GLEANINGS OF PAST YEARS,

1843–78.

BY THE RIGHT HON.

W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

VOL. III.

HISTORICAL AND SPECULATIVE.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS,
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I.

THE THESES OF ERASTUS

AND THE

SCOTTISH CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT.*

1844.

1. Doctor Lee, the minister of one of the parishes of Edinburgh, has given to the world, in a very convenient form, a new translation of the 'Theses of Erastus' concerning excommunication, and has prefixed to them a short treatise of his own. This he has written apparently with a double view: firstly, that of inducing a more mitigated opinion of the man and of his principles, although he expressly states that it is not his object to defend them;† secondly and chiefly, that of showing that, whether the ill-odour of his name be merited or otherwise, it is unjust to characterise *ad invidiam*, by an epithet derived from it, the Established Church of Scotland. And it is but fair that we should introduce the observations which follow, by an acknowledgment that Dr. Lee has expressed his own sentiments with clearness and ability, and in a temper perfectly unexceptionable.

* Published in the *Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review*, 1844. Dr. Lee's volume appeared in that year, and in Edinburgh. † P. 19.

2. It may indeed be said, by persons having in their view that very singular picture which the present ecclesiastical state of Scotland presents, that asperity would be most inexcusable on the part of those who are in the position of Dr. Lee, with reference to the persons who were lately their masters in the General Assembly, and who are now cast down from their legal vantage ground, and deprived of their former professional emoluments, by their secession from the establishment. This is true; but those who know the great degree of crudity and harshness with which religious controversy is pursued in Scotland,* will still think Dr. Lee entitled to honour for his having set a good example, and his having refused to follow bad ones.

3. There are, however, certain circumstances that tend to irritation, in the view of the case, as between the existing Scottish Establishment and the late Secession, that would naturally be taken by the members of the first-named body. The party who have left it have formally assumed the title of "The Free Church of Scotland"; and they frequently or habitually, if not formally, apply to that religious society, which they have quitted, the almost contemptuous appellation of the "Residuary Establishment." Now amidst the divisions of Christendom it has rarely happened, that titles, in themselves conveying a reproach or slur, have been fastened upon any particular section. Human malevolence finds a sufficient scope in the invidious and oblique application of appellatives good in their first intention. And anything that tends to the introduction of the practice of calling names, and especially of embodying vituperation in popular phrases meant

* [Not so now.—W. E. G., 1878.]

for permanent use, should be discountenanced, as we think, by sober-minded and christian-minded men.

4. But let us examine also the superscription, which the seceding party has assumed for its own use. They are, in the first place, a Church. Well, as it is allowed, by something analogous to the comity of nations,* to each individual among us to call himself a Christian, if he pleases; and, as others are generally content to apply to each man the name he selects for himself, we see no real extension of this licence in a like discretion assumed by bodies of religionists, to term themselves Churches if they think fit. There may come a time when that motley catalogue will be riddled and sifted with some severity. If, however, words are things as well as counters, they are also counters as well as things: and we are content to use the currency we find established in a country, without inquiring into the title by which the ruler, whose image and name it bears, occupies the throne. Let thus much therefore pass. But they are also the *Free* Church. Some may think that this epithet was meant to convey an ugly insinuation against opponents; but it was natural, and as we conceive fair, for a body of persons making a great effort and a magnificent sacrifice, to describe their cause by a somewhat pungent and stirring symbol, and we are not to go out of our way to impute an ill-natured motive. This however is not all. They are the Free

* The Unitarians have been allowed, and perhaps wisely allowed, to appropriate a name which, in the view of the Church, has no relation whatever to their system, as it indicates simply their holding a doctrine which is, as we should say, much more definitely and rigidly held by their opponents. Were it our business to choose a designation for them, we should say, that "Anti-Trinitarian" would be far more just. This case indicates forcibly the extent, to which the principle of comity with reference to names has been carried.

Church of Scotland. Now the episcopal communion of that country, representing as it does the only apostolical succession which belongs to it, is denominated by the most rigid of its writers no more than the Church *in* Scotland. The other form of speech is conventionally allowed to indicate what is national, what is recognised by the nation in its corporate capacity, and therefore what is legal. We might not, however, hold for ourselves that the State is a church-maker as the Earl of Warwick was a kingmaker; and we are not surprised that the Free Church, parting with civil authority upon uneasy terms, should have bestowed on it this farewell buffet. But there is a more serious question, of an ecclesiastical nature, behind, in connection with this title.

