  
 And caught their glistening glory in thy flight.

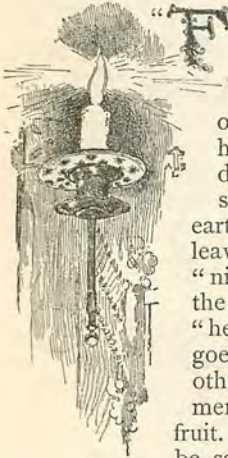
Yet wert thou human, too, and human fair—  
 Thy soft palm warmed me with the touch of old,  
 I heard thy heart beat, and I felt thy tears,  
 And then of thy low voice I was aware:  
 "The dream is ended, and the story told,  
 Clasp hands with Memory, all thy waiting years."

*Louise Chandler Moulton.*



# THE NATURE AND METHOD OF REVELATION.

## II.—THE GRADUALNESS OF REVELATION.



“FIRST the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” This picture Jesus himself drew of the foreseen diffusion of his kingdom. The kingdom was to be “as if a man should cast seed upon the earth.” He plants it and leaves it; he sleeps and rises, “night and day.” Meantime the seed springs up and grows, “he knoweth not how.” It goes through, one after another, the stages of development up to the ripeness of the fruit. A parable, it need not be said, is framed to illustrate

one point, and is not to be pressed beyond the intended scope. As rain and sunshine are required for the growth of wheat, so we are taught elsewhere that divine influences are needful, and are never disconnected from the operation of the truth in the minds of men. There is enough complementary teaching of Jesus to preclude any mistake, or one-sided view, in this direction. Yet the parable shows the confidence of Jesus in the perpetuity and progress of his kingdom. There resides in it, so he declared, a self-preserving, self-developing life. The seed, once planted, might be left with entire unconcern as to its growth. In these days, when “development” is a word on every tongue, we are often told that the conception of nature and natural law is foreign to the Scriptures. No assertion could be more mistaken. Even on the first page of the Bible, although the design there is to set in the foreground the creative agency of God, we read that the earth was bidden to bring forth the grass, the herb, and the fruit tree, each yielding “after his kind,” “whose seed is in itself.” In the parable of Jesus of which we are speaking, it is said that “the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself”—that is, to transfer the Greek term into English, “automatically.” That epithet is chosen which denotes most exactly a self-acting, spontaneous energy, inherent in the seed which Jesus, through his discourses, his acts of mercy and power, and his patience unto death, was sowing in the world. This grand prophetic declaration, uttered in a figure so simple and beautiful, in the ears of a little

company of Galileans, was to be wonderfully verified in the coming ages of Christian history.

It is not, however, the progress of Christianity since it was fully introduced by Christ and the Apostles that we have now to consider. The development of the understanding of Christianity on the side of doctrine and of ethics, the advance to a more and more just and enlightened comprehension of the Christian religion, the unveiling of the riches of meaning involved in it, is a fascinating theme. But all this belongs under the head of the *interpretation* of Christianity, that term being used in a broad sense. The religion of the Gospel means vastly more to-day than it was ever perceived to mean before. This enlarged meaning, however, is not annexed to it or carried into it, but legitimately educed from it, through the ever-widening perceptions of Christian men whom the Spirit of God illuminates. The starry heavens are now what they were of old; there is no enlargement save that which comes through the increased power and use of the telescope. The globe on which we dwell to-day is the same that it was twenty centuries ago. Yet during the past ages there has been a progressive advance in astronomical and geographical discovery. No one commits the blunder of confounding discovery with creation.

What we have to speak of now is development and progress in the contents of revelation itself, in the interval between its remotest beginnings and the epoch when the Apostles finally handed it over in its ripe, consummated form to the Church, to be thereafter promulgated in the world. Of divine revelation itself the saying is likewise true: “First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” The fact that revelation was progressive, that it went forward like the advance from dawn to noonday, may suggest the hasty, unwarranted conclusion that it was a natural process merely. Some will be quick to leap to this rash inference. As regards natural religion, the fact that creation is found to have been progressive, that unsuspected links are found to unite its consecutive stages, that the tendency of science is to lay bare a certain continuity in nature, leads the shortsighted to ignore the supernatural altogether. They imagine that there is no need to call in God to explain nature except where breaks are met



in the chain of mechanical causation. It is enough, they imagine, to be able to trace back the planetary system to a fiery vapor preceding it, as if the existence, or the order, or the beauty, of the astronomic system were thereby explained. If it be true that the plants in their multiplied species or "kinds" spring out of a few primitive germs, or out of only one, the evidence of forethought and will-power in the organization of the vegetable kingdom is not in the least weakened. Nor would it be effaced if the spontaneous generation of the living from the lifeless were an ascertained fact of science. It is the fruit of that same unreflecting tendency to dispense with God where there is observed an orderly progress of phenomena, which leads to the ignoring or denial of the supernatural in connection with the gradually developing religion of redemption. The critical researches of the time ferret out bonds of connection between successive stages of religious and moral teaching in the sacred volume. As in geology, there is less need than was formerly thought to fall back on the supposition of catastrophes along the path. The rudiments of what once seemed an utterly new form or phase of doctrine are detected at a point farther back. Behind the most impressive inculcations of truth are found the more or less unshapen materials out of which they were framed. The statue is followed back through the different sets of workmen to the quarry where the marble was hewn out of its bed. Before the Lord's Prayer was given by the Master some of the petitions contained in it had lain, like grains of gold dispersed in a sand-heap, in the arid waste of rabbinical teaching. The first effect on a novice in literary studies of looking behind Shakspeare's plays to the tales out of which they were woven, is to lessen in some slight degree his previous impression of the poet's originality. In a much greater degree is this effect produced by the first view of the spoils of the past which Milton gathered — from Homer, the Greek tragedians, Dante — and incorporated into his poems. That revealed religion *is* revealed, and is not the product of human genius, despite the gradual unfolding of it and the coherence of its parts, becomes more and more evident the more thoroughly the characteristics of it are appreciated. Its unique character finds no explanation in native tendencies of the Semitic race. History belies such a solution, of which Renan is one of the later advocates. This can be said while it is conceded that there were, no doubt, qualities in the Hebrew people which caused them to be selected as the recipients of revelation, and as witnesses for God to the rest of mankind. When we contemplate the true religion in its long, con-

tinuous advance upward to its culmination in the Gospel of Christ,—when we survey this entire course of history as a connected whole,—we are struck with the conviction of supernatural agency and authorship. When the outcome appears at the end in Jesus Christ and his work, light is thrown back on the divine ordering of the long series of antecedent steps. The accompaniment of miracle is a crowning token, reënforcing all other proofs of the supernatural, and confirming faith by an argument to the senses.

In glancing at the historic process of revelation, as that is disclosed by the scriptural documents, there is one transition which none can overlook. It is the contrast, on which the Apostle Paul builds so much, between law and gospel, the old covenant and the new. It is true that the Old Testament is not wanting in proclamations of the merciful character of God. The Apostle Paul himself insists that the Old Testament religion was, in its very foundation, a religion of promise, and that law came in to fill an intermediate space and to do a subsidiary office, prior to the realization of the promise. His doctrine is, moreover, that even the Gospel contains a new disclosure of God's righteousness, which was made necessary by his having passed over human sins in the period of comparative ignorance. The Atonement prevents the misconception which the divine forbearance in dealing with law-breakers in the earlier times might have occasioned. Still, the earlier revelation of God was predominantly a manifestation designed to impress on those to whom it was made his justice and unsparing abhorrence of transgression. Only as far as ill-desert is felt can pardon be either given or received. An education of conscience must precede a dispensation of grace. The later revelation was one of forgiving love. The superiority of Christianity to the Old Testament religion is the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Its author will show that Christ is the "mediator of a better covenant"—a covenant with "better promises." "For," he pointedly remarks, "if that first covenant had been faultless," there would have been no occasion and no room for the second. The world-embracing compass of God's love, its inclusion of the Gentile races, was one of the prime elements in the Gospel. This was the "mystery" which had been hid from "ages and generations." The ordinary meaning of the term "mystery," in the New Testament writings, is not something which is still unknown, or inscrutable, but something which had before been concealed from human knowledge, but had now been brought to light. And the term is specially applied to the purpose of God to show



mercy to the world of mankind—a purpose which had been concealed from men, or at best but obscurely divined.

What precisely was the conception of God which was entertained in the earliest periods of Hebrew history is a subject of debate. There are questions which will be settled variously, according to the different views which are adopted respecting the date and relative authority of the documents. That the process of expelling the vestiges of polytheism and image-worship from the practices of the Israelitish people was accomplished slowly is sufficiently clear. The assumption, involved in language uttered by the heathen, that the gods of other nations than Israel are real beings, and exercise power, although it may be less than the power of Israel's God, determines nothing as to the doctrine of Israel's own accredited teachers. But Jethro, although a Midianite prince, was the father-in-law of Moses, and we find him saying, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods." Jephthah says to a Moabite king: "Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our God hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess." Even Solomon wavered in his beliefs on this subject. Side by side with the altars of Jehovah, he built altars to foreign gods. Even in the early Church the idea prevailed that the deities of the heathen were demons—really existing, but evil and inferior in power. It would be natural for the less instructed Hebrews to imagine that there was some sort of territorial limit to the jurisdiction of the God whom they worshiped. An indistinct idea of this kind is at least a natural explanation of the story of the attempted flight of the prophet Jonah to Tarshish, which lay on the western border of the Mediterranean. There is a curious disclosure of a natural feeling in the fact recorded, without censure or comment of any sort, of Naaman, the Syrian captain. He craved permission to take into Syria two mules' burden of earth,—the sacred soil of Israel,—that upon it he might offer sacrifice to Jehovah. Some scholars there are who consider the earliest belief of the descendants of Abraham to have fallen short of a positive monotheism, and to have been rather a monolatry—the worship of one God, to the exclusion of all other worship, but without an explicit disbelief in the existence of other divinities who have respectively their own earthly realms to govern. Then the progress of faith would include, first, the idea of the God of Israel as more powerful than all other deities, and then, later, the ascription to him of almightiness, and the distinct conviction that all other gods are fictitious beings. But the scriptural evidence in favor

of this succession in the phases of faith is scanty. We are speaking now, not of the populace, but of their more enlightened and steadfast guides. The path from a more narrow conception of God to a pure and absolute monotheism is supposed by some to have been through a deepening ethical idea of the attributes of Israel's God. Wellhausen writes: "Jehovah became the God of Justice and Right; as God of Justice and Right, he came to be thought of as the highest, and at last as the only, power in heaven and earth." The reader of statements of this kind should bear in mind that we are in a field where prepossession and theory play a great part. If it could be established that Jehovah at the outset was regarded as simply the tribal god, the sovereign protector of that one people, while the other nations were imagined to have each its own guardian divinity; yet the expansion of this primitive notion into the pure and lofty conception of the only true and living God, the world's creator and ruler, which is presented in soul-stirring language by the most ancient prophets, is a marvel. The transformation is really insoluble on any naturalistic theory. Even on the supposition that there was this gradual uplifting of religion from the low plane on which all pagan nations stood, and that the notion of a mere local divinity, of limited control, gave way to the majestic conception of one Lord of heaven and earth, the maker of all things, the ruler of nations, the universal sovereign—no conclusion would be so reasonable as that God Almighty took this method of gradually disclosing his being and attributes to that portion of the human race from whom, as from a center, the light of the true faith was eventually to radiate to the rest of mankind.

The universal providence of God is a cardinal element in Christian theism. Nothing is independent of him. There is no province set apart from his control, where rival agencies hold sway and thwart his designs. We can easily understand why, in the early stages of revelation, all emphasis should be laid on the sovereign power of God, and why a clear separation of his direct efficiency from his permissive act should be reserved for a later day. It was always taught, indeed, and holds true for all time, that according to a law of habit, of which the creator of the soul is the author and sustainer, sin engenders further sin. A self-propagating power inheres in transgression. In numberless examples it is observed that sin is thus the penalty of sin. It is true now, as it was always true, that a loss of moral discernment and a fixedness of perverse inclination are an ordained effect of persistent evil-doing. The law which entails this result is but another



name for a divine operation. Hence it is a false and superficial theology which will find no place for "judicial blindness" and for a "hardening of heart" that deserves to be called a judgment of God. So far the Scriptures of the New Testament are in full accord with the Scriptures of the Old. But there are certain forms of representation which, in the introductory periods of revelation, go beyond these statements, and ascribe to God a positive and immediate agency in the production of moral evil. Sometimes the hardening of the heart is spoken of as if it were the end which is directly aimed at. Such passages, taken by themselves, would warrant the harshest doctrine of reprobation which hyper-Calvinism has ever broached. The proper treatment of such passages is not—certainly not in all cases—to pronounce them hyperboles. It is not through unnatural devices of interpretation that we are to rid ourselves of the difficulty which passages of this nature occasion. The reference of them to a fervid rhetoric—in various instances, to say the least—may not be the right solution. We are rather to see in them that vivid idea of God's limitless power and providence which has not yet arrived at the point of qualifying the conception by theological discriminations. If it be asked how it was possible to reconcile the perception of the ill-desert of sin with the ascription of it to God's causal agency, the answer is that the inconsistency was not thought of. Reflection was required before the inconsistency referred to could become an object of attention, and the need of removing it be felt. In more than one philosophical system—for example, in Stoicism—there is found an earnest ethical feeling, which condemns wrong action, side by side with a metaphysical theory as to the origin of evil, which logically clashes with such an abhorrence of it. The two judgments do not jostle each other, because they are not brought together in the thoughts of those who entertain them. Where there is more reflection in the matter, as in Spinoza and his followers, it is still possible to keep up a degree of moral disapproval along with a theory which really ought to banish it as absurd. In the ancient Scriptures, and occasionally in the New Testament, and especially in passages cited from the Old, the evil-doing and perdition of classes of men, their misunderstanding and perversion of the truth, are set forth as ends in themselves. Being involved in the circle of occurrences which are comprised in the general scheme of Providence, they are no surprise to him who carries it forward. They were foreseen and taken into the account from the beginning. It was arranged that they should be overruled and made the occasion of good. Their relation to Providence

is emphasized in speaking of them as being directly aimed at and pursued, so to speak, on their own account. As we follow down the progress of revelation, we see that needful distinctions are more frequently made, and more carefully insisted on. In the second book of Samuel (xxiv. 1) it is said that God "moved" David against Israel, with whom he was displeased, and bade him go and number the people. The impulse or resolution of David, on account of which David was subsequently struck with compunction, is there said to have emanated directly from God himself. But in the later history (1 Chronicles, xxi. 1), in the record of the same transaction, we read that it was Satan who "provoked David to number Israel." The earlier writer does not hesitate to describe God's providential act as if it were the direct product of his preference, an explicit injunction, and the fact of David's repentance for doing the act does not present to the writer's mind any difficulty. The chronicler, from a later point of view, sets forth the act of David in such a way as to exclude, if not to guard against, the supposition that God prompted it.

The gradualness of the disclosure of the merciful character of God is one of the most obvious features of revelation. One part of this disclosure pertains to the heathen, and to the light in which they are regarded. It was natural that the contempt and loathing which idolatry and the abominations of paganism excited in the heart of the pious Israelite—feelings which the Mosaic revelation developed and stimulated—should be felt towards heathen worshippers themselves. The hatred thus begotten awakened an impatient desire that the divine vengeance should fall upon them. An impressive rebuke of this unmerciful sentiment, and what is really a distinct advance in the inculcation of an opposite feeling, is found in the book of Jonah. There are reasons which have availed to satisfy critics as learned and impartial as Bleek, who are influenced by no prejudice against miracles as such, that this remarkable book was originally meant to be an apologue—an imaginary story, linked to the name of an historical person, a prophet of an earlier date, and was composed in order to inculcate the lesson with which the narrative concludes. This was the opinion, also, of the late Dr. T. D. Woolsey. One thing brought out by the experience of Jonah is that so great is God's mercy that even an explicit threat of dire calamities may be left unfulfilled, in case there intervene repentance on the part of those against whom it was directed. The prophet who was exasperated at the sparing of the Ninevites was taught how narrow and cruel his ideas were, by the symbol of the



gourd "which came up in a night, and perished in a night." He was incensed on account of the withering of the gourd which had shielded his head from the sun. The Lord referred to Jonah's having had pity on the gourd, and said: "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" This humane utterance, in which compassion is expressed even for the dumb brutes, is memorable for being one of the most important landmarks in Scripture, since it marks a widened view of God's love to the heathen. To illustrate this truth the narrative was written, and towards it as onward to a goal it steadily moves.

