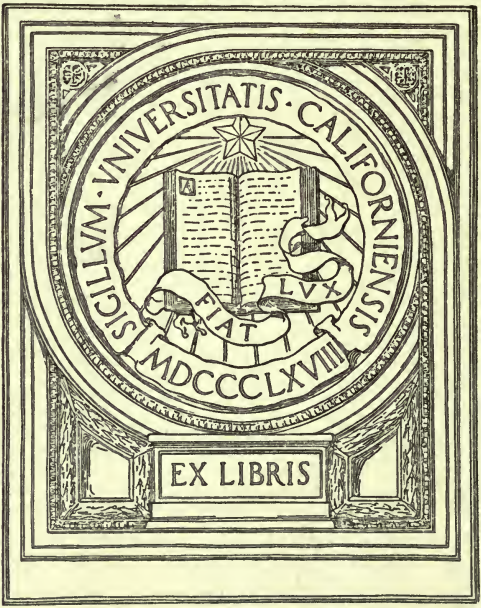
Swarthmore Lecture

The Quest for Truth

Silvanus P. Thompson, F.R.S.



Swarthmore Lecture
1915.

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BY
SILVANUS P. THOMPSON, F.R.S.

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Preface

The Swarthmore Lectureship was established by the Woodbrooke Extension Committee, at a meeting held December 9th, 1907: the minute of the Committee providing for "an annual lecture on some subject relating to the Message and Work of the Society of Friends." The name "Swarthmore" was chosen in memory of the home of Margaret Fox, which was always open to the earnest seeker after Truth, and from which loving words of sympathy and substantial material help were sent to fellow-workers.

The Lectureship has a two-fold purpose: first, to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their Message and Mission; and secondly, to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the Friends.

The previous lectures of the series have been as follows:—

1908: "Quakerism a Religion of Life," by Rufus M. Jones, M.A., D.Litt., of Haverford College, Pa.

1909 : " Spiritual Guidance in the Experience of the Society of Friends," by William Charles Braithwaite, B.A., LL.B.

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The above lectures have been delivered on the evening preceding the assembly of the Friends' Yearly Meeting in each year.

Contents.

"*For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.*"—JOHN xviii. 37.

"*Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for thee.*"—ECCLESIASTICUS iv. 28.

"*Happy is he whom truth teacheth by itself, not by figures and words that pass, but as it is in itself.*"
"DE IMITATIONE CHRISTI," I., iii.

"*Truth emerges more quickly from error than from confusion.*"—FRANCIS BACON.

"*It makes all the difference in the world whether we put truth in the first place, or in the second.*"
ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

"*It is only by virtue of the opposition which it has surmounted that any truth can stand in the human mind.*"
ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

"*The longest Sword, the strongest Lungs, the most Voices, are false measures of Truth.*"
BENJAMIN WHICHCOTE.

"*Truth is like a torch: the more 'tis shook, the more it shines.*"—SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON.

"*The more readily we admit the possibility of our own cherished convictions being mixed with error, the more vital and helpful whatever is right in them will become.*"
JOHN RUSKIN.

"*Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?*"—PAUL (GALATIANS iv. 16).

"*Blame not before thou hast examined the truth; understand first, and then rebuke.*"—ECCLESIASTICUS xi. 7.

The Quest for Truth

INTRODUCTION

In the age-long quest after Truth, men have sought far and wide. They have questioned the starry heavens; they have dug into the bowels of the earth; they have rifled the treasures of the antique world; they have consulted the reputed oracles of human wisdom; they have sought for truth in the depths of their own consciousness; they have looked for some divine Revelation. Has any one—the wisest, the purest, the most enlightened of them—found the answer to the age-long enigma: What is Truth?

Yet from the dawn of human history men have known as by some divine instinct the vital difference there is between fact and not-fact, and have despised the man who should say the thing that is not. They have learned to discriminate between the man who unwittingly says that which is not, and they have styled his untruth as *error*; and him who wittingly and of deliberate purpose says that which is not, and they have branded his untruth as *a lie*. Perhaps it has been easier

to define the negative, untruth, than to define the positive, truth. But whether positively defined, or negatively, man has ever possessed a consciousness of the difference between them. At whatever stage of prehistoric development man attained the endowment of speech, he has instinctively expected and required a correspondence between the fact and the word which expressed it; and has been conscious that if that correspondence were violated some wrong has been done to him; and he has resented that violation. Untruth, then, in its most elementary form consists in a violation of the correspondence between fact and word; and truth, in its essence, consists in the strict observance of the correspondence between word and fact. Any violation of that correspondence, whether accidental through carelessness or ignorance, or purposed through malevolent intention, leads to confusion. When discovered, it offends against the instinctive sense of right and wrong, and is condemned in the court of conscience.

VERACITY.

And here we must distinguish between that which is, and a man's conception of that which

is. If a man honestly expresses in speech, or in action, that which he conceives to be the fact, we credit him with being *veracious*, even if what he conceived to be the fact should afterwards turn out to be a mistaken or imperfect conception of the real fact. He has not lied; and yet what he spoke may after all not have been the truth. Veracity, which is always a commendable quality, implies a correspondence between what a man believes and thinks on the one hand, and what he says, and acts upon, and does on the other hand. But Truth is much more than mere veracity. The quest for truth demands much more than following the habit of veracity. It implies the effort—the continued, intelligent, honest effort—to bring one's conception of things into accurate correspondence with things as they really are; so that one's speech shall not merely voice empty or confused or untrue opinions or impressions, but shall express, so far as possible, the thing that is. The ascertainment of truth, and its discrimination from error and falsehood, is therefore a different process and a much more exacting one than mere truth-speaking. Veracity is quite compatible with honest error; may co-exist with confusion of thought and

ignorance. Yet deliverance from confusion or ignorance cannot be expected to be brought about through anyone of whom veracity is not the habitual practice. The discovery of truth is not for him who is careless of truth in speech, or deed, or in habit of mind. Neither is it for him whose thinking apparatus is in a state of confusion.

This is not the place or time to enter upon the abstract question sometimes raised, as to why we ought to speak the truth, or why moralists in all ages[1] have insisted on truthfulness as the necessary foundation of all the other virtues.

[1] In ancient Egypt, we find Truth set forth as amongst the highest titles of God. In the *Book of the Dead* (ch. xlii. and xliv.) we read :

"God is Truth; he lives through Truth; he is nourished on Truth; he is King of Truth; and Truth he erects over the world."

And the verdict prononuced on the soul of the justified person runs :

"He lives in Truth, nourishes himself on Truth."

Socrates was pre-eminent in Greece for his stern and outspoken love of truth. Blackie, in his *Four Phases of Morals* (pp. 19-34) has thus written of him :—

"Socrates, therefore, was right, not only for Greece in the fifth century B.C., but for England at the present moment, and for all times and places, when he proclaimed on the house-tops that the first and most necessary wisdom for all men is not to measure the stars, or to weigh the dust, or to analyse the air, but, according to the old Delphic sentence to know themselves, and to realize in all the breadth and depth of its

In the dialogues of Plato there is a very remarkable passage in which that sage gives a vision of souls choosing their lives[2] before

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significance what it is to be a man, and not a pig or a god. . . . Truth, therefore, unadulterated truth in thought and act, was the pole-star of his navigation."

Plato, in the *Republic*, declares a lie to be a thing naturally hateful both to gods and men.

The Zoroastrians also had strong perceptions of Truth. In their conception of the universe there were two great conflicting principles of good and evil, personified as Ormuzd and Ahriman. Of Ormuzd they said: "He is the Truth." The power of Ahriman is "in the lie." One of their legends states that Yima, the fallen spirit, fell through a lie: "His glory (*i.e.*, the truth) was seen leaving him in the likeness of a beautiful bird."

[2] The passage occurs in the *Republic*, ch. x., 617, and is worthy of being quoted at greater length.

"But first of all there came a prophet who arranged them in order; then he took from the knees of Lachesis lots and samples of lives, and having mounted on a high pulpit, spake as follows: 'Hear the word of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your genius will not be allotted to you, but you will choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her, he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser—God is justified.' . . . 'A man must take with him into the world below an adamantine faith in truth and right, that there too he may be undazzled by the desire of wealth or the other allurements of evil, lest, coming upon tyrannies and similar villainies, he do irremediable wrongs to others and suffer yet worse himself.' 'Even for the last comer, if he chooses wisely, and will live diligently, there is appointed a happy and not undesirable existence. Let not him who chooses first be careless, and let not the last despair.'"

Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. III., pp. 334-6.

they enter the world of men, and puts as the first qualification for the momentous issue this :—"A man must take with him into the world below an adamantine faith in truth and right." That is, he must cherish truth-speaking and right-doing as cardinal points of conduct in this life.

I need not dwell upon this moral obligation to speak the truth, or on the ethical reasons that have been assigned for it by different writers. For us, at least, the obligation may be put on the highest grounds. We have the words of Christ,[1] "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." But we have also, in the words of Paul,[2] what seems to be the real reason why, "putting away lying," we should "speak every man truth with his neighbour," namely this :—"for we are members one of another." The solidarity of human life requires of us that we should use our words so that they correspond to the thing that is, and so abuse not the gift of speech. "The great basis," said Babbage,[3] "of virtue in man, is truth

[1] Matthew v. 37.

[2] Ephesians iv. 25.

[3] Passages from the Life of a Philosopher," p. 404.

—that is, the constant application of the same word to the same thing." There is, as Professor Jacks has declared,[1] " no surer road to a state of alienation from what is best in modern life, and to the forfeiture of good men's confidence, than that of a careless handling of the standard of truth."

EQUIVOCATION AND CASUISTRY.

The casuists have immemorially raised the question whether one is bound at all times and in all circumstances to speak the truth ; whether under stress of personal danger, or under threat of violence, one is not justified in deliberate untruth ; whether in dealing with madmen or criminals one is debarred from using a lie in the interests of truth ; whether a physician is permitted to conceal the truth from a patient in a critical state of health ; whether an advocate may plead for the innocence of a client whom he knows to be really guilty. Little good can come from arguing out casuistical cases[2] on *a priori* grounds. Everyone will

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, Oct., 1906.

[2] Lecky, in his *History of Rationalism* (Vol. I., p. 394), has stated the position as follows :—

" Whatever may be the foundation of the moral law, it is certain that in the eyes of the immense majority

agree that the less of casuistry there is in the world the better; that every departure from the standard of truth, however excusable it may seem in the stress of difficult circumstances, is in itself evil and debasing to the moral sense. Still less would one care to defend or justify the perversions of truth that pass current almost unrebuked in many departments of life. No one has denounced more clearly the evils of prevarication, of the false insinuation, than John Ruskin. Hear him as he speaks in the *Seven Lamps*:—

"Do not let us lie at all. Do not think of one falsity as harmless, and another as slight, and another as

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of mankind there are some overwhelming considerations that will justify a breach of its provisions. If some great misfortune were to befall a man who lay on a sick bed, trembling between life and death; if the physician declared that the knowledge of that misfortune would be certain death to the patient, and if concealment were only possible by a falsehood, there are very few moralists who would condemn that falsehood." . . . "It is not very easy to justify these things by argument, or to draw a clear line between criminal and innocent falsehood; but that there are circumstances which justify untruth has always been admitted by the common sentiment of mankind, and has been distinctly laid down by the most eminent moralists." Lecky quotes Jeremy Taylor and other divines in support of this temporizing view. A careful statement of the Roman doctrine of Equivocation will be found in a letter, dated from Stonyhurst, October 5th, 1901, by Rev. Father Canning, S.J., printed as Supplementum VI., on p. 287, of H. H. Spink's book, *The Gunpowder Plot* (1902).

unintended. Cast them all aside ; they may be light and accidental ; but they are an ugly soot from the smoke of the pit, for all that ; and it is better that our hearts should be swept clean of them, without over care as to which is largest or blackest. Speaking truth is like writing fair, and comes only by practice ; it is less a matter of will than of habit, and I doubt if any occasion can be trivial which permits the practice and formation of such a habit. To speak and act truth with constancy and precision is nearly as difficult, and perhaps as meritorious, as to speak it under intimidation or penalty."

" And yet it is not calumny nor treachery that do the largest sum of mischief in the world. But it is the glistening and softly spoken lie ; the amiable fallacy ; the patriotic lie of the historian, the provident lie of the politician, the zealous lie of the partizan, the merciful lie of the friend, and the careless lie of each man to himself, that cast that black mystery over humanity, through which we thank any man who pierces, as we would thank one who dug a well in a desert."

" There are some faults slight in the sight of love, some errors slight in the estimate of wisdom ; but truth forgives no insult, and endures no stain."

Hear again the late Father George Tyrrell :—

" There is something worse than deliberate lying, and that is the habit of gratuitous assertion ; of saying, not what we know to be untrue, but what we do not know to be true. Nine-tenths of our untruthfulness is of this sort ; and it is fostered by the credulity or the indifference of our hearers."

INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY.

Experience of life brings home to us the desirability of keeping out of deceptions, of

avoiding the disaster that follows on dwelling in the false security of illusions. It seems indeed strange that men willingly live on the lower planes of truthfulness, rather than on the higher. In every rank we find conventional lies taking the place of truth. Each man, wherever he is placed, has to contend, not only against the outward falsities, but against the temptation to say to others the things that seem pleasant, and things serviceable for the hour, rather than the things that are. Every class has to fight with its own misleading prepossessions, every age has to meet its own falsehoods. In an environment where men are careless of truth, it is easy to slip into inexactitudes of speech. The habit of looking at things carelessly begets in men the inability to see things truly. They cannot read aright the things that are. And this, the saddest, if not the most wicked, form of lying, eats as a canker into the character; it is what Francis Bacon called "the lie that sinketh in." There are some who imagine that it is an easy thing for a man to speak the truth; that even after lapse of exercise the faculty remains unimpaired. But he who supposes that truth-speaking is a casual function, which after

habitual neglect may be at any time resumed, has never gone to the root of the matter. It seems deplorable, but after many years I have come to the conclusion, that the majority of men do not want to know the truth about things. They will admit that truth is many sided; but they want to hear one side[1] only. They do not want the truth, but only that particular aspect of it which suits them.

"Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" was the question directed by the great Apostle of the Gentiles to some of his subverted followers. It was ever thus; men, even though veracious and honest in speech, are not by nature lovers of truth, anxious to know the thing as it is. Rather they wish to believe the thing as it seems in their imaginations. They are lovers of their fancies, their own cherished prejudices[2]. To

[1] How many men make a practice of reading both sides of even passing politics? They prefer to hear the organs of one party only. In religious matters, how many men read the views of those who differ from them? How many subscribers to the *Christian World* read also the *Inquirer* or the *Tablet*? How many readers of the *Inquirer* read also the *Guardian*, or the *Church Times*, or the *Dublin Review*?

[2] "In the same way all those superficial and inadequate, too often also harsh and severe, judgements which we see and read daily amongst men in the common

become lovers of truth for its own sake they need to undergo a moral, and in many cases an intellectual, regeneration; to be baptized into the truth.

And this is truly sad, that some of the best of men think that truth is endangered if that side of it which they call particularly theirs is submitted to scrutiny. As though truth could not endure enquiry, or were unable to stand the test of examination. Nay, it may almost be said that everything that has been established as true has been established by being contested, and having stood the test.

No one has spoken of truth in relation to men's preconceived opinions more wisely than Dr. Whately in the second series of his *Essays*.