5. The seceders of 1843 were, beyond all dispute, a minority of the body which they left.* If we look to the parochial ministers, who alone are legally qualified to elect and sit in the Assembly, we find that they were less than three hundred out of about nine hundred; if we look to officiating ministers of all descriptions, their number rises to between four and five hundred, but then the total from which they are subtracted is between eleven and twelve hundred, and the portion not concurring in their movement must have been seven hundred, more or less. Yet the larger number are, forsooth, the Residuary Establishment, but the smaller number are the Church of Scotland. Doubtless it is open to them to reply, that the majority are wrong and the minority right; and that, as the minority have retained essential principles which the majority have abandoned,

* [In the "Free" Assembly's Pastoral Address of 1845, the seceders of 1843 are declared to be "an undoubted majority of the ministers and elders chosen, according to the laws of the Church." The Free ministers did not all depart at once.—W. E. G., 1878.]

the majority have in virtue and effect abdicated, and their opponents are the true and genuine corporation. But this is the universal and comprehensive apology of disorganisation in every form: it is a principle that goes to the utter destruction of every church, every legislature, every association of human beings in the world; under its cover every discontented fraction of a body may renounce it, and having renounced it, may claim its prerogatives. And there is a law of retribution applicable to such processes: for again, and in its turn, every fraction of that fraction may claim and exercise the privilege which the fraction of the first order put in force against the integer: and so in never-ending series, until we arrive at the unit, and there are as many "Churches of Scotland" as individuals professing Presbyterianism in it.

6. Most of all is it singular, that this extraordinary assumption should have occurred in a country, where the parity of all ministers is a fundamental principle. For if one doctor of the High Church party be worth two or three, or even only one and a half doctors of the Moderate party,* is it not clear that this parity as an engine of government means not what it seems to mean, and becomes merely an instrument for pulling down a definite and limited power in order to leave room for an indefinite and unofficial and irresponsible power in its stead? But in fact the lessons of the past are returning upon us. Two hundred years ago, within this same Kirk of Scotland, in the days of the Resolutioners and Protesters, the latter, being a minority, protested, as we find, against the General

* We use the well-known phraseology, that distinguished those who have seceded from those who remain so long as both were comprehended within the Establishment.

Assembly of their own Kirk, on the ground that, "since all Protestants rejected the pretence of infallibility, the major part of the Church might fall into errors, in which case the lesser number could not be bound to submit to them." And the answer was, that "this was the destroying of presbytery, if the lesser number did not submit to the greater; it was a sort of prelacy if it was pretended that votes ought rather to be weighed than counted: parity was the essence of their constitution: and in this all people saw they had clearly the better of the argument."* Of course, no reasonable objection can be taken to the firmest assertion by the free seceders of their possessing the genuine titles of the Presbyterian Kirk: but it is a rude measure to embody that pretension in a formal appellation, in the teeth of the spirit at least of public law. No doubt the Romanists of England consider themselves to possess exclusively the apostolical prerogatives of the Church; but they do not take upon themselves to require to be called by others, that which nevertheless they believe themselves to be.

While this claim to continue the identity of the true Scottish Kirk in their own body, is one of the principal weapons used against the national establishment by its antagonists, another is to be found in the constantly reiterated charge of Erastianism. It is by way of defence against assaults of this latter kind, that Dr. Lee has republished the Theses of Erastus, and his own view of them.

7. The main propositions of Erastus, as they are represented by Dr. Lee in his Preface, and as they may be gathered from the Theses, are these:—

* Burnet's 'Own Time,' B. I.

(1). The minor excommunication, or exclusion from sacraments, is justly applicable to the ignorant, to heretics, and to apostates; but not to those of evil life.

(2). All that is commonly termed immorality ought to be punished by the civil magistrate, provided he be a Christian.

(3). As the Christian sacraments are intrinsically the same with their Jewish forerunners, admission to them should be similarly regulated; but persons were not excluded under the Mosaic law for immorality. They were excluded for uncleanness: that however was not an act but a state, and not moral but ceremonial.

(4). There is no authority for excommunication from the precepts or practice of the New Testament.

(5). The Jewish constitution is the proper model of a Christian state.

"In the whole treatise," says Dr. Lee,* "there is not one word of those questions which have distracted the Church of Scotland of late years; nor is it easy to say which of the two parties, who opposed each other in that Church, had less sympathy with the peculiar opinions of the learned and acute Heidelberg doctor. It is true, one of these parties charged the other habitually with Erastianism, which charge was as habitually denied, neither stopping to ask what Erastianism truly was: but each having an idea of its own regarding the thing, and both agreeing in holding that, whatever it might be, Erastianism was at least some very foul and dangerous heresy."