The truth of a righteous moral government over the world pervades revelation from the beginning. Obedience to law will not fail of its due reward; guilt will be punished in a just measure. But under the Old Testament system, nearly to its close, the theater of reward and penalty was confined to this world. The horizon was practically bounded by the limits of the earthly life. It was here, on earth, that well-doing was to secure the appropriate blessing, and sin to encounter its meet retribution. The Israelite, like other men of antiquity, was wrapped up in the state. He felt that his weal or woe hinged on the fortunes of the community in whose well-being his affections were, in a degree beyond our modern experience, absorbed. The prophets never ceased to thunder forth the proclamation that the fate of the community would be surely, in the providence of God, determined by its fidelity or its disloyalty to its moral and religious obligations. If they deserted God, he would forsake them. The people were to be rewarded or punished, blessed or cursed, as a body. And so in reality their experience proved. Moreover, as regards the single family, and the individual, the tendencies of righteous action, under the laws of Providence, were then, as always, on the whole favorable to the upright in heart. The arrangements of Providence were in their favor. But in process of time it became more and more painfully apparent that this rule was not without numerous exceptions. The righteous man was not uniformly prospered. He might be poor, he might be oppressed, he might be condemned to endure physical torture, he might perish in the midst of his days. On the other hand, the wicked man was often seen to thrive. His wealth increased. He grew in power and influence. His life was prolonged. How could the justice of God be defended? How could the allotments of Providence — this disharmony between character and earthly fortune — be vindicated? This problem became the

more anxious and perplexing as the minds of men grew to be more observant and reflective. How to explain the lack of correspondence between the condition and the deserts of the individual? This problem is the groundwork of the book of Job. A righteous man is overwhelmed by calamities, one after another. His lot is to himself a dark and terrible mystery. But his consolers, when they break silence, solve it in the only way known to their theology. Such exceptional suffering implies an exceptional amount of guilt. Job must have been a flagrant transgressor. Of this fact his dismal situation is proof positive. The wrath of Jehovah is upon him. Conscious of the injustice of the allegation brought against him, yet unable to confute the logic of it, Job can do nothing but break out in loud complaints extorted by his anguish and the bewilderment into which he is thrown. He cannot see any equity in the lot which has befallen him. His outcries give vent to a pessimistic view of the world and of the divine management of it. Another interlocutor brings forward the inscrutable character of God's doings. What more vain and arrogant than for so weak and helpless a creature as man to pretend to sound the unfathomable counsels of the Almighty, and to sit in judgment on his ordinances? This, of course, is a rebuke, but contains no satisfactory answer to the questions which the distress of Job wrings from him. But the real answer is given. Afflictions may have other ends than to punish. They may be trials of the righteousness of a servant of God. They are a test to decide whether it springs out of a mercenary motive. Hence, it is not to be inferred that his sufferings are the measure of his ill-desert. Thus a distinct advance is made in the theodicy. New vistas are opened. Pain has other designs and uses besides the retributive function. Yet at the end Job's possessions and his earthly prosperity are all restored to him. The feeling that even here on earth there must be, sooner or later, an equalizing of character and fortune is not wholly given up.

It was revealed, then, to the religious mind, that suffering, besides being inflicted as the wages of sin, might be sent to put to the test the steadfastness of the sufferer's loyalty to God, to prove the unselfishness of piety, by showing that it might survive the loss of all personal advantages resulting from it, and to fortify the soul in its principle of obedience and piety. But relief from perplexity in view of the calamities of the righteous came from another source. This was the perception of the vicarious character of the righteous man's affliction. This idea emerges to view in a very distinct form in the great prophets. The pious portion of Israel, the kernel of the people,



suffer not for their own sake, but on account of the sins of the nation, and as a means of saving it from deserved penalties and from utter destruction. This view is brought out by Isaiah in his description of the servant of Jehovah. The conception is gradually narrowed from Israel as a whole, or the select portion of Israel, and becomes more concrete; so that in the fifty-third chapter the sufferer is an individual, the Messianic deliverer. It is declared that the popular judgment respecting the sufferer, which attributes to him personal guilt, and sees in his lot the frown of God, is mistaken. Penalties are laid on him, he is taking on himself penalties which not he, but others, deserve to bear. How this principle of vicarious service is illustrated in the life and death of Jesus, and how abundantly it is set forth in the New Testament, it is needless to say. Who had sinned, the blind man or his parents, that he was born blind? His blindness, Jesus replied, was not a penalty for the sin of either. This problem of the distribution here on earth of suffering in discordance with desert, of which we are speaking, had new light shed upon it by the gradually developing faith in the future life; but of this point I will speak further on. In general, the contrast between the common run of Old Testament descriptions of the reward of the righteous, and of the New Testament declarations on the same theme, is very marked. In the Old Testament it is riches, numerous children, safety of person and of property, which are so often assured to the righteous. The words of Jesus are, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Yet the essential character of God, the eternal principle of justice that will somehow and somewhere be carried out in the government of the world, is at the root the same in both dispensations.

He who would appreciate the progress of revelation has only need to compare the silence as to a hereafter and the gloom that encompasses the grave—characteristic features of ancient Scripture—with the definite assurances and the triumphant hopes which are scattered over the pages of the New Testament. On this subject we can trace the advance from the night to the brightening dawn and from the dawn to midday. The hopes and aspirations of the ancient Israelites were bounded by the limits of the present life. Their joys and sorrows were here; here, as we have seen, were their rewards and punishments. It is true that they did not positively believe their being was utterly extinguished at death. On the contrary, they found it impossible so to think. There was some kind of continuance of their being, vague and shadowy though it was. When it is said of the worthies of old that they died and were "gathered to their fathers," it is not

to their burial—certainly not alone to their burial—that the phrase points. It was used of those who died far away from their kindred. A continued subsistence of some sort is implied in it. Necromancy was a practice which was forbidden by law, and the need of such a law proves that the belief and custom prohibited by it had taken root. The story of the appearance of Samuel, and the occupation of the witch of Endor, show at least a popular notion that the dead could be summoned back to life. Sheol, the Hades of the Israelites, was thought of as a dark, subterranean abode, a land of shades, where existence was almost too dim to be denominated life. There was nothing in this unsubstantial mode of being to kindle hope, or to excite any other emotion than that of dread. In the poetical books Sheol is personified and depicted as full of greed, opening her mouth "without measure," and swallowing up all the pomp and glory of man. In a splendid passage of Isaiah, Sheol is represented as disturbed by the approach within her gloomy domain of the once mighty King of Babylon, and as stirring up the shades, the dead monarchs, to meet him. They exult over his downfall and death, crying, "Is this the man who made the earth to tremble, who made kingdoms to quake, who made the world as a wilderness and broke down the cities thereof?" But this is only a highly figurative delineation of the humiliating fall and death of the arrogant, dreaded sovereign. It is not until we have passed beyond the earlier writings of the Old Testament that we meet, here and there, with cheerful and even confident expressions of hope in relation to the life beyond death. In the later Psalms there is an occasional utterance in this vein. The sense of the soul's communion with God is so uplifting as to forbid the idea that it can be broken by death. Jesus refers to the Old Testament declaration that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as a sufficient warrant for the belief in the continued, immortal life of those who stood in this near, exalted relation to the Eternal One. What other—at least, what higher—evidence of immortality is there than is derived from the worth of the soul, and what indication of its worth is to be compared with its capacity to enter into living fellowship with God? How can a being who is admitted to this fellowship be left to perish, to exist no more?

Besides this connection of faith in future life with the relation of the righteous and believing soul to God, the demand for another state of being to rectify inequalities here arose by degrees in religious minds. The strange allotment of good and evil, whereby the good man, and not the bad man, was often seen to be the sufferer, and the holy were found to be maligned



and the victims of oppression, led to the expectation of a life beyond, where this confusion would be cleared up and an adjustment be made according to merit. The moral argument, which Kant, and others before and since, have presented as the ground for believing in a future state, was a revelation from God to the Hebrew mind, and not the less so because this belief stood connected with experiences and perceptions that went before. There is a familiar passage in the book of Job in which the hope of a reawakening from death is perhaps expressed. It is the passage beginning, "I know that my Redeemer"—or Vindicator—"liveth." The confessions of hopelessness in earlier portions of the book, the impassioned assertions that there is nothing to be looked for beyond death, are to be counted in favor of the other interpretation, according to which the vindication which Job expected he looked for prior to his actual dissolution. On the contrary, however, it is not improbable that the foresight of an actual reawakening to life is represented as having flashed upon his mind, displacing the former despondency. Certain it is that distinct assertions of a resurrection appear, here and there, in the later Scriptures. For, in the biblical theology, it is the deliverance of the whole man, body as well as soul, which in process of time comes to be the established belief. It is closely associated with the conviction that in the triumph and blessedness of the kingdom the departed saints are not to be deprived of a share. It was not a belief derived from the Persians, but was indigenous among the Hebrews,—an integral part of revelation,—however it may have been encouraged and stimulated by contact with Persian tenets. Not to refer to statements, relative to a resurrection, of a symbolical character,—such as the vision of dry bones in Ezekiel,—we find in the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah a passage which is explicit, and, as it would seem, is to be taken literally. In the Revised Version the passage reads, "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise." There is a critical question, it should be stated, as to the date of the chapter in which these words occur. In the Psalms there are not wholly wanting passages of a like purport. In the book of Daniel the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked Israelites is very definitely predicted. As is well known, the resurrection was an accepted doctrine of orthodox Jews in the period following that covered by the canonical books. In the New Testament immortality, and with it the resurrection, stands in the foreground. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus there comes a new illumination, a signal disclosure of God's purpose of grace and of the blessed import of

eternal life; so that death is said to be "abolished" and life and incorruption "brought to light" (2 Tim. i. 10).

When we leave theology for the domain of ethics, the progressive character of revelation is capable of abundant illustration. The Sermon on the Mount has for its theme that fulfillment of law, that unfolding of its inner aim and essence, which Christ declared to be one end of his mission. Morality is followed down to its roots in the inmost dispositions of the heart. The precepts of Jesus are a protest against the Pharisaical glosses which tradition had attached to Old Testament injunctions. It is "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees" which is pointedly condemned. It is still an unsettled question, however, whether the reference to what had been said by or to "them of old time" was intended to include Old Testament legislation itself, as well as the perverse, arbitrary interpretations which had been attached to it by its theological expounders. Plainly the injunction of Jesus to love the enemy, as well as the neighbor, goes beyond the directions in Leviticus (xix. 17, 18): "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. . . . Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Here nothing is said of any except the "neighbor." The prohibition is limited to the treatment of national kinsmen. That the general obligation to the exercise of good-will towards wrong-doers and foes, wherever they may be, and to the cultivation of a forgiving temper towards all men, finds in the Gospel an unprecedented expansion and emphasis is evident to all readers of the New Testament. A supplication for the pardon of enemies forms a part of the Lord's Prayer. The hope of personal forgiveness is denied to those who are themselves unforgiving. The example of Jesus, and the pardon offered to the most unworthy through him, are a new and potent incentive to the exercise of a forgiving temper.

A glance at the ideals of ethical worth in the early ages of Israel is enough to show how sharply they contrast with the laws of Christ and the type of character required and exemplified in the New Testament. It was once said by an eminent divine that the patriarchs, were they living now, would be in the penitentiary. Polygamy and other practices the rightfulness of which nobody then disputed, the wrongfulness of which nobody then discerned, are related of them, and related without any expression of disapproval. Whoever has not learned that practical morality, the ramifications of a righteous principle in conduct, is a gradual growth, and that even now,



after the generic principles of duty have been set forth in the Gospel, and a luminous example of the spirit in which one should live has been afforded in the life of Jesus, the perception of the demands of morality advances from stage to stage of progress, is incompetent to take the seat of judgment upon men of remote ages. Not long ago, a letter of Washington was published in which directions are given for the transportation to the West Indies and sale there of a refractory negro who had given him trouble. The act was not at variance with the best morality of the time. The letter is one that deserves to cast no shade on the spotless reputation of its author. Yet a like act, if done to-day, would excite almost universal reprobation. To reproach the worthies of Old Testament times as if they lacked the vital principle of unselfish loyalty to God and to right, as they understood it, is not less irrational than to deride the habitations which they constructed or the farming tools which they used to till the ground. It is not the less imperatively required of us, however, to recognize the wide interval that separates the ancient conceptions of morality from those of the Gospel. Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, entered, heart and soul, into the cause of Israel in the mortal struggle with the Canaanites. In lending aid to the cause which she espoused she did an act of atrocious cruelty and treachery. She enticed Sisera into her tent, and when he was reposing drove a tent-pin through his head. Yet for her deed she is lauded in the song of Deborah the prophetess (Judges v.), "Blessed above women shall Jael be, the wife of Heber the Kenite!" Almost the same words were addressed to the Virgin Mary (Luke i. 42), "Blessed art thou among women!" What an infinite contrast between the two women to whom this lofty distinction is awarded! Nothing is better fitted to force on us the perception of the gradualness and the continuity of revelation.

We meet in the Psalms with imprecations which are not consonant with the spirit of the Gospel. They belong on a lower plane of ethical feeling. It is one thing to experience a satisfaction in the just punishment of crime. It is accordant with Christianity to regard with conscientious abhorrence iniquity, whether we ourselves or other men are the sufferers by it. Indifference to base conduct, be the root of this state of mind a dullness of the moral sense, or false sentiment, is, to say the least, not less repulsive, and may be more demoralizing, than the fires of resentment which nothing but fierce retaliation can quench. But the spirit of revenge is unchristian. Christianity teaches us to distinguish between the offense and the offender: the one we are to hate;

the other we are forbidden to hate. Moreover, Christianity never loses sight of the possibilities of reformation in the case of wrong-doers. The Christian considers what an individual might be, not merely what he now is. The benevolent feeling, therefore, is not allowed to be paralyzed by the moral hatred which evil conduct naturally and properly evokes. As regards personal resentment, the Christian disciple is cautioned never to forget his own ill-desert and need of pardon from God, and the great boon of forgiveness in the reception of which the Christian life begins. These qualifications and correctives of passion were comparatively wanting in the earlier dispensation.

It is impossible to refer all the imprecations in the Psalms to a feeling of the authors in relation to the enemies of God and of his kingdom. Respecting such even, Jesus invoked not vengeance. He rebuked his disciples when they proposed to call down fire from heaven to destroy the inimical Samaritans (Luke ix. 55). No devices of interpretation can harmonize with the precepts of Christ such expressions as are found in the 109th Psalm: "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be vagabonds, and beg. . . . Let the extortioner catch all that he hath. . . . Let there be none to extend mercy unto him. Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children." The wrath of the author of this lyric against the cruel and insolent one who "persecuted the poor and needy man, and the broken in heart, to slay them," it is fair to assume was merited. The sense of justice and the holy anger at the root of these anathemas are in themselves right. They are the result of a divine education. But they take the form of revenge — a kind of wild justice, as Lord Bacon calls it. The identification of the family with its head is one of "the ruling ideas" of antiquity. It appears often in the methods of retribution which were in vogue in the Old Testament ages. It gave way partly, and by degrees, under that progressive enlightenment from above through which individual responsibility became more distinctly felt and acknowledged, both in judicial proceedings and in private life.

It is the characteristic of Old Testament laws and precepts that in them bounds are set to evils the attempt immediately to extirpate which would have proved abortive. Something more than this must be said. There was lacking a full perception of the moral ideal. In the Old Testament expositions of duty, as we have already seen, there is an approach towards that radical treatment of moral evils which signalizes the Christian system. An additional example of this feature of the preparatory stage of revelation may be found in the last chapter



of the book of Proverbs. There "Lemuel," the name of a king, or a name applied to one of the kings, is apostrophized. He is exhorted to practice chastity and temperance. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." What better counsel could be given? The judge on the bench must have a clear head. But the counselor, in order to strengthen his admonition, proceeds to say: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish." So far, also, there is no exception to be taken to the wisdom of his precept. The Jews had a custom, resting on a humane motive, to administer a sustaining stimulant or a narcotic to those undergoing punishment, in order to alleviate their pains. Something of this kind was offered to Jesus on the cross. But the counselor does not stop at this point. He says: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." There need be no hesitancy in saying that this last exhortation is about the worst advice that could possibly be given to a person in affliction, or dispirited by the loss of property. The thing to tell him, especially if he has an appetite for strong drink, is to avoid it as he would shun poison. Yet our remark amounts to nothing more than this, that the sacred author sets up a barrier against only a part of the mischief which is wrought by intemperance. His vision went thus far but no farther. It is a case where, to quote a homely modern proverb, "Half a loaf is better than no bread." It would be a great gain for morality and for the well-being of society if magistrates could be made abstinent.

