

**CAMBRIDGE THEOLOGICAL ESSAYS**



**ESSAYS ON SOME THEOLOGICAL  
QUESTIONS OF THE DAY**

**BY MEMBERS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

**EDITED BY**

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## PREFACE.

**T**HIS volume owes its inception to a small body of Cambridge graduates who are associated for the study of Christian Doctrine. It seemed to them that the time had come when an effort ought to be made on the part of those who are entrusted with the theological teaching of Cambridge to deal in a series of Essays with some of the religious problems which are now attracting the attention of educated Englishmen. With the view of making the book fairly representative of Cambridge theology, the Association has sought the help of several well-known resident teachers who do not belong to its own ranks, and of a few non-residents who are still in touch with the life and thought of the University.

Two changes only have been made in the original list of contributors : one writer withdrew through the pressure of other work ; the task of a second, the late Forbes Robinson, Fellow of Christ's College, a colleague whose early removal from us is deeply deplored, fell upon his brother, who in the midst of many duties consented to fill the vacant place.

No desire has been felt to limit the representation to any particular school or schools of theological opinion, and it will be found to include men who differ widely on questions where it is possible to disagree without disloyalty to the common Faith. Each writer is to be held responsible solely for what he has written ; although the Essays have been circulated in proof, there has been no formal consultation or cooperation among the Essayists, and the Editor has generally refrained from suggesting material changes, and has made no such change without the consent of the Essayist concerned ; even in the details of orthography and punctuation no attempt has been made to secure absolute uniformity. Independence carries with it certain obvious disadvantages, and the reader will doubtless observe here and there in this book something like a conflict of opinion ; there may be some overlapping and occasional repetitions, and a general lack of

the homogeneity which, when many writers are at work upon the same ground, can be gained only by repeated conference or by the repression of personal methods and convictions. But on the whole it has seemed better to accept these risks than to interfere with the free play of individual preferences. Such unity as this collection of Essays may possess must be sought in its general purpose.

In the selection of the subjects the Committee to whom the details were entrusted have been guided by a desire to give prominence to those which seemed to be of vital importance in themselves or under present circumstances. But they had also in view to provide an orderly treatment of the chief landmarks in the theistic and Christian positions. A brief sketch of the contents of the volume will show how they have endeavoured to fulfil their purpose. Beginning with a general view of the Christian standpoint, the book proceeds to show that theistic belief is not inconsistent with a loyal acceptance of the assured results of either physical or philosophical research. It then examines the position of Man, both as a part of Nature, and as standing in relation to God and conscious of sin; the possibility of communication between God and Man, and the means by which it is effected. The next step is to deal with certain problems which meet the student on the threshold of the Christian Revelation: the credibility of miracles, the permanence of the Old Testament, and the historical character of the Four Gospels. Some essential features of Christianity are then considered: the Person of Christ as seen in the Gospels, and the Work and Influence of Christ in History; and in the last two Essays the series is completed by a discussion of the ethical value of Christian doctrines, and the power of the Christian Ideal and the hope of the life to come.

From this summary it will appear that these Essays to some extent constitute an *apologia pro fide nostra*. To such an interpretation of our effort there can be no objection if the work of the apologist and our own relations to it are rightly understood. To be *ἔτοιμοι πρὸς ἀπολογία*, ready to answer the challenge of non-Christians, is a necessary part of the equipment of believers, and especially of the professed teachers of Christian Theology. From the first half of the second century onwards the Church has occupied herself from time to time in producing an apologetic literature, which, if not always worthy of its high aims and now partly obsolete, has upon the whole served a useful purpose. Our own time, with its wide outlook upon Nature, and searching enquiries into the origins of institutions, needs a new apologetic;

neither the efforts of Justin and Clement to correlate Christianity with the best thoughts of Greek philosophy, nor the sarcastic dialectic of Tertullian, nor Origen's brilliant reply to Celsus, nor the often acute answers of Macarius Magnes to the moribund yet militant paganism of the fourth century, nor the refutation of seventeenth and eighteenth century unbelief by English writers such as Cudworth, Butler, and Paley, can adequately meet the wants of the present age, when the case against faith is stated by a new learning of which our fathers never dreamt. We shall rejoice if this book is found worthy to suggest lines of thought to the future apologist, and we are not without hope that it may be thus used by him. For these Essays are the work of men who have lived for years, in some cases for the best part of a lifetime, in the atmosphere of an English University, and who therefore cannot be either unconscious or regardless of the problems which modern knowledge presents to theologians. It is one of the chief advantages of our academical system that the student of Theology meets, in the frank intercourse of a common life, with the student of History and Literature on the one hand and the student of Nature on the other. In Cambridge no sharp line of demarcation separates sacred from secular learning; Theology gladly descends into the arena of the 'studies,' and learns to regard all knowledge as sacred and all truth as of God. For theologians who have lived in such surroundings it is impossible to ignore objections raised by other branches of knowledge, and no less impossible to offer answers which have not first satisfied their own intellectual needs. It is because this volume of Essays has been written by men who have in every case passed through such training that it may be expected to render some real assistance to the Christian apologist.

But while we hope that our book may not be destitute of apologetic value, we have not followed the methods of the formal apology, nor has the defence of the Faith been our primary aim. Our purpose is rather to bring certain questions connected with Christian belief into the light of modern knowledge, and to register the results of this process, whatever they may be. A special responsibility attaches to those who are called to study and teach theology under the shadow of a great University. The Master of all Christians has promised to send to His Church both Prophets and Scribes: the men of vigorous action and glowing speech, who can teach afresh to their own generation the great lessons of Truth and Righteousness, and by clearness of vision forecast the work of the near future; and the men of the cloister and the study, whose

business it is to reexamine the sacred writings and to restate and hand on, enriched but essentially unchanged, the tradition which the Church received from the first generation of disciples. In England the Christian Scribe has ever found his chief home in our old Universities, and it is of good omen that the younger Universities have shown a disposition to welcome him among their teachers; it would indeed be an evil day both for learning and for religion if this happy concordat were abandoned and the theologian were led to seek shelter in an atmosphere wholly theological. For the present in any case it is to the Universities that the Church may rightly look for the "things new and old" which it is her business to bring forth out of the treasury of the Kingdom.

There is room in Theology for the new as well as for the old, and each age, as it passes, must contribute to the store and not merely preserve and pass it on. In Cambridge there is little danger of forgetting or undervaluing the great leaders of the last generation; their memories are yet green, and their work will always remain with us, a storehouse from which we thankfully borrow inspiration and knowledge. But since Lightfoot overthrew the historical position of the author of *Supernatural Religion*, the battlefield has shifted in part, and the forces of our opponents have been recruited from fresh quarters; the criticisms which are still good as against that unfortunate venture have little bearing upon some of our present controversies with unbelief. Nor do all the historical and textual results which seemed so secure twenty years ago now command universal assent. The times have moved on, bringing new workers, new facts, new ideas, glimpses even of whole fields of thought unknown to us then; and room must be found for these in our theology as well as in other departments of study. It is no disloyalty to the past to endeavour to keep pace with the present, or to prepare for a future which is already coming into sight. Theologians above other men are tempted to regard what is novel as suspect or even self-condemned; does not the Queen of Sciences teach eternal and unchangeable truth? was not the Faith, it will be asked, *once for all delivered to the saints*? But those who urge this plea forget that there is another point of view which is not to be overlooked. If there are things new as well as things old in the store of the spiritual householder, it is his duty to give prominence to each of these aspects of Truth in its own place. The New Covenant, no longer new in point of time, possesses what the Old Covenant lacked, an inherent power of presenting itself in fresh lights, and of developing points of contact with the latest revelations of human knowledge. The Logos,

as an early Christian writer has finely said, though He was of old, even from the beginning, manifested Himself anew at the Incarnation, and is evermore being born into a fresh, young life in the hearts of the saints; through her progressive realization of the Christ, the Church is enabled continually to renew the vitality of her early days, whilst there are epochs in her long history when the Eternal Truth appears with the startling freshness of a great spiritual discovery. Such an epoch, answering to an age of rapid progress in other branches of knowledge, may be dawning upon us now, and it is not for us to follow the example of the Scribes of our Lord's time by overlooking or misreading the signs of the time. The disciples of the Word dare not turn away from any of the teachings of God in Nature or in History because they may be thought to involve a reconstruction of some of their cherished beliefs.

Reconstruction, however, is a serious matter, when vital truths are concerned; and in Theology it calls for the utmost care. There is grave risk lest some pearl of great price should be lost or marred in the resetting of the chain. Although new combinations are permissible, the original deposit must remain without diminution, without addition: *nove, non nova* must be the motto of the worker in this field. It is easy to state this principle, but the task of giving effect to it is one of the greatest delicacy and difficulty. How necessary it is that this should be reserved for the handling of trained students is borne in upon us by the crude pronouncements which from time to time proceed from opposite camps, and disturb the peace of the Church and the faith of not a few.

That these Essays will have succeeded in adjusting the rival claims of 'old' and 'new' is more than we hope, more indeed than can be attained at the present moment. A generation or two may barely suffice to solve outstanding problems, and as soon as they have been solved the process will begin again, through the discovery of new facts or the penetration of society by new ideas. Meanwhile in this book the reader may see the work in progress at a stage where it is still tentative and the results are therefore of uncertain value. He will bear in mind that to expect finality in such investigations is to court disappointment; it is only through alternations of failure and success, and a persistence in effort which defies discouragements, that the end can at last be reached. Nor will he look for uniform excellence in a field where many labourers are engaged upon soil of varying character. Some of the subjects are in themselves more attractive than others, or may be thought to have received more sympathetic treatment; for into the interpretation of

truth the personal equation must ever enter largely, especially in a volume of this kind. The purpose of the book will have been gained if, taken as a whole, it is judged to have set forward what is perhaps the most important work that lies before the theology of the twentieth century; if it has helped to assimilate the new views of truth suggested by modern knowledge, without sacrificing any part of the primitive message, and to state in terms adapted to the needs of a new century the truths which the ancient Church expressed in those which were appropriate to its own times.

The partial Hellenizing and Latinizing of Christian thought and terminology, which began soon after the end of the Apostolic age, may not have been without danger to the Faith, but few will now doubt that valuable results have followed. If we owe to these processes certain accretions which do not harmonize with primitive simplicity, on the other hand they enriched the Christian Society with much that appealed to the thought and imagination of the centuries through which it had to pass; nor would any thoughtful believer at the present day willingly abandon the best heirlooms that the Church has received from the Greek East or the Latin West. It would be faithless to doubt that the modernizing of Theology, which seems to have begun, will upon the whole be equally productive of good. Something of the rich beauty of the ancient presentment of the Faith may be lost in the process, and the period of transition must necessarily be one of unrest and discomfort. But it needs no prophet to foresee that the time will come when ideas which to-day are strange and unwelcome will be seen to possess a beauty of their own, to be necessary to the completeness of truth, and to belong, no less than many which are long familiar, to the common treasury of the Kingdom of Heaven.

H. B. SWETE.

CAMBRIDGE,  
20 *September*, 1905.

