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THE ETERNAL RELIGION.

THE ETERNAL RELIGION

By

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THIRD IMPRESSION

BOSTON: THE PILGRIM PRESS.
LONDON: JAMES CLARKE & CO.

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Preface.

Amid the seeming confusions of our time there is, amongst leading minds, growing into ever clearer vision the main lines of the structure which, when fully in view, will be recognised by humanity as the Eternal Religion. The earlier theologies were advance sketches which, we are now coming to see, were not only incomplete but, in important respects, were wrongly drawn. We are better equipped to-day than the older framers of systems. We are in a more favourable position for discerning between the evanescent and the permanent, between what are essentials and what are matters of detail.

It is the peculiar privilege of our age to have come into possession at once of the entire heritage of the past centuries, with their vast endeavours after ultimate truth, and at the same time of a scientific method for assaying their results. In what I have here advanced I have tried to utilise the advantages of that position. I have kept always before me the idea of religion as at once a principle and a history. Its story, properly considered,

is that of eternal ideas expressed, with varying degrees of clearness, in historical personalities. The progress both of the ideas and of the personalities has, it is here maintained, reached, so far, its highest term in Christianity, which is accordingly here treated as the Eternal Religion. In the exposition of it under this view I have tried first to prepare the ground by the exhibition of certain principles, the proper apprehension of which seems essential to a grasp of the theme as a whole. Following this I have dealt with some of the leading positions of Christianity, with a statement of the grounds on which its claim rests for validity and permanence. The succeeding chapters offer applications of religion, as thus expounded, to some of the more prominent phases of present-day life.

While dealing with the final religion, the book, I need hardly say, lays no claim itself to finality. It is the barest of sketches. It merely suggests the roads along which the thought of the future seems likely to travel. Its purpose will be fully served if it help in any humble degree to a better apprehension of those great facts, and of those spiritual forces upon which the humanity, both of to-day and of to-morrow, must sustain its inward life.

J. B.

LONDON,
August, 1905.

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The Eternal Religion.

I.

The Eternal Revelation.

The late Auguste Sabatier, in his essay on "Religion and Modern Culture," describes in powerful language the gulf that has opened in Europe between science and the Church. For two hundred years the two forces have been in antagonism. They represent two opposing principles. The one founds itself on the freest inquiry. The other rests on external authority ; an authority which derives from the past, which declares truth to be an affair of a revelation made to men ages ago, and which is not to be added to nor taken from. He gives the result of the conflict in the country he knows best, his own France. Irreligion, he says, has swept over it like a sirocco. A later authority says there are to-day less than two millions of practising Catholics in that population of forty millions.

The rest are, for the most part, practically outside Christianity.

The conflict here described is, of course, not confined to France. It rages all over the civilised world. In England, where religion is an active interest, there have been abundant attempts at compromise, most of them as futile as they were well-meaning. Amongst Protestants, where the principle of authority had been shifted from an infallible Church to an infallible Bible, we have seen endeavour after endeavour, by means of interpretations fearfully and wonderfully made, to join modern science to ancient Genesis. The difficulty here is that to our faith in the Scripture has to be added an equally implicit faith in the interpreters, an embarrassing business when some half-dozen of them, at odds with each other, claim at the same moment our allegiance. The position to-day amongst both religious teachers and their followers is, in this matter, entirely unsatisfactory. They are carrying two sets of ideas in their minds, to each of which they in turn defer, but which they are quite unable to reconcile. They believe in science; they believe in revelation. They accept the truth which is being arrived at by observation and research; they live morally by another truth which they hold has come down from heaven. But when these two appear to clash, as is often

enough the case, the modern believer has no solution of the difficulty. He is only uneasily conscious that his two life theories are somehow at war, and his soul suffers accordingly.

It is time this war was ended, and that can only be in one way. Religious peace will come, a peace final and abiding, when men everywhere recognise that these two things are, after all, one ; that science and revelation are really the same thing ; that there is no true revelation that is not science, and that there is no true science that is not revelation. Humanity has been long, and by devious routes, working its way towards this conclusion, and at last it is fully in sight. To accept it, we know, means to cut through a greatmany venerable ideas, but, *crede expertis*, when we have done the business, we find ourselves spiritually not one penny the worse. "What," exclaims some one, "are we then to put Scripture on the same level as science ; are we to regard the apostles as inspired in no other way than a Copernicus or a Newton ? "

Let us take here one thing at a time. The question for the moment is as to authority ; as to a solid enough basis for our belief. Waiving for the moment all speculative aspects of the matter, and coming straight to the practical issue, let us ask ourselves, "Which of the two bases of belief to-day is the more solidly established in the human mind, that

which founds itself on scientific grounds, or that founded on the old theological assumption? When a man puts this question frankly to himself there can be no doubt as to the answer. Science is to-day *the* authority. Do we not see, however, that by this admission we recognise that the inspiration question has really solved itself? We cannot have anything better than the best. There are no two sorts or degrees of truth. Truth to us is the thing we believe; the thing which brings to the mind its own irresistible proof. And so the truth brought to us by a Paul, and that offered by a Kepler, are seen as ultimately on the same basis, that of the evidence behind and in them; of their inherent congruity with the perceptions and laws of our mental life. What more do we want? Calvin was really, though perhaps unconsciously, recognising this principle when, on being asked on what he based the authority of the New Testament, if he threw away the dogma of the Church's infallibility, he replied that it carried its own authority. It appealed to the heart as colour appeals to the eye, and is its own revelation.

Observe that here we are in no way diminishing the religious value of revelation. We are simply broadening its range and placing it on a surer ground. For the universe which by slow degrees is opening to us by the telescope

and by spectrum analysis is one with the universe discovered to us in the religious consciousness and in the pages of the Bible. They are only varying aspects of the same reality. How certain this is is proved by the simple consideration that every advance made by science in cosmic knowledge has immediately reacted upon our theological ideas. The two things march together. The mere fact, for instance, that the patristic writers of the early Christian centuries based their interpretations of Scripture, and their whole thought system upon a world-view which included a creation in six days, a geocentric universe, and a literal interpretation of the Genesis story of the Fall, alters entirely our view of their own authority as spiritual teachers, as well as of the formal creeds of which they were the authors. Science has here inevitably asserted its authority in the sphere of doctrine. On the other hand we are beginning to see, as never before, the directly religious value of science. The great teachers have, indeed, always realised that. Let anyone read the lives of the pioneers of research; let him read the story of a Copernicus, of a Kepler, of a Newton, the men who, as one of them said, "read God's thoughts after Him," and note the religious awe which filled their spirits as the realm of truth opened before them; let him read of Copernicus,

when his great discovery burst upon him, regarding it as a new vision of God ; of Kepler, praying that "he might find in his own soul the God whom he discovered everywhere without," and he will see that here also is one of the open roads of the Spirit. The present attitude of the scientific leaders is, in this respect, most noteworthy. The materialism of thirty years ago has been outgrown. Men have tunnelled through their mountain and are reaching the sunshine on the other side. The utterances of a Kelvin, of a Crookes, of a Lodge, are a testimony that the age of revelation is not over, and that what is now being opened to us is on the same note and toward the same end as the utterance of prophets and apostles.

Where the Church has fallen into error, and brought confusion into our thinking, has been not in affirming a Divine revelation, but in restricting it to one particular time or set of times, and to one particular order of ideas. Whereas the Divine revelation is an eternal one ; has been going on from the beginning ; is going on now. It is a favourite idea of certain researchers, illustrated, too, with a vast mass of evidence, that every tribe of man has in its literature or customs the marks of a pure and elevated primitive faith. However that may be, one cannot read the world's story at any point without realising how, from the

beginning, the men of every nation have been under a spiritual discipline. Who that has looked into the Bhagavad Gītā but has felt this as regards India? When we read, too, the definition of religion by Asoka, the great Buddhist king: "Religion is an excellent thing. But what is religion? Religion is the least possible evil, much good, piety, charity, veracity, and also purity of life," can we doubt that here, also, was a heavenly leading? The Stoics were seekers after God if ever there were any; and when Epictetus declares: "When you have shut your door and darkened your room, say not to yourself you are alone; God is in your room"; we may be sure that some of them had not only sought God, but found Him. That was a truth which some of the early Fathers were not slow to realise. It is pleasant to see an Origen, a Clement, openly proclaiming that the great Greek and Latin teachers spoke by the inspiration of the Eternal Word. Zwingli, who saw so many things before his time, saw this also. In a "Confession of Faith" written just before his death, he speaks of "the assembly of all the saintly, the heroic, the faithful and the virtuous, when Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will mingle with Socrates, Aristides and Antigonus, with Numa and Camillus, Hercules and Theseus, the Scipios and the Catos, and when every upright

and holy man who has ever lived shall be present with his Lord." Luther and Bossuet, from their opposite camps, joined in condemning this utterance. We to-day, in the clearer light that has come to us, are sure that he was right and that they were wrong.

It is only in this view of the eternal revelation that we obtain any consistent or tenable position in relation to the Scriptures. But in that view all becomes clear. The Bible, properly read—read, that is, in the historical sequence of its books—offers the most striking illustration in literature of that spiritual evolution which constitutes the religious history of the world. These pages are like the fossil-crowded strata in a geological series, that reveal the successive steps along which life has ascended from the beginning. We see here how, under a never-ceasing guidance and uplift, man has slowly clarified his view of God, of his brother, of duty, of sacrifice, of life and death. And just as the geological story gives us at intervals gaps and convulsions, periods which mark fresh eras and the coming of a new order, so here, in the passage from the Old Testament to the New, we discern a fresh epoch opening, a glorious and unparalleled enhancement of man's spiritual life. The world has suddenly become warm with the Divine presence. God has come nearer to

man. Jesus, in His perfect consciousness of the Father, has made all things new.

But the revelation still goes on. For no fresh fact that emerges in the physical sphere but will shed its own light on the spiritual sphere. That the New Testament is a different book to us from what it was to our fathers is proof in itself that the revelation continues. The Spirit of Truth is ever fulfilling His mission. The human consciousness is a volume in which God incessantly writes, and each generation has its special contribution. Vinet has in this connection a prophetic word which we to-day need specially to remember. "The Reformation," says he, "is ever permanent in the Church even as Christianity. It is Christianity restoring itself by its own inherent strength. So that even to-day . . . the Reformation is still a thing to be done, a thing ever to be recommenced, and for which Luther and Calvin only prepared a smoother and broader way."

II.

Doctrine and Experience.

In the former chapter we discussed, as a phase of the eternal religion, the concurrent revelation opened to us in science and Christianity. We may now take a further step in reviewing some of the relations between the existent Christian theology and the primitive experiences on which it is based.

The world has had before it, for now some fifteen centuries, a system of closely-knit propositions, offered as the orthodox account of the Christian faith. The acceptance of these propositions has, during this time, been regarded by devout persons as a condition of salvation, as well as essential to character and respectability. Upon them has been reared a new morality, with a whole vocabulary special to itself of "virtues and their contrary vices." To doubt these propositions was a deadly sin; nay, more, it was a criminal offence, for which millions of people have been put to death. "Miscreant," than which we have nowhere a more opprobrious word, is a

literal translation of "misbeliever." One needs to be steeped in the patristic and mediæval literature to learn the terrific significance to men of those times of the word "heretic." As late as the sixteenth century we have Cardinal Pole declaring that thieves, murderers and adulterers were not to be compared in criminality with those who sought to tamper with the Catholic belief; while Newman, in our own time, speaks of the publisher of heresy as being "embodied evil."

But, as we have seen, there has arisen against this set of ideas a vast and ever-growing revolt. It was found for one thing that the propositions themselves were some of them doubtful. It was, perhaps, an even more important discovery that the mere acceptance of dogmas was in itself neither religion nor morality. Of this latter truth the orthodox centuries had indeed been piling up an only too abundant evidence. There has never been a lower morality, a more absolute dissoluteness, and lack of all the fibre of character than in times and places where every article of the Creed has been accepted without question. The brigands of Sicily and Spain are orthodox Catholics. The monks who figured in that unspeakable record the "Black Book" of the monasteries, compiled for Thomas Cromwell, had subscribed all the creeds. It was not of heretical sects, but of

the Roman clergy, that Jerome in the fourth century draws the life-like picture in which they are depicted as "flattering rich matrons, spending the day in calls at grand houses, admiring a cushion or a handkerchief by way of obtaining it as a present, walking abroad with hair æsthetically arranged and rings glittering on their fingers"; while monks are described as "worming their way into favour with the rich, and pretending to fast, while they repaid themselves with nightly revelry."

The revolt against doctrine once started took, as revolts are apt to do, extravagant forms. The creeds which had so despotically ruled, were in the fashionable circles of the eighteenth century mocked at and despised. In those "suppers of the gods," at Sans Souci, with Frederick the Great as host, and Voltaire, Algarotti, and D'Argens among the guests; when the wit was, according to Sulzer, who had been present, "more brilliant than anything he had read in books," the old beliefs were one of the prime subjects of raillery. Voltaire considered he had laughed the Christian doctrines out of existence. Condorcet arraigned them as built up in ignorance of natural laws. Diderot declared the Christian system to be "of all systems the most absurd and atrocious in its dogmas, the most unintelligible, metaphysical and intricate, and

consequently the most liable to divisions, schisms and heresies." A large portion of the adult male population of France has since that time been brought up in this opinion, or has embraced it.

But the Voltairean position about Christian doctrine is, with scholars and thinkers, as much out of date as the dogmatic despotism against which it was a reaction. The world, after flying from one extreme to the other, is at last, in these matters, reaching a more central and secure position. And the cardinal point in the new thought structure is, as we have said, the discovery of the proper relation between doctrine and experience. Doctrine, as we now see, is not the artificial product—vamped up by the priests for their own purpose—which the French Encyclopædists imagined. It has, on the contrary, its place in the nature of things. It is in every case the explanation, according to the lights available at the time, of certain human experiences. However high the metaphysics soar, their starting-point is a phase of consciousness through which the human spirit has at some time passed. The Athanasian Creed may seem at first sight a mass of cobweb speculation. But it would never have been in the world apart from a series of historical experiences. Its doctrine of Christ is the attempt, according to the formulas of that age, to put into words the transmitted

impressions of the first disciples concerning their Master. The doctrine of the Spirit is a similar rendering of inner movements of the soul.

But the whole crux of the modern question, the hinge of its demand for a theologic reconstruction, lies in the question: Granted the experiences, as genuine, and as unspeakably valuable, are the doctrines handed down to us a proper or adequate interpretation of them? In other departments it is a commonplace of history how experiences which for centuries were common to all men had been by all men misinterpreted. Countless millions had seen the sun's daily ascent into the heavens, and had obtained from the spectacle a view of the solar system proved afterwards to be false. It has been the world's age-long education to gain rules for the proper interpretation of phenomena. We are now discovering that we are only at the beginning of the lesson. How far, with all our training, we are competent as interpreters is seen in the modern attitude to Spiritualism. Here are experiences which no one can doubt. But what do they stand for? There are serious and capable men who declare them an obsession of evil spirits; a Huxley denounces them as frauds; a contemporary of his, fully his mental equal, the mathematician De Morgan, declares his conviction that the phenomena he had seen

"showed a combination of will, intellect and physical power which were not that of any of the human beings present."

But if we, after our ages of culture, in presence of facts of this order, are so much at sea in our explanations of them, how far, we are now asking, were the first Christian disciples, and the doctrine-makers who came after them, in a position to explain what they had felt in the presence of Christ? They called Christ divine; and truly, for they felt that in His person, word and influence, the Divine had in very deed come amongst them. Their language, as it has come to us, is the evidence of the stupendous spiritual impression the Master had made. In like manner their doctrine of the Spirit was a reflex of a blessed yet unspeakable work going on within them.

That they should call Christ divine was not only to express, as adequately as they knew how, what was to them an indubitably Divine Fact. It was, we have to remember, in strict accord with the whole former tradition of humanity. The world from the beginning has held, with a true instinct, that the Divine manifestation, wherever traceable, has been always through the human. It was from the human, indeed, men climbed to the idea of a Divine. It may well be, as Euhemerus maintained in the fourth century, and as Locke and Nietzsche after him have contended,

that the pagan gods were originally illustrious kings who were deified after death. All the forms of worship and all its vocabulary began on this lower plane. The kneeling, the uplifted hand, the prayer of intercession, the adoring words even, came first into history as addressed to human rulers. The final reference to an Unseen, Infinite and All Holy, was a later inspiration.

What is behind the human has ever been the mystery. And the mystery reached its culmination in Christ. He stood before the disciples with the Infinite as His background. And this Infinite behind Him was also within Him. The early Church did its best to describe that Infinite, with what results we know. But it is not these explanations that have given us Christianity or that have advanced religion. That was done by the soul's actual experiences. It was when the disciples felt their hearts "burn within them" in contact with the Master, when they realised the gracious uplift of His teaching, the ineffable peace He breathed upon them, that in them religion found its life and its self-propagating power. And it has been so ever since. When Wesley, at the meeting in Aldersgate Street in 1738, "felt his heart strangely warmed," and entered there and then into joy and peace in believing, there were forces at work which neither he nor we are fully competent to explain. But the

forces were there, and they were redeeming forces. It is here, in what men age after age have felt of the inner quality of the Gospel, of its mystic heavenly drawing of the soul towards peace and purity, that its abiding power consists. The doctrine may go. It is at best an explanation. But the experience is a fact, and remains. And it contains a doctrine grander than any we have had yet.

III.

The Eternal Commerce.

Walter Bagehot, in one of his essays, asks, "How can a soul be a merchant? What relations to an immortal being have the price of linseed, the fall of butter?" The question is flung out as a kind of challenge. And assuredly, in the many sordid aspects of modern business life, the soul, in any high sense of it, has little enough to do. And yet the soul has a commerce. There is, indeed, no aspect of its life which opens so wide a field as this of its give and take, of its incessant barter with men and things, with the universe it dwells in. It partakes to the full of that vast system of intercourse by which everything passes into everything else; by which earth and sky, sea and land, the light from Sirius and the fire in yonder grate, are united as in a cosmic zollverein, a league of perpetual and intimate exchange. It is, indeed, when we consider the soul's commercial methods, the business laws, so to speak, which from the beginning have been imposed on it, that we

obtain glimpses of what is yet to rule in the world's factories and counting-houses. If we attentively study what we have imbedded at the centre of us, we shall find there a political economy, a business system, not yet recognised on 'Change, but which is yet to rule. Ethereal in quality, it is yet solid as the hills, for it is rooted in the nature of things. The commercial "*vade mecum*" of the future will come out of the soul's primal intuitions; will follow its methods of getting and of giving. Let us examine one or two of these methods.

The soul begins as a receiver on a vast scale. It is as if a billionaire had invested his capital in us. How ludicrous the pose of independence when we think of our history! When our consciousness takes up the business of life it begins millions of years from the start. Through that immensity of time the universe has been in incessant labour to make you and me possible. It was there with its myriad forces, shaping a world for us, shaping a body, shaping a soul. The fingers on our hand, the eyes in our head, the separate mental faculties as we know them, have each a history of development marvellous almost beyond belief. If wealth is, as the economists say, the product of labour, at what figure, may we ask, would stand the inheritance we have come into, and that without a farthing paid on our part?

That is a part of the account. Another page of the ledger, always on the debit side, opens with our conscious life. Here again an incessant, unpaid for, receiving. We breathe the air of liberty. It was won by our forefathers, who, some of them, laid down their lives as the price. Our mind, as it opens, gulps knowledge, truth, beauty. Civilisation, the arts, music, science, the myriad conveniences of life, are there, waiting for us. And they are all gifts. Our billionaire, it seems, is fitting us up gratis and regardless of expense. Yet more. It is made plain to us that this largeness of reception is the condition and ground of our value. Our quality of being is according to our power of taking in. The universe, with all its wealth of being, is around the oyster just as much as around you and me. The difference between us is that the oyster cannot digest the universe as we can. Our faculties, our organs, are the most insatiate of beggars, incessant with their "give, give," at every point extracting from the world its precious things, and carrying them to that limitless absorber, our inner self.

At this stage of the account two points arise. For one thing, the story of our receptiveness should teach us something on the ethics of reception. If our account here be true, the cosmos lends no countenance to the ascetic view of life. The history of the

soul's ascent shows the reverse of a break with the world's treasures as a means of progress. It has been, on the contrary, by an ever-increasing capacity of absorption, by a multiplying of the channels and passages along which the outer world could flow to the inner, that the upward movement has been marked. And this holds of material as well as of spiritual goods. The two indeed cannot be separated. There were no inner function apart from the outer structure. The ethic of the future, recognising all this, will seek not to destroy wealth, but to increase it. Its effort will be rather for a wider distribution, so that each member of the family may come by his share.

The other point is as to our personal attitude towards receiving. There is a grace of accepting, of consenting with humility and gladness to be the receivers of gifts which many of us have not yet learned. The lack here is the peculiar failing of strong characters. Such, royally generous in their giving, forget sometimes that there is an even greater generosity of receiving. For often, to take a favour, to place ourselves under an obligation, and especially where the giver is, in the world's eye, inferior to ourselves, is the sweetest as it is the subtlest form of human kindness. It is offering our weaker brother his chance. A man feels his dignity when he

gives. It is the moment often of his highest self-realisation. Let us help him to that, where it is a help. Indeed, whenever we forget our essential dependence, both to one another and to that whole scheme of things which enfolds us; whenever we forget that our only proper attitude to the lowliest of our fellows, as well as to the Power whence all is derived, is that of humility and gratitude, we show disloyalty to the soul's first principles; forgetfulness of the whole road along which it has travelled.

Thus of receiving. But the ledger has another side. Our capitalist, lavish though he seems, does not appear to be a fool. His outlay is an investment. He expects a return. To vary our phrasing, the soul's history, as we have sketched it, offers to every rightly constituted mind a silent but irresistible appeal. From these colossal figures on the debit side the finger points to the opposite column with mute but eloquent interrogation. That enormous, piled-up indebtedness to life, what does it mean to us? Our nature in its very make contains the germ of the response. Linked with the afferent nerves which carry the universe to our inner sense, are the efferent nerves, designed to be the bearers of the output by which we seek to balance the account. It is this feeling of social obligation, weighing on every mother's son of us, which in our

view should form one of the chief features in modern education. We need to create in every young heart a sense of what life, as they possess it, has meant in toil and sacrifice to former ages, till their soul burns with a desire to repay. At every school-bench and college-desk, the question should arise, "What! Shall I sit at the world's banquet and feast on these good things that others have provided, and offer nothing in return?" The question should burn in them till they cry with Walt Whitman, eager with him to leap into the foremost files, "Pioneers, O Pioneers!"

Profoundly interesting is it also to note the inner laws according to which the soul, in its commerce, settles its debtor and creditor account. The method is significantly different from that current in some business circles. We hear of "so much work for so much pay," where the aim is to get the highest pay for the least work. There are transactions in which the contracting parties seek each to get the better of the other. That is not the soul's way. Observe the action of a high nature. Its commerce is that of a free giving as the result of a free receiving. It takes in of all sorts, transmuting, by its mystic chemistry, the raw material into a something higher and different. Like radium, an extract of an extract, which out of a dozen substances has become a new substance with infinite energy

and action ; so the soul, drawing in from every realm and corner of the world, turns these multiform ingredients into its own quality of being, to pour it henceforth upon the world as its own contribution to life.

This is the other, the royal side of the soul's commerce, an incessant giving, which becomes ever a nobler giving as our nature rises in quality. We talk of our charities. We give, in England, say the statisticians, fourteen millions a year in public charities. But the real giving finds no expression in figures. The true worker is, in his work, always first and foremost a giver. The artist, the poet, the writer, the singer, follow the law of the soul's commerce. "Paradise Lost," the "Moonlight Sonata," the "Laocoon" were never paid for in cash. The pay was in the joy of the worker, pouring out of his best. There is more cash moving in artistic circles to-day than of old, but the rule is still the same. With the true soul the one impelling motive is to offer of its highest.

But with such natures the best is not even in the visible work, good though that may be. At every conscious moment a great heart is exhaling into the world a something more precious than gold, more vital than art. Matthew Arnold, when he speaks of the early Christians as "drawing from the spiritual world a source of joy so abundant that it ran

over upon the material world and transfigured it," gives the best illustration of what we mean. The greatest happiness the heart of man knows is in its contact with an outflow of that kind. The first disciples willingly left all and followed Christ because of what they found in that contact. And as men approximate to that Highest Nature so is the preciousness of the gift of themselves. What such have to offer is beautifully expressed in the account given by Gregory Thaumaturgus of his meeting with Origen, in which he declares that " the first day of his receiving us was in truth the first day to me, and the most precious of all days, since then for the first time the true sun began to rise upon me." What a goal of character to aim at, even if not to reach, where the mere contact with us is reckoned as a red-letter day, as the hour of sunrise for the soul!

A topic like this has endless applications. The working, business world will never come to its best till it allows the soul's intuitions fuller play. The possibilities of life will never be properly realised until each one of us is intent on getting the best in order that he may give the best. I am defrauding my fellow if I do not seek to broaden and deepen my mind, with every labour and exercise, that I may speak to him from a fuller knowledge, a wider experience. What an immense

significance for all teachers lies in that remark of Stanley on Newman: "How different the fortunes of the Church of England might have been if Newman had been able to read German!" How dare any of us attempt to teach unless we have learned something, and unless we are continually learning more! And this learning will have to be more than a secular knowledge. Our commerce will have also to be with the Unseen. To us must apply that fine idea of Plutarch's, where, speaking of the daimon of Socrates, he declares that it was "the influence of a superior intelligence, and a diviner soul operating on the soul of Socrates, whose calm and holy temper fitted him to hear this spiritual speech."

IV.

Life as Symbol.

A FURTHER first principle of the eternal religion may be stated as that of the essential symbolism of all that is visible. That the things of this world, open to our senses, have another and hidden meaning, has long been a commonplace amongst serious people. Man has been persuaded of it from the beginning of the world. He has, indeed, expressed his conviction on this point in singularly odd forms. One of the earliest and most favourite methods of religious teaching has been the symbolic, the allegorical. What the Jews made of the Old Testament in this way can be seen by consulting Philo Judæus. But the Christian writers have not been behindhand. Origen's allegorical treatment of the Bible history takes one's breath away. There have been, indeed, successive schools of allegorisers concerning the most of whom Calvin's scathing indictment is not too severe : "Some hare-brained spirits take occasion from this to turn everything into allegory.

Thus they change dogs into men, trees into angels, and all Scripture into a laughing stock."

Extravagance apart, however, man has found enough in the nature of things to convince him of the inherent doubleness of life and the world. Both he and his environment, he discovers, are so constructed as inevitably to convey this impression. We cannot lift our hand without striking on this cosmic symbolism. Every simplest thing has a mystic invisible lurking behind it. Our natural is matched ever with its supernatural. Take a piece of writing. In itself it is a series of up and down strokes, black lines on a piece of white paper. But these strokes are loaded with invisibles. From behind them there may gleam the soul of a Shakespeare, out of them may flash wit and wisdom treasured there for three thousand years.

It is marvellous to note how this symbolism, the taking of an outside visible as representing a whole world of hidden values, has woven itself into human things. In the course of the Russo-Japanese war there was talk of a tremendous struggle round a Russian flag. Men died in heaps about that floating streamer. What was it? A soiled, ragged piece of silk. That was all the eye saw. But these men, who gave their life-blood to keep it from the enemy, recognised there,

woven into its folds, all that was dear to them—country, home and honour. Men eat and drink, the simplest and lowest of human acts. They are doing here what the animals do, urged by the same necessity. But the wild Arab will make the eating of his bread the covenant of an alliance with the stranger who shares it, and through centuries millions of believing men have taken bread and wine as symbols of the holiest they knew, taken them upon their knees, realising in the act things ineffable of Divine pity and love. Wonderful world, truly, in which, in this taking of bread and wine a man could see what Irenæus has expressed: "For as the bread which is produced from the earth when it receives the invocation of God is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of resurrection to eternity." It is not necessary to agree here with Irenæus to realise the wonder of the symbol to which he points us.

One might continue these illustrations endlessly. The world is full of them. Man persists in seeing more in clay and mortar than anything they yield to his senses. Yonder is a cottage built of them, the simplest village affair. Its worth as bricks and mortar is ludicrously small. To yonder traveller, who

has come from the ends of the earth to see it, and can hardly now see it for tears, it is the place of unspeakable memories and affections. Its walls are saturated with the invisibles that give value to life ; every stone is eloquent of the loved ones that are gone, of the faces and voices to which this stranger forty years ago bade farewell in his quest for fortune, but which he has carried in his heart ever since.

It is not strange that, with things like these close to his hand to teach him, man should have carried the significance of it all into his wider conceptions of life. How natural that, prompted thus on all sides, he should say to himself, "Is not, then, this the key to the whole riddle ? Is not all that I see simply a sign and representative of a greater, vaster thing behind ? " The Eastern world, in its doctrine of Maya, or illusion, the doctrine that the world revealed to our senses was a mere mirage, and that reality was to be sought elsewhere, had not read the writing quite accurately. We read better when we understand that what we see *is* reality, but only the outer edge of it. For there are degrees in reality, and we are as yet only in its outer courts. Mr. Haldane, in his Gifford Lectures, has struck nearer to the truth in his suggestive remark where, speaking on the outlook to a future life, he observes : "The mind looks

for the truth of those things as to be got, not so much by setting up something beyond, as by breaking down the reality of what is here and now, so as to transform what is appearance here and now into the presentation of another and higher aspect."

It is when we have properly grasped the idea of the world and life as a vast symbolism, the visible standing always as the representative of a greater thing behind, that we are in the best position for realising the proper significance of the main doctrines of religion. Multitudes of serious minds to-day are troubled sorely by the difficulties which science and modern criticism have raised as against the prominent Christian dogmas. The modern believer is startled on the one hand to find articles of his creed impugned by criticism, and on the other hand to find these same articles paralleled, to a wonderful degree of imitation, in other and alien faiths. His views of revelation, incarnation, atonement, resurrection, are, in the form he has held them, assailed by the weapons of history and of reason; they are, at the same time, to his astonishment, placed alongside of what seem almost exactly similar beliefs which Egyptians, Babylonians, Mexicans and a host of other peoples have held concerning the unseen world.

It is precisely at this point that our doctrine of the symbol comes in at once as a mediator

and an illuminant. For may we not say that the law of the double which we have found running through all life applies here also; and that the Christian doctrines, as men have formulated them out of the Christian facts, are themselves only representative and symbolic? They are not untrue; they are packed with truth. There is no great dogma that has risen out of the human consciousness and asserted itself with authority over generations of men but has some sure relation to the reality of things. Where we have made the mistake and got into the trouble is, that we have taken these statements as the final ones, as themselves the ultimate truth. Whereas they are no more the ultimate than our other surroundings, visible to the eye, are ultimate. At best they are the dim adumbrations of a reality whose other and higher aspects are slowly but perpetually disclosing themselves. Let no one doubt that there has been a Christian incarnation, or that Jesus Christ is other than, as Carlyle put it, "our divinest symbol." But our setting of the fact may be far enough away from the final one. So of the Christian atonement. When, in one of the earliest and most beautiful of the Christian writings outside the New Testament, the Epistle to Diognetus, we read this statement of Christ's death: "He Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities; He gave

His own Son to be a ransom for us, the Holy One for transgressors, the Righteous One for the unrighteous! . . . Oh, benefits surpassing all expectation, that the wickedness of many should be hid in a single Righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors," what do we make of it all? Do we accept every phrase here as the literal truth? Or do we reject the statement as inherently false? Neither. We see as through a glass darkly. But through the mists of this old interpretation we discern looming the proportions of a truth of life whose majesty and divine inspiration surpass all our efforts properly to express.

And so, we say, with all the great doctrines. It is not that the present movement of science and criticism will operate in the way of diminishing their proportions or their human value. The evolution of ideas on these high subjects, when it has reached its term, will have had the effect of heightening rather than of lowering their worth and sacredness. For, let us remember, the symbol is ever inferior to the thing symbolised. It is at best only a rough sketch of the actual. And what men have laboriously endeavoured to set forth in their creeds is always a truth immeasurably vaster and more benign than their presentation of it.

This law of the double, indeed, in whatever direction we apply it, yields ever the same result. It gives a new meaning not only to eternal things, not only to ideas and doctrines, but also to events. Is not the fact, the happening which meets us, often so grimly visaged, on life's road, also a symbol? Have we done with it when we have tasted its first rough impact? Is there not something behind, a spiritual wedded to this visible? The great souls have always believed there was, and so have been fearless in front of their event. What a word is that of Ignatius in view of his martyrdom: "The wild beasts are the road to God." To other eyes the lions that awaited him in the arena were just forces to tear and slay. To his eye they were the way to the Celestial City. And both were right; only the martyr's was the rightest right.

We ourselves, as we stand here in the world, are symbols. Our very body is a sacred mystery hiding immortal things. Its physical beauty is nothing but a hint of another beauty. The latest investigation, as represented by a Delanne, declares the human being to be "a psychic form which assimilates matter: when its energy is exhausted it assimilates matter no longer, and the physical body is disintegrated and the soul, in another form, pursues its career."

However that may be, we take our "here and now" as the prophecy of a greater thing behind. With Tennyson, we hold ourselves as

> Not only cunning casts in clay;
> Let science prove we are, and then
> What matters science unto men,
> At least to me? I would not stay.

To sum up. The world is according to the eyes with which we view it. There are men who find it nothing but a market in which goods are bought and sold; or who, like the Catius whom Horace satirises, regard it as a banqueting-place where gourmands may feast. But these people are not built high enough to see over a five-foot wall. To anyone who has reached the proper human proportions, the world opens in far vaster perspectives. He realises that he is only at the beginning. Amidst all uncertainties, of this he is sure, that the ignoble, the frivolous, the despairing view of life, is a false one. He is inspired with the belief expressed by the greatest and most Christian of our English statesmen, that "life is a great and noble calling, not a mean and grovelling thing, that we are to struggle through as we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny."

V.

The War of Good with Good.

In no direction has the present interaction of science with theology shown itself more impressively than in the view which is fast taking possession of the modern mind on the subject of good and evil. For nearly a millennium and a-half Christendom has held to the Augustinian view, of the essential and eternal difference between these two things. But to-day Augustine's empire over religious thought is trembling. We are beginning to see in how many directions his ideas were coloured more by his early Manicheeism than by the Galilean Gospel. And we have learned some other things since the fifth century. In particular the doctrine of evolution has changed the whole standpoint from which we look over the ethical field. A single sentence of John Fiske's gives us the main outlines of the new position. "Theology," says he, "has had much to say about original sin. This original sin is neither more nor less than the brute inheritance which every man carries

with him, and the process of evolution is an advance towards true salvation."

This is not the solitary utterance of an isolated thinker. One has only to turn in any direction of serious literature to realise how profound and widespread is the revolution of thought on this question. Spinoza is at the bottom of much of it. His declaration that the human passions are not defects, and his subtle remark that "we have not so much an appetite for what is good, as that we deem a thing good because we have for it an appetite," set men's minds on a road they have been travelling ever since. Some have travelled it to strange lengths. In America Walt Whitman preaches "there is, in fact, no evil; or, if there is, I say it is just as important to you, to the land, or to me, as anything else." From the Continent comes the word of Nietzsche that "all good things were originally bad things; every original sin has developed into an original virtue." And he adds in support of his paradox that "matrimony for a long time was a trespass; a fine was imposed for the presumption of claiming a woman for oneself." Finally, from a German Christian thinker, G. Prellnitz, we get this as the ultimate philosophy: "Everything inferior is a higher in the making; everything hateful is a coming beautiful; everything evil a coming good."

Are these new doctrines? Not entirely. In one aspect they appear, indeed, to be the echo of a very old one. We seem, in fact, to catch here the notes of the neo-Platonist teaching, that "Evil was a not-being, the necessary foil of the good, the shadow of the light," an essential condition of finiteness. The view is not dissimilar to that of the Alexandrian fathers Clement and Origen, who of all the Christian thinkers of the time, show the greatest breadth. In the "Stromata," Clement declares that "evil is involuntary, for no one prefers evil as evil." And he goes still further with the remark, "that nothing exists the cause of whose existence is not supplied by God. Nothing then is hated by God, nor yet by the Word." But the modern position, while not without resemblance to this earlier one, carries in it a distinct difference. It rests on another basis. The Alexandrian theory rested largely on speculation; the modern is an affair rather of scientific research. Our view is ceasing to be a metaphysic. It is deriving itself rather from plain facts.