On this general subject there is no more explicit criticism of Old Testament law than is contained in the words of Jesus respecting divorce. The law of Moses permitted a husband to discard his wife, but curtailed his privilege by requiring him to furnish her with a written statement which might serve as a means of protection for her. This statute, as far as the allowance to the man which was included in it is concerned, is declared by Christ to have been framed on account of "the hardness of heart" of the people. It fell below the requirement of immutable morality. It was a partial toleration of an abuse which it was then impracticable to seek to cut off altogether. But Christianity lifted the whole subject to a higher level. It presented a profounder view of the marriage relation. It superseded and annulled the Mosaic enactment.

The advance of the New Testament revelation in its relation to the Old has become, in

these days, obvious. But the New Testament revelation, in itself considered, was not made in an instant as by a lightning-flash. It did not come into being in all its fullness in a moment, as the fabled Minerva sprung from the head of Jove. As in the case of the earlier revelation, the note of gradualness is attached to it. The fundamental fact of Christianity is the uniting of God to man in the person of Jesus Christ. Peter's confession respecting his person is the rock on which the Church was founded. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with the following striking passage (as given in the Revised Version): "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." The former revelations were made through various channels, and were besides of a fragmentary character. They paved the way for the final revelation through the Son, whom the writer proceeds to liken, in his relation to God, to the effulgence of a luminous body. But modern exegesis and modern theological thought, while leaving untouched the divinity of Jesus, and even, for substance, the Nicene definitions of it, have brought into clear light that progressive development of the Saviour's person of which the Incarnation was the starting-point. Not until his earthly career terminated and he was "glorified" was the union of God and man in his person in its effects consummated. More was involved in his being in the "form of a servant" than theology in former days conceived. Nothing is more clear from his own language respecting himself, as well as from what the Apostles say of him, than that there were limitations of his knowledge. On a certain day Jesus started from Bethany for Jerusalem. He was hungry. Seeing at a distance a fig tree with leaves upon it, he went towards it, expecting to find fruit—it being a tree of that kind which produces its fruit before putting out the leaves. But when he came to it his expectation was deceived; "he found nothing but leaves." Jesus said that he did not know when the day of judgment would occur. Apart from conclusive testimonies of this character, it is evident from the whole tenor of the Gospel histories that he was not conscious of the power to exercise divine attributes in their fullness of activity. The opposite idea gives a mechanical character to his actions and to most of his teachings. How, if he was all the while in the exercise of omniscience, could he "marvel" at the unbelief of certain of his hearers? That when he was a speechless babe in his mother's arms he was consciously possessed of infinite knowledge, is an impossible conception. And the difficulties of such a conception are only lessened in degree at any other subsequent day while he was "in the



flesh." When we behold him at the last, prior to the crucifixion, we find his soul poured out in the agonizing supplication: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The supposition of a dual personality in Christ is not less contrary to the Scriptures and to the Creed of the Church than it is offensive to common sense and to philosophy. Yet he was conscious of his divine nature and origin, and the unfolding within him of this unassailable conviction kept pace with the development of his human consciousness. The dawning sense of the unique relation in which he stood to God comes out in his boyhood, in the words addressed to his mother when he was found with the doctors in the temple, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" And the limitations of Jesus must not be exaggerated or made the premise of unwarranted inferences. He knew the boundaries of his province as a teacher and never overstepped them. Just as he refused to be an arbiter in a contest about an inheritance, saying, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?"—so did he abstain from authoritative utterances on matters falling distinctly within the sphere of human science. No honor is done to him, and no help afforded to the cause of Christianity, in attributing to him scholastic information which he did not claim for himself and which there is no evidence that he possessed. It is not less important, however, to observe that, notwithstanding the limits that were set about him by the fact of his real humanity, and as long as he dwelt among men, there was yet an inlet into his consciousness from the fountain of all truth. "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). His knowledge differed in its source, in its kind and degree, from that of all other sons of men. "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works." The divine in him was not a temporary visitation, as when the Spirit dwelt for a brief time—sojourned, one may be permitted to say—in the soul of a prophet like Isaiah. Even then God spoke through the prophet, and the mind of the prophet might for the moment become so fully the organ of God that he spoke through the prophet's lips in the first person. But in Christ there was an "abiding" of the Father. The union was such that the whole mental and moral life of Jesus was an expression of God's mind and will. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As conscience in me is the voice of another, yet is not distinct from my own being, so of Christ is it true that the Father was in him—another, yet not another. And this union, although real from the begin-

ning, culminated in its effects not until a complete ethical oneness was attained, at the end of all temptation and suffering—the oneness which found utterance in the words, "Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." This was the transition-point to the perfect development of his being, which is styled his "glorification." As the risen and ascended Christ, he can be touched with sympathy with the human infirmities of which he has had experience, at the same time that he can be present with his disciples wherever they are—can be in the midst of the smallest group of them who are met for worship.

From Jesus himself we have a distinct assurance that the revelation which he was to make was not to end with his oral teaching. Near the end of his life he said to the Disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." They were not ripe for the comprehension of important truth, which therefore he held in reserve. The Holy Spirit was to open their eyes to the perception of things which they were not yet qualified to appreciate. The communication of the Spirit ushered in a new epoch. Then the Apostles took a wider and deeper view of the purport of the Gospel. We find in the Epistles an unfolding of doctrine which we discover in the germ in the conversations and discourses of Jesus. It was impossible, for example, that the design of his death could be discerned prior to the event itself, and as long as the Disciples could not be reconciled even to the expectation of it. In isolated sayings of Jesus, in particular in what he said at the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Atonement is taught. The giving of his life, he said on another occasion, was to avail, in some way, as a ransom. But it was not until the cross had been raised that the doctrine of the cross was made an essential part of Christian teaching, and the great sacrifice became a theme of doctrinal exposition. By this subsequent teaching a void which had been left in the instructions of the Master was filled. In his teaching there were two elements, standing, so to speak, apart from each other. On the one hand, he set forth the inexorable demands of righteous law. In this respect no portion of the older Scriptures, in which law was so prominent a theme, is equally adapted to strike the conscience with dismay. On the other hand, there was in the teaching of Jesus the most emphatic proclamation of God's compassion and forgiving love. These two sides of the Saviour's teaching are connected and harmonized in the apostolic exposition of the Atonement.

The Apostles themselves, individually, as regards their perceptions of truth, their insight



into the meaning of the Gospel, and its bearings on human duty and destiny, did not remain stationary. How they attained to a more catholic view of the relation of the Gentiles to the Gospel and to the Church must form the subject of a special discussion. Apart from this subject, where their progressive enlightenment is so conspicuous a fact, there can be no doubt that from day to day they grew in knowledge. If we were in possession of earlier writings from the pen of the Apostle John, we might expect that marked differences would appear between them and the Gospel and the First Epistle, which were written when "the Son of Thunder" had ripened into the octogenarian apostle of love. The Apocalypse, so far as the style of thought is concerned, whatever judgment may be formed on other grounds, may quite conceivably have been written two or three decades prior to the date of the Gospel

by the same author. When the earliest writings of Paul, the Epistles to the Thessalonians, are compared with his latest writings — with the Pastoral Epistles and the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians — we not only find perceptible modifications of tone, but, in the later compositions, we find also views on the scope of the Gospel — what may be termed the universal or cosmical relations of the work of redemption — such as do not appear in his first productions. As a minor peculiarity, it may be mentioned that when he wrote to the Thessalonians he seems to have expected to be alive when the Lord should come in his Second Advent, while in his latest epistles this hope or expectation has passed out of his mind. As the Gospel and the First Epistle of John are the latest of the Apostolic writings, it is permissible to regard them as the fullest and ripest statement of the theologic import of the Gospel.

*George P. Fisher.*

## PROFESSOR JAMES BRYCE, M. P.,

AUTHOR OF "THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH."



BY common consent, no Englishman of the present generation knows America so well, or has formed so just and far-seeing an impression of her institutions, as James Bryce. His personal acquaintance with the United States is limited, notwithstanding, to three holiday visits paid to this country in the intervals of professional activity. Mr. Bryce has many friends on both sides of the Atlantic, but, politician and author as he is, he shrinks with unusual timidity from any personal approach of the interviewer. His private life is little known because he has declined to permit it to be observed; and in giving some small sketch of his career we have been obliged to content ourselves with barren materials. The author of "The Holy Roman Empire" and "The American Commonwealth" is too modest to allow even his friends to persuade him that they wish to know something of his inner life or of the development of his intellectual powers. If this sketch of his career is slight, let it be appreciated that Mr. Bryce has not merely contributed nothing to make it fuller, but has done all that lay in his power to persuade us that it was altogether needless and superfluous.

James Bryce was born at Belfast, in the north of Ireland, of a Scottish father and an Ulster

mother, on the 10th of May, 1838. His father being an LL. D. of Glasgow, it was natural that he should receive his early education, first at the high school and then at the university of that city. He early showed a vigorous understanding and a rare power of application, gained a scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford, and began that connection with the latter university which has lasted now for nearly thirty years. Mr. Bryce, who is many things besides, is primarily and characteristically an Oxford don. He carries about with him a flavor of scholastic life into all his practical concerns, and is now perhaps the most complete specimen of the English university politician. He took his bachelor's degree, and was elected a Fellow of Oriel, the college which Newman and the Tractarian movement had long before made famous, in 1862. He now settled down, at the age of twenty-four, into an Oxford don, whose peculiar existence entails a feverish round of lectures and committees, board meetings and council meetings for eight months of the year, and leaves the remaining four open for extensive travel. Mr. Bryce, whose physique has always been sturdy and active, early became a mountaineer, and some of the more remarkable of his adventures have found their way into chronicle.

His literary life opened in 1864, when he published a prize essay on "The Holy Roman Empire." This was a little volume of a kind



## THE NATURE AND METHOD OF REVELATION.

### III.—THE DIFFERENTIATING OF CHRISTIANITY FROM JUDAISM.



OW the ties which at the outset held Christianity and Christian believers within the pale of the Jewish religion, with no thought of breaking away from its appointed ordinances and rites, came to be completely dissolved, forms a highly interesting chapter in early Christian history. The leading agent, the man specially chosen of Providence to introduce this new stage of development, was a converted Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. A remarkable characteristic of the revolution — or evolution, if one prefers so to call it — is the circumstance that there neither lurked in it nor ensued from it any antipathy to the Old Testament religion. It involved no discarding of the ancient Scriptures in which the revelation to the Jews was recorded. Moses and the prophets continued to be revered as divinely commissioned teachers. The Old Testament continued to be the Bible of the Christian churches. Up to the time of the composition and collection of the Apostolic writings they had no other Bible. It was read in their Sunday assemblies. The God whom Christians worshiped was the God of the patriarchs, the same who “spake . . . unto the fathers by the prophets.” The religion of the Gospel assumed no antagonistic relation to the religion of the Old Testament. Yet it came to pass that the Old Testament ritual was dropped. The title of the Jews to peculiar and exclusive privileges in the community of Christian believers was set aside. The demand that the Christian believer should come into the Church through the door of Judaism, by conforming to the rites ordained for heathen proselytes, was no longer made. Christianity was, and was perceived to be, one thing, and Judaism another; and soon there was a wide gulf between them. At the beginning we find the Disciples “continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple,” although they met, also, by themselves for social worship (Acts ii. 46, Revised Version). If they were, in a sense, to borrow a phrase now current, “church-goers,” they were likewise “temple-goers.” They were like other Jews; only they believed that the Messiah had come, and, although he had been rejected and crucified, they looked

for his second appearing in power and splendor. The daily devotions, the solemn festivals, the smoking altars of the Jewish system, were as dear and sacred to them as they had ever been. The converts were to be baptized, but baptism did not supersede the necessity of circumcision for admission into the Judaic-Christian fraternity. But pass over a few decades of years and we discover that this conformity to the old system has vanished. Numerous Christian churches are planted in which the Mosaic ceremonies are not practiced. In process of time the revolution is complete. The synagogue is no more a place of resort for Christians. Their fellowship, such as it was, with unbelieving Jews, who formed the bulk of the Jewish people, is broken off. The rupture is absolute. The opposition is mutual. The Jews pursue the Christians with bitter maledictions. The Christians are of one mind in discerning that the old ritual with its burdensome yoke of ordinances is obsolete. They no longer tolerate the observances which at first they expected all of their number to practice.

This revolution was the consequence of no injunction of Jesus. He himself kept the law in its ceremonial as well as in its moral parts, notwithstanding that he protested against the over-rigid interpretations of the Pharisaic school. He distinguished between the laws themselves and the “traditions of the elders” — the glosses and additions which the doctors had affixed to the Old Testament legislation under the pretext of expounding it, or of applying it to unforeseen cases. He denounced the pernicious casuistry which brought in now an evasion of moral duties, and now an imposition of ceremonial performances which the spirit of the law did not exact. He taught that the value of institutions consisted in their usefulness. They were not an end in themselves, but a means for attaining a good beyond them. Rules were not framed for their own sake. Even the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. While Jesus encouraged no revolt against the ritual system, while he even enjoined conformity to it according to its proper meaning, and himself set an example of such conformity, the spirit of his teaching and the work done by him undermined it. They could not fail to lead to the discontinuance of the Jewish cultus. Eventually it would



be seen to have no longer a *raison d'être*. It would come to be felt to be as needless a burden as winter garments in the mild air of summer. The time must arrive when the Jewish system would be consciously outgrown. To keep it up would then be like the attempt of an adult to wear the clothes of a child. Jesus did not decree the subversion of the Jewish cultus, that ancient fabric which had sheltered religious faith in the days of its immaturity, when the community of God was waiting for a full disclosure of his purpose of mercy and of deliverance for the race. He did not by one sudden stroke demolish that system, but he put gunpowder under it. And yet this is not an apposite simile. We should rather say that he prepared the way for the gradual, intelligent abandonment of it. There might be temporary confusion and even occasional contests; but on the whole the change was to be in a true sense natural, like the melting of the winter snows and the coming out of the leaves and blossoms under the increasing warmth of the vernal sun. Jesus taught that religion is spiritual. He showed, as the prophets before him had proclaimed, how empty is a round of observances into which the heart does not enter, and which are not accompanied by righteousness of conduct. "Mercy is better than sacrifice." He said of one that he was not far from the kingdom of God because he discerned that the love of God and man "is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." The illustrations in the Sermon on the Mount of that fulfillment of the law which he came to secure all relate to moral tempers and moral conduct. He taught the infinite worth of the soul, the impartial benevolence of God, and that love is the substance of the law. His teaching was void of sympathy with Judaic exclusiveness. That the institutions of the Gospel could not be identical with those of the old system, he taught when, in answer to the question why his disciples did not fast, he said that "new wine must not be put into old bottles." He said that not what goeth into the mouth defileth a man. This he declared, the Evangelist adds, "making all meats clean." He laid down the principle that defilement is from the heart alone, from bad feelings and motives — a principle which cut the ground from under the ritual as far as it related to meats and drinks. Jesus implied that he was conscious of an authority higher than that which prescribed the laws of the Old Testament, when he superseded the Mosaic precept concerning divorce (Matt. xix. 8, Mark x. 5); when he declared the Son of man to be "the Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 28, Luke vi. 5); when he affirmed that he and his disciples were not under an obli-

gation to pay the tax to the temple (Matt. xvii. 24-27). "In this place," he said, "is one greater than the temple." The priests, it had been understood, were absolved from the strict observance of the sabbatical law. They might on any day offer their sacrifices; they might "profane the Sabbath" without guilt. The thought was not so remote that he who was greater than the temple might supersede the temple. To the woman of Samaria he said that worship was confined to no local sanctuary (John iv. 23, 24). There were predictions of a downfall of the temple, of the letting out of the vineyard to other husbandmen (Matt. xxiv. 2, Mark xiii. 2, Luke xxi. 6, John ii. 19, Matt. xxi. 41, Mark xii. 9). Then he made everything turn on the relation of men to himself. The test of character was belief or disbelief in him. The one condition and source of communion with God was personal communion with him whom God had sent. When this last truth should be fully apprehended, what space would be left for any other priesthood or sacrifice? At the Last Supper he so connected his death with the forgiveness of sins as virtually to dispense with the need of any other offering or intercession than his own. In fine, the large and spiritual view of the nature of religion which Christ presented, together with the sufficiency which he ascribed to his own work as a reconciler, made the cultus of the Hebrews, including the national rite of circumcision, superfluous. But how should the free and catholic spirit of the Gospel come to be recognized? How should the fetters of custom, and ingrained reverence, and national self-esteem — the claim on the part of the Jews to precedence and to some kind of perpetual sway in the concerns of religion — be broken? For so great a change time was required. In matters where feeling is strongly enlisted, where lifelong prejudices are to be overcome, where usages are closely linked, from long association, with devotional sentiment, there is often between the premises and the legitimate conclusion a long road to travel.