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Ἡ πίστις εἰσάξει, ἡ πείρα διδάξει, ἡ γραφή παιδαγωγήσει.

Πῶς οὖν ἀνέλθω, φησὶν, εἰς οὐρανοὺς; δδός ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος, στενὴ μὲν ἀλλ' ἐξ οὐρανῶν, στενὴ μὲν ἀλλ' εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀναπέμπουσα· στενὴ ἐπὶ γῆς ὑπερορωμένη, πλατεῖα ἐν οὐρανοῖς προσκυνουμένη.

Ἐκπύνει καὶ μὴ ἀπόκαμνε· ἔσθι γὰρ οἶος οὐκ ἐλπίζεις οὐδ' εἰκάσαι δύναιο ἄν.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

ESSAY I.  
**THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT.**

*WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM, D.D.*

## SYNOPSIS.

The Want of a Common Understanding.

### I. CONFLICTING OPINIONS.

1. Narrow Limits of Difference in the Study of Physical Phenomena.
2. Incompatibilities of Moral Judgements.
3. Uncertainty of Religious Principles.

### II. GROUNDS FOR DISCARDING RELIGION.

1. Materialism.
2. Pantheism.
3. Agnosticism.

### III. COMMON SENSE OPINIONS ABOUT RELIGION.

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1. Apprehension and Appreciation.
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1. Self-repression.
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## THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT.

ORDINARY table talk, on every-day topics, brings out the curious differences that are to be found among human beings. It offers a field where bright intelligence comes to the front, by acuteness of perception, by alertness in contributing to the common thought of the company, and by adroitness in turning the stream into fresh channels when there is danger that it will stagnate. Keeness of intellect and geniality of manner show on the surface, and give a charm to talk, upon whatever subject it may turn; but other personal qualities may obstruct rather than illuminate the flow of conversation. Intimate friends have so much in common that they can speak freely, without fear of giving offence; while those who find themselves in an uncongenial atmosphere feel the duty of exercising some conscious self-repression. The Tory and the Radical have habituated themselves to look at political affairs from different points of view; each interprets the events of the day from his own standpoint, and each finds in them a confirmation of the opinions he has always held. Fruitful discussion of affairs of state between two thorough-going partisans is almost impossible; they abhor each other's principles, and deny each other's facts. There is no common ground between them, and unconvincing argument is only too apt to degenerate into mere wrangling. Nor is it only with respect to political matters that a man feels it prudent to be careful what he says among strangers. In regard to many topics of art, or of religion, one person speaks and thinks on such a wholly different plane from that which others occupy, that honest attempts to comprehend the opinion that is expressed are foiled: they only lead to mystification. The

human mind recoils from the merely incomprehensible, and is not always patient enough to be at pains to try to reach the platform of those who seem to be oddities. Not a little education is needed to enable a man to interchange thought on all possible subjects of human interest, with many sorts and conditions of men. There must be some kind of common understanding, or intelligent discussion is impossible ; no advance can be made towards agreement unless one at least of the disputants is prepared to try to comprehend the other's point of view.

### I.

1. There are of course subjects of discussion in regard to which it is rarely necessary to take much account of different points of view ; for practical purposes we are all on the same standpoint, when we are considering the objects of sense-perception in their relations to each other. The questions as to the ultimate analysis of physical phenomena, or as to their precise relations with the human mind, raise problems that many of us are ready to leave on one side ; since we do not see that they have any utilitarian bearing. Those who are content to try to understand Nature, in order that they may make the most of her and control her resources for human purposes, feel that there is no need to justify their position. They are looking at the world steadily and systematically, as all civilised men take it unconsciously in every act of daily life. To find an exception, we must go to the fetichism of primitive man, which reduces nature to a chaos of capricious influences ; this is a different standpoint, wholly at variance with our own ; but we can trace the steps by which, with advancing knowledge, men have discarded it, and may thus find additional reason for preferring our own point of view. The conception of the physical world, as an orderly whole, gives us a sufficient basis for common action ; those who are merely doing the business of life, and those who are pursuing investigations, find common ground from which to survey the knowledge acquired in the past, and to coordinate their new impressions. Differences of course there are, due

to the idiosyncrasies of particular individuals ; the senses do not agree in the accuracy or character of their reports<sup>1</sup> ; colour blindness vitiates some observations, and mere carelessness makes others worthless. But it may often be possible to account, or at any rate to allow for such divergences ; there is, on the whole, one standard, in the body of knowledge about physical phenomena, to which appeal can be made, since it is a tribunal that all are ready to accept. Nor is it merely that there is a common conception in which all agree,—a dream that all dream at once ; they recognise that the system of nature is *real*, because of the limitations it places on the operation of human wills ; and they feel that their knowledge is growing in certainty, as their ideas come into closer correspondence with that which common sense regards as actual fact. The possibility of verifying our impressions, constantly or at stated intervals, and of fitting them into a coherent whole, renders our empirical knowledge so reliable that we do not need to take serious account of such different points of view as we may find among primitive men, or in exceptional persons.

2. When we turn to another class of phenomena and consider the relations between man and man, the variety of opinions expressed and the diversity of the standpoints adopted by different people become most startling. As Alan Breck put it to David Balfour, “I have often observed that you Low-country bodies have no clear idea of what’s right and wrong<sup>2</sup>.” The conscience seems to be capable of such strange vagaries ; and there is always an interest in discovering at what precise point scrupulous persons will draw the line. Nor is there any common standard to which appeal can be made. Among non-progressive peoples the traditions of right and wrong come to be embodied in customs and institutions ; there is a body of practice and observance which is right in all the relations of life, and the neglect of which is wrong. The caste system of the Hindus gives external expression to the conception of duty ; but, since the close of the Middle Ages,

<sup>1</sup> Compare the controversy as to *n* rays, *Nature*, 29 September, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, 177.

there has been no such generally recognised external standard among Western peoples. The pretensions of the Church to pronounce authoritatively on right and wrong in every sphere of conduct are no longer enforced; the privileges of the Head of the State, as the source of law and right, were set at nought in the seventeenth century, and the claim of every man to do that which is right in his own eyes is treated with respect.

This state of affairs has led to the diffusion of doubt as to the reality of moral distinctions and relationships; they do not seem to be given, as something which our wills cannot oppose; they are, on the other hand, to a very considerable extent affected by the individual decision. It is true that the duties of a child to a parent are thrust upon every one, but it rests with himself whether he shall undertake those of a husband, a father, or a citizen; he can remain outside them all. Not only is he free to evade these moral responsibilities, but many human relationships appear to have been constituted by individual wills. The doctrine that the State is the creation of those who agree to place themselves and their property under the protection of a common body, and to divest themselves of individual rights, removes the whole realm of law from a basis of controlling duty, and rears it instead on common expediency and individual consent to abide by a convention. The whole fabric of right becomes unreal, and the distinction between good and bad is rendered uncertain, since there is no recognised *forum externum* to which appeal may be made, or from which we can obtain clear and distinct guidance as to our conduct towards one another. We habitually admit that a man, of whose action we disapprove, may be right from his own point of view.

The differences in the ethical standpoint taken by different individuals are so great that the mere description of actual moral conditions must be greatly affected by them. The American is full of pity for the lot of the women of India, immured in zenanas and left without education—though powerful personalities have been developed and have made

themselves felt under these disabilities. The Hindu would view with positive horror the preference of the American woman for an unfettered life ; and his strong sense of disapproval would necessarily colour any attempt to describe the current morality of the United States.

Even if we do not take such extreme instances as the gulf between the civilisations of the East and of the West, we find that there are striking differences between men brought up in the same country, and under the influence of Christian teaching. They may cherish very different ideals of what ought to be, and may be brought into diametrical opposition over practical issues. There are those for whom the individual is everything, and freedom for individual self-development is essential to the realising of their aims. There are others who regard the institutions which hold society together, which perpetuate the race and form the personal character, as of paramount importance, so that any individual sacrifice may be rightly demanded for the sake of maintaining them. This is the irreconcilable contradiction that underlies all conflicting views on social questions. The varieties of temperament, or upbringing, or whatever else it may be that determines a man's attitude towards the constituted order, are fundamental in affecting his point of view on all questions of human relationships ; they affect his judgement on everything connected with the family, the Church, or the State. There is so little agreement on the fundamental issues, that there is very little common ground on which such questions as the moral education of the young can be even intelligently discussed. Opinions on matters of detail of every kind are affected by the point of view from which the topic is considered.

3. While the differences of standpoint give rise to so much confusion in regard to the relations of man to man, we can hardly expect that they should be unimportant when we are considering the relations of man to the Ultimate Power in the Universe. The problems are so terribly complex ; they seem to involve elements in regard to which there is no hope of reaching a definite decision. The two poles of the relation-

ship are alike inscrutable ; among all the contradictions in his disposition and character, how shall we summarise the nature of man ? Are all men endowed with similar faculties, but in varying degrees, or are there differences of kind which condemn some races to occupy a lower level ? Is each person immortal, or does death involve the utter disintegration of the individual life in all its aspects ? And when we find it so difficult to attain to knowledge of ourselves, how shall we figure the Ultimate Power in the Universe ? Our capacity for thinking does not range so far ; we cannot tell what it is we are groping after. While each of the poles of the relationship is so little known, we can hardly expect to be successful in investigating the relations which subsist between them. While there is so much confusion and unreality in regard to questions of ethics, it may seem doubtful whether it is worth while to attempt to raise the deeper problems which religion presents. The problems of ethics are forced upon our attention by the practical necessity of living among our fellow-men ; we must be on some sort of terms with them, and we have to decide how we will treat them, and how we will submit to be treated ourselves. But there is no such obvious and pressing necessity in regard to the issues raised by Theology ; the most cursory observation shows that many men are accustomed to treat these considerations as so remote that they need only be taken into account very occasionally, if at all ; and it is easy to assume an entirely negative attitude towards religion, since it seems to be lacking in reality when it does not bring pressure to bear upon the will.

## II.

1. Reasons may readily be adduced in defence of this negative position ; neglect of religion seems to be not only excusable, but commendable, or at least justifiable, from one or other of three different points of view.

All religious belief and practice seem to be empty and vain to those who see no reason to suppose that there are or

can be any direct relations between man and the Ultimate Power in the Universe. Many of the phenomena of human life can be explained by physical conditions of climate and soil, while others can be accounted for by such influences as association or heredity. As we analyse our own conduct in the past, or look back on the history of the race, it seems as if so much was effected by material surroundings, that a little more investigation may serve to show that the residual phenomena are determined in the same fashion, and that the study of man's relations to the material universe will give an exhaustive account of his life-history, past, present, and future. Man's greatest good would then consist in examining his environment, and studying the circumstances of his lot, with the view of modifying them, so far as may be, in the interest of the species. This standpoint is materialistic, but not atheistic; it does not deny the existence of an Ultimate Power in the Universe, but it rejects religion, and hence it is in conflict with common convictions as to the nature and dignity of man. Man has been defined as a religious animal; and if he is merely an animal determined by physical environment, there is no room either for religion, or for those sides of culture which are his greatest achievement. The whole creative force, which has found expression in art and literature and civilised institutions, is a protest against this doctrine. Man's consciousness of his own personal identity and personal character rebels against the attempt to interpret him as the mere product of his surroundings. We may even come to see that the best clue for helping us to follow the development of the human race is to be found in these residual phenomena, and that neither the source of initiative nor the actual course of progress is really explicable from the materialistic point of view.