Let us see in one or two particulars how matters stand. What is now dawning upon us is that the story of good and evil is nothing else than the story of human progress. What to us is now evil was an earlier good. It was the best thing known—until something better emerged which put a shade upon it. The

war, we see, has always been not so much of good with evil, as of good with good ; or rather of good with better. There was a time when the primitive instincts were the only incentive. There was nothing beyond them. A tiger's theory of morals is to get its hunger satisfied. There was a stage of the human story in which that was highest. St. Paul strikes at once the history and the philosophy here in his deep remark that "with the law is the knowledge of sin." It was when something higher came into the consciousness, that the old good became the new bad. And the whole fight and struggle of the world ever since has been between these two things, the fight has been always between the inferior and the superior good. In this view the saying of our German, that "everything evil is a coming good," is a reversal of the order. Rather should it be said that evil is an old decrepit good, a good outgrown, outworn and left behind in the upward march. When we sin we are simply falling back upon an earlier ideal, that of the prehistoric savage. We are deserting from the foremost files. From life's university we have come back to the dame school.

This struggle between the different goods is, we say, perpetually going on, and there is nothing so interesting as to watch its phases. Often we discern the clash of the two, which

becomes eventually a fusion into a higher third. A notable instance is that conflict between head and heart which came with the Christian Gospel. It has been a favourite reproach of opponents that the introduction of Christianity meant the eclipse and loss of what Greece had taught the world. We are pointed to the fact that the early Church tabooed art; that the decrees of its councils destroyed the freedom of human thought; that, in short, the Christian ecclesiasticism was the greatest of set-backs to intellectual progress. It is often forgotten in this indictment that what is here charged to the Church's account does not belong to it at all. It was not the religious question, but the break-up of the empire by the invasion of the Northern barbarians that plunged Europe into darkness. But, waiving that point, and recognising, as we must, that the Church teaching left one side, and that not the lowest, of human development almost untouched, to what, after all, does this amount? Have we not to recognise here simply the first stage, which is usually a warring stage, in the relation of two ideals, each necessary to the world, to be followed by their union in that glorious synthesis in which heart and head shall each perfectly minister to the other? M. Villemain, the eminent historian, in discussing this question, has touched its centre in the remark that "it

is a moral progress which Christianity brought into the world—a progress of grief over oneself and of charity for others. The heart of man has gained more in this discipline than its imagination has suffered."

Another phase of this war of good with good has been the age-long conflict between liberty and order. Order, we say, is heaven's first law. It is the foundation of states, a first condition of prosperity, an imperative of Church and social life. And yet history is a record of the continual breaking up of order, and that by the best men. Against this good fights another good, in battles that have often been bloody and terrible. It is the good of a larger liberty to which this other is barring the way. The new good in the end beats the old, but always at a price. Protestants and progressives generally recognise the Reformation as a mighty stroke for the soul's freedom; but the old order it broke in upon had a revenge of its own. The Reformation was not all gain. There were times when Luther and Calvin despaired of their work, and of the new world it had brought. The doings of the Münster Anabaptists, the Peasants' War, the queer interpretations of religion of some of the emancipated princes, formed part of the heavy bill of costs which order presented to the Reformers as its price for breakages. England had the same story to tell. Let any-

one read the state of affairs during the Somerset protectorate, when the Universities were called "the stables of asses, stews and schools of the devil," when young gallants rode their horses through the aisles of St. Paul's, when, as Froude has it, "hospitals were gone, schools broken up, almshouses swept away, and when the poor, smarting with rage and suffering, and seeing piety, honesty, duty trampled under foot by their superiors, were sinking into savages." It is a gloomy story enough; and yet this was the way along which the two goods, order and liberty, were to travel, and are still travelling, until they understand each other better, and unite into something ampler and purer than either has known hitherto.

Nearly all the difficulties, both of yesterday and to-day, have come from the inability of one good to recognise another. It has been so much easier to call names. The opposite side has stood for wickedness, or foolery, or both. Whereas the men on each side have been following the best they knew. When Diderot and his fellow Encyclopædists denounced Christianity as full of superstitions and impossible doctrines, their writings were tabooed by all good Catholics as of the devil. What we now see is that each side stood for a right whose victory is to-day one of civilisation's most valuable assets. The *libres*

penseurs of the eighteenth century strove for the freedom of investigation. The system they fought was greatly in need of being fought. It was, indeed, stuffed with superstitions and impossible beliefs. The real Christianity behind that system is a good that these attacks never touched. In the end the heart's devotion and the mind's freedom will know each other as of the same stock and quality.

An illustration still more to the point, since the question in it presses us with special insistence to-day, is the matter of religion and amusement. There has been a long fight between the Church and the drama, between the Church and the saloon. It has been regarded as a battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. The fathers anathematised the pagan drama, and we remember, in later times, that terrible denunciation of Bossuet, where, in his "Maximes sur la Comédie," speaking of Molière's last hours, he says: "He passed from the pleasantries of the theatre, among which he rendered almost his last sigh, to the presence of Him who said: 'Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall weep.'" Is this to be the permanent attitude of Christian men? What in its essence is the drama? If it be evil, then life is evil, for it is the representation of life. All children are evil, for all children are

actors. The drama is the human story, embellished by light, colour, music, painting. The great preachers are actors. The pulpit has often enough been a stage, and with excellent result. In the miracle plays of the Middle Ages the Gospel was acted more effectively than it had often been preached. And the inn, the saloon, do these in their idea represent simply an evil? They are the drawing-room, the fireside of the working man, the caterers for his social nature.

The only rational position of the Church to these sides of life is that of a good relating itself properly to another good. Between goods there must be not opposition, but co-operation. But the higher here must teach and lead the lower. The brightness, the movement, the colour, the humour, the human interest represented alike in the theatre and in the public-house are to be taken into the Church's scheme for the highest furtherance of life. For these are all of the assets of humanity, elements in its social evolution. The problems connected with them are so to be dealt with as to eliminate the baser elements; the remains of a time when the sensual and the animal were man's highest good.

These are illustrations of a theme which, in its entirety, offers a new and fascinating outlook upon the future. For it shows us

how the very problems of evil are really the marks of an eternal progress ; how man's very consciousness as a sinner is the evidence of a movement towards an infinitely glorious ideal yet to be realised in him.

VI.

The Systems, and Man.

Civilisation might, in general terms, be described as a move from the open country to the town. Man had reached a certain stage of development when he roofed himself in, and a further one when he learned to join his particular roof to that of a neighbour. And this, let it be noted, is true of his inner as well as of his outer life. The great religious systems which we find covering the world are the several roofs which have been constructed to shelter the soul from the waste, dread infinity around it. The eternal religion has a relation to these systems which we are bound to take note of. Every tribe dwells under its roof. Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahminism, Mohammedanism, Christianity—we see these huge structures lifting their domes over their several millions; their foundations deep in history, deeper still in human aspiration, fear and hope. And underneath each main dome are myriad minor structures. Our British Christianity, to come close home, is a street

of separate buildings, each walled off from the others, and constructed after its own special design. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Independent, each has laboured with prodigious industry to make his building complete and to make it lasting.

Everywhere, we say, these thought-structures have been thrown up by humanity, and everywhere they have been by their inhabitants declared to be complete and final. To suspect otherwise has been held as high treason to the soul. To an outside observer it would indeed appear to be one of the most singular and pathetic things about man, this notion of the finality of his system. For what is evident is that not one of these structures is stable. To keep to our own country and faith, let anyone compare the religious ideas of only fifty years ago, taken from any one of the denominations, with the ideas in the same religious bodies of to-day. He will find himself in another universe. The pulpits everywhere have been tuned to a different note. The creeds and formularies in use may be, as to words, the same; but oh! the difference of interpretation! The thought-structure has, in fact, been re-windowed, with an outlook over a new world.

The phenomenon thus presented is indeed singular. The spectacle is of man in incessant rebellion against himself. The system-maker

is by an equal necessity the system-destroyer. By an imperious law of his being man overturns all that he creates. We are at last beginning to understand why this is. When the lesson has been completely learned the revolt of one part of us against the other will cease. What is the fact? It is simply that there can be no permanence for man in any of his systems, and that because change is the law of his own being. He is the eternal changer. That, however, fortunately, is not the whole. It is not mere wreckage that he indulges in. His creeds, his constitutions, incessantly crack and fall around him, because he, the indweller, is ever getting bigger. And the growing nature must, as part of the process, continually cast its old shell. The secret at his centre, which explains all, is that man is not a Being so much as an eternal Becoming, a passage always from one stage to another. And because of this no externality can be final for him. It stands, but he moves. And the thing that stands is bound to be left behind by the thing that moves.

It is noteworthy, and supremely interesting, to observe how this law has operated in religious history. There is no single century or spiritual condition in which we do not find it at work. We see ages where, to the superficial view, everything has been regarded as fixed, where the weight of authority seemed overwhelming,

where the existing creeds were taken as the absolute and ultimate truth. We look deeper into those times, and what do we find ? Everywhere our law of movement ; everywhere the human spirit, standing over against the systems, questioning, measuring itself against them, and knowing in its deepest self that it is greater than they. How wonderful its uprise against the strongest assertions of authority, when these came across its own unwritten laws ! That old Frisian king who, with one foot in the baptismal font, drew it back when the missionary told him that in Paradise he would not meet his noble ancestors, was acting from an authority higher and mightier than that of his teacher.

We talk of the Middle Ages as illustrations of a fixed orthodoxy. Protestants are apt to think of them as a cast-iron period, fast bound under the Roman yoke, and having no affinity with their own spirit. We have only to look into them to discover their mistake. There is, to take one illustration, perhaps nothing more wonderful in the history of Christianity than the life and literature of the thirteenth century. What an age, which produced a Dante, a Dominic, a Francis, an Aquinas, a Bonaventura ! The astonishing thing about it is its perfect freedom. Despite creeds, popes and canons, men said the thing that was in them to say. And the thing was often so

astoundingly daring. Francis of Assisi, the man probably of all ages who most resembled Jesus, calls and believes himself a Roman Catholic. As a matter of fact he is free of all theology. His mind is far away from the systems. He is no theologian, but a simple Christian man, living in his world as freely and joyously as the birds he loved so well. His thought, if you could give it a name, is a kind of Christian pantheism, where fire, wind and sun are his "brothers" and death is his "sister." His "Hymn of the Creatures" is the exultant song of a beautiful, emancipated soul that, having nothing, possesses all things.

When we look more closely into that century we discern how innumerable less-known men, the best religious spirits of the age, were on the same track, expressing to the full, in face of the dogmatic systems, the rights of the human spirit. What a phenomenon for us that thirteenth-century preaching of "The Eternal Gospel," a watchword which fired humble souls all over Europe, and whose message was, not a laudation of popes or councils, but a declaration of doom against the corruption in high places and of a coming new kingdom of righteousness! Has anything bolder been uttered in the Church's history than those manifestoes of a Joachim di Flor, the Cistercian Abbot of Perugia, and of a John of Parma, his follower, wherein, voicing

the dumb aspiration of patient watchers throughout Christendom, they proclaimed the swift approaching downfall of the visible Church, with all its pomp, and the inauguration of the reign of the Spirit ?

Every century, we say, exhibits the same phenomenon ; on one side the visible system, founded on the past, and buttressed by authority, and on the other the live human soul seeking ever to pull down these barns and to build greater. Always is heard, too, the protest against this demolition, a protest which rings especially loud in our own time. And the protest often seems well founded. Our system, cries theology, is stable, and that because it is founded, not on the shifting sand of conjecture, but on the rock of fact. Granted the restless movement of man's mind and its destructive power. But it cannot sweep away rock. Facts are our foundation just as much as they are the foundation of science, and a system so founded can never fall. But in so stating its case theology has touched, perhaps unwittingly, the very centre of our problem. It is precisely on this question of fact that the whole thing hinges. What we have to note here, and which so many of us have failed to note, is that the fact itself, as related to the human spirit, is never stationary. It changes as we change. The stars were one thing to the men of the first century. They

are quite other things to us. As the mind opens our fact opens, and is ever disclosing new secrets.

It is on the mental condition in which earlier men approached their fact—what they made of it—that the value of their testimony, as authorities for us, depends. Often enough its value was small. The majority of people even to-day cannot see the thing that is before them, cannot properly and scientifically see it. What, then, of onlookers a thousand years ago? Hiouen Thsang, the old Chinese Buddhist, in his account of his famous pilgrimage to India, solemnly declares, as an eyewitness, that the footprints of Buddha seem of more or less size according to the greater or less faith of the beholder. In describing the relics he says of one after another of them, "The persons who worship it with sincere faith see it surrounded with luminous rays." And if the multitude of reporters of what is before their eyes are so untrustworthy, what of the generation that receives its account from them? Buddhism is for us a wonderfully instructive study on this matter. When we study the accounts of Buddha in the simple Sutras of the South, as compared with the developed Sutras of the North, we see as in a flash how a plain story in the hands of simple people becomes a miracle-studded legend. The story of St. Francis is Christendom's exact parallel. As told by

Frater Leo, his contemporary, it is a bit of history. As given, in the same century, by a Bonaventura, it is a tissue of impossible miracles. When, then, we talk of founding our system upon fact, the questions immediately arise, "How much do we know of our fact? With what eyes have we or our ancestors viewed it? How much of its innermost secret lies yet unveiled?"

From a study of this kind some conclusions emerge which none of us may neglect. One is the supremacy of personality. Greater than all his past work, as it stands there in sciences, theologies, churches, is the worker himself. You talk of revelation! Here, man, did you but know it, in your own living soul, is the very tissue of revelation, the treasure-house out of which it all has come! And yet it is not you, but the Something within and behind, that is greatest of all. For you are ever the Eternal coming into time, and by your growing spirit making Himself visible and giving Himself speech. This is above all things the lesson of Christianity. It is throughout the story of victorious personality. Jesus conquered the world, not so much by what He said, divine as that is, but by what He was. The Greek and Eastern philosophers had uttered beforehand almost all His teachings, but He exhibited to men a soul greater than all teachings, a soul whose divine sweetness

and power have been the main human uplift through all these later ages.

If such be the place and work of the human spirit, what kind of life should we, its possessors, be living in this world? Our business, it seems, is that God may more and more utter Himself through us. The deeper we descend into ourselves the surer do we become of this; the clearer the signs of a Divinity that is within, beneath, behind us. The days and the years are for the weaving of that Divine into speech and act. We are here to help on the ever-growing kingdom, nothing less or other. In the words of Professor Royce, who in his deep, philosophic way sums up thus the aim of our human striving: "When I seek my own goal I am seeking for the whole of myself. In so far as my aim is the absolute completion of my selfhood, my goal is identical with the whole life of God."

VII.

The Eternal Gospel.

WITHIN the circle of modern Christianity two movements are going on before our eyes, each of extraordinary interest, and each related in the most vital manner to the other. On the one hand we see an evangelistic Christianity putting forth its strength, and achieving the old triumphs over the human conscience and will. But behind this activity and emotion there has been going on a ceaseless mental movement, which is carrying us far. Men are praying and working with a new enthusiasm. Into religion's open door new converts are flocking. But the region they enter is not entirely the same as that our fathers knew. It has some new features. It is a broader, roomier realm, with a fresher air and a vaster prospect. In short, what has been going on may be described as at once a reinforcement and a reconstruction of the Christian idea. It is to this latter movement we wish here specially to give attention. We propose to point out, in certain definite re-

spects, how modern research and what has been called "the irresistible maturing of the human mind" have acted upon our present-day view of the Christian Gospel.

The doctrine in which people now middle-aged were brought up was that of a Christianity which stood out from all other faiths as the one true religion amongst a multitude of false ones. According to it the outside world was in absolute darkness. Even to-day the word "heathen" carries the idea of realms which are practically God-forsaken. Against this outer desolation Christianity, with its doctrines of Incarnation, of Divine Sonship, of Atonement, of the Holy Spirit; with its sacred institutions, with its immortal life behind, stood out as separate, distinct, divided by an impassable gulf. The difference was that between midday and midnight, between truth and falsehood, between God and the devil. This view was the foundation of divinity systems, the staple of sermons, the motive of missions. How does it look now?

There has been an immense revulsion, and one of the features of it is the discovery, so vastly surprising to the average man, that the doctrine he was brought up on was not the earlier Christian teaching at all. The noblest of the old apologists thought very differently, he finds, of the outside races and faiths, from what he had been led to imagine. He hears

of Justin Martyr, standing so close to the apostolic age, who regards the wisdom of Socrates as inspired by the "Word"; of Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, whose teaching is of the entire race of man as under the Divine tutorship; of Lactantius maintaining that belief in Providence was the common property of all religions. In later days he notes Erasmus, with his proposition to canonise Virgil and to bring "Saint Socrates" into the Litany. The finer Christian minds have, in fact, in every age gone more or less along this line. It needed only that men should come into contact with these outside races, whether in their literature or face to face, to realise at once that the "impassable gulf" theory between one religion and another was false to life and to the soul. How otherwise? Could it be a Christian thought that those vast populations, succeeding each other through centuries and millenniums, all of them, as we come to know them, eager as ourselves to solve the problem of life; all, like ourselves, sinning, suffering, repenting, and boundlessly aspiring; could it be possible, if a God were in heaven, that these should be without a teaching, a leading, a consolation, a preparation for death and after?

The view which, from the beginning, was impossible to the heart has now become impossible to the intellect. Christianity has

to-day fallen into line. Its position has become assured in a new way, by the discovery of its marvellous relation to the faiths that have gone before, and that have lived alongside it. The first and last, the eternal religion, the crown of all, it is at the same time seen as akin to all. The famous saying of Augustine that the Christian faith is that which has been in the world from the beginning has received confirmation in a way that would have surprised himself. What we have now to rejoice in is the truth, established in a thousand ways, that the great doctrines and institutions of the Gospel are the highest forms of a doctrine and an institution that the race of man has been trained in through all its history. God has been teaching His child everywhere the same truths and in the same way. Religion, by a hundred different names and forms, has been dropping the one seed into the human heart, opening the one truth as the mind was able to receive it. We may trace the process now in one or two particulars.

We spoke just now of what are called the distinctive doctrines of Christianity—of Incarnation, of Divine Sonship, of Atonement, of the Holy Spirit. In an earlier chapter we dealt with the symbolic character of these doctrines. But there is now something else to say. It is when we come to inquire how these doctrines arose and took

their present shape, that we strike upon what we may call the essential solidarity of the great world-religions—their kinship and unity of meaning. The Gospel we have received centres round the person and work of Christ, as these are described for us in the New Testament. But has it ever occurred to us to ask how these descriptions came into existence there? Here we come on a marvel. The New Testament is a world's book, not only because it is for the world, but also because the whole world joined in the making of it. We find that the personality of Jesus has been here fitted into a framework which all the ages and all the earlier faiths had united to prepare. New Testament Christianity is, in this way, the product not simply of the first Christian century, and of the Galilean disciples. It had the entire human race as collaborator.

The language, for instance, in which Christ is described was all there, ready made. As Wernle puts it: "The early Christians experienced something altogether abnormal in Jesus, but their own words fail to express it. So they turn to the Jewish categories nearest at hand and attempt to confine the indefinable within these definitions." And what were these "Jewish categories"? When, in the Epistle to the Colossians, we read of Christ as "the Son," as "the image of the invisible

God," as "the first-born of every creature," we ask, where did these ideas come from? Did they spring to birth at the moment by a special inspiration in the mind of the writer? Was that the way also in which the prologue to the fourth Gospel was written, in which we have the doctrine of the eternal Word, the Logos, who was "with God, and was God, by whom all things were made"? By no means. These thought-forms, in which the New Testament writers clothed the personality of Jesus, were already there awaiting their use. Judaism was full of them. Philo of Alexandria, in his "*De Monarchiâ*," had already written of the Logos as "the Word, by which the world was made," as "the image of the supreme Deity," as "His first begotten Son," as "an Intercessor between the Creator and the created." And that "Book of Enoch" which had been for a century the nurture of pious Jews had taught the doctrine of a Messiah who was "the Chosen One," the "Son of Man who was hidden with God before the world was, whose dominion endureth from eternity to eternity."

And that true religion meant incarnation, the humbling of Godhead into humanity was a view also which Christianity, as it formulated its doctrine, found everywhere already accepted amongst men. It was the doctrine of Brahminism, of Buddhism, of the Zend Avesta,

of the Greek mythology. In the Empire where Christianity was born the idea had lowered itself to the gross and commonplace form of the cult of the Emperor as divine. At Halicarnassus was to be seen the inscription to Augustus which proclaimed him "the paternal Zeus and saviour of the whole race of mankind." And as with Incarnation so with sacrifice and Atonement. The doctrine of the New Testament—in the Gospels, in the Acts, in the Epistles—is above all things a doctrine of the Cross, of sacrifice, of redemption by blood. How did it get there? The tragedy on Calvary had, in the minds of the disciples who looked upon it, no connection with this doctrine. What they saw was only a brutal doing to death, a catastrophe, the ruin of all their hopes. The Gospel narratives are at one in this testimony. But as time passed, to that first idea of helpless suffering and dying came another. By a psychological process, which was as inevitable as it was natural, the dying of Jesus took on the clothing woven for it by long centuries of Judaic teaching and ceremony. "Here," they now realised, "was the culmination of the long ages of sacrifice and of religious blood-shedding." And so the doctrine was born.

And as with the doctrine, so with the institutions in which the doctrines were enshrined. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are held as

distinctive Christian rites, but they are kin with religious mysteries that have been celebrated the world over and the ages through. Scholars have been recently studying the Eleusinian mysteries in their relation to the Christian cult. Here, as well as in the Church, are baptism, penitence, a sacred communion of bread and wine, and a special teaching for the initiate. How marvellous, too, in this connection, is that ancient cult of Mithras in Persia, where, as M. Cumont says : " Like the Christians, the followers of Mithras lived in closely united societies, calling one another father and brother ; like the Christians, they practised baptism, communion and confirmation ; taught an authoritative morality, preached continence, chastity and self-denial, believed in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead." Does not our heart thrill with sympathy for these souls of the far-off time who also yearned, as we do, for the Good ! Here is one of their prayers—we copy from Dieterich's Mithrasliturgie—offered by a baptized initiate : " If it hath pleased you to grant me the birth to immortality, grant that I, after the present distress, which sorely afflicts me, may gaze upon the immortal First Cause, that I, through the Spirit, may be born again, and that in me, purified by sacred rite, and delivered from guilt, the Holy Spirit may live and move."

One might continue without end this line of illustration and of argument. The field which modern research has here opened is boundless. But enough for our purpose has been said. What we wanted to show is, in these instances, sufficiently revealed—that the Christian Gospel is not a bizarre, isolated thing, cut off from the rest of the human story, but is linked intimately and indissolubly with the entire history of the world, one with it in its struggle, its aspiration and its victory. Here find we the Gospel at the head of the world's faiths, the goal towards which they strove, the realisation of what they dreamed. God is here revealed not as intervening in this or that patch of world territory simply, or on this or that day of history, but as everywhere in humanity and all the time.

In this view Christianity stands as the eternal religion. Chrysostom tells us that the people of his Church at Constantinople were full of questions, asking why Christ had not come sooner, and about God's dealing with the heathen world. We are to-day in a better condition for answering those questions. No human soul, of whatever world-age or world-longitude, has been left without witness or without help. These distant realms and times, so far from being cut off from the Church fellowship, were privileged in the Divine Providence to help weave the very

garment of thought and language in which the Christian doctrine was first set forth. They, too, assisted to build the sacred temple of the eternal religion. They, too, were of its apostolate, though they knew it not. It took all these ages, the experience, the passion, the aspiration of the whole world, to frame our New Testament. The entire race had its hand in that production. The entire race shares the Divine grace it proclaims, the Divine kingdom to which it points.

VIII.

Calvary.

THE eternal religion, we have so far insisted, recognises in Christianity its fullest expression. But of Christianity the death and reported resurrection of Jesus are everywhere recognised as of the essence of its message. It would accordingly be impossible, in an exposition of this kind, with any consistency, to omit a statement of what we conceive to have been the actuality and significance of these events. We begin with the Crucifixion.

The death of Jesus at Jerusalem is, we may say, the best attested fact of His career. Concerning other parts of it—the birth, the childhood, the beginning and continuance of the ministry, the miracles—there have been endless doubts and controversies. There is no doubt about the death. The most pronounced scepticism is clear on that. A French anti-Christian propaganda, in denying the resurrection, put recently its position into the antithesis: "*Jésus, mort devant tout le monde, ressuscité*

devant personne." For everyone, in fact, non-believer as much as believer, the tragedy we commemorate on Good Friday stands in clear day. The sense of historic accuracy, which compels us to reject so much else, pronounces us here on firmest ground. The event, so far as actuality is concerned, is on a footing with the assassination of Cæsar, or the execution of Charles the First. When the story brings before us Annas and Caiaphas, or that dissolute Spanish Roman, Pontius Pilate, we know perfectly where we are. Annas and Caiaphas—Josephus has given us their portraits. We know our Lucius Pontius; his father before him; his predecessors in the Judæan procuratorship; his doings before and after the crucifixion. Myth and legend have, of course, since played with his name. They have forged epistles for him in the ancient manner. But we are at home to-day in dealing with this kind of material, and in the business of separating the false from the true.

The whole tragedy of that Friday, the fourteenth of Nisan, the seventh of April of that year in our notation, the facts and the personages connected with it, are, we say, clearly before us, having indisputable place in human chronology. That procession of men wending its way from the Prætorium through the narrow, ill-smelling lanes of

Jerusalem to Golgotha; the curious crowd, the indifferent soldiery, the uplifting of the prisoner there on the cross, the awful punishment, which Cicero describes as "*crudelissimum teterrimumque*," were features in the old city's life as actual as the passage there to-day of the modern excursionist who covers the route, guide-book in hand.

Thus much of the history. What now do we make of it? Surely never had plain grim fact so marvellous an outcome. On this story has been founded a theology—a succession, in fact, of theologies—comprehending the entire science of God and man. And the remarkable thing about it is that the actors in the drama, the people in immediate contact, had no remotest suspicion of there being any theology in it! They had a theology of their own, but they saw no application of it here. To the Roman and to the Jew the doctrine of sacrifice, animal and even human, was quite familiar. But the death of Jesus conveyed to them no hint of sacrifice. The elements were wanting. A sacrifice meant the offering of the victim as a gift or a propitiation to the unseen Powers. But Caiaphas and Pilate were making no such offering. They were simply carrying out a judicial sentence; putting to death a condemned criminal.

Yet on that, to them, commonplace transaction has, we say, been built a world-religion.

The cross, up to then a word synonymous with our "gibbet," has become the most sacred of names. On its grim front has been hung the most wondrous of thought-systems, a system varying with the times, but ever renewing itself, a system compounded of early world beliefs, of ancient cosmogonies, of wildest phantasies, of profoundest truths. In the early centuries ponderous tomes were written to prove that Christ's death was an offering to the devil. A later theory, which ruled Christendom for centuries, saw in it an offering to God for human sin; a commercial transaction, a *quid pro quo* of so much suffering for so much guilt. People to-day sing hymns with this as their *motif;* many of them still listen to sermons based on that assumption, We imagine ourselves at a long distance from the mental condition which led Jephthah to slay his daughter, or Agamemnon to devote Iphigenia to the knife. But the idea of human sacrifice as a propitiation to Deity is still an article in the creeds, and at the back of much theological lucubration.

What, then, does the death of Jesus really stand for? What, if we reject these interpretations, do we accept as its historical and spiritual significance? To get to that we need to ask some preliminary questions. And first we may inquire how it happened that the event and these theories of it came together.

Came together, we say, for the theory did not grow out of the event; rather it coalesced with it. It is one of the miracles of history that while no one ever thought of constructing a theology out of the assassination of Cæsar, or the death of Socrates, there should have come this one out of the death of Christ. It is a miracle, we say, of the coincidence of circumstance with a condition of the human mind. On the one side stood the event; at first naked and solitary; to all men, the disciples included, an unrelieved tragedy. Then floated towards it, not unguided, we may be assured, the vast body of an ancient people's thought and immemorial tradition. The crucial point in the history here is that the disciples, the apostles, Paul included, were Jews. Their whole conception of the world, its history, its religious purpose, was Jewish. They had been brought up on the doctrine of sacrifices as propitiatory of Deity. As we to-day study scientifically the workings of the human mind we perceive that it was inevitable, if they framed a theory at all of the death of their Master, it should cast itself in this mould, be coloured by this conception. It could not be otherwise. As we have seen in the last chapter, the language, the types, the whole thought-system were there ready-made. They could only use the tools they possessed; they could only speak

the tongue they knew. The past, in the hour even of its supersession, always exacts its price. The price here was that, in dying, Judaism fixed its language upon Christianity, giving it a form of which we are to-day only beginning to grasp the real significance.

But to-day, in which we are extracting the true history from the "histories," in which we are detaching events from their ancient framework, in which we are moving among myth and legend with the ease and certainty which science has secured us; to-day, is the Cross, on these accounts, any less potent or less precious to us? In no degree. For the marvel in spiritual evolution is that the fading of earlier and cruder forms is always to make room for fitter and more effectual ones. The Cross has survived all its interpretations, proof in itself of the Divine reality hidden in it. The death there consummated was indeed a sacrifice, the greatest of all, carrying in itself whatsoever of worth was included in the dim ideas of earlier times, and lifting the whole conception into another plane. Augustine had surely prophetic insight into this in that great word of his in the *De Civitate Dei*: "*Huic summo veroque sacrificio cuncta sacrificia falsa cesserunt.* In this highest and true sacrifice the false sacrifices around have ceased." It is ever the way of evolution for the higher form to contain in itself all the lower ones,

in a new manifestation which at once transforms and transcends them. And so we find the New Testament writers, while using of necessity the language and thought-forms into which they were born, have in their doctrine of the death made no mistake as to the innermost significance of it.

It is one of the extraordinary features of this theme that the critic, if his one interest is the truth, is obliged in the end to become constructive. The same rigid analysis which, in discussing the history of the event, leads him to cut away so much of the earlier conceptions, compels him now upon another and deeper line of things. The question he has to answer is, *why* did the disciples, in their story of the Cross, in Gospel and Epistle, offer us this theory of it? They threw their theory, as we have said, into a given form; but why a theory at all? They were not paid to offer one; neither bribe nor threat compelled them to their view. It was a purely voluntary business; an irresistible inner movement of the mind. Nobody, as we have already said, made a religion out of the death of Cæsar. What caused a religion to come out of the death of Christ? The answer is inevitable. It was because Christ was what He was. It was the character, the life and spirit of the Victim; what He had done and said; what He had made them feel about

Himself ; this it was that wove the spell, that created their doctrine.

And the doctrine, when we see beneath the Judaic phraseology, is clear. Here is no placation of an offended Deity. The better mind of Israel had got already far beyond that conception. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a contrite spirit. A father wants no intervening slaughter as a reason for loving his prodigal. What bound the New Testament Christians with everlasting bonds to the Cross was that it was the Master who hung there ; the Master whose love reached here its highest expression, its perfect and eternal consummation. That was what they meant when they said that " He bore our sins " ; that " He had purchased the Church with His own blood." Yes, He had bought all His followers that way. He had bound them for ever to Him by such love as never before was dreamed. The Cross became the fountain of redemption because there throbbed the spirit of redemption. In their sorrow, in their loss, in their disgrace, in their weakness, in their hour of death, men lift their eyes to the Cross because there they see, in a light which no lapse of time, no change of circumstance can ever dim, a perfect submission, a perfect self-sacrifice, a perfect love which reach even to the evil and to the lost.

It is this note of an absolute surrender toward God, and a perfect love towards men, that in all time has made the Cross the saving power. It is this which, amid all the barbaric interpretations of it, has given the preaching of the Cross its unutterable charm. The crudeness of the theory could never prevent the love from breaking through, and it was love that wrought the marvels. A Bernard, a Luther, a Spurgeon preach the Cross ; their doctrinal interpretation may differ each from the others, and all from our own. But the one spirit shines through, and human hearts are melted and won. In every age the charm works. What Justin Martyr said at the beginning has gone on repeating itself. "For Socrates has no one shown such faith as to die for his doctrine, but for Christ's sake not only philosophers, but also mechanics and unlearned men have suffered death." And thus, in Lamartine's words, the tomb of Christ has been the grave of the old world and the cradle of the new.

No religion could be perfect without a perfect death. Christianity gives us that. Rousseau, comparing Socrates with Jesus, says that the death of Socrates was the death of a hero, the death of Jesus was the death of a God. It is significant that Mohammedanism, feeling its lack here, has, among the Shiite section at least, invented a Passion

Week of its own; and in Persia makes the Passion plays which dramatise the deaths of Ali and his sons the great religious festival of the year. The substitute is a fit measure of the distance between the two religions. The Persian Teaziehs are a poor business beside the Christian commemoration. At Calvary we learn to love and to serve. There also we learn to suffer and to die. Said Michel Angelo, "When you come to die remember the Passion of Jesus Christ." The artist's sublime genius had taught him nothing better than that. Calvary is indeed a good place to come to. The Jew of old time trod the slopes which led upward to the city with songs of rejoicing. We climb them with a fuller, tenderer consciousness. The air we breathe here is of heaven. The prospect is divine. "Life," says our modern poet, "struck sharp on death, makes awful lightning." This Life, struck sharp on this Death, makes more than lightning—makes a radiance in which God's innermost secret is revealed.

IX.

What was the Resurrection?

The beliefs connected with Easter Day have, within the lifetime of many of us, gone through some startling phases. During that period the educated mind has had, on this question, shocks as it were of earthquake. Between the present attitude and the unquestioning assurance of the earlier orthodoxy a great gulf has yawned. The state of mind which permitted Tertullian to say, and generations to repeat after him: "*Et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile est.*" "And He being buried rose again; it is certain because it is impossible"—has passed away. We can no longer talk about the happening of impossibles. The new habit of historic realism has destroyed our faculty of self-delusion. The past has ceased to be the refuge of the incredible. The first century, we realise, belonged as much to the world-system as the twentieth, and its happenings were under the same laws. Palestine is as much a part of our planet as New York or London, and whatever

has occurred in the one place is such as might occur in the others. The documents, ancient or otherwise, which deal with religion must, with the modern man, have as much actuality in them as his newspaper, if they are to have any more than a conventional value.

The rise into clear consciousness of this feeling produced first of all in our generation a tremendous rebound in the direction of scepticism. Thirty years ago the region of the actual, as compared with the merely imaginable, seemed to have become strangely narrowed down. Physical science had closed in upon man like a vast lid that shut out his sky. Life was being examined with the scalpel and the microscope, and these made no discoveries of immortality. The new criticism threw scorn upon the old human legend. Where there was no scorn, there was despair. What that first reaction meant for earnest souls is given us in those memorable, mournful lines of Matthew Arnold:

> While we believed, on earth He went
> And open stood His grave;
> Men called from chamber, church and tent
> And Christ was by to save.
> Now He is dead. Far hence He lies
> In the lorn Syrian town,
> And on His grave with shining eyes
> The Syrian stars look down.

In that phase of the Western mind the feeling of literature was also represented by the

wonderful passage in Renan, where, in the *Vie de Jésus*, at that turning-point of all history, he makes the fancy of an hysterical woman, the opening and shutting of a door, the breath of the Eastern breeze, into the producing causes of the resurrection faith which created Christendom.