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converse of life, are the result of a habitual carelessness as to truth, of which habit only too efficiently conceals the grossness. And under the bitter inspiration of ecclesiastical and political warfare, men, when speaking of their adversaries, will not only lightly excuse themselves from using any special care in testing the facts which it suits their purpose to parade, but they will even consciously present a garbled statement constructed upon the principle of pushing into prominence everything that is bad, and keeping out of view everything that is good, in the character of the person whom it may suit the use of the moment to vilify. And in this way even the sacred-sounding columns of an evangelical newspaper may become a systematic manufactory of lies."—Blackie, *Four Phases of Morals*, p. 44.

"Every one must, of course, be convinced of the truth of his own opinion, if it be properly called *his* opinion; and yet the variety of men's opinions furnishes a proof how many must be mistaken. If anyone then would guard against mistake as far as his intellectual faculties will allow, he must make it, *not the second, but the first question* in each case, 'Is this true?' It is not enough to believe what you maintain; you must maintain what you believe; and maintain it *because* you believe it; and that on the most careful and impartial review of the evidence on both sides. For any one may bring himself to believe almost any thing that he is inclined to believe, and thinks it becoming or expedient to maintain.[4] It makes all the difference, therefore, whether we *begin* or *end* with the inquiry as to the truth of our doctrines. To express the same maxim in other words, it is one thing to *wish to have Truth on our side*, and another thing to wish sincerely to be *on the side of Truth*. There is no genuine love of truth implied in the former." (p. 31).

Harmful as preconceived notions may be, they are perhaps less harmful to ourselves than confusions of thought. Take this as an illustration. To denounce gout as a sin would be a confusion of thought. Doubtless gout is often the result of bodily excesses, and excess is not merely a vice; it is a sin against light. But gout is not always the result of excess. To

[4] Some persons accordingly who describe themselves — in one sense correctly—as "*following* the dictates of conscience," are doing so only in the same sense in which a person who is driving in a carriage may be said to *follow* his horses, which go in whatever direction he guides them.

denounce it as a sin is, first, to confuse effect with cause, and, secondly, to confuse causes that are sinless with causes that are sinful.

The quest for truth, then, in whatever field we are seeking it, implies a frame of mind that shall be fundamentally sincere, and frank. Sincere: that it shall seek the truth for its own sake and without fear; frank: that it will neither be blinded by prejudice nor let itself be warped by ulterior aims. Truthfulness is a thing of habit even more than of will. In this respect there is a oneness about it which pervades it, whether in the great or the small, whether in things sacred or things secular. He that would be faithful in the great must be faithful in the small. Whether we seek truth in religion, or in history, or in science, sincerity and frankness are equally essential; while carelessness in what may seem matters of little moment insensibly leads to carelessness in matters of vital and eternal importance.

THE USE OF WORDS.

Amongst the things which make for sincerity in the quest, one of the most important is the right use of words.

"Words," said Jowett, "want constant

examination and analysis; for words tend to outrun facts. They become symbols of ideas. Thus they dominate the mind and prevent it from seeing facts as they are."

Every student of the science of language knows full well how words, in passing as the current coin of thought from man to man, slowly change their meaning, so that to one generation they convey a slightly different implication from that which they conveyed to the preceding generation. Yet in one and the same age a word may mean very different things to different minds, even when the word itself is used carefully and in an accepted meaning. That language may change in the course of a century or two, may be seen by very simple examples from our own Authorized Version, in words which have altered their meanings since the time of King James. The "compass" which Paul and his companions "fetched" from Syracuse when sailing to Rhegium[1], was not the useful instrument of navigation that now goes by that name. When Christ "prevented" Peter[2], as we read in the account of the payment of the tax, the word,

[1] Acts xxviii. 13.

[2] Matthew xvii. 25.

as used in the seventeenth century meant "anticipated," and did not mean "hindered" as it now does. Words are in many instances fossil expressions of thought, which we do not understand until we have examined the significance they bore at the time when they were used. The philosophical Greeks in the period when Greek literature flourished were much more precise in defining and using words than were the later Greeks, including the writers of the New Testament. Yet even they were not always agreed as to the meanings attached to terms. Men who were careless about settling definitions left legacies of confusion to after ages. Half the theological disputes which raged in the Church from the third to the fifth century really turned upon the meanings of words; and anathemas were pronounced against men of piety because of misunderstandings of language. The theologians who were responsible for drawing up the three orthodox Creeds sinned greatly against the generations to come, by their morbid word-battlings respecting such words as "person" and "substance," sometimes maintaining that their signification was the same, sometimes contending that they were essentially different.

Orthodox theologians are most emphatic that it is a heresy either to confound the three "persons" of the Trinity or to divide its "substance" into three. Yet the Council of Nicæa decided that "person" and "substance" are the same. Dean Stanley, discussing[1] that decision quotes J. H. Newman as saying: "its language is so obscure that even theologians differ about its meaning." Dogmas, once the expression of ardent and living piety, have largely shrunk to mere formulas. It has dawned upon mankind that they were mostly merely verbal fortifications against the intellectual difficulties of a bygone age. No longer can they preserve their significance when it is seen that their validity rested upon assumptions of historicity that had never been verified, and upon verbal definitions that had never been established. "And thus the child imposes on the man."

Now we cannot get rid of this difficulty about the change in meaning of words by merely preserving them in a dead language. There is a body calling itself the "Catholic Truth Society," which issues controversial pamphlets to prove the rightness of the teachings of the Roman Church, and the wrongness of all the

[1] *Athanasian Creed*, p. 18.

other Churches. One of these pamphlets,[1] issued a few years ago, is headed: "Why in Latin?" It is in the form of a dialogue, defending the practice of saying the Mass in Latin. From this I take the following passage:

"The first duty of the Society which Our Lord founded must be to keep the Truth which our Lord has taught; exactly the same Truth. Christianity changed is not Christianity; Christianity added to, or taken from, is not the Christianity of Christ. The care of the Truth is the great and first duty of the Society of Christ."

With all my heart I agree. But the priest who wrote these words seems to think that it is compatible with them to adopt all the vast accretions with which the Church of Rome has overlaid the simple truth which our Lord taught. Then he goes on with the dialogue:

"But what has that to do with Latin?"

"This to do with it:—a dead language is far better for this end than a living one."

"Why so?"

"Because the meaning of its words is fixed, and cannot alter. Latin, as I said, is dead in one way . . . the meaning of the words cannot change. What Cicero meant when first he spoke the words in the parliament of Rome—what SS. Jerome and Augustine meant, and the writers who went before and came after, that same is meant to-day, and will be meant when the world ends."

[1] *Why in Latin?* By Rev. G. Bampfylde (The Catholic's Penny Library). Published by the Catholic Truth Society.

The argument is utterly fallacious; the bad non-Ciceronian Latin written by St. Jerome has been notorious for centuries, and was even the subject of jest between humanist ecclesiastics in the Renaissance. And if there were any importance in preserving the letter of Christ's teaching in a dead language, that language should surely be either Greek, or Aramaic which Christ spoke; not Latin, which He did not speak. We do not know of one single word of Latin being ever spoken by Christ.

In passing, let me remark upon the change of meaning that has in the course of centuries come over the adjective "catholic." Originally signifying "all embracing" or "inclusive," it has come to signify almost the opposite.

Perhaps the most glaring and persistent misuse of words that has occurred in our time is to be found in the writings of the late Mrs. Eddy, who throughout her teaching uses words, either ignorantly or wilfully, in senses different from their accepted meaning. I do not condemn that which she calls "Christian Science" so much for its puerile philosophy as for its verbal equivocations and insincerities of language. To use words in misleading significations is to poison the fountain of truth.

The misuse of language with intent to mislead is merely a clever form of lying. The misuse of language through carelessness of expression, though less culpable, not only leads to fruitful error but harms the speaker. "Be assured of this, most excellent Crito," said Socrates, "that to use words in an improper sense is not only a bad thing in itself, but it generates a bad habit in the soul."

One other caution is needed. All human language is imperfect, and fails to convey the highest thought, simply *because* it has grown up to express our own limited experience. When we try to express in words the nature of God Himself, and attribute to Him qualities such as *good*, or *just*, or *merciful*, we are applying to Him phrases derived from human experience, and from our experience of the best we know in man: the highest we can think of. Or perhaps we try to intensify their meaning by putting on a prefix and calling Him *all*-good, *all*-just, *all*-merciful. But if we thus do the best we can, "we may not, therefore," as Professor Percy Gardner (to whom the preceding remark is due) says,[1] "use these phrases as counters in a game of theological speculation on the divine nature."

[1] *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 51.

Half the weary disputes of Christology have arisen from failure to understand the limitations of language; and the combatants who fought so strenuously through long centuries, for what they imagined to be sacred truth, were largely occupied with what the Apostle Paul dismisses as logomachies—"doting about questions and strifes of words."

CONFUSIONS IN THE USE OF PHRASES.

Another point in which the use of words may lead to error is the confusion which exists in many persons between a *categorical* and an *analogical* statement. The commonest verb—"is"—is used in more than one way. It sometimes implies identity. If I say "Sir Oliver Lodge is the principal of Birmingham University," no one doubts that this is a statement of identity of the person who is mentioned by name and the person who holds a particular office. It would be equally true if it were turned round, and stated that "The Principal of Birmingham University is Sir Oliver Lodge." The statement is categorical. But if I say "Murder is sin," the statement is not one of an identity, as may be seen at once by transposing it into the different statement

"Sin is murder." Apply this test to the familiar declaration from 1 John iii. 5: "God is Light." No one doubts its essential truth, but it is not categorically true; it is not an identity. Turn it round and it becomes "Light is God," which means a very different thing. The two concepts connoted by the two words thus joined, cover, as it were, different areas of thought, and cannot be equated or identified with one another. Consider the statement of Galatians iv. 24, "For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia." In what sense can it be true that Agar, the slave wife of Abraham, is the same as Mount Sinai? Clearly it is categorically untrue, and is true only by remote analogy; is only metaphorically true. Or again, Paul says, 1 Cor. x. 4: "for they [our fathers] drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ." Obviously the statement is analogical,[1] not categorical. But more important still in the present consideration is the statement of Jesus

[1] The statement is evidence of a survival in the mind of Paul of that curious Rabbinical tradition that the rock which Moses struck followed the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings, to afford them supplies of water in the desert. In the complex mentality of Paul, Rabbinical tradition played a much more considerable part than is commonly recognized. His identification of the traditional rock with Christ is not the least significant of the clues we have to his modes of thought.

at the Last Supper, where He took the cup (Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24) and said to the disciples, "this is My blood." Was the statement true categorically or analogically only? The orthodox theologians of Rome say it was categorically true, and with perfect logic hold the dogma of transubstantiation. Protestant theologians hold that it was only true by analogy.

Confusions between the categorical and analogical use of phrases have, alas, led to confusion in many other directions.

We all are familiar with the statement that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep. It is a supremely beautiful statement, and supremely true. We are also familiar with the other statement that Jesus is our Passover, the Lamb slain for men's sins. This also is a supreme and beautiful truth. But put the two statements together and we at once encounter the difficulty that they cannot, except as analogical statements, be both true at once. The man who gives his life rather than let his sheep be lost cannot in the same breath be the sheep that is slain instead of men, or for the sake of men. If they are put forward as categorical statements they cannot both be true, one or both must

be false. They can only both be true if they are (or if one of them is) true as an analogy only. This is not the place to decide whether either of them, or which, is categorically true. I merely point out that they cannot both be so. Much confusion of thought has prevailed through the unwisdom of good men in attributing categorical values to things only analogically true.

Another example is afforded by setting side by side the two statements of Jesus found in the Fourth Gospel; "I am the true vine, and My Father is the Husbandman." "I and My Father are one." Since the vine and the vinedresser who prunes it cannot possibly be the same, it is evident that one or both of these statements must be analogical only, and not categorically true.

To take an analogical truth and found a dogma upon it, and argue about it as though it were categorically true, is an illicit process which will end in confusion. Yet the dogma which claims supremacy for the see of Rome is based upon an analogical statement.

HINDRANCES TO THE QUEST FOR TRUTH.

Let us return to the quest for truth, and consider the things that militate against it—the

feelings and preoccupations which tend against enquiry.

(1) First, there is over-respect for venerated authority; the excessive deference to those whom we rightly revere, and to the sanctions of long-established custom.

(2) Secondly, there is a false humility which blinds men from exercising any independent judgment.

(3) Thirdly, there is in many minds an aversion from doubt; they dislike to have their judgement kept in suspense. They want to have their minds made up, even if the materials for arriving at a sound judgement are wanting.

(4) Fourthly, there is a tendency to temporize; to accept the expedient, rather than share the toil of investigating the evidence. This is inertia rather than timidity; but if allowed to sway the individual its consequence is inevitable. Habitual neglect of the faculty of discriminating the false from the true, the doubtful from the well-established, will bring atrophy of the power of discrimination.

(5) Fifthly, and happily rare, is that opposition to truth which arises from the craving for originality. But unfortunately there are men

who will be zealous for truth only so long as it is discovered by themselves.

(6) Carelessness of phrase, inexactness in the habitual use of language, want of precision and clarity of thought, all militate against the apprehension of truth. Overstrained metaphors[1] also cause confusion, even when it is plain that they are intended to be metaphorical only.

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH IN HISTORY.

Having said this much, let us turn to the consideration of the quest of truth in history. History deals with the events of the past; with the recorded words of bygone chroniclers, with the remains left by former generations of builders and craftsmen; with the ebb and flow of peoples; with the rise and fall of civilizations; with the customs and traditions of times gone by. Out of these materials the historian tries to piece together the past, and to place it in narrative before us in the present. And in his case the question, what is truth? can

[1] In a recent book of religious verse, containing contributions by the late poet Francis Thompson, and some of the younger Meynells, occurs this phrase: "White as a lamb's blood." The phrase is as untrue to fact as it is puerile.

only be satisfactorily answered if he faithfully observes the canon of truthfulness in all his works. But this involves an integrity of purpose which few historians have been able to preserve unblemished. I speak not of honest historians who have had insufficient access to the data of the times concerning which they wrote, but of those who were not single in their aim, and wrote with some ulterior purpose to serve. If a man writes a history in order to prove some particular doctrine, he becomes a controversialist whose mind is warped by some ulterior aim other than that of pure history. Can such a one write that history with scrupulous fidelity to fact untinged with a controversial colouring? The true historian, if he would tell his story so as to be true to life, must set it out in the words and deeds of those who acted it out; he must nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice. He must conceal nothing and distort nothing if his work is to endure. He must strive against the besetment of negligence in selecting his material; he must abstain from inventing details in order to fill up gaps, or to add to the picturesqueness of the narrative. The father of historians, the Greek Thucydides, himself a model of unbiassed

accuracy, was fully aware of the first of these temptations; for he wrote[1]:—

"Irksome to the many is the quest for truth, and they betake themselves rather to the readiest resource."

As for the second temptation, it is common to many minds. Froude, in his essay on the Dissolution of the Monasteries, tells us that in perusing modern histories he "has been struck dumb with wonder at the facility with which men will fill in chasms in their information with conjecture; will guess at the motives which have prompted actions; will pass their censures, as if all secrets of the past lay out on an open scroll before them." He adds that wherever in tracing historical difficulties in English history he had been fortunate to discover an authentic explanation, he very rarely found that explanation to confirm any conjecture either of his own or of any other modern writer. "The true motive has almost invariably been of a kind which no modern experience would have suggested." The incalculable human element

[1] *Ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθειας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἕτοιμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.*

Thucydides, Bk. I., 20.