2. There is another view of the Ultimate Power in the Universe, which leaves scope for admiration and even for adoration; but it still fails, as completely as materialism does, to recognise the dignity of human personality, and thus presents a negative attitude towards religion. The various forms of Pantheism "find the ultimate and dominant idea in

some divine Mystery of the Universe, in the sense of Beauty and Power of Nature, in the immensity of the sum of Life and Matter, it may be in a pious trust in the general good of all things, be the things human and moral, or be they physical, and unconscious<sup>1</sup>." But such ideals are too far off and vague: they give us no *axiomata media* to serve as principles, either for thought about ourselves, or as guides for action<sup>2</sup>. It is, as Mr Frederic Harrison says, "the original blot on every form of philosophic pantheism when tried as a basis of religion, or the root idea of our lives, that it jumbles up the moral, the immoral, the non-human and the anti-human world; the animated, and the inanimate; cruelty, filth, horror, waste, death; suffering and victory; sympathy and insensibility. The dualism between moral being and material being is as old as the conscience of man. It is impossible to efface the antagonism between them; their disparate nature is a consequence of the laws of thought and the fibres of the brain and the heart. No force can amalgamate in one idea tornadoes, earthquakes, interstellar space, pestilences, brotherly love, unselfish energy, patience, hope, trust, and greed. No single conception at all can ever issue out of such a medley; and any idea that is wide enough to relate to the whole must be a mere film of an idea, and one as little in contact with the workings of the heart or the needs of society as the undulatory theory of Light or the Music of the Spheres."

"Try any one of these sublimities in any of the crises of life.....A human heart is wrung with pain, despair, remorse; a parent watches the child of his old age sinking into vice and crime; a thinker, an inventor, a worker, breaks down with toil and unrequited hope, and sees the labour of a life ending in failure and penury; a widow is crushed by the loss of her husband, and the destitution of their children; the poor see their lives ground out of them by oppressors, without mercy, justice, or hope. Go, then, with the gospel of pantheism to the fatherless and the widow, and console them

<sup>1</sup> F. Harrison, *Pantheism and Cosmic Emotion*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the criticism by Maine de Biran, *Œuvres inédites*, I. ccxxix.

by talking of sunsets, or the universal order ; tell the heart-broken about the permutations of energy ; ask the rich tyrant to remember the sum of all things and to listen to the teaching of the Anima Mundi ; explain to the debauchee, the glutton, and the cheat the Divine Essence permeating all things and causing all things—including his particular vice, his passions, his tastes, his guile, and his lust. And when social passions rage their blackest and the demon of anarchy is gnashing its fangs at the demon of despotic cruelty, step forward with the religion of sweetness and light, and try if self-culture, so exquisitely sung by Goethe and his followers, will not heal the social delirium<sup>1</sup>.”

3. These forms of definite opposition to current religious beliefs may be congenial to men who have either an intense enthusiasm for empirical investigation, or a strongly developed artistic temperament. Of those who are lacking in these qualities, many appear satisfied to accept the ignorance to which we seem to be condemned as inevitable, and as something against which it is useless to rebel. Whatever human relations with the Ultimate Power in the Universe may be, so long as we cannot comprehend them, they can have no bearing on our lives ; religion seems only to offer a field for idle speculation, and in so far as it diverts energy from practical effort it may appear positively mischievous. In lands where power and wealth are in the hands of the clergy, the feeling that these resources are wasted will easily breed an anti-clerical spirit ; in any communities where religion is vigorous, its very activity may be irritating and offensive, and call forth a reaction that is consciously anti-Christian in protest against misdirected energy. Agnosticism may be positively hostile, or on the other hand it may be warmly sympathetic with definite religious beliefs, and admire the faith in which it does not participate. Mr Herbert Spencer's opinion as to the impossibility of attaining to religious knowledge appears to have remained unmodified, but he had latterly less sense of antagonism to those who cherished beliefs which seemed to him to be vain. “I have come more

<sup>1</sup> F. Harrison, *op. cit.* 16.

and more to look calmly on forms of religious belief, to which I had, in earlier days, a pronounced aversion.... Largely, however, if not chiefly, this change of feeling towards religious creeds and their sustaining institutions has resulted from a deepening conviction that the sphere occupied by them can never become an unfilled sphere, but that there must continue to arise afresh the great questions concerning ourselves and surrounding things; and that, if not positive answers, then moods of consciousness standing in place of positive answers, must ever remain.... Religious creeds, which in one way or another occupy the sphere that material interpretation seeks to occupy and fails the more the more it seeks, I have come to regard with a sympathy based on community of need; feeling that dissent from them results from inability to accept the solutions offered, joined with the wish that solutions could be found<sup>1</sup>." When it is once recognised that religion takes a permanent place in human thought, and has a practical bearing on human life, the phenomena of religion can no longer be regarded as merely futile; they become a legitimate object of human study. The fact that some natures are insensible to this influence<sup>2</sup> is not a justification for waiving aside the religious consciousness, and its reports on the relations between God and man: if we do not discard religion altogether, we can go a step further and consider the points of view from which the contents of the religious consciousness may be most fruitfully studied.

### III.

1. Students of the religious consciousness are inclined at first sight to assume that the phenomena are on the same plane as all other humanities, and that they may be satisfactorily investigated from the same standpoint and by the same methods. Religious opinion has found expression in theological doctrine; religious feeling in sacred art. The canons of criticism which can be applied to other branches

<sup>1</sup> H. Spencer, *Autobiography*, II. 468, 471.

<sup>2</sup> W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 92.

of literature, the scrutiny which can be brought to bear on the history of other institutions, are ready at hand for examining the origin and character and growth of religion; it is treated as a body of opinions, on which we bring our minds to bear. There are, however, many men who are unable to adopt this mental attitude; to them religion is not an affair of other people's opinions, but a personal conviction of their own. They are unable to maintain an attitude of academic aloofness, but can only view the religious beliefs and practices of others in the light of their own convictions. The difference in the standpoint of one man, who can take a dispassionate survey of religion from the outside, and of another, to whom certain religious beliefs are a matter of personal conviction, is fundamental; though the two distinct habits of thinking may be blended in various proportions. It is not easy for anyone, however much he tries, to lay aside all personal predilection and look at disputed questions with a single-minded intellectual interest. Antipathies may distort the powers of observation, and sympathy will certainly affect the manner of expression and judgement; the decisions of the critical faculty may be obscured by a cloud of sentiment. Still the two ways of looking at religion are really distinct; and typical examples of each habit of mind may be quoted as illustrations which serve to mark the contrast. The religious controversies of bygone days are not to be lightly dismissed as mere pedantries and futilities; for these discussions have an abiding interest in so far as they bring into clear relief the particular point of view which was adopted by the disputants on either side. In this way the pamphlet literature of the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century marks an important epoch. The claim of the individual reason to pronounce definitely on all points of religion was strongly asserted by the Deists, and seems to have been very generally accepted by their opponents; in the tracts of that time we may find an excellent field for studying the characteristic features of this habit of mind,—as it was, and as it survives.

Rationalism in religious thought was not by any means

an isolated phenomenon in the seventeenth century, for it was closely connected with the current philosophy. It is sufficient for our purpose, however, to regard it as a product which emerged from the exigencies of theological polemics. The great struggle of the sixteenth century resulted in placing the Bible and the Church in apparent opposition, as the supreme depositaries of Divine truth on earth. Chillingworth, to whom the question was one of deep personal interest, endeavoured to define the position he finally reached in opposition to the Romanists. He held that no living infallible guide was needed, since Universal Tradition embodied in the Bible was the basis of Christian belief, and this could be sufficiently interpreted by the human understanding. He insisted that the Scripture was the only rule to decide all controversies among Christians<sup>1</sup>, yet subject to the proviso that questions touching Scripture are not decidable by Scripture<sup>2</sup>. All questions as to canonicity could be settled by Universal Tradition, but private judgement was called for, since there was in fact no reliable 'traditive interpretation.' "We are ready to receive both Scripture and the sense of Scripture upon Universal Tradition," but not on the authority of the Roman Church, which had in many ways departed from Universal Tradition. Authoritative interpretation was unnecessary since private judgement was capable of applying the rule of faith which is given in Scripture. "Speaking truly and properly, Scripture is not a judge, nor cannot be, but only a sufficient rule for those to judge by that believe it to be the Word of God...what they are to believe and what they are not to believe. I say sufficiently perfect, and sufficiently intelligible in things necessary, to all that have understanding, whether they be learned or unlearned. And my reason hereof is convincing and demonstrative, because nothing is necessary to be believed but what is plainly

<sup>1</sup> He guarded himself against the misunderstanding that by Scripture all things absolutely may be proved which are to be believed, for it can never be proved to a gainsayer that

there is a God, or that the book called Scripture is the word of God. *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation*, ch. II. pt. i. sec. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. II. pt. i. sec. 27.

revealed<sup>1</sup>." Where the interpretation of Scripture was a matter of serious difficulty the precise interpretation could not be of much importance as a matter of faith. He thus insisted that the use of their own understanding by private individuals was a sufficient practical guide in religion, but he lays down somewhat narrow limits within which it may wisely operate. With the rise of Puritanism, however, the claim to put forward private interpretation ran riot; those who believed in their own personal inspiration could not submit their deliverances to any restraint, and the vagaries among different religious teachers brought this liberty of prophesying into contempt. Sober-minded men were inclined to look to reason, rather than alleged inspiration, as the guide to be followed in the pursuit of religious truth. The disordered imagination should be restrained<sup>2</sup> that the light of reason might assert its sway; this would give us, as they believed, a firm grasp on such fundamental principles as the existence of a God and the immortality of the soul. Disgust at the narrowness and fanaticism of the disputing sects rendered men eager to place religious controversy on a plane of thought where it could be treated calmly and dispassionately, so that there might be some hope of ultimate agreement. This was the line which was taken by the rational theologians of the seventeenth century, and especially by Tillotson, who was, both from his position and his oratorical gifts, the most striking representative of the school; it is in his sermons that the new habit of thought reaches its clearest expression. He appeals to reason not only as the interpreter of Christian teaching, but as its very basis. "All religion is founded in right Notions of God, and of His Perfections; insomuch that Divine Revelation itself does suppose these for its foundations, and can signify nothing to us unless these be first known and believed... So that the principles of Natural Religion are the foundation of that which is revealed<sup>3</sup>."

"Religion begins in the Understanding, and from thence

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* chap. II. pt. i. sec. 104.

<sup>2</sup> More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, Cure from Temperance.