But this attitude towards the great Easter faith is already, with the best minds, passing away. Some new factors in judging the problem have come in. Modern science, which began by limiting the human horizon, is now enlarging it on every side. It is discovering that the instruments it uses are not so adequate as it once thought for sizing up man and his destiny. It cannot explain him by its cycle of laws. At a dozen points he breaks through them into another sphere. And his history breaks through likewise. In its own immediate department, indeed, science is to-day using a totally new language from that of a generation ago. One of the most eminent of its professors, Professor Shaler, speaking of the groups of natural laws, declares of them that they are not to be understood as "evidences of inevitable and infinitely distributed events, but as having a limited field of certainty. They hold on this planet and for our age." And further: "All that we divine of the unseen leaves us to conceive that it is a realm of unending and infinitely varied originations. Into the

equation is continually going the influential qualities of newly-formed individualities, and from it is continually being drawn those that pass away." In other words, our universe is discovered to be vastly more elastic, fuller of unimagined possibilities, freer to the play of spirit, than the age of early Darwinism could allow itself to believe.

When, from this new starting-point, we come back to investigate the Easter tradition, we find our attitude, while far removed from that of the old conventional orthodoxy, to be equally remote from that of a pessimistic unbelief. It is that, in fact, of a faith, actual and operative, because established on grounds that the modern mind finds reliable. Let us examine how the matter stands. Our first duty we see is to take matters in their proper order. And the natural order here, as in every other inquiry, will lead us, as a beginning, not to causes but to effects. What occupied men first in the phenomena of a thunderstorm were not the electrical laws, but the blinding flash and the echoing roar, and the impression these made on their senses. From that followed the search for causes. In the quest they were guided by the instinct which assured them that this impression on their senses was a reliable measure of the outside reality. In like manner, in studying the phenomena of the Easter faith, we come first to the immense

fact of the faith itself. Here, as with the impression of our thunderstorm, is a tremendous effect wrought on a multitude of human minds and hearts. Nobody, not the most destructive of critics, ever questions that effect. Nobody doubts that whatever happened at Jerusalem after the death of Christ, the apostles and the early Christians believed and taught that He rose from the dead. The belief and the teaching were unquestionably there. What had caused them ?

This brings us to the account of the Resurrection, as given in the Christian Scriptures. Have we here the true cause ? Again, much depends on the order in which we take the evidence. The average English reader naturally accepts what, on this subject, he finds first in the New Testament as what actually is first. He needs to correct that impression. The four Gospels are not our earliest evidence of what really happened after the crucifixion. The remarkable varieties of the Gospel Resurrection narratives show in themselves that they are not a first-hand witness. They are the fruit of a time in which discrepancies had been allowed to grow. So great are these discrepancies that one of the most eminent of modern critics, Professor Harnack, declares that on this account the Easter stories are not historically reliable. But that, surely, is too sweeping an assertion.

Discrepancies may throw doubt upon details, but not, of themselves, upon central facts. It is the very nature of great facts to produce discrepant stories. Mr. Andrew Lang, in his work, "The Mystery of Marie Stuart," speaking of the murder of Darnley, declares, and with perfect justice, that if the wide differences of statement of persons closely connected with the event were to be taken as invalidating their testimony as to the central fact, then assuredly the murder of Darnley never took place at all. A newspaper controversy some time ago revealed the extraordinary divergences of statement of trustworthy persons as to the way in which the news of Waterloo first came to England. But no one doubts the murder of Darnley, nor that England did receive early tidings of Wellington's great victory. Great events, it seems, commonly create discrepant stories of them. It would be a strange procedure, on that account, to take the discrepancies as destroying the event!

But what, we ask again, *was* the event which produced the Easter stories? Fortunately we have here an earlier witness than that of the Synoptics and of the Fourth Gospel. It is that of St. Paul. His letters are the earliest written evidence as to that birth hour of Christianity. St. Paul's Gospel, like that of the other apostles, was, above all things, a Gospel of the Resurrection. He preached a risen

Christ, and he believed Christ risen because he had seen Him and had felt His power. When, in the fifteenth of I. Corinthians, one of our very earliest extant Christian documents, he speaks of the successive appearances of the risen Lord, first to Cephas, then to the twelve, then to five hundred at once, afterwards to James, and again to all the apostles, he winds up with the appearance to himself. That appearance was an overwhelming fact in his life. It had converted him from an opponent to a fervent believer ; had wholly transformed his views and his destinies. But what was this appearance ? Observe, he puts it on precisely the same level as the earlier manifestations to the other apostles and disciples. He offers no hint that his experience in this matter was other than theirs.

And his experience—what of it ? The supreme and governing fact about it is that it was a purely subjective one. Whatever happened at Damascus was a happening to his own interior soul. What he saw was unseen of his companions. And the whole after-testimony of the apostle as to his relation to Christ tallies with this first beginning. The relation was that of a spiritual force working upon him, within him, from out of the unseen world. He knew his Master to be living in that realm because of vital communications from Him which set his being aflame. " When

it pleased God to reveal His Son in me"; here for Paul was the Easter faith and the Easter fact.

It is here, in this earliest story of the Resurrection, that we have the clue to all the rest. We ask our readers to study carefully the whole of the narratives on this subject of the four Gospels, to note what they say, and more, what they suggest. Everywhere, they will discover, there is the idea of a manifestation that takes the form of an unearthly, immaterial and wholly spiritual happening. What is the meaning of the phrase in Matthew where, describing the appearance in Galilee, the writer says, "But some doubted"? What else but that the awesome impression made on the minds of the disciples left some of them wondering what precise actuality lay behind this glimpse, this stir from the Unseen? What is the suggestion in Luke's story of the walk to Emmaus, where the mysterious companion of the two disciples is at first unrecognised by them, and then vanishes out of their sight? The psychic character so unmistakably manifest in these accounts is not less prominent in those of the Fourth Gospel. It appears in the "touch me not" of the garden story, and in the repeated statement that "the doors were shut" when the Master suddenly appeared to the assembled company.

There is no getting rid of these hints. Any theory which takes the post-mortem Gospel stories into account must square itself with them. They dispose utterly of the idea that, in the minds of the writers, the appearance to the first believers was of a body which even resembled in character and quality that which had been laid in the grave. And it is precisely at this point that we meet the objection of those who ask, "What on this theory is to be made of the empty tomb; and what became of the body of Jesus?" Our answer is quite simple. We do not know, nor does anyone else. That is one of the secrets of history. As De Wette says, a darkness rests on these details which, with our present information, it is impossible to penetrate. But, let it be immediately observed, that if the view here taken throws no light on this point, neither does any other theory that holds closely to the Biblical accounts. A form which made men "suppose they had seen a spirit," which appeared suddenly in a room whose doors were closed, and which vanished without warning from men's sight, whatever it might be, was assuredly, we repeat, not the physical form that was interred in Joseph's new tomb. Moreover, the idea of a transformation of the one into the other is neither scientific nor Biblical. Apart from other considerations, it would be a flat contradiction of St. Paul's

argument: "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be . . . so also is the resurrection of the dead."

It is a sufficient clue; it is a credible one; and it is one that leaves the vital Christian faith not only unimpaired, but re-born to a new actuality for our age. What had happened to Paul had happened to earlier followers of the Crucified. They, too, "had seen the Lord." After the last scene on Calvary, after the pure soul on the Cross there had breathed itself forth to the Father, there was for a time nothing but blank desolation for His followers. And then, striking across the black darkness, there came, first to one and then to another, mysterious thrills of the Spirit, glimpses, unveilings, openings of the inner eye, and visions printing themselves upon it; the supersensuous within vibrating to motions of the supersensuous without. And the whole ineffable movement was instinct with a sense and feeling of their vanished Lord. They knew that it was He. Before His death He was a link for them between two worlds. Even then the largest part of Him was in and of that higher sphere. Now, wholly taken into it, He was whispering them from it, and pouring into their hearts of its unimaginable treasures. The Resurrection, in fine, was the psychic manifestation of the departed Lord.

That was for the first disciples the Easter faith. It was the faith that converted them and started them to convert the world. When people ask, "What was the Resurrection ?" there is our reply. It is Paul's reply, and what was good enough for him should be good enough for us. The more so, as it is one in which history, science and present human experience unite and harmonise. And it contains all we need, for it gives us the risen and ever-living Christ, and opens the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

X.

Our Moral Habitat.

A FUNDAMENTAL feature of the eternal religion is its relation to morality. On one point all sane men are agreed—that moral character is the supreme life value. The men of action and the men of thought are alike solid on this conclusion. Napoleon, and Cromwell before him, held that beyond all question of equipment or strategy was an army's *morale* as a condition of victory. Huxley put his conviction into the caustic saying, "Clever men are as common as blackberries; the rare thing is to find a good one." Tyndall utters his verdict in the saying, "There is a thing of more value than science, and it is nobility of character." From his side of things, Emerson writes: "The foundation of culture, as of character, is at last the moral sentiment. If we live truly, we shall see truly." The soldier, the sceptic, the materialist, the *littérateur*, as much as the orthodox theologian, is, we see, convinced that in the mysterious sphere of things deep down within us, where

work our powers of choice and will, is to be sought the real significance and potency of our life. All the world is of opinion that, for national and individual welfare, nothing touches in importance the securing, in that quarter, of healthy conditions.

Yet, with all that taken for granted, nothing is more singular than the way in which we treat this side of ourselves. We occupy, and daily do our work from, a given moral habitat, with the vaguest ideas as to how we came by it, as to what its condition is, and as to how the changes which it is constantly undergoing tend to its betterment or its worsening. The theme is one that, of course, runs through the very centre of religious teaching, but its treatment has been, too often, a purely conventional one. There is room and need for some more definite conclusions here than most of us appear to have reached, conclusions founded on the actual experience of life.

Be it remembered, to begin with, that our moral habitat is a twofold affair. There is, first, that of the external circumstances by which we are surrounded. But within these, and far closer to us, is a structure, which is also a habitat, growing up around us, woven out of our past, knit of a million volitions, judgments and acts; a vital structure we carry everywhere with us, and which in a healthy nature has become the master and manipulator

of the external, rejecting its deleterious, transmuting its raw material into nutriment, and by its adaptations securing health in the midst of surrounding disease. Both these forms of our moral habitat offer richest material of observation, and are worth our most careful study.

The sphere of outside circumstances is, we say, in itself a moral habitat. Everything in the world yonder—the food we eat, the air we breathe, the age we are born in, the country we belong to, the social position we occupy—carries its special moral quality which is incessantly working upon us. There have been writers, indeed, who have made this external factor the all-dominant one. Buckle, in his "History of Civilisation," takes it as an axiom that the character of nations and races is an affair of their climate, of their geographical conditions, of the food they eat. Buckle made here the mistake of people who take the half for the whole, yet his half has undoubtedly to be reckoned with. Part of the mystery of our fate lies in its being knit so closely to our time and our class. A given age has a certain tincture which dyes all the souls that are born in it. What an inner adversity, for instance, to have belonged to the Germany of the Thirty Years' War, a time when, according to a contemporary writer, in addition to a physical misery which reduced the population from

sixteen to four millions, and which led men to devour the corpses that hung on the gallows, there was a depravation of manners amongst all classes, and amongst the nobility especially, which almost surpasses belief. Professions also, trades, callings, have their speciality of moral climate. How is it, by the way, that the "law" has in this connection got everywhere so bad a name? "Why," cries a character in one of our early English comedies, "does the lawyer wear black? Does he carry his conscience outside?" And what a cruel saying is that concerning St. Yves, the lawyer saint of Brittany: "*Advocatus et non latro, res miranda populo,*" which we may freely translate as, "He was a lawyer without being a thief—a thing which to the world was a miracle in itself!" We may fairly hope the ethical climate in that particular quarter has improved since then.

The influence of the external on character has, perhaps, its most vivid illustration in the effects of foreign travel, and the exile, voluntary or otherwise, of men from their native land. The Anglo-Saxon, as the great modern traveller and coloniser, has in this respect shown a singular moral hardihood. In search of expansion, of new trade, of a career, our race has been perpetually breaking bounds, and that, apparently, without much thought as to what the results would be on its morals.

The results have been often deplorable enough. It used to be said that Anglo-Indians, on their way out, dropped their religion at the Cape, and picked it up again on their way home, when their career was over. And yet it says something for the essential soundness of the race at bottom, that, in its new ventures, however unpromising the beginnings, the moral factor comes out uppermost in the end. There seems a faculty of moral, as well as of physical acclimatisation, which enables our people to thrive inwardly as well as outwardly in the strangest surroundings. Sydney began as a penal settlement, and San Francisco as a haven of desperadoes. But the Australian and the American city are to-day amongst the best churched of communities.

To most of us, however, a more immediately practical side of this theme is that of the moral habitat as it exists around us here at home. Without travelling beyond our parish boundary we may find there momentous changes, continual fresh conditions which demand our closest attention. It is from their failure to estimate these properly that the men of our time seem, in such vast numbers, to miss their way in life. They set themselves, for instance, upon the race for wealth—wealth at any price—without considering apparently the kind of life they are to get out of it. For life, the clarity, strength and beauty of the

inner spirit, as it grows and energises within us from day to day, is plainly, to all who can see, the main thing for us, in this world or any other. And so in contemplating any changed or "improved" circumstances our question first and last should be: What effect will all this have upon my inner state; will it make me more humble, more helpful, more loving; will it fill me fuller of clear-springing thought; will ideals be higher, will the spiritual currents run stronger and more deeply?

We find much fault to-day with asceticism, yet amid its excesses it had this merit, that it stood for the idea of moral prosperity as above all other prosperities. Savonarola at Florence, and Bernard in his cell at Clairvaux, led their life of outward bareness and poverty from the conviction that, as related to the things they sought for—the fulness of spiritual power, a conscious union with God, a freedom of intercourse and growing influence for good upon their fellows, and the expansion of all their higher faculties—the external pomps and luxuries were a hindrance and a vanity. They carried their ideas, we say, to an extreme, but the experience of such men, and the power they wielded, should be a lesson to every teacher of religion. It is the lesson of the simple life, which all the greater spirits have practised. Will a million of money or a palace to live in give me nobler inspira-

tions, a deeper insight into life, a warmer affection for my fellows, a better power of serving them? Will all this build up in me a structure of finer tissue, with which to issue forth, when the time comes, to that world unseen? If not; if it would rather be a hindrance; while frugality and simplicity, such as a Socrates or a Milton practised, will be the truer help, why for a moment crave the purple and fine linen? All religious teachers need, we say, to remember this. They will lose power if they forget it. It was a brutal remark which George II. is reported to have made of Hoadly, but it put in a coarse way the line of thinking which the world instinctively takes on this theme: "Very modest of a canting, hypocritical knave to be crying 'the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world' at the same time that he as Christ's ambassador receives six thousand a year!"

In the war of sects which characterises the religious life of England to-day the issues are, by the contending parties, looked upon largely as doctrinal or ecclesiastical. Some day an observer will arise who will adjudge the issues as quite other than this. Germany had such an observer in Goethe. In his "Dichtung und Wahrheit," after speaking of the German Established Church of his time as "giving barren morals without nourishment for heart or soul," and of the Dissenters

—Quietists, Herrnhuters, Pietists and the like—as all "seeking a nearer access to God than the forms of the Church afforded," he observes: "the Dissenters were always in a minority as to numbers, but ever remarkable for originality, fervour and independence." When in England, on the controversy between privileged and unprivileged religion, the balance has finally to be struck, the issue in like manner will lie, we imagine, not in this or that dogmatic definition, but in the relative moral textures that have been woven, in the relative inner states that have been realised, in the rival communities. To some of us inner freedom is worth many bishoprics.

There is one department of this study which might well have occupied it entirely—that of the inner habitat which the soul provides for itself, and which goes everywhere with it. The grandest fruit of our earlier moral victories is that their results are woven into this structure and help to make it and us invulnerable. It is because they have this as their surrounding, that spiritual natures can live and thrive in moral quagmires. The truth about them is finely expressed in that rule which St. Vincent de Paul gave to his "Filles de la Charité": "The streets of the city or the houses of the sick shall be your cells, obedience your solitude, the fear of God your grating, a strict and holy modesty your only veil." In

a free and growing soul this structure, woven out of our past and present, and open sheer to the heavens, becomes growingly real to our consciousness. It regulates for us the temperature of the outside world, and amid the disorders of the external creates an inner calm where the spiritual can have full play. It is, as it were, the condensed exhalation of our personality which, when death has loosed the bond between us and the physical, may take shape in the spiritual world as the form of the life we have here been leading.

XI.

The Story of Morals.

A FURTHER insight into the question of religion and morals will be gained by the glance, which we propose to take in this chapter, into the history of morality in its relation to man's spiritual side. The story here, both of past and present, is at first sight confusing enough. Modern society offers us the sinister spectacle of a religion which too often dispenses with morality, and of a morality which is seeking to dispense with religion. All the civilised countries are contributing their special variety of this entanglement. In France we see a formidable movement to found a so-called scientific morality, which shall be independent of the Christian sanction. Paris and the great towns have witnessed of late huge assemblies where the speakers, cutting themselves off from the religious idea, have urged the promotion of justice, social order and morality on purely naturalistic grounds. If we pass from France to its ally Russia we see the opposite extreme. Here is a religion, a

form of Christianity, professed with immense fervour by all classes of the populace, but with the loosest possible relation to morals. That the village priest should regularly get drunk is considered part of the order of things. The nation swarms to the churches on every possible occasion, and is meantime, throughout its whole civil and military organisation, the theatre of the vastest and most thoroughly organised corruption in the world.

One could multiply these illustrations endlessly. Every nation, as we have said, offers its own variety. There is one whole side of the history of religion, the study of which might put us in doubt as to whether it had any ethical value at all. There have been faiths which were direct panderers to vice. To be a "Corinthian" was, down to Shakespeare's day, a synonym for a dissolute character, and Corinth owed its reputation in this respect to its great temple of Aphrodite, with its hundreds of female devotees whose religious service was practically a prostitution. But let us not suppose that paganism has been the only offender here. The record of Christianity in its relation to morals has been a very mixed one. We have instanced Russia, but there are others besides. An eminent French ex-Abbé told the present writer that of the French clergy of to-day perhaps one-third might be reckoned as pure men, true to

their celibate vows. Zwingli said of the Catholic clergy of his time, "Scarce one in a thousand was chaste." What the Church morals of the Renaissance were is sufficiently shown by the records of the Borgias, and by the elevation of an Æneas Sylvius to the Popedom. And lest we should think the looseness here was all on one side, Protestants will do well to remember that extraordinary transaction of the double marriage of the Landgrave of Hesse, when a Lutheran divine, in giving his benediction to the marriage, declared that "monogamy had had its day," and when Luther's friend, Bugenhagen, adduced examples of bigamy among the early Christians! On this special aspect of morals we get disquieting reports also nearer home. Recently two of our English districts, specially under the influence of Methodism—Cornwall and the Potteries—have been marked out (though we believe with some exaggeration) as on the black-list in regard to sexual relations. And one of the most baffling problems with which earnest men have been confronted is that contained in the undoubted fact that intense religious feeling has been found, in so many instances, susceptible of the swiftest transition to animal passion.

But this is not all. There are other aspects of the moral question in which the history of religion offers us difficulties rather than

solutions. Take, for instance, the matter of truthfulness. Pascal's maxim that "the first of Christian truths is that truth should be loved above all," has never yet taken real hold of the religious consciousness. We are suffering endless perplexities to-day simply because the earlier Christian writers did not esteem truth as a virtue. The modern scholar, as he works upon that early Christian literature, is perpetually conscious that in his search for the exact truth of things, he is in contact with writers who had no vivid sense themselves of the value of accuracy and of the simple, unadorned fact. And to-day there are numbers of religious people, excellent in general character and intention, who will refuse to open their minds to a truth, however well it has been established, which seems to contradict some earlier prepossession.

Here, then, we are face to face with some great questions. Has religion, then, no inevitable bearing on morality? Has morality, as some are arguing to-day, nothing to do with religion? Is it a growth out of human nature and its needs, with laws of development which are independent of the creeds? To find our way here we need to answer two prior questions. What is religion, and what is morality? We will look for a moment at the latter of these first. Much of the existing confusion,

and especially in the churches, arises from want of clear thinking on this point.

Let us admit, to begin with—for the facts here compel us—that human morality is an organic growth, developing by a kind of inward necessity. As we watch the centuries we discern the varying stages of it, with standards that continually shift as the years go on. One of the most interesting things in the Bible is the spectacle it offers of these separate moral strata. The patriarchs were sincerely religious men, but their morals, if practised here to-day, would land them in gaol inside of a week. Even under the Christian inspiration the moral principle is, we see, subject to the limitations of the time. Augustine was one of the deepest and devoutest souls that ever lived, but a host of his views on these matters are impossible to us. Our time, indeed, is witnessing a development of the moral perspective which amounts in itself almost to a revelation. We understand, in a way never realised before, that morality is, above all things, the science of right living, the science of procuring the fullest life, of securing the highest type of man and woman. And this view is bringing new elements into the question. We see now what Socrates urged, the connection between knowledge and ethics. To do things best, we must know things best. Hence more and more the idea will prevail that ignorance,

unskill in things, inasmuch as it keeps men back from the higher realisations, is in itself a kind of lower morality. Then the modern mind is being more and more penetrated with the relation of the individual to the social organism. We see, as M. Bourgeois, in his "Solidarité," has so fully expounded, how the struggle for individual development, while the first condition and the initiative of all progress, becomes in its turn part of a vast social movement outside.

With this all admitted, where does religion come in? Can the moral movement go on without it? Here comes that other question which we propounded: "What do we mean by religion?" We have seen how a certain form of it, and that very intense and real in its way, has subsisted and does subsist alongside of the grossest immorality. That is one fact. But to get a true view we must have all the facts. And another of them, not less certainly established, is that no advance in morality has been made apart from religion. Man has never yet been kept on his upward line by mere scientific propositions. China is often pointed to as a country which has subsisted on a bare morality? Has it? Is Confucianism a bare morality? Confucius always turned to the religious motive as the final sanction. He pointed his disciples with admiration to that wonderful inscription on the Golden Statue in

the Temple of Light : " When you speak, when you act, when you think, you seem alone, unseen, unheard, but the spirits are witnesses of all." That is religion. It is the same religion—the religion of the unseen presence—that lay back of the best in Stoicism and gave it its strength. The French revolutionaries tried to get on without the religious motive, and wound up with Robespierre's declaration that if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him.

Modern thinking, proposing to found morality solely upon the principles of human nature, will have to take account of all there is in human nature. And one of the first things we meet there is the necessity, in order that man may come to his true self, that he be possessed by some thing, some one beyond himself. In one of Baudelaire's prose poems we have this seemingly wild exclamation : " To escape being the martyrised slaves of the hour, intoxicate yourselves ! Be ever intoxicated—with wine, or poetry, or virtue, as you will. But be ever intoxicated ! " A strange outburst, yet with deep truth in it. Man must, to reach his best, be filled with something not himself. And that is the basal truth of all religion. It is the topmost truth of Christianity. It is where the personal Christ comes in as its central and satisfying fact. Edmund Spiess, in his " Logos Spermatikos," gives an exhaustive

comparison between the ancient Greek ethics and the New Testament teaching. He finds that almost everything said in the New Testament has been taught, in one form or another, by the philosophers outside. And yet ancient Greece had not Christianity. It lacked the personality of Christ.

We strike here the clarifying fact of our whole controversy. A true morality, we have said, requires a growing knowledge. But to be operative it demands something more. It must have a motive, an impelling force. We know Matthew Arnold's definition of religion—"morality touched with emotion." It is by no means a complete definition, but it goes a long way. And it is the Christianity of the presence of Christ that gives us the true morality and the true emotion. In Russia, or England, or anywhere else where religion may be more or less dismembered from the best living, it is because there is a link missing, a lack of coherence between the knowing and the feeling. Where the Gospel is really understood and felt it has always uplifted the morals. Chalmers in his early days preached morals alone and with no moral result. He became filled with the love of Christ, and with that power behind him engraved the ethical precepts on the heart of Scotland. M. Villemain, in his great work on the Fathers, while recognising that the early Church lost much

of the intellectual treasure of the Greeks, observes that it was more than compensated by the moral force which Christianity brought into the world. The heart of man, as he truly says, has gained more in this discipline than its imagination has lost.

To sum up then, in the Christianity of Christ we have the best solution we know of the problem involved in "religion and morals." We have here the highest teaching, combined with the highest motive for following it. "*Enivrez vous*," says our Baudelaire. The simple Christian has a better sense for this than had Baudelaire. He has the best sort of possession. Back of his knowing is a being, behind the ethic a force to translate it into life. The Church of to-day will gain or lose power in proportion as it keeps the balance between the two factors. Its exhortation must be crammed with ethic. At its peril may it arouse feeling, unless it use it as the way to conduct. Historic Christianity is, as we have confessed, full of moral failures. But it has had also the most magnificent successes. They have always come, and always will come, when the Gospel in the fulness of its moral is combined with the fulness of its spiritual power. The modern pulpit, as an instruction in this whole matter, cannot do better than to reread the sermons of John Wesley. In those wonderful compositions, examples of the

purest English, the great evangelist, who did more for England than all the eighteenth-century thinkers and politicians combined, offers us a gospel which stirs to its depths the spiritual passion, and then turns this force to the performance of every human duty. The Church to-day can do no better than to copy that model.

XII.

On Human Perfection.

One dogma of the eternal religion will assuredly be that of the human perfectibility. There is, one may say, already a kind of unanimity about it. The story of this faith and of the efforts and struggles it has occasioned, is, perhaps, the most wonderful in history. Theists, atheists, Greek philosophers and evangelical Christians, Indian Yogis and Western scientists, have found here a meeting-place. Condorcet, who rejected Christianity as a supernatural extravagance, nevertheless put forward the human perfectibility as the centre of his system. There is nothing more pathetic in literature than the spectacle of this hunted philosopher, in the days of the "Terror," in daily expectation of the guillotine, occupying himself with his treatise on "The Progress of the Human Spirit." On the other side of the Channel his contemporaries, John Wesley, and his ally, Fletcher of Madeley, ardent evangelical believers, had in their doctrine of "entire sanctification" proclaimed,

with a vast difference of accent, substantially the same idea. In our day Nietzsche, their completest imaginable contrast, has yet obeyed the same inspiration in his doctrine of the "Overman," a suggestion which Mr. H. G. Wells, in his recent "Food of the Gods" story, has developed into weirdest proportions.

These are later forms of a quest that has been in the world from the beginning of time. Ever has floated before our race the vision of "the perfect man." It has been always felt that our chief significance lay in our promise of something better. It is remarkable to note how the early Chinese philosophy, reckoned as the most prosaic of cults, yet contained in it the thought of the ideal man, in whom both sexes and all other men existed, the "holy one" in whom, as it were, inhered the body spiritual of humanity. The East has from time immemorial sought after perfection, and always in one way. The path was that of the ascetic. The Indian Yogi believes that through the training of body and spirit enjoined by his cult, he can attain to supernatural powers. On the same quest we find in Persia the followers of Mithras, living in closely united societies, calling each other "father" and "brother," having rites of baptism, confirmation and communion, practising continence, self-control and self-denial, believing in resurrection and the soul's

immortality. Their life was one long aspiration towards something higher.

In the West the idea of a perfected humanity has been equally before the mind, but with a characteristic difference. Plato, in the "Republic," throws out the suggestion, ever since caressed by philosophers, and notably in recent years, that human perfection should be approached by scientific methods applied to questions of birth and training. We can produce enormous developments in animal life by a proper selection in breeding. Why not apply the same principle to man? We know the Platonic suggestions on this head, and the way they have been reproduced by modern writers. One could almost have wished, in the interests of experiment, that the Emperor Gallienus had actually carried out that scheme of his of building a city to be called Platonopolis, to be administered by him on the principles of the "Republic."

The problem, however, is not quite so easy as the theorists, ancient and modern, appear to think. What, after all, is human excellence? It is, we find, a marvellously complex affair, and the elements of it are distributed in the strangest way. We have physical giants without brains, and splendid intellects on puny bodies. A healthy physique and acute reasoning power may go with a hard heart, while an angelic sweetness and patience

may be conjoined with mental mediocrity. The qualities which make the human ideal are, in fact, the property of humanity as a whole, and not of any separate individuals. It is as if Nature had said to us, "No, you must grow together; for you are one, both in your weakness and your strength. Hand, foot and head, body and soul, individual and society, your make is one, and one must be your common destiny."

There is, however, one side of our topic to which all this is preliminary. It is its definitely Christian aspect. To-day we have put to us in a very precise form the question, "Should Christians be perfectionists?" A school of evangelical believers, whose personal character and service entitle them to our highest respect, offer us here a clearly-defined doctrine. Their principle is a life without conscious sin, maintained in us daily and hourly by the abiding presence, through the Spirit, of the unseen Christ. For this contention they quote His own great word: "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," and those sublime passages in the Epistles which speak of a complete sanctification, of the preserving of body, soul and spirit blameless unto the great Coming. In this, as we have already suggested, the school is following largely in the footsteps of Wesley and Fletcher. Students of their

writings will remember with what cogency they insist upon an entire cleansing in this life as a preparation for the heavenly life beyond. What, asks Wesley, has death to do with cleansing? And yet the majority of Christians seem to depend upon death as the one preparation for the perfect life beyond! Here and now, he concludes, in the will, soul, spirit, is the preparation to be made; it is the teaching of Scripture and of common-sense.

And assuredly there is here much, very much, with which all believing people must agree. Do not our souls leap in response to Christ's great word? Do not we want to share, with those Thessalonians to whom Paul wrote, in the Spirit's completest work? And is not the thought of an abiding highest Presence, on whose power we can hourly lean, for resisting evil and accomplishing good, of all thoughts the most inspiring? So far indeed from disagreeing here, our plea would be for a fuller insistence by all sections of the Church on truths at once so plain and so ennobling.

While saying this, and from the heart, we find this teaching susceptible at the same time of a certain criticism. And the criticism is, not a repudiation of the teaching, but a complaint of its restrictedness. What it lacks are some additions, necessary to bring it

into line with another range of realities. Its fault has been in the failure to note the relation between its own special message and other truths not less visible and not less important.

To begin with. While to aim at perfection, in the sense of sinlessness, is unquestionably a duty and privilege for Christians, does this in any sense imply consciousness, or an actuality of sinlessness on their part? Neither Scripture nor fact imply anything of the kind. The nature of things is entirely against it. For when we talk of perfection, or of sinlessness, we must remember that the whole thing depends upon our ideal. A state that satisfies one man's conscience will not satisfy that of another. As we rise in the scale our ideal rises, the perceptive faculty becomes keener. A room in which a short-sighted person discovers no speck of dust is to a keener sight in quite a dusty condition. It is, we conceive, with our moral faculty as with other faculties, the artistic, for instance. A painter who had seen only rustic daubs might be entirely satisfied with his own performances. Let him enlarge his view; let him visit the great galleries and see the work of the masters, and his self-complacency becomes self-disgust. And so our half-bred saint, who speaks to-day of himself as being without conscious sin, has only to be broadened a little in his view, to have a stronger light

thrown on his interior, and his "sinlessness" will be as the competency of our untravelled artist.

And this leads us to another question—a root question. What do we mean by "sin" and "sinlessness"? We have to-day to revise our meaning of these terms as we have had to revise our meaning of the word "holiness." This latter word we now recognise as signifying neither less nor more than "wholeness." It means the full equipment of manhood, the highest state of body, soul and spirit. In this connection we are coming at last to understand that apostolic word which bids us "add to our faith virtue, and to our virtue knowledge." Here, in the New Testament, is the sanction, to an extent at least, of the Greek teaching which made knowledge a condition of virtue. We remember how Socrates insisted that to be "good," in any practical sense, as "a good horseman," "a good musician" and so on, meant that a person had knowledge and skill in these matters; and how he extended this view to all departments of virtue and morality. And we are recognising to-day, with a new clearness, what truth there is in his argument.

We see at once how this view relates itself to the doctrine of sinlessness. A Christian man, attending church and reading his Bible, sincere in his desire for the best, looks into

himself and around on his environment, and rejoices in the equilibrium that he finds there. It is a peace which he feels is divine. He is committing no conscious sin, and he thanks God for his daily preservation. He has indeed much to thank God for. But is this sinlessness? If you mean by that an equation between what he is and what he thinks he should be, well and good. But on a larger view the word is seen to be ridiculously out of place. His incapacity to see his huge defects is in itself a fault. To the extent in which he is untrained, undeveloped—and he is undeveloped in a thousand things—he is below his possibility, and to that extent sinful. Sinful we say, for the Greek word which is in our New Testament means by sin "a missing of the mark," and our man, in all these ways, has been missing the mark.

"Be ye perfect" is our word. Yet think of the "perfection" of our fingers as compared with those of a Paderewski; of our muscular system as compared with that of a Sandow; of our scholarship as related to that of a Max Müller or of a Harnack! In this one realm of omissions, of failures to make the best of our faculties, and to increase thereby the depth and height of our being, how enormous is the lack of the best of us, how absurd the complacency which would regard ourselves in such aspects as "perfect"!

There is another point not to be forgotten in a discussion of this question. It is that we can never consider human perfection, either in a general or in a theological sense, as a question of the individual alone. A perfect man requires a perfect society. We cannot, howsoever we may try, get away from our relation to the brotherhood. This is the truth at the bottom of Socialism. To the extent to which the community is diseased, we are diseased. We cannot, if we would, shake off our solidarity. We have seen how the different perfections are scattered over the race. We are great, little, growing, dwindling, in each other. We can taste no ultimate perfection which our lowliest brother is not to share.

To sum up. The Gospel is a Gospel of perfection. To its ineffable height we are all of us called. The indwelling Christ is for us the daily victor over sin. But His greatest work in us is to open incessantly to our gaze the new depths of the riches of His calling, and to make us, in the light of that great vision, aware, as never before, of the poverty and bareness of our present state, and athirst for the yet untrod altitudes to which He points.

XIII.

Ethics of the Intellect.

We have spoken of morality as a central feature of the eternal religion. But human morality is a plant of strangely irregular growth. Man has moralised himself in patches. Nothing is more curious than to observe the diligence with which one part of us has been ethically tended as compared with the neglect visible in other directions. Society has great institutions for keeping us straight, but their jurisdiction is a limited one. The law courts, for instance, deal with ethics of the will and of action. The Church so far has had to do mainly with ethics of act and feeling. It probes deeper than the law court, judging not only men's evil acts, but the envy, lust, avarice, wrath, hatred, out of which the acts have come. But there remains another region of human life for the regulation of which no institution at present exists, and the laws of which are still very much to seek. It is the region of the pure intellect. A simple statement of how the facts lie in this department

will be enough to show that throughout long past ages, and with multitudes of earnest people in our time, there has been no such thing as an ethic of the intellect at all. When that ethic does arrive, when everybody realises that mental morality is essential to every other morality, we shall get some very different thinking, leading to some very different acting in our world, and not least amongst those who are counted specially religious.

Let us see in one or two directions how the account stands. We have to begin with a reservation. There will never be an ethic of the intellect pure and simple, because there is no such thing in human nature as intellect pure and simple. We are not built in water-tight compartments. For the purposes of analysis, philosophers divide our inner consciousness into sections which they label as reason, feeling, volition; but, as a matter of fact, these are never found alone. Our feeling is always more or less charged with thinking, and our thinking with feeling. The one may be said always to contain the other in solution. And, as we shall see, a morality of the mental process must, as a consequence, impinge continually on a morality of the feeling. But when all this has been allowed for, there remains in the action of the human reason, taken separately, a sphere of ethics which demands a far more diligent cultivation than has hitherto

been accorded to it, if man is, in the inner life, to attain to his highest and best.

How badly we are in need of a new code in this department is shown by the way in which men have hitherto treated the intellect. The ideals that have guided them in other directions have here completely disappeared. Reformers who have been ready to shed their blood for their country's freedom have turned with horror from the idea of liberty as applied to their reasoning faculties. Is it not a most singular circumstance that while the word "free" is one of the most inspiring in the language, the word "freethinker" carries to-day with multitudes of excellent people the most opprobrious of significances? And yet what thinking is valuable that is not free? One might suppose that the human reason were some mischievous imp, some creation of the powers of darkness, whose action, if left unchained, would inevitably be evil and deadly. It is time we all realised that the mind in its most unfettered condition is as much subject to law as are the tides; that when left to its proper action the results of its labours are always and everywhere the slow disclosure of ultimate truth. And yet what despite has been done to this perfect law of liberty! The Church, which is supposed to be the guardian of morals, has been in this matter, of all institutions, the most unmoral.

