PRIMARY FACTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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SEVEN ESSAYS DEALING IN A SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL MANNER WITH THE NATURE, EXPRESSIONS, AND RELATIONS OF RELIGION

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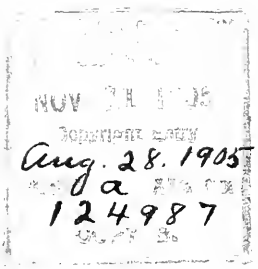

PREFACE

Religion is a theme of perennial interest. Everybody thinks and talks about it. The libraries are filled with books dealing with theological creeds and systems, ecclesiastical institutions, religious customs, forms of worship, and sacred books. The subject engaged human thought in the infancy of the race, and it still maintains its place as the greatest of all the problems that perplex the mind of man.

The aim of these short essays is to place within the reach of the people certain facts and principles which, it is believed, are absolutely essential to a proper understanding of the subject. The author's rather varied experience convinces him that, notwithstanding the multitude of sermons, periodicals, and books upon religion, many people, including the well-read, have very vague and unsatisfactory opinions respecting religion and its relations to theology, morals, the church, the Bible, and Christ. Much of the distress of mind caused by the changes in theological thought would be averted if certain fundamental facts were more

generally known and their significance understood.

Since the value of a book for general readers is increased by clear statement and candid treatment, the author has tried to present the message stripped of evasive terms and perplexing technicalities. What he thinks, he has endeavored to state with unmistakable clearness.

It is hoped that the book will clarify the views and strengthen the faith of those who are confused and troubled by modern theological thought and historical criticism.

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CHAPTER I

WHAT IS RELIGION?

There are unnumbered mysteries in this world, some of which exist in things themselves, others are of man's creation. Skilful philosophers can spin metaphysical cobwebs around any subject. They sometimes invent problems which they themselves cannot solve. Is there a world outside ourselves corresponding to our ideas? Few persons can furnish proof of such a world that will be satisfactory to certain philosophers. Yet we conduct ourselves as if the world were real, and our assumption does not fail us. We build houses of brick and mortar without knowing what matter is, or even if there is such a thing; and we live in them, rear our children, and find comfort and happiness. Are we free agents? That is a nice question in philosophy not yet satisfactorily solved, and it may never be. Still we act as if we were free. We appeal to others to do this, or not to do that, just as if they really could do one thing or the other as they please. When we do wrong, we blame our-

selves, assuming that we could have done right, if we had wished to do it.

Our senses are not infallible, but, in the main, we trust them. Our convictions may be all false, but we act upon them. We may be all soul or all body, yet we talk and plan as if we had a material body and something not body, which we call the soul.

Where these ideas, convictions, assumptions, whatever we choose to call them, came from is a much-disputed question, troublesome only to a very few. The mass of men simply accept the fact that we have them. The mysteries involved in every thought, emotion, or act of will do not stop the wheels of industry or throw the world of human life into confusion. For thousands of years mankind has assumed very many things to be real and true, and during these ages great progress has been made; yet the question, "What is reality?" is as hotly debated as it ever was. We are no nearer the final solution of many mysteries than were those who first faced them in awe and wonder.

Listen to John Fiske, one of the choice intellectual products of centuries of human development:

When from the dawn of life we see all things working together toward the evolution of the highest spiritual attributes of man, we know, however the words may stumble in which we try to say it, that God is in the deepest sense a moral Being. The everlasting source of phenomena is none other than the infinite Power that makes for righteousness. Thou canst not by searching find him out; yet put thy trust in him, and against thee the gates of hell shall not prevail; for there is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Eternal.

Mr. Fiske informs us that this conclusion is the fruit of a wide induction from the most vitally important facts which the doctrine of evolution has set forth. But was his faith in God, so derived, any stronger than that of Jesus Christ, who never heard of evolution? What is still more important, are scientific arguments for the existence of God any more convincing for the millions than Christ's assertion, without proof, that God is our Father in heaven?

Let us be clearly understood. No discredit to science, which has been of great service to religion, is intended. The progress of knowledge has thrown light on the idea of God and other problems of religion. But, after all, may it not be true that mankind, including Mr.

Fiske, believes in God, puts its trust in him, not because, by searching, it can find him out, but because man cannot help believing in God? Man is, as Sabatier declares, "incurably religious." Research and meditation may clarify and broaden the idea of God, but the fact is that man believes in some sort of a Higher Power as naturally and inevitably as he accepts the evidence of his senses and believes in a world outside himself. "Call him, then," says Seneca, "as thou pleasest, either Nature, or Fate, or Fortune, it makes no matter, because they are all names of the selfsame God, who diversely useth his divine providence."

When one demands evidence for the existence of God, he will find no more rest for his perplexed soul in the arguments of philosophers and scientists than in the fact, uncontroverted and indisputable, that man has always believed in him.

We shall therefore assume, without discussion, that God is, and that he manifests himself to man, immediately in man's soul, and indirectly through nature and history. Religion which has its origin in this ultimate fact, is universal. Its varieties are innumerable, being scarcely the same in any two persons. It

has marvelously changed in the course of time. Yet in its essential character, and as an actual, real phase of human experience, one might as well justify the ocean or the stars as justify religion. It needs no justification. It has always been and now is a vast, complex, indestructible fact. The underlying nature of this universal experience, however, and its manifold expressions or forms, may profitably be studied. The ideas, feelings, and conduct involved in religion may be investigated, and one set of experiences may be compared with another, for the purpose of facilitating religious progress and getting closer to reality and truth. That is the task to which we now address ourselves.

What is religion? A friend once remarked that a definition more often defines the definer than it does the thing defined. That is true. To define is to determine the limits of a thing, to fix the boundaries which distinguish it from other things. The definition is therefore the definer's conception of a thing, and the definition will bear the earmarks of his limitations and particular point of view. When the object defined is complex, intricate, vague, and vast, points of view will be numerous and definitions will vary. So a definition of religion often

excludes more than it includes. A fence always shuts out more than it shuts in. Each philosopher and theologian has his own definition, and he no sooner lays it down than he takes it up again to expand it to include many things he has left out. But this inability of the learned to agree on a subject of such vital concern to all mankind need disturb no one. It is to be expected. It is unavoidable.

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies —
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower — but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."

If one cannot understand a tiny flower, need one marvel at the diversity of opinion respecting religion?

In order to convince the skeptic, the preacher argues that religion is universal and natural. Thus he seeks to justify faith in God as a rational experience. On the other hand, when he appeals to the sinner to turn from the error of his ways, the preacher is quite likely to divide men into two classes, the religious and the irreligious. This inconsistency arises because the word "religion" is used in

two senses; the subject is considered from two different points of view. In the first instance, the mind dwells upon that fundamental and universal element in human experience which characterizes man as religious. In the second, a distinction is made, consciously or unconsciously, between religion and religions. A particular type of religion is used as a standard by which to judge men. If they come up to that standard, they are called religious. If they fall short, they are classed as irreligious.

"Man as man is a religious being," says William N. Clarke. "Conceivably, religion may be simply a reaching forth on the part of man; for by an inward necessity man does reach forth to the realities with which religion is concerned, whether he has definite knowledge of God or not." This is undoubtedly the fundamental fact about religion. Our thinking on this subject must begin with the fact that religion, in the broad, general sense, is a man's life or experience viewed in its relation to God — to the God who dwells in all things.

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there!

If I take the wings of the morning
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

Right here a real difficulty arises. Some believe there is no God, no Spirit binding all things into one complete whole. Instead of God, there is only the order of nature. Man's duty, it is said, is to reverence this order, to obey nature's laws; but whether we stand in the presence of an infinite and eternal God or not, cannot be determined. All we can do is to worship and to obey the laws of nature. Others substitute humanity for God, and find in enthusiasm for humanity, and in love and reverence for the best men, an equivalent for the worship and love of God. Now, since these nature-worshipers and humanity-worshipers do not recognize any divine life, related to nature and to man, can they be called religious? Have they any religion? The answer to this question depends entirely upon the point of view, the definition of "religion" which one adopts. For example, if we understand by "religion," what Martineau declared it to be, "belief in an ever-living God, that is, a divine Mind and Will ruling the universe and holding

moral relations with mankind," then the nature-worshiper has no religion. Martineau objects to "watering down" the meaning of "religion" so as to include those who are not conscious of "the abiding presence and persuasion of the Soul of Souls." He does this in the interests of what he conceives to be clear thinking and true religion. Nevertheless, he sees in the ideals and characters of these lovers of nature and servants of humanity, in their desire to harmonize knowledge and religion, in their manly struggle to reach the light and the truth, an "inspiration akin to that of genuine piety." Therefore, as if his heart revolted at shutting the doors of the temple of religion in the face of such valiant and sincere advocates of what they believe to be truth, Martineau says: "Their functions are sacred, because concerned with a universe already consecrated by a divine presence, gleaming through all its order and loveliness." So he opens the doors and lets them in — with a distinct understanding, however: "You may come in; but if we give you a home in the widened category of religion, it must be as children of the house, and not as wielding its supreme authority. You men of science and true artists are rightly

called 'ministering priests of nature,' but this you could not be, 'unless nature were a temple filled with God.'"

Religion, then, may be considered as impossible without a conscious fellowship with God, a conscious recognition of God as the Spirit that lies back of all nature and speaks to us through nature. In that case, a savage who believes that the things he sees were made by a spirit or spirits he does not see, would be religious; while the scientist, whatever his knowledge and moral character, who does not believe in God, would not have any religion.

But suppose we deal with what we have assumed to be a fact, irrespective of the knowledge or consciousness of that fact. Suppose man is related to God, whether he knows and feels it or not; that the laws of the moral and physical world are God's laws; that every fact of nature tells us something about God, and that, when we deal with these laws of nature and obey them, we deal with and obey God; that all moral ideals proceed from God, so we cannot try to realize any moral ideal without trying in some degree to do what God wants us to do, whether we know it to be God's will or not. Then a man's religion is his attitude

toward all things — toward God, nature, humanity. What he thinks, feels, and wills is his religion, because, from the very nature of the case, in view of the supposition taken, a man cannot think, feel, and act without displaying his attitude toward God. The failure to grasp the real significance of his life, to see himself as related to a Divine Being, does not alter the fact that he is related to this Divine Being, any more than ignorance or unconsciousness of the action of foods in the stomach proves that no chemical action takes place.

So when we think of religion as universal, as instinctive, as the experience of man in relation to a divine life, we do not inquire whether the individual thinks and feels and acts according to some fixed standard; not what he ought to be and to do, but what is his actual attitude toward the universe. Whatever that is, that is his religion.

This is viewing religion as the actual, concrete experience of the individual soul, assuming all the while that this soul is, whether it knows the fact or not, dependent upon an infinite God holding relations with that soul — relations from which he cannot escape, even if he would.

But there is another and very important way to consider this subject. The moment we set up a standard by which to judge the quantity or quality of a man's religion, we are forced to make a distinction between religion and religions. When we speak of conscious and unconscious religion, or revealed and natural religion, or the religion of love, the religion of creeds, the religion of conduct, or the Christian religion, the Buddhist or Mohammedan religion, we at once adopt a test and classify each individual in some group or type.

Judging by some fixed criterion, we speak of true and false religion, of persecuting religion, of ceremonial or creedal religion, of theoretical and practical religion, of individual and social religion. Clearly all these are particular expressions or manifestations of the universal religious life. We may take any one of these religions and identify it with religion itself. Then everything that departs from this ideal will be no-religion. How common is it for people to say of some persecuting religion: "If that is religion, I don't want any of it!" Here there is evidently in mind some standard of what man ought to be before he is worthy

to be called religious. Yet in the last analysis the deeds of the persecutor are emphatically an expression of his religious life. They indicate his religious attitude toward God and man. So we may think of religion as synonymous with goodness, whatever that may be. All who are not as good as we think they ought to be we may class with the irreligious. But are all religious people good? They may be in the savage state. They may love that which is bad and act wickedly. Still they certainly have a religious life. Whatever that life is, we repeat then, is their religion. But if they must attain a high stage of development in knowledge, feeling, and conduct before they are religious, then they are not religious. If the standard is lofty, there are comparatively few who are religious. The vast majority of people are, then, without any religion at all.

There is, lastly, a third way to regard religion.

We may think of religion, not as the actual and total experience of man, and not as that experience judged by certain standards; but we may analyze that experience and find in it certain elements which are often called the essence of religion, the germs from which the

highest forms of religion grow; "the soul of good in things evil," as it were.