And further—

"So that Erastianism is a controversy, not between those who hold lower and those who maintain higher notions of ecclesiastical power in relation to the state or civil authority, but rather between those who entertain different views regarding the terms of admission to the sacraments."†

* P. xxx. † P. xxxii.

8. In this view of Erastianism the Scottish Establishment, as the Doctor argues, is not a whit more Erastian than her rival, which he denominates, very inoffensively, "The Protesting Church."*

He admits, however, that the views of Erastus concerning the church power of the civil magistrate in this particular case, of admission to the sacraments or of the punishment of immorality, may appear to involve the general principle known as Erastianism; and that many expressions of Erastus *seem* to affirm that doctrine without qualification.

He observes, that Erastus binds the civil magistrate to follow the Word of God in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, and therefore that he holds, instead of denying, the headship of Christ: and, consequently, that the Establishment of Scotland, if it be proved to agree with Erastus, is thereby proved in like manner not to deny but, on the contrary, to hold it. And as Erastus likewise maintains that the Jewish constitution should be taken for a model, and that the excellence of a Christian system in church matters should be measured by its approximation to it, Dr. Lee thinks that he is not chargeable with leaving to the magistrate an undefined and capricious discretion.

Finally, he considers that if the ordinary interpretation of the language of Erastus be the correct, as it is the obvious, one, then to affirm that the magistrate holds the same relation to religious as to civil affairs, is the peculiarity or error† of his doctrine.

9. This doctrine, it appears to Dr. Lee, did not excite any great alarm among the reformers generally at the time of its promulgation,‡ although the author in his own

* P. xlii. † P. xlvii. ‡ P. l.

Preface declares that the magistrate had tried * "to wring the 'Theses' out of the hands of the students," and that the authorities of the university endeavoured to silence him as an intruder into the province of theology. And † a person whom he considered to be one of his dearest friends, took the book from him "loathingly," and would not read it. Nay, Dr. Lee himself says, in the earlier part of his Preface,‡ "It was not till the year 1589, six years after the death of its author, that the book was published. The indignation which the opinions maintained in it had occasioned, seems to have rendered the publication dangerous, as both the printer's name and the place are suppressed on the title page of the original edition, and fictitious names substituted."

10. Dr. Lee, however, considers that the reformers, except those of Geneva, hold sentiments akin to those of Erastus. Among these he includes "many of the greatest English divines."§ He considers that their idea of the union of Church and State ‖ was that of a single subject contemplated in two aspects or relations, and this he conceives to be the relation of the monarch of England to its Church. He then travels into a most dubious and slippery argument on the subject of ecclesiastical injunctions, intimating, though not declaring an opinion, that, in all questions not of the class termed indifferent, the individual is to be the judge between conflicting commands of the Church and the State; for, he says, "if the former prescribe one doctrine and the latter another, and if he be satisfied that the command of the latter is from God and the former not, it is his duty to obey the latter and to

* P. 10. † P. 8. ‡ P. xvii.
§ P. liii. ‖ P. liv.

reject the former." * But we apprehend that this author by no means clears up the matter in debate between the spiritual and the civil powers by making the individual the final arbiter between them. The whole question at issue is, which of the two powers shall have authority to lay down the law for individuals; and neither the one nor the other will thank Dr. Lee for his discovery that the private person is to settle the matter by following whichever he thinks fit.

11. It appears to us that Doctor Lee has taken much pains in vain, if he expects to convince the world, either by his arguments, or by the perusal of the writings of Erastus, that the idea hitherto commonly received of his opinions has been an erroneous one. He evidently sets out with a desire to satisfy his reader and himself, that the judgment of Erastus is given only on a by-point, and not on the subject of church power at large. But he is too candid to accomplish his own wish, and he breaks down in the effort, for he admits, and it is indeed very plain, that Erastus taught that one and the same moving power governed and prompted, of right, both the State and the Church; and that the diversities of administration, in the one by chancellors and chamberlains and secretaries, in the other by bishops or presbyteries, as the case might be, belonged merely to that general principle of the division of labour, which distributes for convenience into many separate employments the common processes of industry. If so, the world has been right, and not wrong, in describing that system, which absorbs church power into state power, by the name of Erastianism. It may be true that many use the phrase as they use the phrases of

* P. lvii.

Toryism and Whiggism, without inquiring whether there is a precise conformity between the views of those political schools respectively and the Irish freebooters, or the Scottish drivers of corn-carts, who said "whiggam" to their horses. But, although perhaps without knowing it, they are, as it turns out, accurate enough.