The purport of the Gospel in the particulars to which I have referred was discerned by the Apostle Paul at an early date, and it was more clearly and vividly perceived by him than by any other. Whether Paul had in his hands written accounts of the teaching of Jesus we are not informed. For what he says of the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 23 *seq.*) he had in some way the direct authority of the Lord. He refers it to a direct revelation; for so we must interpret his language. On the contrary, what he says of the appearances of Jesus to the other Apostles after his resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 1 *seq.*) he had ascertained from



them. We cannot be mistaken in supposing that Paul was acquainted with teachings of Christ which, in his judgment, contained an implicit warrant for that broad interpretation of the Gospel and of the privilege of the Gentiles under it which he adopted; such teaching of Jesus as we have cited above from the Evangelists. In his intercourse with the other Apostles — it is important to remember that Paul spent a fortnight with Peter — he had the best opportunity to rectify any mistake, if he had fallen into any mistake, in respect to this part of the Saviour's teaching.

It has been sometimes said that Paul himself professes not to be acquainted with the facts of the ministry of Jesus. This strange statement is founded on a misunderstanding of his meaning when he says that he did not receive the Gospel from men, but "through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 12). This direct relation to Christ, who revealed himself to him and called him to be an Apostle, does not preclude the obtaining of knowledge through secondary sources. That he did not care to learn what Christ had taught and done during his earthly life is something quite incredible in a man of his active intelligence and Christian feeling.

That Paul became the leader in the work of emancipating the Church from Judaism has been sometimes attributed to the liberalizing influence of culture and learning. He was that one of the Apostles, we are reminded, whose mind had been expanded by study, and whose intellect had been invigorated and widened by a scholastic training. But on this subject of the education of the Apostle to the Gentiles there are prevalent mistakes which require to be corrected. One of them is the ascription to him of a familiarity with Greek classical writers. This idea is based partly on certain utterances of his which correspond to sayings of Greek authors. There are three of these passages. The first is in the Apostle's speech at Athens: "As certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). The quotation is found in Aratus, a poet who belonged to Soli, a place near Tarsus, and it occurs, also, in that noblest example of devotional poetry that has come down to us from a heathen source, the Hymn of Cleanthes. Both Aratus and Cleanthes belonged to the Stoic sect. The second passage of this kind is an Iambic verse: "Evil company doth corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33). This has been referred to Euripides by many, including John Milton, who remarks that "Paul thought it no defilement to insert into holy Scripture the sentences of three Greek poets, and one of them a tragedian." But the passage is traced by scholars at present to the

"Thais" of Menander. The third of the passages traceable to heathen sources is the unflattering description given of the Cretans (Titus i. 12): "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons." The words form a hexameter and are from Epimenides, a Cretan poet, whom Plato styled a "divine man," and whom Paul does not scruple to call a "prophet" — recognizing in him, as regards this particular saying at least, a remarkable divination or foresight. But probably all these passages were proverbial sayings, and as such were caught up by the Apostle from the conversation of the day. According to the correct reading of the passage from Menander, Paul deviates from the metrical form; which indicates that, unless he did not know what the original was, he preferred to give it in the shape in which it passed current as a proverb. There is really nothing either in the style of Paul's writings, or in their contents, to show that he was versed in the Greek classical authors. As to his style, it is unlettered Greek. It is not likely that a man of his high intellectual qualities could have read an author like Plato without distinct traces of the fact being evident both in his language and in his thoughts. On a mind of an inferior order a feeble impression might have been left by the masters of Greek philosophy, poetry, and eloquence, but not on a mind like that of Paul, in case he had been conversant with them. He was born, to be sure, in a city where Greek was familiarly spoken — although the inscriptions discovered recently in that region do not indicate that the Greek in use there was of a choice character. Tarsus was a seat of Stoic philosophy. It must be remembered, however, that Paul was the son of a Pharisee, that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and was no doubt brought up after the strict method of Pharisaic training. Such a father as he had would not have put pagan authors into his boy's hands. He had for his teacher at Jerusalem the rabbi Gamaliel. The advice which, according to Luke, was given by this noted rabbi to his fellow-members of the Sanhedrim reveals a certain moderation and sagacity. He dissuaded them from using force against the Apostles, for the reason that, if their cause was right it could not be put down, and the attempt to put it down would be impious; while, if their cause was wrong, it would come to nothing all the sooner for being let alone. His appeal to the instances of Theudas and Judas of Galilee, fanatics who raised a disturbance which lasted but a little while, would seem to indicate that he anticipated a like failure for the new enterprise which the Apostles were trying to promote. Whether Gamaliel was simply politic, or had some genuine tolerance in his temper,



may be a question. This we know very well, that his ardent pupil did not share in any sentiment of this kind. He was an approving spectator of the killing of Stephen. He plunged into the work of a heresy-hunter and inquisitor. He seized on the disciples of Jesus and shut them up in prison. He tried in the synagogues to force them to recant. He chased them from one place to another; for he was "exceedingly mad against them" (Acts xxvi. 11). It is certain, therefore, that Paul had not imbibed any lenient sentiment towards dissentients from the standards of orthodoxy; and it would be irrational to credit him with feelings of this kind towards the heathen. His education was rabbinical; and traces of its peculiar character crop out occasionally in his way of arguing and of illustrating truth, even after he had been lifted into the higher atmosphere of the apostolic calling.

Nevertheless, there exist in the writings of Paul striking coincidences with Stoic philosophic teaching. The correspondences between New Testament passages and Stoic maxims and precepts is a fact that calls for explanation. It is more marked in relation to Seneca, the Roman Stoic, the preceptor of Nero, than in regard to any other of the philosophers of the Porch. The similarity in his case extends to numerous sayings of Jesus as well as to other portions of the New Testament. The theory was broached by several of the ancient fathers that Seneca was a Christian convert. There appeared a forged correspondence between him and the Apostle Paul. From the time of Jerome, it was taken for granted that Seneca had been won over by the Apostle to the Christian faith. There is nothing to disprove the supposition that Seneca may have gathered up, perhaps from slaves of his household, fragments of the teaching of Christ and of Paul. Yet it has been observed that some of the most striking parallels are with the Epistle to the Hebrews, and this Epistle was written after Seneca's death. The whole basis of Seneca's philosophical view is utterly at variance with the Christian system. This circumstance is fatal to the hypothesis that he was connected with Paul, as the legend represented.

But how shall we account for the Stoic phraseology which is undeniably found in Paul's speeches and writings? The Stoic ideal of the sage painted him as lacking nothing, as the possessor of all things, as alone free, as alone happy, as alone rich, as the true wise man, the true priest, the true king. In similar terms the Apostle delineates the Christian believer. We seem to be hearing echoes of Stoic sayings. The Stoic system was cosmopolitan in its character. The kinship of mankind, that the Stoic is a citizen of the

world, a denizen of all lands, are frequent affirmations of Seneca, of Epictetus, and of the imperial philosopher, Marcus Aurelius. This universality of fellowship the Apostle affirms of the Christian believer. In it the boundaries of race and nationality are effaced. Such ideas in Paul are presented in an original, entirely different setting. There is a groundwork for them in Christ and his kingdom, which was wanting to the Stoic, with whom these lofty distinctions could have but little more than a negative import and value. However, the verbal resemblance remains. This is best accounted for by the intercourse into which the Apostle was brought with Stoics, both at Tarsus, where he dwelt for a considerable time after his conversion, and in other cities which he visited. At Athens, as we are told, he disputed with Stoics and Epicureans. These were the popular philosophical sects at that time. With the Epicurean tenets he could find few points of contact. But in the ethical ideas and maxims of the Stoics, although they rested on no basis of fundamental truth that was satisfactory, and although the Stoic ideal, for this reason, could not be realized, the Apostle discerned features which he, from his higher point of view, could appropriate. He could take them up and infuse into them both a significance and a worth which they had not before possessed. The relation of Paul to certain Stoic terms and phrases was somewhat like that of the Apostle John to the term *Logos*, or *Word*, and possibly to some other phrases in his writings. Terms in current use in the discussions of the day John could take up and transfigure, as it were, so that they became a fit vehicle for expressing the higher truth which was derived, not from any philosophical source, but from revelation and from the direct impression made by Jesus upon the susceptible spirit of his disciple.

The reason, certainly the main reason, for the exceptional liberality of Paul, or his complete emancipation from Judaic prejudice, is not to be found either in his learning, or in his marked perspicacity. His mind was no doubt disciplined and made capable, above most others, of looking into a question to its very core. He had no need of an acquaintance with Aristotle in order to grasp a doctrine in its logical relations, and to carry it out to the legitimate inferences. And he had a superiority in knowledge — not merely in that sort of knowledge which an eager scholar of the rabbis would of course acquire. He had a store of knowledge, constantly increasing, drawn from observation and from contact with adherents of differing schools of opinion in the places where he sojourned. But the secret of his catholicity, as we have



seen, is not to be found either in his talents or in his culture. To discover that secret we must turn to the history of his conversion. Great as the transformation was at that crisis, yet in important respects he was the same man after as before. If we look at him first on the day when he was on the road to Damascus, armed with credentials from the high priest, and then look at him again when he was on one of his great missionary journeys, we behold the same energy, the same aggressive, conquering force. He was a crusader from first to last. No revolution of motive and of moral temper could be greater. He had become humane, loving, willing to give up his life, and even his own salvation, for the sake of the Jewish countrymen who detested him as an apostate. And the end in view—how different! Then he was bent on exterminating the class whom now he regards with an almost motherly tenderness. Then it was to extirpate a faith which now he cherishes, and for which he is ready to be offered up! Nevertheless, the natural qualities of the man, the qualities that made him a leader and, when consecrated to the service of the Gospel, a Christian hero, were his in the first as well as the last of the eras into which his life was divided, and between which seemingly a great gulf was fixed. There is one other element of resemblance, or thread of continuity, of more consequence still. His ideal from the beginning to the end of his career was righteousness. To stand right before God, acquitted, with no accusation lying against him at the bar of the Judge and in the forum of conscience, was always to his mind the one inestimable good. He attached the same value to it after his conversion as before, the same before as after. As to what is involved in being righteous, and how righteousness can be attained, these were points on which there was a world-wide difference between the earlier and the later conception. But the aim in its generic character was unaltered.

In the attempt to explain the conversion of Paul in such a way as to eliminate the miraculous elements in the event, a naturalistic solution has been suggested. The persecutor, it is said, was probably haunted with misgivings in reference to the course that he was pursuing. He had heard of the moral excellence of Jesus; perhaps he had seen him. He had been touched by the forgiving, heavenly spirit of the dying Stephen. The meek demeanor of the harassed disciples was not without its influence. In short, there was a conflict arising in his mind; there was inward anxiety, amounting to self-reproach. Here, it is urged, was a state of feeling which might give rise to hallucination—to the imaginary vision of Jesus. The

trouble with this theory is that not only is there no evidence that Paul felt any such disquiet respecting the rectitude of the errand on which he was bent, but there is decisive evidence that he did not. The phrase "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" means nothing more nor less than that he was engaged in a futile enterprise. It has no reference to any feeling of compunction. He was like an animal kicking against the goad. That is to say, his undertaking against the Christian faith was a hopeless one. But he says: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9); "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). There was no insincerity, no inward halting, no doubt as to whether Jesus might not after all be the Messiah. There was no psychological state of the kind which would pave the way for an illusive vision of Jesus. In epistles the genuineness of which is beyond dispute, the Apostle attributes his conversion exclusively to the grace of God and an act of revelation (Gal. i. 12, 16). "While," writes Weiss, "he constantly accuses himself of persecuting the Church, as being the greatest sin of his life, he never intimates that he struggled long against better knowledge and conscience, in opposition to the testimony of the truth." He never ascribes the revolution in his convictions, which was accomplished at a single stroke, to proofs appealing to his understanding, but always to facts accepted in faith, "on the believing acceptance of which his peace of soul and his eternal salvation depend." Hence if it was a vision that produced the change, it was a real vision, and no product of illusion. It was a vision that convinced him not only that Christ continued to live, but that he had risen in bodily form; so that, if this was an error, "it was God himself, by causing this vision, who led him into the error." This perception of Christ, while he was on the way to Damascus, stands apart from other visions, of which he did not care to speak. On it he rested as the guaranty of his apostolic office (1 Cor. ix. 1). There was included in it not only his commission to be an Apostle, but more specifically, to be an Apostle to the heathen.

The sight of Jesus in the glorified state swept away the "stumbling-block" which was contained in the idea of a crucified Messiah, and served to demonstrate the fact of his resurrection. But into the conversion of Paul there entered something more than the giving up of disbelief in the divine mission of Jesus. That, in itself considered, might not have carried with it any great spiritual change. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the veil is drawn aside, and we have



glimpses of the course of his inner life. Without doubt he speaks of his own personal experience, although he speaks as in this matter consciously the representative of human nature. He shows how the attempt to get inward peace by the method of law had collapsed. The seeking for righteousness on this path had brought him to utter despair, to a sense of helplessness. At the outset, as we may suppose,—in his younger days,—he was “alive.” His natural feelings and desires were in full activity, with no painful consciousness of wrong. But “the law came.” There came a time when the holy ideal of duty to God and man rose before him in the rigor of its perfection. Then he “died.” His peace of mind was gone. The conflict between the desires on the one side and the restraints of law on the other produced a schism in the soul. A distressing battle raged within, in which the better nature was felt to be powerless, felt to be a slave panting for liberty, but struggling in vain to free itself. To what extent this feeling of condemnation and of bondage was experienced by him when he was on the way to Damascus—whether this consciousness of guilt and of weakness was not greatly intensified in the days that immediately followed—he does not tell us, and we have no means of knowing. But this moral conflict it was that prepared him to welcome the gospel of deliverance. There was a better way to attain to righteousness; namely, a free pardon from God, and a new life in the spirit, a heart-fellowship, a grateful feeling, a filial relation which made obedience easy. He learned by experience that a legal system had in it no life-giving power. It could only condemn. It could only make one aware of his need of help from some other quarter. When it had done this work it had fulfilled its office, and was superseded by those forces of spiritual aid and healing which are contained in the gospel of grace.

Now what must be the effect of this experience on Paul's view of the Old Testament legal system, including the ceremonial features? He could look on that system only as something preparatory and provisional. It was like the ancient pedagogue, whose business it was to lead boys to school and leave them there. Law and grace, the old dispensation and the new, appeared to him in the sharpest contrast. In his philosophy of religion, ceremonial prescriptions, as means of salvation, were “beggarly elements”; that is, rudiments which had had their day. The other Apostles, the original Disciples, had not passed through a like spiritual crisis. They had been led on, step by step, in the company of Jesus, into a full sympathy with him and trust in him as a Saviour. They knew that, believing in him, and follow-

ing him with a loyal spirit, they were forgiven and saved. In common with Paul they held with one accord that reconciliation was through Christ, and that the humility of the publican in the parable was the temper of mind alone becoming a sinful man. The gradualness of their religious progress, the absence of a momentary, decisive turning-point, prevented them from seeing at once, and from seeing so distinctly, that relation of the new to the old, of gospel to law, which Paul's experience made as clear to him as sunlight. Their minds were open; they were ready to be guided by the Spirit, and they were thus guided; but, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, it was Paul who led the way.

What effect on his mind had these new perceptions, the outcome of a living experience? They could have no other effect than to level the barriers of race and nationality. Where were now the privileges on which the Jew plumed himself? Sin was a characteristic equally of Jew and Gentile. The same divine law which through Moses and the prophets had been revealed to the Jew had been written on the heart of the Gentile. Both rested under the same condemnation. It was not on the Gentiles exclusively, it was on “the world,” that the burden of guilt rested. And what could circumcision, lustrations, the sacrifice of animals, do to deliver any from the double yoke of self-accusation and evil habit? There was only one means of deliverance, one remedy for heathen and Hebrew alike. It was the Christ and faith in him. Moreover, Paul had seen the Christ on a heavenly throne. His kingdom was evidently not a temporal one having its seat in the city of David. Even when he should come again, the kingdom was not to have this earthly character. The Apostle no more knew Christ “after the flesh,” as belonging to one nation and leading here among them a human life. He says, “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. iii. 20). There Christ is, and there, for this reason, is the center of our polity. There is the seat of authority in the commonwealth in which we are citizens. When the Lord comes, the “body of our humiliation”—the mortal body, borne down by persecution, privation, suffering—is to be assimilated to his glorified body, to that heavenly mode of being that belongs to him. Paul's conception of the kingdom is changed. His idea of it is wholly different from that of those who had not shaken off the associations of a political theocracy, with Jerusalem for its capital and with the temple on Mount Zion for the place of resort for all nations. When we consider the birth, and education, and earlier characteristics of this Pharisee, this inquisitor, thirsting for the blood of heretics, how astonishing is



the declaration, "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek" (Rom. x. 12)! Few more remarkable utterances ever fell from human lips. Yet the reason which is connected with it explains all: "For the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him." There was but one Lord, and there was not less mercy in his heart for the heathen than for the Hebrew. In a religion that is spiritual, where there is but one Lord, and salvation is a free gift from him, there "cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all."