Freely translated this is:—"The multitude takes little trouble about getting at the truth, and prefers a superficial view of things."

in all history defies invention. History does not repeat itself; its phenomena are as unpredictable as earthquakes, not recurrent, like tides or eclipses. The ages of the past are truly, in the words of Faust, a book sealed with seven seals. They can only be reconstructed by the historian after the most diligent and minute research. At the best, history is a record pieced together from very imperfect data—"beyond all question honeycombed with false statements which must go for ever uncorrected," says a modern writer, rather bitterly. Even contemporary history is full of statements that are the subject of controversy and denial. How then shall the historian recover the truth and winnow it from the accretion of error? By what test shall he try the miscellaneous material that comes to hand? He cannot cross-examine the witnesses, who died long ago. He cannot recover the original manuscripts of centuries past. How shall he discern, in tradition and legend, the germ of truth from which they sprang? What he can do, and what all practised historians have done, is to apply the test of criticism. He can compare dates to see whether they concur or contradict one another. He can collate

manuscripts to ascertain their various readings. He can train himself to detect interpolations or anachronisms. He can study hand-writings and styles of composition. He may hunt out the origins and sources from which some early writer derived his information. The whole science and apparatus of historical criticism has been marvellously extended during the last hundred years. This seems perhaps like the development of a destructive process; but the casting-out of error is a very necessary step in the advancement of truth. It at least clears the way for the letting-in of more light.

It is of little use for the historian to make his history a mere collection of bare facts; he must present them in an intelligible setting. A mere collection of bare facts may be very misleading, though every fact set down may be true[1]. The historian must select, and

[1] A curious illustration of this is afforded by some of the plates in James Tissot's *Life of Our Saviour*. Tissot, who first gained fame as an artist by painting Parisian boulevard scenes, broke, at the age of fifty, from these associations, and spent some years in Palestine, wandering with true devotion from place to place, carefully observing scenes and characters, and endeavouring with the utmost care to reconstruct by art the picture or panorama of the earthly life of Christ. The expensive volumes which he produced render what he saw with the utmost fidelity of his powers. But this very fidelity to facts results in one remarkable anachronism: for he

generalize, and make the dry bones live. We must not condemn the innumerable historians who, from Xenophon to Dr. Johnson, have thrown their history into the form of imaginary speeches. That is, or used to be, one of the recognized conventions of the historian's art. He was expected to state the facts in that form. He might adopt this convention, and yet not be guilty of lying, though the modern scientific spirit in history eschews so doubtful a practice. The conventions of historical picture-painting are equally understood, and equally doubtful. They may be shams: but they are frank shams that deceive no one.

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH IN SCIENCE.

In the physical sciences the quest for truth has, during recent centuries, and particularly in the last, made great advances. And these advances seem to possess a greater intrinsic importance, perhaps, than their real magnitude warrants, because scientific discoveries, unlike discoveries in history or morals, possess the

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reproduces amongst the plants that flourish in Syrian scenery the Opuntias (prickly pears) and Yuccas, Agaves and Aloes, which have been introduced in recent centuries, and are natives of America—plants which Jesus never saw.

precious property that they are capable of independent verification by experiment. For that very reason a training in scientific methods possesses a special value of its own. In science, far more than in history or philosophy, it is possible to arrive at something like real certainty. The scientific fact once discovered requires no citation of authority to procure its acceptance: it can be demonstrated over again[1] by an independent observer. In history, when confronted by an alleged fact, one must ask who or what is the authority for this. In physical science the demonstrated fact is its own authority. The circumstance that many facts in physical science are of a numerical kind—as for example the fact that mercury freezes at a temperature of forty degrees below zero—or the fact that gold is nineteen-and-a-third times as heavy as an equal bulk of water—gives a

[1] As I write the discovery is announced, April, 1915, of a ninth satellite of Jupiter. It is excessively minute, probably not more than ten miles in diameter, travelling along an orbit with a sweep of some fourteen million miles. It is so small as to be invisible not only to the unaided eye, but invisible even to the eye when aided by the most powerful telescopes; having been detected by the photographic image it left on a sensitive plate after prolonged exposure. Yet there is no reason to distrust the reality of the discovery. At other observatories the observations will be repeated and tested by independent observers.

precision to scientific thought that is lacking in other departments. Unlike the facts in history,[1] the facts of science, or most of them, can be verified by repetition, and measured quantitatively. Hence in physical science the seeker acquires a definiteness of grasp, a clearness of view of the relation between cause and effect not otherwise attainable. He learns in the physical sciences, as he learns in no other department of knowledge, what is meant by a rigid proof. The distinction between a thing definitely proven, and a thing that, though possibly true, has not been really proved to be so[2], is one that impresses itself upon his mind. His thought is cleaner-cut, and the demonstrated facts are to him more sharply demarcated, than would be possible to one who had no acquaintance with science and its methods.

[1] Some numerical statements handed down in history it is now impossible to test; as for example the number of ships given by Homer as attacking Troy, or the number of fishes stated in John's Gospel to have been taken in the miraculous draught.

[2] Euclid's propositions were true before he found the proofs for them. They were no more true after he had proved them than they were before. But the difference lies here. His demonstration had garnered them into the storehouse of definitely ascertained geometrical facts. Men knew not only that they were true, but that they had been proved to be so. Further, they had learned what sort of demonstration it is that constitutes a rigid proof.

The oldest of the exact sciences were arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. At what age in prehistoric times the multiplication table was discovered is unknown. Probably it was regarded as a divine revelation in its day. Plato wrote over the door of his academy at Athens: "Let no one ignorant of geometry enter here." It was his mode of requiring that his pupils should have at least some training in exact thinking and in the use of abstract ideas. The invention of the calendar, the discoveries of the periodic movements of the planets, the perception that the tides depended on the moon, the discovery that eclipses recurred in definite cycles that could be predicted, are all amongst the early advances in the quest for scientific truth. The definite conquest of the principles of mechanics by Archimedes, Galileo, and Newton came later. It is in the study of the physical sciences that men have learned of the existence of persistent relations, inviolable correspondences between fact and fact, which go by the name of natural laws. The relations which they express appear to have been imposed by the Creator from the beginning, to be inherent in the very nature of things, and to be in ceaseless operation. They existed ages before man

discovered them, and since their discovery by man there is no evidence that they have for one instant ceased to operate or been suspended. Time goes on; the planets circle round the sun, the moon revolves in her course, the earth spins steadily on her axis. Man did not make these laws, nor can he break them. Neither his virtues nor his crimes have influence on them. Neither his fears nor his prayers have the slightest relation to them. He cannot stop an eclipse by conjuration. He cannot change the multiplication table by prayer or fasting.

The great generalizations of science have been discovered by patient observation and experiment, by classification and inference, by framing and testing hypotheses, by rejection of the inadequate and verification of the valid. They have resulted from the long continued efforts of many minds. In the inorganic world we have amongst the chief discoveries the law of conservation of matter, the law of universal gravitation, the law of the conservation of energy, the law of the absolute velocity of light in space, the laws of chemical combination and equivalence. In the organic world the great laws of heredity and descent, of development and evolution, though not capable of being

formulated in the same quantitative terms as the laws of inorganic matter, have been the result of no less zealous and careful search.[1] Where the old method of syllogistic reasoning failed as an implement to discover new truths,

[1] In the descriptive sciences, botany, geology, zoology, and the like, patient industry and intelligent examination of facts have yielded no less remarkable results. Darwin was pre-eminent as a naturalist of transparent honesty, rather than as a philosopher. Yet his wonderful insight into the relations between things led him to a generalization that has profoundly changed the foundations of philosophic thought. Through the middle part of the nineteenth century the advance in geology created burning controversies, because its indisputable conclusions as to the age of the globe clashed with the preconceptions of theologians, much in the same way as the astronomical advances of Copernicus and Galileo had clashed with the dicta of scholastic theology two centuries previously. Men refused in the nineteenth century to acquaint themselves with the testimony of the rocks, and the evidence of the fossil remains, lest they should seem to countenance any doubt of the inspiration of the Old Testament; just as in the seventeenth century certain ecclesiastics refused to look through the telescope lest they should see the spots on the sun and so discredit the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. But geology won acceptance because the plain evidence of the facts could not be burked. Even so recently as a hundred and fifty years ago it was generally believed that fossils were mere accidental concretions of mineral matter imitating animal forms. Voltaire seems to have seen that this was utterly unlikely, yet he continued to hold this explanation. Fearing, however, lest the occurrence of fossil fishes in the rocks of the Alps would lend support to the Biblical account of the Deluge, which he disbelieved, he suggested that they were the remains of fishes brought there by pilgrims in time past!

the modern method of enquiry by experiment and inference, by inductive generalization and subsequent verification, has been amazingly fruitful in the better understanding of physical nature. But the very precision of its intellectual processes and the inevitableness of the garnered results are sometimes urged against it as tending to cramp or warp the perception of other kinds of truth. It is charged sometimes with leading men to reject or despise other kinds of truth which have not been discovered by the same sort of process, and which cannot be verified by experiment, weighed in the balance, or analysed in the test-tube. Doubtless there is some ground for this reflection. In any department of human activity the too-exclusive exercise of any one faculty or set of faculties tends to bring about a one-sided development; and the neglect of any faculty tends to its atrophy. Perhaps the worst that can be said against devotion to the discovery of truth in the physical sciences is that it tends to impose a necessitarian or determinist view of existence. When we find in physics that through all there runs an inescapable relation of cause and effect; that nothing happens except that which follows from antecedent causes; we are apt to conclude—though quite erroneously

—that the whole world is ruled by fate, by fixed and determinate necessity, affording no scope for free-will or for the operation of moral forces. Such a view[1] would reduce the universe to a mere mechanism and remove all moral responsibility[2] from man; a view to be sternly repelled.

It was remarked above that part of the scientific method in ascertainment of truth is the framing and testing of hypotheses. When observation or experience has shown a number of facts, one is desirous of drawing

[1] In Baron Friedrich von Hügel's wonderful book on *The Mystical Element in Religion*, there is a section (Vol. I., pp. 40 *seq.*) devoted to the meaning of science for the religious temper, in which he sets down three characteristics of the scientific spirit. These he regards as (1) a passion for clearness; (2) the great concept of law prevailing amongst phenomena, which, however, he regards as leading to determinism; (3) a vigorous Monism, by which he means that view which conceives that "our sources of information are but *one*—the reasoning, reckoning intellect, backed up by readily repeatable, readily verifiable experiment. The resultant information is *but one*—the Universe, within and without, a strict unbroken mechanism." Contenting myself with modestly denying that all (or most) scientific men are so *borné* in their views, I rejoice to note that in a later passage (Vol. II., p. 373) Baron von Hügel quotes with approval the sentiment, "For Religion also, Science is a bath of purification."

[2] A very excellent chapter on the scientific spirit is to be found in Dr. R. F. Horton's essays entitled *Great Issues* (1909).

inferences from them to elicit either some general correlation between them or some additional facts. It may be that some of the observations are incorrectly made; or they may so diverge from one another that any inference is doubtful. What the scientific enquirer does is to hazard a number of hypotheses, some of them probable, others quite improbable, and to test them one by one to see which is right,[1] or which of them is nearest to the truth. For every hypothesis that turns out correct he may have to frame a score that prove invalid. Persons who do not understand this mode of arriving at truth often regard this as a very shaky procedure, and condemn it as trying to arrive at truth by means of error. But it is really an every-day process of

[1] Pasteur insisted strongly on the importance of this process. "On ne fait rien sans idées préconçues; il faut avoir seulement la sagesse de ne croire à leurs déductions qu'autant que l'expérience les confirme. Les idées préconçues, soumises au contrôle sévère de l'expérimentation, sont la flamme vivante des sciences d'observation: les idées fixes en sont le danger."
Pasteur, *Histoire d'un Savant*, p. 28.
This may be rendered: "One achieves nothing without preconceived ideas; only one must have the wisdom not to believe in any deductions from them except so far as experience confirms them. Preconceived ideas, submitted to the severe test of experiment, are the living flame of the sciences of observation; fixed ideas are its danger."

thought. If I have mislaid my fountain pen, I guess the likely places where I may have left it, and then go to verify my guess. If I guess wrongly six times before the right guess occurs to me, I am really all the while seeking after truth. It is better to make wrong guesses than to be in such a muddled state of mind as to be unable to guess at all. It was some thought of this kind that made Francis Bacon say: "Truth emerges more quickly from error than from confusion," and which led Babbage in his Bridgewater Treatise to declare: "It is a condition of our race that we must ever wade through error in our advance towards truth: and it may even be said that in many cases we exhaust almost every variety of error before we attain the desired goal." Another aspect of the same matter is expounded by Lord Acton in his *Lectures on Modern History* (p. 21).

"If men of science owe anything to us, we may learn much from them that is essential. For they can show how to test proof, how to secure fullness and soundness in induction, how to restrain and to employ with safety hypothesis and analogy. It is they who hold the secret of the mysterious property of mind

by which error ministers to truth, and truth slowly but irrevocably prevails. Theirs is the logic of discovery, the demonstration of the advance of knowledge and the development of ideas, which, as the earthly wants and passions of men remain almost unchanged, are the charter of progress and the vital spark in history. Remember Darwin taking note only of those passages that raised difficulties in his way; the French philosopher complaining that his work stood still, because he found no more contradicting facts; Baer, who thinks error treated thoroughly nearly as remunerative as truth, by the discovery of new objections; for, as Sir Robert Ball warns us, it is by considering objections that we often learn. Faraday declares that 'in knowledge, that man only is to be condemned and despised who is not in a state of transition.'"

Let us put beside this word of Faraday's another, from his *Experimental Researches in Electricity*, Art. 3362 :—

"It is better to be aware, or even to suspect, we are wrong, than to be unconsciously or easily led to accept an error as right."

The circumstance that scientific enquiry proceeds by observation and inference and ex-

periment, and admits no argument from metaphysics, nor any that appeals to religious authority, was in the outset often misunderstood. It was deemed to be irreligious,[1] because it did not test its discoveries by any appeal to the Bible or to the dogmas of the Church Councils.

[1] The following extract from Professor F. Gotch's lecture on *Some Aspects of the Scientific Method* (Oxford, 1906), shows the nature of such attacks :—

"Tracts were written fulminating against the Royal Society (formed in 1661), which was rightly regarded as the headquarters of the New Philosophy; attacks and rejoinders were as thick as leaves in June. Sprat found it desirable to write a history of the foundation and work of the Society in order to demonstrate that it did not exist for the purpose of upsetting Church and State, but that when fully understood the New Philosophy would be found to be a bulwark of Christianity, not its destroyer. In an article upon the Royal Society, included in the *Quarrels of Authors*, the elder Disraeli gives an interesting account of this literary controversy. From this it appears that the zeal of the opponents often outran their discretion; for not only the aims, but many of the obvious practical results of scientific inquiry were inveighed against. Crosse, the vicar of Chew Magna in Somersetshire, anathematized the Royal Society as a Jesuitical conspiracy against both society and religion; he regarded the use of the newly invented optick glasses as immoral, since they perverted the natural sight and made all things appear in an unnatural and, therefore, false light. It was easy, he said, to prove the deceitful and pernicious character of spectacles, for take two different pairs of spectacle glasses and use them both at the same time, you will not see so well as with one singly; therefore your microscopes and telescopes, which have more than one glass, are impostors. Hostility went further than this; it was declared to be sinful to assist the eyes, which were

But whatever the besetments of the scientific spirit, it seems incontestable that one feature of it is its abhorence of all sophistication. Its one fear is to believe a lie. Writing in *An Englishman's Religion,* of those who have been brought up in families where a regard for truthfulness was a first consideration, H. G. Wood says :—

"There is a real connection between this dislike of the lie and the scientific impulse. I think it will be found that the ranks of scientific investigation have welcomed some of their ablest recruits from men who have been reared in this atmosphere."