In every creature, simply because he is made in the image of God, will be found something good, even though it be the faintest traces. No rational creature, however depraved, is absolutely destitute of every germ of goodness. To be such a man one must be absolutely without any knowledge of God. That means that he does not know, in whole or in part, a single truth or fact in God's world. He has never been the possessor of a worthy affection — never loved anything good, even in the faintest degree. He has never performed an act that had even the element of right in it. Such a creature is really unthinkable. We behold in all men, however degraded, some striving to realize something good, some ideal that has elements of nobility in it. Blindly, though it may be, this human being is groping after God. The Divine is struggling with a human soul, seeking its salvation. The voice of conscience, craving for immortality, consciousness of sin, love of children, desire to serve a friend, sympathy with the unfortunate, grief over the dead — these are some of the germs of the

religious life, the elemental manifestations of the life of God in the soul of man.

"God is in all that liberates and lifts,
In all that humbles, sweetens, and consoles."

The individual exhibits these traits of goodness and truth just because he is a soul, made in the image of God; because God dwells in every heart. So in this sense, too, religion is "writ deep" in human nature. It is constitutional. Man cannot escape from it. He is "incurably religious."

Now, it would be comparatively easy to understand this view of the matter, and to confess it to be true, were it not for the fact that we have been brought up to think of some type or kind of religion as constituting all the religion there is in this world. Then, too, we have other preconceived ideas, which lead us at once to ask: "Will everybody, then, be saved? If all men are religious, what is the use of sending missionaries to the heathen?"

The destiny of man after death is easily distinguished from the state of his religious experience in this world. If only those who are going to heaven, according to the belief of many Christians, are religious, then vast multitudes have no religion at all. Religion ceases

to be universal, and becomes the achievement of a small fragment of humanity. Under this view, the non-Christian nations, with their sacred books, altars and temples and theologies, have no religion. No intelligent person would go so far as that, because, if no one is religious except those who are called Christians, it might be difficult to prove that the Christian religion is any more entitled to be called a religion than any other. If it is claimed that all faiths except Christianity are false, it would be quite easy to prove that to be false also. "Salvation," then, is a term used to describe the state of those who have reached a certain stage in religious development or complied with certain requirements. But religion itself is not identical with "my" religion, or with certain standards of faith and practice. It is not at all necessary to assume that, because every man is religious, he is therefore what he might be or ought to be. He may be a very undesirable member of society. He may have a long way to travel in order to reach certain religious standards. No truth of Christianity, no true incentive to missionary effort, is in the least degree weakened by this broad conception of universal religion.

When Paul addressed the Athenians on Mars' Hill, he took substantially this view of religion. He conceded that the Athenians were "somewhat religious," even though they had erected an altar to "the Unknown God." Even their agnosticism was their religion. "But," said he, "what therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you."

It is in this universal groping after God amid the clouds of mystery that enshroud us, in this divine life struggling for recognition in the consciousness of man, that we find the creative force which has produced every phase of the religious life; and it is this which furnishes an unanswerable argument for the permanence, indestructibility, and reasonableness of universal religion.

The baby's consciousness of the world into which it is born has been described as "one big, blooming, buzzing confusion." That is what the religious life was at the beginning of man's long march toward the Infinite; to a certain extent, that is what this universe is to all of us even now. We see through a glass, darkly. Some see more clearly than others. But the ground of our hope is that underneath are the everlasting arms; that the soul of man

craves harmony with its environment, peace and rest in the shadow of the Eternal. Were it otherwise, we might confidently await the end of all religion. But, such being the case, religion cannot perish. It may change and grow, but it will not, cannot, die.

It may serve to illustrate the point of view taken, and to render the conviction of its correctness more certain in the minds of the doubting, to consider briefly the subject of art.

Tolstoi says that, in spite of the mountains of books written on art, no accurate definition of "art" has yet been reached. The reason for this, he explains, is that some idea or standard of beauty constitutes the basis of all definitions.

Shall we say, with Mill, that art is the employment of the powers of nature for an end? In that case everybody is an artist. The savage who makes a flint ax, or decorates his face with paint, or constructs a rude shelter, employs the powers of nature for an end. Everybody does that.

Or shall we confine art to that only which reaches a given standard of beauty or excellence? When an artist, criticising a picture, says, "That is not art," what does he mean? Plainly this, that the picture does not conform

to certain artistic standards which the critic has adopted. What some call art he denies to be art. Is everybody, then, an artist? Or are those artists only who are professionally skilled, who have reached a certain stage of development in knowledge, taste, and skill?

But there is still another standard. William Morris says: "That which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labor." Is joy in one's work the test, so that all who have no joy in their work are not artists? Is the product itself not to be considered? If the worker experienced joy in his work, is the result of his labor to be called an artistic product, no matter what its æsthetic character may be?

Here then, as in the case of religion, it is plainly to be seen that everything depends on the point of view. If conformity to certain standards be art, then some are artists and some are not. But if man's inborn craving to express himself, and the germs of the taste for the beautiful, be considered as the essential element in art, then everybody is an artist, the difference between the untrained and the professional being merely one of degree.

Art may be regarded as subjective, as a

phase of human experience. It may be considered as objective, consisting of the products of that experience.

To conclude, then: "Religion" may be taken to mean man's actual inner life, viewed in its relationship to God, in which experience, thoughts, feelings, and will are indissolubly united.

Or the term may be confined to the body of doctrines or mythologies, sacred books, institutions, ceremonies, conduct, and other visible manifestations or expressions of the inner religious experience.

These two uses of the word "religion," however, really apply to one and the same thing; for the visible is but the outcome of the invisible, two parts of one experience, just as the personality is expressed in the deed. We can get at the deed through the personality, or at the personality through the deed. Each helps to tell us what the other is. The doctrines, sacred books, rituals, and creeds assist us in determining the inner side of the religious experience, and the thoughts, feelings, and will determine what the external religion will be.

A third use of the word "religion" appears when we adopt a standard. If one must have

certain ideas about God, or certain feelings of dependence upon him, or if he must have reached a definite stage of goodness, then religion ceases to be a man's actual attitude toward God, whatever that attitude may be, and no matter what the degree of his consciousness of God may be. According to this view, only those are religious who reach the standard; the others have no religion.

CHAPTER II

RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

The failure to understand the relations between theology and religion is a fruitful source of unhappiness. Many persons are not taught to see any difference between theology and religion, and consequently, when they lose faith in one or more doctrines about religion, they often feel that they have lost their religion. Others are afraid of being classed with the irreligious or skeptical, and employ all sorts of ingenious devices to satisfy conscience and at the same time avoid an open rupture with their family or friends. They try to make themselves believe that the words they formerly understood to mean one thing can stand just as well for a very different thing. Some drift insensibly into the habit of pretending to believe what they really do not believe. Others become indifferent to doctrines of religion, and imagine that it makes no difference what one believes, if one is only sincere. In one way or another a rather cold and formal allegiance to the church and a lifeless sort of religion result

from a misunderstanding of the true value and function of theology. It is, therefore, a sad fact, well known to students of history, that crises in theology have always been accompanied by irreverence and religious indifference in the experience of many persons driven into confusion and despair by theological changes. Brought up to believe that religion and certain doctrines are one and the same thing, when they cease to believe these doctrines or become skeptical respecting them, they cannot escape the conviction that they have lost their religion. It is, then, highly important to consider carefully the nature and function of theology. This does not require us to pass judgment upon conflicting systems of theology. Our inquiry is not, "Which is the true theology?" but, "What is theology itself?"

Everything entering into the experience of man may be explored, investigated, studied. When we study crystals, plants, animals, we really observe, compare, recall, and analyze our impressions and perceptions of these objects. Science is, strictly speaking, knowledge of reality as it comes in contact with the experience of man. Everybody, even an untutored barbarian, has some knowledge of reality,

although we do not speak of this vague, uncertain knowledge of things as science. So the meaning of the word is restricted to a developed form of primitive ideas. Sometimes science is described as "organized or systematized knowledge," or "the highest stage of growing knowledge." No clear line has been drawn between the indefinite knowledge of the uneducated and the more adequate knowledge of those who call themselves scientists. Some say that science does not exist until the idea arises of law binding facts together. "Science, therefore, consists not in the accumulation of heterogeneous facts, any more than the random up-piling of stones is architecture."

The word "science" must not be restricted to the study of physical things, because, as a matter of fact, when we study physical things, we at the same time examine these things as they appear to the soul. It is just as legitimate to study the idea of duty, the love of God, the feeling of reverence, the soul's craving for righteousness, as it is to study our impressions of flowers, birds, or stones. Science deals with other things than those that can be seen and handled. Science deals with unseen realities as well as with the things that do appear. The

so-called scientific laws are not laws that can be seen.

Since some things are more involved, the sciences differ in the range of ascertained and established truths. It is easier for scientists to agree in some fields than in others. For example, botany, or the science of plants, is more exact than psychology, or the science of the human soul. But this does not prove that cabbages are more real than souls.

Now, religion, as human experience, is made up of ideas about God, nature, and man, involving feelings of love, reverence, duty, all of which exert a profound influence upon man's character and conduct. Theology is the science of this whole religious experience. Religion is the fact, the object, the reality, whatever you wish to call it; and theology is the organized body of knowledge concerning this reality.

There are those who refuse to call theology a science, because the Infinite and the Unknown enter so largely into the experience which is studied. It is assumed that exact knowledge is possible when dealing with the facts of nature, but nothing more than theory is possible when dealing with fundamental and ultimate reality, the all-pervading mystery of the uni-

verse. So all theologies, it is said, must ever be imperfect systems of thought, defective interpretations of the relations existing between man and God.

But, rightly viewed, is not the difference between theological knowledge and all other scientific knowledge merely one of degrees? All knowledge, of every sort, is partial. What science or philosophy goes to the roots of things and tells us the whole truth about life and force and ultimate reality? What science is without its theories, assumptions, hypotheses, guesses? What science does not encounter obstacles and barriers to its investigations? What scientific classification satisfies all minds?

True, it is not so easy to reach satisfactory conclusions in theology as it is in the physical sciences; but it is very far from true that the difference between theology and physical science is that the former gives us guesses and theories, while the latter gives us facts and exact knowledge. The mystery, perplexity, and uncertainty are not all on one side.

The first and most important thing to remember, then, is that there is clearly a difference between religion, which is the experience of man in all his relations with the Infinite, and

theology, which deals with these varied and complex facts, whatever they are. A similar line is drawn between plant life and botany, the starry heavens and astronomy, animal life and zoölogy, the earth and geology. We know that in all these sciences what is declared to be true about things may be true or may be false, and all that is true is only true so far as it goes; it is not the whole truth.

All these sciences have a history. When Socrates sees how absurd are the answers to his questions, he exclaims: "How disappointing! How vexatious! We are where we were! We must begin again. We have not yet found what we are seeking. We have not yet got hold of the real and essential truth." To get hold of real truth, to know ourselves and the outward world — this has ever been the eager desire of mankind. But how slowly and wearily has mankind reached its present imperfect conception of things! What crudities, superstitions, and absurdities once passed for knowledge! How frequently have the theories of men been revolutionized by new discoveries! And, even in our time of boasted enlightenment, how quickly do scientific treatises become obsolete and useless! Books on the con-

flict between science and theology do more than show the hostility of some theologians to scientific investigations and conclusions. They also disclose the fact that the history of every science is a record of human ignorance and superstition — reverence for conclusions utterly without foundation. So it is true, not only of theology, but of all the sciences:

> "Our little systems have their day,
> They have their day and cease to be,
> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

But it will be said that science has made great progress in recent years. True, indeed, and so has theology. We are in the midst of a momentous revolution of thought respecting the religious experience. Systems of theology are undergoing thorough and radical reconstruction. Whether theological knowledge has kept pace with other knowledge is a matter of some consequence, but the really vital question is whether theology is advancing at all. It must be evident to every well-informed student of theology that there is slowly emerging out of the chaos a number of epoch-making doctrines. We are now, and shall always be, far from absolute truth. But some things are

becoming clearer. The vital elements of religion are more definitely perceived, and the fundamentals are being emphasized now as never before.

There are several important divisions in theology which it is well to describe very briefly. The foundation of theology in general, the subject-matter of the science, is God in his various manifestations or relations.

When attention is fixed upon God in relation to nature, we have what has been called "physical theology." Here the object is to deal with God as the First Cause of all things, and to study the visible world for the light it may throw on the nature and purposes of God. Martineau says: "If you wish to remain an agnostic or an atheist, you must never look beyond appearances or inquire as to causes. If you do, you cannot stop short of God."

When we study God in his relation to the essential nature of man, we have "metaphysical theology." Here the effort is to arrive at some knowledge and understanding of God by a study of the personality of man.

Then there are other classifications based upon the different religious experiences of the race. Each particular religion has its theology.

Christian theology deals with that religious experience which has its center in Christ. It studies the religion described in the Bible, and the religion which sprang from the religion whose record is in the Bible.