We pause for a moment to point out a profoundly interesting parallel between Paul's conception of the death of Christ as bringing Jew and Gentile together, and certain most instructive and pathetic words of Jesus. At the last Passover, we read in John's Gospel, certain "Greeks,"—who were not Jews, but heathen, probably proselytes of the gate,—who had come up to the festival to worship, came to Philip, one of the twelve, and expressed their wish to see Jesus (John xii. 20, *seq.*). Philip reported this to Andrew, and then both carried the request to the Master. It is one of those circumstantial accounts which in its manner, not to speak of its contents, shows the truthfulness of the Gospel narrative. When the two Disciples delivered their message, Jesus exclaimed: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The visit of the Greeks, heathen, proselytes of the gate, and their request, was a suggestion to Jesus that the time had come for him to die, and thus to open the door for the wide extension and growth of his kingdom beyond the limits of Judaism. That very idea of the significance of his death is intimated which is clearly brought out by the Apostle Paul.

THE first sign of a disposition to break through the wall that fenced off the Gentiles appears in the liberality of tone which was manifested by Stephen. It drew on him the charge of having threatened with destruction the whole Mosaic system of worship. His death dispersed the Church and sent abroad many to engage in missionary work. Philip, one of the deacons, preached with success in Samaria, and the Samaritan converts were recognized by the Apostles. The Samaritans, however, were among the circumcised. But the Ethiopian chamberlain, the eunuch, was only a proselyte of the gate, if he was even that. It required supernatural communications to Peter

to induce him to receive the Roman centurion Cornelius, and others with him, as disciples, and to sit at the same table with them. But Peter, when he returned to Jerusalem, was taken to task for his proceeding. When he told his tale the accusers were quieted, and there was joy over this accession of Gentile believers. The illiberal spirit was quelled, but only for a time. It was not at Jerusalem, but at Antioch that the catholic interpretation of the Gospel first gained a foothold. There some of the dispersed disciples, Hellenists, or foreign Jewish converts, preached the new faith to the heathen. There in that great city, which was one of the three principal cities of the Roman Empire, Rome and Alexandria being the other two, the message of the Gospel met with a quick response in heathen souls that found in it satisfaction for their spiritual hunger. Barnabas, himself a foreign-born Jew, a native of Cyprus, was sent by the Jerusalem church to look after this new movement.

For a number of years after Paul's conversion he is almost lost to our knowledge. There was a sojourn in Arabia; and then, after the lapse of three years, a return to Damascus. From there he was soon obliged to flee. Then followed a visit to Jerusalem to see Peter, with whom he spent fourteen days. After this visit he went into "the regions of Syria and Cilicia." The churches in Judea had not met him, but had only heard that he who had been a violent enemy of their cause had now become a preacher of the faith which he had persecuted. Later, he is found at Tarsus, and thence he is brought by Barnabas, who needed his help, to Antioch. They "taught much people" there, and there the disciples were first called "Christians." There is a coincidence between the ceasing to be a Jewish sect and the acquisition of the new name by which believers in Jesus were thenceforward to be designated. Up to this time they had been called "Nazarenes," "Galileans," or "Ebionites." Paul and Barnabas, according to Luke, were sent upon the occasion of a famine in Judea with contributions to the Jewish Christians there; but as Paul makes no allusion to his being there on this errand, it is probable that by some accident he was hindered from accomplishing it.

So vigorous was the Antioch church that it sent missionaries into Asia Minor. On the return to Antioch of Paul and Barnabas from their missionary journey, they found the church in a ferment. Men from Judea had arrived and had raised a disturbance by warning the disciples that they must conform to the Jewish law and be circumcised, or give up the hope of salvation. There was discussion and debate between Paul and his companion on one side and the Judean visitors on the other.



Finally it was resolved that the two Antioch leaders should depart at the head of a deputation to confer with the Jerusalem church on this all-important subject of dispute. In that church there had been an addition of members from the Pharisaic sect who were opposed to conceding liberty to the Gentile converts in this controverted matter. The rapid growth of the Antioch church, the multiplying of heathen converts, might naturally awaken anxiety and give rise to misgivings among many who had given way under the peculiar circumstances in the case of Cornelius. It was not now a question about a few individuals. Here was an organized church, on the basis of absolute freedom from "the law," and engaged in a successful work of propagandism. What was to become of the distinctive privilege of the Jew? Was the new kingdom to abolish the old cultus? Was it to be composed largely, and perhaps predominantly, of uncircumcised heathen? The turn of events brought up afresh a question of vital moment. Paul, on his side, had a full sense of the importance of the crisis. He resolved to meet it in the frankest and most direct manner. He would go to Jerusalem and meet the Apostles and the church there, face to face. He went up, he tells us, by "revelation" — by divine sanction; but he went, as Luke states, with the sanction of the Antioch church and as their commissioner. Fourteen years had elapsed since his visit to Peter; seventeen years had passed since his conversion.

We are brought to the memorable occurrences of which we have accounts in the fifteenth chapter of Acts and the second chapter of Galatians. At Jerusalem the demand was made of Paul that Titus, a Greek convert who accompanied him, should be circumcised. Here was a practical test that would decide the point in dispute. This demand the Apostle met with a resolute denial. That there was a pressure upon him which it was not an easy thing to withstand is evident from his language. At that supreme moment he did not flinch. The intense agitation which the recollection of the crisis stirred within him is betrayed in his language. It causes him in referring to it, as Lightfoot remarks, to make shipwreck of grammar. We can well believe that his voice trembled as he dictated the passage to his amanuensis. Did the other Apostles join in this request, so repugnant to his views and feelings? We are not justified by anything that he says in inferring that they did. Yet it would appear that Paul was left to stand alone, with no outspoken sympathy from any quarter. It is not improbable that even the Apostles, at that moment, under the circumstances, recommended him to yield, and to make the required concession. But he felt that the principle was at stake.

The very meaning of the Gospel, the breadth of its grace, the liberty of the Gentile, hung on a pivot. The Apostle took a stand like that which Luther took at Worms; but with a difference. But for Paul, there would have been no Luther; unless, indeed, it should have pleased God to raise up, in the room of Paul, another equally clear-sighted expositor of the truth and intrepid leader in the Church. There was another difference. There were numerous friends at Worms to sympathize with Luther's position. Paul was alone.

Paul and Barnabas took the precaution to have a private conference with the leading persons in the Jerusalem church before they should meet its members as a body. Paul laid before the select company the substance of his preaching, the Gospel as he understood it, in order that his career as a missionary might not be interfered with by a division among the Apostles themselves, and an opposition to him, the fruit of misconception. The other Apostles were told not only what Paul and Barnabas had preached, but also the result of their preaching — how that among the heathen Paul had been as successful as Peter had been among the Jews. No further persuasion was needful. Peter, James, and John had nothing to add to Paul's teaching by way of correction or amendment. On the contrary, they extended to the Antioch leaders the right hand of fellowship, with the understanding that their work was to be among the heathen, while their own work should continue to be among the circumcised. There was a cordial fellowship, as was implied in the engagement of Paul to collect alms from the Gentile converts for the poor disciples of the mother church. The danger of a rupture was now over. It was settled that the heathen were not to be driven to become Jews in order to be Christians. But it remained for the apostle of liberty to meet the Jerusalem church as a body. Our knowledge of this public gathering we owe to Luke. At the meeting the recruits from the Pharisaic sect renewed their demand. Peter opposed it in a characteristic address wherein he referred to what had occurred in relation to Cornelius. James spoke the final word, quoting, as he naturally would, passages from the prophets. He gave his voice in behalf of catholicity, but recommended that the heathen converts should be enjoined to abstain from certain practices which were especially obnoxious to men of Jewish birth, who had been trained to observe the laws of Moses and were to continue to do so. These articles of peace clashed with no principle which Paul valued. They included nothing that could fairly be called a modification of his teaching. They probably put in a definite form what was already a custom of the Gentile converts. They



are based on the injunctions, imposed alike on Israelites and strangers among them, which are set forth in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Leviticus, and included the usages which were practiced by proselytes of the gate. The agreement of the Jerusalem conference, therefore, was not a compromise or concession to Jewish prejudices. It served to keep the peace among the disciples in Syria and Cilicia, to whom it was addressed. At a later day, when Gentile churches were independently established and in remoter places, the Apostle does not feel himself bound to refer to this pastoral letter of the Jerusalem conference. In writing to the Corinthians he considers the question of "meat offered to idols" on its own merits; just as he calls for gifts of money for the Jerusalem Christians without referring to the stipulation that he should make a collection for their benefit. Yet he teaches nothing at variance with the essential purport of the instructions given to the Gentile converts. We may be sure that James would have been content with nothing less than these "necessary things," and that Paul would not have consented to go farther in the path of concession. To the fact of their harmony and satisfaction with one another Paul himself testifies. That he did not go to the extreme attributed to him by Baur and his fellow-critics is clear enough from his express recognition of the "gospel of the circumcision" as having been committed to Peter, and of the divine blessing which had been accorded to Peter in his work (Gal. ii. 8).

Ecclesiastical settlements were not then more certain to be final than in later times. It was understood on all hands that the Gentiles were to be left unmolested. But it was expected that Jewish Christians, whoever they were, would continue to conform to the old observances. To this Paul felt no objection. What he refused to do was to impose an obligation of this sort on the heathen; he would not allow it a place among the terms of salvation. If in the consultation of the Apostles at Jerusalem his own work had been approved by Peter, he in turn had approved Peter's work as the Apostle of "the circumcision." It was enough for him that the legal observances were not made the foundation of the disciples' hope in Christ. As regards outward things, he was no revolutionist. He let the Jewish national usages remain as they were. He willingly conformed to them himself. Not needlessly to offend Jews, he caused Timothy, whose mother was a Jew, to be circumcised. But still there were points which the Jerusalem conference left undetermined. So the controversy was reopened at Antioch in relation to one of these unsettled points. The Jewish and heathen converts there mingled together freely

and sat down at a common table. Peter, as well as Paul and Barnabas, had no scruples of conscience respecting this kind of free intercourse. But at length certain persons came from James. We are sure that they were persons of influence; for when they objected to this liberality on the part of Jewish Christians, not only Barnabas, but even Peter, deferred to them, and "drew back and separated" themselves. The rest of the Jewish Christians followed them. Here there was suddenly drawn a new line of division between the two classes of Christians. Once more Paul had to stand by himself. He sharply and publicly rebuked Peter for timidity and unfaithfulness to principle. He, a Jew, had been living as a Gentile himself, and now he was trying, so far as his example went, to bring the Gentiles to live as if they were Jews. The authors of this trouble came from James. It is not safe to conclude that they came expressly on this errand. Yet it may be that the liberal course taken by Peter was the occasion of their mission. It is, on the whole, probable that their view of the subject was one in which James participated. He had given to Paul and Barnabas, in all sincerity, the right hand of fellowship. It does not follow that he expected the old restrictions as to eating with the Gentiles, and their social relations in general, to be swept away. It is likely that he did not interpret the Jerusalem arrangement in so broad a way as Paul construed it. A church made up, as at Antioch, of Gentiles and Jews together, presented a case which in the conference had not been definitely considered. The tradition about James as it was given by Hegesippus, the Jewish Christian historian, in the middle of the second century, represents him as an ascetic, observing the Nazarite rule, strict in all his ways, frequently resorting alone to the temple, "praying for the forgiveness of the people until his knees grew hard and thin." We see him, on the occasion of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, receiving the Apostle to the Gentiles with fraternal cordiality, to be sure; yet advising him to make a further manifestation of his respect for the ritual by taking on himself a vow, which involved the shaving of the head. The motive of James's counsel is thus explained in his own language: "That . . . all may know . . . that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law" (Acts xxi. 24). The occurrence shows how strenuous James was for the keeping up of the Mosaic ceremonies by the Jewish Christians, and how anxious he was that Paul should do something to efface a prevailing impression that he had tried to induce Jews to discard them.

The spirit of James is clearly disclosed in the Epistle which bears his name. It was in-



cluded in the ancient Syriac canon, and as it was addressed to Jewish Christians outside of Palestine, it was not improbably intended to be read primarily by Syrian disciples. The law, in the spiritual import given to it by Jesus, is prominent in the writer's esteem. We observe in the Epistle not a few echoes of the teaching of Christ. The practical tone, averse to all theory and theological disputation, is obvious. Its doctrine is not contradictory to that of Paul, but moves in a different line. As Jesus had taught, it is said that men are to be judged by their works. There is a verbal contrast with sayings of Paul; for example, in the definite assertion that Abraham was justified by works. Whether or not we are to conclude that the author had in mind a current use and misuse of Pauline phraseology, depends on the date to which James's Epistle is to be assigned. Some would place it too early to admit of any reference to Pauline theology. There is much in the peculiarities of the Epistle — as in the application of the name "synagogue" to the meeting-place of Christians — to favor the supposition of a very early date. Could it be shown that it was written by James at a later point of time, the opinion that it refers to Pauline language would be more probable.

What was the immediate outcome of the renewed controversy at Antioch, the Apostle in his letter to the Galatians does not inform us. Taken up with his theme — salvation by faith alone — he drops the consideration of personal matters. About seven years after the Apostolic conference at Jerusalem and the subsequent rebuke of Peter, we find Paul writing an epistle to the Christians at Rome. During this interval he had been pursued with animosity by the Judaizing faction, of whose malignity he repeatedly complains. Nowhere does he imply that the other Apostles are in sympathy with these enemies of himself and of the Gospel. On the contrary, his references to the other Apostles imply the opposite. Yet the reports which the Judaizers set afloat concerning him, to which a reference has just been made, might easily excite a certain degree of alarm and uneasiness even among the Apostolic leaders who had extended to him the right hand of fellowship. We must bear in mind that the disturbance at Antioch had followed. Whether the separation of Paul from Barnabas, the immediate occasion of which had reference to Mark, had any connection with that incident, we are not informed. At all events, when Paul writes to the Romans, he is looking forward to another visit to Jerusalem, not without some anxiety about the reception that will be accorded to him. He asks for the prayers of the Roman brethren not only that he may be delivered

from the hostility of the unbelieving Jews in that city, but also that his "ministration" might be acceptable to the "saints" there. There was some apprehension in his mind lest the collection which he had been making for the poor in the Jerusalem church might be unwelcome (Rom. xv. 31), gathered as it was from churches composed of heathen converts, and while the accusation of being hostile to the observance of the Mosaic rites by anybody was circulated against him. His kind and fraternal reception by James and his associates dispelled this apprehension. The mob of Jews that assailed him, notwithstanding the precautions taken to appease their wrath, showed the hatred which had been accumulating against him in the course of the missionary campaigns in which he had spent the later eventful years.

The Apostle now passed into the custody of Roman officers. At the end of about two years he was conveyed to Rome. After the lapse of another equal interval, he appears to have been set free for a time. Once more a captive, it was in the closing part of Nero's reign, the period of the tyrant's unbridled cruelty, and in the year 66 or 67, that he fell under the sword of the executioner. If the name of James is not an interpolation in a passage of Josephus, James perished in the interval between the death of the procurator Festus and the arrival of his successor, or in the year 62. As to the main fact that James was stoned to death, the traditions agree. It is evident that the animosity of the Jews even against the most conservative — if the term may be allowed — of the followers of Jesus was growing fierce. The lines between the adherents of orthodox Judaism and the believers in the Nazarene were more and more sharply drawn. At length, in the year 66, the great insurrection against Rome burst out. In the blaze of the popular fanaticism there was no safety for Christians within the walls of Jerusalem. The church there was broken up. When the epoch of the mortal struggle of Judaism with Roman power was fast approaching, the Jewish Christians must necessarily find that the middle position which, in a certain sense, they had held, was no longer tenable. There were circumstances which might tempt them to give up their faith in Jesus, and to find their comfort exclusively in the old system in which they had been bred and whose ceremonies they still observed. They had hoped for the conversion of their countrymen, but that hope grew more and more faint. They had hoped for the reappearance of the ascended Messiah, but where was the promise of his coming? Patriotic instincts might naturally awake to a new life, and sympathy with the national enthusiasm impelling to a revolt against



foreign domination, might find a lodgment even in Christian hearts. There stands in the canon an Epistle to the Hebrews, concerning the authorship of which opinion has been divided from ancient times. At the present day there are few scholars who attribute it to Paul. Some, with Luther, ascribe it to Apollos; others to Luke, or to Barnabas. Whoever the writer was, it is certain that it was addressed to Jewish Christians. The purpose of the author, moreover, is clear. He sees a danger and he is striving to ward it off. He seeks to deter Jewish believers from lapsing from their faith and returning to Judaism. He is anxious to show them that they have in the Gospel a treasure infinitely more precious than anything offered them in the old ritual, and that the ordinances and ceremonies of the ancient Covenant are but types of blessed and enduring realities brought to them through Christ. To go back to the old sacrificial system is to give up the substance for the shadow.