Any one who has the time, and the requisite training, will find abundant matter dealing with scientific method, and with its bearing on philosophy and ethics, in Dr. J. T. Merz's masterly volumes on *The History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century.* The Chapters on the Astronomical view of Nature, the Atomic view of Nature, and the Vitalistic

adapted to the capacity of the individual, whether good, bad or indifferent. It was argued that society at large would become demoralized by the use of spectacles; they would give one man an unfair advantage over his fellow, and every man an unfair advantage over every woman, who could not be expected, on aesthetic and intellectual grounds, to adopt the practice."

view of Nature, to name no others, will well repay the reader, who cannot but be struck with the author's breadth and impartiality.

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH IN RELIGION AND MORALS.

I pass from the quest for truth in the domains of history and science to the quest for truth in the domains of religion and morals. Here, if anywhere, with insistence, resurges the question: What is Truth? How are we to find it? How are we to recognize it? By what authority are we to test it?

First, let us make very sure that what we desire to find is nothing else than the Truth itself: not some one phase of it that would be agreeable to us, but the Truth for its own sake. Let us make very sure that whatever harm may come to us from error in history or in science, from accepting as true the garbled history or the sophisticated science, a thousand-fold harm will come to us if in the vital issues of faith and morals[1] we are any

[1] "The praise belongs to Socrates, of having taught men, four hundred years before Christ, to be as scrupulously exact in testing by experience their moral ideas, as they are now in proving by experiment their physical theories."—Blackie, *Four Phases of Morals*, p. 57.

the less scrupulous, or palter with the Truth. In each domain there exists its own besetting weakness : in history, the tendency to romance ; in science, to agnosticism ; in religion, to credulity. Is it any greater sin to reject a doubtful thing because it is doubtful, than to accept a doubtful thing on the off-chance that it may hereafter[1] be found true ? Surely in matters of religious belief we ought to make it our business to be as clear in vision, as pure in heart, as cool in head, as we would be in any other matter. Casuistry is even more deadly in religion than in history or science. The caution is necessary because the habitual ecclesiastical temper is to deprecate all independent enquiry, and to side with authority rather than face the facts.

But, you will say, we are not bound to take

[1] The acceptance of any revelation or dogma (even if it should afterwards prove true) which is offered to us from without, and which is not supported by evidence that satisfies the reason, *is* credulity. I deliberately use the words "from without" for reasons which will appear in a later section of this lecture.

Flippant unbelief is worse than earnest credulity ; but flippant (that is undiscriminating) belief is worse than earnest incredulity, being, in fact, superstition.

"Faith can accept things which are as yet unproved ; but to cling to what in your heart of hearts you suspect of being disproved is not faith, but mere delusion."

Canon Streeter, *Restatement and Reunion*, p. 42.

the ecclesiastical view: we are free to examine evidence and make our choice in matters of belief. No; we are not free. Not free, because we cannot escape from the inevitable effect of the atmosphere and environment in which we have been reared. Strive as we will, we cannot rid ourselves, even if we would, of that background of religious life in which we have been brought up. We are influenced at every end and turn by the tacit assumptions, the presuppositions, the current modes of thought and expression, the prejudices of education and habit, no less than by the silent weight of tradition, which, whether we accept it or not, influences our judgement. But if, frankly recognizing the presence of this tendency to take the colour of our environment, we would desire to regain our healthy freedom from prejudice, there are surely means that we may adopt to prevent the spirit of truthfulness from being warped by that from which we cannot escape. Of such steps towards the preservation of spiritual sanity of judgement the first is this: The recognition of the principle that it is wrong to accept as wholly true anything which is half-doubtful. Better reject that which you know to be half-doubtful than accept it on the chance

that it may be partly true. Better reject the fruit that is obviously half-rotten than swallow it because *some* of it may be good. The "sin of sophisticating what we can perceive of truth," by hope of reward or dread of consequence, is a very real danger.

> The shadow, cloaked from head to foot,
> Who keeps the key of all the creeds,

dwells not far from all of us. Her name is superstition: for it is superstition that binds men to the trammels of those dark ages when the living faith was forced into the artificial bonds of human dogma.

PIOUS FRAUDS.

If we return to Apostolic times, we see that even before the consolidation of the then prevalent beliefs into set forms as creeds, the spirit of untruth was at work. Or, rather, shall we say, oriental habits of thought, which did not exalt truthfulness for its own sake, had been at work, warping the Apostolic tradition and sophisticating the simplicity of believers. Actually in the period between the death of Christ and the committal into writing of the Gospels, legend had been adding itself to history as part of the tradition: and the centuries

immediately following witnessed accretions around the core of truth. The Fathers of the post-apostolic period had no such single-minded regard for naked truth as would be now required. According to St. Jerome, we must distinguish between what the Early Fathers set down as truth and what they wrote "dialectically," that is argumentatively. They did not hesitate to postulate in argument matters which they were conscious could not be maintained as fact. At a later stage even so eminent a Father as St. John Chrysostom, when defending himself against attack, openly advocated[1] the lawfulness of lying in a good

[1] The passage occurs in the work of St. John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood*. The three paragraphs cited are from the English Translation by B. Cowper Harris, published 1866, p. 19.

§ 58. But if an act be not always wrong, but becomes bad or good according to the motive of the doer, cease to accuse me for deceiving, and show me that I devised it for evil; for so long as this is not done, it would only be just that such as desire to be well disposed should not bring rebukes and accusations upon him that has practised deceit, but should even express their approval of him.

§ 59. For deceit, when well-timed and practised with a right intention, is so profitable that many have often been punished because they have not circumvented.

§ 63. We may find the use of deceit to be great and needful, not only in war, but also in peace; and not in affairs of state only, but also at home,—by the husband towards the wife, and by the wife towards her husband, and by the father towards the son, and by friend towards friend, and even by children towards a father.

cause, and in support quoted from the Old Testament (1 Sam. xix. 12 and 1 Sam. xx. 11) deceits practised as stratagems.

In contemplating this lapse from truthfulness, we cannot forget that already in that age the doctrine that there was no salvation outside the pale of the Church had gained acceptance. Suppose a fanatical priest, who ardently believed in this doctrine of exclusive salvation and who wished to rescue from eternal damnation some unbelieving outsider; what temptation then would beset him to resort to stratagems, and pious frauds, and false miracles, in order to allure the wanderer into the Church? If he could "save" the heretic, whether by downright falsehood or by distortion of the truth, would he not find the pious temptation irresistible?

Chrysostom's doctrine of pardonable deceit for pious ends was not, however, a solitary instance. The loss of a sense of the imperative duty of truthfulness on the part of the theologians of the third and fourth centuries is one of the most significant facts in the degeneration that was creeping over the early Church: and the tendency grew as corruption spread and deepened. We have only to read the historian

Rufinus (*De Adulteratione*) to see to what lengths this lying spirit eventually led them. There is a remarkable collection of examples in Harnack's *Altchrist. Litt. Geschichten* (Vol I., pp. xlii., *et seq.*). Harnack himself says (*History of Dogma*, Vol. III., p. 184):—"Some, however, went much farther in this matter. As they did not hold themselves bound to stick to the truth in dealing with an opponent, and thus had forgotten the command of the gospel, so they went on in theology to impute untruthfulness to the Apostles, citing the dispute between Paul and Peter, and to Christ (who concealed His ommiscience, etc.). They even charged God with falsehood in dealing with His enemy, the devil, as is proved by the views held by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and most of the later Fathers[1], concerning re-

[1] This astounding version of the doctrine of Atonement—the earliest attempt to frame a logical theory of that matter, and one which lasted till the time of Anselm and Abelard—is itself a development from the teaching of Origen. The following passage from Harnack (*op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 307) states the case :—

"He [Irenæus] further insisted that Christ had delivered us not from a state of infirmity, but from the power of the devil, redeeming those estranged from God, and unnaturally imprisoned, not by force, but with due regard to justice. Origen, however, was the first to explain the passion and death of Christ with logical precision under the points of view of *ransom* and *sacrifice*. With regard to the former he was the first

demption from the power of the devil. But if God himself deceived his enemy by stratagem (*pia fraus*), then so also might man. Under such circumstances it cannot be wondered at that forgeries were the order of the day. And this was the case."

Theologians who could calmly teach an act of deceit on the part of God, that they might thus bolster up the then orthodox doctrine of the Atonement, were assuredly no safe guides in their presentation of truth. It is in the writings of the same historian, Rufinus, who recorded the prevalence of the lying spirit amongst the fathers, that we meet with the story that the Apostles had jointly composed the document known to us as the

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to set up the theory that the devil had acquired a legal claim on men, and therefore to regard the death of Christ (or His soul) as a ransom paid to the devil. This Marcionite doctrine of price and barter was already supplemented by Origen with the assumption of an act of deceit on the part of God. It was, in spite of an energetic protest, taken up by his disciples, and afterwards carried out still more offensively. It occurs in Gregory of Nyssa, who (*Catech*, 15-27), in dealing with the notion of God, treats it broadly and repulsively. We find it in Ambrose, who speaks of the *pia fraus*; in Augustine, and in Leo I. It assumes its worst form in Gregory I.: the humanity of Christ was the bait; the fish, the devil, snapped at it, and was left hanging on the invisible hook, Christ's divinity. It proves that the Fathers had gradually lost any fixed conception of the holiness and righteousness of God."

Apostles' Creed; each Apostle contributing one of its twelve clauses. Rufinus says that this opinion cannot be traced earlier than the middle of the fourth century. A modern scholar attributes that Creed to the church of Aquileia. It appears to have been developed from the "symbol" or confession required of converts on their baptism, at Rome. It certainly possesses no Apostolic warrant.

We have travelled a long way from the hypothetical cases of casuistry discussed on an earlier page (p. 17) as to the stress of exceptional circumstances that might excuse a lie. They involve isolated moral judgments, and are so rare that they can but be exceptions hardly affecting the general veracity of the person betrayed into such a lapse. But between them and the pious frauds sanctioned by the theologians lies a whole horizon of difference; for these are elevated into a regular doctrine and systematized, producing a habit of persistent deceitfulness. On this matter the historian Lecky has spoken plainly.[1]

"The Fathers laid down as a distinct proposition that pious frauds were justifiable, and even laudable[2];

[1] *History of Rationalism*, Vol. I., p. 396.

[2] Lecky here refers to the passage from St. John Chrysostom already quoted, p. 58, above.

and even if they had not laid this down they would have practised them as a necessary consequence of their doctrine of exclusive salvation. Immediately all ecclesiastical literature became tainted with a spirit of the most unblushing mendacity. Heathenism was to be combated, and therefore prophecies of Christ by Orpheus and the Sibyls were forged, lying wonders were multiplied, and ceaseless calumnies poured upon those who, like Julian, opposed the faith. Heretics were to be convinced, and therefore old writings or complete forgeries were habitually opposed to the forged Gospels, The veneration of relics and the monastic system were introduced, and therefore innumerable miracles were attributed to the bones of saints or to the prayers of hermits, and were solemnly asserted by the most eminent of the Fathers.[1] The tendency was not confined to those Eastern nations which had been always almost destitute of the sense of truth; it triumphed wherever the supreme importance of dogmas was held. Generation after generation it became more universal; it continued till the very sense of truth and the very love of truth seemed blotted out from the minds of men.

"That this is no exaggerated picture of the conditions at which the Middle Ages arrived, is known to all who have any acquaintance with its literature; for during that gloomy period the only scholars in Europe were priests and monks, who conscientiously believed that no

[1] Here Lecky refers to J. H. Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua* (Appendix, p. 77), where he says:—"The Greek Fathers thought that, when there was a *justa causa*, an untruth need not be a lie. St. Augustine took another view, though with great misgiving." Obviously a *just cause* would include that "zeal for God's honour" which lighted the fires of the Inquisition, and issued the Forged Decretals. Well might Augustine exclaim: "God is thought to be truer than He is pronounced to be; He is truer than He is thought to be."

amount of falsehood was reprehensible which conduced to the edification of the people. Not only did they pursue with the grossest calumny every enemy to their faith, not only did they encircle every saint with a halo of palpable fiction, not only did they invent tens of thousands of miracles for the purpose of stimulating devotion—they also very naturally carried into all other subjects the indifference to truth they had acquired in theology. All their writings, and more especially their histories, became tissues of the wildest fables, so grotesque and at the same time so audacious, that they were the wonder of succeeding ages. And the very men who scattered these fictions broadcast over Christendom taught at the same time that credulity was a virtue and scepticism a crime. As long as the doctrine of exclusive salvation was believed and realized, it was necessary for the peace of mankind that they should be absolutely certain of the truth of what they believed; in order to be so certain, it was necessary to suppress adverse arguments; and in order to effect this object, it was necessary that there should be no critical or sceptical spirit in Europe. A habit of boundless credulity was therefore a natural consequence of the doctrine of exclusive salvation; and not only did this habit naturally produce a luxuriant crop of falsehood, it was itself the negation of the spirit of truth. For the man who really loves truth cannot possibly subside into a condition of contented credulity. He will pause long before accepting any doubtful assertion, he will carefully balance opposing arguments, he will probe every anecdote with scrupulous care, he will endeavour to divest himself of every prejudice, he will cautiously abstain from attributing to probabilities the authority of certainties. These are the essential characteristics of the spirit of truth, and by their encouragement or suppression we can judge how far a system of doctrine coincides with that spirit."

All this is conceded even by modern theologians. Dean Milman in his *History of Christianity*, Vol. iii., p. 358, says :—

"That some of the Christian legends were deliberate forgeries can scarcely be questioned; the principle of pious fraud appeared to justify this mode of working on the popular mind; it was admitted and avowed. To deceive into Christianity was so valuable a service as to hallow deceit itself."

Canon Mozley, in his Bampton Lectures, when discussing ecclesiastical miracles, declares :—

"It is but too plain that in later years, as the Church advanced in worldly power and position, besides the mistakes of imagination and impression, a temper of deliberate and audacious fraud rose up within the Christian body and set itself in action for the spread of certain doctrines, as well as for the great object of the concentration of Church power in one absolute monarchy." (p 226.)

PARABLES.

Far as the poles asunder from any suspicion of untruth are the parables by which all teachers, and in particular the Greatest Teacher of all, have sought to convey spiritual truths to minds unversed in abstract thinking. Similitudes chosen from common events and natural objects are the surest means of bringing home to the unsophisticated mind lessons of spiritual import. The only objection which the sternest

moralist could urge against the use of parables is the risk lest the half-educated should mistake them for history. That this danger is not imaginary may be illustrated by an anecdote in Mrs. Jameson's *History of Our Lord*, vol. i., p. 373.