We may divide the religious experience of Christians into various elements, and fix attention, for example, upon the dogmas of the Christian religion, which constitute "dogmatic theology." "Historical theology" traces the development of the doctrines of the Christian religion.

If we think of the doctrines of Christianity as a revelation, and the religious life associated with these doctrines as revealed religion, then theology may be divided into "revealed theology" and "natural theology," which latter deals with the religious life outside of revealed religion.

All these divisions and subdivisions of theology are simply parts of the universal thinking of men about a universal experience. They are made for practical purposes, in order to limit a vast subject within such bounds that it can be more easily handled. Each department or branch of the general subject is simply a partial view of the whole.

Passing now from these more general observations, let us point out a few actualities in the religious experience with which theology deals, which are as truly facts as any physical reality with which science has to do.

First, the belief in God. Whether there is a Divine Being or not, it cannot be denied that man has cherished the belief in his existence. The origin and growth of the idea of God is a matter of interesting history and philosophy. The varieties of this belief no more prove the nonexistence of God than the disagreements of scientists disprove the reality of the outward world.

Moreover, the influence of the idea of God upon human character, as a force in civilization, cannot be ignored. It is difficult to describe that influence and to distinguish its operation from those of other civilizing forces; but the fact remains that the belief in God exists, and that it has profoundly affected mankind.

A second fact or element of the religious experience with which theology is concerned is the consciousness of sin. Self-condemnation, attended by distress of mind and heart, and discontent with one's moral condition, are actual experiences, as real as any that man has

Thirdly, there is also to be found in the experience of man the desire for righteousness, for forgiveness of sins and peace with the Divine Being. This longing for God may be described in language that applies only to a developed form of the religious experience, but the fact is that there is a universal hunger for spiritual peace which, consciously or unconsciously, is always at work.

We may go a step farther without leaving the solid ground of reality. While there is the greatest diversity of opinion respecting the nature of ultimate goodness, there is a universal recognition of good and bad. Even a savage responds to kindness, and feels that there is a difference between a brutal, blood-thirsty villain and a tender-hearted missionary. The loving character is, to say the least, generally preferred to the cruel one. There is a common understanding that certain types of character and certain kinds of deeds are worthy of admiration, while others merit condemnation.

In these four facts — the belief in God, the consciousness of sin, the longing for forgiveness, and the attachment to some ideal of character — will be found the constituent elements of the universal religious experience. In deal-

ing with these fundamental realities, theology does not beat the air or walk with uncertain tread. Here, truly, there is something to be investigated in a scientific spirit, and about which exact knowledge, comparatively speaking, is obtainable.

Finally, another relationship between religion and theology deserves attention. Is religion the fruit of theology? The influence of Christ's teachings upon the religious life will be discussed in a later chapter; so the effect of theological doctrines on religion will here be viewed in its broadest aspect.

Theology did not create religion, any more than astronomy created the stars. So theology is subordinate to religion, doctrine to life.

Scientific knowledge has some bearing on life, and tends to promote the well-being of mankind. Mistaken views of nature may do great harm. For example, astrology and false medical theories had a serious effect upon morals and physical life. Ignorance always injures man.

This is particularly true in the case of theology, because this science is more vitally and intimately related to the welfare of mankind. The mind is one of the chief factors in the

religious development of the race. What a man thinks about God and duty has much to do with his religious life. Our ideas, whether we gained them by instruction or by personal inquiry and meditation, react upon the whole life. Consequently, the doctrines of any system of theology exert a powerful influence upon individuals and upon society. It is therefore folly to say that it makes no difference what we believe so long as we are sincere.

But there is a vast difference between doctrines in their relation to the practical life. Some theological doctrines have less contact with life than others; that is, they are more speculative and purely philosophical, dealing with subjects out of the common reach, more or less remote from the capacity of the average intellect. So, while religion is affected by intellectual conceptions, it is not correct to say that religion is entirely dependent upon theological knowledge, because the religious experience is made up of what we love and what we will to do, as well as of what we think.

Many successful farmers know little of the science of agriculture. They are not entirely ignorant of soils and seeds, else they could not be successful; but their knowledge is not of a

scientific character. One might know all about the chemistry of foods and be a confirmed dyspeptic, unable to experience the health and pleasure derived from food. To enjoy a beautiful landscape, to delight in mountains, green fields, brooks, and flowers, it is not at all indispensable to study geology and botany scientifically. One might be expert in the scientific knowledge of mountains without a tithe of the joy which an ignorant mountaineer experiences who lives among and loves the Alps.

There is a great difference between nature as it is cut into pieces, dried, labeled, and tucked away in a museum of natural history, and nature as it glows with beauty and throbs with life out of doors.

So, without ignoring the real value of scientific study, and the increased interest, pleasure, and advantage which it may impart to life, it is undoubtedly true that the religious life may flourish even where there is much ignorance of the philosophy of the religious experience, and little knowledge of the doctrines of religion. The test of mother-love is not knowledge of the psychology of love. The test of health is not knowledge of physiology. The test of virtue is not knowledge of ethics. So the test of reli-

gion is not knowledge of theology. One may love God supremely, devote his whole life to the service of God, and exhibit to his fellowmen a spirit of sympathy, sociability, kindness, and purity which will render him highly esteemed by all who know him; yet his intellectual capacity may be of an inferior order, and his knowledge of theology may be very slight. "Our young people," says Emerson, "are diseased with the theological problems of original sin, origin of evil, predestination, and the like. These never presented a practical difficulty to any man — never darkened across any man's road, who did not go out of his way to seek them. These are the soul's mumps, and measles, and whooping cough."

There is, in other words, a distinction to be drawn between philosophical or scientific religious knowledge, and that kind of religious knowledge which is acquired by the complete surrender of the whole personality to God. This is because religion is more than knowledge. An expert theologian is not necessarily a truly religious man, while an uneducated man may be a noble example of religion. This does not place a premium on ignorance. It does not conflict with the fact that, all other

things being equal, he who knows most about God, will reach the highest altitudes of character and usefulness. It merely argues that the essential knowledge required, that without which no moral excellence can be achieved, is not of a technical, but of a practical kind. To know the truth most worth knowing about God, one must enter into conscious fellowship with him and strive to obey him. Without suffering any deterioration in the religious life, one may remain ignorant of the arguments for the existence of God. One will not be any less a beautiful exponent of Christianity because he cannot or does not understand the doctrine of election, or the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures, or the Trinity. But what a man is doing with the life and the commands of Christ has much to do with the character of his religion. Our happiness, welfare, and usefulness, then, do not depend primarily upon the range of our theological knowledge, but upon our attitude toward those principles and facts that are related specifically and vitally to our daily life. The religious life is not nurtured and developed by merely intellectual processes. The fundamental truths of religion must be experienced to prove of any value to the soul.

What we love and what we will to do are vastly more important questions for us than what we know about theology as a system of knowledge concerning religion.

Therefore no one should cease seeking fellowship with God because theologies change and pass away, any more than he would cease to seek his health and to delight in his strength because of the changes in medical science.

Paul suggests the proper relationship in the religious life between knowledge and love when he says:

> Whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.
>
> Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND MORALITY

In the popular mind there is much confusion respecting the relations between religion and morals. Many church members think that religious people are those who are going to heaven, while the irreligious people are those who are eternally lost. In order to go to heaven, so they say, certain doctrines must be accepted; and multitudes would add another condition, namely, church membership. So it has come to pass that those who do not fulfil these requirements are thought to be without any religion. These opinions, honestly held, are often severely tested, and sometimes abandoned in particular instances, as every minister can testify. Mothers have unbelieving sons, wives have unbelieving husbands, who are shining examples of genuine morality. They are honest in business, good citizens, agreeable neighbors, charitable to the poor, chaste in their habits, loving and kind in their homes. Realizing how superior in moral character such men are to many church members, loving

them as their own kin, these mothers and wives will tell you, in earnest and sincere tones, that if anyone is going to heaven, these sons and husbands will be found there. Their theories cannot stand before love, and before the consciousness that, somehow or other, these good men ought to be saved, even if they are not religious.

In what respect morality is related to religion is, therefore, more than an interesting speculative problem. It is one of great practical significance. Can one be good without being religious? If the good man is religious, what do those popularly classed as moral men lack which those classed as religious possess? These are the two questions to which we shall attempt an answer.

1. Can we be good without being religious?

Let us be clear as to what we mean by "good." Moral philosophers distinguish between "right" and "good." Right conduct, they say, is conformity to some rule. These rules, however, must be directed toward some useful end. They do not agree what that end is; but for convenience sake we will call that end the Supreme or Highest Good. Conduct directed toward this Supreme Good, whatever that may

be, is good conduct. But what the individual does, that he is. He who does right is good, because he cannot be truly said to do right unless his motive is right. Of course, libraries have been written on this subject, and it is impossible for us to do more than state the case as simply as possible.

The chief trait, then, in the moral man, that which distinguishes him from those regarded as bad or immoral men, is this: The moral man tries to do his duty from right motives, and his fidelity to his obligations is adorned by the attractive graces of unselfishness, sociability, and kindness. If the moral man gave to the poor to get votes; if he were chaste only because he feared indulgence of passion might injure his business by ruining his reputation; if his motive was bad, we could not call him a good man, in the common acceptation of the word. It may be said that there are men who are outwardly good for selfish ends. That may be true; but people cease to regard them as good when they are found out. They are respected and trusted by their fellowmen only when they are believed to be good at heart as well as good in deed.

This must be the type of characters for us

to consider. It would be self-contradictory to base a discussion upon a character outwardly good, but inwardly bad, assuming that such a thing could be.

We must also remember that when it is said a man is good, the word "good" is used in a relative, and not in an absolute, sense. If he were absolutely good, he would be perfectly religious. Then there would be no problem; for morality and religion would be two names for the same thing.

The difficulty arises when the moral man is supposed to be without belief in God, and hence without any religion. The word "religion" we now use, not in its broadest significance, but as involving some special form of belief in God.

If there are two kinds of goodness, a religious and a moral kind, then the merely good man is not religious at all. But are there two kinds? Are there two ways to tell the truth, to resist a temptation, to pay one's debts, to vote fearlessly and conscientiously, to befriend the needy, to love one's wife and children? In so far as a man does right, does he not obey God? In so far as he is good, is he not what God wants him to be? The truth he recognizes

and accepts as a principle of conduct, is this not God's truth? The moral laws he tries to obey, are they not God's laws? Is not his love for the moral ideal, and his subordination of his lower self to reach this ideal — is not this a leading feature in the highest religion? The struggle to do right is, whether one knows it or not, the response of the soul to the claims of God, to the voice of God. But it is said that this moral man has no consciousness of God. Is that quite true? Would it not be nearer the truth to say that he is only partially or dimly conscious of God? In other words, the difference between this man and a truly religious character is not that one has no religion and the other has, but that one is undeveloped and the other is developed, or one has little religion and the other much; because, as a matter of fact, the moral man is partly conscious of God, when he is conscious of vital moral principles and certain high ideals, which are grounded in the Divine Being.

Compare the moral man with a witch-doctor in a savage tribe — a brutal, ignorant slave to vices of the worst sort, grossly superstitious. Yet he acts as a priest of religion, dealing in incantations to ward off evil spirits.

He is religious; but his attitude toward God is that of blind terror, inspired by the mysterious forces of nature, which he does not understand. He is a savage; and that tells the whole story.

The moral man may not believe in a personal God; or he may be an agnostic, and declare that he does not know. He may have reached this conclusion after honest search; or he may have become indifferent to what he has been taught to believe is religion, from one or more of a variety of causes. Theological changes may have confused him; unfortunate experiences with professors of religion may have repelled him from the church. Yet the underlying purpose of his whole nature may be one of exalted and unselfish ambition to live nobly and usefully, to make the best possible use of his powers for humanity's sake. If the moral law is grounded in the nature of the eternal God; if truth and love and goodness center in him, does not this moral man have some consciousness of the things of God, even though he cannot yet exclaim: "My Father, who art in heaven"?

Can we affirm, without an irrepressible feeling that there is an error somewhere, that

the savage is religious and the moral man has no religion?

The inability to pass a fair judgment on the moral man is traceable to a desire to preserve certain religious standards. But true religion will not suffer by viewing this subject broadly and dispassionately. The recognition of the religious character of the moral man only bridges the gulf between morality and religion, rendering it easier for moral men to enter where there is more light and truth. The gulf is not closed. It is not affirmed that the scope of the merely moral life is as broad as the truly religious life. This will appear in the consideration of the second question proposed at the outset.

2. What, then, does the moral man lack?

He lacks that which, in the last analysis, is the source of the highest morality — without which not only religion, but morality, would perish. That something is conscious fellowship with the Divine Father; the recognition of God as the source of all goodness; the feeling that nature and man find their unity and only explanation in the eternal God. He lacks that clear vision of the higher life, that sweet communion with the spirit that dwells in

all things, which brings one into real and true harmony with God, and furnishes those motives which lie back of all good conduct.