If there was a retrograde movement, a reactionary tendency in some minds at this critical era, when the fate of the Jewish state and the Jewish religion hung in the balance, the same circumstances would engender in another class an opposite feeling. They would cling to the Christian faith with redoubled ardor and firmness. The tie that still held them to the old ceremonies would be loosened. The rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people, and the persistent rejection of him, with the attendant fact of the astonishing spread of the new faith among the Gentiles, must have tended to open the eyes of many to a more just and liberal interpretation of the purpose of God. A fatal blow was dealt at Jewish Christianity by Divine Providence — the same Providence which had been the teacher from the beginning, removing, step by step, prejudice and misconception. No doubt there were those with whom the legions of Titus were more effective than persuasion and argument. The "logic of events" could not be disputed. Many Jewish Christians must have seen in the ruins of the Temple a sign of the passing away of the ancient system of worship. When the Jewish rites were wholly forbidden in Jerusalem, and it was converted by Hadrian into a heathen city (A. D. 135), the lesson was taught afresh with an irresistible emphasis.

It was probably about the time of the beginning of the Jewish war, and after the death of the Apostle Paul, that there was a migration of a number of Jewish Christians to Asia Minor. Among them were the two Apostles Andrew and Philip, and among them also was the Apostle John. John took up his abode at Ephesus. Traditions of his life and teaching and traces of his influence remained in all that region. There, in his serene old age, he wrote his Gospel and Epistles. From one of his pupils, the martyr Polycarp, Irenæus in his youth heard personal reminiscences of the Beloved Disciple. It is the same Apostle who, long before, had given to the Apostle to the Gentiles "the right hand of fellowship." After all these years, after the providential occurrences which had swept away the hope of the conversion of the Jews as a body, it would be strange indeed if no further advance had been made in catholicity of perception. The sayings of Jesus, which indicate the spiritual and universal nature of the Gospel, are present in John's recollection. He remembered that Jesus had said that the worship of the Father was not to be confined to Mount Gerizim or to Jerusalem. Christianity was now set free from Judaism, and in the second century Judaic Christianity survived only in sects beyond the borders of the Church.

To revert for a moment to the causes which brought on this result, the historical events to which reference has been made have an important place. The subjugation of the Jews by Hadrian and the exclusion of their worship from the Holy City were of especial consequence. An essential condition on which the result depended was the multiplying of churches made up of Gentile converts. The rapid spread of the Gospel in the Gentile world and the comparative fewness of its Jewish adherents excited surprise even in the lifetime of Paul. It was to him a mysterious fact, a fact that called for explanation. It had a great influence in molding the institutions of the Gospel. But underlying all these agencies was the leavening influence of the teaching of Jesus. The catholic elements of that teaching produced their legitimate effect. They were the warrant for the doctrine of the Apostle Paul. It was Jesus and the teaching of Jesus that liberated Christianity from the entanglements of Judaism.

*George P. Fisher.*

## TO YOUTH.

TOUCH love with prayer.  
It is a holy thing;  
No dove with snowier wing  
Fanned Eden air.

To mortal care  
Heaven's whitest angel, Truth,  
Intrusted it. O Youth,  
Touch love with prayer!

*Orelia Key Bell.*



## THE NATURE AND METHOD OF REVELATION.

### IV.—REVELATION AND FAITH.



HE term "revelation" is commonly used to denote religious truth, supernaturally communicated, as distinguished from the knowledge of God obtained by natural means. In this use of terms, revealed religion stands in contrast with natural religion. But all our knowledge of God, through whatever medium derived, is from one ultimate source. That source is a revelation, or disclosure, which God makes of himself. And all truth respecting things divine and supernatural is apprehended by faith. Faith is the word descriptive of the mind's reception of it. Hence, in speaking of faith, and illustrating its nature, we may fitly take into view the fundamental truths of natural theology as well as Christianity.

It is often said, and the same thing is more often insinuated, that faith is something independent of evidence. It is looked upon as belief for which no reasons — that is to say, no valid reasons — are to be assigned. The individual himself, such is the implication, may perhaps be fully persuaded, but nothing that he can say constitutes an adequate ground of conviction for other minds than his own.

One occasion of this impression is the failure to distinguish between the sources and the proofs of religion. The genesis of religion as a fact of experience is one thing; the proofs of its reasonableness and the vindication of faith against skepticism are another. The genesis of religion is primarily from within, and not from without. As Aristotle styled man a political animal, it may be affirmed with even more emphasis that man is a religious being. Religion is not something foreign to his nature, imported into it from the external world, inculcated as a piece of information by his elders; nor is it, in its origin, an inference from the marks of design stamped upon things about him. The roots of religion are not in any process of the understanding. The idea that religious faith is a delusion of the imagination, a superstition engendered by dreams or by the fancied sight of ghosts of the dead, is disproved by history and philosophy. Religion is too deeply embedded in human nature, it is too powerful a factor in the history of mankind, to be accounted for by any of these superficial conjectures. Faith in the Being above us, the Author of our being, springs out of the sense of dependence

and the feeling of obligation and of law,—law felt as the manifested will of another, even the Infinite Spirit in whom we live,—and it is born of that yearning for a higher fellowship with him which alone can fill the soul with peace and joy. This primal revelation of God in the soul is the fountain-head of religion. However vague this impression may be in the beginning, however obscure the perception, and however dim it is rendered by the absorbing quest for earthly pleasure, it is the light of all our seeing. There is a *nisus* in the souls of men—a tendency to "seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." This implied recognition of the existence of God is that from which—as John Calvin, in unison with the most profound philosophers of all ages, expresses it—"the propensity to religion proceeds." Here is the germ of our distinct and defined religious convictions. The latent anticipations of our nature are met and matched by the manifestation of God in the material world, in history, or the providential succession of events, and in Christ. These manifestations constitute the objective proofs of religion. They are real proofs. Drawn out into explicit statements, they constitute the arguments for Christian theism. It is true that no constraining efficacy belongs to them. But the same is to be said of all reasoning that is not strictly demonstrative. No other interpretation of the phenomena is so satisfactory to the unbiased reason of thoughtful inquirers. At the same time, another interpretation of the phenomena is always *possible*. Here it is that the primal disclosure of God in consciousness, the native "propensity to religion," when it is not dulled or stifled, avails to banish doubt. Let it be noticed, also, that this very religious constitution, by which we are inwardly drawn to God, correlated as it is to objective manifestations, constitutes an argument for the verity to which it points.

The great church historian Neander, whose living experience of religion opened to his mind its true philosophy, has these noble words respecting Socrates: "Socrates stands at the head of those men of supreme distinction in the world's history who, in the times when faith in anything divine and in objective truth has been shaken and shattered by the sophistry of an understanding that disintegrates all things and the power of an all-embracing spirit of denial, have led men back into the depths of



their soul which is akin to God, and have caused them to find in the immediate consciousness of the true and the divine an assurance lifted above all doubts. From the speculative questions, in answering which the spirit ever anew tires itself out, he turned their glance within upon their own moral nature. From the external world he called the spirit back to its own inner being, that it might there find its whereabouts and learn to be at home. It is the weighty 'know thyself' which the oracle at Delphi praised as the characteristic merit of Socrates. The great impulse that went forth from him worked on for centuries, and in later times was continually renewed by the agency of men who carried down his spirit to after ages; and this influence it was which directed attention to that in man which is immediately related to God and to the moral element in the human soul, as well as from this, as the starting-point, to the religious." What skeptical minds need in this age, as in every other, is to remember that man has a soul as well as an understanding. Conscience, sensibility, affection, aspiration are a deep and indestructible part of human nature. As there is a soul, there is a life of the soul. There are presages and inchoate beliefs native to human beings, existing by their own right, entitled to respect, needing, it may be, light and direction, but too sacred to be ignored. To surrender them is to fling away that which is most precious in man. In the depths of the spirit religion has its birth. It is a flame kindled in the soul by its divine Author.

Keeping in mind that the grounds of faith are in the connection of the subjective and objective manifestations of God, each throwing light upon the other and each serving to corroborate the other, we may glance at certain leading proofs of theism which thus address us from without.

Nature is pervaded by an intellectual element. That nature is intelligible is the prime assumption in all study of natural phenomena. As Professor Huxley remarks, in substance, at the beginning of a recent essay on the progress of science in the last half-century, to discern the rationality of nature is the comprehensive aim of science. This affinity of nature with our own minds, this mind in nature, implies an intelligent author of nature. It is *possible* to conclude otherwise, but not reasonable or natural.

Materialistic atheism must begin with the impossible task of resolving the human mind into a machine, and identifying consciousness and thought with the molecular movements of the brain. It must build a bridge which can never be built. The doctrine of the conservation of energy affords no help in this direction. Clerk Maxwell, one of its most authoritative ex-

pounders, says: "There is action and reaction between body and soul, but it is not of a kind in which energy passes from one to the other—as, when a man pulls a trigger, it is the gunpowder that projects the bullet, or when a pointsman shunts a train, it is the rails that bear the thrust." "The conservation of energy, when applied to living beings, leads to the conclusion that the soul of an animal is not, like the mainspring of a watch, the motive power of the body, but that its function is rather that of a steersman of a vessel—not to produce, but to regulate and direct the animal powers."

No modern discoveries have weakened the force of the argument from design, which in all ages has impressed alike the philosopher and the peasant. Evolution is a method, not a cause. It does nothing to account for the origin of things or the energy exerted in all progressive development. "It is plain," says Mr. Sully, "that every doctrine of evolution must assume some definite initial arrangement, which is supposed to contain the possibilities of the order which we find to be evolved, and no other possibility." Until that initial arrangement, involving all that issues out of it, is accounted for, not a step is taken towards explaining the world. The outcome of all the past history of nature is undeniably an orderly system—a cosmos. To introduce an element of "chance" in the succession of steps leading to it is a philosophical absurdity. Such a meaningless notion might seem to be countenanced in the terms used to describe the promiscuous variation which was a part of Mr. Darwin's theory. But even Mr. Darwin had no thought of denying that there are *laws* of variability. "Our ignorance," he says, "of the laws of variation is profound." This, of course, implies that there are such laws. The constitution of the being that varies is an essential factor, and, with Mr. Darwin, the prime factor in producing the variations which constitute the materials on which the so-called selective agency of nature acts. But according to many evolutionists, like Asa Gray, variation moves along definite lines and its range is limited. If this were not the fact, as the physiologist Dr. W. B. Carpenter cogently argues, the chances to be overcome in building up an organized species are infinite. "On the hypothesis of 'natural selection' among aimless variations," says Dr. Carpenter, "I think that it could be shown that the probability is infinitely small that the progressive modifications required in the structure of each individual organ to convert a reptile into a bird could have taken place without disturbing the required harmony in their combined action; nothing but intentional variations being competent to bring such a result." The proof of this pre-arrangement is furnished



“by the orderly sequence of variations following definite lines of advance. The evidence of final causes is not impaired. ‘We simply,’ to use the language of Whewell, ‘transfer the notion of design and end from the region of facts to that of laws’; that is, from the particular cases to the general plan. In this general plan the production of man is comprehended. In him, the final product, the meaning and aim of the entire scheme of creation are fully discovered.”

There are naturalists, among them Mr. Wallace, who are in more full accord with Darwin’s particular view, and ascribe more to “natural selection.” Generally speaking, even these are not so rash as to undertake to rule out teleology, and to explain the phenomena of vegetable and animal life on a mechanical theory which excludes design. How inadequate the mechanical view is, regarded as an explanation of nature, has been demonstrated by Lotze and other philosophers, who are not in the least averse to the doctrine of a genetic relation of animal species to one another, or even to a wider extension of evolutionary theory. It is easy for naturalists to become absorbed in the search after the links of causal connection which bind together the phenomena of nature. There is an exposure, the antipode of that false use of the idea of final causes which stifled inductive investigation, and against which Bacon protested. But even to naturalists of the present day, who are chargeable with this error, the teleological aspect of nature, the design that runs through all, will at times come home with an irresistible force of impression. Darwin is himself an example. The Duke of Argyll, speaking of the phenomena of nature, which “our mind recognizes as mental,” writes as follows: “I have the best reason to know that Darwin himself was very far from being insensible to the evidence of this truth. In the year preceding his death he did me the honor to call upon me in London; and in the course of our conversation, I said to him that to me it seemed wholly impossible to separate many of the adjustments which he had so laboriously traced and described to any other agency than that of mind. His reply was one which has left an ineffaceable impression upon me; not from its words only, but from the tone and manner in which it was given. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘that impression has often come upon me with overpowering force. But then, at other times, it all seems —’; and then he passed his hands across his eyes, as if to indicate the passing of a vision out of sight.”

The admission of a first cause — that is, of a cause which is not itself an effect — is unavoidable unless the principle of causation is to be utterly discredited. The agnostic theory of an

“Unknowable” is self-destructive. To ascribe to the infinite being *power* is open to whatever objection is imagined to lie against the ascription to that being of intelligence. It is assumed that there is a revelation of *power*: because of this revelation the existence of that being is assumed. But the revelation of *intelligence* is every whit as clear.

How shall we be assured of the moral attributes of God, of his holiness and love? We are in a world that abounds in suffering. How shall this be reconciled with benevolence in the Creator? Much weight is to be given to the consideration of the effects flowing of necessity from a system of general laws, notwithstanding the advantages of such a system. The suggestions relative to the occasions and beneficent offices of pain and death, which are presented by such writers as James Martineau, in his recent work, “A Study of Religion,” are helpful. Especially is the fact of moral evil to be taken into the account when a solution is sought for the problem of physical evil, its concomitant and so often its consequence. Let it be freely granted, however, that no explanations that man can devise avail to clear up altogether the mystery of evil. It is only a small part of the system of things that falls under our observation in the present stage of our being. It is not by an inductive argument, by showing a preponderance of good over evil in the arrangements of nature, that the mind is set at rest. There is no need of an argument of this kind. There is need of faith, but that faith is rational. We find in our own moral constitution a direct and full attestation of the goodness of God. Our moral constitution is affirmed, by a class of evolutionists, to be a gradual growth from a foundation of animal instincts. Let this speculation go for what it may be worth. The same theory is advanced respecting the human intellect. Yet the intellect is assumed to be an organ of knowledge. There is no avoiding this conclusion; else all science, evolutionary science included, is a castle in the air. If the intellect is entitled to trust, so equally is the moral nature. Are the righteousness and goodness of God called in question on the ground of perplexing facts observed in the structure and course of the world? Where do we get the qualifications for raising such inquiries or rendering an answer to them? It must be from ideals of character which we find within ourselves, and from the supreme place accorded to the moral law which is written on the heart. But whence come these moral ideals? Who enthroned the law of righteousness in the heart? Who inscribed on the tablets of the soul the assertion of the inviolable authority of right and the absolute worth of love as a motive of action? In a



word, our moral constitution is itself given us of God, and if it be not the reflection of his character, it is, for aught we can say, a false light; in which case all the verdicts resting upon it, with all the queries of skepticism as to the goodness of God, may be illusive. The arraignment of the character of God on the ground of alleged imperfections in nature, or of seemingly harsh and unjust occurrences in the course of events, is therefore suicidal. The revelation of God's character is in our moral constitution. The voice within us, which is uttered in the sacred impulse of duty and in the law of love, is his voice. There we learn what he approves, what he requires, what he rewards. When this proposition is denied, we lose our footing. We cut away the ground for trust in our own capacity for moral criticism.

Man has not one originating cause and the world another. The existence and supreme authority of conscience imply that in the on-going of the world righteousness holds sway. If there is a moral purpose underlying the course of things, then a righteous being is at the helm. What confusion, worse than chaos, in the idea that while man himself is bound to be actuated by a moral purpose, the universe in which he is to act his part exists for no moral end, and that through the course of things no moral purpose runs!