<sup>3</sup> Tillotson, Sermon XLI, in *Works*

(1752), I. 389.

descends upon the heart and life...It is the issue and result of the best Wisdom and Knowledge, and descends from above, from the Giver of every good and perfect Gift, even from the Father of Lights<sup>1</sup>." "All that can be done is to set the thing before men, and to offer it to their choice ; and if men's natural desire of wisdom and knowledge and happiness will not persuade them to be religious, 'tis in vain to use arguments<sup>2</sup>." The position which was thus taken by the Archbishop of Canterbury was singularly like that adopted by Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*. He recognised Revelation, not as giving us truths of a different kind from those that could be apprehended by Reason, but as discovering truths which reason was able to confirm<sup>3</sup>. The untutored human intelligence was the only faculty that was needed to apprehend the leading principles of Christianity. He took the written word of God to be "a collection of writings, designed by God, for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind in the way of salvation ; and therefore generally and in necessary points to be understood in the plain, direct meaning of the words and phrases, such as they may be supposed to have had in the mouth of speakers who used them according to the language of that time and country wherein they lived<sup>4</sup>." A prominent apologist carried the reliance on men still farther. "Let what is written in all the books of the New Testament be tried by that which is the Touchstone of all Religions, I mean that Religion of Nature and Reason which God has written in the hearts of every one of us from the first Creation ; and if it varies from it in any one particular, if it prescribes any one thing, which may in the minutest circumstances thereof be contrary to Righteousness, I will then acknowledge this to be an argument against us strong enough to overthrow the whole Cause<sup>5</sup>." It would not be easy to find a more explicit statement as to the faculty by which religious truth is to be judged or the criterion by which

<sup>1</sup> Sermon XXX. *Works*, I. 272.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon I. *Works*, I. 27.

<sup>5</sup> H. Prideaux, *Letter to the Deists*

<sup>3</sup> Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, in *Works*, VI. 145. (1697), 59.

its truth is to be appraised. Individual intelligence is apparently accepted as the sole authority in interpreting the sacred writings and building up a body of theological doctrine; and the claim is put forth to survey the whole field of religious phenomena and appraise the different systems rightly.

While we may take Tillotson as a typical representative of the habit of thought which was dominant in the period from 1689 to 1750, we must remember that there were also men who were wholly dissatisfied with this point of view; they regarded his treatment of the subject as quite inadequate. Those readers to whom such a book as Law's *Serious Call to a Devout Life* appealed, could not but be dissatisfied with the placid periods of the celebrated Archbishop. In the official proclamation of Christian truth, there was a lack of earnestness which could be contrasted with the personal self-sacrifice of the Non-jurors and the fervour of such men as Whitfield and Wesley. It can hardly be a matter of surprise that strong feeling was roused by the superficial fashion in which the "letter-learned clergymen" dealt with supreme realities. To men of intense religious conviction, the famous Archbishop seemed to have been neglectful of his trust in approximating so closely to the position of the Deists, and in minimising, if he did not wholly neglect, the influence of Divine grace in the heart. The man who had regarded natural reason as a sufficient guide to the interpretation of revealed truth seemed to them guilty of a great betrayal<sup>1</sup>. Christianity, as they knew it, was a practical power in the heart and mind, and those who took the position of looking at it from outside seemed to be incompetent to deal with it at all.

2. The rational theologians would have indignantly disclaimed the charge that they neglected the practical working of religious belief; indeed Tillotson laid stress on the efficacy, as regards moral conduct, of the prudential arguments which may be drawn from the belief in a future state<sup>2</sup>. He made

<sup>1</sup> Seward, *Journal of a Voyage from Savannah to Philadelphia*, 62, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon CXI, in *Works*, III. 45.

a remarkable pronouncement as to the utility of religion. "What is religion good for, but to reform the manners and dispositions of man, to restrain human nature from violence and cruelty, from falsehood and treachery, from sedition and rebellion?"<sup>1</sup> This school would have contended that by relying on reason they could survey a wider field, and get more forcible testimony in regard to the effectiveness of religious belief as a factor in conduct, than they would if they confined their argument to Christian lands and Christian belief. Whichcote's influence at Cambridge seems to have been largely due to the freshness which he infused into his discourses by working at this vein. He broke away from the academic pulpit tradition, and did not confine himself to elaborating his thesis from stores of Biblical and Patristic learning; he dealt with the living issues which had been raised by the teaching of Hobbes<sup>2</sup>, and treated religion as the safeguard of morality. He valued it as a practical power for righteousness in the hearts of men, even when they professed somewhat different creeds. As Whichcote says in one of his aphorisms, "Religion has different denominations and names from different actions and circumstances, but it is one thing, viz.: universal righteousness; accordingly it had place at all times before the Law of Moses and under it, and since<sup>3</sup>."

The rational theologian could also hope that by this wide survey he would obtain a means of distinguishing what was essential in religion from its trivial adjuncts. Much of the discord appeared to have arisen from the way in which one party or another had treated trivialities of ceremonial, or subtleties of theological doctrine, as points of fundamental importance. The rational theologians preferred comeliness and good order in divine worship; but this was to them a matter of expediency and common sense, not in any way of principle; and on similar grounds they were indifferent in regard to many questions which had been debated between Calvinists and Arminians. They looked round on the world

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on 5 Nov. 1678 before the House of Commons. *Works*, I. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, *Preface to*

Whichcote's *Works* (1749), III. v.

<sup>3</sup> *Aphorisms*, 957.

at large, and saw that there were three great religions which had a powerful and elevating influence on conduct. They felt that the essential element in religion was to be found in principles which were common to Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity alike; and that this essential element had never been entirely lacking in any age. According to this common-sense standard, the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of the existence of God were treated as the necessary principles of religion, without which it failed to exercise an influence on conduct. The orthodox rationalist held that the adjuncts to this essential belief, which were given in the Christian religion, set forward a better morality, and by the clearness of the teaching, added to its force. But these were points which they found it hard to establish from the position they had adopted. The Deists frankly regarded revealed religion as surplusage; they might be ready to agree that revealed religion was analogous to natural theology, but this was not convincing. The superiority of Christian doctrine and practice was not so great as to render it apparent that it had any special claim to a divine origin<sup>1</sup>. Nor was the historical argument convincing; the ordinary understanding, applying common-sense standards, was inclined to explain away all the particular phenomena of prophecy and miracles as due to coincidence or 'enthusiasm.' The rational theologians had set out to rescue Christianity from the quarrels and follies of fanatics; but the tendency of the movement had been to discard all that was distinctively Christian. The suspicions of Whitfield and the Methodists were justified; the individual intelligence, working from the grounds of common sense and ordinary experience, appeared incompetent either to do justice to the present power of the Christian religion, or to vindicate the accepted record of its origin.

The inherent tendencies of rational theology had taken many years to show their true character; but as the movement ran its course, the views which were involved in the principles of the pioneers came into clear light. When the Bible is

<sup>1</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, *Preface to Whichcoté's Works* (1749), III. ii.

studied in the same fashion as other literature, and the history of the Church is treated as precisely similar to that of other institutions, there is a practical refusal to draw any marked distinction between various expressions of human aspiration and hope, or to regard the sacred books and the Christian society as in a special sense Divine. If religious literature and life are dealt with as part of the phenomena of human culture, in which we take an outside interest and on which we pass our judgements from the common-sense standards of expediency and probability, the claims of Christianity to stand on a level of its own are discountenanced in advance. And hence men of deep religious conviction cannot recognise that humane learning affords a suitable position from which to pronounce on the validity of their faith; to them it is not a mere opinion, and they cannot accept the 'theoretical' decision of those who are content to weigh one opinion against another. The practical force of Christianity is something they feel in their own consciousness, not a mere factor in human morality which they endeavour to analyse and appraise. In their minds it is inseparably linked with devotion to Christ; they have no confidence in a habit of mind which admires Christian morality but is content to dispense with its conscious basis. Ordinary intelligence and common-sense estimates are inclined to look favourably on religions in general, but to hesitate about the truth of any one in particular; and the man of deep convictions cannot regard this tribunal as authoritative; he claims at least to be judged by his peers.

3. In thus refusing to accept the arbitrament of ordinary human intelligence and appealing to some other tribunal, the man of religious convictions appears to put himself entirely in the wrong. To reject the voice of Reason, as expressed in the common sense of his fellow-men, seems to be a piece of arrogance that is both offensive and ridiculous. It implies a claim to have special access to sources of truth, while it pronounces human reason inadequate in a sphere in which it is habitually exercised. Still this refusal is inevitable; religious conviction has a logical character of its own; it is a personal

matter, and cannot be brought into direct line with the data on which common-sense intelligence is fitted to work. The understanding usually plays the part of the bystander who looks on and gives an impersonal decision on the phenomena before him; their characteristics and qualities and relations are presented to him, and apart from the exertion of attention, he only gives a sort of passive assent. But in personal convictions there is a definite exercise of will power<sup>1</sup>, and the decision is the man's very own. These truths are not things that come to us ready made<sup>2</sup>. There is an element of personal approval in 'consenting unto the law that it is good,' and even of appropriation in deciding that it is good, as a rule for him. This personal exercise of the will is involved in all the acts of the religious life; we find it in the devotion of the Psalmist, "Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee"; and again in the faith of St Thomas when he cried, "My Lord and my God." Such convictions are fundamentally different from the religious opinions on which we pass 'theoretic' judgements, as outside observers; the peculiar force which they have for the individual mind must be taken into account by anyone who pretends to pronounce what is essential and unessential in religion. Common sense is content to consider what a man holds, and to compare his beliefs with those of other people; but from the point of view of the man of strong convictions, the important question is not *what* a man holds, but *how* he holds it,—Is it a personal thing that is ingrained in his own will? Has he got religion, or rather has religion got him? From this point of view, the ultimate decision as to the validity of religious beliefs cannot rest with Reason, or be decided by any criterion which the Understanding applies to them; the Religious Consciousness is not content to provide data for intelligence to discuss, but claims to be supreme in the interpretation of these data, and in declaring the relations of man to the Ultimate Power. The corporate religious consciousness has claimed to be independent of civil authority at sundry times and in diverse

<sup>1</sup> Ollé Laprune, *De la certitude morale*, 65.

<sup>2</sup> La Berthonnière, *Essais de philosophie religieuse*, 119; also 47.

manners ; not only in the contest about Investitures, but in the recent demand of the United Free Church of Scotland for scope for self-development. In a similar spirit the personal religious consciousness refuses to submit to any intellectual authority outside itself.

## IV.

1. The distinction between the points of view of those who treat religion as a body of opinions, and of those to whom it is a matter of conviction, is fundamental. The process of passing from one phase of thought to the other may be spoken of as the awakening of the religious consciousness ; and some of those who have undergone this change gradually, and as the result of a long period of hesitation and unrest, have set themselves to reflect on and to record the course of their own inner experience. An admirable delineation is to be found in Pascal's *Thoughts*. No mere intellectual arguments sufficed to change the current of his moral life ; for the arguments on each side were ineffective. "All the principles of sceptics, stoics, atheists, etc. are true, but their conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are also true<sup>1</sup>." "It is incomprehensible that there should be a God, and incomprehensible that there should not be ; that there should be a soul in the body, and that we should have no soul ; that the world should have been created, and that it should not<sup>2</sup>." There was as he insisted a deeper source of certainty in our nature. "We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is from this last that we learn first principles ; and reason, which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to combat them<sup>3</sup>." He was distracted by the contradictions which he felt in the depths of his own consciousness<sup>4</sup>. "Let

<sup>1</sup> Pascal, *Thoughts*, translated by Kegan Paul, 111.