Does the good man grow up isolated from religious influences? In the majority of cases it will be found that he was reared by a religious mother in a religious home, and that flowing in his veins are those religious forces that constitute the very life-blood of civilization. To think of individual excellence of character and conduct as something self-originated, developing independently of those religious influences everywhere active, is to create an abstraction. Such men do not exist. Morality is social as well as individual. Social ideals, social habits, and public opinion vitally affect the individual, who inherits a fund of moral ideals, and is reared in an atmosphere pervaded by religious thought and religious feeling.

Where on this earth are to be found communities in which there are social security and freedom, justice and philanthropy, respect for women and protection to children, without developed religion? The rise and fall of nations, although not wholly determined by religion, are nevertheless intimately connected with the growth and decline of religion.

Do not these facts tend to show that the moral man is living on borrowed capital, as it were? He is upheld by a Power which he does not worship, and is deeply indebted to institutions and literature the origin and significance of which he fails to perceive. In short, he is what he is largely because of a religion he disowns.

Furthermore, morality depends upon certain sentiments, affections, aspirations. Good conduct does not create itself. It is the expression of inward ideas, desires, motives, feelings. Its source is in the soul. The continuance of good conduct in the world depends upon the development of right motives and true ideas.

The fundamental question in ethics, therefore, is the ground of obligation. Why should we be honest? Why should we love our neighbor? Why should we be chaste and kind? These questions will never be satisfactorily and conclusively answered without the aid of religion. To say that the end is self-realization is not enough. God must be recognized as the ultimate ground of obligation and the Perfect Ideal.

Ezekiel G. Robinson says:

If it be true that our highest aim in life should be the realization of the highest ideal manhood, and if the

highest ideal manhood consists in a resemblance to the perfect archetype of all personal being, then our ultimate ground of obligation should be looked for in the moral nature of the original and archetypal being — God.

In the feeling that we are God's children we find a powerful incentive to seek the welfare of our neighbors who are our brothers. In the feeling that we are made in the image of God we find a motive to avoid all those things which deface and disgrace this image. In the recognition of God as everywhere present we rejoice to discover that in obeying what we call moral laws we are doing those things which a filial love of God requires us to do.

Professor John S. Mackenzie, in his *Manual of Ethics,* after discussing the various theories respecting the ultimate ground of obligation or duty, all of which leave God out of account, says: "It must be evident to the discerning reader that, in what has gone before, we have occasionally been skating on rather thin ice. The ultimate questions to which we have been led have not received any quite satisfactory solution." All ethical systems lead inevitably to the temple of worship. Ethical teachers may philosophize and lay down very useful rules; but they cannot ground these rules on

any firm foundation, and they cannot suggest any power that will induce men to obey the rules, unless they take God into their counsels and point sinful souls to him as the source of all moral energy.

Knowledge of the right is no doubt essential; but most men fail in the performance of duty, not for want of knowledge, but for lack of moral power to do that which they believe to be right. We cannot acquire that power unless our souls are inspired and sustained by powerful incentives and holy affections.

Lastly, life is not merely conformity to moral laws, faithful performance of duties. Our hearts crave rest, peace, joy, the sense of harmony and fellowship with all things. Besides the satisfaction arising from fidelity to earthly obligations, the truly religious man's life is enriched and strengthened by the contemplation of divine things, by sweet communion with the Father. He does not feel that isolation and loneliness, that despair and doubt, which agitates the souls of those who cannot look with hope beyond the grave, nor feel that back of the shifting panorama of the universe and the varied experiences of mankind there is a divine life. To stop short of this point, as

President Hyde well says, "is to leave our world incompleted, our minds unsatisfied, our hearts unfilled, our wills unfree. It is the reluctance of the mind and heart to accept this lame and impotent conclusion, the refusal of the will to withdraw from the field at this stage of the contest, that drives man with the eagerness of an infinite passion on into the sphere of religion."

So conscience and duty, the watchwords of the moral man, point to God. The search for unity and for the ground of moral obligations leads to him. The soul of man will never find itself, will never achieve rest and peace, in the mere effort to live up to a moral ideal stripped of all relationship to God, the ultimate source of all our ideals of duty. We cannot really love abstract truth. We must love persons. We must find our deepest and truest inspiration to do right in the love of God.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AND THE CHURCH

Are religious societies essential to the maintenance and spread of religion? Or, are they arbitrary creations of priests to perpetuate their influence over society? Could we not get along without them, and find in other societies and institutions substitutes adequate to all our individual and social needs? Thousands of people seem to think that churches encumber the earth, or at least, however much some may need them, that they can get along quite as well without them.

A man could go through life blind or crippled. Millions have lived and died in poverty and in ignorance. Does this prove that a complete body is undesirable, or that man's best life can be lived in poverty or in ignorance? The question, therefore, which one ought to ask is not: "Can I exist without the fellowship of a church?" but rather: "Is the church a natural institution, originating in response to the soul's deepest needs, and absolutely essential to the highest development of

mankind?" If it be found that the church is not a cunning device to keep alive superstitions, but is a normal and inevitable expression of man's religious experience, and can be explained only by considering certain universal laws, then the individual's duty toward the church is seen in its true light.

We live in the midst, not only of individuals, but of groups of individuals, associations, and institutions. The origin of the community life, of governmental and industrial organizations, of schools and fraternal societies, is not due to caprice. Natural laws determined the appearance of associational life and its development upon the earth. Down deep in the human heart are certain intensely active cravings or desires which constitute the mainspring of progress. As man advances step by step from the savage stage, he is pushed on from within. These internal forces have always been at work, and without them man would sink back into primitive barbarism. So, when we inquire why society has courts of law, legislatures, industrial organizations, schools and colleges, we must seek the answer in the soul of man. The visible institution is the manifestation of what has been going on in

the inner life, just as the trees and the flowers, the streams and the mountains, are the outward expression of unseen forces.

Experts differ as to the exact nature and number of the desires which impel men to seek one another's society, and to lay the foundations of institutions. But they all agree that language, literature, science, art, customs, laws, and governments are the visible fruit or product of these desires, and that all these change in accordance with corresponding changes in the soul of man. Various forces combine to aid man in the effort to satisfy the cravings of his inner life. His increasing knowledge, the product of expanding experience, shows him the mistakes of the past, and helps him to improve the institutions which he inherits.

No one desire is responsible for any institution. Some one desire may be more marked in its influence than others; but there is an intimate connection between all of them, and, to a greater or less degree, each human activity and each social institution is the expression of a combination of impulses and desires, thoughts and ideals.

Let us note some of these desires and observe their effects.

The desire for health leads men to study the human body and the medicinal properties of various substances. It leads to schools of medicine, hospitals, asylums, and other institutions intended to promote health. It also incites to activities for the procuring of food and clothes and houses, so that life may be sustained.

The desire for wealth, and for the comforts and luxuries which wealth can furnish, is a powerful incentive, to which may be traced manufacturing, trade and commerce, and a variety of industrial organizations.

The desire for knowledge finds expression in libraries, schools, and colleges.

The desire for social order and for justice gives rise to governments and judiciary institutions, with all the established customs, laws, and institutions involved therein.

Not to pursue these illustrations further, is it not apparent that social institutions grow up as naturally as flowers spring out of the ground, or as water is drawn by the sun into clouds?

Men associate themselves together because they cannot help it. They are drawn to one another by invisible forces, and the product of

this co-operation is institutional life and social groups developing according to natural laws.

Certain kinds of institutions and laws may seem to have a definite beginning at some fixed time, but there are elements in every institution which can be traced back to the distant past. No expression of the social life can be understood unless it is viewed historically as the outgrowth of the nature of man and the product of centuries of human development. Social institutions, therefore, do not spring up because a body of men came together and said: "Go to now, let us make literature, or establish an industrial system, or organize government." These things grow, and they grow out of the human soul in harmony with, and obedience to, universal laws.

Now, then, the important question before us is this: Do religious organizations exist in response to universal needs? Do they obey the same laws which control and determine the origin and growth of all other social institutions? Our line of inquiry will apply to all forms of religious organizations, although the advanced religious bodies, such as the Jewish and Christian churches, more clearly illustrate the ideas expressed. Which of the many claim-

ants for the honor is the true church does not concern us, because all churches are rooted in human needs, which is the main proposition to be considered. When one is convinced of that, his duty becomes quite clear, and he may well be left to his own sense of his personal needs and his individual tastes to select that church in which to worship and to labor which seems best fitted to his life. He must be a remarkable and unique character who cannot find, among the variety of churches and sects, some local communion which may contribute something to his life, and with which he may co-operate for the promotion of the general welfare.

To make men realize the privileges and duties of patriotism, it is first necessary to inculcate those truths upon which the duty of the citizen to his country is founded. Does the individual love his country and seek its welfare? If so, he must support political institutions of some kind. Partisan issues, however important, are not so vital as the question of patriotic loyalty to the fundamental institutions of the country. One's sense of loyalty may lead him to seek a change in these institutions, or to join one political party in preference to

another, or to be thoroughly independent of parties; but he will not hold himself aloof from all political institutions, and remain totally indifferent to them, if he truly wishes to promote his country's welfare.

A church is a social group, a fraternal organization. It is a nobler expression of the brotherhood principle than those societies and lodges which are confined to one sex or to adults. It includes men, women, and children. There is a good deal of brotherhood in this world that excludes women and children. Societies which do so can never truly represent, in miniature, the world-wide brotherhood which is the goal of humanity. So, too, the church takes in all classes, rich and poor, educated and ignorant. All this is true because religion is essentially social. It constitutes one of the spiritual bonds of society. It is a phase of man's craving for sociability, for companionship. The higher the religious life, the more adequately will the brotherhood feature of religion be expressed in the religious organization.

It will perhaps be said that these observations do not correspond with the actual facts, for the contest between sects and the quarrels of churches are most notorious. It is, indeed,

true that churches do not live up to their ideals; or, to put it in another and truer way, the ideal is not yet as clear as it will be some day. But experience with all other societies boasting of their fraternal features will convince the thoughtful that all brotherhood up to date means brotherhood limited. The trade unions, the Masonic and other fraternal societies, are made up of men whose consciousness of brotherhood does not extend much beyond their favorite group, and it seldom reaches all the members of that fellowship. The clashing of groups is a characteristic feature of modern life. There is an intense group-consciousness, which must be further developed to close the chasm between groups and eventuate in a consciousness that all men are brothers.

But the point we insist upon is that religious societies, like all other fraternities, owe their existence, in no small degree, to the craving for fellowship. The community life is a step in advance of unrestricted individualism, which is anarchy and barbarism. Men follow this impulse toward unity up to a certain point, and then stop, restrained by false ideas, inherited prejudices, and other forms of human weakness. They allow mistaken conceptions of life

to overrule the dictates of the heart. Theories keep men apart as well as hatred and jealousy.

The churches, however, do exhibit a spirit of brotherhood to a greater extent than is often conceded, and they have been an indispensable social factor in the evolution of human fellowship. They furnish that social environment which is essential to the development of the individual's religious life. Lawyers, physicians, workingmen, business men, artists, and literary men feel the need of some social cooperation for the promotion of common interests and the development of their own lives. They know that knowledge is broadened and usefulness is enhanced by contact with those of the same profession or business.

William Morris makes John Ball say in his sermon:

> Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death; and the deeds that ye do upon the earth it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them, and for the life that is in it, that shall live on and on forever, and each one of you part of it, while many a man's life upon the earth from the earth shall wane.

So the religious society, being a group of persons bound together by a common interest in pursuit of certain high ends, affords just that

environment in which the individual may cultivate his spiritual nature under the most favorable circumstances. Since the moral life of each individual is shaped to a great degree by group-sentiments and group-ideals, each individual should seek closer affiliation with that group where the ideals of life are purest and highest. In the friendship and sympathy of those who are seeking fellowship with God, the individual will find the social influence essential to the broad development of his moral life.

Again, the benevolent impulse, the desire to assist the distressed and afflicted, draws people together in religious societies. It is not claimed that this desire has operated with equal force in all ages or in all religions. However feebly the benevolent impulses may manifest themselves, they have always been present in humanity, and for two thousand years they have been a marked characteristic of Christian churches.

The individual who desires to serve his fellow-men needs courage, stimulus, direction, training. The mere desire to render assistance is not sufficient to guarantee the best results. Knowledge of what the helpless and unfortunate really need is necessary to render the

desire to serve effective. There are thousands of people, trying to spread happiness, who ignore the vital conditions of true human welfare. Various ameliorative schemes and organizations for mutual aid are carried on without reference to man's deepest spiritual needs. If one wishes to benefit his fellow-men in the most substantial and permanent way, he cannot afford to neglect religion and the church. The church has done a vast amount of good in fostering and directing the philanthropic desires of mankind.