"I know that I was not very young when I entertained no more doubt of the substantial existence of Lazarus and Dives than of John the Baptist and Herod; when the Good Samaritan was as real a personage as any of the Apostles; when I was full of sincerest pity for those poor, foolish virgins who had forgotten to trim their lamps, and thought them—in my secret soul—rather hardly treated. This impression of the literal sacred truth of the parables I have since met with in many children, and in the uneducated but devout hearers and readers of the Bible; and I remember that when I once tried to explain to a good old woman the proper meaning of the word parable, and that the story of the prodigal son was not a fact, she was scandalized—she was quite sure that Jesus would never have told anything to the disciples that was not true. Thus she settled the matter in her own mind, and I thought it best to leave it there undisturbed."

Has it ever occurred to you whence it is that the parables derive their peculiar force? Why should similitudes drawn from the growth of plants and the events of life, human and animal, take a really profound hold upon us? Why should they avail to teach us of those inward and spiritual things that constitute the

higher truth? Simply because all life is one; and growth and development run through all. As we are learning through scientific investigation to understand more fully the physical world, and to grasp its phenomena, their interactions and their ordered sequences, so we are coming to learn new meanings in their parallels in the spiritual world. Christ's saying "first the blade, then the ear"; His dictum that "men do not gather grapes of thorns"; His likening of the kingdom of Heaven to a ferment working in the lump, are all illustrations taken from the physical world, the full significance of which modern science has greatly deepened. Read in the light of recent advances in science, the parables teach us new lessons in the oneness of truth. Perhaps we shall some day perceive that the story of the curse on the fig tree—which is a true parable of the fate overtaking Israel's lack of faith—is a parable which has been mistaken for a narrative. As a narrative it rings false and purposeless. As a parable, it is profoundly true.

LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS.

Remote, too, from the pious frauds of ecclesiastical schemers are the legends of the

saints, which grew up like beautiful flowers around the memories of men and women who had been venerated when living for their devotion and good works. If we read them to-day with a smile for their naïve simplicity, we must also love them for their obvious sincerity. To turn the pages, for example, of the *Fioretti* of Saint Francis of Assisi, is to breathe the air of that uncritical child-like piety which the self-denying labours of Francis, and his spiritual unity with all creation infused into his unsophisticated followers. They tell how he preached to the fishes, and was brother to the birds; what miracles of goodness and healing he wrought amongst the poor. It is all so lovely that the obvious lack of critical insight and defiance of all the laws of evidence do not offend. But if, in a moment of sterner thought, we put the question, is it true? something rises up within us to say, no; it is not historically true; it belongs to another sphere—that of devout imagination. Within that sphere it is no more untrue than the *Pilgrim's Progress* is untrue. But the *Fioretti* differs from *Pilgrim's Progress* in this respect; *Pilgrim's Progress* is a parable which was deliberately written as such, while the *Fioretti* is a legend which grew.

Legends grow, they are not made. They are not written as history is written, nor may they take the place of history; though we find history and legend often inextricably mixed as they have been transcribed by undiscriminating pens. But he were a very superficial moralist who would condemn the pious legend as a pack of lies. Only remember that in the interests of truth, we must, in the last resort, be prepared to divide, as with a sharp dissecting knife, between the historic fact and the pious folklore which the unlearned scribe has thus intertwined.

In what way such stories arose, what purpose they subserved, and how they took form, has been well told by Froude in words that cannot be bettered.

"The lives of the saints are always simple, often childish, seldom beautiful; yet, as Goethe observed, if without beauty, they are always good. . . . Wherever the Catholic faith was preached, stories like these sprang out of the heart of the people, and grew and shadowed over the entire believing mind of the Catholic world. Wherever church was founded, or soil was consecrated for the long resting-place of those who had died in the faith; wherever the sweet bells of convent or of monastery were heard in the evening air, charming the unquiet world to rest and remembrance of God, there dwelt the memory of some apostle who had laid the first stone, there was the sepulchre of some martyr whose

relics reposed beneath the altar, of some confessor who had suffered there for his Master's sake, of some holy ascetic who in silent self-chosen austerity had woven a ladder there of prayer and penance, on which the angels of God were believed to have ascended and descended. It is not a phenomenon of an age or of a century; it is characteristic of the history of Christianity. From the time when the first preachers of the faith passed out from their homes by that quiet Galilean lake, to go to and fro over the earth, and did their mighty work, and at last disappeared and were not any more seen, these sacred legends began to grow. Those who had once known the Apostles, who had drawn from their lips the blessed message of light and life, one and all would gather together what fragments they could find of their stories. Rumours blew in from all the winds. They had been seen here, had been seen there, in the furthest corners of the earth, preaching, contending, suffering, prevailing. Affection did not stay to scrutinize. . . . So, in those first Christian communities, travellers came through from east and west; legions on the march, or caravans of wandering merchants; and one had been in Rome, and seen Peter disputing with Simon Magus; another in India, where he had heard St. Thomas preaching to the Brahmins, a third brought with him, from the wilds of Britain, a staff which he had cut, as he said, from a thorn tree, the seed of which St. Joseph had sown there, and which had grown to its full size in a single night, making merchandise of the precious relic out of the credulities of the believers. So the legends grew, and were treasured up, and loved, and trusted; and alas! all which we have been able to do with them is to call them lies, and to point a shallow moral on the impostures and credulities of the early Catholics. . . . For fourteen hundred years these stories held their place, and rang on from age to age, from century to

century; as the new faith widened its boundaries, and numbered ever more and more great names of men and women who had fought and died for it, so long their histories, living in the hearts of those for whom they laboured, laid hold of them and filled them; and the devout imagination, possessed with what was often no more than the rumour of a name, bodied it out into life, and form, and reality. And, doubtless, if we try them by any historical canon, we have to say that quite endless untruths grew in this way to be believed among men; and not believed in only, but held sacred passionately and devoutly; not filling the history books only, not only serving to amuse and edify the refectory, or to furnish matter for meditation in the cell, but claiming days for themselves of special remembrance, entering into liturgies and inspiring prayers, forming the spiritual nucleus of the hopes and fears of millions of human lives."—*Short Studies*, First Series, Vol. II., pp. 203-206.

HISTORY AND FOLKLORE.

All this is well and wisely said. But it must be remembered that human nature, though modified from clime to clime, remains much the same. Pious legends are growing up amongst the simple folk to-day, as they grew around the mediæval saints, the Fathers, the Apostles. I have myself seen devout Italian peasants kneeling reverently before the tomb of Alessandro Volta, the famous electrician, evidently treating him as one whose bones possessed saintly virtures. Around the memory of Garibaldi a rich crop of legend

has already sprung up. No age has been free from like tendencies; and particularly in the East there has always been an atmosphere of vivid colouring ready to condense as a nimbus around the heads of the great ones. In an age which treasured up the legendary stories; which embroidered the robe of history with uncritical fancies; which valued the adoring legend because it was adoring; there was no wilful untruth in thus decking out fact with fancy. It is the natural and spontaneous way of imaginative children.[1] The mythical story narrated of the saint or martyr was no more a lie than the golden halo which the painter depicted around his head. Neither was true as history; neither existed in fact; but devoted hearts would have been the poorer had both halo and legend been banished. How naturally such legends arise may be learned from the thirteenth century narrative of the speaking crucifix which is said to have been possessed by Bonaventura, the origin of which is known to be a conversation between him and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

[1] "Primitive men, like very young children, are hardly capable of formal and conscious lying. They give out, as of equal value, what they have seen and what they have imagined. And in some measure the savage survives in us all."—Father George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, p. 243.

"St. Thomas asked Bonaventura whence he received the force and unction which he displayed in all his works. Bonaventura pointed to a crucifix hanging on the wall of his cell. 'It is that image,' he said, 'which dictates all my words to me.' What can be more simple, more true, more intelligible? But the saying of Bonaventura was repeated; and in spite of all remonstrances, they insisted that Bonaventura possessed a speaking crucifix."—Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, Series II., p. 555.

But while we must freely grant that there was no wilful lying in those legendary narratives, blossoming among a simple-hearted folk who devoutly believed them to be true, it is our duty to say plainly that they are not historic, but are mythical. However beautiful symbolically, and true for their time and place, for us they are not true. "To maintain a myth which we know to be only a myth, with a view to edification, is a dishonesty to ourselves and others, which brings with it a heavy retribution."[1] The flaming sword of truth shuts us out from that garden of devout fancies; we in our age may not live therein.

The myth may have had its origin, as Professor Percy Gardner suggests,[2] in the search for truth. In that case there must be

[1] Dean Inge, in *Contentio Veritatis*, p. 84.

[2] *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 97.

amongst those who invent or repeat myths a notion of truth very different from that of the educated modern world. "But," he adds, "the modern notion of historic truth is very recent."

Rabbis and theologians have read into the Bible things that are not there. I have asked, but hitherto in vain, when, and by whom, was the doctrine invented that, by the Fall, man was condemned to eternal death. As I read Genesis iii., the curse pronounced on Adam was labour and sorrow until he should return to dust. Paul's well-known argument "as in Adam all die, &c.," apparently asserting an accepted proposition, does not imply either eternal death or eternal torment. It does not justify the doctrine of total depravity, with its correlative dogma of just damnation, whether in the form held by Augustine or in that preached by John Wesley. When was that black doctrine imposed upon the narrative of the Fall?

It has been nothing less than a disaster[1] for the world that for centuries ecclesiastical

[1] The position may be summarized thus:—Organized Christianity, holding a doubtful tradition, offers us doctrines which she declares to be outside the province

Christianity entrenched itself against any independent quest for evidence conducted by unbiassed seekers after Truth.

Confidence is shaken by any attempts to bolster up the doubtful accretions which the ages of credulity added to the earlier faith. This point was very well put by the late Dean Liddon :—

"It will certainly be admitted that round the original deposit of the Faith there had grown up in process of time previous to the sixteenth cenutry, partly from a desire to popularize Christianity, partly from other causes, an accretion of matter, some of it possibly true, much that was beautiful and poetic, some certainly false. Must not the crisp and jealous sense of truth be impaired when the soul accepts with equal facility that which is certain, and such portions of the imaginary as it may conceive to be probable, and when the truths for which the Apostles gave their lives are practically correlated with stories which in an age like ours bring the whole Faith into discredit, and, for too many souls, into danger ? "

All this is good and apposite, but it goes further than the good Dean supposed. For such dogmas as the "Procession" of the Holy Ghost, the Nicene theory of the "Three

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of demonstration by reason, and for which she therefore offers us miracles instead of proof. But at the same time she virtually forbids the enquirer to sift the evidence for the miracles, as an act of impiety.

Persons," and the legend of Peter having been the first Pope, are unquestionably no part of the earliest strata[1] of the "deposit of Faith" —a question-begging term—of which "the Church" claims to be the guardian. It remains to be true that the Councils in their attempts to settle the canon of Holy Scripture exercised on the whole a wise discretion in rejecting numerous doubtful Gospels, which were current in early time, disfigured as they were with apocryphal stories about the childhood of Jesus, and other non-historical matter.

ADVENTITIOUS AIDS TO TRUTH.

In ages not very long past, the minds of men accepted as being true doctrines and narratives which they would otherwise not have accepted, provided the teacher was a miracle-worker, or was believed to be such. To the modern

[1] Nor, indeed, is the dogma of the Virgin Birth. Not only is it contradicted by the pedigrees, given in Matthew, of the descent from David, but it was not believed by Peter (Acts ii. 30), nor by Paul (Rom. i. 3). The author of the Fourth Gospel, who must have known of the legend, ignores it, as it would seem intentionally. Moreover the whole doctrine of the Incarnation as it is presented in the New Testament is independent of it.

mind there does not appear to be any connexion between the two. That a person is able to do some marvellous thing that we do not understand—which therefore seems unaccountable, miraculous—does not to the modern mind appear to have any bearing whatever on the truth or falsity of propositions which he may lay down. There is no logical connexion between the working of a miracle and the truth of any independent allegation the miracle-worker may make. It is exceedingly difficult for us to conceive any such connexion. But undoubtedly in the time of Our Lord that idea prevailed[1] amongst the people. We have only to read John x. 41, where it is recorded that many resorted to Jesus "and said: John did no miracle, *but* all things that John spoke of this man were true." The "but" reveals their attitude of mind. It was an attitude of mind which Jesus Himself repeatedly rebuked. "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not

[1] The narratives, preserved to us in the Acts of the Apostles, of Simon Magus (viii. 9), and of the exorcists at Ephesus (xix. 13) prove to us that reputed magical powers were in that age thought to confer some authority on the miracle worker. But they also show that miracle working could afford, even then, no guarantee of true doctrine, Nor did the Jews in Jerusalem suppose so when they gave out that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub, the demon-prince.

believe," He said. Yet everywhere, even in the case of false prophets and false teachers, signs and miracles were regarded as somehow proving the truth of the doctrines taught. It was very illogical, no doubt, but it existed as an ingrained habit of mind. It seemed to establish an authority for the truth of the doctrine; it gave certitude where otherwise there would have been hesitation or doubt.

On the modern mind the effect is just the opposite. If any modern teacher of religion or morals would propose to establish the truth of his teachings by showing some unaccountable marvel—by working a miracle in fact—the sincerity of his teaching would be at once discredited. We should rank him straightway as an impostor. Our belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ ought to be held by us *because we are convinced of their inherent truth,* not because He is said to have worked miracles.[1] And,

[1] Spinoza held that miracles, as contrary to the order of nature, would tend rather to lead us to doubt the reality of God. The artificial distinction between what we call "natural," and what we call "supernatural" amounts to the denial that nature is also divinely ordained. That deplorable dualism which regards God's universe as something inherently undivine and evil is a legacy from the times of ignorance. It prevents us from seeing that the greatest "supernatural" event that ever occurred—the event which we in human

moreover, whatever the disciples and hearers of Christ had before them, we have only narratives of miracles, not the miracles themselves. It is impossible to dissever the narratives of miracles from the back-ground[2] of their environment. The belief in them was a product of the age in which their occurrence is recorded. It was an age when devotion and vivid imagination were creative in their activity. We must not conceive these early disciples, like Western leaders, testing the testimony, weighing evidence, calculating the conditions and influences at work, or discriminating between cause and effect, or practising an analysis of thought wholly foreign to their mental constitution. That was not their method.

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language call the resurrection of Jesus Christ—was only so far above our human comprehension that we fail to understand its true significance. Philosophy, drawn from limited human experience, has no adequate language in which to describe it. Words fail to convey its essential and transcendent truth.

[2] "It is doubtless the tendency of religious minds to imagine mysteries and wonders where there are none; and much more, where causes of awe really exist, will they unintentionally mis-state, exaggerate and embellish, when they set themselves to relate what they have witnessed, or have heard; . . and further, the imagination, as is well known, is a fruitful source of apparent miracles."—J. H. Newman, *Two Essays*, p. 171.

They were essentially Orientals, though Luke took evident pains to collect and sift the tradition, when he composed his Gospel.

To see the narratives of miracles in their true proportions we have got first to appreciate, and enter into, that Oriental state of mind which with perfect honesty and sincerity, values the adoring legend because it is adoring, more than the naked truth because it is true. To the Oriental, scientific accuracy stripped of pious trappings ceases to be true because it is stripped.