It is not my object in these remarks to draw out in full the proofs of the existence and the moral attributes of God. It is rather to illustrate the relation in which these proofs stand to those perceptions, inchoate and spontaneous in the experiences of the soul, which are the ultimate subjective source of religion, and on which the living appreciation of the revelation of God in external nature is contingent. Let it be observed, moreover, that these native spiritual experiences of dependence, of obligation, and accountableness, of hunger for fellowship with the Infinite One, wherein religion takes its rise and has its root, are themselves to be counted as proofs of the reality of the object implied in them. They are significant of the end for which man was made. They presuppose God.

It is true that all our knowledge rests ultimately on an act of faith which finds no warrant in any process of reasoning. We cannot climb to this trust on the steps of a syllogism. We are obliged to start with a confidence in the veracity of our intellectual faculties; and this we have to assume persistently in the whole work of acquiring knowledge. Without this assumption we can no more infer anything or know anything than a bird can fly in a vacuum. All science reposes on this faith in our own minds, which implies and includes faith in the Author of the mind. This primitive faith in our-

self is moral in its nature. So of all that truth which is justly called self-evident. No arguments are to be adduced for it. In every process of reasoning it is presupposed. We can prove nothing except on the basis of propositions that admit of no proof. But if we leave out of account the domain of self-evident truth, which is ground common to both religion and science, religious beliefs, as far as they are sound, are based on adequate evidence. It may be well, however, to explain somewhat more definitely what is denoted by faith; to say enough, at least, to guard against certain misconceptions. At the opening of one of the noblest passages in the New Testament, faith is defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." A more correct rendering of the verse would be, "The firm assurance of things hoped for, the being convinced of things not seen"—that is, of their reality. Faith makes real to the mind objects of hope; things in the future; it makes real, also, things not cognizable by the senses. It takes these things out of a kind of dream-land; and, further, it gives to them a substantial being, so that they exercise a due control in the shaping of conduct.

It is superfluous to remark that faith creates nothing; makes nothing different from what it is already. This is evident of that sort of faith which is exercised in relation to mundane affairs. I believe in the virtue of a medicine; but, if my faith is well founded, the virtue is in the medicine quite independently of any idea or feeling of mine in regard to it. I believe in a physician; but my belief does not give him the knowledge and the tact in which I confide. He is just the same—just as competent, or incompetent, as the case may be—whether I trust in him or not. Or, take for an illustration the faith of a discoverer. Columbus believed that he could reach a continent by sailing westward on a path which Europeans had never taken. His faith urged him onward, week after week, and month after month, never turning his prow, regardless of the discontent of his men, until faith was rewarded by sight. He descried at last the green shores and heard the singing of the birds. The poet Schiller, indeed, referring to the ardor of his faith, says that had Columbus not found a continent he would have created one. In truth, if he had not found the land, had there been no real object answering to his belief, his faith would have been merely a fancy.

It is equally obvious that nothing is added to the sum of religious truth by believing in it; nothing is subtracted by indifference or disbelief. As well might one think of creating or destroying the visible universe by opening or shutting the organ of vision. When a per-



son comes to believe in God, he adds not a single quality to the nature of that being with whom "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He simply discerns that which he had failed to see before: he finds God. No one imagines that the Prodigal Son created his father by returning to him. The forsaken father was always there, waiting for him. Faith in the gospel is simply the practical acknowledgment of a fact. The Apostle Paul reminds his readers that they have not to climb into heaven and bring Christ down, or to descend into the grave and bring him up. He has already lived among men, and he has risen. The victory of Jesus Christ over sin and over death is a finished achievement. Faith is that recognition of the fact which carries in it appropriate fruits in feeling and conduct. No one has understood better what faith is than Martin Luther, himself a great believer. "By faith," says Luther, "man sees into the heart of God." "God," says Luther, "is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, and the desperate, and of those that are brought even to nothing; and his nature is to exalt the humble, to feed the hungry, to give sight to the blind, to comfort the miserable, the afflicted, the bruised, the broken-hearted, to justify sinners, to quicken the dead, and to save the very desperate and damned. For he is an almighty Creator, and maketh all things of nothing."

Luther was not wrong in considering that the one essential thing in religion is faith. For without faith there is no real approach to God; and what is religion but converse or communion with God? Religion is a relation of person to person. The reveries of Pantheism are not religion in the proper sense of the word. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who seek after him. To speak to a being in whose existence one has no belief is little short of lunacy. To pour out gratitude, or to address a petition, to something held to be void of consciousness, incapable of hearing, is to bid farewell to common sense. So of the character of God; it has no practical influence on a man's thoughts or conduct except as he believes in it. Luther, moreover, was right, and only followed the Scriptures when he insisted that the source of all wrong-doing as well as of irreligion is the lack of faith. If men believed in God and in a hereafter as truly and as vividly as they believe in the reality of material things around them, temptations would be stripped of their power, sinful pleasure would have no chance as a rival of the higher good. Men sin because they mistake shadow for substance, and substance for shadow. They deify creatures of God, believing in them with an

idoltrous faith. Not seeing them in contrast with an equally clear view of things of imperishable value, they magnify their worth. They are drawn to them by an irresistible attraction, because they are cut off from the influence of the counter-force. They seek to slake the thirst of the spirit for the moment, striving to forget that "whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

We started with the thesis that the truths of religion rest upon good and sufficient evidence. Comparing these truths with well-grounded beliefs of a different species, where the things believed are within the circle of every-day life, we shall find that the first difference is in the *kind* of proofs presented, not in the comparative degree of weight that belongs to them in the two cases. As regards religious truth the proofs are not experimental. We cannot apply to them the tests of the measuring-rod and the crucible, and other criteria, of a tangible kind, which appeal to the senses. The evidence is, to say the least, equally weighty, but is not of the same sort. Among recent theological writers no one has set forth this not unfamiliar distinction with more force and originality than Mozley. Even in astronomy, not only is the reasoning in great part of a demonstrative kind, being mathematical in its nature, but it has the advantage of being verified by the observed fulfillment of prediction. The eclipse draws a curtain over the disk of the sun at the very moment set down in the almanac. The comet makes its appearance, fulfilling with absolute punctuality a prophecy recorded centuries before. It may be doubted whether astronomical truth—truth so amazing and almost bewildering in its nature—would gain the assent of the common mind were it not verified to everybody in this visible and astonishing way. Now the only thing in religion analogous to these external tests is the miracle, including prophecy, which is one form of miracle. The miracle is a sign, a kind of experimental proof, an appeal to the senses as an aid to faith. Jesus wrought miracles only where there was already a germinant faith. He said to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Jesus manifested himself to the senses of the doubting disciple and that disciple believed. It is a higher thing to believe when there is nothing but testimony, and when the internal probability of the fact is thrown into the scale and avails to carry the mind's assent.

It is therefore an error, either undesigned or intentional, of skeptical writers to describe faith as an arbitrary, groundless acceptance of doctrines in behalf of which no proof is possible. This is to confound faith and credulity. It makes religion the equivalent of superstition. Mon-



taigne, in his "Essays," in his genial way of avoiding whatever might give offense or raise a dispute, affords an example of this practice of relegating faith to a province quite apart from reason. The open rejection of religious truth is avoided by this urbane method of remanding the creed to a department where it is presumptuous for plain mortals to intrude. Hume, in his "Essays," Gibbon, in his history, following a common practice of freethinkers in the last century, in an ironical or sarcastic vein, not unfrequently refer to faith as something too sacred to rest on proof. Thus religious beliefs are made to appear to hang in mid-air, without any support. But the foundation of these beliefs is no less solid for the reason that empirical tests are not applicable to them. The data on which they rest are real, and the inferences from the data are fairly drawn.

The first peculiarity of the truth accepted by faith is, then, the absence of the external or experimental sort of proof in confirmation of it. In addition to this peculiarity, the truths of religion, while they are of the character just described, summon the mind to a forth-putting of energy in an extraordinary degree. An exertion of will is requisite. Take the fundamental truth of religion, the existence of a personal God. The proofs of the being of God are so strong that they would suffice to produce conviction in every reasonable mind if the proposition were not one so amazing in its nature. To accept it and rest in it requires a certain energy of trust. "This principle of trust," says Mozley, "is faith — the same principle by which we repose in a witness of good character who informs us of a marvelous occurrence — so marvelous that the trust in his testimony has to be sustained by a certain effort of the reasonable will." The timidity of reason has to be overcome by a courageous exercise of will. In appropriating, or making our own, the things of faith, there is a venture to be made on the ground of the evidence, without the stimulus and support of an appeal to the senses. In matters of the highest moment, which affect our destiny, we have to go upon trust; a reasonable trust, to be sure, yet requiring to be maintained even in the face of impressions, seemingly adverse to it, which come in through the senses. Now, unless the phenomena which are the reasonable ground of faith, and which pertain on the one side to our moral and spiritual experience, are vividly apprehended, the soul will be too timid to make the venture. The stake is too great, the issue too momentous. We are called upon to take a leap in the dark, without seeing what our feet are to touch. There is proof enough, but there is a seeming conflict with the senses. The elements of uncertainty are at once exaggerated. Courage

gives way. Many people are afraid in the dark, out of doors and in their own homes, even when they know that there is no rational ground for apprehension. Infidelity is a species of cowardice.

In a charming passage of the *Phædo*, Socrates, after much wise talk about the future life, says: "To affirm positively that all is exactly as I have described would not befit a man of sense. But, since the soul is evidently immortal, that this or something like it is true of our souls and their future habitations — this I think it does befit him to believe, and it is worth risking his faith upon, for the risk is a glorious one indeed." And then, later, when Crito inquires, "How do you wish us to bury you?" "Just as you please," he answered, "if you only get hold of me and do not let me escape you." And quietly laughing and glancing at us, he said: "I cannot persuade Crito, my friends, that this Socrates who is now talking with you and laying down each one of these propositions is my very self; for his mind is full of the thought that I am he whom he is to see in a little while as a corpse; and so he asks how he shall bury me."

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews enumerates a list of heroes of faith — Abraham, Moses, and the others. Their faith nerved them to risk everything without fear as to the result. It was not an irrational confidence. Had it been a groundless trust, their bravery would have been mere foolhardiness. Their distinction was that they had the energy to act upon an expectation which, though reasonable in its character, ran counter to all the appearances. Not without truth has it been said of heroism in general, that it partakes of a supernatural quality.

A number of years ago I read an account of a visit made by the Prince of Wales, in company with an eminent man of science, to a great iron foundry. They stood together by a stream of red-hot iron, flowing slowly out of the smelting furnace. "Do you believe in science?" said his companion to the Prince. "I do," was the reply. "Then thrust your moistened finger into that stream." The Prince at once divided the stream with his finger, and the finger was not harmed. Whether this particular incident occurred or not, the same thing is not unfrequently done by workmen in foundries. On the instant of the contact of the hand with the fiery liquid there ensues what the scientific men call the "spheroidal state." The sudden evaporation is somehow attended by a repellency that perfectly shields the flesh, for the moment, from contact with the burning substance through which it passes. A learned professor has related to me that having had occasion to refer, in a popular lecture, to the principle of the spheroidal state, and to ex-



plain how a stream of molten iron could be thus parted by the naked hand with impunity, a lad among his hearers informed him that his father, a workman in a foundry near by, had often done it. The lecturer repaired to the place, and the workman repeated the experiment in his presence, but, in reply to an inquiry, informed him that the other workmen were afraid to do it. The professor to whom I refer has more than once cut with his finger the glowing stream as it flowed out in a slow current from the heated furnace.

We may suppose a person to understand the principle of the spheroidal state, and how it is that the hand, with only the ordinary amount of natural moisture upon it, can be safely passed through such a current. Nevertheless, he might shrink from making the experiment. The sight of the red-hot liquid might induce a recoil which his faith in the principle would not suffice to overcome. Even in the case to which I have referred, the workmen who saw one of their companions try the experiment again and again were kept back by a certain timidity from following his example. An unwonted energy, an unwonted boldness, are requisite to neutralize the impression made on the mind through the senses, let reason say what it will.

It follows that there are grades of faith. We read in the Gospel of Mark that a father who had brought his poor diseased child to Christ "said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'" The Evangelist Luke records the fact that the disciples of Jesus came to him with the prayer, "Increase our faith." The petition implies that there is a difficulty in believing. Many Christian disciples of later times have found it to be so, both in respect to that general faith in God's presence, power, and love which the Apostles then had specially in mind, and in respect to trust in the revelation of his mercy through Christ. Where there is intellectual assent, another element must be mixed with it to constitute faith. Why do we not *feel* that God is near us and with us; that not a sparrow falls to the ground without him; that he really pities and cares for us; that he will provide for us; that he loves us even when he makes us suffer; that he can make all things which occur to work together for our good; that nations, like individuals, are in his hand? Why do we not feel that if we are stripped of all earthly good, he can more than make up the loss to us; that in his favor there is life in the highest sense — true joy? In a word — why is not God more real to us? How near is the power on which we depend for life and breath and all things! How narrow, after all, is the space that is open to the action of our wills! Its boundaries are close upon us, and

on every side is God! The place and time of our birth, our personal characteristics, the outward circumstances of our life, the results of our plans and endeavors, the length of our days, all — save the limited effects left contingent upon our choice — are determined by God. Man proposes, but God disposes. He is without us, ordering the course of events. He is within, speaking through conscience. He hems us in on every side, and confronts us at every turn. Why should he be to us as if he were not?

No doubt the considerations already brought forward may suggest a partial answer to the question. We live in a world of sense and the world of sense abides with us, early and late. We live in the midst of things seen and temporal. The material aspect of human existence is constantly before us. On every hand is the appalling spectacle of human decay and death. The generations come and go — carried away "as by a flood." After all, however, this explanation of the dullness of faith appears inadequate. It does not go to the root. We believe in a thousand things that we do not see. The past history of the world I did not myself witness. I believe in the existence of a million stars which I have never beheld. But these, it may be said, are in their own nature visible. But heat is invisible; the force of gravity is invisible. Yet we believe in these. We believe that the men and women about us have souls, although we have never seen them, nor are they capable of being seen; for

We are spirits clad in veils,  
Man by man was never seen;  
All our deep communing fails  
To remove the shadowy screen.

Why should the visible scene around us intercept the view of God instead of manifesting him? When we look within, when in a truthful spirit we inquire before the bar of our own judgment in what spirit we have lived, and when we contemplate mankind earnestly, in their present condition and their past history, we have to confess that human nature is afflicted with a malady; which yet is not properly called a malady, since men accuse themselves and blame themselves on account of it and on account of the multiform types of wrong-doing that spring out of it, as fruits from a tree. We may leave it, if we choose, to philosophers and to theologians to discuss the origin of sin, how it spread, and the grounds of personal responsibility for it. Of the fact of sin there can be no question. In one of Professor Huxley's recent excursions into the field of theology he drops for a moment from his usually confident and almost hilarious mood into a more pensive strain. I quote the para-



graph, printing, however, two or three words in a type that will call to them special attention :

I know no study which is so unutterably saddening as that of the evolution of humanity as it is set forth in the annals of history. Out of the darkness of prehistoric ages man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute only more intelligent than the other brutes ; a blind prey to impulses, which as often as not lead him to destruction ; a victim to endless illusions, which make his mental existence a terror and a burden and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle. He retains a degree of physical comfort, and develops a more or less workable theory of life, in such favorable situations as the plains of Mesopotamia and of Egypt, and then, for thousands and thousands of years, struggles with varying fortunes, attended by INFINITE WICKEDNESS, bloodshed, and misery, to maintain himself at this point against the greed and the ambition of his fellow-men. He makes a point of killing and otherwise persecuting all those who first try to get him to move on ; and when he has moved on a step, foolishly confers post-mortem deification on his victims. He exactly repeats the process with all who want to step yet farther. And the best men of the best epochs are simply those who make the fewest blunders and commit the fewest sins.

How much truth there is in this vivid picture of the past of mankind is plain to all thoughtful persons. What is worthy of note is that along with what is said of the " evolution of humanity," and notwithstanding the apparent sanction given to that unproved type of evolutionary theory which makes man at the start nothing but an intelligent brute, there is still a perception that his career is something more than a chapter in natural history. That is, moral history is not completely metamorphosed into natural history. There has been " INFINITE WICKEDNESS." Nay, more ; the most that can be claimed for the " best " of men is that they " commit the fewest sins." Has the brilliant naturalist ever pondered what is involved in these unquestioned facts ? Has he ever grasped them in their full purport, and sought to understand what they presuppose respecting the race of mankind ? Is he wise enough to be sure that the solution of them in the Scriptures, and the Christian explanation of the radical source of the " bloodshed and misery," the " greed and the ambition," the " endless illusions " on which he dwells so pathetically, is not, after all, the most philosophical and satisfactory of all solutions ? Grant that sin, in its origin and diffusion, and the union of individual responsibility and guilt with a common moral depravity coextensive with the race, involves mystery. May it not be, as Coleridge has said, the one mystery that makes all things else clear ? Grant that even when sin is perceived to be the root of misery, it is hard fully to explain the slowness of the divine

process of recovery and redemption, yet the gravest difficulty is taken out of the way. A dark shadow is removed from the character of God and his administration.