It has imagined that truth could be secured by force. It has habitually coerced the reason. The mind must bow before the decisions of councils and of popes. How odd all this to people who read history! Councils! But the councils have again and again flatly contradicted each other; and have had their decisions declared heretical by others which succeeded them! We remember Arles and Milan, which pronounced Athanasius a heretic and declared for a creed which the later Church emphatically condemned. Which are we to believe? And popes! But what of infallible popes who have spread heresy? A Pope Honorius, for instance, who taught the Monothelite heterodoxy, for which he was afterwards excommunicated by an Œcumenical Council! The whole business here is a blunder. It is time we recognised that coercion of this kind, wherever exercised, and by whatever authority, is a damage wrought on the most delicate and valuable portion of the human machinery, a violation of the ethic of the intellect.

And, then, as further illustration of our mental morality, observe the estimate which men, the best of their time, have formed of the value of truth! It would seem as if there is no lesson which humanity has been slower in learning than that of simple veracity. For ages the most unpopular of cults has been the

cult of the plain fact. It was not good enough for the human imagination, especially the Eastern imagination. Here again the Church has been one of the chief sinners. Religion, which begins with emotion, expressed itself first in picture and symbol. And this was well enough so long as these were taken at their proper value. The mischief came when imagination was exhibited as history and enshrined as dogma. We may allow the allegorists fullest scope. Venerable Bede may assure us that the text, "Elkanah had two wives," means "Elkanah is our Lord and His two wives are the Synagogue and the Church." We shall not be much the worse for the interpretation. But it is different when, on the most vital subjects, fables are offered us as realities. The Anglican divine, Conyers Middleton, was denounced by his contemporaries as a heretic for declaring, in his "Free Inquiry," that the religious leaders of the fourth century had condoned falsehood, had allowed wholesale forgery, and approved pious frauds. To the modern critic these asservations are the commonplaces of ecclesiastical history. Church writers of those days considered forgery in a "good cause" to be a virtue. "I did it for the love of Paul," observes one of them as his reason for issuing his production under the Apostle's name. And this habit of putting ecclesiastical interests before the truth has,

alas! survived in force to our own times. Maurice's wonder that "the faith of scientific men in the Bible has not wholly perished when they see how small ours is, and by what tricks we are sustaining it," is a wonder for which to-day we find too abundant justification! Religious men still proclaim their passionate devotion to "the truth," "the precious truths," "the great fundamental truths," without daring to inquire whether what they proclaim is true at all. Religion will never set itself right with the present age, and still less with the time that is coming, until it has purged itself of, and done penance for, this age-long and deadly infraction of the ethic of the intellect.

And the wrong here done was so needless! As if inquiry, the freest play of the mind on religion, could ever damage it, or damage humanity! Do we suppose that the ultimate facts and forces of the Gospel can lose any of their value by being better understood? The truth is, as we are at length beginning to discover, that it is only after giving the reason its fullest exercise that we recognise its limits, and come upon the real argument for faith. It is then we find out for ourselves that there is a truth undiscoverable to the intellect which reveals itself instead to the heart. It is thus that Christianity won its first victories. It conquered men not as a syllogism, but as a

spiritual power. The truth of life is always deeper than logic, and here was a truth of life. When Aristides in his "Apology" says of the early Christians: "Wherefore they do not commit adultery, nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. Whatsoever they would not that others should do to them they do not to others," he is exhibiting to us religion in its true quality and function as a power to purify and uplift. In presence of a force like this we are in contact with what is beyond our mental analysis, so far as we can at present carry it. But we feel here the truth of the thing the more profoundly, for the very reason that we cannot formulate it.

And this leads us to another point, closely allied to the foregoing. We have spoken of "the truth of life." But there is a converse to that. It is in the relation of life to truth. What has often been lost sight of in argument, especially on the materialistic side, has been the fact that certain aspects of truth, and those of the highest importance, are only accessible to certain spiritual states. You cannot get the Mont Blanc prospect without climbing Mont Blanc. The rigid ascetic discipline of the Neo-Platonists was, after all, only an exaggerated expression of the truth that to see into the spiritual kingdom you must have a clean soul. The intellect, in these regions, can never act

by itself. One's vision must come to the whole man. If I as a reasoner about religion have not learned to forgive, to love and to serve, I am lacking in the first qualification for the business. The truth here is only known through doing. Zwingli means this when in his "True and False Religion" he says: "Truth does not depend on the discussions of men, but has its seat, and rests itself invincibly in the soul. It is an *experience* which everyone may have." Gregory Nazianzen is on the same line in his exhortation: "Ascend by holiness of life if thou desirest to become a theologian. Keep the commandments, for action is the step to contemplation." "*On a toujours la voix de son esprit*," finely says a French writer. The soul's voice is the expression of the soul's state, and if that state is not one of movement towards the highest, it can never catch or interpret the Divine voices.

The subject has endless other lines of investigation which we here glance at without following. A study of this kind should, for instance, be for some a new call to industry. What are we doing with our brains? There is no such waste on the earth's surface as the waste of mind power. We have not, likely enough, taken even the trouble to find out what we have. It was by mere accident, or the pressure of necessity, that many of us discovered what there really was inside us. Our mind

kingdom is wider than the British Empire, but we have only cultivated as yet a patch outside our kitchen door. What are we reading ? The finest literature of the world—the best product of all its best minds—is open to us. What time do we devote to this high fellowship, or is our reading-life a mere slushy progress through literary gutters ?

There is also a social side to the theme. The ethic of the intellect needs to be cultivated above all things at the domestic hearth. Nowhere so much as here should the mind's action be so carefully watched. Nowhere so much as here do we need the right atmosphere of feeling in which the intellect may do its work of thinking. For the people around us will be to us precisely according to that atmosphere and that thought. They will vary as these vary. A French writer says we are never just except to those we love. He is right. There is no justice outside of love. A wife, a husband, a brother, depend for their justice, for their happiness, on the way we set our minds towards them. They cry to us to look for the good in them ; most of all for that hidden good, which awaits our loving culture to nurse it into life.

In sum. The ethic of the intellect unites in the demand for truth, for life, for love. But the greatest of these is love.

XIV.

Wealth and Life.

One of the results of the new idea of religion, as the whole science of right living, is the necessity it imposes on Christian teachers of broadening their studies. In this view all great literature, all true science, are a part of theology and belong to its curriculum. And quite indispensable as a branch of that learning, lying as it does at the root of our vast social question, and forming thus an integral feature of the eternal religion, is the study of Political Economy. The religious leader of to-day is indeed badly equipped who is not familiar with his Adam Smith, his Ricardo, his Mill, his Sidgwick. For here are amassed and arranged for him facts and laws, concerning the individual and the community, which touch his special business at every point. Political economy has been called the Dismal Science. As a matter of fact it is ignorance of it which has made some of our most Dismal History. What Adam Smith and his successors had to teach concerning the creation

and distribution of wealth, the relations of land, labour and capital, the theory of rent, the laws governing currency and exchange, and the hundred and one allied topics, forms a branch of knowledge with which the Church, if it is to fulfil its function, must be at least as familiar as is the world.

But one of the chief reasons why the Christian community, as such, needs to interest itself in this side of truth lies not so much in the lessons it has to learn from it as in the lessons it has to teach. When Ruskin began, from his own standpoint, to discuss these questions, he was regarded by many as a fantastic dreamer, offering cloudy sentiment as a refutation of hard fact. To-day we begin to see things differently. His criticism is discovered to be an entirely sound one. The eighteenth-century economists saw a great deal, but they did not see everything. In treating man simply as a wealth-creating machine they left out of the account some of its biggest factors. They forgot that man is not built in watertight compartments, and that his idealisms, his religious aspirations, that sphere of spiritual power whose work upon him tends to change his whole centre of gravity, cannot be left out of the economical calculation. In truth the earlier political economy, with its idea of self-interest as the mainspring of activity, with its laws of demand

and supply, of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market, was exactly like a theory of the world which should deal accurately with inorganic forces—with gravitation, cohesion and so on—but all the while ignored the vast realm of organised life above. Life is influenced at every point by the law of gravitation, but we should understand it very imperfectly if we knew no others. The old economy is in fact a science of the lower laws. It deals always with man as he is, not with what he is to be; it takes no account of the upper forces which are making him something different and higher. What then the religious teacher has to-day for his task is, after acquainting himself thoroughly with this under sphere of things, to open it up to, and relate it definitely with, that realm of the spiritual powers which alone can produce the true human society.

Such a study will give us some sure results, and should dissipate a good many mischievous notions. It will, for instance, in no degree diminish our sense of the value of wealth. It will, instead, clarify our view of its position and function. We shall realise, in the words of a modern writer, that "money is compressed force," and force, especially "compressed force," is, we know, not a matter to be trifled with. And there is a legitimate enjoyment in wealth. Who that has known

at once the pinch of poverty and the sense of abundance, but can honestly sympathise with Sydney Smith's confession that "he felt happier for every guinea he gained"? Indeed, theology here must come to the same conclusion as economics. For if God be at once the supremely Holy, and at the same time the Possessor of all things, there can be no intrinsic evil in wealth. We are, indeed, in a very rich universe, with invitations scattered over every yard of its surface to enter boldly and partake. The real question here is, "On what terms and for what end?"

And here we come straight upon Ruskin's great governing proposition, that "there is no wealth but life." We are here, that is, not ultimately for the purpose of heaping up riches, but to live the great life. Wealth, then, is not wealth unless it ministers to life. The proposition is, indeed, self-evident. A career, whether it be of twenty or of ninety years, is in the final analysis the sum of its thoughts, its feelings, its deeds. To get the best in these kinds is to have truly lived. To secure these things in the largest degree for the community, is the one worthy aim of the teacher and leader of men. It is only as property—material having of whatsoever kind—ministers to this result that it is of value. Where it hinders this result its influence has to be regarded as mischievous. The only stand-

point, then, from which we can properly study the problem of wealth, is the standpoint of life. And what, pray, is Life? We are learning some new things about it to-day. In an admirable little work by Mr. Hibbert on "Life and Energy," the author arrives by scientific demonstration at the thesis that life is not in itself a form of energy, but rather "a non-factorial director of energy." He shows, too, that life is the ultimate basis of morals; that the moral is always that which furthers the development of life, and the immoral that which depresses and retards it. In the idea of life, also, is summed up not only our present morality, but all our future prospect. We do not yet know to what further stages its development will reach. The miracle of our present consciousness may be only the veriest foretaste of what is yet to be. There seems an infinitude of untouched resource wrapped up as yet in its secret place, and which the coming ages are yet to unfold.

How, then, is wealth related to life? As we look into this question we discover that, over at least a wide aspect of it, the answer seems mainly to be a negative one. When we ask what makes up the best thinking, feeling and doing, we find only a slender relation to pounds, shillings and pence. We are in questions here of bodily health, of good air, of hard work, of inner training, of a soul tuned to the infinite.

But these things are all possible to poverty as well as to riches. Fresh air, outside the towns at least, can be had for the opening of one's mouth. Physical vigour is nowhere a millionaire's monopoly. The health-giving food, as doctors are everywhere now preaching to the rich, is the simplest food. The moneyed classes are being told that they are destroying themselves by over-eating and drinking. Dr. Abernethy's "live on sixpence a day and earn it" is declared to be the true philosophy. Splendid bodies and brains have been built up on Scotch porridge, a diet within easy reach of most of us. And hard work, the natural heritage of every Adam's son, is not difficult to find. Amid all the frantic strivings, defeats and disappointments of the modern world, it is something surely to have this one point fixed in our minds, that the highest attainable life, the finest thinking, feeling and doing, are by Nature's immutable laws annexed to the simplest and plainest natural conditions.

Why then is it, with all this demonstrably true, that the modern man struggles so desperately and sacrifices so enormously in order to amass wealth? The answer is simple. It flings us back upon that earlier definition: money is compressed force. Men seek riches because they seek power. The mansion, with its retinue of servants, is probably less com-

fortable to live in than the cottage, but the owner knows that the size of all this passes somehow into the word he speaks to his fellow, and commands his attention. In a materialistic age, especially, wealth is the supremest energy. It can carry you to the ends of the earth; it can open the door to every circle of Society; it can buy the very thoughts and souls of men. How to its very core did pagan Rome, the most materialistic of civilisations, feel its power! Witness that word of Horace: "Et genus et virtus nisi cum re vilior alga est." Both birth and virtue without property are cheaper than seaweed. And that companion word of Juvenal: "Omnia Romae cum pretio," "Everything at Rome has its price."

It is precisely here that wealth under existing conditions threatens life. It is amongst ourselves beginning to choke and to suppress life's higher manifestations. As a single illustration take the case of literature and journalism. The prostitution of letters in the service of Mammon is, of course, no new thing. In the Renaissance time Aretino excuses himself for his indecencies by the remark: "Why write serious books? Amusement and scandal are the only things that pay." He is echoed by Des Periers, who observes: "Let us write some vile thing and we shall find a bookseller who will give ten

thousand crowns for the copy." Indecency is not precisely the danger of our day, though in some quarters there is enough of it. What the modern world has to fear is the choking of its thought by the money interest. The independence of the Press is being threatened by trust combinations in England, and even more formidably in America. Here is a shadow that is stealing over the entire modern world. Imagine the Press of England controlled by a Rand syndicate! The whole intellectual life of the country purchased by a ring of alien company promoters! Yet things are tending this way. It may well be that before long the modern Press, in the interests of its own life and of all that is best in civilisation, will have to realise, as the Church did of old, that to be of any true service its base must be spiritual, its members an apostolate, content to live, if need be, on bread and water, if that be the price at which alone they may speak the highest that is in them!

In the long run the problems of wealth and life will adjust themselves, and we are beginning to see how. The clue to the solution will be, as we have said, in accepting life-development as always the highest end. The soul must first of all be free in order that it may grow. The gold tyranny that seeks to fetter it must at all costs be broken. And that can only be by the uprising of men

whose minds are not to be bought; who will speak naught but the truth, though they starve in the process. And these men must to-day speak the truth about wealth. They must show that in the method of its procuring, of its distribution, and of its enjoyment, no law shall be broken that concerns the furtherance of life. To this end the wealth must be equitably distributed. The beauty it creates, the energies it sets in motion, the art, the literature, the enjoyment it promotes, must be held as not the appanage of a few, but, in as far as the ultimate conditions permit, the inheritance of all. The end is that not a clique or a caste, but man himself is to be wealthy; a being, that is, dowered with all the capacity of being, doing and possessing that is commensurate with the magnificent place assigned to him in the scheme of the world.

XV.

A Layman's Religion.

WILL the eternal religion be a layman's religion or the religion of the priest? The question receives curious illustration from a controversy on "Do We Believe?" which some time ago filled day after day the columns of one of our English newspapers. A distinguishing feature of the controversy was the fact that it was so largely the utterance of the British layman. As a rule, he is not addicted to speech on these subjects. On this occasion, however, he cast aside his reticence, cleared his throat, and said his say. And it was the layman's voice that was listened to. The clerical deliverances on the question were not in the front rank of interest. The words that sunk deepest into the public mind were those of medical men, of sailors, of lawyers, of policemen, of City people—of people, that is, in the thick of secular affairs, who discussed religion from the standpoint of simple manhood, and not from that of a professional interest.

And the feeling which showed itself in this instance is visible to-day in other directions as well. The words men listen for as determinative in matters of belief are not those of the episcopate or of other members of the hierarchy. The clergy themselves wait on the utterances of a Lord Kelvin, of a Sir Oliver Lodge, on their own subject, with a deference that the bench of bishops is quite unable to command. The clerical testimony to religion is, in fact and inevitably, taken with a certain discount. The ecclesiastic, it is felt, is committed to a certain position and cannot help himself. Amongst the working classes this view of things is especially widespread, and accounts largely for their present coolness towards Christianity and the Churches. There is no doubt as to the fact, but many of us, both inside and outside the Church, have not yet taken the trouble to understand what the fact means, nor the conclusions to which it points. It is not too much to say, however, that the whole fortune of the Churches and of Christianity depends on the way in which, in the future, the fact is comprehended and acted upon.

It is by an instinct which is essentially sound that the clergy, as such, are at a discount as a religious witness. The reason is that in so far as they, as a class, are separated from the laity, they are in a false position. Their position is false at once historically and

by the nature of things. For primitive Christianity was essentially a layman's religion. It was this, in part, which constituted its utterly revolutionary character. Against all precedent and usage here was a faith with a layman for its Founder and laymen for its first propagators. Jesus had no connection with the clerical order, nor had His followers. Not one of His first disciples was in any sense a "reverend gentleman." The virulent opposition of the Jewish ecclesiastics was largely a trades union opposition. A religion without priests and sacrifices was to them, not only the most daring of innovations; it meant destruction to the privileges and emoluments of their order. No wonder at the priestly hue and cry, or at the final tragedy at Jerusalem. Calvary was, in the eyes of the Judæan "cloth," fit punishment for the unheard of insolence of a lay religion. A way to God that dispensed with sacrifices and with the hierarchy must be necessarily, to the hierarchs themselves, the most damnable of heresies.

During the first period after the death of its Founder, Christianity still held to this distinctive and wholly revolutionary feature. The New Testament religion is from beginning to end a lay religion. The teaching of Jesus, as preserved by that first society, is a religion of the common life. As Wernle puts it, "Christ will have the sanctification of life in the

world, the sanctification of one's calling, one's everyday life, one's work, within the limits of human society. All the demands that Jesus makes are set up, not for monks and ascetics, but for men in the world." And the society was constituted on a lay basis. As a great missionary organisation it had, of course, a teaching function, but there is not anywhere discernible so much as the flutter of a sacerdotal robe. There are elders, overseers, prophets, evangelists, deacons, "helps," "ministries," but there are no priests. We hear of no clerical garments. The apostles dressed like other men. It is a curious feature of the present situation, that the robes worn to-day by the Roman priests at the altar are a survival of the ordinary lay dress of the first period. It is an unwitting testimony by the sacerdotalist to the non-sacerdotal character of his predecessors.

But the primitive Christianity did not last. In what followed that first stage we have the greatest perversion in history. The new was conquered by the old. The pure stream, leaping from the utmost heights, fell into the sluggish river below, to take its colour and to follow its course. The Horatian verse which speaks of Rome as having conquered Greece by arms, to be itself conquered by the Grecian arts, is the story also of the new faith's contact with old-world custom and

tradition. The two forces in their contact each gave something to the other. What Christianity gave was vital and could never be destroyed. But in taking it the systems of the immemorial past exacted their rights, and the toll was a heavy one. As a result of the compromise we have in the following centuries a Christianity which is an amalgam of the teaching and life of Jesus with the priestism and clericalism with which Judaism and heathendom had combined to endow it. Christianity had ceased henceforth to be a layman's religion.

How the change worked is now a matter of history. That this bastard, unauthorised priesthood produced great characters no one acquainted with the story would for a moment deny. The Jeromes, the Augustines, the Bernards were men of whom the world was not worthy, to whom all succeeding ages are indebted. It would, indeed, be out of place to exclaim too excitedly against the course which things took in mediæval Christendom. It is better, perhaps, to recognise that this was the course which the world, in its inner evolution, had to take. The nature of things and the human limitations made it inevitable. Human perfection is a long way off, and the road to it is circuitous. It was necessary that men should have their experiment and see how their amalgam worked.

We can trace the result now with some certainty.

Priesthood and monkhood, in all their degrees, were alike the assertion of the same principle—the principle of separation, of a class, a caste, theoretically superior in Christian privilege, function and authority from the commonalty. It was the principle of religious professionalism. Its first result was upon the clergy themselves. Great saints, we have said, were to be found in their ranks, but the general condition was deplorable. What a picture is that which Jerome draws of the Roman clergy in his day, flattering rich matrons, spending the day in calls at grand houses ; of monks gaining favour with the rich by pretended austerities, while they repaid themselves with nightly revelry. And matters did not improve with the years. Could there be anything more terrible as a revelation of manners than Walter de Map's satire of "Bishop Goliath" in the twelfth century ? Yes, there is worse even than that. It is found in the records of the Black Book, the publication of which sealed the doom of the English monasteries. Thus was it with the clergy. It fared worse with the laity, who, shut off from their heritage of responsibility and service, were lost for centuries to vital religion.

The Reformation was, for one thing, a revolt against all this ; an endeavour to make

Christianity once again a layman's religion. In the century preceding it, in the words of J. R. Green, "Pope and king, bishop and noble, vied with each other in greed, in self-seeking, in lust, in faithlessness, in a pitiless cruelty. . . . Religion and morality passed out of the hands of the priesthood into those of the laity." The gist of Protestantism was in this, that the layman had once more found his soul. He had opened the New Testament to discover with astonishment and delight a religion without the priest. That discovery produced the Puritan and the Huguenot, the sturdiest manhood of these later ages. Well may Carlyle say of them: "It is a fruitful kind of study, that of men who do in very deed understand and feel at all moments that they are in contact with God, that the right and wrong of this little life has extended itself into eternity and infinitude. It is at bottom my religion, too."

The vital religious movements ever since have been essentially laymen's movements. Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravian community, was a layman. John Wesley obtained his most vivifying spiritual experience from his contact with Peter Böhler, the Moravian, also a layman. And Wesley's first preachers, with whom he woke up England, were a band of laymen. To-day General

Booth's vast evangelising work the world over is conducted by lay people. D. L. Moody, the greatest missioner of our generation, was a layman. France to-day would not be, as it is, in revolt against Christianity were it not that in expelling its Huguenots three centuries ago it thrust from its borders the exponents of and witnesses to a laymen's religion, leaving the land the prey to a professionalism which the nation refuses any longer to endure.

Here are the facts, or some of them. But to what do they lead ? Are we to conclude from them that Christianity is better without any separated order ; that in view of the evils of clericalism, we are to do away with a clergy ? That by no means follows. *Abusus non tollit usum.* This would not be primitive Christianity, which certainly had its separated ministries. It stands to commonest sense that a religion which rests on teaching must have teachers, and that teaching, to be continuous and effective, must have its specialists.

But what primitive Christianity and all the later history do teach is plain enough. Clericalism as an evil can only be avoided by putting the teaching order on the primitive basis. It is to be ever of the people, and with the people and for the people. Sacerdotalism contends that ecclesiastical authority comes from above and not from beneath. It is conferred by the episcopate, which, in its

turn, by apostolic succession, has received it from the Church's Head. With the highest Churchmen we too believe in an authority which comes from above. The true teacher and spiritual leader has ever his vocation from on high. It begins there between his soul and God, most august of commissions and of consecrations. But thus commissioned he stands there amongst his brethren, of and with them always, his note union, and never separatism.

All sections of the Church have to relearn this lesson if they are going to save religion for the people. Nonconformists not a few need to learn it afresh. Let them be done for ever with dressings up and gestures and postures. There is a professional smile and a professional tone that are alike detestable. Let religious speech be with blunt simplicity and sincerity. Let the teacher be one with the common life of the people. Let him never by any assumption of his own permit the business man to suppose that his participation in the duties of the Divine kingdom has been transferred to other shoulders. In a word, let Christianity, with its organisation and its teaching faculty, resume its place as a layman's religion ; let the great Layman, its first Teacher, be permitted once more to exhibit, without veil or intermediary, His Divine life and doctrine, and again, as of old, the common people will hear Him gladly.

XVI.

Religion and Art.

A FEATURE eternally associated with the eternal religion is its expression in art. The story of the relation here is often a complicated, and, at times, a very puzzling one, yet crammed at every point with interest and suggestion. There have been periods when art has seemed to ignore the religious feeling, and when, on the other hand, the religious feeling has ignored art. But despite attempts and surface appearances there has never been any real divorce. There cannot be. Religion will go on producing art, and art will go on representing religion, because they both belong to one and the same nature of things. The artist, *quâ* artist, is religious. He may do nothing but *genre* pictures, landscapes, flower and fruit pieces, portraits, with never a suggestion of so-called sacred history or symbolism. But in so far as he is a genuine painter, his work is, we say, religious, for its success from first to last lies in its conformity to a law which is divine. He is a disciple of an eternally

ordained truth of things in the sphere of colour and form, and would be a failure there if he were other than this.

Yet this relation has varied enormously in successive ages. The earliest art, wherever we go, is religious. Man from the beginning has been an inveterate symbolist. Behind his rudest constructions in this line an *arrière pensée* lingers. Is it not wonderful, this instinct which invests some rudest block—the black Kaaba stone at Mecca, the sandstone and granite monoliths at Stonehenge—with a mystical significance? Beginning so humbly, art in the earlier civilisations blossoms out into the most elaborate forms, but always in the service of religion. In Babylon, Egypt, Greece, it was for the temple and the statue of the god that the artist wrought. And we may well believe that those early workers, as they reared the Parthenon or carved the statue of Jupiter, had beneath their technique a genuine inspiration. They had in them surely some stir of that feeling which makes Plato, in the Symposium, break out in his glorious rhapsody on the Eternal Beauty: "What would it be, then, were it granted to any man to see very Beauty clear—incorruptible and undefiled, not mingled with colour or flesh of man, or with aught that can consume away, but single and divine?" They saw what Athenagoras, the Christian father, has

so finely expressed: "For beauty on earth is not self-made, but sent hither by the hand and will of God."

And yet it is here that one of those curious puzzles meets us in the story of religion and art. How comes it that in the times and among the peoples where the religious sentiment has been at its highest, the feeling and the production of art have been at the lowest; and that, contrariwise, the periods of the greatest artistic splendour have been marked so often by the utmost depravation of morals and religion? There is no doubt as to the facts. The Christian history here is a remarkable one. On the one side we may remark three distinct periods where the religious claim has been felt to its utmost, and where at the same time the artistic sentiment seemed either to be non-existent or under ban. These were the first age of Christianity, the Puritan age, and the time in England of the Evangelical revival. The first Christian generation had its apostles, its prophets, its teachers, its martyrs, but not its artists. So barren was it in this direction that we have no authentic portrait of Christ. The early fathers are in flat contradiction, even, as to His appearance; some, as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, declaring Him devoid of human comeliness, while others, as Jerome and Augustine, speak of

His transcendent beauty of aspect. Eusebius mentions a statue of Him at Cæsarea Philippi which he himself saw, but of which, however, he gives no description. One would like, in this confusion, to think that the wonderful face in Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" is, as tradition holds it was, the copy of a real portrait.

The broad fact remains, that for centuries after the Advent Christendom had no art, in the sense in which a Greek understood the word. There was no room in it for a Phidias or a Praxiteles. It did not appear to include among the virtues the cult of physical and visible beauty. When at last the picture was introduced into churches it was as a concession to the ignorance of the people—that it might be to them a simpler lesson-book. As Pope Gregory I. has it, "therefore the picture is used in churches that those who are ignorant of letters may at least read, by seeing on the walls, what they cannot read in books." And the pictures were most of them terrible daubs. What art had come to in those times is illustrated by a decree of the second Council of Nicæa, in which it is laid down that the painter must have nothing to do with the inspiration or idea of a picture, but only with its execution. "It is not the painters, but the holy fathers who have to invent and dictate. To them manifestly belongs the

composition, to the painter only the execution."

Puritanism and early Methodism seem only to have repeated this story. The Scotch Presbyterians and the Cromwellian Ironsides would have none of an artistic religion. They threw the pictures out of the churches, trampled on the ornaments, broke the stained windows, and whitewashed the walls. The organ is to this day in many places taboo in Scotland. And the early Methodists, "filled with the Spirit," saw no connection between their vocation as saints and that of the painter and sculptor. They turned from an ornamental worship to the barest simplicity. Their clothing was in itself a cult of plainness. There is a story of a young Methodist preacher "out West," of excellent character and ability, but whose brethren were sorely exercised about him because of the grace and physical beauty of his appearance. They insisted, as a condition of acceptance, that he should cut his hair shorter and wear clothes of an older fashion. They had no use for comeliness.

And, as we have said, on the opposite side there is this other puzzle: that the periods of highest art have been again and again those of moral and religious decadence. The standing illustration here is, of course, the Renaissance. The period which gave to art

Da Vinci's "Supper," Raphael's "Transfiguration," the Vatican frescoes, and St. Peter's, was the period of the Borgias and of Leo X., a time of utter pyrrhonism in belief and of unbridled licence in morals. Perugino and Da Vinci were sceptics, and Raphael was a rake. One has to study the contemporary records to get an idea of the enormous orgies of the time. But, you say, "these men painted religious subjects!" They did, but often enough the "sacred" picture had not a particle of religious sentiment in it. We admire these productions as art, but not as religion. Rubens's "Descent from the Cross" is magnificent in form and colour; but it is a pagan, not a Christian splendour. The same may be said of the "Christ in the Pharisee's House" of Paul Veronese. It is really a brilliant sixteenth-century banquet. Compare either of these works with the "Adoration of the Lamb" of fifteenth-century Van Eyck, or with the work of the ecstatic Fra Angelico, the man who fainted from emotion as he painted Christ upon the Cross! In these you have not only form and colour, but the expression of souls that are penetrated with the innermost mystery and power of the Gospel.

Here, then, altogether is a curious tangle. What, with a history like this before us, is the true relation between art and religion? Does high religion banish art, or high art

banish religion? Or is the history a mere jumble of opposites with no uniting principle beneath it? We believe in neither of these propositions. One has to take a large view here, a wide survey of facts. It is a survey which shows us that even Christianity, taken historically, has been only one of the educators of humanity. Religion and beauty are twin sisters, but they seem to have been put out to different nurses, and in their after career to have travelled so far afield as hardly at first sight to be able to recognise each other. Christianity came to us through the Hebrew race, and artistic culture was not in its department. The Greek here had a mission denied to the Jew. Each had something from God without which the other, and humanity at large, would not be complete.

That is part of the story. But there is another thing. The peoples we have mentioned, the early Christians, the Puritan Nonconformists, the eighteenth-century Methodists, who in their intense realisation of religion tabooed art, were mainly, let us remember, of the poor and uncultured classes. "Not many great, not many noble," were called. No miracle was wrought in the mental structure of these people. The moral regeneration they had undergone was not meant to be, and did not become, a substitute for those ages of culture which in other races

and classes had produced the artistic feeling. Let us further remember that for centuries Christianity was struggling with the barbarism of those Northern peoples who had flooded the Roman Empire and stamped out its civilisation.

The history, rightly read, shows really no contradiction. Art, instead of being opposed to religion, is one of its inevitable products. For goodness, as Joubert says, "is the beginning of beauty." Its full development is only a question of time. The early Christian, the Puritan, the Methodist, had the whole thing within them for which the highest art strives. It was only that they had not the means, nor the development required, to put it all into form. They knew also, what the truest art knows, that the deepest within them could never be put into any visible form. These men were artists in the great way; they realised with Milton, that the true poem is a life, that the noblest creations are in the sphere of character and the soul. And that external beauty which they eschewed, as inferior to this inner loveliness, and as allied so often with moral rottenness, they yet believed in. In those visions of the Apocalypse which formed part of their inner nurture, they recognised the final union of spiritual and physical beauty, the alliance of the inner holiness with the splendours of the heavenly city.

It is the business of the present day, taught by this marvellous discipline, to bring these great life factors into a yet more visible harmony. We want artists, skilled not only in that divine law of form revealed to Greece, but in that diviner law of the soul which was opened to men in the Sermon on the Mount. We want an architecture as sublime as that of the old cathedrals, but expressing that higher note of life which they do not possess, that greater freedom, that joy in living, that sense of boundless possibility which is opening as part of the religion of our time. We want a combined culture which shall secure us what Plato held to be the perfection of humanity, a beautiful soul in a beautiful body. Art and religion will reach their true unity when man, radiant in his spiritual perfection, shall look out upon a Paradise world which reflects that inner splendour.

XVII.

Nature the Preacher.

For decades past it has happened with some of us that, somewhere in the youth of the year, a day has dawned which has sent us straight to our Wordsworth. Certain lines of his, and the morning we have waked upon, seem predestinated for each other :

> It is the first mild day of March,
> Each moment sweeter than before,
> The redbreast sings from the tall larch
> That stands beside our door.

We feel "a blessing in the air," and that

> One moment now may give us more
> Than fifty years of reason ;
> Our minds shall drink at every pore
> The spirit of the season.

As we try to analyse the delight with which spring fills us, we find the matter becoming at every moment wider and deeper. The finest joy of the season, we perceive, is a religious joy. The spell we are under is of an eloquence which we cannot call ecclesiastical—that were too narrow a word—but which, nevertheless, is Divine.

The spell, we say, is religious. It bids us talk of a certain preacher. In Church circles a chief topic has always been the advent of new preachers. The coming of a personality of the first order, who devotes his powers to the exposition of life's deepest things, is ever, and rightly, felt as an event. There are preachers who spring into prominence at a bound. Others take long in maturing; remaining, maybe, in some obscure corner for years, until the significance of their message begins to dawn upon men. We propose here to speak of a preacher of this latter order; one who has been long in the world, but who nevertheless may be said to have only lately "arrived." The preacher is Nature. Only lately arrived we say, for it is within the last generation or two that people have begun to wake to the proper sense and feeling of the message. For long centuries men have been clamouring in the name of their various dogmatisms, and thereby drowning effectually the utterance of this finer voice. It is quite lately that it has occurred to them, and only then to a small number, to cease from shouting and to take instead to listening. To these has at last come the suggestion of a time of silence, of waiting upon this other preacher, while she opens her fact and argument upon them, as just now the most fruitful of disciplines. On them in fact it has dawned that here the eternal

religion finds its profoundest interpreter. How slow has been the process of her recognition will appear when we compare modern thinking and feeling on her subject with that of the earlier world. It would seem as if in these days we have grown a new sense—the sense of Nature. As Walter Pater puts it: "An intimate consciousness of the expression of natural things, which weighs, listens, penetrates, where the earlier mind passed roughly by, is a large element of modern poetry." He might have said of the modern consciousness. There are entire literatures that up to a late period have ignored the countryside. Is it not, by the way, a remarkable thing that in the whole New Testament there is only one voice that seems to recognise the world's beauty? St. Paul travels through the most magnificent scenery. He crosses the Ægean, he traverses the Taurus mountains, he looks upon "the isles of Greece," but there is no hint in his letters that he had even noticed them. It was left to his Master to read Nature. To Him her voice was Divine. The sun, the flower, the bird of the air were symbolic, sacramental. He delighted in her beauty as one who read her secret.

Theology has in this matter followed more in the footsteps of Paul than of Jesus. Here and there has appeared a trancéd soul, a St. Francis, a Jeremy Taylor, who revelled

in Nature, felt her beauty, seeing always the spiritual shining behind. A Calvin even astonishes us with that great word, "Pie hoc potest dici Deum esse Naturam." (One may say with reverence that God and Nature are one.) He was, perhaps, thinking of that noble utterance of Seneca: "The whole universe which you see around you, comprising all things both Divine and human, is one. We are members of one great body." But ecclesiasticism as a rule has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to our preacher, and taught the world to do the same. This indifference of the past to what is our greatest inspiration is indeed difficult to understand. We are amazed, for instance, in studying French literature, to find that Rousseau is the first who, as Sainte Beuve has it, "puts green fields into it." It was quite a revelation to Frenchmen when Rousseau wrote thus of a country walk: "The view of the country, the succession of pleasant prospects, the open air . . . the distance from everything which reminds me of my dependence, from everything which recalls my personal situation to me—all this frees my spirit, gives audacity to my thought, throws me, as it were, into the immensity of things, which I can combine, choose from, appropriate without trouble and without fear, and act as master of all Nature." We have travelled far since then. We have reached, to

a degree not dreamed of by our ancestors, what may be called the cosmic consciousness.

Nature has become, as never before, a preacher to us, the most formidable rival to all other preachers. These last, indeed, need, above all things, to get instruction in her school. Her "Lessons on Preaching" are the best extant. This orator has something for every capacity; her word for the little child, her problem for the deepest mind. She clothes her truth in beauty, she adorns it with infinite illustration. Robert Hall used to read everything in order that, on the topics handled, he might always be ahead of his hearers. Nature is always ahead of her hearers. Behind her baldest commonplaces are depths of meaning which no plummet can sound. This is the teacher that never tires her audience. Every day she has something fresh. What holds us to her is her infinite suggestiveness. What she offers is, we always feel, only a lure to what she conceals. Ruskin says of art "that nothing is satisfying that is complete; that every touch is false that does not suggest more than it represents." Nature is here the supreme artist. What draws us is her mystery, her perpetual hint of the something behind.