There is the less need to dwell on this phase of ancient belief; because in the conditions of modern education, we are in little danger of being influenced either one way or the other in our beliefs by any exhibition of thaumaturgic power irrelevant to the matters in question. Our Lord Himself, in the parable of the rich man and the beggar, declared of those who were not convinced by hearing Moses and the Prophets—neither would they be persuaded even if one should rise from the dead. We therefore have His authority for discounting the evidential value of miracles.

Can it be said that belief in miracles, or in dogmas reared upon the support of alleged

miracles, avails to strengthen the grasp of truth in the soul of any man whom truth has failed to convince without their adventitious aid? Do the miracle-working relics of the saints, where such are preserved for the edification of the pious worshipper, increase his love of truth, his accuracy of thought, his hold on the vital facts of the relation between God and the soul? Are those countries where veneration of relics flourishes superior in honesty and veracity to those where that practice is discountenanced? Is scrupulous care taken to ensure that no relics are venerated except such as are well authenticated? It is notorious that these things are not so. Some fourteen years ago it was discovered that the relics at Bury St. Edmunds, supposed to be those of Saint Edmund, were spurious. Did that make any difference in the practice of offering pious veneration to them? This is the answer which was given publicly by Cardinal Vaughan in *The Times*, of September 10th, 1901:—

"Some of our friends may now, perhaps, inquire whether the discovery that the relics [of Saint Edmund] are not genuine will be a very awkward matter for the Church. To this I answer at once, "Not at all, . . . if we should venerate a spurious relic in the belief that it were genuine, the veneration, being relative and

personal, would certainly not rest in the inanimate relic or picture, but simply in the person, whose memory we have in our mind."

Alas, the ecclesiastical mind seems unable to understand how truth is dishonoured by these adventitious aids to piety. Truth needs not to walk on such crutches.

THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

But if the embroidery of fact with pious fancy is thus found all through the history of the Christian religion backwards, even to the Apostolic times, have we any reason to suppose that it was wholly absent from the narratives which have come down to us of the Apostles themselves, and of their Master? Have the Gospels, compiled in the very age that was prolific in pious legends, escaped miraculously from sharing in the characteristics of the environment within which they took form? To avert such an enquiry by the *a priori* assertion that our New Testament being divinely inspired is miraculously free from all admixture of error is only to shirk the question. Happily very few people take this position now. Are the Gospels history? If they are, and so far as they are, then like every other history,

they are subject to the tests of historical criticism. You cannot establish their historicity, *en bloc*, by saying that the Church at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in the year 1442, or at any other Council or Synod, voted to include them in the Canon of Holy Scripture. Nor, if you could do this, would that settle the point, because we do not know which of the then existing manuscripts is the authentic one. There are said to be more than 700 separate Greek manuscripts of the Gospels existing; and there are variations between the texts of them that are not unimportant.[1] Some of these show evidences of certain later additions to the earlier texts from which they themselves were copied. Not one original exists; all we have are more or less faithful copies from older ones. There were, as we learn from Luke i. 1 and Acts viii. 4, as well as from other sources, other oral Gospels in existence before our four canonical Gospels were composed. It is a matter of history that numerous other early Gospels were in circulation; and many of these were rejected by the early Church. The revisions

[1] On the question of tampering with the text of Scripture, see F. C. Conybeare, in the *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. I.

which have taken place in our own time attest the facts that enquiry has been necessary, and that criticism of the texts has been justified. The quest for truth compels us to ask that competent scholars shall at least be free to undertake the task of enquiry into the historicity of the narratives. It is a question of competence and of scholarship, not of fervency in preaching, nor of frequency in prayer. To determine the historicity of a particular event or the date and authorship of a document no doubt needs devotion and honesty; but something more is needed, for devotion and honesty cannot take the place of scholarship and training. Few indeed are those fitted for this particular quest; and those of us who have no such qualifications must be humbly content to be guided by those who have.

Meantime the quest for truth has led to distinct results in several directions. One of these is the question of the fulfilment of prophecy; another is the detection of glosses or comments that were originally no part of the manuscript.

THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

Seeing what stress has been laid upon certain events being regarded as the fulfilment of

prophecy, or fulfilment of the Scriptures, it is worth while for a moment to examine what is the significance of the word *fulfil*. This at first sight may seem a simple matter that everybody understands; but a little thought will show that it is not so simple. There is a vast difference between the fulfilment of a prediction, and the mere occurrence of a correspondence. If an event has been clearly set forth beforehand, and then it subsequently occurs in the way or at the time predicted, we may well say that the prediction has been fulfilled. Our almanacks inform us that on the third day of February, 1916, at 4.21 p.m., there will be an eclipse of the sun, visible at Greenwich. That statement is a clear and definite prediction, the essential truth of which no sane person doubts. Supposing that there are no clouds and the eclipse is seen, should we, or should we not, regard the event as the fulfilment of prophecy? Is a prediction any the less a prophecy because it expresses the calculable and definable result of ascertained laws of recurrence of phenomena? Our almanacs also tell us that the Royal Academy will be closed on Monday, August 2nd, 1915. Now, supposing that the Academy does actually close on that date, should

we refer to this event as the fulfilment of prophecy? Do we keep the word "prophecy" to mean the prediction of some occurrence that is vague, and indefinite, and unlikely in itself? Or do we refuse to employ the word "fulfil" except in cases where the event could not be with accuracy foreseen? Perhaps it is a question of habit of mind, or of intelligence, as to how we use our terms. Some persons will regard as a fulfilment of prophecy some trifling event which to others suggests no such relation. A well-known member of our Society narrates how a good pious lady on going for the first time in her life to the sea-side, and looking out over the ocean, exclaimed: Oh, the fulfilment of prophecy!—"There go the ships" (Ps. civ. 26). Now, undoubtedly those words occur in the hundred-and-fourth Psalm; but whether the actual seeing of the vessels sailing on the ocean was the fulfilment of them depends on the question whether in the first place the words in question were uttered as a prediction, and in the second place whether they predicted that those ships would be going over the sea at the place and time when they were observed. Doubtless you will agree that in the right usage of the words there was

neither prophecy nor fulfilment. There was "narration," not "prophecy," in the text quoted; and there was "recurrence," not "fulfilment," in the fact observed. Now it cannot be seriously denied that many of the matters which have been regarded by the piety of past ages as "fulfilments" are essentially of the same character; being merely the occurrence or recurrence of a correspondence. Instances in plenty might be given. But, it must be remarked, the Hebrews did unquestionably use the word and idea of "fulfilment" in this wider and looser sense. It was part of the Rabbinical mode of thought. One of the greatest living Hebrew scholars has told me that in the view of the Rabbis the whole scheme of Creation and of the giving of the law, and of the course of Jewish history, was present in the Divine Mind before the creation of the world; and that therefore every single event in Jewish history was a "fulfilment," and was regarded as a fulfilment of Scripture, even though the particular passage of Scripture may have been in fact written long after the event which is said to establish it. An example occurs in one of the Rabbinical writings known as 'Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, (a second century

treatise or exposition of Mishnah and Midrash writings) i. 5, where the passage runs :—"It is said that Adam sinned in the seventh hour from his creation to fulfil that which is written (Psalm xlix. 12), 'Man cannot live over a single night in honour.'"[1]

If we understand this Rabbinical mode of thought, so strange to us, we shall see how irrelevant from the modern point of view are many of the things regarded in the time of Christ as fulfilments of prophecy. Nor must we forget that in that country and age, the

[1] In the Authorised Version it runs :—"Man being in honour abideth not." In the Revised Version, "A man abideth not in honour." My friend Professor Israel Abrahams, whose distinction in Hebrew scholarship is beyond challenge, tells me that the Hebrew verb here translated *abide* means literally to *lodge overnight, or* to *spend the night.* It is the verb used in the Hebrew of Ruth iii. 13, "*Tarry* this night" ; in Genesis xxxii. 21, "and himself *lodged* that night" ; also in Exodus xxiii. 18, "neither shall the fat of my sacrifice *remain* until the morning." All these and many other passages, says Professor Abrahams, use the same verb as in Psalm xlix. 12 ; it means to *pass the night,* and only metaphorically to *abide.* The Hebrew homilist used the phrase in Psalm xlix. 12, in its literal sense.

It may be remarked in passing that, as understood by the Rabbinists, the entire occurrences from Genesis ii. 7 to iii. 24—the creation of man, the planting of Eden, the creation of Eve, the eating of the forbidden fruit, and the expulsion from Eden—all took place in one day—the sixth day of creation.

See the *Jewish Encyclopædia,* article on 'Aboth de Rabbi Nathan.

people were accustomed to this habit of referring all things thus to 'that which was written," as their mode,[1] or at least one of their modes, of verifying truth. Hence the determined attempt by Christian teachers of the Apostolic age and of that which succeeded it, to impress this line of argument upon the Jews amongst whom they moved. The whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews and very many passages in the Epistles of Paul, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the first and fourth Gospels, are instinct with this idea. The Gospel facts must needs be presented as the fulfilment of prophecy or fulfilment of the Scriptures. And, not understanding the Rabbinical usage of the term "fulfilment," the majority of later Christian teachers have accepted as being fulfilments events which were in fact only recurrences or occurrences, and have often had to warp the true meaning of the original text in

[1] Without doubt the *invention of writing* threw a glamour upon all written documents in the centuries that followed; and from the influence of that glamour the Hebrews were not exempt. Many Eastern people, particularly Mohammedans, still share this influence. We know, even in our own day, with respect to the much more recent *invention of printing*, what a disproportionate regard ignorant people have for anything that is printed in a book. Because they have found it printed in a book, it *must* be true.

order to make out the later events to be fulfilments.

It is sometimes said that any one who criticizes a composition thereby puts himself on a superior plane to that of the author whom he criticizes. But that is a mistake. A merely plain man has a perfect right to point out inconsistencies in any printed book—even the most sacred. Anachronisms for example, may be detected[1] in works of genius by a person of no pretence to literary ability.

So, when we find expressions of a later age, such as the baptismal formula in Matt. xxviii. 19, embedded in the Gospel, we know, even without any reference to the witness of the manuscripts, that this was no part[2] of the original text. So, again, when in Matt. xxiii. 35, in the passage supposed to be quoted—like the parallel passage

[1] If we were to find in a reputed drama of Shakespeare any reference to travelling by railway, or if there were put into our hands a story said to be by Charles Dickens in which one of the characters would be rung up on the telephone, any schoolboy would at once detect the blunder; he need not pretend to be superior to Shakespeare or Dickens.

[2] Eusebius, quoting this verse in the fourth century, in his earlier writings omits all the words after the first seven, showing that the manuscript before him at that date did not contain the formula. In his later writings he quotes it as we have it. The two readings were then competing for acceptance.

in Luke xi. 49-51—from the lost book called "The Wisdom of God," we find a reference to Zachariah the son of Barachias, we know that there is some historical blunder, since Zachariah the son of Barachias was murdered in the court of the Temple in or about the year A.D. 68.

We have travelled far from the time when an English Dean could declare from the pulpit of St. Paul's: "Every book of it [the Bible], every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High, faultless, unerring, supreme." Yet our Bible is to us more than ever precious. It stands out more clearly than ever as a unique storehouse of records of God's dealings with an ancient people to whom He made known His ways and His works. It has preserved to us not only the records of their faith, and of their strivings after Him, but also of their failures; not only of their progress toward righteousness, but also of their sins; not only of their inspired poetry, but also of their folklore. Let us frankly admit all this: so has it become to us all the more helpful and inspiring. And it is of infinite worth to us in that it, and it alone, has preserved to us the

manifestation of Him who had the words of eternal life, Him of whom we believe and are sure that He was the Son of the living God.

CERTITUDE AND TRUTH.

But it will be said by some that if faithful, and patient, and reverent scholarship has shown in the Holy Scriptures, as they have come down to us, the existence of interpolations, anachronisms, and glosses, we shall not be able to rely upon them in matters of faith and doctrine. Perhaps we formerly did so, believing that their language was infallible. Perhaps we did not; and yet relied upon some other infallibility. Perhaps we felt certitude because we rested upon Authority, instead of relying on Divine guidance. The craving for certitude is not in all respects a sign of spiritual health. The very eagerness to be certain tends to vitiate the search by a temper of impatience. With many men, certainty is a matter of custom rather than of conviction. Belief, so far as it exists in any formulated shape in their minds, is not the foundation but rather the product of the creeds they have been taught. Many have never tested their religious views; they were told it was wrong to do so. But no

thinking man's views are worth much until he has tested them—has gone through the process of looking them in the face and questioning their validity, their authority; until in fact he has gone through the stage of doubting them, and has passed from the stage of doubt to the fuller experience of conviction. "A man may have taken up second-hand, indolently, religious views; may believe them, defend them vehemently.—Is he a man of truth? Has he bowed before the majesty of truth with that reverential humbleness which is the mark of those who love her?"[1] Until he has so done he has no right to certitude; he is a creature of the authority which he follows at second-hand. The quest for truth means going to the very sources of truth[2] to learn at first-hand,—immediately.

Consider what we understand by certitude. How, by what process of thought or soul, do we become certain of anything? Are we certain that there is an external world around us?

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, First Series, p. 338.

[2] Francis Bacon put it in another way: "For Truth is well called the daughter of Time, not of Authority. And so it is not wonderful that these spells of Antiquity, Authority, and Consent, have so bowed down the power of man, that he cannot (being as it were bewitched) hold communication with things themselves."

Are we certain that we have actually seen and heard things; do we rely on the credibility of our senses? Are we convinced of the persistence of natural law? Are we sure that causes actually do produce effects? Is not certainty in these things a habit of mind—a reliance upon generalized experience, experience of our own in particular and of mankind in general? Has authority anything to do with certainty? We are certain that two and two make four; should we be any more certain of that fact if we found it to be so declared in the Bible; or if an Act of Parliament should so proclaim it? There is no logic in all the schools which can prove to our finite intelligence that anything is absolutely certain. We take past experience as a guide to the present and to the future, as the result of the experience of mankind (including ourselves) that like causes produce like effects.[1] But experience is always imperfect, limited. We have no logical justification for pronouncing anything "impossible," even if it be wildly improbable and outside our experience, unless it be something that is self-

[1] Huxley (*Essay on Possibilities and Impossibilities*, Vol. V., p. 192, of his *Collected Works*) calls this "An Act of Faith"; but it is equally truly a habit of mind.

destructive,[1] that is to say, something which lands us in confusion of thought. Omnipotence itself cannot make a lie true.