In the world-wide struggle against sin, ignorance, and poverty, the individual who battles alone places himself in hostility to the tendency of the ages. Co-operation is the noblest achievement of civilization. Social order and social progress began when men banded themselves together for the common good. We are born for sympathetic and helpful relationships. "Bear ye one another's burdens," is not only an injunction of an apostle, it is a law of life. It is not merely a duty, it is a privilege. It does not mean self-sacrifice in the old and popular sense. It is the only way to save ourselves, to realize the ends for which we were born. Among the many ends for

which men co-operate, none surpasses in dignity and significance that of the moral betterment of mankind. This is distinctively the mission of the church.

The desire for inspiration, comfort, sympathy is universal. In the struggle of life everybody feels the need of a kind and encouraging word; something to brighten life, to give hope and peace. Multitudes attend the churches on quiet Sundays, weary in mind and body, agitated by the conflicts of the week, weighed down with cares and griefs, knowing by precious experience that they will find rest and joy in the music, prayers, and sermon. Here they will be greeted by friendly faces and cheered by words of sympathy.

Let not the shortcomings of the churches blind us to the good they have done and still do. Every observer who takes broad views of things must acknowledge that God has given consolation to the bereaved and inspiration to the despondent through the friendliness of those who meet together for common worship. The ministrations of the church to the poor and sick have been of incalculable benefit to mankind. Witness the hospitals, asylums, charitable and other philanthropic institutions, which

the church has founded, or caused to be founded, through its influence over the benevolent impulse of its members. No other institution approaches the church in this field, and no other institution can take its place, because the church is the custodian of those influences, inspirations, ideals, and truths which are essential to the maintenance and further development of uplifting and ministering institutions. It is the love of God and his creatures which constitutes the unfailing spring of sympathy and philanthropic activities. To spread this love among men is the church's chief privilege and sacred mission.

Lastly, the church is a visible expression of man's desire for righteousness. We have already seen that man's consciousness of sin and recognition of a higher life, his inborn craving for harmony with his environment and peace with God, are distinctive traits of human nature. In this respect, as in the others, the religious society is founded on human necessity.

We are beginning to see that the problems of sin and righteousness are problems in education; not that sin can be uprooted by mere intellectual development, but that the way to save the world from sin is to save the children;

and the way to save the children is to train them from the cradle in the love and service of God, so that their whole life will be one continuous, normal development in harmony with God. This ideal is hazy enough yet, to be sure, because for many years to come the problem of the adult sinner will remain.

Rightly viewed, then, the church is a training-school for righteousness. The desire to be good, like the other desires mentioned, needs to be directed by education. Knowledge of the nature of the true ideal of life is essential. Power of will has to be secured. Sympathy with the good has to be cultivated. Moral strength, courage, and endurance must be developed, if the perceived and cherished ideals are to be realized. It is not enough to awaken holy sentiments and enthusiastic appreciation of some beautiful ideal of love or service; the beholder must be sustained by inward power in the real battle of life, to be loyal to his ideals. This work belongs peculiarly to the church. It renders its truest service to humanity when it takes man's desire for righteousness, interprets it, unfolds the ideal, and helps man to realize it.

But some will ask: "Need we go to school

to be educated?" The possibility of getting an education without going to school need not be denied, although it is a debatable question whether such an education as the schools and colleges furnish can be had without the various advantages of school life. Still, let us concede that the thing is possible, and that many educated men have never been to school. Is that the real issue, after all? How many would get an education if there were no schools? What would society be without them? As civilization progresses, the number of schools increases, and the range of their influence expands. Will anyone deny that schools are essential to satisfy the general desire for knowledge, or affirm that society would be as well off without these social institutions? If all this is also true of churches in relation to the religious life, as has been shown, it is apparent that those who are indifferent to the churches, who insist upon their children going to school, but neglect their religious development by allowing them to keep away from churches, commit a fatal mistake. Here and there some may "get along" without the churches; but, abandoning the field of theory, and taking life as we find it, the multitude that tries to live without the church suffers.

As millions go through life intellectually starving because they had no schooling, or because their school days ended early in life, so the multitudes who forsake the church deprive themselves of a moral education which they greatly need.

There is another view of this indifference to the church, which applies more to the comparatively few who are admirable specimens of morality, but who give churches a wide berth or attend rarely. Although we are not willing to grant that any man is better because he refuses to associate himself with some religious society, for the sake of the argument let us concede that some do exhibit fine traits of character without fellowship with religious societies. If it be true, as we think has been proved, that modern churches do promote the general welfare, and if the masses need the churches, what shall be said of the attitude of indifference assumed by some moral men to these institutions so essential to religion? Think of the millions of men and women, struggling amid privations, afflictions, and temptations, attracted by glimpses of a higher life, yet battling with inferior desires, and burdened with many cares and trials! Think of

the havoc caused by wrongdoing! Think of the abuse of noble faculties and the gross satisfaction of desires legitimate in themselves! Think of the tears and heart-aches and troubles due to sin! Think of this whole spectacle of mankind struggling for righteousness in the face of unfavorable conditions, or hopelessly enslaved by inherited evil tendencies or acquired weakness! Can a man admit that these millions need the churches, that churches can and do assist these burden-bearers and sufferers, and yet justify himself in his refusal to help the church perform its noble mission? Simply because he was born with superior endowments and reared amid favorable conditions, so that he can keep himself "unspotted from the world," is it right for him to withhold the helping hand from his struggling fellowmen? It is not only a question of what the church can do for us, but what we can do for those to whom the church ministers. "To go it alone" may smack of independence; but it is just that sort of independence which, if it became a universal practice, would shatter the foundations of civilized society, deal a deathblow to every philanthropic institution, and revive the ancient régime of barbarism.

Noblesse oblige. The spirit of the true knight and gentleman requires every man of influence and character to support those institutions which history proves to be essential to the progress of civilization and the highest welfare of humanity. It argues a serious defect in character — suggesting that perhaps those who say they do not need the church may need it most of all — when one is content to enjoy the fruits of others' sacrifices and labors, without doing one's share of the world's work.

We have no apology to offer for the mistakes of religious bodies. Dissensions, cruelty, and persecution have marked the history of the church. Creeds have tyrannized over life, and orthodoxy has been preferred to loving-kindness. The church has been regarded as an end in itself, instead of a means to promote righteousness and brotherhood. The church has hidden Christ as well as revealed him. The Christian church, like all other religious societies, is a human institution as well as an abiding-place for the spirit of God. The weakness of human nature has expressed itself in the church, as it does in every human institution. Men have had to leave some churches in the interests of their own souls and a higher

religious life for the world. All churches are not equally promoting the best interests of mankind. But the same may be said of governments, courts, industrial organizations, schools, and family life; yet no sane man would seek relief from the ills of organization by advocating absolute anarchy. The principle of organization, the benefits of association, the delights of companionship, are too well established to render it likely that the world will return to the individualism of savagery.

Theories aside, practical experience with many types of human life has convinced us that most men stay out of the church not because they cherish higher ideals than those who are in the church. In many cases it is the love of self, the desire to gratify lower desires unrestrained by considerations of duty. In others it is sheer indifference to one's true welfare, and a failure to appreciate the benefits to be derived from religious worship and instruction. While no church may be perfect, there are thousands that could prove of incalculable benefit to those who spurn their aid. The general tendency, the dominant influence, of the churches is on the side of righteousness. They can be improved because man himself is not

perfect. Nevertheless, the church is the mightiest moral force in modern society. The world needs its teaching and its inspiration. Love and good works are promoted by its ministrations, and the individual soul is strengthened by its influences to encounter temptation and to bear the burdens of our common humanity.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

Ruskin was once invited to tell his Yorkshire friends how to build a suitable exchange for Bradford. Instead of talking about styles of architecture, he gave them a lecture on taste and life. "Pardon me for telling you frankly," he said, "that you cannot have good architecture merely by asking people's advice on occasion. All good architecture is the expression of national life and character; and it is produced by a prevalent and eager national taste, or desire for beauty."

It has been said that all industrial problems are fast becoming political problems, and that political problems are in turn becoming religious problems. This is not one of those plausible, catchy generalities, with more rhyme than sense, which confuse rather than enlighten. It is based upon a profound fact, of which we are all slowly becoming conscious. Social progress is dependent upon human character. What we are determines what we do and why we do it.

Science, art, literature, and law are not distinct entities, things existing in themselves apart from the souls of men, and acting for good or ill upon the lives of men. They are the expressions of the human soul. It is not art or science which progresses so much as it is the soul. It is man who advances. Industrial systems and political governments are infallible signs of the mental and moral state of those who live under them.

So social progress means ultimately progress in thought, feeling, and will-power. It means the continuous conscious adaptation of man to his spiritual and physical environment. The most important element in this progress is man's religious life. We do not mean that every religious doctrine or every religious institution has been uniformly on the side of social progress, but that man's inborn desire to seek right relations with God, nature, and his fellow-men is the chief source of social betterment. All governments and courts of justice have not been friendly to social progress, but the desire for social order and the love of justice are human impulses, right in themselves, and ever impelling men to seek right political relations.

In this sense, we affirm that religion is essential to social progress. And as the religious life develops, as religions are purified and brought into closer harmony with the divine life, all forms of social life, all institutions and activities, are affected for good. In other words, where we find the most exalted ideas of God, and the strongest desire to love and to obey God, there we find the cleanest, happiest, and most prosperous society.

The moral life of man, then, is bound to seek expression in literature, politics, and industry. To improve governments, to secure peace in industrial circles, to enable men to employ their leisure aright, to correct methods of industry so that they will minister to character, to establish justice upon the earth, it is absolutely necessary that man should be developed in true religion.

Consider the economic loss and the economic friction arising from moral delinquency. Dishonesty, laziness, greed, unrestrained ambition, inhumanity are among the causes of industrial problems. No business could long exist in which the employees were all thieves or drunkards or libertines. How many concerns have failed, not because the proprietors lacked

business sagacity and energy, but because of dishonesty or greed, or moral delinquency of some sort! How strenuously do banks and railroad corporations insist upon securing employees of good moral character! Industrial problems are a thousand times more difficult of solution because men try to overreach one another, trample upon principles of brotherhood, and aim at profits or wages instead of social service.

Does it require argument to prove that the real political problem is not to spread political knowledge, but to get rid of moral iniquity? If citizens and politicians wanted to do right, would not many political problems cease to vex us? Bribery, extravagance in the use of public funds, rake-offs and cheating in public contracts, franchise-stealing, are among the worst of our political troubles, and every one of them has its real center in the corruption in human nature. Society is not menaced by these evils because men cannot discover the laws of municipal government. It is not political wisdom we so sorely need, but righteousness. As Lincoln Steffens declares:

> You can't reform a city by reforming part of it. You can't reform a city alone. You can't reform

politics alone. And as for corruption and the understanding thereof, we cannot run 'round and 'round in municipal rings and understand ring corruption; it isn't a ring thing. . . . . And I have found that I cannot confine myself to politics and grasp all the ramifications of political corruption; it isn't political corruption. It's corruption.

Would that we might cease our speculative treatment of the real political issue and face the truth. Political corruption is the corruption of human nature — the wickedness of man's heart. The political problem is a religious problem.

How forcibly does history bear out these observations! Social distresses, such as war, poverty, ignorance, tyranny, and domestic misery, in no small degree have been due to corrupt rulers, to privileged classes that gained their power by unrighteous means, and used it recklessly and selfishly, sacrificing every interest of their fellow-men on the altar of greed or ambition.

It is often difficult to understand an intricate political or economic problem, to analyze complex conditions, and to seize upon the principle to be followed. But a much harder task is that of socializing the individual, inducing men to love their fellows and to seek their

welfare. Every real and vital improvement in social life is due, not to the coercion of laws or the force of arms, but to the progression of moral character.

The arts-and-crafts movement, still in its infancy, is based on the idea that men do and must express what they are in their work. They can lie in wood and stone and iron quite as well as in words. A badly constructed building tumbles into ruins, and precious lives are lost. Somebody lied and cheated. A miserable character has expressed itself in fraud that resulted in a waste of time, money, and life. Our houses are full of lies, base imitations, shiftless work, and greed for gain, in the shape of useless baubles, shoddy garments, furniture that quickly falls into pieces, fraudulent decorations.

The remedy for these evils is to be found in a nobler and broader religious life. As William L. Price has said:

> Blasphemy is neglect. Blasphemy is don't care. The workman's bench is an altar. You have perhaps associated reverence and blasphemy with your attitude toward some abstract or distant or grotesque or demoniacal concept of God. But I say that reverence and blasphemy may with more ominous menace dictate your attitude toward man. I can see God in the honest

joint of a chair. I can see God woven in tapestries and beaten in brasses and bound in the covers of books.