But does this preacher teach anything; and if so, what is her doctrine? Is it the ecclesiastical dogma—an affirmation of the Thirty-nine Articles? It would require some

hardihood to affirm it. The teaching seems rather to be enigmatical, occult. It has had divers interpretations, some of which it would be hard to reconcile. Thoreau, one of the most devout worshippers at the shrine, declares the preacher to be absolutely non-committal. The wisest man, he says, following her, "teaches no doctrines; he has no scheme; he sees no rafter, not even a cobweb against the heavens. It is clear sky. The perfect God in His revelations of Himself has never got to the length of one such proposition as you His prophets state." There are many voices to-day to that effect. The Church view that man has a special position in the universe is held as shattered by modern science. The position here is wittily voiced by Fontenelle, who observes that "the human way of thinking the world made for us reminds one of a certain Athenian lunatic who imagined that every vessel that entered the Piræus belonged to him." Are we then to pronounce Nature as a preacher unorthodox? Is she a denier of the Church's doctrine? Is Nature's one affirmation that of Nature's supreme indifference? Has man in affirming his value in the universe acted like the ancient alchemists who found gold in their crucibles because they had themselves put it there?

Fresh from their new study of the universe, men have been of late asking these questions

with a persistence which reveals the intensity of their inner perturbation. Certainly we find we are not so wise as we once thought. We can no longer take ourselves, as was said of a famous divine, "as of God's privy council." There are more open questions than we imagined. Yet Nature has some definite teachings for us, and that upon the vital points. The net result of them is to upset some earlier judgments, to make some things less sure than they seemed to be; yet to give us, on themes about which the soul has craved for light, some new and blessed affirmations.

For one thing she has taught us that life is fundamentally, divinely simple, and yet the most complicated business in the world. Simple, so that little children and ignorant races that have never read books have, generation after generation, drunk her draught and found no hurt. And yet the infinite complexity! For as our mind opens we find life to have in it a million things, each one related to ourselves, each one with its own laws, laws which we must learn and obey if we would get life's blessing, and not its curse. Life, we find, is, from beginning to end, cause and effect, seed-sowing and harvest, the harvest being according to the seed. No pulpit thunder has ever declaimed this truth with an impressiveness equal to that of Nature as interpreted by science. The modern

mind has, under this *régime*, had drilled into it the inexorableness of the reign of law more than by the lightnings of Sinai.

But Nature as studied to-day has another teaching, not less definite. She has a doctrine not only of law but also of grace. Her punishments, her retributions, are severe, but they are never final, never hopeless for the criminal. Here her doctrine runs counter to some of our earlier theology. Butler, amongst others, founded an argument which rested on an imperfect study of his question. In the "Analogy" he points us to Nature as giving example of certain courses which, if unchecked, lead finally to irremediable ruin. We know now that there is, in Nature at least, no irremediable ruin. For there is no ending that is more than a new beginning. The uttermost clash of worlds were only a fresh start of her combinations and her energies. She has, indeed, a special grace, all her own, for the ruined. She has a way of making them comfortable. Our worn-out coat is the one we like best, because we cannot spoil it. When we are wet to the skin we walk entirely at ease, for we can get no wetter. At the bottom you can tumble no farther. Nature is exhaustless in her patience as healer; and her very ruins are consolations. Has this no bearing on the ultimate human fate? We pity the man who can study this aspect

of things without seeing the meaning of the parable.

We put into a single paragraph a phase of the theme that needs a study to itself. When we ask, "Does Nature teach theology, teach Christianity?" we have in reply to remember that Nature here must include human nature, the human story, and all that it contains. That man is what he is, that he has thought his thought and done his deed; that he stands here to-day, with his religion in him, with his ceaseless question, his eternal aspiration—this is all to be taken into account in our gospel of Nature. As to Christianity, if we are evolutionists, it is impossible for us to suppose that the life and faith it stands for came by chance or accident, that they were other than inevitable in the onward course of things. If God, whom Calvin speaks of as one with Nature, is ever to have speech with man it must be by becoming incarnate. In man alone on this planet has the Eternal Reason emerged into consciousness; in man alone has that Reason broken into thought and speech. And the New Testament is in this sense a part of Nature, showing us its spiritual, inner side, shining in divinest light, revealing its most intimate secret of love. Nature the preacher performs her most gracious office, delivers her supreme teaching, in pointing us beyond her visible to an Infinite Goodness and Grace behind.

XVIII.

Behind the History.

A GREAT part of religion is, and always will be, wrapped in history. Partly on this account history, to some of us, becomes more and more a fascination. The story of man and of his environment is one of which we can never tire. He is the only intelligence with whom, so far, we have come into visible contact, and we want so much to know what this brother soul of ours thought and felt as he, in the far past, trod this old earth and looked upon the sun. The smallest hints he has left, whether in the cuneiform inscriptions of Syria, or the rock drawings in Rhodesia, or the clay libraries of Babylon, are alike precious. We are thankful beyond words to the men who tell us something of their time. Even where, as with a Livy and a Herodotus, the account is stuffed with legends, it is for us full of instruction. The legend at least shows us how men of that day conceived things. When our historian is at once a philosopher and a recorder of contemporary events, as Thucy-

dides, we get in his pages perhaps the best reading there is.

But there are so many ways of reproducing the past. Is it not an extraordinary thing that India, with its vast mentality, with its ages of theological and metaphysical thinking, has yet produced no history? The Hindoo mind has been so absorbed with the Infinite that the mere finite conditions of human living have not seemed to it worth recording. And yet in its systems we have given us, perhaps, a more vivid idea of the innermost soul of India, of its entire attitude to the universe and to life, than we could have obtained from whole libraries of Court news. It is not, indeed, the chroniclers, the Froissarts, the De Commines, helpful though they be, who give us the deepest insight into the things they speak of. We are reminded here of Leigh Hunt's remark: "I felt, though I did not know, till Fielding told me, that there was more truth in the verisimilitudes of fiction than in the assumptions of history." A Shakespeare, a Scott, though they may be free enough at times with their facts, will make a period alive and moving for us far more than the dry purveyor of names and dates. It is often the small details, especially if they come from the inside view, that teach us more than the big events. We want not only Austerlitz, but the gossip of a Madame

de Remusat to understand Napoleon; the chatter of a De Chaulieu, as well as the tomes of a Bossuet, to realise the time of the Grand Monarque.

Yet the more we study written history the more dissatisfied are we with it as a real record of what has actually happened on this planet. We feel all the time that we are only on the outer edge of reality. The thing itself, and the thing said about it, are all so different. Sir Walter Raleigh, after hearing half-a-dozen discordant accounts of something that had happened under his windows, was amused at his own idea of writing a history of the world. There are, indeed, as many different accounts of things as there are persons to relate them. We have a score of contemporary reporters of the death of Darnley, but the collation of their reports makes the mystery of it blacker than ever. Who wrote the "Imitatio"? Was it Gerson, or Thomas A'Kempis, or the Abbé of Verceil? We grope for answer amid masses of statement this side and that, and at the end are as puzzled as ever.

It is indeed the secret history, the history behind the history, for which the inquirer after reality is always in search. When, for instance, we read our Bible, while under unspeakable obligation for what is there, we find an interest almost as deep in what is not there. About the Old Testament we recog-

nise, with Sir William Dawson, that "we are just beginning to realise that the fragments of Hebrew literature contained in the Old Testament are the wrecks of a vast literature which extended over the Oriental world from a remote past." If only we knew the genesis of Genesis; the earlier documents, the substructures of legend, and the successive processes out of which arose our Pentateuch! The critics have helped us enormously here, but the results are, at best, a guess. Of the New Testament, much the same must be said. When we open at Matthew how we long to get at the sub-Matthew! Ah! to reach that inner circle of fact; to see the growth of the story; to watch the process by which the scattered notes of events and discourses, the tales passed from mouth to mouth, the prepossessions and mental habitudes of witnesses all finally condensed into this evangel as we now have it!

All religions, indeed, have a secret history. And that because what really transpires is beyond accurate expression in speech. The transcendental feeling in which they originate has no exact correlative in language. What was the Christianity of Christ? What was, we mean, the precise feeling of Jesus in contact with God, with man and the universe? That is the whole question, and we can only approximate to the answer. The men who

came into contact with Him realised that they were in the presence of something new and incomparably beautiful. There was no language ready in which accurately to express their feeling. The best they could do was to fall back upon the categories which Jewish thought had created. And so they used towards Jesus the terms in which Philo and the Alexandrian school had clothed their conception of the Logos. Let us never forget that the language of the Gospels, while a medium through which we have come to know Christ, is a medium which is also a barrier. In these pages we are on the outer edge of the fact. We see through a glass, darkly. We have to guess at the historic reality behind.

Assuredly we are not saved by knowing. The gaps in our Bible knowledge are paralleled in every other department. It might seem, indeed, as if Nature were in a good-humoured conspiracy to keep us in ignorance until she chose to reveal her secrets. Is there not a suggestion of humour in allowing generation after generation of civilised and cultured men to believe implicitly that our world was made in six days? All the time the actual record was there, writ in rock and fossil and alluvial drift. The truth was open for all eyes to behold, but no eye saw it. When a faint glimmer of it began to show, it was held

as a part of religion to close one's eyes. A few generations hence and how many conceptions we now regard as necessary to the spiritual life may seem to our descendants equally unnecessary and grotesque !

We never get a complete history of one another. "*Est-ce qu'une vie de femme se raconte ?*" asks Sainte Beuve. The question applies not only to women. How should we be able to write accurately about life when no scientist can tell us what life is ? No man can explain his own consciousness. Most of us have little desire to make the attempt. Talleyrand's *mot* that language is for the purpose of concealing thought, holds a certan amount of truth. It is in the line of Kant's admission that "openheartedness, the saying of the whole truth we know of, is not to be met with in human nature." The attempt to do so has actually a displeasing effect. The nearest approach to it is probably to be found in Rousseau's "Confessions"; and who that has read him has not felt a certain repugnance, as if a stranger were stripping himself naked before us in the open street ? With most of us our best and our worst is alike concealed. An unfriendly critic declared of Chateaubriand that "within Chateaubriand was an obscene Chateaubriand." There has been something similar in a good many persons of repute. But a true record of our

fellows, while reporting these black spots, would report also many an unsuspected holy of holies, shrines where have burned the flames of passionate devotion, of pure ethereal desire, in hearts we have thought cold and hard. William Watson's judgment on Burns is one that may be applied over a wider area :

> Not ours to gauge the more or less,
> The will's defect, the blood's excess.
> The earthly humours that oppress
> The radiant mind.
> His greatness, not his littleness,
> Concerns mankind.

The history behind the history ; that, we say, is the ever-interesting thing. The unwritten outweighs immeasurably all we have in print. What records are in the faces we meet ! One is overwhelmed with the tragic interest of those lines of feature, of those volumes contained in a glance. Do we get properly behind our newspapers of a morning ? When we read of Port Arthur and its casualty list, did we get from the cold print to the actual history ; to what passed, for instance, in every bosom of those nameless thousands of the Japanese army who swarmed up the shell-swept slopes in attack after attack, and whose bodies afterwards lay stark on the hillside—that story unwritten in each man of keenest, agonised consciousness up to the last fatal

moment? Will all that we wonder, in this or any other world, ever emerge into speech? Or have we ever tried to think ourselves into the consciousness of the animal creation, of those dumb millions that travel with us in the life-journey, that suffer and say no word? There is a secret history beyond even this. Beneath the life we know, of man and animal, opens a mystery of existence still more inscrutable. What is the life of atoms, of the earth itself? Deep beneath our planet's surface, in the far interior, there lie, probably, great open spaces, subterranean lakes, that have been there from the beginning. Can we realise that solitude? Some geologists give fifty million years from the Laurentian period to the Early Pleistocene. Imagine the movement of the hours, the centuries that made that period, in these vast, dark, silent interiors! And yet is not that story, each moment of it, written upon some world-consciousness? It must be, for matter is only the outer side of spirit, and there can be no existence anywhere which has not its spiritual counterpart.

And here come we, at the end, to the root of the whole matter. The unwritten, the secret history is, we have contended, the deepest and most important of histories. And we can see now the reason. It is that the whole of the visible, in its entire manifestation, rests upon a greater invisible. The outer

world is a deposit from the unseen. Mind is, we perceive, both essentially and historically before matter, for it is only through mind and in terms of mind we can conceive matter. Out of such a study as this emerges the inevitable truth that man is a spiritual being in a spiritual universe. This truth, the end of historical inquiry, is the beginning of religious experience. The abiding realities, the permanent forces, are "the things unseen." Our age is asking, in an agony of doubt, this question :

Can a finite thing created in the bounds of time and space,
Can it live and grow and love Thee, catch the glory of Thy face,
Fade and die, be gone for ever, know no being, have no place ?

We have here the answer. It cannot be, for man's being in its essence is founded on the unseen ; and while "the things that are seen are temporal, the things that are not seen are eternal."

XIX.

Of Spiritual Loss.

The modern habit of thinking theology in terms of physical science is apt, if we are not careful, to lead us, in some directions at least, very far astray. A notable instance is where we begin to speculate on spiritual power, as though it were on the same plane and subject to the same laws as the power which energises in the natural world. About this latter force, as we know, physicists argue on the supposition that it is a constant quantity; that its amount is fixed; that while you may indefinitely change its form, you cannot add to it or take from it. It is very easy for the scientific mind to reason on the same lines concerning the soul's energies. There is so much that is analogous. Here, too, are wonderful transmutations. Spiritual power, as far as we can trace it, seems hidden away in all kinds of elements; its apparent loss is constantly a mere disappearance, as of heat when it becomes latent. Does not the parallel, then, go all the way? When

heights are reached in one direction, will it not be at the expense of a corresponding depression elsewhere? Is not a supposed progress, then, simply the sway backwards and forwards of an energy whose quantity is always really the same?

Along this line, we say, modern thought is apt to travel easily. But it is a false line. For the laws in this region are not on a level with those of physical energy. So far from being a fixed quantity, life in its higher and spiritual manifestations is an ever-growing quantity. From the invisible spheres it is flowing in upon humanity in a deepening stream, augmenting always with the capacity to receive it. The supply seems limitless, as seems also the inner development which it works to produce. It is this consideration which upsets completely the modern materialistic determinism. When we are told that character is fixed by the shape of a man's forehead, that, as Schopenhauer has it, "the wicked man is born with his wickedness as much as the serpent is with his poison fangs and glands, nor can the former change his nature a whit more than the latter," we see the gaping flaw in the argument. It forgets the progressive force that is shaping humanity; working on its foreheads, altering its physical conditions, touching to new issues its centres of feeling and thought.

These higher manifestations, which, for want of a better term, we define as "the spiritual life," are being more and more recognised as humanity's most precious asset, its pearl of great price. To lose them, or to stop their free development, is, by the best minds, seen to be a loss greater infinitely than the failure of the crops or the breakdown of the national credit. To the degree in which a country is backward here it is under a disability not to be reckoned in figures. It is like a want of eyesight. We do not stay now to define the contents of the spiritual consciousness. St. Paul has done it excellently for us in his description of the "fruits of the Spirit." What we want specially to dwell on is the possibility of losing it. That the loss, in more or less degree, is quite possible history abundantly shows. What history, however, has made quite as abundantly manifest is the curious blunders men have made in guarding against the loss.

The wider our observation, the more careful shall we become in declaring what is actually a spiritual loss. So often do we mistake the apparent for the real, so often do we find that what needed to be corrected was, not the thing outside us so much as our own standard of judgment. What we imagine has gone has simply become latent. There are instances, of course, where much more

than that has to be said. When Louis XIV., by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, drove out the Huguenots, it is impossible not to see the enormous impoverishment that was occasioned in the highest life of France. She lost then her Puritans and Nonconformists, and her spiritual life has never recovered the blow. What a strange confession that is of Renan, which he seems to regard, indeed, as a commendation of the modern French mind! "The French mind is altogether in the most perfect harmony with the proportions of our planet; it has estimated the dimensions at a glance, and does not go beyond them." This planetary provincialism does not seem, however, to have produced the highest results, if we may credit the description by a French writer of to-day of the inner condition of his country: "More than a hundred years after the great Revolution; after thirty years of a republic, by turns Conservative, Opportunist, Radical and Socialist, we find ourselves wallowing in the mud of our industrialism, our pauperism, our revolts, our wars; with prostitution and alcoholism for our joys, the Press and politics for our activities, with money and appearance for ideal."

Who also can fail to discern, amid much progress in other directions, a lack of the highest life in our own land in that eighteenth-

century society of which Hume and his school were the accepted prophets! What a level of thinking and of being which permitted the following, quoted with approbation by Adam Smith from Hume, as the proper attitude towards religion! "And in the end the civil magistrate will find that he has dearly paid for his intended frugality in saving a fixed establishment for the priests; and that in reality the most decent and advantageous composition which he can make with the spiritual guides is to bribe their indolence by assigning fixed salaries to their profession, and rendering it superfluous for them to be further active than merely to prevent their flock from straying in quest of new pastors." In other words, one must establish religion as the best way of restricting its activities! This idea, astonishing as it may seem to most of us, has nevertheless been at the back of the mind of a good many of our legislators. It found expression in the remark of that good establishmentarian and pillar of the Church, Lord Melbourne. "If," said he, "we are to have a religion, let us have one that is cool and indifferent; and such a one as we have got." It is to be hoped the world is at last arriving at a different conception from this of man's relation to the spiritual powers.

And yet amongst those who have had the profoundest sense of religion and the keenest

desire to conserve its interests, we discern a blindness not less fatuous. When we review the various precautions against spiritual loss, we remember Voltaire's *mot* about the doctors and bodily health. "They put drugs of which they know little into a body of which they know nothing." For centuries the belief prevailed throughout Christendom that the only way of saving men's souls was to secure an absolute uniformity of theological opinion. Augustine, founding himself on the text, "Compel them to come in," taught this fatal doctrine to the imperial Government—a doctrine which was afterwards to deluge the world with blood. We are apt to think of Philip II.—the man under whose auspices Alva wrought his butcheries in the Netherlands, who sent the Armada against England, and who worked the Inquisition with such terrific energy amongst his own Spaniards—as a monster of cruelty. In reality, he was a man naturally of mild disposition and of strong affections. In his later years especially he was revered by the people as a saint. His slaughters and persecutions were wrought under the profound conviction that he, their crowned monarch, was responsible for the souls of his people; that only by the victory of the Catholic faith, of which he was in his realm the appointed custodian, could the Kingdom of God come amongst them.

We have made some advances since Philip's day, yet in many quarters we have ideas almost as erroneous on the causes of spiritual loss. Ignorance is still fostered as a safeguard of piety. A minister once expressed to the present writer his thankfulness that he had not learned German. German literature he considered was so unsettling. There are to-day reputable preachers who taboo the critical investigation of the Scriptures as a kind of infidelity.

There is, indeed, a certain religious exaltation to which study of any kind which does not directly feed emotion is regarded as hindering the spiritual life. And assuredly it does hinder feeling, but the mistake here is to regard feeling as the whole of life. When Ignatius Loyala, turned from warrior into saint, began to learn Latin, he found it a miserable substitute for his earlier raptures. But he had the good sense to persevere, it being granted him to see, as some of our zealots have failed to see, that zeal without knowledge can offer at best only a lame and limping service. Is not this, indeed, one of the damning heresies, though no council has denounced it, the idea of exalting feeling, the rapture of devotion, as the supreme test of the spiritual life ? It is often when feeling is crushed and broken, when the whole realm of sensation is in revolt, that a man's soul

is at its highest point. When Jesus stood in Gethsemane, when He trod the road up to Calvary, His mental state was the reverse of rapture, but it was there He was conquering for Himself and the world. Men do their grandest things often when the heart within them feels like a stone. The heroic Malesherbes, safely away from the Revolution at Lausanne, hears that Louis XVI., his master, is a captive and in danger. He has his horses put to. "What are you doing?" ask his friends. "*Je pars pour Paris.*" He was going himself to his doom and knew it. It was midnight in his soul as he went, but the man was never higher, or nearer heaven.

It is time we understood more clearly what really constitutes spiritual gain and loss. The safeguards devised by monarchs and ecclesiastics for the spiritual kingdom are on a par with the Protectionist proposals for the benefit of commerce. Practitioners of this order in both departments do not perceive that the only healthy condition here is one of absolute freedom. Anything that hinders the freest circulation of the spiritual forces is a loss. The pursuit of research, the clash of opinion, where full liberty is, can only end in spiritual furtherance, for the laws of the human mind, where they are free to act, tend inevitably towards the truth. To underprop religion by the old artificial methods

is like underpropping the planet. The spiritual kingdom, like the planet, requires no underpropping, because it, too, is sustained by forces that are invisible.

There is a personal aspect to this theme which in itself might well have occupied us entirely. Nothing in the whole range of a man's possessions is so well worth safeguarding as his spiritual estate. And he is himself a fair judge of how matters are going there. As we advance from youth to age a great many things change in us. There may be decay of bodily strength and of some forms of mental faculty. But it is a glorious fact that in all that makes the soul of a man the movement may be one always of less to more. If there is in us a perceptible lessening of the sense of justice, of the passion for purity, of human sympathy, of sensitiveness to the spiritual world and all of beauty and promise that it holds, the fault is not with the years but with ourselves. After all, the one great touchstone of spiritual loss or gain, as the apostle has told us in immortal words, is love.

The night has a thousand eyes
  And the day but one;
But the light of a whole world dies
  With the setting sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes
  And the heart but one;
But the light of a whole life dies
  When love is done.

XX.

Converts.

An abiding question for all the Churches is the question of converts. It is one which requires from them not only their best doing but their best thinking. And yet there is no topic so persistently shirked; or where, when attention is given to it, the ideas are so shallow and so inadequate. There are shoals of ecclesiastics amongst whom the matter is hardly even considered. With them the word "conversion" has dropped out. And yet this one thing is, in Luther's words, "the article of a standing or falling Church." Modern Christianity will have to get to the bottom of the business or perish from the earth. As a religion it is, as never before, on its defence, and its only successful defence will be in attack. The time has come for a complete revision on this subject, both of ideas and of methods. It will be when we come back to the conception of the Gospel as, not so much a theology as a dynamic, a motive power for the changing and uplifting of men,

that the Church will get off the down-grade on which it is so swiftly gliding and take its place once more at the head of the human movement.

What are the facts of the present situation ? The most salient of them is that the working class, from whom almost exclusively the first Christian converts were drawn, is to-day the class at the farthest remove from the Church. We have here, we say, an exact reversal of the primitive state. In that first age it was the rich, the titled, the important people who stood aloof from Christianity, and the common people who received it gladly. To-day, throughout Protestantism—in Germany, in England, in America—organised Christianity is maintained by the capitalist classes, while the proletariat keeps outside. So extraordinary a swing round surely demands attention. As a fact in sociology it offers a challenge to inquiry ; as a feature in modern religion it stands as a matter of life and death. There is no doubt as to the facts. In Germany, according to Dr. Stöcker, " Protestantism is sick, sick unto death. The working men of the towns, belonging, as they often do, to the Social Democratic party, are everywhere hostile." In the United States, during a recent investigation, pastor after pastor of the town churches testified that they had not a single working man on their roll. What

the condition is in our own land the researches of Mr. Charles Booth and the recent Church censuses have sufficiently revealed. Here, surely, is a state of things that requires some looking into.

What theory and practice has the Church to-day concerning converts ? Conversion is a business the world has been about for a good many years now, and with a remarkable variety of method. It is reported of Xavier, that on one of his missionary expeditions, on passing some islands where he was unable to land, he waved in their direction a brush dipped in holy water, making over them the sign of the cross, and on the strength of this procedure claimed the inhabitants for the Catholic Church. Charlemagne took more trouble with the Saxons, but his methods also were summary. After defeating one of their armies, he offered his prisoners one of two alternatives, either to be baptized in the neighbouring river, or to have their throats cut. They became converts at once. Queen Mary would seem to have had a view not remote from that of the Frankish conqueror when she burnt heretics, declaring, as is recorded of her, that " she could not be wrong in this, as God would otherwise do it in hell."

We do not in our time propose these ways of solving the religious problem. But they were at least vigorous, and the question arises

whether our lack of initiative is not, in its way, as far from a proper handling of the matter as was their crudeness? If our idea is not that of Charlemagne, what is it? Protestantism, in so far as it possesses a theory, has dealt hitherto with conversion as an exclusively personal question. It holds, or professes to, that a man can be vitally changed; made, in New Testament language, "a new creature," by the operation in him of a gracious Divine power. And that in itself surely is a great Gospel to proclaim. There are innumerable witnesses to such happenings. Everything, indeed, in cosmic analogy would lead us to affirm such a possibility. If man, in other spheres, can multiply his power a hundredfold by alliance with outside energies; can call in steam, electricity, a thousand things as magnifiers and intensifiers of his personality, why should not the same hold in the sphere of the spiritual? Why should there not lie here external aids waiting for him to appropriate? And when primitive Christianity speaks of this aid as a personal one, modern psychology can have nothing against it. If in so humble a region as hypnotism we see one will passing into and executing itself in another personality, why hesitate to accept, in the highest realm, the doctrine of the "possession" of us by a Divine personality?

So far good. But the mischief with modern Protestantism is that in its reading, alike of the New Testament and of the facts of human life, it has only gone half-way. It has taken the doctrine, while overlooking the setting, the environment of the doctrine. But, as related to converts, the one is as important as the other. And the neglect of it is the cause of all the present decadence. The thing forgotten, and now at all costs to be recovered, is the fact that primitive Christianity had a social as well as an individual programme. Its appeal to men was not only in relation to something invisible in the heavens, but to something visible here before them on the earth. And the something it offered was felt by these poor disinherited ones as a good something. It was a social organisation whose watchwords were the very ones that thrilled Europe a century ago: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." The Gospel's offer was not only a secret and mystical rapture of the soul, but a fellowship of unequalled charm and sweetness. No wonder the poor flocked in at these doors! The slave, treated outside as dross, felt himself here a man. Surrounded, frowned upon in the world by huge, pitiless tyrannies, in the Christian brotherhood he found a sacred democracy where everything good was freely shared. He had come into his kingdom.

It is really amazing that our modern ecclesiastic can fail so utterly to grasp this side of his problem. He sees the masses of the people outside his system, and asks in piteous bewilderment for the reason. Is, then, Christianity a failure; or is it that our generation has a double dose of original sin? It is neither, my good friend, but simply that you and those with you have not yet been able to recognise the most obvious facts of the situation. What, in heaven's name, do you propose to convert these people to? Is it to modern Anglicanism? That institution has undoubtedly some Christian doctrine inside it. But what is its environment? What social instincts of the working man does its system appeal to? Its religious services are conducted by a white-robed gentleman, who reads or intones a ritual which might as well be addressed to the moon as to our artisan. This goes on in a cold building, whose occupants are well-dressed persons who would be insulted if he sat by their side. Genial atmosphere this for the expansion of his social instincts! When, in addition, our proletaire learns that the institution which, as a convert, he is here invited to join is the trenched and moated citadel of the aristocratic, feudal principle; that in its government the people have no voice; that its interests are, above all things, the interests of property, of class distinction,

of social exclusiveness, of all, in short, that militates most fiercely against his individual and class aspiration, can we be serious in proposing that he embrace it? His conversion to all this would indeed be the most astounding of miracles. But do not, in the name of common-sense, let us speak of this attitude of his as a rejection of Christianity. It is a rejection of feudalism and of the cold shoulder.

Shall we never learn our lesson? Christianity is first and foremost a democracy, and it can succeed upon no other terms. The Kingdom of God it proclaims is none other than freedom inner and outer; the participation of the best by all; the brotherhood of men, where each serves the other; a family where all are one in Christ their Brother and God their Father. That Church is a mockery of the Gospel which invites men to anything other or less than this. If evidence were needed of the truth of all this, it is found, surely, in the fact that precisely to the extent in which Christian communities, of whatever name, are awaking to these ideas, to that degree are they breaking down the barriers between themselves and the people. Where religious services partake of the democratic note; where the entrance is free and the welcome hearty; where song, prayer and speech are the voice of the brotherhood;

where the institutions springing from the central force are all manifestations of the same spirit, there the ancient, eternal Gospel asserts at once its power and renews its immortal youth.

There is another aspect of this subject worth far more attention than we shall here give to it. It is that of what the convert, when he is found, brings with him. This is one of the little noted, but really most significant features in the history of religion. We are not yet at the bottom of all it means. The point is that whenever the Church, in the great springtimes of its activity, has admitted the inflowing hosts from outside, the result has been, not simply a change wrought in them, but a change also wrought in itself. The convert is always a giver as well as a receiver. Each contributes something of his own to historic Christianity. The conversion of the Latin races brought into the Church the rigid discipline of Catholicism ; the entrance of the Greek peoples gave her the creeds and a dogmatic theology. It was the stern, cruel temper of the North African peoples that produced in a Tertullian and an Augustine that dark, fearsome aspect with which for centuries they clouded the Christian eschatology. With the new races that are yet to come in the same law will hold. A converted India and China will mean new

conceptions of the Gospel. What they will bring will be only less in importance to what they take. Have we ever tried to estimate what it meant for our religious thought when Paul, with his previous rabbinical training, with his notions of sacrifice and other vital topics, became a Christian convert; of the difference to our whole conception of Christ's death, for instance, had this particular Jew never been baptized? And there may yet arise in China or India men who, at least to their own countrymen, will prove as original and as influential exponents of Christ as he of Tarsus has been to us.

In sum. The question of converts is *the* topic for to-day. It is time we gave Christianity its chance. At present half its force is locked up. There are two oars in the boat and we are only using one. The result is the boat goes round and round instead of moving on. When we have got the whole programme; when the peoples hear the voice and see the institutions of the Democratic Gospel, they will rally to it. It is, they will recognise, the supreme good for which they and their fathers, through all the weary ages, have ceaselessly yearned.

XXI.

Necessity.

EVERY religion has had its doctrine of necessity. The final one will assuredly also contain it. The word itself, whichever way we take it, is assuredly one of the grimmest in the language. We use it in two widely different senses, but in each of them it looms over human life like a thundercloud. It represents for one thing that stern metaphysical doctrine which denies freewill to man, regarding his life and action as the inevitable result of preordained causes. Science has translated this metaphysic into biology, and taught a predestination which announces itself in the shape of a nose, in a chin's weakness or strength, in the quantity and quality of the brain's grey matter. "As you are made," it says, "so you will act." The peculiarity of the position here is that the argument which may convince the intellect convinces never the conscience. Against all evidence our moral sense declares us free. We are here, indeed, fixed in one of those antinomies with which life is full. The con-

tradiction of necessity and free will is only one of many. The mathematician offers us calculations in which we can discern no flaw, but which lead to exactly opposite results. What they really prove is that our mind, under its present limitations, is trustworthy only up to a certain point. There are savages who can count up to ten and get no farther. Our reason is a calculator up to a point which is equally limited.

The world's best minds have broken themselves on these problems, and there is no better exercise in dialectic than to study their efforts at a solution. The boundaries of human thinking in this direction were reached pretty early. The doctrine of Heraclitus that fate or destiny was "the general reason that runs through the whole nature of the universe"; of Chrysippus that it was "a spiritual power that disposed the world in order"; of Plato that it was "the eternal reason or law of nature," represent a view of things which we have scarcely improved upon. Their handling, too, of the mystery of evil as related to necessity is marvellously interesting. How ingeniously does Plato work out his idea that the Creator, having to mix together necessity and thought, made the universe as like to Himself as He could; and how subtle is Aristotle's argument that the universe consisting of matter and form, the

Divine perfection is found in the form, while all imperfections derive from the matter! No thinkers in these realms can afford to overlook Leibnitz's Théodicée, in which he derives evil from the necessary relations of finite and infinite, and argues that God is the author not of moral evil, but of the possibility of it, since whoever commits a trust to others opens this possibility. He is the cause of the existence of character, not the cause of what the character shall be. The problem which is here solved is how to promote the free conditions of character, with the best security for its tendency upwards.

But it is not after all with necessity, as thus understood, that we wish here mainly to concern ourselves. It is, we suppose, only the few to whom this aspect of the matter is in any sense a trouble. There is another side of it, however, which grips every son of Adam. Millions who never gave to necessity a thought as a speculation know and obey it every hour of the day as a compeller. And in this aspect we say it is among the grimmest of presences. At the end of a holiday, for instance, when the period of "go as you please" is over, and there looms in front that region of "must," of inevitable performance, of stern restriction, of that "necessity," in short, which for a brief time we had escaped, how unlovely, how desperately forbidding, does it all appear!

It is worth while, for our comfort and heartening, to look into this matter a little. It may be, ere we have done, we may form a judgment less harsh of our necessity, if we have not fallen in love with it altogether. For when all is said, this grim attendant of ours is not an enemy, but a friend, one of our best. To the race as a whole, and to ourselves as individuals, it has been what the driving power is to a train. That fiery furnace heat, that fierce blast of the urgent steam, are things not to be trifled with, terrible to encounter on their wrong side, but there were no progress without them. When we speak of the gifts with which humanity has been dowered, the grace by which it has lived and thriven, we must put necessity high in the roll. For it is at once a gift and a grace. When we reckon up our capabilities we must always add this " needs must " to the sum of them. We only know our full self when yoked thus to the inevitable. We are on this planet to have the best got out of us, and here are the pick and shovel that dig it up. For it is the " must " that not simply orders but accomplishes. The amateur Alpine climber (we speak here from experience) reaches a spot which seems an absolute *impasse*. But necessity compels him across the impossible, and he does it quite easily. The journalist writes against time, and the pressure itself does the work.

And it is not simply that, under this compelling force, we reach our limit. It is this same compulsion that perpetually enlarges us, pushing our boundary-line ever further on. In our extremity we fall back on our reserves, to discover with astonishment the hitherto unknown riches in that territory. Our normal, at such moments, becomes raised to an n^{th} power. The papers contained the other day the story of a paralytic who was cured by an alarm of fire in the house. The shock and sudden exertion broke open some hidden reservoir that reinforced the failing nerve centres. Man, indeed, is never so worthy of study as in times of sudden extremity. It is then that he rises above or falls beneath himself. There is, of course, this latter possibility. A great pressure may demoralise as well as strengthen. Burke, in one of his speeches, argues that times of great mortality are times of special wickedness. "It was so," he says, "in the great plague of Athens. It was so in the plague of London. It appears in soldiers, sailors, &c. Whoever would contrive to render the life of man much shorter than it is would, I am satisfied, find the surest recipe for increasing the wickedness of our nature." This reminds us of Renan's argument that if the world were convinced of a speedy end of things it would give itself up to general debauchery.

We have grave doubts on the point, Burke and Renan notwithstanding. What we are discussing here, however, is not so much the effect of the sudden pressures, which vary with the whole extent of the previously acquired character, as the action of the steadier and more permanent ones. It is here we see, in sun-bright clearness, the redemptive and uplifting power of our necessity. Every historian, every sociologist, is agreed that the nation with the hardest struggle is the nation with the best asset and the surest future. Nature flings here her contradictions broadcast. She shows us how the peoples most continually in danger are really the safest, and how the protected peoples, assured by their situation against the foreign foe, and by climate and fertility against the struggle for life, are on the road to decay and extinction. It is along this road of hardship and dire extremity, in terror of famine, of nakedness, of tempest, of wild beast, that our prehistoric ancestor fought his way upward. His difficulty was the creator of his faculty. Out of this external besetment he won his power. And to-day it is the nations that are most exposed, that are faced with the sternest problems, that hold the future's greatest promise. Were England to be rid of her competitors to-morrow, the deliverance would be a loss not reckonable in millions.