<sup>2</sup> Pascal, *op. cit.* 205.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 102.

<sup>4</sup> He felt the contradictions which Huxley observed and described, "Men are very queer animals, a

mixture of horse nervousness, ass stubbornness, and camel malice—with an angel bobbing about unexpectedly like the apple in the posset, and when they can do exactly as they please they are very hard to drive." *Life and Letters*, II. 428.

man love himself, because he has a nature capable of good, but let him not therefore love the vileness that exists in that nature. Let him despise himself, because this capacity is void, but let him not therefore despise his natural capacity. Let him hate himself, let him love himself; he has in himself the power of knowing the truth and being happy, and yet has found no truth either permanent or satisfactory<sup>1</sup>. He had himself attempted to drown the thoughts of death, sorrow, ignorance, and all the miseries of life<sup>2</sup>, and forget them in the enjoyments of life; but it was only as he wearied of these that he began to find the real solution he sought. "The weariness which is man's most sensible evil is in some measure his greatest good, because more than anything else it contributes to make him seek his true healing.....Man is weary of all things and seeks a multitude of occupations, only because he has the idea of a lost happiness. And not finding this in himself, he seeks it vainly in external things, without being able to content himself, because it is neither in us, nor in the creature, but in God alone<sup>3</sup>." "The God of Christians is a God who makes the soul perceive that He is her only good, her only rest is in Him, her only joy in loving Him. ....The knowledge of God without that of our wretchedness creates pride, the knowledge of our wretchedness without God creates despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the middle way, because in Him we find both God and our own wretchedness<sup>4</sup>." The divine power which reconciled the contradictions within his own nature was to him the supreme reality; he was convinced of its truth. The Christian religion teaches the righteous that "it lifts them even to a participation of the

<sup>1</sup> Pascal, *op. cit.* 48.

<sup>2</sup> "When I see the blindness and the misery of man, when I survey the whole dumb Universe, and man without light, left to himself and lost as it were in this corner of the Universe, not knowing who has placed him here, what he has come to do, what will become of him when he dies, and incapable of any knowledge whatever, I fall into terror

like that of a man who, having been carried in his sleep to an island desert and terrible, should awake ignorant of his whereabouts and with no means of escape; and therefore I wonder how those in so miserable a state do not fall into despair." *Ibid.* 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 93.

divine nature; that in this exalted state they still bear within them the fountain of all corruption, which renders them during their whole life subject to error and misery, to death and sin, and at the same time it proclaims to the most wicked that they can receive the grace of their Redeemer. Thus making those tremble whom it justifies, and consoling those whom it condemns, religion so justly tempers fear with hope by means of that double capacity of grace and of sin which is common to all, that it abases infinitely more than reason alone, yet without despair, and exalts infinitely higher than natural pride, yet without puffing up, hereby proving that alone being exempt from error and vice, it alone has the office of instructing and reforming men. Who then can withhold credence and adoration to so divine a light? For it is clearer than day that we feel within ourselves indelible characters of goodness; and it is equally clear that we experience every hour the effects of our deplorable condition. This chaos then, this monstrous confusion, does but proclaim the truth of those two states, with a voice so powerful that it cannot be resisted<sup>1</sup>." The path which he recommended others to follow if they would attain to his conviction was that which he had himself pursued: "Labour to convince yourself," he says, "not by increase of the proofs of God, but by the diminution of your passions<sup>2</sup>."

The gradual awakening of religious consciousness can be traced even more clearly in the record of his inner life which has been left us by Maine de Biran. A man of keen sensibility, with a passionate interest in the analysis of mental phenomena, he continued to pursue the philosophical studies to which he had devoted himself at Bergerac, when he was called to take a prominent part in public affairs at Paris after the fall of Napoleon. He was in touch with the most eminent philosophical thinkers of his day, and was well acquainted with modern philosophy, but he possessed a singular independence. As the "philosopher of inner experience<sup>3</sup>," the growth of his doctrine is closely connected with the changes

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Lang, *Maine de Biran und die neuere Philosophie* (1901), 3.

of personal conviction, as revealed in his *journal intime*<sup>1</sup>. Starting from the sensationalism of Condillac he gradually came to lay more stress on the active element in consciousness, and, as years passed on, to recognise an external source of moral vigour. "In the psychological aspect, or as regards cognition, the soul draws all from itself, or from the Ego, by reflection; but in the moral aspect, as regards the perfection to be hoped for, the good to be obtained, or the object in life to be aimed at, the soul draws all and receives all from without—not from the external world and sensations, but from the purely intellectual world above, of which God is the centre<sup>2</sup>." To him Christianity appealed rather as an intellectual satisfaction than as a means of redemption from evil. The sense of a want of stability of life, and the impossibility of sustained happiness weighed upon him; this was the starting-point of his reflections<sup>3</sup>, and it occupied his mind with sombre thoughts in 1815, when he seems for the first time<sup>4</sup> to have turned consciously towards God. "It is too long to go on drifting with the whirl of events and opinions, with the never ceasing flux of changes without and within, and all that passes like a shadow. There is need to-day to attach oneself to the Only Being that remains Unchangeable, Who is the true source of consolation in the present and of hope for the future<sup>5</sup>." And his mind took an increasingly firm hold on this fixed point. "I was thinking yesterday," he writes in 1820, "as I was driving through the streets, that there are three very different kinds of temperament in the intellect or soul. The first, that of nearly everyone, consists in living exclusively in the world of phenomena, and taking them for realities; hence there is inconstancy, loathing, and perpetual unrest. The second is that of the men who reflect, and seek patiently for truth in themselves or in nature, by separating appearances from realities; but since they do not find a firm basis

<sup>1</sup> E. Naville, *Maine de Biran, sa vie et ses pensées*, 117—419. 1817, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 283. 19 Sept. 1818.

<sup>3</sup> 27 May, 1794. *Ibid.* 120. See also his remarks on Stoicism, 30 Sept.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolas, *Étude sur Maine de Biran*, 52.

<sup>5</sup> 16 April, 1815, p. 178. See also 17 May, 1815, p. 185.

from this truth they despair and fall into scepticism. Lastly, there is a third group of those who are illumined by the unique and unchanging light which religion affords. None but those have found a firm support ; they have courage in their convictions<sup>1</sup>.”

2. The awakening of the religious consciousness as it has been thus portrayed is gradual, and the subject of conscious cultivation ; but some of its aspects are brought into clearer view by sudden conversions, such as occurred in numbers in connexion with the preaching of Whitfield and the Wesleys. The sudden realisation of personal guilt may be called forth by the most trivial occasions ; John Bunyan was conscience-stricken at his guilt in playing tipcat on Elstow Green one Sunday ; but the import of such awakening is set before us for all time in the story of the Fall. We read there how man came to see his conduct, not in connexion with the motives and excuses which have urged him, but retrospectively, and dispassionately, as if from the standpoint of the Omniscient Creator. Each human act is part of an indefinite chain of cause and effect ; our idle words, our careless follies may work far-reaching mischief of which we are wholly unconscious. We cannot pursue these indefinite consequences ; but they come clearly into view when we sum them up in the thoughts of the Infinite God, Who sees all things, and looks at our acts in the light of His judgement upon them. Through the sense of guilt, man becomes conscious that he is part of a divine order, which he had neglected ; the violation of this order by his own acts presses on him the suggestion of an existence and of relationships which he had ignored. His sense of guilt becomes the object of reflection, and his cognitive faculties are brought to bear upon it and elicit what is implied in it. The facts of the case are clear ; the moral law, the distinction of right and wrong, was known to him ; he accepts it and approves it, and lays it down as valid for all intelligences ; and since in spite of this he is responsible for a breach of it and blames himself for his fault in failing to keep it, he recognises his own freedom.

<sup>1</sup> 10 June, 1820, p. 328. See also 8 Dec. 1821, p. 361.

There is more too that he feels to be immediately implied in the existence of this law, in all its dignity; he cannot account for it, in its universality and necessity, without falling back on the thought of God as the ruler from Whom it emanates, and of an unseen world in which its decisions are realised. Personal liberty, the existence of a God, and of a future life, are inferences which follow as immediate convictions from the recognition of the validity of Moral Law. The moral order, just as much as the physical order, comes to be thought of as a coherent system in which man is placed.

It is thus that by turning within himself, man becomes conscious of his own nature in all its complexity, and reaches a standpoint from which he apprehends his relation to other existences. The illustrations have been taken from modern times and from the Christian religion, but the experience of remorse and guilt is not by any means confined to those who have been instructed in the Christian religion. The tragedy of existence, the inner contradictions in human nature, the sense of a violated order and of guilt are found in all but the lowest forms of faith. The unique character of Christianity comes out in the solution it offers; in the power with which it declares forgiveness, and the restoration of man, so that he shall be reconciled to himself and to God. It shows him that by penetrating further along the path he may find, within himself, not only remorse and anguish, but the path of relief and rest. It declares to him that he need not look for his happiness in self-detachment, nor in externals, nor in enjoyment of any kind; "it is neither without us, nor within us, but in God, and thus both without and within<sup>1</sup>."

## V.

1. The special feature of Christianity is in the sense it affords of reconciliation; and this term itself suggests the most fruitful method of procedure, if we wish to investigate the

<sup>1</sup> Pascal, *op. cit.* 49.

contents of this most highly developed form of the religious consciousness. The awakening, to which allusion has already been made, brings out a sense of a double consciousness—such as is illustrated by Clough's *Dipsychus*, or by Stevenson's story of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. In these cases the two sides were wholly alien and repugnant to each other; and in the religious consciousness generally, they remain opposed to one another; it is only by consciously ignoring one or the other that satisfaction seems attainable. The claim of Christianity is that it affords a real method of reconciliation, so as to bring the two sides into harmony without any compromise, and without suppressing either one or the other.

We cannot get a clear view of this reconciliation by taking a single instance of religious experience, and setting our cognitive faculty to reflect on it and analyse it. We may see that the sense of guilt implies in some vague outline the ideas of a broken moral order and an offended God; but such logical inference<sup>1</sup> does not give us any assurance as to the reality of existences corresponding to these ideas. The exertion of the cognitive faculty in the search for truth leads us to an *impasse*. The only existence we know as real is our own, and it is by drawing upon ourselves that we give reality to our ideas. After all, in considering religion we have not to do merely with the cognitive faculty but also with the will: the gist of the Christian life consists in the reconciliation of the human will with the Divine—the control of the human will as it expresses itself in action; and in this mode of statement the severance between our subjective ideas and the real existences outside us does not arise as a sharply set opposition which we cannot satisfactorily bridge. The human will is conscious of itself as an activity; it knows itself not only as existing<sup>2</sup>, but as doing; there is certitude in its feeling of its own doings<sup>3</sup>; and this certitude is extended in varying degrees to other existences. In his moral conscious-

<sup>1</sup> La Berthonnière, *op. cit.* 77 n.      mere emotion, but for self-conscious

<sup>2</sup> *Cogito ergo sum.*      activity.