What is required, then, to produce a good architecture, good literature, good furniture, good anything, is not merely technical knowledge and skill, but good character. We express what we are in our work. We cannot hide the truth. Our methods of trade and manufacturing, our systems of politics and of finance, will be honeycombed with corruption if we ourselves are corrupt. Refine, elevate, purify the soul, and the effect will be seen in every department of human activity. This is going to the root of the matter. This kind of reform is really formation. It is vital. It deals with the disease itself and not with the symptoms. In the knowledge of God, in the passion for honesty and justice, in the love of one's neighbor, will be found those dynamic forces which will create a new social order.

Viewing this question from the other side, because activities and institutions react upon men and help to shape character, we find a new and high standard by which to estimate the value of industrial and political methods, and by which social progress can be measured. Churches, schools, industrial combinations,

labor unions, political parties, and political habits are to be judged by their effect upon human character. Do they refine or degrade? Do they tend to infidelity in human relations or to brotherhood, to avarice or to generosity, to inhumanity or to sympathy? When the moral character suffers under any form of social activity, no justification can be advanced for the continued existence of that activity, except on changed lines. It is an enemy to be slain without mercy.

The most superficial acquaintance with modern political and economic literature, and with the social problems of our time, will satisfy candid minds that the hopeful feature is the demand for the application of this life-test to modern government and industry. The ethical influence of political methods and forms of industrial organization is a primary consideration with thoughtful and patriotic men. When it is asked whether a business pays or a political program is desirable, more and more is attention directed toward the ethical standard. It is not enough to show that large dividends will result, or that the temporary victory of a political party will follow. The question is fast becoming a moral one. Is

character developed? Is human life enriched? Wealth is viewed in terms of life. Machines are judged, not only by their ability to produce material goods, but by their effect upon the workers. Political and industrial programs are tested in the light of their probable effects upon the moral ideals and moral life of the nation. There is an increasing insistence upon the necessity of employing this standard as the real and fundamental criterion of social progress. Never before in the history of the world has the ethical issue been so emphatically, persistently, and clearly presented as it is today. Never were so many men seeking to subdue selfishness by the development of the altruistic sentiments. Never was the duty of the individual to society so nobly conceived and so eagerly obeyed as at the present time.

And, further — a fact to be regarded as practically conclusive of the position we have taken — never before has there been such general diffusion of happiness, prosperity, and knowledge. More people share in the benefits of civilization today than ever before. Social progress, in other words, has gone hand in hand with the moral progress of the race. Indeed, social progress is fundamentally moral

progress. As the higher life of man has been developed, every phase of man's life has been elevated. He is healthier, in possession of more of this world's goods, richer in knowledge, on the whole happier than ever before. All this surely indicates the path to further social progress. It should help us all to see that, if we would bind factions, classes, and nations together in a nobler brotherhood; if we would abolish special privileges, establish justice, disseminate mercy and loving-kindness, we can do so only by developing the spiritual life of man. The bonds that bind us and make us one are spiritual bonds.

The victory over hatred and envy which keep men apart, and over the greed that causes men to trespass on human rights and disregard human obligations, can be achieved only by fostering love of God and of man in the human heart; that love which is not a vague sentiment or an empty feeling; the love of God who gave his best to save the world; the self-sacrificing love that seeks the welfare of the beloved; that love for man which found its highest expression in Christ who went about doing good, who never placed the things of this world above the value of the soul, who taught us that "a man's

life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

In claiming so much for religion we do not forget the influences of scientific investigations and discoveries, mechanical inventions, and intellectual acquirements. Newspapers, libraries, schools, and the increasing comforts of life, all have their part in the world's progress. Industrial combinations and organized labor profoundly modify the conditions under which the work of the world is carried on, and more or less directly facilitate social betterment. But all these achievements have to be used in the right way, and the use we make of them largely determines their real value. A newspaper, for example, may be a curse or a blessing to society. Its effect is determined by the character of its moral influence. If it is conducted solely as a business enterprise, without regard to moral considerations; if its proprietors use its columns to deceive people with lying advertisements; if they accept bribes and support corrupt politicians, the influence of that newspaper will be hostile to social progress.

Printing-presses, type-setting machines, rapid transportation, and swift communication

are not in themselves a blessing. They are means to an end. What do we say in our newspapers? What messages flash across the wires? What goes on in our skyscrapers and beautiful buildings? What use do we make of the comforts and luxuries bestowed upon us by science? The answer to these questions fixes the real value of inventions. So no amount of material progress can render religious considerations irrelevant. Of itself no mechanical achievement will ultimately promote social progress.

Politics and religion are not two distinct things. Political practices and institutions may be tested by ethical standards, because they are expressions of the moral life of a people. We have just as good politics as we deserve, because our political condition is just what we are — no better, no worse.

Political deeds spring out of the common life and then react upon public morals. This suggests the folly of trying to reform politics without changing the moral life of the people, or of attempting to improve the moral life, leaving the political habits and institutions untouched. They are both parts of one process, and we must work at both ends of the problem.

There is no such thing as individual morality, if by that term is meant a private morality that has no relationship in any sense with social morality. The individual is constantly under the influence of social standards of right and wrong.

The boy among us becomes familiar with all forms of political corruption. He breathes a tainted atmosphere. He reads and hears of all sorts of political frauds, bribery, ballot-box stuffing, and franchise-stealing. While he hears of protests from the few, he soon learns that all of us, represented by the state, really do not care. We do little or nothing. We do not enforce the law impartially. We catch and punish the small offenders, and let the big ones go. The youth soon learns of flagrant violations of the laws against gambling and disorderly houses, excise regulations, and other ordinances dealing with institutionalized vice. He notes the public indifference, the refusal of officials to do their duty. All this knowledge, this intimate acquaintance with the real thoughts, feelings, and standards of the people, slowly shapes his life. He accepts prevailing customs and ideals as his own ends in life. He soon feels about all these things the way every-

body else feels. And if he does not become either a disreputable or a respectable rascal, he joins that large class of easy-going, indifferent, unpatriotic "good citizens."

Much of the political corruption of our time and the general character of our public morality are attributable to two leading features of our social life; first, the love of money, with all its kindred passions unrestrained by moral ideals; secondly, the double standard of ethics which is almost universally employed in political and business circles. Perhaps the latter accounts in no slight degree for the uncontrolled power of the love of money. If this dual standard could be destroyed, and the moral life unified, it would mean more for our country than could be accomplished by any other reform.

The average man, no matter how active in the church he may be, is one thing in his home and private life, and quite another being in his political and commercial life. He has a different code of honor, another standard for conduct, in his more public life than that which he respects in domestic, religious, and club circles. The political jobber, the trickster and exploiter in business, the oppressive monopolist and

franchise-stealer, is often a respected and cherished friend, a devoted husband, a zealous churchman, and a benevolent philanthropist.

This state of things cannot last long. It is a temporary stage in the evolution of our social morality. Either the political or commercial trickster and corruptionist must cease to respect a high code of morals in his private life, or he must alter his public habits. He cannot long remain one kind of a man in one sphere of his activities, and another sort in the rest of his life.

There are not wanting significant signs that these changes are already taking place. Some are turning toward the right in public as well as in private life, and others are becoming religiously and domestically what they are in politics and business.

Here, then, is field for noble and needed work. The press, the pulpit, and the schools may join hands in a campaign of education which shall have for its end the unification of our moral life, the breaking down of the dual standard, the removal of the barrier between the sacred and the secular.

Such a reform would penetrate to the root of political evils. It would be vital, not super-

ficial. Our only salvation lies that way. All other reforms are merely contributary influences toward this crying need of our American life.

The existence of perils and evils does not prove our modern social life to be inferior to that of other times; for every age has had its characteristic evils. Ancient wrongs have been righted. True culture and refinement have been widely promoted. There is larger freedom and opportunity today than ever before. Pessimism is only apparently justified. The outlook is promising. The recognition of existing evils, the very discontent with conditions once endured in silence and ignorance, the consciousness of those higher ideals by which we indict wrongdoers, and in the light of which we battle for righteousness, are all signs of progress, the grounds of faith, "the substance of things hoped for" in the days to come.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION AND CHRIST

Religion is often regarded as only a collection of doctrines, ceremonies, and rituals; just as science is considered as a system of knowledge. But we cannot leave personality out of account in any of the religions, sciences, or arts. Science has been made what it is by great thinkers. Scientific knowledge is the knowledge possessed by those who have intelligently studied some phase of the universe. Politics, literature, and art have been promoted chiefly by the masters, the men of creative genius and magnificent powers.

So while religion is the experience of all men in its relation to God, the personality of a few remarkable men has exercised a profound and lasting influence upon the religious life of mankind. This is an interesting fact, because it furnishes another illustration of the naturalness of religion. It shows that religion is a phase of human experience, and that its origin and growth have been determined by those universal laws which have controlled the progress

of man in all other spheres of thought and activity.

When regarded from this point of view, the life of Jesus Christ is seen in its true relationship to the religious life of the world. Principal A. M. Fairbairn, in *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* states this fact with great force thus:

> If then man, by his moral being, touches the skirts of God, and God in enforcing his law is ever, by means of great persons, shaping the life of man to its divine issues, what could be more consonant, alike with man's nature and God's method of forming or re-forming it, than that he should send a supreme Personality as the vehicle of highest good to the race?

Remembering that the life of God is in the life or soul of man, and that religion exists because man, by the constitution of his being, holds relationships with God, and is ever striving to become more and more conscious of God, it is very evident that there is a divine and a human side to religion. That is to say, God reveals, unfolds, manifests himself; man discovers and accepts the truth thus inherent in nature and in his soul, and enters into fellowship with the Divine Being.

Christ is, therefore, on the divine side an expression of God, who is seeking to enlighten

man and to bring his nature into harmony with his own. God speaks to the race through Christ. He shows man what he is, what his feelings toward man are, what his divine ideal of human nature is, so that man may have some clearly defined conception of what the moral ideal is like, because the ultimate moral ideal is God. Glimpses of this ideal man has always had: God, revealing himself in nature, personal experience, and history has taught him much about it. But its clearest visible form is in the character of Christ, attracting all lofty aspirations toward itself, and awakening within us an ardent desire to realize this ideal in ourselves. That is the divine side — God seeking man, revealing himself.

On the human side man seeks God. Christ, as a gloriously endowed human soul, struggles with temptation, fights sin in all its subtle forms. As a child he obeys his parents; as a man he earns his living by hard, honest work. He grows in grace and in wisdom amid trials and temptations. He hungers and thirsts after true righteousness. He is intensely human. He weeps and prays. He mourns for the dead and grieves for faithless friends. He pities the multitude enslaved by tradition and groping

blindly after God. Hypocrisy and cant stir his soul into indignant protests. He breaks loose from the traditions of centuries, and marks out for himself and the world a new path to truth. He searches for principles lying back of forms and customs. He loves men with unequaled devotion — all men, good and bad. He is sincere to the core of his being. He speaks simply and naturally, without cant or hesitation. In short, he is a brave, pure, true, loving man — the ideal religious man. The man who knows God, loves God and obeys God.

Christ's relationship to religion in general is, then, that he is, on one hand, the most beautiful expression of the life of God in the soul of man, and, on the other, the noblest example of what a truly religious man ought to be. So he shows us in himself what the divine nature is like, and what man is at his best.

Now let us see how this view of Jesus Christ fits the religious needs of human nature, and then how the life and teaching of Jesus are adapted to the advanced experience of modern times.

Professor William James has said:

> We become conscious of what we ourselves are by imitating others; the consciousness of what others are precedes; the sense of self grows by the sense of pat-

tern. . . . . Imitation shades imperceptibly into emulation. . . . . Emulation is the very nerve of human society.

How beautifully does the mission of Jesus Christ exemplify this law of life as laid down by a modern thinker! Christ came that men might have a true consciousness of themselves and of the God whose life dwells in them. To be like Christ should be the goal of every person. We become conscious of ourselves, we awake to a sense of what we really are, by emulating Christ. We do this by first becoming conscious of what he is. Then we try to think his thoughts, to have his feelings, and to will to do what he willed to do. This process is really a development of the life of God in our souls. It is carrying upward and onward what good there is in us. No new faculty is added to our personality. Christ had what we have — mind, affections, will. But all these were brought into harmony with the mind, heart, and will of God. This is the religious need of all men. In every age and clime men have been stumbling and groping, more or less consciously, toward that goal. Christ reached the summit; and we mark the way he climbed, and follow in his footsteps. That is Christianity. To be something other than a Christian is to

wander around in the wilderness following other guides; or to lie down in despair and let come what will; or to turn the other way and plunge headlong into the depths, without any care as to what becomes of us.