12. We differ, therefore, very widely from Dr. Lee in his opinion, that Erastianism is a controversy not between different theories of ecclesiastical power, but between different theories of the qualifications requisite for access to the holy sacraments. It is true that the occasion of the promulgation of the system was the question, whether immorality ought to disqualify for such access: but that question is determined by principles cutting very deep, and of very broad and comprehensive application. Erastus says it should not disqualify: but why? Mainly because, 1st, he finds no authority for it in his model system,—the theocracy of the Old Testament, wherein, as he thinks, the whole supreme ecclesiastical power lay with the same person who was also the civil ruler; and because, 2ndly, he likewise thinks, that the civil ruler himself may appropriately supply the place of repulsion from sacraments by the infliction of positive penalties for sin.

13. It can scarcely be necessary to argue at any length, that in giving to the magistrate the whole cognisance of moral offences, Erastus is making over that which (in its proper form) most strictly appertains to the Church. The substance of Christianity is, after all, comprehended in the title of a book of Scougall's; it is 'The Life of God in the Soul of Man': and dogma, as apart from this, is its outwork and its fence, or else its intellectual expression. While erroneous and heretical tenets belong to the latter province, moral offences, the "works of the flesh" (in the

largest sense), are the antagonists to be encountered in the former; and as *they* are ultimately at the root and source of all heresy, to leave to the Church a controul over opinion, and to deny a controul over life, would be dooming her for ever to be confined to cleansing the outside of the cup and of the platter, and to leave it inwardly full of all uncleanness. Let it once be established and avowed as a formal principle, that the Church is to take no account of individual conduct, but simply to proclaim in the abstract what is true and right, and in effect nothing will remain worthy either of being conceded or of being refused by her to the State. So that even if Erastus had confined himself strictly to the discussion on the sacraments, we should have found the whole substance of what is charged on him to be his due.

14. But, in his Preface, Erastus states more explicitly that to which in the 'Theses' he seems more timidly to approximate:—

"It is necessary that that Church is most worthily and wisely ordered, which cometh nearest to the constitution of the Jewish Church. But in this, matters were so ordered by God, that we find not anywhere two diverse judicatories concerning manners, the one politic, and the other ecclesiastic. What, then, hindereth that the Church now also, on whom the most merciful God hath bestowed a Christian magistrate, should be less content with *one government?*"*

And this notion is more formally developed in a passage which Dr. Lee quotes in a note from the *Confirmatio Thesium*, and which closes with these very intelligible words—

"Eodem modo non est alius magistratus qui res profanas curat, ab eo qui res scholasticas vel sacras disponit. Res quidem inter se differunt, at non differt similiter harum dispensatio et moderatio."†

* P. iv. † P. xlviii.

15. The ecclesiastical controversies of Scotland have always, from the time of the Reformation, been carried on with a peculiar obstinacy and fury; but at the same time with a sincerity of purpose that has made them respectable in themselves, and, on account of their rigid and precise development of the principles or notions involved in them, interesting to the rest of the world. The very last scene of the drama is one of the most remarkable. The Establishment of that country has been abandoned by the men who claim exclusively to inherit the spirit and views of its founders, because they hold to these positions as fundamental in the constitution of a Church: first, that consent, or at the least the absence of dissent on the part of a congregation, is essential to the formation of the pastoral relation; and secondly, that the sentences of ecclesiastical judicatories in matters held by themselves to be of their own proper cognisance, are binding, and must be maintained against the civil power.

16. On the other hand, those who remain in the Scottish Establishment maintain that, whatever scope and latitude be allowed for objections to a presentee by the people, and however unrestricted be the choice of the presbytery in assigning reasons for his disallowance, yet no simple act of volition on the part either of the one or the other, shall be allowed to defeat the privilege of the patron, and to annul the civil right which accrues to the person in whose favour that privilege of nomination has been exercised. In short, the one party claimed a power of black-balling for the flock; the other refused it, but were willing to concede everything short of it. Thus the issue is reduced to a very fine, we do not therefore say, to an unreal or fanciful one. Under the Presbyterian system, presentation is generally exercised in favour of licentiates; and their

ordination, or rather admission into the ministry, must take place after presentation and before the benefice can be acquired. By what authority, it may be asked, do they discharge ministerial functions when all is completed? A question not easy to answer. But the Non-intrusionists would say that the real authority lies with those whose simple act of will must, unless causes of objection can be substantiated, take effect in their appointment—that is to say with the patron, who represents the principle of civil power, or the State. He, that is bound to render reasons for his act, is not supreme.