The Apostolic advice:—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," should be an incitement to follow the quest. In that pursuit our business is to demand evidence, to evaluate its weight, and to be tenacious of that which has been found to be demonstrably true. Neglect to follow such advice can never advance truth. To adopt without discrimination beliefs that have not been submitted to strict and impartial scrutiny is to sow the garden of the soul with weeds. To refuse to submit Truth to scrutiny, lest it should fail to meet the test, is cowardice, not faith. Upon each of us rests the personal responsibility to exercise a faithful discrimination. But this is the very antithesis to receiving Truth on any external authority, whether of the Synods, or of the philosophers. Men who are not content that Truth should be its own authority have sought for something

[1] It is, for example, impossible that two and two should ever make five. For "four" is the name that we give to the result of adding two to two. And if two and two did not make four, the meaning of the word "four" would be destroyed. Similarly, it is impossible for the words "one" and "three" to mean the same without verbal nihilism.

that they might treat as such, and so relieve themselves of the personal responsibility of exercising their discrimination. Some will say that man has no right of private judgement; that the sole custodian of Divine Truth is "the Church," and then they will use their own personal judgement as to which Church is the rightful and exclusive custodian. Some will tell you *Truth is that which prevails*, according to the proverb "*Magna est veritas et praevalebit.*" Unfortunately, evil sometimes prevails. Others will say: *Truth is that which persists.* Unfortunately errors also persist; there is such a thing as survival of the unfittest through long ages. A lie is notoriously hard to kill. The pragmatist holds that *Truth is that which works in practice*—a utilitarian doctrine which conveniently ignores the categorical imperative and the supreme obligation of doing one's duty even when the doing of duty seems humanly impracticable. The command, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you," is rejected by the pragmatists as an unpractical counsel of perfection. It *is* a counsel of perfection; but Our Lord's command, which is binding on us was: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

How then, and by what tokens can we attain to certainty? Even the most exact of sciences, goemetry, cannot demonstrate its propositions without assuming certain axioms or postulates as self-evident truths, such as that the whole is greater than its part, or that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. The negative axioms are mostly denials of the admissibility of something which if admitted would lead to confusion, or absurdity. Modern science, too, has its postulates, and some of the most effective of these are in negative form. Amongst the most certain of the generalizations of modern science—a generalization to which no exception is known,—is the principle of the conservation of energy. Yet for long no demonstrative basis for it could be found, until the master-mind of Von Helmholtz struck on a negative basis, which has become a postulate of physics,—"perpetual motion is impossible." In morals, also, there are postulates. Huxley tried to deal with them in his *Science and Morals*. While not denying them, he demanded "How may a man be certain that they are true?" He discovered no answer. The real reply, I suppose, is this—a negative one—that if they are not true, then there are no such things as moral

laws. Their denial would lead to confusion. It would be a moral absurdity if the ten commandments were valid only six days out of seven, or if they were binding only in longitudes West of Suez. Suppose God were to hear prayers only when they were addressed to Him in Hebrew, or in Latin, or only when expressed in irreproachable grammar. These would be moral confusions indeed. We may be very sure that God is not the author of confusion. That is indeed one of the necessary postulates of an intelligent faith. By universal consent mankind has an instinct (as well as an interest) to place confidence in those men whose word corresponds to the thing that is; to trust those teachings which pre-suppose that the government of the universe is not capricious, or disorderly, or self-destructive. Perhaps this was in essence what St. Augustine meant by the famous dictum *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*, often quoted as though it signified much the same thing as the pagan proposition *Vox populi vox Dei*. And, assuredly, truth cannot be determined by any majority vote, whether in the House of Commons or in the Council of Nicæa. "The longest Sword, the strongest Lungs, the most Voices, are false measures of

Truth." [1] Certainty is not to be attained by conformity to the vote of the majority; by shouting with the crowd. The philosophy of By-ends is a virtual denial that there is any quest for truth.

In matters of ethical motive, where conscience, and duty, and personal devotion are involved, dependence on authority is absurd. A man who should cherish his wife with calculated tenderness because he finds printed in the Bible the advice, "Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them," would be a poor sort of husband. He has not begun to understand that emotions cannot be made to order; that no love is pure that is not passionate. "No one who pretends to make the moral teaching of Jesus the rule of life *merely from dogmatic obligation* can have understood that morality at all, or penetrated beyond the mere letter of its precepts." [2] Neither can belief be made to order; a man believes, not what he is ordered to believe, nor what he wilfully chooses to believe, nor yet what he merely desires or hopes to believe. What he really believes he believes because he cannot help believing. He believes

[1] Benjamin Whichcote.

[2] *Supernatural Religion*, Vol. II., p. 485.

that of which he is convinced, whether by the coercive logic of evidence, or by the experience of some inward conviction. The sort of belief which is merely imposed by Authority carries no conviction of the Truth. Milton put this very aptly in the *Areopagitica* :—

"A man may be a heretick in the truth ; and if he beleeve things only because his Pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresie."

But in contradistinction to this view stands the claim persistently put forward by the Church to be the sole authority and arbiter of truth. This claim is baldly stated in words attributed (perhaps unjustly) to Cardinal Bellarmine :

"True things are true and false things are false ; but if the Church has declared true things to be false, and false things to be true, then false things are true, and true things are false."[1]

The words sound like a caricature. But the course of the Inquisition in persecuting men for announcing scientific discoveries which were

[1] *Vera sunt vera et falsa sunt falsa ; sed si ecclesia dixit vera esse falsa et falsa esse vera, falsa sunt vera et vera sunt falsa.* I have been unable to place or verify the quotation.

counter to the dicta and authority of the Church lends ominous support to the pronouncement. Galileo was tortured, Giordani Bruno martyred, for promulgating views condemned by the tyranny of Authority.

Nevertheless, even the defenders of Authority have continually been conscious that Authority needed to be supported by something that should at least seem like intellectual sanction. Accordingly, the schoolmen dragged in the aid of Aristotle and his "method" of applying logic to the discovery or substantiation of Truth; and so the philosophical writings of S. Thomas Aquinas rule the intellectual training[1] of the seminarists down to the present time.

There is a popular notion abroad that the Fathers discouraged all use of reason and required unquestioning submission to imposed

[1] The rigorous study of scholastic philosophy is doubtless a vast improvement on the crude philosophies of the earlier centuries. Think of the kind of irrelevant argument by which the Fathers sought to justify the accepted views of the Church. According to Irenæus there could be only four Gospels, because there were only four winds of heaven, and four quarters of the earth, and because the cherubim had only four faces apiece. Saint Jerome, wishing to clinch the doctrine that the resurrection would be a bodily one, asked most naïvely: 'If the dead be not raised, how could the damned, after the Judgement, gnash their teeth in hell?

The point is that need was felt of *some* argumentative support for the Authority of the Church.

beliefs, however unreasonable. Tertullian is sometimes misrepresented as having said, "I believe because it is impossible." It is perhaps worth while to see what he did say. He is speaking of the paradoxes of faith, which he sums up in these words:—*Natus est Dei filius; non pudet quia pudendum est; et mortuus est Dei filius; prorsus credibile est quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile.*[1] (De Carne Christi. Cap. v.; see Migne's *Patrologia*. Tom. ii.; Col. 761).

It would be difficult to over-estimate the harm done by the claim of any organization to exclusive Authority in matters of faith. For when a claim to infallibility is coupled with the prohibition of all independent enquiry two results[2] follow—bigotry and scepticism: bigotry in those who cannot think, and scepti-

[1] After careful thought I conclude the essential meaning of these words may be rendered thus:—"The Son of God was born; He was not ashamed of it, albeit it is shameful; and He died [though] Son of God; in brief it is believable, albeit it is absurd; and, having been buried, He rose again; it is certain, albeit impossible."

[2] "Let every man who is engaged in persecuting any opinion ponder it; these two things must follow: you make *fanatics*, and you make *sceptics; believers you cannot make.*"—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, First Series, p. 338.

cism in those who can. Truth must not be stifled in the miasma of imposed dogmas.

Yet it must not be thought that there is no place for authority, the reasonable authority which men rightly attribute to accumulated experience, and to goodness and wisdom as they see these qualities incarnate in the lives of good and wise men. No one can doubt that it is in the Divine ordering that simple souls look up with a genuine respect to those whose lives and words demonstrate daily a close communion with God, a fidelity to the inner convictions of their souls, a readiness to put Truth before aught else, a character moulded on the pattern of all that is Christ-like. Such men—and there are such to-day—cannot but wield, unconsciously to themselves it may be, a real authority. They are leaders not by virtue of any office they hold, not because of any ordination by the laying on of men's hands, but by virtue of their sincerity and nobility of soul. We revere them but not because they are an authority; they are an authority to us because we revere them. The opinion and example of such men counts for more than the decisions of Councils and the precedents of antiquity, in shaping the beliefs of the way-

faring man. The child must needs be subject to authority while he lacks experience: but the day comes when he must put away leading strings, and walk on his own feet. And when the day of spiritual enlightenment comes we say, with the men of Samaria: "Now we believe; not because of thy saying, for we have heard for ourselves, and know."

But why should we spend time on further discussing external authorities when all the while the key to authority lies in our own bosoms? "No religion is true which contradicts our sense of right and wrong." This is one of the postulates of religious thought. To think otherwise would be confusion indeed, since all and any religion, if it be an ethical religion and not a mere mumbo-jumbo worship, is based on there being a distinction between right and wrong. And if man possesses[1] a

[1] Archbishop Trench stated a kindred postulate in the following terms:—"For all revelation presupposes in man a power of recognizing the truth when it is shown him,—that it will find an answer in him,—that he will trace in it the lineaments of a friend, though of a friend from whom he has been long estranged, and whom he has well-nigh forgotten. It is the finding of a treasure, but of a treasure which he himself and no other had lost. The denial of this, that there is in man any organ by which truth may be recognized, opens the door to the most boundless scepticism, is indeed the denial of all that is godlike in man."—*Notes on Miracles*, p. 24.

fundamental religious perception such as this, if there be in him an element of the divine to which righteousness appeals, what need should there be of resort to any external authority? "That of God in you" is an interior authority to which things that are divine appeal. Justice, mercy, pity, yes, even truth itself, would be meaningless to man unless he himself were endowed with some element of those divine qualities. So if the question be once more raised, "How or by what means can truth be attained?" we have abundant answer. Logical reasoning (the method of philosophy), and induction from experiment (the method of science), valuable aids as they may be in the sifting of ideas and facts, are after all external methods. Neither of them avails to get at the heart of ultimate realities with the same assurance of success as awaits the method of spiritual intuition. We can test by external methods the accuracy of the perceptions thus spiritually apprehended, but the external methods neither replace the internal method nor challenge its validity. The Kingdom of God is within you. There is no authority that can give you the right to be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

INTUITION AND TRUTH.

In the preceding section Intuition has been spoken of as a means of discovering divine truth; we have also spoken of divine truth being revealed inwardly to us. Discovery and revelation are but two names for opposite aspects of the same thing. A discovery is a discovery only to the man who makes it. If he informs us of it we do not discover it, but he discloses or reveals to us what was, until then, his secret. This is also true of the disclosures which we call divine revelations. They are, in a primary sense, revelations to him only to whom they are inwardly revealed. But if, when announced to us, they are found to evoke a response in our souls, they become in a secondary sense revelations to us also, and are apprehended as true.

Here it may be pointed out that, in other departments of knowledge, intuition is more and more being recognized as a legitimate mode of discovering truth. Assuredly this is so in science. In the branch of mathematical science known as the integral calculus there are a number of results which have been arrived at intuitively, and subsequently verified deductively. Many

of the sciences, to say nothing of the arts, bear witness to the efficiency of intuition as a means of extending knowledge. Many scientific discoveries, so-called, have been made by intuition; by a sort of inspired guessing which has led to verifiable results. Truth seems suddenly to flash across the enquirer immersed in his research. He becomes aware of something of which a moment before he was not aware. He has not arrived at it by any process of logical thinking; but it has dawned upon him. He proceeds to put the intuition and its consequences to the test; and definite knowledge results. Great scientific discoverers are men who appear to have a genius for the intuitive perception of hitherto unknown facts. It is a supra-rational faculty, neither inductive nor deductive in its form of operation; it is more akin to imagination than to logic, being creative and spontaneous, independent of the mental processes of analysis and synthesis which constitute the ordinary machinery of thought. Henri Bergson[1] has definitely admitted the faculty of intuition into his philosophy. He calls intuition "knowledge at a distance," and

[1] See Bergson's *l'Intuition philosophique*, published in the *Revue de metaphysique et de la morale*, November, 1911.

regards the relation between intuition and intellect as analogous to the relation between vision and touch.

Many things intuitively discovered have since been found to be demonstrable by reason. But their origin has been forgotten when they became recognized as acquisitions of definite knowledge; and men have slighted the intuitive method of seeking truth, deeming the intellectual process of reasoning a higher one. Rightly regarded, the reverse is true; for logic does not discover the data with which it works; the premises of the syllogism must be known before the inference can be drawn. Few enquirers have the patience and simplicity to wait for the intuition.

THE INNER LIGHT.

We are thus led to the central point in the distinctive beliefs of the Society of Friends, the reality of immediate personal revelation; the postulate that the human soul possesses a faculty of intuitive perception of Divine things; the belief that God can and does communicate His will, without any go-between and apart from all institutional or human agency, to the individual soul of man. In all

ages the devout men who feared God, who strove to work His will and to do the truth, were brought by direct spiritual experience into communion with the most High. The doctrine of the Inner Light, distinctive of the early Quakers, is—theological terminology apart—only another form of the doctrine of immediate guidance by the Holy Spirit. "That of God in you," as they expressed it, meant what others would describe as "the Indwelling Christ," or "the Christ of experience." What the Apostle Paul indicated when he said "Christ liveth in me," or when he wrote "Christ in you the hope of glory," was for Fox, and for Penington, for Penn, and for Barclay, the same as "the Light which lighteth every man" of the Johannine Gospel. In the midst of a dry and wordy Protestantism, *that* was the revelation which came to them. To them, as Fox tells us, the Gospel was the power of God,[1] which was

[1] The following extract from George Fox's *Journal* contains an entry of the year 1663 relating to his service in Cornwall.

"From thence we returned to Redruth, and the next day to Truro, where we had a meeting. Next morning, some of the chief of the town desired to speak with me, amongst whom was Colonel Rouse. I went, and had a great deal of discourse with them concerning the things of God. In their reasoning they said, 'The gospel was the four books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John';

preached before Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written. Apostles of the intuitional view of religion, they rediscovered for themselves the significance of "that inner stillness wherein we discover truth at first-hand." In other words, they set down as of little account any religious profession which was based on intellectual notions only, or which depended on assent to propositions laid down by authority, and was not founded on some deep personal religious experience. Experience of the deep things of God by the faculty of spiritual apprehension was for them more[2] than all creeds; and the waiting upon God

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and they called it natural. I told them, the gospel was the power of God, which was preached before Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John were written; and it was preached to every creature (of which a great part might never see nor hear of those four books), so that every creature was to obey the power of God; for Christ, the Spiritual Man, would judge the world according to gospel, that is, according to his invisible power. When they heard this, they could not gainsay; for the truth came over them. I directed them to their teacher, the grace of God, and showed them the sufficiency of it, which would teach them how to live, and what to deny; and being obeyed would bring them salvation. So to that grace I recommended them, and left them." (Edition, 1765, p. 346.)