The paragraph which I have quoted from Professor Huxley recalls a striking passage from the pen of a most gifted man, but a man quite different in the cast of his thoughts from the distinguished naturalist. The passage which follows is extracted from the " Apologia " of John Henry Newman. After speaking of the certainty which he has of the being of God, on the ground of the inward testimonies of heart and conscience, he adds :

Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only ; and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God drawn from the general facts of human society ; but these do not warm me or enlighten me ; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral being rejoice. The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of " lamentations and mourning and woe."

To consider the world in its length and breadth, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienations, their conflicts ; . . . the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity ; the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, moral anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries ; the dreary, hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so perfectly yet exactly described in the Apostle's words (having no hope and without God in the world) — all this is a vision to dizzy and appal ; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact ? . . . Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace, his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from one cause or other, his parents were ashamed. . . . And so I argue about the world ; if there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact ; a fact as true as the fact of its existence ; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God.

I have not quoted the whole of these impressive paragraphs of Newman, but I have quoted enough to show the points of strong resemblance between this description of the feelings excited by a calm survey of men and their history, and that given in the citation



from Professor Huxley. If Newman inserts in the dark catalogue "the prevalence and intensity of sin," the phrase is equivalent to the "infinite wickedness," the contemplation of which saddens the mind of Huxley. But the difference is that the theologian does not suffer that most terrible fact of evil involving guilt, which exhibits itself everywhere in human history—a fact in its very nature abnormal; the abnormal character of which cannot be denied without a denial of the fact itself—to belightly passed by. He sees in it, in the universality of transgression, proof that in some inscrutable way the race has made shipwreck of itself. There is a source—however incapable it may be of full explication—of this corruption, which, be it never forgotten, is not physical, but is moral and culpable. There must be a *fons et origo malorum*. Writers of the class of Professor Huxley can see and acknowledge the "infinite wickedness" of the world, and designate it by its right name. They can see that the only merit of "the best men of the best epochs" is that they "commit the fewest sins." They call them "SINS" and distinguish them from "blunders." They confess with pain that immoralities and crimes make up a great part of the annals of mankind. Theorizing about "the evolution of humanity" has to reconcile itself, somehow or other, with human responsibility and with the appalling moral depravity which has spread over the race. It is seen clearly enough that to seek to turn, by any hocus-pocus of speculation, whether physical or metaphysical, evil into good, to transmute sin into something not base or blameworthy, is to undertake to paralyze conscience and to undermine the moral basis of society. So here remains the awful fact of sin, and of a common sin, or of sin that is common. Here is the fact which Professor Huxley terms the "*infinite wickedness*" that is and has been in the world since men began to exist in it. Here is the reason why Professor Huxley, and every other man who honestly goes through an act of self-judgment, is obliged to bow his head like the publican in the parable.

Sin being an undeniable fact, and being in its nature an element of disorder, that our perception of God and of things spiritual should be to a certain degree darkened by the perversion of the will in its inmost inclination, by the "infinite wickedness" which Professor Huxley deplures, and of which he truly says that the "best men of the best epochs" partake, is what might naturally be expected.

Light is thus thrown on the psychology of doubt and disbelief. We have to take account of the fact that we have fallen into a habit of mind discordant with our nature,—that better nature which is affiliated to God,—and one

effect of this perversion is to obscure the discernment of things supernatural. The life of self which we lead, and which Christ undertook to destroy,—the habit of living to the world and of placing our chief good, and seeking the satisfaction of the spirit, within the bounds of created nature,—is the radical source of unbelief. We have not liked to retain God in our knowledge. Herschel remarks of the cosmic system as revealed by astronomy, that it is directly opposed to the ordinary conception of men. To them the earth is the center; the sun moves in a circle around it; the starry heavens are a canopy stretched over it. Science contradicts and upsets this natural view of things. But not more than the truth of religion subverts that habit of thought in which the soul is self-centered and the world is looked upon as tributary to its gratification. It is a dictum of common sense, as well as a word of the Lord, that the heart will be where its treasure is. Can it be considered strange that the course of our mental life—the currents of thought and feeling—should be adjusted to the natural order within which, exclusively, our affections find their chosen objects, and above which our desires and aspirations do not rise? The laws of association by which the process of our thoughts is determined keep the attention upon the object of the heart's love. As to all that lies beyond, the vividness of our ideas, and, eventually, even our beliefs, are subject to the same influence. The perceptions that engender faith are wanting. The sense of dependence, humility in the room of self-assertion, the craving for something higher than earthly good, the sharp rebukes of conscience, are absent. Faith is a plant that cannot spring up in so barren a soil. One might as well hope to impart science to one void of curiosity and without any true sense of the value of knowledge. Receptivity of one kind or another is the door of access for all higher good.

If there be such a hindrance to the exercise of faith in general, a peculiar obstacle interferes with trust in the revelation of the love of God in the religion of the gospel. In this branch of the discussion it is pertinent to refer to the well-known phenomena of Christian experience. There is an abundance of testimony, in the history of the Church and in Christian biography, to sustain the remarks which are to follow. To facts of this nature the class whom Newman somewhere denominates "mere men of letters" may think it beneath them to attend. Not so will judge wise and candid students of human nature, be their creed what it may.

It often happens that when the habit of worldliness is partly broken up, and self-reproach is awakened, the feeling of unworthiness makes it hard to look upon God in any



other light than that of a judge. Like Luther, in his earlier days, we are inclined to think of Christ as having come into the world to condemn rather than to save. He seems to be a second Moses; only tenfold more rigid and austere than the first. We read the Sermon on the Mount, and find no difficulty in believing what he says of the rigor of the law, the ideal of obligation—penetrating to the inmost thought of the heart—finding in unrighteous anger the seed-principle of murder. We believe all this; but we do not so easily believe in the assurance that he is meek and lowly in heart; that “the bruised reed he will not break.” The invitation to come unto him and find rest is heard with a kind of distrust. There is a common saying that it is hard to forgive those whom we have injured. Certainly we are apt to imagine them to feel unkindly towards us. A sense of ill-desert banishes men from God the more effectually because they know it to be a true and right feeling, and know that if they condemn their sin God condemns it even more. Such is the effect of the moral ideal, brought within the pale of consciousness. But the law reveals man to himself; it does not reveal God to man save partially and in one relation. He is more than law and justice and holiness. There is a mercifulness deeper than all. He loves his enemies; and we are exhorted in the Sermon on the Mount to copy his example by doing good to those who treat us ill. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Yet, notwithstanding this manifestation of the love of God, and of his willingness to forgive the ill-deserving, the sense of guilt and of shame at the lives we have led may hinder us from believing in him. The Prodigal Son, when he resolved to go back to his father, only thought to apply for the place of a servant. “Make me as one of thy hired servants,” that should be his prayer. That was the extent of his hope. But when, weary, footsore, and famished, he caught sight of his father, hastening to meet him, and saw that his heart was full of love and pity, he forgot this part of his intended petition. He did not beg to be made a servant. All his dread was dispelled.

Now that we have glanced at the principal hindrances in the way of believing, it will not be wandering from our subject to inquire by what means faith may be increased.

Not by the mere exercise of the understanding—the inquisitive and reasoning faculty. The understanding, it has been all along implied, has its rights in matters of religion. We cannot be required to believe anything in conflict with the dictates of sound reason. But when men talk of reason and of a supposed conflict between Christianity and reason, it is impor-

tant to inquire what precisely is signified by the term. Whose reason is meant? Is it the reason of an immature mind? Is it reason warped by prejudice, heated by passion, or blinded by conceit and self-admiration? A conflict between reason as thus described and the Christian system is of no significance in opposition to the latter. When we speak of the accordance of Christianity with reason, we mean the reason of a right-minded man whose intellectual vision is purified. We mean reason regenerated. The Christian cause need not shrink from answering to a tribunal thus qualified for passing judgment. In the case of an historical religion like Christianity we have a right to examine the testimony to the facts offered to our credence. To attribute all sorts of doubt and questioning to an evil heart is quite unwarrantable. To condemn dissent from the tenets or interpretations of a particular sect or school, as if it were infallible, is arrogant. At the same time our convictions of religious truth do not take their rise in the understanding. Define it as you will, there is such a thing as spiritual discernment. A quickened receptivity develops an insight analogous to higher perceptions in the domain of poetry and art. There are truths which shine in their own light. They impress the soul directly with the evidence of their reality. They will sometimes flash on the mind after long waiting and fruitless groping in the dark. Christ did not say: Blessed are men of talents; blessed are those who have the ability and leisure for investigation; blessed are the keen logicians. But he said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”; “Blessed are the pure in heart”; “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” He took a little child, and placed him in the midst of his Disciples, as an example of the humility required for admission into his kingdom. His first followers were not distinguished for their intellectual powers. They were unlearned men. It is found in these days, not unfrequently, that men eminent for their intellectual powers and acquirements are unbelievers. Numerous examples, to be sure, of faith on the part of men equally eminent, men like Kepler, Leibnitz, Newton, Faraday, are not wanting. But apart from numerous examples of the power of Christianity to convince the most powerful minds, no Christian believer has any occasion to be disquieted for the reason that men excelling in science or scholarship stand aloof from the gospel, or even if they profess atheism. If the secret of unbelief, or its inmost source, be the alienation of the heart from God, what is there in mere intellectual culture to furnish a remedy? A man may not be cured of a moral distemper by getting knowledge, any more than by getting fame, or getting money.



Two things are to be borne in mind. In the first place, there is abundant evidence that an *awakening* of conscience, or a quickening of moral sensibility in any form, will often dissipate doubt, and create an inward assurance in another way than by the solving of intellectual problems. It is frequently seen, also, that the understanding, even when its path is made smooth, its difficulties cleared up, its hard questions answered, does not engender faith. A negative work is accomplished, but perhaps nothing more. The bark is all ready to move on the waters, the sails are spread, but there is no breeze to fill them. To break through the bonds of nature, and lay hold of the supernatural — that all our reasonings do not lend us the power to do. Fetters have been shaken off which held us to the earth, but no wings have been given on which to soar aloft. Light has come, but not life.

Logic alone cannot develop faith. But more is to be hoped from that kind of thoughtfulness which tends to detach the heart from earthly good. He who learns how insufficient the world is for the soul will be prepared to turn to something higher. For this reason, in a multitude of instances, trouble has proved to be a school of faith. One who has trusted in riches, but who is despoiled of them and reduced to poverty, looks about for something more substantial to rest upon. One who has made a god of reputation, but becomes, either with or without his fault, unpopular and odious, or obscure and forgotten, is naturally prompted to seek for a good more satisfying and more lasting than the breath of human praise. How many have learned more of God in one hour of bitter sorrow, when bereaved of those who made a part of their life, than they had learned in years of study! They open the Bible, and hear there messages from the Unseen which before had fallen on listless ears. Bowed down with grief, they hear the sweet and majestic words, "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." When the light goes out on the hearthstone, when nothing meets the eye but tokens left behind by those gone from us, no more to return, then, perchance, we lift our eyes from the darkened earth, and lo! like the patriarch of old, we see the heavens radiant with stars not seen in the glare of day. Out of anguish that seemed unbearable, out of paroxysms of grief, out of the long hours of dull pain, are plucked fruits precious enough to outweigh the suffering which they cost. The soul is brought a little nearer to God. Saints there have been who have welcomed pain. Pascal prayed: "If the world filled up the affections of my heart while I was in bodily vigor, let that vigor be laid low if my spiritual good require it!" "Dispose of me altogether as thou

shalt see best! Replenish or impoverish me as thou wilt! But conform my will to thine; and enable me, in an humble and entire submission, and a holy confidence, to wait thy providential guidance, and to acquiesce in thy gracious disposal!"

It is sometimes made a reproach to religion that it is the refuge of the weak, the disappointed, the desponding. But the question is whether the realities of existence are not more truly discerned from the point of view gained by such — whether the mental vision is not clearer.

Not long after the death of his wife, Thomas Carlyle wrote to his friend Erskine of Linlathen as follows: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done" — what else can we say? The other night, in my sleepless tossings about, which were growing more and more miserable, these words, that brief and grand prayer, came strangely into my mind, with an altogether new emphasis, as if written and shining for me in mild pure splendor on the black bosom of the night there; when I, as it were, read them, word by word, with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure that was most unexpected. Not perhaps for thirty or forty years had I ever formally repeated that prayer; nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul it is; the inmost aspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature; right worthy to be recommended with an 'After this manner pray ye.'" How did Carlyle come to see what he had never seen before, and to feel what he had never before felt? Have the teachers of the Church in all ages been so far astray, when, following Christ and the Apostles, they have talked of a blindness of mind and of spiritual light?

Another effective mode of promoting faith is obedience, even if, owing to the dullness of the organ of hearing, one hears but faintly the voice of him who commands. With obedience there begins a rectification of the will, and a quickening of the power of discernment will follow. We are then steering by the right star, albeit we dimly perceive it. No man has any assurance that he will discover religious truth unless he has first made up his mind to live by it. It is ordained that we shall feel our way in religion. The truth of religion is bread for the hungry; we must "taste and see" that the Lord is good. Even more important is it to bear in mind that the gates of light are shut to him who is not bent upon walking in the light. "If any man will [or rather, willeth to] do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."



Here not thinking, but doing, is made the road to knowledge.

Another means of increasing faith is the contemplation of Christ. Wherever men are to be lifted above the ordinary plane of character and achievement there is need of the inspiration of personal leadership. The history of every nation's deliverance from peril or from degradation illustrates this truth. The highest of all illustrations is afforded in Christianity. Christ came to draw men out of the life of unbelief into a fellowship with himself; a fellowship in his own spiritual life of communion with the Father. Here on earth he himself lived by faith. We are invited to look to him as the Author and Finisher of our faith. The word here rendered "Author" is the same as that which stands for "Captain" where he is called "the Captain of their salvation," and means both example and forerunner. He is the "Author" or forerunner in faith, since, by looking forward to the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame. His victory on the cross was by faith; a faith which he would fain impart to us. He replied to the Tempter that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. He thanked the Father for choosing humble men to be his disciples, because it seemed good in the Father's sight. Faith upheld him in the garden when he said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"; and on the cross when he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He is the vine, we are the branches. By looking to him we become partakers of his inward life; the life of faith as well as of holiness and peace. If his communion with God was a real thing and not a mockery and a delusion, then all that is presupposed in that communion is also real. He inspires with faith by his own example.

The last and principal means of deepening faith to be adverted to is prayer. The Disciples came to Jesus with the supplication, "Increase our faith." Mere thinking and striving will not avail. Christ thanked the Father for the faith of the Disciples, because it was the Father who had hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. Of Peter's fervent avowal of faith in him as the Son of God he said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Whoever seeks to enliven his own faith, or the faith of others in whom he is interested, finds out by experiment that thought and argument and entreaty do not suffice. Light must come from the source of light. Nothing is left but to resort directly to God.

No help but prayer,  
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world  
And touches him that made it.

And here there is a well-founded assurance that none apply to God in vain. There is one prayer that may be offered with an absolute certainty that the very thing sought for will be granted. With respect to everything else, in our limited knowledge of what is best for us, we have to connect with each petition an acknowledgment of submission to the divine will and wisdom. We implore God to give—but to withhold, should it seem to him best. But to the prayer for the enlightening Spirit of God no proviso need be appended. The doctrine of a divine influence even the most enlightened heathen have found no difficulty in accepting. It is declared without qualification in the Scriptures that God is willing to give his Spirit to them who ask. We can apply to him, if there be in us faith enough to go to him at all, confident that we shall receive the very thing that we desire for ourselves. He can open the eyes of the blind. He can touch the soul with his own mysterious, life-giving Spirit, and quicken it to a perception of realities now dim and shadowy. He is willing to do that: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Whoever is baffled by mysteries that he cannot unravel, and confused by problems that he cannot solve, can approach God as a child, and ask the Father to teach him.

Poor Hartley Coleridge wrote these lines, out of a heart surcharged with suffering:

Be not afraid to pray—to pray is right.  
Pray, if thou canst, with hope; but ever pray,  
Though hope be weak or sick with long delay;  
Pray in the darkness, if there be no light.

Pray to be perfect, though material leaven  
Forbid the spirit so on earth to be;  
But if for any wish thou dardest not pray,  
Then pray to God to cast that wish away.

The truly great poets are the profoundest preachers. These are words of Tennyson:

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy  
voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them  
friend?

*George P. Fisher.*