17. We are not, however, about to enter into the question, whether the Church Establishment of Scotland at present conforms to the doctrine of Erastus; but we think Dr. Lee's plea is irrelevant when he contends that, because Erastus has not written upon the ordination or admission of ministers, *therefore* his system cannot be involved in the controversy. Erastus teaches that there is but one governing power. If, then, it were true that the Kirk of Scotland allowed the supremacy of the State in the admission of ministers, that surely would be essential and pure Erastianism. And this without entering into the second of the two controverted questions, namely, whether the Kirk, as it is now constituted, maintains at all a judicial power distinct from that of the State. Before the secession, and when the party now ejected were the majority of the General Assembly, that body deposed the members of the Presbytery of Strathbogie, in Aberdeenshire, for acting upon the law of the land in opposition to the law of the kirk. The sentence of deposition was declared null by the Court of Session; it was disregarded and disobeyed by the party in the Assembly, who were then a minority and are now ascendant; and it was reversed immediately after the

secession had taken place. It is, we think, to be wished that Dr. Lee, in repelling the charge of Erastianism, had acquainted us what are the principles of the judicial power of the Church, as they are now held in the Scottish Establishment.

18. He declares, indeed,* that ecclesiastical jurisdiction has an existence and a province apart from that which is civil; but he does not state its limits or its nature. And he admits that—

"Some few acts, and these too done in a time of great excitement and keen controversy, and in the midst of difficulty and perplexity, may, by the ingenuity of hostile criticism, be construed into a practical acknowledgment of something like the doctrine held by Erastus, or by some one else, whom some other person, knowing little of the matter, called an Erastian."

A liberal, and even a dangerous admission. But at all events, it seems to us most clear, in opposition to Dr. Lee, both that the principles of Erastus are what they have commonly been supposed, and likewise that they are not irrelevant to the matters lately at issue in Scotland. And we apprehend the effect of the publication now before us, although intended to impair that conviction, will be to confirm it.

19. It is ominous, with respect to the future fortunes of the Scottish Establishment, that Dr. Lee, who represents —and as we should think favourably represents—the spirit of that important body, seems to entertain a lurking unavowed design of recommending Erastus and his principles to favour. For example, he says,† "Erastus was not an atheist, nor even an infidel; he was neither an open

* P. lix. † P. xv.

enemy of the gospel, nor the most flagitious of mortals, but a man, whom good and great men pronounced great and good."

It is true that good and great men may be mistaken; and Dr. Lee does not absolutely countersign their testimonial; but he indicates a desire, which should attract the more notice because the mode, in which the expression of it is *subintroduced*, seems to denote a repression of his own full meaning in deference to the public opinion of Scotland. When he speaks of "the real peculiarity, *or heresy if you will*, which has rendered Erastus famous,"* it is evident which of the two appellations he himself prefers. Again, we find he mentions "*the peculiarity or error* in the doctrine of Erastus"; † and at length he summons up his courage to denounce "the virulence of those little venomous creatures, who, in his own age, ventured to malign the *illustrious* physician;"‡ so that one would say, whatever be the case with the Scottish Establishment, there are grave suspicions of Dr. Lee. For, as we have never heard that the medical prescriptions of Erastus were particularly good, we must presume that his theology is that which has won for him this decisive epithet.

20. But before quitting this matter, we must in fairness observe, that, of the charges of Erastianism which may be made against the Established Church of Scotland, perhaps the most formidable is one which applies with equal force to the Free or Protesting Church; for it is founded upon the language of the Westminster Confession, the symbol of Christian belief in use among both alike. We pass over another very curious question concerning the extraordinary manner in which the Assembly, that composed

* P. xxxvii. † P. xlvii. ‡ P. li.

that Confession, was appointed and controlled by the Parliament; and simply call attention to the language in which the function of the civil magistrate, with regard to religion, is declared in the third clause of the twenty-third chapter.

"The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed: for the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God."

21. It is quite true that there is also a declaration in the twenty-fifth chapter, that—

"There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."

And in the thirtieth chapter, of "Church Censures" it is expressly declared that—

"The Lord Jesus, as king and head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate."

But no other function of this "distinct" government is set forth than that in relation to censures. The duties of synods, in which, according to the Presbyterian system, laymen have votes of equal weight with ministers, are explained in the thirty-first chapter, and they are—

(1). Ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience.

(2). To set down rules and directions for the better

ordering of the public worship of God and government of his church:

(3). To receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same:

The right of meeting in synod without the authority of the prince, is confined to the case in which he is an "open enemy of the Church."