<sup>3</sup> 'Feeling' is not used here of

ness man feels that he accepts some aim, or frames it for himself, and strives to realise it. He is aware of obstacles which balk him, and which are real to him, just because they hamper and thwart him; he is certain of the existence of an external world<sup>1</sup>. He may be aware, too, of a Power which cooperates with him, not as an external agent, but as a spiritual influence; which convicts him of evil when his aims are sordid and self-seeking, but which strengthens his purpose when it is something that he lays down for all intelligences as well as for himself. He may recognise a “not ourselves that makes for righteousness<sup>2</sup>” in the world, because he is certain of a Power that makes for righteousness in his own internal life.

Devout literature, in which various phases of the Christian consciousness are set forth fully and explicitly, testifies to two points on which it is worth while to lay stress—on the one hand the certainty of reconciliation as attainable, on the other the sense of frequent failure to maintain this harmonious relationship. There is a process of reconciliation going on, but a process that is not fully accomplished. The attempt to universalise one's action may be occasional, and it may become habitual. As the moral law is thought of as a law for all intelligences, so when I act rightly, I act from the standpoint of the Universal Will; but still it is my action, there is no force that overmasters the personal will, but rather a personal desire to come into accord with the Universal Will—to think and to do what is pleasing to God. “We have to choose whether we shall make ourselves the end of our action and the centre on which it turns, or whether we shall seek an aim and a centre outside and above ourselves. Every generous action, every effort to get out of ourselves, however rudimentary it may be, is an acceptance and affirmation of God, and at the same time a step towards the light<sup>3</sup>.” And in this universalising of his will and activities there is no loss of his individual personal life; it is not merged in the

<sup>1</sup> Maine de Biran, *Essai sur les fondements de la Psychologie* in *Œuvres inédites*, I. 249.

<sup>2</sup> M. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 53.

<sup>3</sup> La Berthonnière, *op. cit.* 135.

Universal with which it is reconciled. As a Lutheran divine urges, man is distinct from God, both in his sin and in the process of reconciliation. "The separation between God and fallen man, however deep and great it may be, does not annul for the Christian consciousness the fact—indissolubly bound up with its very existence—that even this fallen man is still God's offspring and created for God; that he, in this condition of separation from God, retains the capability of receiving influences from God, so that God can come to be for him, even as he was once and in himself for God...However great the change may be which takes place by the Christianising of the natural man, to whatever extent this effect is produced by the objective factors of the spiritual world, it is still human life and human thought, into which the Divine Life and the Divine Thought enter...It is likewise surely a fact, that the man who has become Christian is not sensible of being thereby estranged from the human nature of which he was before conscious as his own; on the contrary, he feels that by a change in himself he has passed through the evil tendencies of his human nature to its truth, and become consciously what in reality he always was and was intended to be<sup>1</sup>." By Christian experience there arises "a change in the centre of gravity of personality<sup>2</sup>," but this change takes place within the sphere of self-conscious activity; there is certitude both as regards the personal will, and about the process of coming into harmony with the Universal Will. "We have the faculty of knowing God. But God is a living reality; and the knowledge that we have of Him, if it is really a knowledge of God and not an abstraction put in His place, lives in us. We acquire the knowledge of God as we acquire the knowledge of a friend by living his life, by penetrating into his intimacy, by becoming himself. To know God it is necessary to resemble Him, and we know Him in the degree in which we resemble Him. When we make progress in the knowledge of God it is time to say that God grows in us...When He is in us, it is not we who fashion Him, but He who fashions us.

<sup>1</sup> F. H. R. Frank, *System der christlichen Gewissheit*, I. 78 (Clark's Theological Library), 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* (Clark), 108.

But in our life of personal freedom He does not fashion us or grow in us, except in so far as we consent<sup>1</sup>." The Christian consciousness is not satisfied to frame demonstrations of the existence of a God Whose character is unknown, it seeks to penetrate into the nature of the God Who has brought Himself into relationship with a human personality.

2. In the same way the question as to how to demonstrate the existence of other intelligences ceases to be of much interest when we are concerned to know, as a practical thing, what attitude we ourselves take towards them in our inner consciousness. How are our activities directed with regard to them? Are we satisfied with the mere egoism of the man "who supposes himself to be a centre in which everything is united and to which it returns? He poses his individuality as the absolute on which everything depends....He professes that he only exists by himself and suffices for himself, and thus he asserts himself at the expense of everything else. One may say that he treats himself as constituting the Universe, and wills that everything should be his and exist for him<sup>2</sup>." Other intelligences are for us what we consent that they shall become; we may try to ignore them, or we may recognise them as partakers, like ourselves, in the power of laying down law universal.

From this point of view the world does not appear merely as a system of phenomena, or as things of which one is the centre. It appears as a system of beings, each of which is in a manner a centre, although all are interconnected together. There is a complete change of perspective<sup>3</sup>; "and the existence of other intelligences is no longer felt as a limitation set on ourselves, but as a sphere where we recognise privileges and responsibilities that add completeness to personal life. These moral relationships are congruent with the suggestions which we get from reflecting on the phenomena of observed and recorded experience, but they have their certitude in the manner in which they are felt, and they come into clear light as the process of Christianising the personal will goes on

<sup>1</sup> La Berthonnière, *op. cit.* 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 96.

increasingly. We do not begin by knowing God, or by knowing ourselves and other existences as they are. It is to this we tend, and it is to this that we ought to look as a goal<sup>1</sup>.”

3. Personal activity is known with the fullest measure of certitude within the sphere of self-consciousness, but it is not confined to the inner life ; it is externalised ; and the Christian consciousness expresses itself in the world of phenomena. Faith without works is dead ; and the whole history of the Christian Church is the story of the struggle of the faith once delivered to the saints, not merely to maintain itself in pious hearts but to show itself to the world in the lives and utterances of men. However chequered its success may have been, its effectiveness in holding up new ideals, in moulding individual lives, and modifying human institutions cannot be explained away. In the face of all the scandals which were the disgrace of Italy in the fifteenth century, and in opposition to the glorification of humanism which was then current, Savonarola could still point to a living witness of Divine Power present among men. He figured the march of this Power on earth as the progress of Christ through all the world, crowned with thorns, yet resplendent in the light of the Divine Trinity, and holding forth in one hand the cross and instruments of His passion, and in the other the Scriptures which record the divine message to the world<sup>2</sup>. The car, on which He was borne, was drawn in triumph by the apostles and heralded by the prophets, and enriched by the martyrs and doctors and saints of all ages, while multitudes of mankind followed in its wake and marked how opposition of every kind was crushed as it advanced. For the evidence of this Power he referred not to the events of a distant past, but to the familiar phenomena of his own day. “Since things which are present before our eyes are more trustworthy and reliable than bygone occurrences, we will put in the forefront those arguments for the Christian faith which rest on the deeds constantly seen in the lives of Christians in the Church<sup>3</sup>”—not of the unworthy, but of real Christians.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Il trionfo della croce*, I. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Il trionfo*, II. *proem.*

He pointed to the devotion of souls who desired "to turn to God, to submit themselves to Him and to be made like Him, and to seek to enter into His blessedness<sup>1</sup>," and to the lives of men, women, and children, in all ranks of society, inspired by Christian hope and charity<sup>2</sup>. And since his day, there has been abundance of such evidence in the extension of the area of Christendom, and from time to time in reinvigorated intensity of conviction. This was apparent not only in Luther and Calvin, but in the heroes of the counter-Reformation,—or in such diverse movements as the rise of Methodism and the organising of the Salvation Army. The vigorous power of Christian belief, among the social conditions of modern times and in spite of widespread indifference, is patent and obvious. Like any other phenomenon it demands an explanation, and no explanation can be adequate unless it takes account of the distinctive features of the system under consideration.

Christian activity, as the expression of Christian belief, has much in common with other forms of religious life, but its distinctive traits may be more easily brought out by comparing it with the Judaism from which it sprang. The Christian to whom the Gospel message is a reality will often wish to bear testimony to the truth which has taken hold of him. It was so among the first disciples, and the same tendency reappears in modern Revivals. But this is not a mere expression of personal enthusiasm; missionary effort is characteristic of the Christian community; there has been from the earliest days organised effort to diffuse the Christian faith throughout the world, and to plant the Church in every region. And this involves a conception of a divine society upon earth to which the Jews were strangers. So long as the divinely constituted realm was conceived of as territorial, and lying round one special centre, there could be little expectation that the Gentiles would benefit, except indirectly, by a manifestation of divine triumph<sup>3</sup>. The new idea of the kingdom of God as a spiritual realm in which men of all races

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* II. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah IX.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* II. 7.

and countries could participate fully, underlay the possibility of such missionary effort as that of St Paul. The perpetuation of the sense of a duty not merely to maintain the light, but to diffuse it, is characteristic of Christianity in the present as in many past ages, and we can trace it back to the definite charge which was given by our Lord to the Apostles.

We may also find that while there is much in common between Christian services and the utterances of Jewish devotion, there is one service which is distinctively Christian. In the Holy Communion a perpetual memorial of the Sacrifice of our Lord has been maintained in all ages of the Church ; it testifies to the unchanging belief that it is in union with Christ that reconciliation with God has become possible for us. And thus we can trace this spiritual force, persisting as a living power through many ages, till we find its origin in an unique personality. It is in the work and words of our Lord Himself that the Christian consciousness has its most perfect expression in the world of space and time.

4. Before this unique personality we stand on the threshold of the very Holy of Holies ; we can but recall what He has told us of Himself as it has been traditionally recorded. There was in Him a double consciousness ; on the one hand the understanding of all human frailty, the comprehension of all human sin, the weakness of a human body, the limitations, as it seems, of human cognition,—and all these mark Him as the Son of Man. Yet there was also a sense of perfect harmony with the Universal Will, so that He found His true refreshment in communing with God, His ambition in seeking to please Him ; it was in God that the true centre of His earthly life lay. And the conscious reconciliation, which obtained in His own person, was the inspiration of an active life : He sought by word and deed to set forth the truth that lived in Him so that it might possess the lives of all other men, and that they too might become, consciously and completely, the sons of God. In His earthly sojourning and passion He sounded the depths of degradation ; in His resurrection He manifested the Divine Power to break the bonds

of sin and death. By this declaration of the actual reconciliation of God and man in His own personality He opened to all men the hope of becoming what He is. By training His Apostles, by enduing them with His Spirit, by instituting rites which have been perpetuated in the Church, He gave the objective means through which the life that dwelt in Him might be transfused to all future generations. This was His effort; this was what He claimed to do: and a great multitude whom no man can number have set to their seals that He is true, since they have found that His is the way that leads, in their own personal experience, to reconciliation with God.