But there is a deeper note yet to be struck. The education of necessity carries more, much more, than is contained in the physical battle for life. The significant thing about man is that the animal struggle is, in all its characteristics, reduplicated in a higher sphere. Man's necessity is a graded one. The soul has its "must" as well as the body. And it is in contemplating this side of human life that, perhaps more than anywhere else, we obtain assurance of the sure foundations and the everlasting continuance of religion. It is not in churches or Bibles that we find the final guarantee. That lies in the inherent structure of the soul. And the "must" here is, that a Divineness, a Holiness outside ourselves should ally itself with us and give a meaning to life. Precisely as his nakedness and physical destitution have been the conditions of man's external progress, so with his inner life. The true beginning of the soul's prosperity is the sense of its helplessness as of itself. Romanes, who had trodden every inch of this road, speaks our experience as well as his own when he says: "There is a vacuum in the soul which nothing can fill but God." There is no surer proof of God than our spirit's need of Him. It is what hunger is to the body—a pledge in itself of food somewhere. The great souls have everywhere realised this. What Walter Pater

says of Pascal is true of them all : " It is from the homelessness of the world which science analyses so victoriously, its dark unspirituality, wherein the soul he is conscious of seems such a stranger, that Pascal turns to his rest, in the conception of a world of wholly reasonable and moral agencies."

It is a grand achievement for the soul when, sure of its place in the world's spiritual order, sure of its relation to and reinforcement from the Highest Life, it finds a new necessity in itself, an imperative of honour and nobleness to which all else within that is inferior must submit. It is here that man becomes as God, " who cannot deny Himself." There is nothing, indeed, so godlike on this earth as the soul's imperative. What a height is that of Dante when, invited to return to Florence at the price of dishonour, he exclaims, " What ! Are not the sun and stars to be seen in every land ? Shall I not be able under every part of heaven to meditate sweet truth, unless I first make myself inglorious, nay, ignominious, to my people and my country ? " When Luther, with a whole world against him, exclaims, " I can do no other," he is at one with the great exile ; he, too, is exhibiting the soul's necessity of being ever loyal to the highest.

The lessons of this theme are innumerable, but we must leave our readers to deduce them

They concern our personal attitude to life, and our whole method of preparation for it. The subject is one above all for the educationist. When we have grasped it we shall know, for one thing, that in shielding the young from the sterner aspects, the "musts" of the world, we are cutting them off from their best friend. The ancients can teach us something here. When Marcus Aurelius, born to the purple, testifies with gratitude that "from my tutor I learned endurance of labour, and to want little, and to work with my own hands," he shows the insight into life which so many of us lack. We repeat, necessity is a grace of God. That outside hardness yonder is waiting to be translated into a grand hardiness in ourselves. Through the outer compulsion we come to an inner liberty. This experience of what has happened and is happening in the sphere of the known is surely also a pledge for all that awaits us in the sphere of the Unknown. Death itself, as part of this spiritual order, will bring a result not inferior to that of life.

XXII.

Faith as a Force.

The world's religions are frequently spoken of as faiths. The appellation is justified, for religion is, was, and always will be, founded on faith. The eternal religion is, we may say, a faith, and we may well accordingly inquire at this point as to what precisely faith is and how it works as a force.

Two things, said Kant, filled him with awe —the contemplation of the starry heavens above and of the moral law within. We are sweeping both these realms to-day, and with new instruments. Spectrum analysis, the Lick telescope and stellar photography are giving us a more vivid sense of the infinity above us than was possible in Kant's time. And that other subject of his study, the inner world of the moral consciousness, is in like manner yielding fresh results. A new analysis is being brought to bear on the human interior, in the light of which it is discovering itself as more wonderful, as opening vaster perspectives even than the immensity without.

The quest here opened touches the inmost secret of religion. In the depths of man's inner consciousness, scientifically probed, we find at once faith's history, its vindication and its promise of the future. In former times men have studied religion as a system of formulated beliefs, as an institution, an ecclesiasticism. To-day we are broadening the reference, and viewing it as a working force in humanity, asking how it got there and what its presence signifies.

The difference between earlier inquiries on this theme and those which we are upon to-day is, that beforetime men concentrated their attention largely on the product of this inner force, whereas we are now turning our gaze upon the force itself. The thing I see yonder may be of the utmost interest and importance. But whatever it be, it is not to me comparable in value to the faculty by which I see it. It is for lack of appreciating this difference that theologians in the past have made such prodigious blunders in their estimate of the sphere and efficacy of faith. They have described faith from without rather than from within. At a time when the marvellous faculty was in its infancy, seeing things dimly and distortedly, through mists of ignorance and prejudice, they took its reports, in all their circumstantial detail, as finalities, the very buttresses of religion and the ground

of salvation. Of this order have we such products as the Athanasian Creed, which makes saving faith to be the acceptance of a bewildering reticulation of metaphysical propositions. To call this faith is as sensible as to declare that the stone wall I am now looking at is eyesight.

It is when they pursue theology through the false track it here opened, and so long followed, that the critics and deniers find so rich a harvest of crimes and misdemeanours which they lay to the account of religion. If we identify faith with its cruder products we have indeed a sorry business on hand. We see it then as a persecutor, perpetrating those cruelties which make Lecky, speaking of mediæval Catholicism, say with truth, "the Church of Rome has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has ever existed amongst mankind." This confusion between the product and the faculty which produced it, as though the former were the all-important, has done wrongs to the mind not less than to the body. Mutianus Rufus, the sixteenth-century German theologian, has a sense of this when he declares of his contemporary clerics, "By faith we mean not the conformity of what we say with fact, but an opinion about Divine things founded on credulity, and persuasion which seeks after profit." Indeed,

if we confine our notion of religious faith to any one of the formulated systems which the Churches have erected, however valuable these may be in themselves, we shall miss the chief argument from faith, as an answer to present-day unbelief. The whole force of the argument lies in this, that the human soul contains the element as one of its working forces, and that its presence demands an explanation which only a spiritual religion can give.

If at this stage we are asked what this feature of our inner constitution really is, we should be disposed, first of all, to fall back on a great word of Calvin, himself a mighty system-builder, but who, nevertheless, saw that faith in itself is hardly a matter of definition. The ultimate forces rarely are. Let us quote his pregnant word : " *Assensionem ipsam iterum repetam cordis esse magis quam cerebri, et affectus magis quam intelligentiæ.*" "Again I repeat that this assent is an affair of the heart rather than of the reason, of the feelings more than of the mere intelligence." In its broadest sense, as we find it throughout humanity, we might speak of faith as a sense of the unseen, a feeling that we are related to an invisible and higher world, that our destiny is essentially a moral and spiritual destiny. The feeling which De Quincey attributed to Coleridge is one which might well be ascribed to humanity : " He wanted better bread than can be made

with wheat." Let it be proved that men come from the dust. The soul will never believe that the dust made it. This sense of an inner unseen universe that is moral, to which we are vitally related, and with which all our destinies are bound up, has been the prime working force in the world. It has been the creator of history, the founder of religions, the chief builder of character. It shows itself everywhere, in art, in literature, in all thinking and doing. It becomes latent at times, as heat becomes latent, but is never destroyed. It is, to all appearance, as indestructible as oxygen.

This power, we say, has been at work in man from the beginning. From history's earliest dawn man knows himself as spiritual and related to an eternal moral order. The Egyptians, millenniums before Christ, had the clearest perception of a future life. In India, Vedic hymns that are three thousand five hundred years old declare a belief in a psychic body inside the fleshly one, by which the dead rose to the upper spheres. What our later researches are making increasingly plain is, that these long-forgotten races, whom in our narrower conception we had thought of as religiously outcast and uncovenanted, had really a knowledge of spiritual law which in some respects was more profound than our own, and were enjoying a very rich religious

inheritance. Much of that higher living which we have regarded as our specialty had been for thousands of years realised in humanity, the possession, in its full fruition, of the choicer spirits, yet dimly discerned and unconsciously working among the less enlightened.

It will be upon this vaster view that the religion of the future will be framed. We are in sight of a scientific demonstration of its essential principle, which will establish it beyond the reach of doubt, and confound alike the narrow sectarianism that finds salvation in some sectional shibboleth, and the more miserable nihilism which denies man a soul and a future. It is wonderful in this connection to note how, in each age, the faith element receives the aliment appropriate to itself. To-day experimental science is the greatest master of belief, and it is this science which is beginning to furnish us with evidence, procured in its own way, for the great religious affirmations.

It is, for instance, giving us precisely the proof which the modern intellect demands of a future existence. The moral life depends on a hereafter as one of the conditions of its growth. Let humanity be persuaded that there is no future, and all its higher interests wither. Away goes its romance, its aspiration, its beauty of holiness, its noblest feeling,

its higher striving. And yet this belief in a future is dead against all the testimony of the senses. It is in itself a mystery that, with such a dead weight of evidence before him, man has so widely, so universally held to his idea of another world. There have been, indeed, generations that could not resist the materialistic argument. Diderot's sarcasm seemed in the eighteenth century to settle the matter: "If you can believe in sight without eyes, in hearing without ears, in thinking without a head, if you could love without a heart, feel without senses . . . then we might indulge this hope of a future life."

But it is precisely on the French philosopher's own ground that modern science is meeting this doctrine of despair. It is, by the demonstrations of hypnotism, proving conclusively that men *can* see without eyes and hear without ears; that behind the apparatus of the senses is another and finer apparatus which dispenses with them, and gives us the phenomena of consciousness apart from nerve and brain tissue. More, the experiments of a Cahagnet and a Rochas give us the astonishing phenomenon of a magnetised person throwing off an emanation, visible in the hypnotic state, which assumes the contours of the body, and which is as sensitive as the body itself. Here is the inner

force of a human personality projecting itself, under certain mental conditions, beyond the body, and operating outside it. With a result like this before us, as a matter of common experiment, what becomes of the argument that our bodily life is all ? Science is, in fact, giving us a new Gospel. But its teaching is the same as the old one. It is building up before our eyes the manifestation of an eternal life of which our present brief existence is only an initial stage.

The great souls in every age have taught this. It was Christ's message. He lived in this sphere as One who, in it, was perfectly at home. The multitudes who have followed Him have been in like manner sure of their fact. Their faith carried its own proof by the work it did in them. Huxley, in a striking passage, describes the evolution in a salamander's egg, in watching which "one is almost involuntarily possessed with the idea that some more subtle aid to vision than the microscope would show the hidden artist, with his plan before him." But a finer piece of work than the evolution of a salamander is the evolution of a soul. And here again the unseen artist is at work. The tools are finer, but the operation is unmistakable.

The finest piece of artistry in the world is the spectacle of faith working upon a personality and producing its results. These

phenomena of the moral sensibilities, of prayer, love, sacrifice, of mighty hopes, of sustained enthusiasms, all energising in a human interior are, we say, the greatest sight the world has to show. Amid the shaking of the creeds these things remain. The breaking down of dogmatic limitations is only a widening of faith's prospect. The decay of older evidence simply makes room for more trustworthy affirmations. We are on the eve of a mighty revival of faith. It will emerge purified from a thousand gross accretions, established upon immutable bases, showing itself as the synthesis of all life, as the explanation of all history, as the motive of all noble striving. With its dawn the great age of humanity will begin.

XXIII.

Religious Imposture.

A DISCUSSION of the permanent in religion would hardly be complete without some notice of those excrescences which have, from time to time, appeared on its surface, and which illustrate better, perhaps, than aught else the distinction between its essence and its temporary environments. Of these the story of imposture is one of the most singular and instructive.

"The country," said Cobden once, speaking of England, "is governed by the ignorance of the country." Had he extended the reference and said "the world" his utterance would still hardly have been exaggerated. And in no sphere has the government of ignorance been more despotic or far-reaching than that of religion. The region it occupies, by its very nature, gives unrivalled opportunities for the growth and success of charlatanism. Religion from the beginning has been the abode of mystery. At every point it impinges on the unknown. It employs

as among its chief instruments three factors, each of which, when fully developed, has the power of paralysing the reason—we mean the elements of imagination, of hope, and of fear. When we combine with these features the naïve and childish conceptions of the universe which prevailed in earlier ages of the world's history, it is not difficult for us to understand the rise and progress, the vagaries, and often the astounding success, of the religious impostor.

The story here is, indeed, a pitiful one, but it is certainly not without its humorous side. Our impostor is usually a character, and often a most interesting character. He is going strong in these later ages, but we doubt whether the earlier practitioner could not give points to his modern successor. In the non-scientific times he held all the cards. Human credulity in our day is a marvellously rich field, but in antiquity it was not only rich but boundless. One of the best illustrations we know of its possibilities, under the handling of a clever rogue, is the story of Alexander of Abonotichos, as told, with all his unrivalled power of sarcastic description, by Lucian, that Heine of the second century. Alexander was a "whole hogger." Amid the crowd of magicians and soothsayers who swarmed in the Roman Empire in his century, he shines forth "*Velut*

inter ignes Luna minores." He was a great healer and a deliverer of oracles. His mission, he declared, was religious. Himself descended, as he gave out, from Perseus, he carried with him a serpent, on which he had fastened an artificial head with human features, and which he introduced to his astonished auditories as an incarnation of Æsculapius. He employed an army of spies, who ascertained for him the private history of the people who came to him for advice. This knowledge, besides convincing his clients of his inspiration, enabled him to add enormously to his revenue by the levying of blackmail. No exposures shook the people's faith in him. He lived magnificently, and with the grossest licence. He maintained his popularity to the last, and died at the age of seventy. The modern practitioner in this line might study his predecessor with advantage.

In speaking of religious imposture we have, however, to discriminate. There is a widespread variety of it which has no relation to the rascalities of an Alexander or his imitators. In this region of things the world has been, for ages, addicted to imposing on itself. Generation after generation has been brought up on illusions which they have lived in and loved. The study, for instance, of the early Christian centuries offers us in this regard some puzzling and even painful

problems. When Middleton, in his "Free Inquiry," published his famous attack on the patristic miracles, he created a terrible flutter in the ecclesiastical dovecotes of the eighteenth century, but his allegations we now recognise as all too true. Men in those days, religious men, had no historical sense, no feeling for accuracy. The more amazing a story was the more ground for accepting it, and for spreading its fame. Pious frauds were the fashion. Clerical writers forged other people's names without a thought of doing wrong. The "Acts of Paul and Thecla," the "Gospel of Peter," the "Gospel of Thomas," and scores of similar publications were the work of men who, in putting fictitious names on their title-page in place of their own, imagined they were performing a meritorious act. And so, as we read their accounts of signs and wonders, we are inclined to cry with our Meredith in "The Shaving of Shagpat":

> Oh world diseased! Oh race empirical!
> Where fools are the fathers of every miracle!

What an amazing story, for instance, to which fathers of such standing as Gregory Nazianzen, Sozomen and Theodoret lend their names, that of the occurrences at Jerusalem when the Emperor Julian ordered the foundations to be dug for a new Jewish temple!

These writers gravely tell us not only of a whirlwind and an earthquake, but of balls of fire, the appearance of a luminous cross in the sky, and of crosses, "star-shaped and of blackish hue," imprinted on the garments of the beholders! When, from the heathen standpoint, Suetonius speaks of the supernatural generation of Augustus, and gives the account of great wonders in the sky at his birth, we realise that we have here the same attitude of mind and level of knowledge as gave birth to the prodigies of these ecclesiastical historians of ours.

There is in this line of things one department which in the present day seems to call for some special notice. We refer to the matter of healing and of the so-called faith-healing. That question is very closely bound up with religion, and especially with Christianity. Christ's own work was, we read, accompanied everywhere with great healings. The apostles followed here in their Master's track, and down through the ages the great saints have been almost invariably credited with similar works. Augustine records seventy miracles wrought in two years in his own diocese of Hippo by the body of St. Stephen. We should doubt the authority of many of them, but it is more difficult to deny the testimony of St. Bernard, who speaks not only as eye-witness, but as agent, when, in the account of his

preaching the second Crusade, he says: "I ask myself with the deepest astonishment what these miracles mean, and why it has pleased God to do such things by the hands of a man like me? . . . It seems to me I have read of nothing more wonderful even in Scripture." The rankest scepticism can hardly pass over a statement of that kind, and there are others not less authoritative. David Hume refers to the cures at the tomb of the Abbé Paris in 1731, in which Charcot, the modern exponent of hypnotism, avows his belief as proved facts.

The question now is, if we admit these statements as true, what do we make of them; and especially what is their relation to our theme of religious imposture? The results of modern investigation enable us, happily, on a question which beforetime was met either with unreasoning scepticism or an unreasoning credulity, to adopt a different and saner attitude. These results have revealed to us for one thing the presence of psychic powers in the human constitution, barely perceptible in some, but in certain select spirits present to a degree which have rendered them capable of producing almost incalculable effects. These powers, it is seen, can work with an almost equal result on both mental and bodily conditions. When, as in the crusade of which Bernard speaks, or in

the extraordinary excitements around the Abbé Paris tomb, the emotions of the recipient multitude are wrought to a high pitch, the psychic possibilities are enormously increased. It is then, especially, that the potency as a healer of that "self-suggestion" of which modern hypnotism has given us the law is revealed. The mind, wrought to the point of upturning its own hidden powers, turns upon itself and the body which contains it with an almost magical effect. It is then, also, that the magnetism of the healer outside, be it a St. Paul or a Bernard, pours itself in on the receptive organism with resistless power. The influence of one personality on another wherever exercised, whether that of an orator on his hearers, or of a general ordering his troops to the charge, is ever a mystery. To compel another man's will by our volition is as real a wonder, though we have not thought it so, as to move by the same subtle force his nerve and muscular system towards cure and strength.

But how does all this bear upon religious imposture? We can now come to that. The point for us here to remember is that while many saintly men have possessed in an unusual degree the personal magnetism, the psychic force of which we have spoken, its possession does not by any means in itself prove the possession of saintliness. We may,

if we will, call it a great gift of God, but these other powers, reason, imagination, eloquence, volition, are also great gifts of God, yet one and all of them may be used for the most sinister purposes. There is no reason why the curative power, just as much as the power of reasoning, may not be exploited for unworthy ends. It is not difficult, indeed, in the light of what we now know both of history and the inner working of the human mind, to trace the genesis and development of the "faith-healing" movements by which the Dowies and the Eddys have in our time made themselves so notorious. These people discover in themselves a certain power, which they exercise at first in a manner that is entirely legitimate. But their success in time upsets their moral equilibrium—alas for poor human nature, it is so easily upset!—and we have our practitioners, by-and-by, making claims and assumptions about themselves which are perhaps not so much a deliberate fraud as the self-deception of a diseased and abnormal vanity.

In what has been said we have only touched the fringes of an immense subject. There are wide departments of it, all too visible and active in our day, which we will only here hint at. We have still with us, in our commercial circles, the man who makes his orthodoxy a cover for the shadiest trans-

actions; the adventurer who exploits for his own purposes a religious reputation, after having lost the religion on which it was originally founded. There are Sicilian bandits who go to mass before setting out on their predatory expeditions. Nearer home their counterparts sing anthems and hear sermons in our churches before robbing their neighbours in the City.

Is the Church itself to-day free from imposture? Some of us fail to understand how good men can subscribe creeds in which they do not believe. Another side of the matter is exhibited in Maurice's wonder "that the faith of scientific men in the Bible has not utterly perished when they see by what tricks we are sustaining it." His criticism applies with absolute accuracy to certain modern apologetics. One wonders whether statements made by seemingly capable and one would fain think honest men are from sheer ignorance and stupidity, or, if not, by what strange process an apparently sane mind has so completely hid itself from the truth. In presence of some of the dogmatisms of our religious leaders we cry with Kant, "O Candour, thou Astræa who art fled from earth to heaven, how shall man draw thee, the ground of conscience and of all inner religion, back again!" If only we would remember, all of us, that a religion which is

worth anything must have truth, honesty and candour among its very presuppositions! And why are we afraid of truth? Do we suppose that when its most vigorous demand has been satisfied, any true spiritual possession can be lost to humanity? It were blasphemy to the God of truth to think so.

XXIV.

The Soul's Emancipation.

One of the questions with which the eternal religion has always concerned itself, and which to the end will be one of its supreme preoccupations, is that of inner freedom. The earliest human consciousness is a sense of inner bondage, its earliest expression a sigh for deliverance. The Platonic philosophy, borrowed in its turn from the East, was fond of describing the soul as an exile from a higher sphere, encased in the flesh as in a prison, awaiting its emancipation in another life. All the theologies have centred upon the same conception. The world religions are so many prescriptions for securing spiritual liberty. The remedies often seem fanciful, based upon theories badly in want of foundation. What for many of us is more interesting than the theories is the individual testimony, the story of the actual human experience. It is a wonderful and enthralling story. Through the ages men have been calling to each other as to how they have fared in this mighty strife.

What is the verdict ? Is there any consensus of opinion on which we can found ourselves ? Have men ever won their freedom ? Have they discovered a road to it on which we can confidently travel ?

In looking for the answer it would be easy to take a narrow view. We might shut ourselves up in an ecclesiastical formula—prescribed as medicine vendors prescribe their pills—and declare men to be free or in bondage as they stand in relation to this formula. But there were souls in the world before our formula, souls which felt in themselves the same primal necessities, which were embarked on the same pilgrimage, were conscious of the same limitations, and had glimmering before them the same far-off goal. These also are our kin. Our fortunes are bound up with theirs. If, in this universe, no good was intended for them, there is none intended for us. We cannot be indifferent to their experience. It would, indeed, be the most heathenish of actions to cut ourselves off in spirit or sympathy from these outsiders. For in the fate of one soul is bound up the fate of us all.

At first sight it seems all a confusion—this fight of men for their emancipation, and the results of the battle. Multitudes of us profess, and with all sincerity, that we have found in religion our inner deliverance. How, then, are we to account for a Lucretius, expressing

in magnificent verse his conviction that in the rejection of religion, and of its teaching about death and after death, man would alone find his liberty? And of modern men what precisely is contained in that verdict of Pattison, the representative of the latest Oxford culture, who, recording his own experience, declares: "It cost me years more of extrication of thought before I rose to the conception that the highest life is the art to live, and that both men, women and books are equally essential ingredients of such a life!" This is hardly a theological extrication! Then, next door to us is France, with its forty millions of vivid souls embarked on this same life venture as ourselves. These, too, have struggled for freedom, and how strange to us the method and outcome! One might call it the Voltairian way of settling everything with a laugh. "Il fait le tout en badinant." History is "La Comédie Humaine." The emancipation here seems often an emancipation at once from fear and from hope. What a philosophy of life is represented by these lines of Leconte de Lisle:

Le faible souffre et pleure, et l'insensé s'irrite,
Mais le plus sage en rit, sachant qu'il doit mourir!

(The feeble suffer and weep; the fool gets angry; but the wise man laughs at it all, knowing that he must die.)

Are these, then, the final results of the world's wisdom? Is this the end of its

search for freedom? Knowing all that the Church teaches, and knowing also all that the world from its experience of life has said in reply, are we, at this end of the age, in possession of anything certain as to the true inward liberty?

We believe there is a reassuring answer to this question. The outlook is not nearly so confusing as it might at first seem. The world, divided much in details, has, nevertheless, learned something as to the essentials on which we may safely count. It is, for one thing, becoming ever clearer that while the religion of terror of which Lucretius spoke was a bondage from which men were well advised to get deliverance, nevertheless, the inner liberty is achieved through religion. We cannot get on satisfactorily in this universe except by an act of faith. As Sabatier has put it: "Science will never tell us, outside an act of faith, why life is to be lived well." This act of faith founds itself upon facts of the inner consciousness. It argues from a moral order which it discovers there to a moral order outside itself, and which encompasses and rules the whole existing system of things. And this order is a good and a beneficent order. For man has found his world to be on the whole a good world. He has found, as Renan puts it, "there are few situations in the vast field of existence . . . wherein

the balance of debt and credit does not leave a little surplus of happiness." The most suffering of mortals have been those who have realised this the most clearly. It was when Stevenson had been worn to a thread by his fatal illness that he attained that "belief in the kindness of the scheme of things, and the goodness of our veiled God," which he found to be "an excellent and pacifying compensation." A man who has reached to so much faith as this has dropped one of the heaviest weights that clog the soul.

But religion, and Christianity especially as its highest exponent, has been emancipator in another sphere. Emerson once described men as "having the appearance of being whipped through the world." Who are the drivers? In most cases the animal passions presided over by a bad conscience. In this region the religion of Galilee has indeed wrought miracles. Its proclamation of "deliverance to the captive" has in no wise belied itself. It is a religion of conversions, where the predominating, exultant sense has been of a new, free and upward-bearing moral life. Let the psychologist explain the thing as he will, the facts are there, multiplying daily before our eyes. They are the verification of what Edmond Scherer, sceptic as he was, found himself compelled to admit: "If there is anything certain in this world

it is that the destinies of the Bible are linked with the destinies of holiness on earth."

But there are some broader aspects of this question, which the fullest acquiescence in what religion has to teach us should by no means permit us to neglect. What Pattison, as we have quoted him, is after, what France seeks, is a side of the matter which religion has too often left out. There are multitudes of religious people who are by no means emancipated. They have not yet learned the full art of living. The education for life has, indeed, a good many branches, and excellent people, on all sides of us, are to-day groaning in bondage because of non-proficiency in one or other of them. In some branches we seem to have gone back rather than forward. Who can doubt that the Spartan and Stoic cult of physical hardihood was, for instance, a step towards inner freedom! Was not that a splendid lesson which Marcus Aurelius learned from his tutor? "I learned," says he, "endurance of labour, and to want little, and to work with my own hands." Not all his imperial legions could win him such conquests as these. Mme. de Genlis must surely have planned her scheme of education on this model when she taught Louis Philippe as a youth "to wait on himself, to despise all softness, to sleep regularly on a hard bed, to brave sun, rain and cold, and to

endure the greatest fatigues." Whether we be prince or peasant, Christian or pagan, these are teachings with the marrow of reality in them. We are becoming enslaved to softness in our time. The Christian professor and the pronounced agnostic are alike in being uncomfortable unless their luxuries are to hand. But all that is treason to the inner liberty. What we should incessantly cultivate is a limber soul that sits easily to circumstance. We are bunglers in life's first principles unless we can sing the heart's song with bread and water for our meal and a board for our couch. The laugh of Le Sage at the English people "that they are the most miserable people in the world, with their liberty, their property and their three meals a day," has some point. So long as our happiness holds of a given round of physical comforts we may call ourselves by what name we choose, but we are slaves and not free men.

Another lesson which, alas! the world has had to learn outside the Churches, is on the relation of knowledge to inner emancipation. It is here, indeed, that the great name of religion has been, and still is, invoked for the forces that make for bondage. Half-educated people (and our English folk are among the least educated of civilised nations) are tyrannised over by ardent religionists who announce exploded opinions as tests of piety. The biting

words of Hazlitt are still appropriate: "We may believe, and know, not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the secret of the imposture as we are, . . . and yet if anyone has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear, and by dint of effrontery and perseverance, make all the world believe and repeat what all the world knows to be false." It is only when the English people study such subjects as the Bible, not simply by listening to fervid platform addresses, but by a calm analysis of the facts of the case, as they have been accumulated and tabulated by scientific research, that they will find themselves free from the tyranny of dogmatic and irrelevant appeal. It is when we know the origin of so many of the doctrines that have coerced and terrified men, know their source as purely human, and as having arisen in ages of less enlightenment than our own, that we are able quietly to assert our freedom from their control, however pretentious the auspices under which they are asserted.

And yet mental freedom is only one of the ways to the soul's emancipation. It is not here that the greatest victory is gained. That is a moral one. We have not tasted real liberty till we have got the true measure of what the world calls success, till we have learned to be

satisfied from within and not from without. The best men in all ages have sooner or later come to this. Gregory of Nazianzen records their experience in his own: "Therefore I have returned into myself, and deem quiet the only safety of the soul." We find out with Fénelon that the best freedom is freedom from vain expectation. In a letter to his friend Destouches he says: "I ask little of men. I seek to give them much and expect from them nothing." We discover the wisdom of that French saying: "If we have not what we like, let us like what we have." Does the world take little or no notice of us? What then? Are we not on the side of that character in Hazlitt, who "sees enough in the Universe to interest him, without putting himself forward to fix the eyes of the Universe upon him"? Is ours a private rather than a public place; are we remote from the seats of power? Let us thank God for our destiny. Jeremy Taylor at Golden Grove, his Welsh retreat, where his status was that of a domestic chaplain, was infinitely better off than when Bishop of Down and Connor. It was not in his bishopric but in his humble position that he had his sublimest visions, his heavenliest thoughts, and that he wrote the works that have been the comfort and inspiration of multitudes. Cardinal Mazarin died, as the world calls it, a rich man. But how poor was

Mazarin on that day when, almost at the end, dragging himself through the gallery of his splendid palace, Brienne overheard him say, as he surveyed his treasures, "Il faut quitter tout cela!"

Our emancipation is accomplished when the soul, free from fears because sure of its place in the Divine order, accepts each day as a new gift from God, looks back on its past with gratitude, and forward with the joy of perfect trust.

XXV.

Recognitions.

FEW people, except ecclesiastical students, know nowadays anything of the "Clementine Recognitions." But the book was vastly favourite reading amongst the Christians of the early centuries. In it, mixed up with a religious teaching which sounds strange to our ears, is a romance, in which people closely akin are for a while in contact with each other, without suspecting their relationship, until the moment of revealing comes, when they discover they are of the same household. The story is clumsy enough in its setting—the Christian in search of literary diversion seems in those days to have been easily satisfied. But its theme is infinitely suggestive. It is a parable of the world and ourselves. For life as we know it is a drama of recognitions. We go about amongst men and things as strangers, with our eyes holden; and then, as in a flash, they stand revealed as tied to us by all manner of new, yet eternally old relationships.

To begin with, we may note that all our knowing is really a recognition—that is to say, a *re-knowing*. Our every act of perception is full of memory. We can see this most clearly by analysing what goes on within us when we are examining what we call a new object. Our instinct is to classify it, and for this we immediately call up all we remember of objects that approach it in similarity. The new perception, when complete, is, we see, the fitting in of the fresh sensation to a thousand, thousand former acts of memory. We scarcely, indeed, realise to what an extent our daily experience is a constant recognition. We open our eyes in the morning and see the sky, the sun, the earth, the myriad surroundings of our household life. We are hardly conscious of a mental act in surveying them; it is all so easy, so much a matter of course. And yet how stupendous and how mysterious an act it is that we perform! For every one in this countless host of objects, from the greatest to the smallest, in the heavens and on the earth, represents a separate recollection, the comparison with an image that lay before in our minds. Every glance of our eye carries innumerable classifications. If we can imagine our waking up one morning and finding nothing above or beneath that we recognised, we may get some idea of what actually is involved in our daily mental

round. We see, then, that the world for us is so full without because we have so full a world within.

But that is only a beginning. When we look upon the world, we know it, we say, to be the same, day by day, as the one our mind has reported to us before. But as our knowledge of it deepens there comes a recognition of a deeper kind. We discover something behind. Just as, in our acquaintances, the body we see is the visible expression of an unseen reality beneath—a mind, a character, which is the thing we really value in them—so, in all the deeper thinking both of the East and of the West, does the matter stand as between ourselves and the universe. The very fact that we regard the world as intelligible supposes that it is an expression of intelligence. Our mind fits the world only by means of the mind that is in the world. The cosmos, narrowly viewed, is indeed nothing less than petrified thought. When we speak of its laws, of its powers, of its cause and effect, we are at every word naming the attributes of mind. And thus we come to the great Recognition. We look into the universe as into a mirror, and see there the face of God. The voice that utters itself in the depths of the soul is that which makes the music of the spheres. That is no parochial belief. It is the verdict of humanity. Protestant Germany utters it in

Luther's saying: "God is in the smallest creature, in a leaf, a blade of grass"; and hoary India re-echoes the mystery in the great word of the Bhagavad Gita: "I am moisture in the water, light in the sun and moon, sound in the firmament, human nature in mankind, savour in the earth, glory in the source of light; . . . I am the eternal seed of all nature."

We reach a further stage on this road when we find, as we shall if we go far enough, that all religious conviction of the true kind is, first and foremost, a recognition. If the time ever comes when a history of Christianity can be written from a world-inclusive standpoint, it will then be seen that the unique force of the Gospel has lain always in this, that there, as nowhere else, has been offered for man's recognition the image and example of his truest self. We may remember in this connection Aristotle's dictum in the "Politics," that "the nature of a thing is that which it has become when its process of development is completed." That is the other side of the Platonic doctrine of ideas, that behind and antecedent to things as we see them are the ideas of them which are perfect and eternal. Every man carries in him the plan of a Perfect which his own nature at once suggests and craves after. And the first fresh emotion which everywhere has sprung in the human

heart in studying the Gospels and the Life there depicted has been this leap of kinship. Here the soul at last has met its mate, its answer, its completion. Its own unuttered Gospel has found voice. Here at last is the Divine Idea expressed in adequate form. Humanity labouring through the ages has at length brought forth. Now at last it knows itself divine, for here is Immanuel!

And as with the central heart of the Gospel, so is it with every doctrine that is drawn from it. We have had, in the history of Christendom, innumerable theological systems; doctrines of Incarnation, of the Atonement, of Resurrection, Judgment, Miracles, of the Church, of Sacraments and what not. In studying them one cannot but feel how far greater a chance of permanence and of religious efficacy these dogmas would have possessed, had their framers previously made a proper study of this initial and covering doctrine of recognition. For it is safe to say that no theological doctrine, whatever its special theme, has the element of permanence unless, in its substance and form, it is a reflection of something previously found in the universal mind. For the doctrine to find a man the man must first *find himself* there. When that condition obtains, no ridicule can dislodge it. We may take, for a single illustration, the doctrine of Atonement. On this theme what reams of

arid utterance, of interest to no mortal, lie unread on the back shelves of libraries! And the modern preacher, discovering in himself no response to these dryasdust deliverances, is apt to eschew the subject in favour of something he deems closer to the actualities of the time. And, indeed, until he has something more real to offer than what at times has passed for Christian doctrine on this theme, he were better silent. But when, out of his own sin and sorrow and life burden, he comes to it, and the Cross behind it, for what it has to say to his own soul; when he recognises himself, his being, his character, his destiny inextricably and vitally mingled in this Eternal Sacrifice, will his utterance then be the chaff of unreality? Never. What has found him will find his fellow. There will be more recognitions. The old story will be repeated. "In this sign thou wilt conquer."

There are manifold further applications of our theme which we pass over in order to bring in a word on an aspect of the matter vital to us all—its outlook on a future life. Our doctrine of recognition bears on this problem in more ways than one. It has something to say on the future life as a possibility for us, and also as to the kind of life it may be expected to be. In the first place, the chance for us of a continuity of existence beyond

death is, as everybody sees, intimately bound up with the question of persistence and identity amid organic change. Men put questions of this kind: "If you speak of surviving, what of you is to survive? Yourself as child, as youth, or as old man? What is the good," they say, "of this talk of after-death survival when the earlier 'you' of the child or the youth has not even survived the processes of life? As you are, here in this world, you are already three-parts dead. You represent even now the eternal flux of things, of which the end will be the crowning illustration." But surely the argument here contains its own refutation. Its very terms give us the answer. For we should not know of the "eternal flux," apart from the fixed points, outside the movement, which enable us to judge it. And the fixed point here is the "I," which we always recognise as our very selves, which survives all the changes, and which indeed registers them. Are we told that the child dies into the youth and the youth into the man? The truth here is rather that the child lives in the youth and in the man. The growing personality is made up of them all, recognises them all, and is the uniting point of all. What, then, is there in the whole analogy of things to hinder us from the acceptance of religion's final affirmation, that as the physical material at death undergoes, not destruction, but meta-

morphosis, so the inner unity of which the body has been at once the symbol and the servant will, at the great moment, carry itself forward into a new expression and surrounding ?

A new expression and surrounding ! And yet not one that is foreign or unfriendly. The best assurance of what happens at birth into that higher world is what happens at birth into our own. Nothing surely, in this regard, is more reassuring than the ways of children as they come to us on this planet. They are entirely at home from the beginning. They recognise the world and its people as familiar. It is as if they had been here before. And in that further birth that awaits us there will surely be no reversal of the kindly law. It is not only a want of faith, but a false induction from the system of things as we know it, that expresses itself in such lines as these :

> Alone ! to land alone upon that shore !
> To begin alone to live for evermore ;
> To have no one to teach
> The manners or the speech
> Of that new life, or put us at our ease :
> Oh ! that we might die in pairs or companies !