22. Now compare these somewhat guarded and meagre prerogatives with those accorded to the civil magistrate. They are to make provision—

(1). To preserve unity and peace in the Church:

(2). To keep the truth of God pure and entire:

(3). To suppress all blasphemies and heresies:

(4). To prevent or reform all corruptions and abuses in worship or discipline:

(5). That all the ordinances of God be duly settled, administered, and observed:

he is also

(6). To call synods and attend them:

and finally he is

(7). *To provide that everything done in them be according to the mind of God.*

23. It has been frequently urged against the Church of England that she has an Erastian tinge; but any one who reads the Oath of supremacy together with the thirty-seventh Article of that Church, will be surprised at their jejuneness, in comparison with the extraordinary document which we have quoted, and which would afford Erastus, we suspect, a richer banquet, if he were alive to enjoy it, than is commonly to be met with in the pastures of Christendom. To maintain order indeed, and to suppress blasphemy and heresy, are offices having some intelligible relation to the civil power. So the power of

convoking synods is an ancient and recognised prerogative. Nor is it difficult to understand that the essential conditions of civil society may require an universal control, or veto, on the part of the State over the proceedings of an ally so formidable as a national church; but, in the Westminster Confession, not only controlling, but if words have any meaning, moving and actuating power is assigned to the magistrate in the largest terms; the custody of the truth, the regulation of ordinances, that is to say, of sacraments, together with other particulars of worship and discipline, are his; and, as if to plant his power in the very centre and seat of life, it is to be his duty to provide that all which a synod does is not only compatible with the exigencies of civil society, but "according to the mind of God!" What else, besides the instrumental and the practical parts of their function, has constituted the duty of the Apostles and of their successors in the ministry from their time to our own? Oh! what a day of triumph for the subtle tacticians of the long parliament, for the Erastian lawyers, Selden and Whitlocke, when they found that they had thus overreached even the long-headed children of the North, and laid the yoke upon the neck of those who had but just before pushed so far the doctrine of the freedom of the Church, as to claim that their Protestant pulpits should be endowed with an unlimited privilege of speech, and that no matter uttered in them should be subjected to the cognisance of the civil power.

24. In 1643, the Scottish Presbyterians obtained the accession of the Parliamentarians of England to their league and covenant. In 1650, they suffered the ignominious defeat of Dunbar: in 1651, they were governed by English commissioners, fortresses were built, and an

army of eighteen thousand English soldiers quartered upon the country;* the officers of that army, whom they had denounced as sectaries (with respect to whom they had already declared in 1647, "yea, we cannot but look on the dangers of the true reformed religion in this island as greater now than before"), occupied their pulpits, and out-preached their ministers. Finally, in 1652, the Assembly itself was extinguished.

25. The comparison, which the Westminster Confession suggests, of its own exaggerated doctrine with that of the Anglican articles respecting the supremacy, leads naturally to some remarks upon the opinion of Dr. Lee, that among the advocates of Erastianism are to be counted "many of the greatest English divines, at the Reformation and after it." Dr. Lee has probably intended this more in the way of honour than of aspersion: but is it true? Which of the greatest English divines, either at the Reformation or after it, held the opinion of Erastus, which formed the foundation of an Erastian system,—that church power was no other than one particular department of state power? Archbishop Cranmer is the man upon whom, probably, with the nearest approach to truth, this doctrine could be fixed: but, if applied to him, it must refer only to a particular portion of his life, namely under the reign of Henry VIII.; and there is ample evidence that in his later and more mature years, he clearly held the doctrine of the succession, which is in itself an emphatic contradiction of Erastus. But it is more material to observe, that even if Cranmer was led, at a period when the tide ran so high against the papal and in favour of the regal supremacy, to the temporary adoption of so extrava-

* Guthrie's 'Hist. of Scotland,' vol. x. p. 53.

gant a view, yet it remained an individual opinion; and was never adopted even among the violent assumptions of that reign and time, as the standard of public policy. A remarkable proof of this is to be found even in those episcopal Commissions which were taken out by Cranmer himself, by Gardiner and Bonner, and the Bishops in general, under Henry VIII., by which their jurisdiction was declared to flow from the crown; because express words were inserted in them to recognise a distinct and separate power in them, founded upon Holy Scripture.