## VI.

1. If we turn from dwelling on the life and teaching of our Lord personally, to a survey of the religious history of the world, the Christian consciousness cannot be satisfied to take the negative attitude of the mere spectator. The point of view from which we look, or the attitude of mind we adopt, must affect the results at which we arrive. It is of course possible to maintain a purely scientific standpoint in regard to the literature and history of any religion; to aim at a clear apprehension of all the incidents, and at obtaining a representation of the past. But to the Christian consciousness it does not seem worth while to try to restrict the exercise of the cognitive faculties in this way. It desires to arrive not merely at an apprehension of each particular phenomenon in relation to other phenomena, but at an appreciation. We may try to appreciate any incident, or document, as regards its significance,—as for example its importance with reference to the interest of the student, subjectively, or objectively in regard to the universe of which it is a part, and the purposes which run through the whole<sup>1</sup>; but appreciation endeavours to take account of relations with which mere apprehension cannot pretend to deal. When we appre-

<sup>1</sup> W. Hermann, *Die Religion in Verhältnis zum Welterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit* (1879), 80, 81.

hend any phenomenon, we can describe its occurrence in space and time with precision, and state its relation as consequent on, or antecedent to, other groups of phenomena so as to determine its cause and effects ; but we cannot pronounce on its import or significance or worth, unless we can apply to it some conception of an end towards which it is tending, or a purpose to which it gives effect, so that we may be able to appreciate it. The doctrine of development is an attempt to appreciate the significance of each animate form with reference to life as a whole. In the study of the phenomena of conscious life, it is possible to get a more intimate acquaintance with the coherence of the several parts, and a more definite view of their connexion into one whole. The idea of end and purpose is almost necessarily introduced ; the whole is susceptible of a teleological interpretation, and we can get, not merely at an antecedent and consequent, but at the reasons for any change. It would be to miss the most fruitful results of the study of moral and religious phenomena if we should dispense with all attempts at appreciation, and rest satisfied with taking the phenomena into the vacuity of the empty mind. There must be an active judgement, with reference to some standard or object, if we are to pass from mere apprehension to appreciation.

It is, of course, possible to appreciate sacred literature with reference to different standards, or from different points of view. It may be considered simply as regards its artistic value ; the success which attends attempts to express the deepest human feeling—the tragedy of human life in all its grandeur. There may be a critical judgement as to the skill shown by a particular poet in the employment of metre, or as to the manner in which a didactic writer handles his theme. The ‘divine library of the Old Testament’ and ‘the sacred books of the East,’ occupy a large place in the literature of the world, and we can appreciate each part with reference to artistic beauty and literary skill. From this point of view the Bible is an epic of the world. “It unrolls a vast panorama in which the ages of the world move before us in a long train of solemn imagery, from the creation of the

earth and the heavens onward to the final passing away of all this material universe and the coming of a new heaven and a new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. Against this gorgeous background, this ever shifting scenery, now bright with the hues of heaven, now lurid with the glare of hell, we see mankind strutting and playing their little part on the stage.....This may not be science and history, but it is at least an impressive pageant, a stately drama: without metaphor, it is noble literature; and like all noble literature it is fitted to delight, to elevate, and to console<sup>1</sup>." This mode of appreciation does not exclude the appraising of sacred literature from other points of view as well; we may consider it not only from the standpoint of the artistic, but also from that of the Christian consciousness, and estimate it with respect, not to its form, but to its content. From this point of view, the really important fact is that the literature is religious, and deals with the relations of God and man. The Christian accepts the revelation of God in Christ as giving us the most complete view of these relations as they are, and thus has a standard by which to appreciate the truth of any sacred writing. How far is it true, not merely as representing the past, but as setting forth the relations that subsist between God and man?

2. From the point of view of the simple Christian man who reads his Bible, this is the one consideration of supreme importance—the truth of the content of the books of the Bible as a revelation of the ways of God with man. He may, according to education or temperament, find a delight and an interest in the Bible for other reasons, but this is the ground which makes it worth his while to read it and get to know it better than any other book. He may be susceptible to its beauty, or he may not; he may be anxious to get the most minute accuracy about every detail of language and incident, or he may not; but matters which belong to the realm of art and of scholarship are subordinate in his mind, as compared with the effort to appreciate religious truth.

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Frazer, *Passages of the Bible chosen for their literary beauty and interest*, VII.

The Bible purports to be a record of the development of the religious consciousness ; of the manner in which a chosen race came to comprehend with greater and greater clearness the character of God, and the relations of duty and privilege in which they stood to Him. It recognises a progressive revelation, as God by successive declarations made known at diverse times and in sundry manners more and more of His Nature and His Will. It calls attention to the unworthiness of the agents and the inadequacy of the media through which these declarations were given at first, and put on record for our learning. The inability of the agent to apprehend the full meaning of the truth he declared was the proof that he did not speak of himself, but was merely a voice inspired with a message. The messages took diverse forms in different ages and on different occasions. The worth of all, whether actual event, or vision of the night, or parable spoken, depends on the truth which it served to set forth. The plain man is quite prepared to welcome increased accuracy in our knowledge of these media as phenomena in time ; he may find that the chronology he had accepted is mistaken, and that the events of which he reads took place at some other time or in some other place than he supposed. Or he may find that what he had supposed to be a description of an actual event is merely a parable ; or that a piece of literature commonly ascribed to some author was not written by the man whose name it bears. For the mind that is concentrated on the spiritual import of the words these questions sink into relative insignificance. It is indeed possible to disparage them unduly ; Alexandrian commentators appear to have been ready to view the whole of the Old Testament history as mere allegory which served to illustrate Christian truth<sup>1</sup>. But there is at all events one limitation to this comparative indifference in regard to the form which revelation may take<sup>2</sup>. The story of the life of Christ has an unique importance, because in Him the content of revelation is indissolubly bound up with the particular form in which it was manifested

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham, *Epistle of S. Barnabas*, xvii, ci.

<sup>2</sup> La Berthonnière, *op. cit.* 205.

to the world. And in seeking to grasp the teaching of the written, as of the Incarnate Word, we dare not treat it as merely spiritual to the neglect of the actual in place and time. All increased accuracy of knowledge of the phenomena is to the good, for it is almost certain to add to the vividness of some familiar truth.

The results of criticism may therefore be thoroughly welcome, even when the devout Christian is repelled by the mode in which some writers express them ; to him the purely critical attitude of mind may seem offensive, in so far as it involves a concentration of thought on the phenomena, to the apparent disregard of the spiritual significance. He cannot sympathise with the absorption of scholars in questions of detail, which seem to him relatively unimportant ; and he resents the air of indifference which some assume to the religious truth contained in the Bible, as at least an affectation. He finds it difficult to believe that any scholars are really satisfied with the meagre result of apprehending the phenomena better without attempting to appreciate the religious truth of the content. Such an attitude of mind is unintelligible to him, unless the critics hold that there is no religious truth contained in the phenomena, and that apprehension, without appreciation, is the only sort of study that is possible. One point at least is clear to him—that more accurate apprehension of the phenomena is not the road by which men ordinarily attain to a fuller appreciation of religious truth. When the phenomena which are recorded for us were actually present to the eye and ear, they did not in and by themselves produce conviction. The most complete success in the reproduction of the past would still show us the crowds who stoned the prophets, or from whom the Lord turned because of their unbelief. The recognition of realities behind the phenomena is not brought about by mere observation and reflection, but by coordinating recorded with present religious experience. The mere exercise of the cognitive faculties does not enable us to predicate existence, the uncertainty which attaches to arguments about existences corresponding to our ideas attaches also to any attempt of

the trained intellect to pass through recorded incidents and utterances of the religious consciousness and show that the alleged relations of God and man are real. "Spiritual things" must be "spiritually discerned."

3. From the point of view of the Christian consciousness it is possible to reach a much more discriminating view of the truth and falsity of the other religions of the world than would otherwise be attainable. Those who relegate religion to a place among the other phenomena of human culture will be likely to take a sympathetic position towards all beliefs alike, and say that each is true for the man who holds it, that it is the form of religion which suits him; but this implies the opinion that no common standard can be applied; scepticism as to the very existence of religious truth seems to be involved in this judgement. On the other hand, from the point of view of Deists, all the higher religions were regarded as essentially true, and all other religions as merely false. But the Christian, who accepts the revelation made in the person of Christ as the fullest statement possible of the relations of God to man, has a standard to apply to other beliefs; and as he applies it, he finds that each of the other religions of the world has some elements of truth, and each has also some elements of falsehood.

The attitude of St Paul towards the religions with which he came in contact affords an admirable illustration of the Christian position. He recognised the truth of Judaism; he held that the Law was a true expression of God's will, and that the sense of guilt which it evoked was a true reflection of the Divine horror of sin. He held that the divinely ordained sacrifices had provided means by which the sinner could be restored to his place in the community of the faithful, and that they gave a dim expression of the fact that God is willing to forgive; but that they could never cleanse the conscience from sin, and were therefore inadequate to make a complete reconciliation. This true but incomplete knowledge of God and His will had been expressed in forms which were inadequate to serve as the medium of the full expression of the truth; that had at last been given in the person of Jesus Christ. By

reference to Him it was possible to see that the beliefs embodied in the worship and practice of the Israelites were true; but the same test which confirmed the truth it contained convicted Israel of error and of falsity. Blindness had happened unto his countrymen. In so far as they persisted in their attachment to the old forms of religious truth, and regarded them as essential, they were in error; the whole of the painful controversy in which he was involved with the Galatians was the fruit of this error. In so far as they were not only unduly attached to their religious traditions, but rejected the Christian revelation and persecuted the disciples—as he himself had done—the opinions of the Jews were false. It was impossible to say offhand whether Judaism was to be approved as true or condemned as false; but it was possible to apply the touchstone of faith in Christ, and to form a discriminating judgement as to how far it was true, how far erroneous, and how far false. In a similar fashion when he turned to the Gentiles, he tried to fasten on any element of truth in their religion, such as the belief in a God of nature, while yet he denounced the forms of their worship, and sought to awaken them to their need of repentance and forgiveness.

The growth of religious knowledge in the world has consisted in the gradual passing from a more to a less imperfect appreciation of God's relations with man. The phases of progress in the world as a whole are parallel to those in the development of the individual consciousness. It is in the light of the inner life that the external history becomes most intelligible. The individual passes from knowledge of himself as guilty, to knowledge of himself as reconciled, as he learns to appreciate more truly the character of the Power not himself that makes for righteousness; and there has been a similar advance by the race in the capacity for apprehending the character of God. The possibility of change and growth among men accounts for the apparent inconsistency of the elements of truth about God which are recorded in the Bible as given in different periods. Even though God is the same in all ages, unchanging and eternal, man's ability to grasp

the Divine traits brought within his cognisance has improved; knowledge has increased, as the power of appreciation has developed.