We need cherish no such fears. Fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood are no monopoly of this world or this life. All that they contain, all the sweetness of home and the inmost

rapture of love, forming part as they do of the riches of that Divine Nature out of which our humanity has come, will be there to meet us on the farther shore. That will be the greatest and gladdest of our Recognitions.

XXVI.

The Thought Behind.

"THOUGHT-READING" is one of the many forms of dabbling with the mysterious which modern society takes up, partly as an amusement and partly as a cult. Mr. Stuart Cumberland's drawing-room exhibitions belonged to that half-laughing, half-serious coquetting with the occult which is one of the features of the time. We shall probably have a good deal more of this in the near future. It will not be surprising if Europe and America present by-and-by the characteristics which Lucian describes with so much vivacity of the later days of the Roman Empire, when the world was overrun with necromancers, magicians, prophets, and exploiters of every form of dark art. Not that the tendencies of the age in this direction are merely frivolous. Far otherwise. A good deal of what is now going on in the Western mind is an awakening to the sense of a lost intellectual inheritance. Hegel's belief that second sight was "a product of an

earlier day and an earlier intellectual condition than ours," is very suggestive on this point. We have developed along certain lines to the neglect of others, and have paid the penalty. Our civilisation has not been all gain. Watchmaking has robbed us of the art of telling the time by the sun. Road-making has put us beneath the savage in tracking our way through the forest. And when the Zulu "opens the gates of distance," and obtains knowledge of far-off events by a wireless telegraphy of his own, he hints at mental endowments which higher races have lost and must regain. It will be by developments along this side of the mind that the next great human advance will not improbably be made.

Meanwhile, and with the workaday faculties we already possess, there is wonderful thought-reading for every mother's son of us if only we will give ourselves to it. Our world is, more than anything else, a magnificent treasury of thoughts. This treasury is open to all, and the laws of enjoying it are the same for all. It is dumbfounding to pessimism, and yet true, that in what most concerns a mortal's sheer happiness and well-being the conditions are, for king and cotter, precisely the same. Our main joy is in thought-reading, and in this, for us, central business, rank or wealth do not count.

We begin early as thought-readers. The child, almost as soon as it is born, commences the process. It reads the face and knows at once whether the expression on it means kindness or the reverse. Indeed, if we want to begin at the beginning we must go lower down than the children. The dogs read our thoughts. They are charming pictures which Darwin gives us, in his "Expression of the Emotions," of the way in which his four-footed companions studied his face and learned there both his mood and his intentions. Our dumb friends partake, in a measure greater than we have imagined, of God's great feast of the inner life. One of the marvels of this language of expression is that both the language itself and the interpretation of it are practically the same throughout the whole human family. Go to China or India, or the islands of the Pacific, or among the aborigines of Australia, and the story of the soul's awe, or terror, or delight, or anger will be signalled on the features and the body by identically the same signs. This is the primordial language, read of all men, created before grammar was, or words, a language wrought deep into the physical frame by the mystic processes of the growing soul.

But the study of expression, as we see it in human faces, is only the beginning of our thought-reading. As the mind opens, it

becomes aware of other thoughts lying around it, vast beyond expression, embedded in symbol and hieroglyph, whose meaning yields only to patience and humility. For the meanings are so deeply infolded. There are surface interpretations, with which the frivolous may content themselves, but which serve really as only veils and wrappings of a deeper sense. In other words, the world we live in is a thought-world, and our business is to decipher it. We are scarcely aware to what extent this is so. As a matter of fact, the street we walk down, the houses which bound it on either side, are really thoughts. The length of that street and its breadth ; the size, shape, fittings and furniture of every building in it existed once as ideas in a human brain. These things will abide there, for the time they last, as embodiments in brick, stone, wood, of what once went on in a mind.

But when we have left the city and reached the country ; when we look, not upon houses, but upon land, sea or sky ; when our surroundings are simply light, colour and form—what are we now in contact with ? Do we listen here simply to the echoes of our own footsteps ? Is our own mind, which peers curiously on this side of these appearances, the only one engaged upon them ? Or are the appearances in their turn, like the houses we just left, the embodied thoughts of a thinker ? One of the

latest exponents of the evolutionary philosophy gives the following as the answer of science: "All is quivering with energy. . . . Matter is indestructible, motion is continuous, and beneath both these fundamental truths lies the fundamental truth that force is persistent. All the myriad phenomena of the universe . . . are manifestations of a single animating principle that is both infinite and eternal." Eloquent words, and true, but not—as they stand—enough, surely, for the human soul. The writer here is afraid to apply Personality to his "single animating principle," because, forsooth, that is anthropomorphism! It is to the last degree singular that brilliant and conscientious thinkers of our time should have permitted themselves to be frightened by a word. If it comes to that, we are all of us, atheists as well as Christians, anthropomorphic, and can be no other if we try. When the materialist speaks of force or of cause in his account of the universe he is just as much applying ideas derived from human experience as when believers speak of the mind and heart of God. And yet this bugbear word has actually, for multitudes of able men, emptied the spiritual atmosphere of all its summer warmth and light. It has reduced them to a theory of which Goethe said: "It appeared to me so grey, so Cimmerian and

so dead that we shuddered at it as at a ghost."

But the world is coming back to sanity in in this matter. It is beginning to believe in the validity of its best instincts. It refuses, as a modern writer has it, "to admit that the universe is a farrago of nonsense." Nor will it accept the attitude which Emerson satirised: "Ah! says my languid Oxford gentleman, nothing new and nothing true, and no matter." The visible world, we find, is full of intellect. Both in its form and its arrangement it is crammed with mathematics and chemistry and logic. Its combinations are alive with artistry, impregnate with the sense of the beautiful. Its sounds are embedded in laws which, as we understand and apply them, yield the most exquisite music; plainest of hints that at their back stands a Musician. But mathematics, and chemistry, and logic, and art and music are Thoughts. The fact that the world's phenomena are reducible to common mental expressions shows that they all lie on a common mental basis. The possibility of our arriving, as individuals, at a universal truth supposes a Universal Mind in which that truth inheres. The student of science is thus, whether he know it or not, a thought-reader. He is reading God's thoughts after Him.

But there are thoughts and thoughts. We utter one order of them to bare acquaintances,

another to intimates. And that is a rule which holds in all spheres. Our innermost yields itself only to kindred spirits and to the solicitations of love. A man going into St. Mark's, Venice, shall find it discoursing to him according to his degree of initiation. If he be entirely uneducated it may impress him simply as a glowing mass of form and colour. Certainly it says that to all who come. To the artist it has far more to communicate. He reads miles deeper into its thought. But even he may miss its central intention. It is to the sympathetic believer, and to him alone, that it tells its whole secret. It is he who finds in these "Stones of Venice," as their uttermost meaning, the Christian Gospel.

In like manner it is with that vaster fane whose dome is the starry firmament, and whose measurements are infinity and eternity. There are those, the careless and unthinking, to whom the universe discloses only its commoner and surface meanings. And there are, if we may so say, God's intimates, to whom He whispers His finer thoughts. It is in man, the microcosm, in whom all the universe meets, that the Divine ideas chiefly unfold themselves, and that in proportion as his receiving surface is purified and expanded. Emerson has put this in his own way in the statement that "the foundation of culture

as of character is at last the moral sentiment. If we live truly we shall see truly." An old English mystic has expressed it quaintly, yet more nearly : " As long as we be meddling with any part of sin we shall never see clearly the blissful cheer of our Lord." It is here, indeed, that we have the secret of the moral authority of Jesus. His absolute purity was the light in which He read the heart of God. He saw it as an open book. He spoke with the certitude of conscious oneness with the Divine. And His way is for all the ages and all the worlds the only way of intimately knowing God. By mathematics and chemistry and art we may scrape some acquaintance. It is only through love and purity and humility and sacrifice that we learn the inner secret.

But if Christianity is in this way a thought-reading of God, it is not less, let us remember, a thought-reading of man. It is the one religion which meddles persistently with the innermost life. The motto of pagan humanity was, " *intus ut libet, foris ut moris est :* in private do as you like, in public follow the fashion." To turn all this upside down, and to invade a man's privacy with an overpowering sense of a Divine holy presence, was indeed to bring in a new religion. The present writer, in a chance conversation with a traveller on the Continent, was surprised to

find this urged as a conclusive argument against Christianity as a practical scheme. "Why," said he, and he was a man of culture, "what can be said for a religion which puts an embargo on your very thoughts!" And he did not seem persuaded by our contention that if religion was to be of any moral use to us it was precisely in this thought-region that it must begin its work.

What gives thought-reading its undying interest is that it brings us in contact with persons. Materialism would rid the unseen universe of the personal. It replaces God with a "principle of unity." The soul's sure instinct rejects all this. It knows that the be-all and end-all of existence is union with Holiness and Love. And as we more and more clearly see God in His world men will catch the reflection of Him in ourselves. The ineffable vision will leave its shining trace. That becomes true which was said half-jokingly, half-admiringly, by Sydney Smith of a contemporary: "The Ten Commandments are written upon his countenance," We read of St. Vincent de Paul, who covered the France of the seventeenth century with charitable institutions, that his originally ugly features were transformed by the sublime goodness which beamed through them. In what terms of physiology can we state that fact? It requires another science than

physiology. This man had been in the highest society and caught its manner. He was a thought-reader of the inner mysteries. And the word they spelled out to him was the Eternal Love.

XXVII.

Conscience.

Of the soul's working forces, none bulks before the general mind more largely than conscience. It is generally looked upon as our chief moral driving power, as a kind of interior Divine law-giver. When, however, we come more narrowly to examine conscience, both in its operation on ourselves, and outside, over the whole sphere of world-history, we become conscious of some strange complexities. Side by side with its normal action we discern a puzzling kind of by-play. Conscience, we discover, has not only a moral, but sometimes a non-moral, even an immoral activity. We are beginning now to understand the meaning of this, but we have not yet emerged from the confusions in which earlier misconceptions involved the subject. Prodigious blunders in ethics and theology have been made from regarding conscience as something absolute in man, instead of considering it, like everything else in him, as a growth. What we are now learning is that the world-conscience has

had its boyhood, when, boy-like, it played tricks which the grown-up conscience of our later days has to allow for and to set right. This relation of past and present is, as we shall see, not the only region in which we observe the by-play of conscience, but we may begin with it as perhaps the most important.

At no time has man's ethical guide played stranger antics with him than when it has allied itself with the notion that the moral ideas of an earlier time could be taken as the standard for to-day. The great example of this is in the early world-conscience expressed in the Old Testament, and in the influence which has been accorded to it over later ethics. Nowhere has the misconception of the idea of inspiration wrought more mischief both to faith and practice. The notion that the early Hebrew records exhibited a Divine, and therefore absolute standard of conduct, made Augustine the advocate of religious persecution, formed a chief prop of American slavery, furnished Joseph Smith with a sanction for polygamy at Nauvoo, and, during the late Armenian massacres, gave point to the sneer against those Christians who denounced the Sultan as an assassin, while regarding Joshua, red with the pitiless slaughter of the Canaanites, as a special commissioner of heaven.

Another of the vagaries of the cruder conscience, from the effects of which we are

still suffering, appears in its connection with belief. Relating itself to the view that certain dogmas were necessary to the religious life it has, in their interest, sanctioned and vehemently supported what we now regard as sheer immoralities. Pious frauds, in which men "lie for conscience sake," have produced entanglements in Christianity from which we have not yet shaken ourselves clear. The early literature of our faith is full of forgeries, of pseudo-gospels bidding for a hearing by the borrowing of Apostolic names as their authors, of invented miracles, of history manufactured to chime with prophecy. If the religious propagandists who did this in that early time had possessed the modern conscience in these matters we should have been saved a world of trouble. But they did not. And it is curious how this cruder religious conscience has survived. Protestantism was distinctly a move towards theological veracity, but the progress has been slow and the goal is not yet reached. The older Protestantism could invent as well as the old Catholicism. In Mary's reign a wall spoke at Aldgate against the Mass. It was discovered afterwards that a girl concealed behind the plaster had worked the oracle. And in many Protestant pulpits to-day statements are made by excellent men which it would be impossible for them to utter were it not that

their "religious conscience" prevents them from candidly examining the facts.

It is time, perhaps, now to come to explanations, for what has been said leads to some vital questions. What then is conscience; have we misnamed it when we call it a Divine inward monitor and judge; is there then, after all, no infallible guide for our life? The modern answer on these points represents a broader outlook than the older one; yet, properly considered, it is not one whit less spiritual or religious. Conscience in this view is the correspondence of our individual feeling with a common outside standard. But this standard is continually rising and its upward progress is nothing less than the growing revelation of God in and to our race. The Divine inspiration was assuredly in the patriarchs, though their manner of life if practised here would have consigned them to a gaol within a week. The explanation is that while the force working in them was from above, its uplift could, in the nature of things, carry them only as far as it was in their generation to go. There *is* an immutable standard of right and wrong, but it was not plumped into the world all at once. It is dawning upon us bit by bit in the ceaseless development of the human spirit. Conscience *is* the Divine in us, but like another incarnation, it was born a babe and comes to

itself by degrees, "increasing in wisdom and stature."

We may now follow our subject into one or two separate by-paths. It tempts us, for instance, to ask whether conscience is precisely the same thing in men as in women. The general verdict amongst those who profess to know is to the contrary. Woman's nature, according to them, echoes more clearly than that of man the cry of Faust, "*Gefühl ist alles.*" La Bruyère has an uncompromising verdict on the point: "*La plupart des femmes n'ont guère des principes : elles se conduisent par le cœur, et dependent pour leurs mœurs de ceux qu'elles aiment.*" We speak of the growing liberty of opinion, but we doubt very much whether the witty Frenchman would have dared to write this had he lived in the twentieth century instead of the seventeenth. Yet a countryman of his of our own time gives an illustration of a certain type of the feminine conscience, which, in its way, is quite as curious as the deliverance of La Bruyère. In his "Journeys through France" M. Taine quotes a shopkeeper in a French provincial town who said to him of the women there: "Not one of them would stay away from Mass on Sunday; but they are light-fingered folk. We have to keep our eye on them. They would not steal money, but anything in the shop is fair game." It would be unsafe,

however, to found on this a homily on the feminine moral sense. It would probably be retorted that the difference between the men and the women of this place and class would be simply in the fact that the former *did* "stay away from Mass on Sunday." But we will hasten off this dangerous ground.

Our modern civilisation offers us some strange and unprepossessing illustrations of the by-play of conscience. It is, of course, not exclusively a feature of our time, but one which is, nevertheless, most unpleasantly prominent in it, that some of the most loathsome of livelihoods are to-day made out of the exploitation of conscience. The tramp, the impostor, the begging-letter writer live by a conscience—not their own. Possessing not a gleam of noble sentiment in themselves, they can calculate to a nicety the working of it in their better-minded fellow-creatures. The charitable instincts, the sense of duty to others, of the clergyman, the philanthropist, and the religious community generally are accurately weighed and delicately handled. Truly a curious business! But a deeper level is reached when the vein worked for profit is not a man's good, but his evil conscience. In all the annals of the human tragedy we come upon nothing so purely infernal as when we see men or women, themselves lost to the sense of virtue, enticing

some weak or unsuspecting victim to his fall, that then they may use the misery of his awakened conscience as a source of income. In our strange world there are, however, compensations in the most unexpected quarters, and it is probable that this latest outcrop of a corrupt civilisation serves, in its way, as a breakwater of virtue. The safeguard between many a man and vice is the dread that, as a consequence of his sin, his own guilty conscience may be exploited by those who have no conscience at all. Of this side of the topic one might indeed, adduce any number of illustrations.

The by-play of conscience, its non-moral activity, is shown for instance in our state of mind towards people we have wronged. If the inner tumult occasioned by the act does not issue in a determination to repair the evil, it produces the curious opposite result of a settled dislike of our victim. He has somehow put us in the wrong, and we bear a grudge against him for it. A long chapter might also be written on the strange vocabulary of excuse which the by-play of conscience has created, and by which men, when they go wrong, contrive somehow to compound with their better self. The study of the subject shows that conscience requires not only to be listened to, but to be trained. It needs a teacher and an ally. We are here

only on safe ground when we realise, as Quaker Barclay puts it in his Apology, "that Christians are to be led inwardly and immediately by the Spirit of God, even in the same manner, though it befall not many to be led in the same measure, as the saints were of old."

XXVIII.

Idle Piety.

It was a saying of Dean Church, which all schools of us may well note, that "the call to be religious is not stronger than the call to see of what sort our religion is." And the label which properly describes our "sort" of religion will, let us remember, by no means necessarily be a denominational one. The dividing lines which mark the difference between a good religion and a bad one are not at all parallel with our sectarianisms. Taine was not thinking of this or that Church when he spoke of religion as "differing with different minds, some interpreting it well, and on it feeding generous feelings, exalted hopes, great thoughts; others falsifying it and making of it an affair of kneelings, processions, bows, ridiculous practices." All the Churches have bred great souls, and all of them, though some more than others, have seen interpretations of religion that have been a hindrance rather than a help to true living. Moreover, we find, clinging to all the Churches

in greater or less degree, expressions of religion that arose out of an inferior development, out of a more limited outlook than our own. It is time now that we recognised these for what they are worth. They may be designated as a species of "idle piety."

Here let us not be misunderstood. We need to use our term "idle" warily. Religion in its highest form holds, and will always hold a large element of passivity. One of its functions is that of a refuge from the rush of the external life. "How few are the moments," says a modern writer, "in which it seems to us that we have really lived, and not been merely busied with preparations for living!" It is within religion's most intimate circle that we realise those moments. Religion, on one side of it at least, is an inwardness, a sacred hush, a *sabbatismos.* It is the soul resting in itself and in the thought of its Divine ally—a musing, a contemplation, a vision of the unseen, a feeding upon the hidden manna.

Also, the seeming passivities which enter so much into the religious life are often really a form of the most potent activity. We have not yet penetrated the law of this inner working, but the fact is there, and unquestionable. When Christ hung on the Cross He was doing nothing but to hang there. But in that quiet of mere suffering were

being elaborated forces, the sweep and range of which no imagination can properly grasp. When a great man, away from the hurly burly, sits brooding his problem, he may to the outsider seem an idle person. All the time, in his interior, is elaborating a piece of work, in the shape of a new resolve, or in the emergence there of a new truth of life, which in its effect on the race shall be more potent than the roar of a million looms. We need to know our way well in this region ere we fling our word of reproach.

Not the less evident is it that religion to-day, and all the vast interests bound up in it, are suffering from forms of idleness that need to be exposed and exorcised. Ecclesiasticism by its notions, its organisations of living and worshipping, by even its activities, has been responsible for an enormous waste of the world's time. It has used human brains and bodies that might have been so well employed otherwise, in pursuits that are futile and that lead to nothing. When Casaubon, on his first visit to Paris, was shown over the great hall of the Sorbonne, he was told by his guide, "This is where the theologians have disputed for five hundred years." "Indeed," was the reply, "and pray what have they settled?" It is not, however, so much in the direction of opinion—though any one who has attempted to wade through

the morass of mediæval theology finds Erasmus's description of it not too strong—that one realises most keenly the unprofitableness of much ecclesiasticism. In his thinking, man has had to flounder through innumerable blunders on his way to a true method of research. He has had, so stupid is he, to beat his head against the wall, to discover there was no road that way. The theology then, was not entirely idle.

But what shall we say of the life? For centuries the Church's ideal of piety was the monastery. Everything outside that was a compromise, a "second best." Now it will not do to pass an undiscriminating judgment on the monastic life. There have been times when it stood for the best there was in our world. Its note has been often the reverse of an idle piety. The early Benedictines, as in successive companies they streamed out, in the sixth century, from their home at Monte Cassino, were the chief agents in the spread of Christianity, of learning and of civilisation amongst the rude Western peoples. One watches these companies with a sympathetic admiration as, settling on some well-considered spot in the surrounding waste, they reared their simple habitation, cleared the land, drained, ploughed, sowed and ultimately turned the wilderness into a garden. One follows them indoors, where, in the

intervals of warfare with external nature, they pored over their manuscripts, copying, illuminating and so preserving for after ages the treasures of antiquity.

But alas! in these institutions the fine gold so soon became dim. Of all the religious orders it may be said that, aiming in the beginning at the highest, they sank ultimately to the lowest. Seeking perfection in a segregation from the common humanity, they ended in losing their manhood. What a picture is that which Walter de Map offers of the clergy and the monks in the twelfth century, abbots purple as their wines, monks feeding and chattering like parrots in the refectory, and his Bishop Goliath, who sums up the enormities of all, void of conscience, drunken, unchaste, lost in sensuality! The later pictures tally with this early one. Boccaccio, Chaucer, Ulrich von Hütten, and a score of other satirists, have let in the daylight on these nests of uncleanness. And that Black Book of the monasteries, which in Henry VIII.'s time was compiled by Thomas Cromwell, revealed two-thirds of the monks in England as living in habits which may not be described.

During these times and amongst these people a fatal thing had happened to religion. Amidst this vice and sloth and ignorance there was going on day by day in the churches and monasteries the drone of litanies, the

offering of masses, the endless repetitions of psalms and Scriptures. It was imagined that the Almighty was so absurd a being as to be placated by these procedures; was so occupied by the sniffing of incense as to have no thought for questions of character! The mischief is that so much of this idea still clings to us. God is imagined as an ecclesiastical person chiefly interested in priestly ceremonies. As Sir Walter Besant once put it with exceeding plainness, there are persons among us "who imagine they can please the Lord by making a stink in a church."

A great awakening is preparing against this whole view of things. And it is one that will shake Protestantism as well as the priest-religions. It is coming inevitably upon the heels of a new and higher conception of the Divine Nature. We think too well of God to conceive of Him as occupied, like some fussy Court Chamberlain, with the exact rendering of Church ceremonial. Surely the Psalm singing and creed reciting might, much of it, in heaven's view, as well as earth's—like the secretary's report at a meeting—be "taken as read"! There is other work to be done in His world that seems more worth while! The Catholic ceremonial has often its match in futility in the Protestant emotionalism. We are in an age of Conventions, in which the higher life is sought

in a round of high excitements, as though spiritual power and the inner victory are won by an incessant play upon the feelings. Are we so sure that these are the right methods? Or may it not be that in surfeiting the feelings we are emasculating the will! Would it not be true to say that a quiet resolve on our own separate part, to amend a certain habit, to start a new line of work, to get up, maybe, an hour earlier in the morning, would be more efficacious upon our life and service than attendance at fifty religious conventions? Spiritual power comes not by external excitements, but by the inward discipline of the soul. It is by obedience to the laws of the spiritual life, to the laws written in letters of fire upon the Cross of Christ, that a man rises to the highest levels.

A deeper study at once of the nature of God, of the laws of the soul, and of the needs of the modern world, are, we say, bringing a vast modification of our ideas upon the whole subject of the pious life. Under the influence of it our truest worship will become more and more a work. We are realising how much of our best self, of our belief, our affection, our sacrifice, can be put into the deed we do, and how our truest inwardness is obtained in doing that deed. Our service of God will express itself in a service of man. Our prayer will be more and more a quiet, yet

hard, leaning upon God, as we haste in His name to help our brother.

The best thought of our time is moving in these directions. The Church is becoming tired of idle piety. Its leaders are eager with their programme of social reform. In Germany Pastor von Bodelschwingh has covered the land with his labour colonies. In America the Churches are becoming centres of institutions which reach the whole life of man. Here in England the mind of Christ is being reincarnated as the spirit of social reform. Man, it is seen, is to be dealt with not simply as a soul, not even as a soul and a body, but as part of a social organism, that is itself to be cleansed and saved.

When this evolution has been completed, when we have carried our creed into our work, and our work into our creed, our worship will regain that accent of reality which it has lost. Men turn from the Church ceremonial of to-day as a cult of strange gods. It is so much of it an idlesse, beneath the level of the strenuous man. What wonder that, with Horace, he is "*parcus deorum cultor et infrequens?*" But that is a phase which will not continue. Christianity, which has been the soul of other ages, will again be the soul of this. At present soul and body are seeking each other. In the end they will find their point of contact, and Christ will again come to His own.

XXIX.

The Central Mystery.

That cosmic picture with which Genesis opens, of a formless void with a Spirit moving on the face of the waters, is, when we think of it, a marvellous portrait of ourselves. We look into this abyss, boundless, chaotic, yet with a light as from heaven upon its heaving surface, and discover that this is the thing we are. "Know thyself," says the ancient oracle, and we strive diligently to obey the mandate, but we come from the quest realising that the knowledge is, and for ever will be, beyond us. It may be true, as Epicharmus averred, that "we live by logic and arithmetic," but the logic and arithmetic are of another mind than ours. It were better to say that, from our standpoint, life is an equation in which we never find the value of "x." An enigma to our neighbour, we are a far greater to ourselves. We go through the world and have never seen our own face. We have had reflections of it, more or less accurate—a moment's glimpse in a glass. That also is the

view we have had of our soul. Some surface impressions, a foam tossed up from beneath that catches the light, but not soundings even of the deeps behind.

That this is not mere rhetoric but sober fact will appear when we proceed to specify some of our unknowns. The first thing we discover is that our greatest part is non-existent. Our career is a perpetual becoming. The acorn is the oak, and yet bears no resemblance to it; its existence is a continuous gathering of itself from what is not itself. The human nucleus that at any given moment is known as "I" has an even wider and more complicated partnership. How shall we ever begin to know ourselves when the chief factor in our personality is its relation to a boundless universe that is perpetually invading us with the unforeseen and the unimagined? The event that shapes us gives, as often as not, no intimation either of its approach or of its character. We accumulate endless knowledge from our books and our instructors, yet of the Something that is at this moment travelling to meet us, and which, when it finally crosses our path, will change everything, we are as ignorant as a babe. We seem ever in the hands of the unlooked for. A chance makes or mars us. In the *coup d'état* of Brumaire, 1799, when Napoleon overthrew the Legislature, there

was only the turning of a hair between success and a fiasco. And at Marengo it was the unexpected arrival of Kellermann that turned a certain defeat for Bonaparte into a victory and the beginning of his greater fortunes. It is curious to note how the ancients regarded this unknown quantity of the external event. It bore to them a sinister aspect. There seemed ever, to their minds, a spice of malice in it. In Æschylus this note continually recurs. The prosperous man must be always on his guard. He is an overladen ship. Let him throw some of his cargo overboard or an envious fate will surely engulph him.

Over against this unknown of our outward relations stands the equally unexplored of our "ego" proper. The later researches both in philosophy and biology have made it more than ever difficult to say what our central "I" really is. The play of the forces round it is so bewilderingly puzzling. We are beginning to realise that a great part of our thinking and feeling is done for us rather than by us. A large part of us is automaton. What emerges on the surface of consciousness from moment to moment is sent up there by the mysterious toilers in the dim under-world of our sub-conscious self. How exactly you will feel in a given situation, you cannot guess. But that inner thought-

organism of which you are a kind of tenant or hanger-on, knows all about it. Were it announced to you to-morrow that you were heir to a fortune or about to be hanged, the machinery underneath would, without a moment's hesitation, provide the exactly fitting sensation.

We have an elaborated science of the laws of thought, yet no one knows how his thought comes, or why it takes this shape rather than that. We are the subjects of all manner of "possessions." We are the passage ways of mysterious forces that sweep through us, leaving us wondering. A Mozart, a Beethoven, as he writes his symphony knows that he is only an instrument. The eternal music that was before the worlds is vibrating on the chords. The poem, the drama, grows, we see not how. Some men dream their creations when asleep, others dream them awake. That story, which Bede tells of Caedmon, of how, when a herdman in the service of Whitby monastery, he heard in his sleep a voice commanding him to sing, and how, in response, he sang in his dream the great hymn of praise with which English literature begins, is no solitary instance in this field. What precisely is it that is at work here? What is the mover in such experiences as Goethe, in his "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*," recounts of his grandfather, who

had revealed to him in dreams beforehand some of the principal events of his life!

Glancing along another side of this topic we discover we are, and must remain, unknown to ourselves as long as we are unacquainted with our possibilities of combination. To say we know carbon from an examination of its properties as a simple element would be very absurd. The chemist has to make acquaintance besides with its behaviour in conjunction with this or that proportion of oxygen, of hydrogen, of the whole series, in fact, with which it combines. Our harmless glycerine may, by a simple partnership of quality, become the most terrific of explosives. But nothing we meet with in these spheres has a range of combination, or a variety of result, comparable with the human soul. Till we have met those other souls that are to encounter us on our way; till we have touched the mysteries of affinity and relationship; known what it is to be absorbed, may be, by a stronger spirit, or to have experienced the immeasurable give and take of some perfectly answering nature, we have not made a start to the knowing of ourselves. It is along this line that life becomes so breathlessly fascinating; its risks and its chances alike so immense. That story which Augustine tells of his friend Alypius, how being dragged by companions in Rome to a gladiatorial

show, he kept his eyes shut, until at a sudden cry opening them, he was seized with a passion for blood, is eloquent of the risks. It was thinking of this, perhaps, that led the African bishop elsewhere to exclaim : " O friendship, worse than the deepest enmity, unfathomable betrayer of the soul ! Merely because some one says, ' Come, let us do this or that,' and we are ashamed not to be shameless ! "

Yet is it along the line of combination that humanity's greatest hope rests. That the soul of every man, however savage or degraded, can attach itself to a higher, and partake of its purifying influence, is that biological fact of the spiritual world which spells redemption. The story, to take one out of a hundred such, of Wesley's apostolic work amongst the mobs of the eighteenth century—amongst the weavers of Yorkshire, the colliers at Kingswood, the miners and fishers of Cornwall—reaching in these half-savage men that hidden chord in the human heart which vibrates to the Divine, and thereby effecting wholly marvellous transformations, offers an aspect of our central mystery which should for ever abolish pessimism. It is enough in itself, surely, to dispose of the argument of Bichat and Schopenhauer who, the one from the standpoint of biology and the other from that of philosophy, aver that the moral character

in man is fixed and unchangeable, depending as they say it does, on the organic structure and functions. Their purview is too limited. They have forgotten the fact of spiritual transfusion.

But the points we have been noting, both hopeful and otherwise, seem, so far, to lead one way. They suggest life as in the grip of necessity. Man appears as the helpless subject of the mysterious powers that work upon him. One could bring in masses of evidence that apparently tell the same story. There is, for instance, the unknown factor that is perpetually remaking us through the mere lapse of time. Ten does not know itself at twenty, nor twenty at forty. The emergence, as the years circle, of new powers, affections and interests, is as impossible of retardation as the progress of the seasons. The physiological theory of morals has made much of this. It fixes a man's character by the number of his birthdays. Huxley, in one of his letters, touches with his own sardonic gaiety the bearing of this theory on old age: "As you get older and lose volition, primitive evil tendencies, heretofore mastered, come out and show themselves. A nice prospect for venerable old gentlemen!"

Altogether the meshes seem, on every side, drawn tightly around us. Hemmed in are we, caught up, whirled hither and thither

on the mighty loom of circumstance, a single thread in Time's endlessly woven fabric. And yet, miracle that we are, a single glance within, and the web has disappeared and we stand free, in a universe of freedom! We may never explain the mystery of this, but we cannot doubt the fact. Like a lighthouse rising out of a stormy sea stands the fortress of our own thought and our own will. The waves of the devouring ocean outside may wash its walls, but they will not enter. In a thousand hidden ways, as we have said, the material plays under and round our thought, but it is not our thought. Consciousness, which is, let us remember, our only guarantee of an outer world at all, is still surer of its own spiritual realm. We only know of causes outside us by first knowing that we ourselves are a cause. Impinged on by a myriad energies, we also are centres of energy, ultimate moral beginners. The laborious analysis of these later years, from Kant downwards, has at least demonstrated that.

And this gives us, at a stroke, a new universe of our own. That welter of forces which confronts us in the outside world becomes suddenly less formidable. The event, so strange and uncouth as it sweeps on us from its far-off origin, assumes, as it nears, a new aspect. It takes on the image of our own

soul. We find it shaping itself according to the mould which our faith, our love, our courage have been giving to the spirit within. It will strike us finally as some astronomers imagine that projectiles strike the sun—to feed its heat and light.

The spiritual man, while contemplating with awe and wonder the unknown within and without, by which his life is compassed, will, in this higher view, cease to fear it. He carries the certitude that the abyss into which he peers is carried within a greater abyss, that of the knowledge and the love of God. From the one he takes refuge in the other. He outruns and conquers the event by submission and self-offering. "God gives us the cross," as a great mystic says, "and the cross gives us to God." It is a profitable exchange.

Entered upon such a discipline we shall take the measure of the external. We shall place no high value of what it can or cannot do. Our main interests will be inward ones. The real fascination of life for us will be in such a cultivation of the inner kingdom as shall make it possible for something greater, sublimer than we have yet known to flash upon our spirit. The Christian's "central mystery" has indeed been put for us into a great apostolic word: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

XXX.

Physical Righteousness.

The coming Theology will bring important readjustments in more than one direction. Nowhere will the change be more apparent than in its concepts of sin and righteousness, and of human responsibility in general. The spiritual consciousness is for one thing developing a new department of activity, to which are being transferred its most sacred sanctions and appeals. We may call it the department of physical righteousness. It is singular, in looking back over the old Theology, to note how barren it has been in this region. Where it has pronounced at all it has been, as often as not, to utter the most flagrant cosmic heresies. In the supposed interests of sanctity it has again and again, in the coolest manner, invited rebellion against plain natural laws. It was utterly ignorant of the fact that the law of the universe is one and that to break it in the physical, as well as in the highest moral sphere, was to brand oneself a transgressor. And that condition

of thinking is still largely prevalent. One of the most needed steps towards the regeneration of modern society is the rise among us of a new conviction of sin; the turning upon our present bodily conditions of something of that sacred horror with which the earlier sainthood regarded its spiritual failures.

But let us, before entering on particulars here, be quite sure about our principle. In religion some of our oldest and most venerable words are so worn by usage that we are apt to miss their original and true significance. In this word "righteousness," for example, we need beware lest we take an emotional substitute for the actual meaning. For, in heaven and upon earth, it has only one meaning, rightness, which, again, means always a conformity to the law of things. In all her myriad departments, Nature has one rule of conduct towards us. She pays according to our conformity to her law. In music her saints are the Beethovens and Mozarts, who study here most carefully her eternal patterns and copy them most closely. In the sphere of the highest spiritual, and just the same in athletics, or in mechanics, the one rule holds. In each those will win results who are obedient to the laws they see. Their observance will be counted to them for righteousness. The man who, in any corner of her realm, opens an account with Nature

on these terms is a creditor whom she will never fail to pay.

Life being, as we have said, a unity, the term "righteousness" may, then, properly be employed for all its ranges. Its appropriateness for physical conditions will be more clearly seen when we take into account that close alliance which modern research has revealed between the bodily and spiritual states. While repudiating, on good philosophical grounds, the medical materialism of a Bichat and others, who make the moral dispositions, good or bad, an affair purely of our organic structure and functions, we nevertheless recognise, with a new clearness, the marvellous interplay between the two. What, indeed, has come about in modern thought has been, not so much the materialisation of spirit as the spiritualisation of matter. There is no mental change without a physical concomitant. And we never alter the conditions of our bodily life without setting in motion forces which, in a hundred subtle ways, affect for good or ill our inmost character.