26. Perhaps Dr. Lee, when he penned the sentence to which reference has been made, had Hooker in his mind. The doctrine of that great writer was, that in the circumstances of England, the Church and the Commonwealth were "personally one society," which society was termed a Commonwealth as living under secular law, and a Church as living under the spiritual law of Christ. Just so, a state and a chess club would be personally one society,* if all the members of the one were members of the other. That is to say, the aggregation of persons is the same in both cases; but the form or structure into which they are combined, its powers and attributes, may be entirely distinct and independent. But in point of fact, the best proof that Hooker was a believer in church power, and therefore that Dr. Lee's assertion can derive no support from his venerable name, is his view of the episcopal office.† "It was," says he, "ordained of God." ‡ "The first bishops in the Church of Christ were his blessed Apostles." "The Apostles were the first which had such authority, and all others who have it after them in orderly sort are their lawful successors . . . . their successors, if

* Eccl. Pol. B. VIII. 1. † VII. 1. ‡ VII. 4.

not in the largeness, surely in the kind of that episcopal function." Nor was this a succession merely by name and title, it was by inheriting a certain power. "For to succeed them is, after them, to have the episcopal kind of power which was first given to them."* Hooker indeed may have held the supremacy more strongly than most of our divines; but he held it to consist in certain defined and limited prerogatives;† and no person we think can desire a more emphatic test of anti-Erastianism, than the having defined episcopal power to be the *same power in kind, which was exercised by the blessed Apostles.*

27. But what shall we say of Erastus himself and of his system? Let no man think that the question has now, in the nineteenth century, become one of merely antiquarian speculation. To say nothing of a spirit akin to his, which is apt to prevail in some important classes of men, his doctrine in its extreme breadth has been revived by systematic writers and by men of eminence in our own day. The late Dr. Arnold, a man deserving on many grounds of very high praise, was avowedly Erastian, and considered the appointments to offices in the Church to correspond essentially with those to civil office. Rothe, a learned and philosophic German, has in a formal treatise argued that the Church is destined, according to the law of nature and of providence, to be absorbed in the State.‡ And these are men who think and reason, not only with honesty and power, but with pious intention. Dr. Arnold, whom as a countryman we may assume to be more familiarly known, was a man whose whole study was to elevate the tone of common life to a Christian standard. He sought

* Eccl. Pol. B. VII. 4. † VIII. 1.

‡ See Rothe's 'Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche,' vol. i. part i.

as it were for an universal consecration of life. A part of this notion was the consecration of the State, not by contact with the Church, as Burke would have had it, but by a sort of fusion, in which the former would alone have retained a substantive existence, although one which, as he supposed, would be effectually coloured and imbued with sanctity by the latter.

28. If we scruple to call Erastianism *simpliciter* by the name of heresy, it will not be because we deem the term "peculiarity" a juster, or in any sense an adequate or proper description; but because we feel that that word "heresy" is an awful brand for the hand of one man to attach to the convictions of another: and that its use should be confined as far as possible to cases where the matter has been brought to judicial issue by competent ecclesiastical authority; and where, consequently, it does not seem to involve either individual presumption or uncharitableness. But we can scarcely doubt that Erastianism contains the seeds of a formal heresy; and that it is, even in its immature development, a serious and very threatening error, on no account to be dallied with or treated as of trifling importance. If the mission of the twelve, so solemnly conveyed by our Lord, and so authentically sealed by Him with the promise of perpetuity, is to be struck out of the scheme of His Gospel, His holy sacraments will not long survive (except as mere shows) that ministry to whose hands they were committed; and the loss of the true doctrine concerning them will naturally in its turn be followed by a general corruption and destruction of true Christian belief concerning the divine grace, of which they were appointed to be the especial channels and depositories.

29. It is not our part, nor our desire, to bestow censure

on a man who, for all we know, may have been the victim of unavoidable delusions, and who shows the signs of a candid and zealous inquirer after truth. But, for our own security and instruction, it is well to endeavour both to trace the origin and to mark the tendencies, of the opinions with which his name is associated.

When the continental Reformers rejected the papal supremacy, and when, whether blamably or otherwise, they broke the chain of the episcopal succession, they still maintained and taught a high sacramental doctrine. The Confession of Augsburg would, we think, be most offensive to an earnest-minded Presbyterian or even Lutheran of the present day, from the strength of its tone with reference to the eucharist, to baptism, and to absolution. So also Calvin taught a doctrine of the sacraments, which is at least very far above that of the continental Protestants in general; and the Scottish Confession of 1560 did "utterly damn" those who regarded them as being only signs. In fact, the idea of an inherent power and sanctity, of a special gift and life in the sacraments, has become weaker and weaker in numerous parts of the Protestant world, from one generation to another; and many honest persons now treat the inculcation of it by the ministers of a Reformed Church, with that indignation which the treachery they suppose it to imply would demand.