[2] Compare J. Drummond, "The highest authority is found when truths come straight to the soul and receive that inward response without which religious truth is dead and useless." (*Via, Veritas, Vita*, p. 119.)

to hear His still small voice in the soul more than all liturgies. They found the essence of Christianity to consist not in holding intellectual opinions about the nature and person of Christ, but in the personal experience of the Life of God in the soul, effecting a transformation of character into the Christ-like pattern. William Penn stated the negative side most clearly. "It is not opinion or speculation, or notions of what is true; or assent to, or the subscription of articles or propositions, though never so soundly worded, that makes a man a true believer or a true Christian." [1] Penington, still in the same strain, added a more positive note:—"By experience they [the Quakers] know that there is no being saved by a belief of His [Christ's] death for them, and of His resurrection, ascension, intercession, etc., without being brought into a true fellowship with Him in His death, and without feeling His immortal seed of life raised and living in them." [2]

A conformity of mind and practice to the Will of God, "according to the dictates of the

[1] William Penn, *A Key opening the Way to every Capacity.*

[2] Isaac Penington, *Examination of the Grounds*, etc.

divine principle of light and life in the soul" was, according to Penn, that which denoted a a person to be truly a child of God. The early Quakers were not concerned with metaphysical distinctions.[1] They regarded the theological differentiations as to the "three persons" and the "two natures" as attempts to be wise above that which is written. Christ as a living personal reality working within them was an absorbing conception which lifted them above disputatious notions. Whether George Fox ever attempted any explanation of the process by which he identified the indwelling Christ with the historical Jesus of Nazareth, does not appear; there is nothing in his *Journal*—a truly wonderful document of living experience—to show that any questioning of the identity ever occurred to him. Penn certainly maintained the ever-living Christ to be the same as the Holy Spirit; while Barclay, though guarding himself against such a definite statement, passed by Christological discussions for the most part as though not vital, or not nearly so vital as the inward response of "that of God in you" to that which is of God. The Logos

[1] See on this whole question Edward Grubb's *Swarthmore Lecture, The Historic and Inward Christ.* (Headley Bros., 1914.)

doctrine of John they frankly did not understand; the wisdom of the Alexandrian school of thought did not touch them. And so they bequeathed to us little or no contribution to what some regard as a pressing need, the synthesis of internal and external witness into an organized body of doctrine.

Now it would seem that we, in these days, are in a happier position than the early Friends, happier than the thinkers of the preceding centuries, having the advantage that we live in a time when the conception of truth has been enlarged; when the search for truth for its own sake has taken newer forms and has extended over wider areas of thought. It was the misfortune of earlier theologians, that they had no independent standards of truth such as are available by the methods of scientific investigation. The whole idea of truth as being verifiable by experiment is relatively modern. In an earlier part of this essay stress was laid on the importance of understanding what constitutes a valid demonstration, and on a clear distinction between statements that are categorically and analogically true. In any synthesis of faith to be hereafter attempted the training in accurate thought which is afforded

by the methods of modern scholarship will be invaluable. But more valuable than all will be that which rises clear from the study of early Quaker thought, the recognition that for any religious doctrine to be of value to any soul it must be the outcome of personal spiritual experience,[1] and such as will evoke a personal spiritual response.

But when we say personal experience we do not necessarily mean the experience of one individual. Collective religious experience is for us just as real as individual experience. We know it; we have found it to be a reality in our congregations and in our community. We may have passed through a spiritual ex-

[1] The late Professor William James, commenting on some of the experiences narrated in George Fox's *Journal* in the following terms :—

"A genuine first-hand religious experience like this is bound to be a heterodoxy to its witnesses, the prophet appearing as a mere lonely madman. If his doctrine prove contagious enough to spread to any others, it becomes a definite and labelled heresy. But if it then still prove contagious enough to triumph over persecution, it becomes itself an orthodoxy; and when a religion has become an orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over; the spring is dry; the faithful live at second-hand exclusively and stone the prophets in their turn. The new church, in spite of whatever human goodness it may foster, can be henceforth counted on as a staunch ally in every attempt to stifle the spontaneous religious spirit, and to stop all later bubblings of the fountain from which in purer days it drew its own supply of inspiration." (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 337.)

perience of which only a portion remains with us. Who shall decide the reality, or even the accuracy of that which we retain? Who or what shall be the faithful custodian and critic of that of which we may have become possessed? We are told to try the spirits to know whether they be of God; but how try them except by that measure of the Divine Spirit which has been vouchsafed to us? There is no final guardian of truth except the spirit of truthfulness itself; the guidance of the Holy Spirit witnessing in our spirits. Our Lord Himself did not claim that His words should be recognized because He said them, *but because they were true.* He appealed to His hearers: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" (John viii. 46.) In the ultimate resort, then, after we have done all we can, as in the light of God, to test and to try our intuitions of truth, that which remains as truth must, for any one of us, be a matter of personal experience, or be confirmed by personal experience.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE AND CORPORATE CONTROL.

The question was raised as to how individual experience may be correlated with the collective

experience of the congregation or community. On that question depends the further enquiry how far collective experience can be used as a corporate conscience to sift and test individual experiences; how far the corporate conscience is a helpful external guide. Let us frankly confess that our Society, in abstaining from fully organizing any machinery for giving effect to the collective experience of the body for the guidance of the individual, has been defective in means of expression, as well as weak at times in the exercise of control.

Nevertheless, there exist very potent ancillary means, mostly unorganized, by which guidance is afforded to the individual. None of us lives so far detached from his fellows or from his own past experiences as not to be continually subject to many constraining influences. It is scarcely needful to enumerate them.

The memory of past association with things of the highest spiritual moment is not readily effaced. Written or remembered records of the past experiences of others cannot be ignored. The influence of religious books, of religious exercises, of association in religious communion, is not lightly escaped. The recurring impress

of inspired and inspiring personalities ; the lives of saintly persons whom we have known ; all the essential nobility and devotion which we have witnessed in them, mould our personalities and constrain the workings of our lives. If they stimulate, yet more do they humble us. And behind us lies all the weight that rightly attaches to the past, the historic exercises of religion, the historic devotion, the historic piety, the great historic prayers, and all the ministries of praise and psalm. And surrounding us are the living philanthropies of to-day, the contagion of holy example, the stimulus of religious association, the great loyalties, the inescapable sense of the presence of suffering, and sorrow, and sin, demanding unity of effort. All these things exercise a control which if informal as to organization is none the less real. It is a control partly internal and partly external.

Within the borders of our own community, control takes the form of a spiritual polity embodied in a system of eldership, which for two centuries has continued almost unchanged. If our Society desires to strengthen the hold which this corporate polity exercises over individual activities, to secure thereby a surer external guidance, it must see well to it that

the influence of the organized body does not degenerate into a fossilized authority, conceiving itself to be the sole custodian of truth. The fountain of truth must be permitted to flow in a perpetual progression, else, as Milton warns us, its waters will sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition.

EXPERIENCE AND CONVICTION.

Moreover the personal experience of Apostles and disciples and holy men, who passed away ages ago, lives with us still, and their testimony is available to bring conviction. It is not necessary for us to see with our eyes what they witnessed in order that we should be convinced of the reality of their convictions, which become evidential for us, so that in a secondary sense they become our convictions too. Let one example—the most vital of all—suffice.

It needs no research to discover, what any one who reads the records with honest eyes can see, that the disciples believed intensely and whole-heartedly in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is the one fundamental topic that dominates the Acts of the Apostles, beside which all other beliefs sink into relative insignificance. It was for

them as great a certainty as that Jesus had walked with them in the flesh. The one qualification required in the claim for election to Apostleship was that he should have been an eye-witness of His resurrection. But here we must, for accuracy, pause on the phrase. So far as we know, no mortal eye witnessed the rising of Jesus out of the tomb. Certainly none of the Apostles did. They went early in the morning to the tomb, and found it empty. That of which the Apostles were convinced, that of which they had no doubt whatever, was the fact of their own personal experience of the continuing presence of Christ with them. They did not spin theories about it to account for it; why should they? There was the joyful fact before them, within their own knowledge:—"We have seen the Lord." They called that fact the resurrection from the dead. That is simple uncritical language. We may—many of us sincerely do—desire to know exactly what did occur; what explanation of facts there is to account for His continuing personal presence after that Easter dawn. In the wisdom of God no such explanation has ever been given; and no living soul has any right to invent one to clear up the mystery. The two facts are:

(1) the empty tomb, (2) the subsequent experiences of His presence as a living and transcendent personality. More than this, we have no warrant to import into the confession "I believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ." It may be inexplicable—but there it is. All speculations as to what He did with His material body, and where His soul was during those hours when His body lay enshrouded in the tomb, are beside the mark. There is no experience behind them.

RECONSTRUCTION.

Before I close I turn to the vexed question of changes of opinion and belief. Under what conditions, by what sanctions is it right to admit changes in the religious beliefs and views in which we have been reared? The question is not an easy one to answer. Certain it is that in no case can we announce any such change without giving pain, or offence, which is worse than pain, to some of those dearest to us, to those to whom we owe in a religious sense a great and unending debt of gratitude, who may be our spiritual fathers or mothers, who so far surpass us in purity of life and nobility of soul that we feel ourselves unworthy even to

touch the hem of their garments. And yet—and yet—we cannot be false to our own convictions. If there is any doctrine or belief in which we have been nurtured, which yet after serious and heart-searching enquiry we find to be for us no longer true, what right have we to pretend that we continue to believe it? To believe without adequate grounds is both weak and dishonest. To feign belief in that of which we are not convinced is a forfeiture of integrity of soul. To simulate belief in that which we no longer believe for fear of paining one of the saints of God is cowardice, if not hypocrisy. Yet there are holy and earnest men who counsel otherwise. The late Dean Vaughan, the saintly author of *The Book and the Life*, advised that when a view has once been arrived at as being true, it should be, as it were, laid on the shelf and never again looked on as an open question. Surely such counsel is false. There are no questions that can be for ever closed. No man, no Church, has any authority to close them so that they shall not be freely examined whenever fresh light arises. Truth is seldom attained at a stride: progress in human enlightenment, particularly in regard to things divine, is only reached gradually by

painful steps, by paths that lead through stages of imperfection, illuminated by twilight glimpses, and transient gleams, toward the more perfect vision. "The best and bravest have struggled from error into truth, they listened to their honest doubts, and tore up their old beliefs by the roots." Remember that many of the time-hallowed beliefs which have come down to us from former generations were but the best that our forefathers were able to perceive, formulated in language which in the course of time has inevitably ceased to mean to us what it meant to them. The intellectual verdict of their day is not the intellectual verdict of ours; truth may compel us to reject it, even though that rejection involves pain and unsettlement. But, remember: while "a man may unsettle the verdict of his intellect, it is at his peril that he tampers with the convictions of his conscience." There are beliefs which, being outworn, must be reverently laid aside. New and more spiritual views must be substituted for the idea of the supposed fulfilment of prophecy; new spiritual analogies must be allowed to replace the artificial "types and anti-types" which, in our childhood, confused our heads and muddled our instincts of right and wrong.

COURAGE AND TRUTH.

Let us then with holy courage have the honesty to confess that truth for us will not include all that our fore-fathers regarded as truth; and that it may include both less and more. Let us see that it be no whit less earnestly and sincerely held. He who seeks truth does not create it; he can only bear witness to it when found. Truth is not to be found by refusing to seek it; nor in the quest must we count the cost. There are many ways of arriving at truth; many views of truth. There are other windows opening on to Heaven than those of the nursery in which we were brought up; and some are wider, and some face toward the dawn.

In thus regarding the oneness of truth we shall also see the promise of fresh truths hereafter to be discovered. The enquirer into divine truth will henceforth need to be provided with the means that have been effective in every branch of research. If he would know the whole truth of God concerning the ultimate great things, life, death, destiny, the trend of the universe, he must learn the truth of man and of nature, for truth is one. And if he frames a scheme of

things, he must leave room in it for the yet unknown truths that are in store.

A discouragement which besets those who have found it thus incumbent upon them to revise any portion of their views of religious truth is the resultant difficulty of fitting the newly acquired truth to the rest of the old. But why this discouragement? Half the difficulties of the theologies, obsolete as well as current, have arisen from the supposed necessity of harmonizing all the salient points into a single self-consistent system. While a man's faith is in the growing stage—and what thinking man can say that for him all questions are closed questions?—there will necessarily be beliefs that stand to some degree isolated, not yet linked up to all his other beliefs; not woven into a consistent body of doctrine. System-mongering has been the besetting sin of all theologians, heterodox as well as orthodox, in all ages. Men have always been under a temptation to trim some of their convictions to make them square with other beliefs. They have attempted to generalize from data all too few and too particular; and in the sequel have warped the truth for the sake of supposed consistency. In a world of imperfect percep-

tions it is bound to result thus to us, if we act as though there were no gaps in our knowledge. But the incompleteness of our spiritual perceptions being once admitted, the difficulty is resolved. That admission constrains us to acquiesce in the co-existence of unrelated and apparently incompatible elements in our faith. We are like men who scan a distant panorama of mountains and woodland through a mist which at times rolls apart here and there, revealing to us partial features, apparently unrelated to one another and seemingly discrepant; yet assuredly parts of a correlated whole. The more distinctly the individual features of these isolated patches appear, the more difficult does it seem to grasp the unseen portions, or fit together the parts we have seen. Any attempt to organize the whole by conjecturing the intermediate parts spoils the scene by substituting arbitary guiding lines.[1] To force the composition mars the truth of the features already seen. That is what theologians have done in straining to fit the various particular truths revealed to or discovered by this or that inspired teacher or prophet, into a logical and

[1] See J. A. Froude's remarks on patching up gaps in history, p. 38 above.

consistent corpus of belief. No man whose convictions arise really in his own bosom is convinced at a stroke of an entire and complex scheme of doctrine. Schemes of doctrine are things elaborated; their historical growth is known; they are, like many of the particular dogmas, compromises. But we are not bound to manufacture one entire self-consistent theology out of our detached convictions; our duty[1] is to act out such truth as has been revealed to us. To hammer out one homogeneous system of theology is a task far beyond us; the immensity of our ignorance precludes any such accomplishment. Admitted that to attempt such a unification were a noble task, yet it is one that would be apt sorely to mislead, and ensnare us into forming a patchwork that could only be in parts a travesty of the yet-unrevealed truths of God. Is it not significant that whereas God has revealed to one and another of His servants, from age to age, a vision of this and that truth, in no age, and to no prophet or teacher, not even through our Greatest Teacher of all, did He reveal a comprehensive and complete

[1] "Each noble inconsistency results from some one fragment of discipleship, some accepted task of sonship." (F. J. A. Hort, *The Way, the Truth, the Life*, p. 168.)

system of theology ? All the theologies, old and new, are patchworks framed by the art and device of man, attempting to unify and reconcile conflicting views of truth. Let us then not be afraid of this reproach when we in simplicity hold fast to the particular truths, the vision of which has been vouchsafed to us. The false pride which will not accept a particular truth unless it can be fitted into a whole scheme of things is sister to the false anxiety which is fostered in us to be true to our principles rather than to make sure that our principles are true. Jesus left no scheme of theology to His disciples; but He bestowed upon them " words of Eternal Life."

Consider what Jesus Christ did not say. He propounded no theories about the redeeming efficacy of His death. He laid down no dogma of the Trinity. He did not talk of the enthusiasm of humanity. He did not speak of the enlightenment by science, the softening influence of art, or the elevation of the masses by education. He was no champion of a new social Utopia, or advocate of well-laid plans for the political or social amelioration of the people. He proposed no general redistribution of wealth, or organization of charitable effort. Those

legislative schemes which we propound as noble ambitions to promote the progress of the race He never mentioned. Our methods for uplifting our fellows were not His methods. He worked on men's hearts from within. His methods were spiritual and interior. He transformed men's lives by renewing a right spirit within them. He lived amongst men as a fellow man, and taught them by His own example the redeeming virtues of self-renunciation and of love unquenchable by death. He bound them by no stronger ties than perfect love to His service. He came into the world that He might bear witness to the truth. He inspired men to search for that truth—the truth which makes them free.