With all this in mind let us examine a little how things stand in the matter of our physical righteousness. A glance only is needed to reveal an extraordinary condition of things. On all sides we find people, of acutely sensitive consciences in what are called moral questions,

in this other direction living in flattest rebellion. Let us take as a single example the matter of the air we breathe. The mass of us here are flouting Nature every day, and reaping the consequences. We are hearing just now of wonders being wrought by what is called the open-air cure. The consumptive, instead of being dosed with medicines, is dosed with pure air, and gets well under the treatment. What a hint for the rest of us! There are more than consumptives who need this *régime*. The truth is, under the modern conditions of industrialism and great cities, we are all of us semi-invalids, and there is only one way of curing us. The English people are suffering a famine of fresh air. The population is dwindling visibly before our eyes. Over 70 per cent. of us are shut up in towns, and if any one would know what that means, let him make a simple calculation. The most constant and important of our physical operations is breathing. Moment by moment, by day and by night, sleeping and waking, it perpetually goes on. And every one of the innumerable breaths we draw in the course of a day, according to its quality, whether pure or impure, whether full of ozone or laden with poisonous elements, is telling on our whole nature, making its influence felt on our every organ, our every thought, and the whole quality of our feeling. What will be the sum total

of effect here in the course of a year; what upon the length and effectiveness of our life? And what will be the sum of effect of these conditions upon a generation, and upon the progress from century to century of an entire people?

And yet we are most of us regulating our life, or having it regulated for us, as though such a consideration were of no importance at all. We cannot grow decent flowers in the heart of a city, but we think we can grow men. The modern world will have to find speedily some substitute for, or at least some amelioration of, its town and factory system or it will perish of inanition. Plato, in his ideal Republic, kept his settlements down to 4,000 families. Sir Thomas More's Utopians changed from town to country, and *vice versa*, at intervals of years, that the whole people might enjoy in turn the advantages of both. However we may settle the problem, whether by "garden cities," or by the readjustment in manufacturing which the distribution of electric power may accomplish, it is plain that the present conditions will have to go. Nature's demands here are too imperative; her penalties for neglect are too appalling. The business of a State, as Thucydides said long ago, is not so much to produce this or that product as to grow men And you can only grow them in the open air.

In the meantime, and before these wholesale remodellings, why is it that such multitudes of us, who are under no economic compulsions, are yet, from sheer indifference, breaking every day this law of physical righteousness? The strange thing is that those we should naturally regard as guides should be so often among the worst offenders. Look at our clerical, our journalist, our literary classes! They are a legion of pale faces. Their records are full of breakdowns. They give us a dyspeptic theology and a pessimistic literature. And the reason is that so many of them are living just below the level of a healthy view and output. And yet so small a change would often turn the scale. Has not an eminent authority assured us that the difference between happiness and misery is the difference between the spending habitually of one farthing less rather than one farthing more of our weekly income? That is true of our nerve income as well as of that in pounds and pence. And yet, we repeat, so small a change of habit would rehabilitate our nerve bankrupts. Why cannot preachers and writers do their work out of doors? When a caller at Wordsworth's house asked to see his study, the servant pointed him to the woods and hills outside. They formed the best possible study, and Wordsworth's use of it accounted largely, we do not doubt, both

for the quality of his work and the length of his life. It is an example for every brain-worker to follow. A trained mind can concentrate just as easily outside as within walls, and its thought will be fresher, because fed every moment with better air. It is a *régime* for almost all weathers. In the winter a man may read or write as he walks, if need be. At all hazards let him be, through the seasons, a Nature's man, taking alike her buffets and her smiles. She will reward him a hundredfold.

We have touched only one department of physical righteousness, but there are so many others. There is the question of our food and drink. The new conviction of sin of which we have spoken will work here in many directions. It will smite the ascetic not less than the man of excess. For its standard is the highest physical efficiency, and it will reject as a delusion and a snare the notion that any spiritual excellence can be secured by starving and neglecting the body. On the other hand, the new consciousness will war decisively against the present cult of the stomach. Whatever answer we give to Maeterlinck's question as to flesh-eating it is certain that multitudes of our "well-to-do" are physically most ill-to-do from their eating habits. Their high living is really a very low living. They will never get to the heights with the loads they carry.

And if that is true of eating, still more is it of drinking. Some day, surely, we shall invent a better drink than alcohol. It is good neither for work nor play. As to the former, we may take Huxley's dictum. Asked about its use as a stimulant for mental work, his reply was: "I would just as soon take a dose of arsenic as I would of alcohol under such circumstances." And for play, his own experience may be also cited: "I am as jolly as a sandboy so long as I live on a minimum and drink no alcohol."

Plainly, for its way upward society wants a new doctrine and a new conscience of the body. It will have to recognise what we may call the spirituality of the body; recognise what

> Truths in manhood darkly join,
> Deep seated in our mystic frame.

Its doctrine of spirit must include the body, while its doctrine of body must include the spirit. When we understand better how one lives in the other many mysteries will open to us. We shall learn how the soul at times of its own energy heals the body. We shall aspire after that dynamic of faith of the early Church which permits a Tertullian to speak thus, as of a familiar experience: "Finally we often aid in this way even the heathen, seeing we have been endowed by God with

that power which the apostle first used when he despised the viper's bite." In a word, physical righteousness, wrought out in the Church and in the State, will be the foundation of that vaster, nobler human life which, in its powers of thought, its capacity of enjoyment, its range of performance, and its depth and sweetness of emotion shall be the spirit's glorious fruition in our present sphere, and the harbinger of its greater heritage of the world to come.

XXXI.

Public Religion.

The nation during these last years has been making repeated investigations into its religious condition. It has suspected itself of invalidism. It has called in the specialists. Its pulse has been examined, its temperature taken and its chest sounded. Numerous bulletins have been issued—censuses of church attendance, reports of religious societies, voluminous newspaper correspondences. It is noteworthy that these inquiries, one and all, have gone on the supposition that religion is a public matter, and that its condition is registered by its public manifestations. So many services, so many people inside the church door—so much religion. But before we count heads in this matter it is desirable to settle, if we can, a preliminary question. *Is* religion, after all, a public matter? Are our ceremonials the proper gauge of its health and activity? It is entirely necessary for any proper estimate of the national condition, and well, perhaps,

for our own private conduct, that upon this point we first of all come to some conclusion.

That the public and spectacular side of religion is an important one goes without saying. For long ages it was practically all there was. In so advanced a period of world history as the Greek and Roman civilisations, we have, among the masses at least, this public side as the one and only conception. There was no idea of connecting religion with morals, with a state of mind and character. Its relation to morals, indeed, was mainly in being immoral. Imagine a worship such as that of the Temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinthus at Corinth, where, as part of the religious rites, a thousand female slaves were kept for the use of strangers! Religion was a ceremony, a holiday, very often an orgie. Both in Greece and Rome it was not the priest, it was the philosopher who taught morality. It was from an Aristotle and a Socrates, from an Epictetus and a Seneca, not from augur or sacrificer that generous souls caught their inspiration. How strikingly does Aristotle set forth at once the power and the limitation of this philosophic cult in that passage of the Nicomachean ethics where, speaking of moral treatises, he says: "The truth is they seem to have power to urge on and excite young men of liberal minds, and to make a character that is generous and truly honourable, easily

influenced by virtue ; but that they have no power to persuade the multitude to what is virtuous and honourable."

When the Greek and Roman world came under the sway of Catholic Christianity the popular conception of religion as public still largely prevailed. That compromise between paganism and the Gospel which made up Catholicism, was extended to the conception of Church worship and festival. The Catholic festivals, were largely baptized heathen feasts. Harnack, speaking of the fourth-century Church says : " The saints took the place of the local pagan deities ; their festivals of the old provincial services of the gods. The cultus of the Emperor tended to intrude itself into the Church. . . . The Christian religion threatened to become a new paganism." And this tradition, this hereditary pre-possession, of religion as a ceremony, a spectacle beginning and ending there, has, despite all the knowledge that has come into the world, showed ever since an astonishing strength of life. Was there, after all, any great difference between the ancient Greek, whose delight it was *adire Corinthum*, there to indulge at one and the same time his passions and his religious sentiment, and the people of the Versailles Court circle in the eighteenth century, whom Horace Walpole describes ? " At Versailles Royal Chapel there was Madame

du Barry, the King's reigning mistress, close to the altar; her husband's sister was with her. In the tribune above, surrounded by prelates, was the amorous and still handsome King. One could not help smiling at the mixture of piety, pomp and carnality." It is, indeed, to us almost incredible, yet perfectly true, that with the New Testament before them, ecclesiastical authorities should have taught and lived as though Christianity was merely a public religion. But the mediæval and Renaissance literature is full of the proofs. Witness, amongst a thousand other evidences, the letters of Piccolomini, afterwards Pope Pius II., in which he speaks without reserve of his gross debaucheries, and the correspondence, in a later day, of the Abbé de Chaulieu, at the same time an ecclesiastic and the recognised pander to the Vendome princes!

When we turn from these ideas and habits to religion as it is exhibited in the teaching and example of Jesus the contrast is startling. Here public religion is almost nothing, private religion is almost everything. Throughout the Gospels no emphasis whatever is laid on public services or ceremonies. In that summary of our relations with God and man contained in the Sermon on the Mount, there is no mention of churches or congregations. It speaks of prayers to be offered in secret, of alms about which there is to be no

advertisement. We hear nothing of processions or of vestments, of organings and *Te Deums*, as means of pleasing Heaven. When we think of the world's ideas in those days it is an amazing omission. What is put in their place is no less marvellous. Here, spite of the habits of countless centuries, religion is presented as viewless, as a condition or state of each man's secret consciousness, a daily regulation of his inmost thought, feeling and volition. The whole standard is reversed. Instead of proposing a census of the annual pilgrimage to the Temple, Christ asks, as the test of religion, "Are you, men and women of the common life, lowly in spirit, meek, merciful, pure, peaceful, hungering for righteousness, ready to suffer for its sake; are you forgiving, truthful, temperate, happy in childlike trust, believing in the eternal life here and the eternal life hereafter?" To be this, says Jesus, is to be religious. From beginning to end it is an affair of invisibles. If you wanted to estimate the existing sum of religion in Israel it would have to be done, according to Him, not by counting heads in the synagogues, but by weighing the amount of righteousness, purity, love, faith and humility there and then existent in human souls. And His action, so far as we read of it, was in accord with His words. We hear nothing of His reputation

as a churchgoer. He entered a synagogue once on the Sabbath day, but the result of His visit was to scandalise grievously the ecclesiastical authorities. Nothing, indeed, is more certain than that, in both the teachings and the habits of Jesus, public or ceremonial religion was far back in the second rank.

With these facts before us, how, we now ask, do matters stand in relation to our own conceptions of religion? We in the twentieth century have our church habitude and tradition; we also have Christ. In these later times we have indeed rediscovered Christ, have in some degree rescued His personality from the ecclesiasticism which for centuries had obscured His true significance. And the discovery has reacted profoundly, and will do so yet more, on our view of public as related to private religion. Protestantism started the movement by offering to men's gaze the Christianity of the Bible side by side with the Christianity of the Church. In the Reformed communities the new knowledge produced immediately a radical change in the conception of public worship. It was everywhere seen, though more or less clearly, that public religion existed for, and had its whole *raison d'être* in, the promotion of private religion. The Church, with its ceremonies, its prayers and public exhortations, was not an end in itself; it was only justified as the

means to an end, the production, namely, in men's minds and hearts of that series of invisible but glorious realities pictured in the Sermon on the Mount.

This end has in many churches, and for long periods, been obscured by doctrinal and ecclesiastical considerations, but in our day it is at last emerging into sunbright clearness. The best men everywhere recognise that if Christ's Christianity means anything, it means that the Church exists for the reformation and development of inner character. Dogmatic eagerness, emotional excitement, æsthetic religious delights are nothing except in so far as they can be translated into permanent states of the mind. The highest Churchman would concede as much, and would say with Hooker of his Church festivals that they are not only "the splendour and outward dignity of our religion," but "the forcible witnesses of ancient truth, provocations to the exercise of all piety, shadows of our endless felicity in heaven, on earth everlasting records and memorials."

To have come so far is indeed to have made an enormous advance on those earlier conceptions with which we have dealt. But we shall go farther yet. For we are still in the toils of ecclesiasticism, and have not yet found the courage to follow Christ. But the day draws nearer when religion will be put

entirely on His basis. His kingdom will be known as always within. This is not to say that public religion will decline, far less die out. That would be to contradict human nature, which demands the outward expression of its inner feeling. There are heights and depths of human emotion which can only be reached in company. A French writer has a deeply interesting book on the phenomena of crowds. Man in the mass is other and, in some respects, greater than man by himself. And that feature of his life has vitally important aspects in the matter of religion.

The common worship has indeed an immense future. Men will bring new elements into it and will make it express the vaster aspiration, the wider view, the heightened joy of living, the fuller realisation of the soul's utmost powers which to-day are opening to the human gaze. The message proclaimed there,—saturated with that New Testament ethic which an Edmond Scherer, sceptic as he was, declared to be "for ever linked with the destinies of holiness on earth," and charged with those mysterious spiritual forces which spring from the Gospel's heart—will continue as of old to search men's lives, to heal wounded spirits, to arrest the young at the parting of the roads and set their feet on the way everlasting.

But when all this is said the point of our theme remains. Henceforth, we shall make no mistakes as to where the emphasis of Christ's religion lies. It is not in congregations, nor in the figures of a church census. You have not fixed your man, in any Christian sense, by calling him Anglican or Presbyterian, orthodox or otherdox. If I see my neighbour this Sunday morning in the next pew, well. If instead he is worshipping God on the hill side I have no word from Christ to throw at him. You and I are Christians not by these tests, but according to the precise height in us of love and faith, of purity, generosity, and helpfulness. Indeed, when the best of human living has been reached it will be in a city without a church. The Bible depicts that condition in one of its sublimest and final words: "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.'

XXXII.

Religion and Amusement.

An indispensable feature of the final religion will be the fixing of its attitude to life's lighter side. The question here is a difficult one, and that chiefly, perhaps, from the fact that the great religious founders are themselves, by temperament more even than by conviction, somewhat remote from this side. The *élite* here are away from the masses.

"Life," said Sir George Cornewall Lewis, "would be very tolerable were it not for its amusements." He was apparently of Bagehot's opinion that "business is so much more amusing than pleasure." It is the cry of all the finer spirits. What the multitude goes after is to them an incomprehensibly childish affair. Westcott could not fit the clown into his scheme of the universe. And, indeed, is there anything more ghastly, more fitted to throw one into the abysses of pessimism, than the painted face of the comedian? Pascal took pleasure as one of the grounds of his indictment of life; men pursued it, he said,

in order to forget their miserable selves. It has to be said, however, that the pursuit, whatever underlies it, is in fullest vogue to-day. Preachers complain, as did Chrysostom, a millennium and a half ago, at Constantinople, that people are leaving the church to flock to the spectacle. There are twenty thousand at the football match on a Saturday, and not one in a hundred of them in the meeting-house next day. The crowd is not serious. What it reads is mainly trash. The thing that holds it is not philosophy or theology, but a music-hall catch, or the tug of war between a Hackenschmidt and a Madrali.

To begin with, must we suppose that our generation is more frivolous than another? The idea hardly accords with our reading of history. Follow the story of any given century, its literature, the record of its *vie intime*, and compare it with to-day. What are our wrestlings and prize fights compared with the sights of the Roman Coliseum, where men and women looked from the crowded benches with rapture on the slaughter of hundreds of hapless victims! Take the common life where we will, what is its quality? Here, for instance, is Alexandria in Clement's time, after Christianity had been long at work and powerful there. Let anyone read that curious chapter of his in the "Pædagogus" on the occupations and diversions of the

women; how "at the dawn of the day mangling, racking and plastering themselves over with certain compositions, they chill the skin, furrow the flesh with poisons, and with curiously prepared washes, thus blighting their own beauty." It is, in fact, Juvenal's story over again. We leap across a thousand years, to the Renaissance time, and find Aretino excusing himself thus for one of his infamous productions: "I have to consider the tastes of my contemporaries. Amusement and scandal are the only things that pay. Why write serious books? I sent one to Francis I. five years ago, and am still waiting acknowledgment. I have just addressed my 'Courtesan' to the King, and by return of post received a gold chain." Examine, in fact, any period of the past, looking specially into its private records, and you find, with one or two brief exceptions, a condition of things as to frivolity and licence that makes our time seem a sobersides indeed.

Yet these centuries, as they have rolled on, with their inconsequence, their thoughtlessness, their madcap revelries, have had always their earnest remonstrants. The Christian Church, with its message to men of life's immense invisible issues, has continually used this as an argument for the restraint of its mirth. The Fathers were dead against the spectacles and theatrical

exhibitions of the Roman world. In that work of uncertain date the "Apostolic Constitutions" we read, "If anyone follows the sports of the theatre, their huntings, or horse races, or combats, either let him leave them off, or let him be rejected." The same note is everywhere in that early literature. And it has been constantly repeated both in Catholicism and Protestantism. In 1694 the theologians of the Sorbonne decided that "comedians by their profession, as they exercise it, are in a state of mortal sin." And we remember the terrible words which Bossuet in the same age, used of the dead Molière. The Protestant Churches have borne similar testimony: witness our Puritans, Prynne with his Histriomastix, and Jeremy Collier with his "Serious View."

Thus of the past. But what now of the present, and of ourselves? Are we bound by those earlier judgments? Were they universal judgments, good for all time because founded in the eternal law? Is the theatre taboo to the Christian of the twentieth as it was to the Christian of the third century? These are questions which are put to every religious teacher by anxious souls. On our way to an answer let us remember two or three things. First, that the judgment of the early Church, or of the Church in any later period, does not, of itself, constitute

any binding obligation for us. The categorical imperative for our conscience must be something more than an echo from the past. It must contain its own reasons. That the early Church believed the world was made in six days, that the sun went round the earth, that the end of things was immediately at hand, constitutes to me absolutely no reason why I should believe these things, as against contrary evidence that seems stronger. In like manner in matters of conduct, what the Fathers say, whether singly or in Council, is to be taken by us precisely for what it is worth, regard being had to the circumstances of their time, to their education as compared with our own, and to the relation of their action and utterance to ultimate principles.

When we take things along these lines we find, to begin with, that the problem the early Fathers confronted, as to the theatre and spectacles generally, was a very different one from that before us to-day. Christianity was then a missionary encampment in the midst of a hostile country. It was engaged in the immense task of the elaboration of a new social order. It was creating a fresh world, which should have work and play, duties and diversions of its own. The amusements outside had become really too bad to be admitted or copied. The student of classic literature knows what we speak of. The

English reader will get some information from his Gibbon or his Lecky.

The problem we have to face belongs, on the contrary, to the amusements that have arisen within Christendom. The modern theatre is actually an offspring of the Church. Its origin is in the mystery plays of the Middle Ages, where sacred scenes were exhibited by the clergy assisted by the laity; at first with a purely religious intention, and then, as the thing developed, with an intermixture of the broadest and coarsest farce. And let us here remember that the drama, in some form or other, is bound to emerge and to assert itself, and that because its substance lies in the very fibre of human nature. Life itself is drama. It was inevitable with this raw material at hand, these tragedies and comedies of daily affairs, this play of the passions, this exuberance in the soul of humour and fancy, of wrath and pity, that it should all be dramatised. The rough facts of things were bound to be lifted, in this way, to the plane of the ideal, that men might find here a refuge from what Pater calls "a certain vulgarity in the actual."

But that, we are told by modern remonstrants, is not the point. We may admit, they say, the drama in the abstract; may hold with George Macdonald to the thought of an ideal Christian theatre. What we have

to deal with is the theatre as it is, and the patronage which professed Christians are extending to it. In this connection Clement Scott, the well-known critic, is quoted with his really appalling word: "It is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession." Can any man with a conscience, it is asked, support an institution which has this as its outcome? Ought he not, rather, with all his might to labour to suppress it? The statement was, we believe, modified by its author, but as it stands, the argument seems irresistibly strong. It is singular, however, that people who so keenly realise what seems the logic of the situation should so utterly fail to see its application elsewhere. The argument would, for instance, rob us of our breakfast table. Almost everything there—our tea, coffee, sugar, bread and a dozen other things, come from oversea. They are carried in ocean tramps, the existing conditions of which almost exclude any religious or high moral life amongst the seamen. Are we, then, by our use of tea and coffee and these other things, to support a system which so demoralises vast numbers of our fellow-men? One scarcely knows, indeed, where this argument would stop, or what it would leave us, if once we set it going.

The truth is that, in this bewildering complex of a world, we cannot at present attain any-

where to the strict, high logic of things. We are mixed up in a scheme where much needs mending. Well, let us mend it! We shall not give up our imports because our sailors are not within reach of church on Sunday morning, nor need we suggest the abolition of the drama because of the present conditions in the green-room. These things, the ship and the play, are part, as it seems, of the business of living, and the question for conscientious men is, not of their suppression, which is impossible, but of their being made, by effort and teaching and the presentation of ideals, a part of the business, not only of living, but of the higher living.

The point we chiefly insist upon here is that the more instructed spirits, who have found the deeper joys of life, should not be too eager in their judgment of those less enlightened who are on the plane of the inferior things. Let us catch something of the large patience of God. We cannot coerce our masses into the Kingdom. They must find their own way upward. A policy of coercion and of condemnation is no true religious method. It savours of the French revolutionary's cry, "Be my brother, or I will kill you."

To some of us, occupied with life's deeper business, in contact with its highest things, to whom the world visible and invisible opens

daily with an ever more ravishing sense of its inner meaning, it may indeed seem strange and pitiful to see men rushing here and there, on such false scents, for what they call their pleasure. But that we are further up gives us no right to judge the man who is lower down. If we would help him it must be by something better than those "scruples" which, as Dr. Johnson said, "often make men miserable, but never make them good." Yet, how one pities these "pleasure" seekers! If only they knew that to be blessed, as possession of the inner treasure makes men blessed, contains all they find and a thousand things more!

XXXIII.

Religious Epicures.

The word "epicure," as we now use it, has a too restricted application. We apply it usually to the gourmet, to the club exquisite whose palate is the most educated part of him. But there are other epicures, who are in no special sense devotees of the stomach. In this connection it is curious to note that Epicurus himself, from whom the term is derived, is reported to have lived on brown bread and water, and to "have borrowed some cheese from a friend, when he would make a solemn feast!" Indeed, it must be said that Epicurus has been somewhat badly used in history and in the popular mind. His view of pleasure was very different from that of the mere sensualist. And when he declared pleasure to be the highest good he was only saying what Bentham, Paley and many another modern philosopher of repute has repeated after him. The Bentham and Paley definition of happiness is, we may remember, "the sum of pleasures," and these writers are not even

as particular as was the Greek philosopher in assigning a qualitative difference to pleasure.

The discussion here, indeed, is an old one, and promises to be interminable. When one controversialist says that enjoyment, and another that duty, and a third that inner development, the attainment of perfection, is the highest end of man, we find—so subtly is the spiritual organism interwoven, by such delicate and imperceptible degrees does one phase shade into another—that we are fairly at a loss for our own decision. Duty? Pleasure? Development? But is not duty a phase of pleasure? Who shall say that, with the higher minds, duty is not embraced instinctively as the noblest joy, and that these two, duty and the happiness of performing it, are not in their turn the essentials of development?

But amid the confusion one thing stands out with perfect clearness. While the pursuit of pleasure, or, if you will, of happiness, is common to the race, the whole difference of character lies in the kind of pleasures that most appeal to us. The saint and the sensualist may be described as seeking with an equal ardour for enjoyment. But what an immeasurable difference in quality, in the whole range and character of life, between the low delights of a Catherine Sforza, or of a Sardanapolus, with his terrible motto, "Eat

and drink and gratify your lust, for all else is little worth," and the pure, intellectual joy of a Spinoza, or the religious raptures of a Madame Guyon! That distinction, indeed, which David Hartley labours in his "Observations on Man," and with which the eighteenth century so much occupied itself, between pleasures, as those of "gross self-interest," "refined self-interest," and "rational self-interest," is still worthy of our best study.

It is significant to note, in the wide divergence of opinion, that on one point men of the most opposite schools seem agreed. They unite in regarding a self-culture which may yield them the highest type of pleasures as one at least of life's chief aims. Over two thousand years ago Plato, in the Phædrus, uttered a word which, in varied form, we have ever since been repeating: "Grant me to become fair within, and whatever external things I have, let them be agreeable to what is within." It is that same sentiment Taine expresses in his diary—and which a Catholic or a Methodist might adopt with equal ardour—"My only desire is to improve myself, in order to be worth a little more every day, and able to look within myself without displeasure. . . . Being a true Sybarite, I am going to sweep and garnish this inmost dwelling, and to set up in it some true ideas,

some good intentions and a few sincere affections." On the same line we find Maeterlinck, in his declaration that, for this higher enjoyment, "sterile pleasures of the body must be sacrificed; all that is not in absolute harmony with a larger, more durable energy of thought."

In the Christian scheme and experience we have this inner cultivation, the development of all the finer feeling, carried to its highest point. Whatever else may be said, it will ever remain true that in this school have been developed the noblest emotions that have throbbed in the human bosom. What banquets of the soul have been here enjoyed! What a height of inner consciousness is represented by that wonderful saying of Augustine, true nevertheless to a myriad humbler men: "And sometimes Thou admittest me to an affection, very unusual, in my inmost soul, rising to a strange sweetness, which, if it were perfected in me, I know not what in it would not belong to the life to come." And if this is the joy of the solitary soul, what of that exquisite community of feeling which the Christian fellowship has also produced! Take, for illustration, that lovely picture of the brotherhood of disciples who gathered round and lived with the saintly Origen. It is Gregory Thaumaturgus who gives us the scene; "This sacred fatherland,

where, both by day and by night, the holy laws are declared, and hymns and songs and spiritual words are heard; where also there is perpetual sunlight, and where by day in waking vision we have access to the mysteries of God, and by night in dreams we are still occupied with what the soul has seen and handled in the day, and where, in short, the inspiration of Divine things prevails over all continually."

Gracious pictures truly! And yet it is precisely here that one of the gravest moral questions emerges, and one of the subtlest of life's temptations. For the very luxury of higher emotion, to which Christianity so lends itself, may, if not watched, lead fatally astray. There opens a road here to a refined but not less deadly selfishness. When a man has made the one object of his life the feeding of his religious sensibilities, he is—startling though it may seem—off the track and in a bad way. To become an epicure of feeling, even though it be the higher feeling, is one of the things a wholesome nature will avoid, as a kind of internal disease. And yet so fascinating a road this, one which to sensitive natures appeals with so irresistible a charm! A man convinces himself that here is the true and blessed life. From the vulgar pursuit of sensual delights, from the sordid rush for gain, from the debauches that bring satiety,

and the actions that are followed by the disquiet of an evil conscience—from all this he will withdraw himself that, without let or hindrance, he may set his mind day by day upon "the contemplation and enjoyment of the highest good." And at the end he shall be the Sir Willoughby Patterne of his circle, and his true denomination, "the egotist"!

No. It will not do. Nobleness does not consist in the perpetual hunt for fine emotions. Nature herself reads us this lesson by refusing these sensations to the too eager searcher, and offering him instead an unhealthy morbidity. And she has written the same lesson broad and deep upon history. It is precisely the cult of emotion, the perpetual balancing of present or prospective sensations in relation to a given course of conduct, that has led to some of the gravest disorders and disasters of the Church's life. The tendency has, amongst other things, been one of the main feeders of ecclesiastical ignorance and obscurantism. There is a whole school of piety that turns away from honest inquiry because it fears to lose a given phase of feeling. It is well illustrated by the story of one of Wesley's preachers, to whom somebody, desirous of improving the exhorter's English, sent a grammar with the request that he would study it. The gift was soon after returned by

the Methodist, with the remark that "he could find nothing about Christ in it"! Better cultivated men than this worthy are to-day in a similar mental condition. Till a man has learned to value truth above the taste of any particular sensibility, he is an outsider to genuine manhood.

The test yields the same result when we come from mental life to that of action. The exquisites of feeling are not commonly the stuff of which heroes are made. The poor serving-maid who trudges along cheerfully day by day with her monotonous task; the rough collier, of sporting instinct and lurid vocabulary, who yet when his comrade is entombed risks his life without a moment's hesitation in the effort to save him, are, on the whole, better human types than the neurotic mental gourmand, who searches incessantly for this and that flavour of feeling, who examines his pulse at each moment to discover the precise condition of his inner health.

This question is of the first importance for the religious life. We are in an age of conventions, of retreats and other aids to devotion. Kept within their proper limits, and strictly to their true uses, gatherings of this kind are a noble stimulus to humble and earnest souls. But even here the danger lurks. The peril is that a man shall get the habit of staying on the transfigured

mount above, while the sick and needy await in vain his presence below. When we run from the drudgery of some uninspiring duty, leaving it, maybe, to others, or altogether undone, in order that we may taste the latest spiritual sensation, we are on a byway to the pit. Coleridge, who as Hazlitt said, "talked on for ever and you wished him to talk on for ever"; who dreamed through every phase of the religious consciousness, was content with dreaming, and talked, but did nothing. And meanwhile neither men nor nations are made by dreaming and talking.

Nature moreover gives her verdict on this question by the rewards she offers to those who, heroic of purpose, do their deed irrespective of what feeling may accompany or follow. It is precisely those who stand to their task, "in scorn of consequence," to whom she opens, at most unexpected moments, her rarest treasures of feeling. It was not a spiritual epicureanism, a mere desire for a refined pleasure, that sent plain John Nelson to a filthy dungeon for preaching the Gospel. But it was the gracious, wonderful spiritual law that rules the universe which, when he got there, made his soul as he tells us, "as a watered garden," and caused him "to sing praises to God all day long."

To-day we want the heroic temper. "A great time demands great hearts," wrote the

hero-poet, Körner, who gave his life for his German Fatherland. "Shall I write vaudevilles when my country calls me?" And if humanity, in the degenerate days that are now upon us, is to be saved anew to faith and freedom, the deed will be wrought by men and women of this mould. In this fight it will not be by people who count over their sensations, who think of life mainly as "a sum of pleasures," that the victory is won. Not by the "epicures of feeling," but by hero souls "who count not their lives dear unto themselves," shall an emasculated, pleasure-drunk generation be won back to strength and righteousness.

XXXIV

Last Things.

ANYONE desirous of exhibiting in unconventional fashion the religious significance of life, could hardly do better than investigate what is contained in its "never more." Nothing, probably, has done so much to educate the human spirit, to compel it to seriousness, as its experience of endings. One can imagine a world in which there were none, but that is not our world. The most insistent fact with which we have each one of us to deal is that nothing lasts. The system of things under which we live arranges for us, in all directions, a series of repetitions which continues just long enough to give us the idea of permanence, and then breaks down. We do a thing for ten thousand times and then do it no more. A preacher wears the steps of his pulpit with innumerable ascents. He goes down them one day, saying to himself, "It is over." With a careless "Good-night," we leave an acquaintance of forty years, expecting to see him on the morrow. It is

our final word. This is the inevitable that is written upon everything. As surely as we begin we end. Our every course of action, our every circle of friends, our every phase of thinking and of feeling exists, as it seems, for this one sure result, that it may pass and be no more.

It is here, we have just said, from the point of view of the transitory, that we most clearly discern life's religious significance. From the beginning men have recognised this. It is true that mocking spirits have from time to time sought to extract from it a contrary doctrine. The "Sceptics of the Old Testament," as a recent author has named the writers of Job and of Ecclesiastes, suggest at times a mood of despair, as though our existence, in view of its endings, were vain and worthless. And they have been followed by later and more frivolous minds who ask us, on the same grounds, to regard the world as a comedy, if not a farce. But that is not the deliberate finding of the human soul. It has everywhere felt that transitoriness, the universal flux and movement of things to an end, is, above all things, a spiritual appeal. That has been at the basis of every religion. It is one of the most prominent features of Christianity.

The way in which this idea has possessed men has been at times singular; one might almost say unwholesome. At the beginning

of the Gospel, and for a long time on in the history of the Church, we find a doctrine of endings, of last things, which filled the minds of believers to an extent which we can now hardly realise. Men looked, in their own generation, for a final consummation of things in which the world should be burned up and men's destiny sealed. The warning note of the Apocalypse, "Behold, I come quickly," was the Church's watchword. It is pathetic to see the insistence with which the ablest of her teachers discovered, in the circumstances of each succeeding century, the portents of the impending catastrophe. In the year 1000 A.D. the whole Catholic world was mad with excitement over warnings of the coming event; and our own day has not wanted for prophets who have flourished exceedingly on similar predictions. The methods, indeed, of some of these last suggest irresistibly the "slim" procedure of certain Moslem ulemas of the last century in Egypt who, when they had nearly frightened their followers to death with an announcement of the approaching end of the world, reaped a harvest of honours and rewards by announcing later, after the date had passed and nothing had happened, that the Almighty, having regard to their prayers, had changed His mind.

It is evident that a mistake lurked in the doctrine of last things as here conceived, a

mistake of large proportions, whose elements lay scattered over many different departments of thinking. There was error about the actual cosmical conditions, about the relations of time and eternity, about what really is meant by an "end." We may say, indeed, with the learned author of "Exploratio Evangelica," that, as to this portion at least of the early creed, "Undeveloped science, imperfect philosophy, perverted notions of history, all presided over its formation." It was a belief that, in its intenser forms, militated seriously against morality and human progress, inducing in some hysterical excitements, in others unmanly terrors, and calling men off from the calm pursuit of their daily duty.

But if this doctrine of last things was all a mistake, how can we speak of its religious value? To begin with, it was not all a mistake. What we now recognise in that early view is one of those Divine ideas which have been the great educators of the human race, but whose history, as Hegel somewhere says, is that of successive forms which are successively transcended. The belief in an approaching catastrophic end, as cherished by the first disciples, was, to use Joubert's daring phrase, one of those "illusions that are sent from heaven." The feeling of a great approaching finality which at that time bit so deeply into the human spirit was a necessary

factor in a certain stage of the world's inward development. It welded men into a religious cohesion strong enough to withstand the tremendous onset of persecution, and gave the Church a driving power adequate to the re-making of the world. It is ideas that govern men, but the ideas, in their turn, are governed by something stronger than themselves. They are, as to their form, subject to the law of change, and when they have done their work they pass away.

We see to-day the working of this law in the idea of "last things" as held by the first generations of believers, when compared with the later view. What has happened to belief on this subject is similar to the history of faith in the Messiah. The Messianic idea which dominated Israel for centuries was, in the popular mind, associated with sensational and materialistic elements at the uttermost remove from the realisation of it in the meek and lowly Jesus. To pass from that first form of the idea to this later was a trial of faith which has been too much for the Jewish nation even to this day. And, so far as appearances go, it will take some generations yet before the materialistic form of the doctrine of last things undergoes a similar transformation.

That earlier notion, as we have said, carried in it an illusion which we are now beginning

to grow out of. The people in whose minds it lived imagined they knew the meaning of the word "end." It is clear that they did not. They imagined a finality where none such existed. Ends, to whatever limits our thoughts pursue them, are, we discover, nothing more than reconstructions, new beginnings. People talk of a universal conflagration which is to finish everything. It would finish nothing. The materials for existence would be there as before, every jot and tittle, with the whole leisure of eternity before them in which to transact their business. The fever of the human imagination, especially of the theologic imagination, is indeed in ludicrous contrast with the majestic calm of the universe, with the steadfast infinity that is around us.

We come, then, to the view that our last things are, in another aspect, always first things, that our ends are ever beginnings. God has ordained for us a discipline of ends, a discipline that is severe and searching, at times awful in its seeming inexorableness. But that discipline, while it cuts so sharp and deep, is ever the sculptor of the sacred. It is because the world is full of endings, of partings, of seeming finalities, that human lives and human actions gain for themselves a mystic preciousness. They are taken from us that they may be understood and valued.

But the topic will not stop at this point. It insists on a further word. The whole trend of things which we have been here trying to indicate presses in one direction. The movement is big with an immense suggestion. It is that of the soul's greater future. Life, we have seen, is full of closings that turn out to be commencements. Nature loves to repeat herself. She stops that she may begin over again. But her repetition is never quite the same thing. She is a musician that, having played over a simple air, returns upon it with incessant new and lovely variations. And so it seems to be not merely a thought that haunts the mind, but a scientific idea grounded in the truth of things, that all we have yet known of life—its rapture of youth, its high endeavour, its delight of friendship, its tenderness of love, its aspiration toward the Highest and the Holiest, is but the first simple strain that in our experience is to be repeated and repeated, with an ever-growing complex of majestic harmonies, in that ampler existence to which the life we now lead, "on our dull side of death," is but the prelude.

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