Would we realize high ideals, find ourselves, think and love and act as becomes the children of God, would we find rest for our souls in sweet fellowship with the Eternal Life of the universe, let us emulate Christ. This emulation is our salvation. This emulation is the very nerve of society — the hope of the world.

Secondly, we were to inquire how the life and teaching of Jesus are adapted to modern conditions. Every step forward in human experience is accompanied by changes in religion. Religion develops like every other part of human experience. The essence or fundamental elements of religion may remain in all forms of the religious life, but the expressions of religion change, because human experience is constantly broadening. New ideas enter into the religious life and alter that life.

What will happen in the future is a purely speculative question that need not concern us. Is Christ our true guide now? This is a prac-

tical and vital issue. Many important changes have taken place in the theological views of Christ and the Bible and Christian doctrines. We are now in the midst of what is called a "reconstruction of theology." Is it possible that these changes indicate an abandonment of Jesus Christ as our religious guide; our hope and salvation?

Let us, therefore, consider some features of modern life and thought in their bearing upon a few of the essential elements in the character and teaching of Jesus Christ.

First, this is a scientific age. Men are in search of reality. Knowledge is prized as never before — exact knowledge, systematized knowledge, that conforms to the facts of the universe. No subject is thought too sacred to be explored. The Bible has been thrown into the crucible of investigation and fearlessly criticised. Tradition is no longer respected. Every declaration and experience of the past which history records is subjected to the most rigorous scrutiny. The terrors of hell and the threats of the priesthood are losing their power to exact an unwilling conformity to established precedents. Freedom from bondage to error and to superstition is the eagerly pursued goal.

The spirit of Jesus was in perfect harmony with this spirit of our times. He defined eternal life to be the knowledge of God and of himself. Thus he threw open the doors of the universe to the seeker after reality. We are encouraged to seek God and to know him. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Here we have the secret of all true freedom boldly laid down. No scientist could say more. Christ was a fearless thinker. Whether the scientist agrees with all of Christ's conclusions or not, he must admit that Jesus was no slave to traditions. He broke through the crust of tradition, the teachings of men, in search of universal principles. He had no fear of church or state. He taught not as the scribes. His whole life is a noble exhibition of the truly scientific spirit, although the facts with which he dealt were not, for the most part, those of physical, but of spiritual, nature. He perished as a martyr for free speech and untrammeled inquiry.

This is an individualistic age. Socialism, in all its forms, is advocated because it is thought to be in the interests of a larger life for the individual. Rights and liberties are claimed for the individual, and are no longer

regarded as the peculiar possession of privileged classes. Civilization is estimated by what it does for man. Philanthropic societies, missionary enterprises, laws, and institutions are justified or condemned on the ground of their value in broadening the scope of man's life. Momentous changes are being wrought in the industrial world by lofty conceptions of the worth of the individual.

No religious teacher equals Jesus in the estimate he placed on the value of the individual, and in the power to impress these ideas upon the world. He came, not to extinguish individual desire, the goal of Buddhism, but to increase desire, to enrich and to exalt the individual life. "What shall a man give in exchange for himself?" he exclaimed. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself?" "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Such was Christ's idea of the worth of personality and of the relation between things — external possessions — and the soul. Christ's estimate of the individual is one of the great evolutionary forces of our time. It will help to save society. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine to seek one lost

sheep. He came to seek the lost, the friendless, and the helpless. They were to him the children of the Heavenly Father, irrespective of their character, possessions, or social standing.

But this is also a socialistic age — a term with many meanings. Let it stand here for the consciousness that we are members one of another; that the individual only truly lives when he lives in society; that brotherhood is to be expressed in every relationship of life, be it political, industrial, or religious. The word "social" is on everybody's tongue. Social topics are the popular themes of scientific treatises, poems, novels, essays. Enthusiasm for humanity is the master-passion of the age. Social service or work for society, the duty of man to man, the practical expression of love for one's neighbor, is the widely inculcated doctrine of reformers, preachers, artists, literary men, and statesmen.

Has Jesus a message for a time like ours? Why, he is the great exponent of this master-passion. His teachings and his life constitute the very essence of the inspiration for social service. Religion to him is love to God and to man. We cannot love God without loving man. If we love and serve our fellow-men, we

shall then truly love and serve God, whether we really know it or not. In a parable on the last judgment he represents those who had fed the hungry and clothed the naked, on whom he was to bestow blessings, as saying: "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink?" "And the King made answer and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

Christ's fundamental principle of life for himself and for all men is "not to be ministered unto but to minister." The sin of the rich man in the parable of Dives and Lazarus was not that he was rich or licentious or a drunkard, but that he was selfish and neglected the sick and needy at his door. The law of social service is a cardinal doctrine in Christ's religion. The love of God is to find its truest and noblest expression, not in prayers and psalms and ceremonies, but in self-denying labors for others. Self-realization, the watchword of modern education and modern ethics, means to live for others. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

We hear much today about ethical relation-

ships, by which is meant that the bonds which bind men are not merely political and industrial, but ethical, spiritual. The employer is more than employer to his workmen; he is a brother. All men are brothers. Society is made up of individuals who should live for their brothers. "Each for all and all for each" should be the fundamental principle of social life. Where will one find these truths more clearly taught than in the words of Jesus? To establish the kingdom of God upon the earth was his mission — a kingdom; not a collection of individuals, but an organized society. Primarily the message of Jesus was to the individual, and any attempt to reform society or to promote human welfare that ignores the individual will fail. But its message was to the individual in his social relations, as a member of the great family of God. How else can men come to regard one another as brothers, unless they see the divine image in the individual, and become conscious of the underlying unity of humanity in the light of Christ's teachings?

It is therefore in the redemption of the individual, in all his relations with his fellowmen, that Jesus based his hopes for mankind. No note of his teaching is out of harmony with

the highest aspirations of this age of liberty, fraternity, and equality. No one shares in his authority. His spiritual leadership is not threatened in the least by the progress of knowledge and the evolution of society. Every step forward brings us nearer to his thought, and every development of consciousness reveals in a stronger, clearer light the power of his life over humanity. As Francis G. Peabody says:

> Among the conflicting activities of the present time his power is not that of one more activity among the rest, but that of wisdom, personality, idealism. Into the midst of the discordant efforts of men he comes as one having authority; the self-assertion of each instrument of social service is hushed as he gives his sign; and in the surrender of each life to him it finds its place in the symphony of all.

The last characteristic feature of modern times to be considered fittingly follows those mentioned. This is what is called a practical age. The long-standing quarrel between the practical and the ideal is settled by joining the two together in what is called "practical idealism." Whatever we think or do, we must be practical, it is said. So, since we must have theories and ideals, let them be practical. This is simply one of the phases of the passion for

reality. Men are tired of theories that cannot be tested except in the realm of speculation. They want no ideals that cannot be pursued with some hope of reaching them, or at least of making progress toward them. To logical demonstration must be added the proof of experience. The real test of truth is life. All this has profoundly affected theology, and the changes it has wrought in the views of religion have greatly alarmed many good people. It has resulted in a new classification of doctrines into those which can be tested in any age by anybody, and those which can be tested only by philosophy or historical criticism. Those doctrines are regarded as the most essential which can be verified in human experience. The rest may or may not be true; but, in any case, we can never be quite so sure of them as we can of those which deal most vitally with character and conduct. It would carry us too far afield to enter into this subject in detail. The fact itself is all that is important for our purposes. Does Christ meet the issue? Will he consent to have his teaching tested by life? Does he give us a series of abstract theories and speculative propositions which we must accept, without any other evidence than his word; or can

we verify his teaching for ourselves in our daily experience? Does he give us speculation or experience?

Now, undoubtedly Christ said many things hard to understand. His person and place in history, and his relationship to God and to man, give rise to many problems of great significance, and difficult of solution. But the vital question which concerns every man, educated or uneducated, is this: Can those elements of Christ's life and teaching which are really essential to human welfare be tested in practical experience?

Christ meets that issue with a confidence inspiring confidence, with transparent sincerity and admirable frankness. He, at least, is not afraid to have his commands implicitly obeyed, whatever fears his disciples may entertain. He says: "My teaching is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." This saying grips the whole man — mind, heart, and will. Surrender self to Christ. Obey him, and we shall find ourselves in harmony with God. Many a theological doctrine has been a hindrance instead of an aid to the religious life. It

has allured men in search of peace and truth into speculative realms, and obscured the living Christ who can and will become our spiritual friend and guide. Emulate Christ, and you will be convinced that his way to live is the only true way. "If we can be our complete selves without him," says Professor Coe, "no conceivable chain of logical reasoning can ever bind his authority upon us." The Christ of personal experience is the all-sufficient authority, the test of Christian truth, and the foundation of the Christian life.

To emulate Christ means more than to imitate his deeds. It is not in the mere performance of acts similar to those of Christ that one finds peace and gains power over self. Nor is the end reached merely by believing that what Christ said is true. His words and deeds were but the expression of his inner life, his attitude toward God. It is that life we need, "that life whereof our nerves are scant." True faith is the appropriation of Christ's spirit so that within each soul the inner life of Jesus Christ is reproduced. The whole personality enters into fellowship with the spirit of Jesus. In the consciousness of what he is we become conscious of our real selves, and of the rela-

tions between ourselves, God, and other selves. Thus we share in the calmness, the peace, the joy, the love of Christ. We have his consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is our delight to do the Father's will. We have Christ's consciousness of our brother's nature, and, like Christ, we live to promote his welfare. The walls between the sacred and the secular are broken down. Religion becomes a thing of everyday life. In every duty of life we discover a new meaning and a rich significance. Daily toil becomes sacred. The workbench becomes the altar. Love for Christ is expressed in honest work, uplifting art, clean politics, and ennobling literature. Day by day, in all the affairs of practical life, we test the life and the teachings of the Master, and in no other way.

"Poor sad humanity
Through all the dust and heat
Turns back with bleeding feet
By the weary round it came,
Upon the simple thought,
By the great Master taught,
And that remaineth still,
Not he that repeateth the name,
But he that doeth the will."

This view of the relation between religion

and Christ will assist the general reader to understand the nature of final authority in religion. Since people are coming more and more to refuse to believe anything without evidence there is naturally a widespread interest in the subject of authority. Blind faith in the teachings of the church or of the Bible is felt to be unworthy of intelligent people. The simple declaration of others does not satisfy many honest inquiring minds. They want to prove things for themselves. The conviction grows that the real authority in religion is the authority of personal obedience to Jesus Christ, through which truth is revealed. As Auguste Sabatier declares:

> In the last analysis, and to go down to the very root of the Christian religion, to be a Christian is not to acquire a notion of God, or even an abstract doctrine of his paternal love; it is to live over, within ourselves, the inner spiritual life of Christ, and by the union of our heart with his to feel in ourselves the presence of a Father and the reality of our filial relation to him, just as Christ felt in himself the Father's presence and his filial relation to him.

This is not equivalent to saying that the religious experience recorded in the Bible and expressed in the church is in no sense an authority for us; but it shows us that we never

can stand on solid ground until we have experienced personally the reality of fellowship with God. Life itself is our greatest teacher.

The interior of a beautiful cathedral may be described to us. We may believe the testimony of others respecting its architectural glories. But what knowledge acquired by verbal reports can equal the knowledge born of a visit to the cathedral itself? Standing within its walls, we see for ourselves, and feel what we never otherwise could feel, no matter how much faith we placed in the authoritative statements made by others.

No man ever has reached, or ever can reach, satisfactory conclusions respecting Christ by purely intellectual processes. It is waste of time to discuss Christ unless we are willing to seek knowledge of him in the only way by which it can finally be obtained — the personal effort to realize the Christ ideal.

"We must enter into life," says Henry Van Dyke, "by giving ourselves to the personal Christ who unveils the love of the Father in a Human Life, and calls us with Divine authority to submit our Liberty to God's sovereignty in blessed immortal service to our fellow-men for Christ's sake."

This is the real message of Christianity to mankind. The universal religious life reaches its supreme expression in human lives transfigured by this self-surrender to Christ. The Bible, the Christian church, and all the forms and ceremonies of the Christian religion are simply means to an end and that end is — Christlikeness.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGION AND THE BIBLE

Confused by conflicting authorities and the widespread agitation over the results of modern biblical criticism multitudes have lost their bearings. This is inevitable and in no wise proves that scientific research and free discussion should be repressed. The Reformation, although a great blessing to the world, was accompanied by many doubts, heart-aches, and commotions.

Peace of mind, secured by ignorance of truth and unreasoning conservatism is by no means desirable. The beauty and fruitfulness of the earth were produced by centuries of agitation. Life and progress are based upon struggle and change. There is not the slightest justification for hostility to the fearless study of the Bible. Nothing true can be destroyed by criticism, and what is false should be shown to be so.