It may be difficult even for the recipient to describe the precise incidents through which a new truth has first flashed on any human mind. The Bible at least gives us a vivid presentation of each stage of progress. In the story of Abraham an early phase of religious consciousness is clearly portrayed, since we find in him a recognition of God as an unchanging Will—and therefore as One who might be trusted utterly and entirely. The sacredness of the most solemn agreement between man and man, or between tribe and tribe, symbolised the reliability which he felt to attach to an expression of the Divine Will. Amid all the uncertainties of human life—the alternatives of plenty and famine as seasons change, the mischief wrought by unfriendly neighbours, the imminent extinction as it seemed of his race and name—there was something, Some One to trust to. In the horror of a great darkness this aspect of God's character was made known to Abraham; and the faith which sprung up in his heart rendered him the precursor and progenitor of countless multitudes who have come after him and have shared in a like faith. To be delivered from constant uncertainty as to physical conditions, or the action of jealous rivals, by having Some One to trust to, in his life and beyond his life,—that was the faith of Abraham; and it is still cherished by many who do not profess or call themselves Christians.

“It fortifies my soul to know  
That though I perish, truth is so;  
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,  
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.  
I steadier step when I recall  
That though I slip, Thou dost not fall<sup>1</sup>.”

However the tribal history may be reconstructed, we cannot but feel that another step in the human power of appreciating Divine truth and a further advance in knowledge of God are marked in the Biblical account of the giving of the

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Clough, *Poems and Prose Remains*, II, 91.

**Law.** The tribes that had descended from the patriarchs had grown up in the tradition of reverencing God as an Unseen Reality ; at Sinai they came to know Him as a Present Power. Moses ascended the Mount which was so carefully guarded from intrusion, and from which the thunderings and lightnings emanated, and from it he brought the Law which the Eternal God had given for His people here. In the Ten Commandments, accepted under such circumstances, there was a conscious union of religion with morality, since there was an insistence on the habitual performance of certain duties at the command of an Unseen God ; the enforcement of the penalty of sin followed the disregard of breaches of these duties to man. It was a revelation for these men to learn to think of God, not merely as the Supreme Reality with Whom is no variability, nor shadow of turning, but as one who takes such account of His creatures as to demand from them regular and habitual compliance with His righteous Will. This new apprehension of the relation in which God stands to men could not but bring out the contrast between the Creator and the creature. On the one side the people recognised God, infinite and all-holy, yet so near, with these tremendous signs of His immediate presence ; and on the other was man, conscious of sin and frailty in his puny life, and crushed by the sense that God was making Himself felt to eye and ear. Throughout the narration we see that the human consciousness of sin has been awakened in its fullest form, a sense of an utter unworthiness to stand before the searching eye, or face the perfect rule of God Himself, such as the patriarchs had not felt. At Mount Sinai man could not but recognise his helplessness and his uselessness ; the people shrank from such a revelation in all its appalling splendour, and besought Moses to shield them from the presence of God and the glory which manifested it.

We read that, centuries later, another great step was taken, when the human race had advanced sufficiently to be able to learn more of the character of God. There was a little company in an upper room at Jerusalem of men who had been trained by intercourse with Him Whom they recognised as

the Incarnate Son of God, who had been desolated by a great sorrow, and gladdened by an unlooked-for restoration. When the Day of Pentecost was fully come they were able to appreciate the new revelation which their Master had promised them, and to find in God, not merely an Unseen Reality, not only a Present Power, but a Personal Help. They found in themselves the fulfilment of the promise that Christ would send a Spirit of Truth Who should abide with them for ever ; through Him the help they needed would be supplied ; and despite the weakness which discouraged and daunted them, they would be sustained by the Lord and Giver of Life. God had at length revealed Himself as willing and able to transform each frail human being by His Power into His own likeness and thus fit them to be in His Presence eternally. On Whitsunday the Apostles attained to Christian consciousness and to the full knowledge of God in His relations with man.

The various phases in the development of the religious consciousness, which are set before us in the Bible, still subsist in many parts of the world ; each has its truth, yet each is enveloped in error, or charged with falsity. It is the work of Christ's ministers to-day, as it was of the Apostles at first, to be His ambassadors and declare the true knowledge of God which He has revealed. It is their wisdom to follow the example of the Apostles, and note the phase of truth any people have already attained, and the further knowledge they are able to appreciate. The message of reconciliation is not what is needed by those who have no consciousness of sin ; the consciousness of sin is hardly possible to those who have no sense of spiritual realities, whose conscious life is still 'immersed in nature.' The evangelisation of the world can only proceed in the order to which God adapted Himself in the revelation of His nature and His will to the world. But the motive to make this effort and carry on this work rests on the simple obligation to declare the truth of God and make it known among men. Religion is an element in human culture ; the spread of higher religions is accompanied by the diffusion of a knowledge of nobler literature and purer morality. The

acceptance of one religion by the whole human race would go far to diminish mutual misunderstandings and to bring about peace and order throughout the world. These are incidental advantages, which may accrue in a greater or less degree from the successful prosecution of missionary work ; but it is not because of its usefulness, but simply because of its truth that we desire to diffuse the Christian knowledge of God. The one object from which all the force and inspiration of missionary efforts come is a desire to diffuse the knowledge of God, in all its completeness, so that all men may come to be reconciled to Him, and thus to be partakers in the Christian consciousness.

## VII.

1. It is claimed for the Christian consciousness that it gives a point of view from which we may obtain deeper insight into religious truth ; but it has also to do with the activities of life as well as with the appreciation of the relations of God and man. Three-fourths of religion, as Matthew Arnold used to insist, are concerned with conduct and the relations of man with man. All the higher religions exercise an ennobling influence on man ; there are many maxims of conduct on which they are agreed, but it is worth while to compare the point of view in regard to duty, which is taken by the Christian, with that of the Buddhist or the Theist. It would be absurd to attempt to discuss the merits of each ; the success of one man in living up to his conception of life as compared with the failure of others ; or the degrees of guilt which attach to those who have had clearer knowledge set before them. It is merely our part to distinguish the ethical standpoints which are consonant with one or other of the nobler forms of religious belief respectively.

There is no figure that has roused more devotion in the East than that of Buddha ; and the story of his life cannot but appeal to our sympathies, and call forth tributes of admiration from the Western world to the Light of Asia.

He set forth in his own person a noble morality which was closely associated with a religion in which there was no place for God. To some of us the very suggestion of a religion without a God seems to be a contradiction in terms; but there are others who know that this is not so, because they have felt the attraction such teaching offers. The personal cultivation of devout consciousness may be pursued as an end in itself. There is so much turmoil and hurry in the world; many of us would fain be quit of it all, and pass our days in the contemplation of what is pure and noble. Life in so many cases seems purposeless and empty. The remorseless struggle for wealth and honours that are vanity and vexation of spirit, the fussiness that frets over everything or nothing, are alike despicable and tiresome. The longing to be quit of it all—aloof from all the irritation and the triviality—may be overwhelming. We may try to withdraw within ourselves, and enjoy the solitude we can create; for the power of self-seclusion may be cultivated with success, if we devote ourselves sedulously to the task.

“As may the ear  
Hearing not hear,  
Though drums do roll and pipes and cymbals ring,  
So the bare conscience of the better thing  
Unfelt, unseen, unimaged, all unknown,  
May fix the entranced soul 'mid multitudes alone!”

This deliberate revolt against the world and all it contains—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—is more congenial to the Eastern than to the Western temperament; but even in England and America the strain and stress of modern life have called forth a reaction; there are signs in many quarters of eagerness to withdraw from it, and cultivate an inner life. This is an echo of Buddhism which finds expression in strange theosophies and forms of science falsely so called. Both in the East and in the West such religion has elements of noble self-renunciation, in efforts to quench the passions and master the desires; but after all a self-centred religion is only consonant with a self-centred

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Clough, *Poems and Prose Remains*, II. 25.

life. We can only cut ourselves free from the perturbing influences that play upon our lives by suppressing all the ties and interests that bind us to our fellow-men. If we wish to cultivate a high morality we cannot be satisfied with trying to draw within ourselves: what we need is a faith that will take us out of ourselves. And this we find in the gospel of the Incarnation; the Son of Man had a part in the sorrows and perplexities, the sins and the sufferings of our common humanity, and through it all He set forth a divine ideal. If we would do our task in the world and lead a life that is worth living, we dare not sever ourselves from all the claims of others and spend our time in mere quiescence: none of us dare set up the cultivation and training of his own consciousness as the supreme object of life. A divine sentence on this ambition has been pronounced once for all,—“He that loveth his life shall lose it”; when he has emptied it of all that can ruffle its course, he will find that he has narrowed and cramped his whole being. Salvation cannot be attained by cutting ourselves off and hedging ourselves in; that is merely to make a desert in our hearts and call it peace. By willingness to enter into the sorrows of others, and striving to rejoice in their pleasures, the best that is in us may be drawn out and developed. We may find our true lives if we strive to bear one another’s burdens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ.

Without in any way disparaging the earnestness and devotion of the Buddhist saints, we may yet recognise that there is a fundamental difference between the moral consciousness of the Christian and of the Buddhist. The former recognises a Power which makes for righteousness, while the other does not. Those who are satisfied with the narrower ideal, and aim at self-subjugation and self-control may be content to trust to the cultivation of personal strength of will, as the power that can set them free. But if we are looking out on the world—out on our circle of relations with all the claims of mutual dependence, out on those who are brought in contact with us through our callings, out on those who may be influenced by the manner in which we discharge our duties

as citizens, out on the posterity that will inherit the fruits of our actions—then we can have a better expectation of establishing harmony between our lives and our surroundings, if our faith and hope are placed in Some One who is greater than ourselves. It may be possible for the ascetic or the philosopher to control the little world within, and to bring it into subjection ; but though we are in contact with it at so many points, we have no power in ourselves to control the great world without. Those who believe that the Universe is not a chaos, but that there is order in it all, and that in the last resort Reason is supreme, can take courage. They recognise a God who created it, a God who has a purpose in it ; in so far as they succeed in making His will their own and lending themselves to be the instruments of carrying out His purpose, they can attain to calmness and confidence through all the struggles of mundane existence.

2. Not every form of Theism will serve to influence morality. It is possible to believe that God is so infinitely above His creatures, that He takes no account of them or their doings, and is entirely indifferent to the manner in which they live their lives, and to their conduct to one another ; such a doctrine is a philosophy, perhaps, rather than a religion, and it can have little connexion with ethics. Any theistic doctrine, however, which recognises relations between God and His creatures, is sure to have a bearing on the conduct of human beings to one another ; it gives a foundation for ideas of right and wrong, in the conception of a rule laid down for man by his Creator, and it provides sanctions and motives for living according to this rule. These sanctions may be thought of as physical, as was on the whole the case with the Israelites of old ; they believed in the direct connexion of personal and national prosperity with personal and national righteousness ; famine or pestilence were regarded as the direct chastisement of wrongdoing. Or the sanctions may be thought of as supermundane, and consisting of rewards and punishments in another world. Mohammedanism has a clearer hold on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul than Judaism attained ; and as a consequence, the joys of paradise and tortures of