But it is not our purpose to enlist in the ranks of the biblical combatants and to engage the reader in what might prove a fruitless con-

troversy. A calm consideration of the relations between religion and the Bible will show that there are many things respecting the Bible which may be regarded as facts, even if there are numerous other disputed propositions. The feeling that the whole subject is enshrouded in mystery, that criticism has imperiled everything, that the average man cannot know what to believe, although perhaps a natural feeling in view of the prevailing agitation, is, nevertheless, unwarranted. Many preachers have increased the doubts and fears of the people by misrepresenting the views of biblical scholars, and by teaching their hearers to assume an absurd and false attitude toward the Bible. For instance, one frequently hears it said: "If you cannot believe all the Bible teaches, you may as well discard it altogether. 'False in one, false in all.'" The critics are depicted with knives in their hands, cutting out one passage after another, until nothing but the covers of the Bible are left. We heard a noted evangelist speak, in substance, as follows: "The tired workman takes down the old family Bible in the evening to read a chapter to his wife and children. Perhaps the passage selected is one of the Psalms. The higher

critic enters and cries: 'Stop! You must not read that. We have not decided who wrote that psalm.' The humble believer turns to one of the prophetical books, and begins to read: 'Stop!' shouts the scholar again, 'You must not read that; we have not decided when that was written.'" It is difficult for those who know the facts to characterize such a misrepresentation of the scholars in terms that will not sound harsh. Yet the truth is that such statements could be inspired only by ignorance or insincerity. No biblical scholar forbids or discourages the reading of any part of the Bible. He might disagree from those who believe in what are called orthodox or traditional views of the Bible as to dates, authorship, and the historical or religious significance of portions of Scripture; but he regards every part of the Bible as historically important, and as possessing significance in the religious life of man.

To pursue this interesting subject further would lead us too far astray, however; for our aim is to set forth, as clearly as possible, a few plain facts respecting religion and the Bible, which may be of service to troubled minds.

The Bible is not religion; it is the product of religion; a collection of books written in

many different centuries, in various stages of civilization, and dealing with a great variety of religious experiences. In these books are to be found history, biography, poems, parables, proverbs, dreams and visions, and prophecies. They furnish us with a multitude of facts concerning the thoughts, feelings, and deeds of individuals, families, tribes, and nations. Taken together, these books may be compared to a photograph showing us what manner of men they were who lived in ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. Cromwell is reported to have said to an artist: "Paint me as I am, warts and all." The Bible faithfully portrays the Hebrews and certain other peoples just as they were, "warts and all." Good and evil, kindness and cruelty, greatness and littleness, failures and successes, truth and falsehood, are to be found expressed and described in the Bible. Each century had its own peculiar views of God and duty, its own aspirations and achievements; and these are all, more or less adequately, expressed and embodied in these books.

The doctrines of the Bible are the doctrines held by men in different ages and countries. The religion of the Bible is the religion of

people who once lived on the earth; battled with temptation; struggled to promote their political and social welfare; migrated from one country to another; built cities; organized governments; passed laws; fought battles; founded synagogues and Christian churches; adopted religious forms and ceremonies; conducted public worship; preached about every subject that interested them, before kings or the multitude; and, in short, lived their lives and struggled for the truth just exactly as other peoples have done before and since that time. Is it any wonder, then, that we find recorded in the Bible varying conceptions of religion, deeds of cruelty, noble examples of virtue, and different ideas of God?

With this conception of the Bible before us, it is not difficult to understand that the Bible may be studied in a variety of ways and for different purposes. For instance, it may be studied purely for historical ends. Information may be sought concerning the ancient tribes of Israel — their origin, migrations, and relations with other nations. The growth of the national life may be traced through the era of the Judges to the establishment of the monarchy, from the division of the kingdom to the

fall of Samaria and of Jerusalem, during the period of the captivity to the return and rebuilding of the fallen cities.

The Bible may be studied biographically, taking up one after another the great men of Israel — Moses, Solomon, David, Amos, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Christ, Paul, Peter, John.

Or we may study the book for sociological purposes. In that case interest would be centered upon the social life of the various peoples of Bible times; upon the origin of various social institutions, social customs, and social ideals.

Philosophers or theologians may investigate the biblical literature for the purpose of tracing the ideas which were held respecting creation and the laws of nature. The ideas of God and of man's moral obligations may be collected and arranged in a systematic form.

The Bible may be studied in its legislative features for the purpose of obtaining light on the civil and ecclesiastical laws of the Hebrews and of neighboring nations. The results would constitute a part of the history of human laws.

The literary expert might study the epics, lyrics, essays, biographies, stories, and histories of the Bible in the same spirit in which

he studies the literature of Greece and Rome, or of the Middle Ages.

But these historical, philosophical, legal, theological, or literary uses of the Bible, while they serve the religious life more or less directly through a better understanding of the Bible, do not constitute the most important use of the Bible. Knowledge of the history or theology in the biblical literature is one thing, but the religious use of the facts and teachings of the Bible is a vastly different thing. One might study the Bible in all the ways we have mentioned, and yet refuse to profit by the teachings of the books. The Bible, in short, is not primarily addressed to the head, but to the heart and will of man. It is not merely as history or biography that the Bible is useful. Its chief value consists in its power to lead us to forsake our sins, to love mercy, to deal justly, and to walk humbly with our God. One might be thoroughly informed on the historical, theological, or literary elements of the Bible, and remain indifferent to the God revealed in the Bible, or even be an open enemy of Christianity. We never get the most out of the Bible, then, until we use it as a book "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for cor-

rection, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Bible is a providential gift of God to man; and, like all the other gifts of God, it may be neglected or abused, and so fail to render the service to man of which it is capable. There is nothing magical or mysterious about its influence over human life. It possesses no power for good apart from the intelligent use made of it. We may take a false attitude toward it. The simple faith that it is God's book, without any understanding of what the book teaches, is of little account. Its value to the soul wholly depends upon the amount of its truth which we appropriate and by which we live.

We are nowhere taught in the Bible that salvation depends upon believing in the infallibility of the Bible, or that we shall be punished if we do not believe this dogma. The real need is not more faith in doctrines about the Bible, but more faith in the essential teachings of the Bible itself; instead of treating the Bible as a fetish, a sort of a charm, we need to understand its contents and practice its teachings.

The religious life requires nourishment to

insure growth. Spiritual development should be the aim of everyone. It is sad to reflect how many people seem to think that because they have professed a faith in God and joined the church they are safe — sure of an entrance into heaven when they die. This narrow view of the religious life is widely held; and consequently the soul is deprived of that culture which is the chief end of our existence. We were never meant to stand still but to add virtue to virtue, to grow "in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." From the Christian point of view, salvation means Christlikeness. The more one becomes like Christ, the more saved one becomes. Being a Christian is like going to school and learning something every day, acquiring the benefits of development, increasing our capacity for usefulness and happiness. The idea that nothing more can be done for the religious life after we have made our peace with God is based upon a totally erroneous conception of the nature of the Christian life. It is because so many live according to this wrong theory that there are so many feeble Christians. Their lives indicate a lack of spiritual nourishment; they are weak and inefficient; they want vitality, power, breadth — in a word, life.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

These laws, testimonies, statutes, commandments, and judgments of the Lord are to be found in the Bible with a simplicity and clearness unparalleled in nature or in the other sacred books of the world. It is our privilege to seek them out and to obey them.

"But," it is asked, "where is there room for revelation according to this theory? Is not the Bible the Word of God?" The Bible is not revelation, is not the Word of God, in the sense that every view of the Divine Being and every doctrine of duty in the Bible is the view and doctrine of God himself.

Again, recall the idea of religion as the life of God seeking expression in the mind of man, or, conversely, the soul of man struggling for a larger recognition of the life and truths of God. God seeking man and man seeking God — these are the two sides of religion. The

Bible records a part of this universal process. Its chief claim upon our attention is not that God has expressed himself, or man sought God, nowhere but in the period covered by the biblical literature. Other peoples had their religious experiences; God spoke also in them; and the history of this search for God and this divine self-revelation is exceedingly helpful to us. We know far too little about it.

But there is a uniqueness, an unparalleled simplicity, breadth, and beauty, in the revelation of God contained in the Bible. It will not be denied that nations as well as individuals differ in their native endowments, in their experiences and achievements, and in their contributions to civilization. The fact that God is in all men does not mean that all men are equally conscious of the divine within them. There are countless stages of religious development. To state the matter in one way, God has revealed truth to some which he has withheld from others. Or, on the other hand, some have reached stages of consciousness of God, have discovered truths, and enjoyed experiences far beyond the attainments of others. The same is true in politics, art, industry, or education. The reason why the Bible is with-

out an equal as a guide to man in religion is that truth was revealed to the Hebrews, and especially in Jesus Christ, which was unrevealed to, or undiscovered by, any other people in history. This does not mean that other nations did not possess any of this truth, nor display in their lives any of the virtues which distinguished Bible characters. But, taken as a whole, the history contained in the Bible is unequaled in the lessons and inspirations it furnishes the human race. No other nation had such a genius for religion. No other nation has left us a record which, from the beginning to the end, so clearly shows us the hand of God in history and enables us to trace the development of the spiritual life of a people under divine guidance. "The Book is, throughout, a revelation intended to bring light out of darkness, to make crooked ways straight, and, across hills and valleys, to make highways for the weakest to pass along." It is the greatness of the history itself which the Bible records that gives the Bible its value. God nowhere else has spoken to man in such comprehensible, familiar language.

It is, then, as a Book of life, capable of arousing the soul to a sense of its needs and of

pointing the way to life, that the Bible is unexcelled as a religious guide.

But how is one to discriminate between the good and the bad characters described in the Bible, and how is one to know which of the many views of God and of human obligation are true? So many ideas about the Bible have had to be given up that one never knows what to believe about it. These are questions that trouble many minds.

Now, in the first place, much that has been discarded is really the invention of men. Views have been held which have been supposed to be contained in the Bible, but which are not to be found there. We must distinguish between what the Bible says for itself and what men say about it. Great progress has been made toward a clearer and truer understanding of the Bible by simply giving up ideas about the book which we have inherited, but which a fearless and honest inquiry cannot find in the Bible itself.

When this is accomplished, there will still remain the necessity for discrimination between the true and the false, the good and the bad, in the Bible. There are, as we have seen, a great variety of views in the Bible, and all

sorts of men and women. To distinguish the difference between these ideas and characters is not so difficult as it theoretically appears. Of course, it requires study and intelligence to become an expert Bible student. Is this strange? Can one master any great subject without study? But experience demonstrates that people do not make such very serious blunders, after all. Nobody thinks that Jonah was as fine a character as Amos or Isaiah, or that Samson was as wise as Solomon, or that Saul was as fine a specimen of manhood as David. Even the untrained reader notes differences between Peter and Paul. Everybody concedes that Christ excels all the biblical characters in wisdom and goodness. We do make distinctions, and we do judge the biblical men and women by certain standards. They are not all equally attractive to us. Everyone has favorite passages of Scripture. No one enjoys a genealogical chapter as he does the Sermon on the Mount. We all see the ethical differences between the laws of Moses and the precepts of Christ. As a matter of fact, the great mass of people who read the Bible find in it comfort, instruction, and inspiration, without settling various questions in historical criticism or in biblical theology.

There is no infallible rule, then, by which one can solve all the questions arising from the Bible. The important thing to remember is that it can help us in spite of difficulties, just as we enjoy sunshine and utilize heat without a knowledge of science. The more we know about the Bible the better. Criticism and research help to render its teachings clearer. But the real difficulty with most of us is not that we cannot find anything in the Bible to meet our moral needs. The difficulty is that we do not practice those things that are clearly taught; that we pass by the plain commands of Christ in search of difficulties, and get entangled in questions that do not pertain to our practical life. If we will, we can lay hold on these simple verities and find peace.

The seeker after God and personal righteousness finds in the Bible a record of the thoughts, feelings, and conduct of men who grappled with essentially the same problems as those which confront all men today. He sees the inner life of religious men laid bare. He marks the effects of love and hate, righteous zeal and ignoble ambition, true faith and cowardly unbelief. He finds encouragement and inspiration in notable examples of fidelity

to duty, and is warned by the miserable failures of those who forsook God to pursue their own foolish ends. He learns the secret of true peace and moral strength. His weary soul finds rest in the contemplation of truths that reveal the glory of God in human experience. When the tragic story nears its end, "in the fulness of time," there is disclosed the incomparable person of Jesus Christ, who unites in himself the loftiest precepts and holiest living, "beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and as true as God." It is the Christ who opens our eyes to eternal truths and existing realities, and as we become acquainted with him, by the aid of the gospel narratives, a new hope is born in the soul, a longing to realize the beautiful ideal portrayed in the pages of the entrancing story.