30. An invisible but an indissoluble connection will also in the long run, we believe, be found to subsist between the tenets of the ministerial succession and of sacramental grace. The first will never be found without the second; the second will not long survive the extinction of the first. But again, ministerial succession is also, we apprehend, the only rational foundation of the doctrine of church power. For unless Church power came by a definite intel-

ligible charge, capable of delivery from man to man, how did it come? And if such power was not transmitted by our Lord through the Apostles, and those who were appointed to succeed them, what can be more natural,* than that we should look for the source and spring of ecclesiastical government to that next divinest symbol upon earth, the prerogative of Kings, or the power, in whatever form, by which civil and social order are sustained?

31. Erastus found himself in circumstances, where Church power was indeed still held more or less as a tenet, but where it had been severed from its trunk; from the Episcopate, through which it had been actually and historically derived to the men of his generation. But State power was a reality, and in its own sense a divine and sacred reality. Who can severely blame the man that preferred it to the other alternative, which he may have deemed to be, as it has since too sadly proved itself, a mere phantom and imitation of true ecclesiastical authority? His mind urged him forward towards reducing his own views to method and consistency, at a rate more rapid than happened to his contemporaries in general. Who is to judge between the man that is consistent in developing error, and the man whose inconsistency preserves to him fragments of truth, which by more of logical precision and boldness he would lose?

32. In the second Thesis, he declares that there is a twofold society of believers, one form of which is internal, while the other is visible and political. Now it seems

* [This apologetic argument, I think, will not hold. It would have been more natural, and more Christian, to trace the transmission of Church power in the body of believers at large, than to derive it from the State.—W. E. G., 1878.]

plain from other parts of the work, that Erastus differed from his contemporaries in general in his view of the nature of the privileges attaching to membership in the visible Church. Faith *only*, according to him, unites us with the internal and spiritual society; baptism simply with that which is visible.* The sacraments are incitements to piety.† The sacraments of the Old Testament were "in substance" the same as ours.‡ Ours differ from the sacraments of the old dispensation merely in the signs, and in their being retrospective.§ Again, he enumerates the ends of the Lord's Supper,‖ none of them importing that anything of a sacred nature is intrinsic to that most sacred rite. But if Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Scotland, with Protestant France and Dissenting England were polled, how many voices would now dissent from Erastus in the fundamental article of his doctrine on the sacraments, namely, that they convey privileges which are visible, but not those which are spiritual and internal? How many are there who would refuse to denounce as Popish, the opposite doctrine of an inward and spiritual grace, forming a *part* of a Christian sacrament?

33. Erastus, then, was in advance, as the phrase is, of his age: he perceived more clearly than his contemporaries, in its meaning and remoter effects, the unhinging of that ancient system, which firmly compacted and riveted together the doctrines of the succession by the Episcopate, of the conveyance of grace by the Sacraments, and of the real spiritual power of the Church. To those who had lost hold of the first, and were contented with that loss, the second and the third were unmeaning, and grew even

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* Thesis IV. † Thesis XI. ‡ Thesis XXIV.
§ Thesis XXXII. ‖ Thesis XXXVII.

to be offensive anomalies: he felt the jar more rapidly and more acutely than others, and he realised for them in the sixteenth century, conclusions, to which they have been slowly approximating through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth. One of these, now fully elaborated and enthroned in what some would call, as if by a cruel mockery, the Protestant religion, is that Sacraments are signs, and signs only. The other, not yet having universal, or even perhaps general acceptance in a definite shape, but growing more and more mature, teaches that all Church power is the fiction of ambitious priests, and the yoke of fools and dreamers.

34. Erastus taught that sin was not a just cause of exclusion from communion. On the principles of the Bible, which made repentance a preliminary to Baptism, he was wrong; for the bearing of his argument would have been this; Sacraments are irritaments of faith, therefore baptise those who have it not, in order that they may be aroused to conceive it.* But was he not right on his own principle, with regard to Baptism? and is not that principle the root and heart of that which some call Protestantism and reformed religion? If it be the proper office, nay, as some say, the sole office, of Sacraments to remind, to exhort, to persuade, to provoke men to religion; if they be, in fact, the Word in another form, why should the immoral man be excluded from them more than he is excluded from sermons and exhortations? His need of the one, as well as of the other, is not only indisputable, but special.

35. Erastus† writes thus:—

"The ends, for which the Lord's Supper was instituted, are these:

* *See* Thesis LXVI. † Thesis XXXVII.

—that we should solemnly commemorate the Lord's death, and publicly render him thanks for our redemption; that we should be reminded, and by our presence should testify, that we have no food or drink that can give life, but Christ crucified, and his blood shed for us; that we should declare we are penitent for our past life; that we are thinking of a better; that we embrace the Christian doctrine; that we are members of Christ; that we belong to his Church, in which we should desire piously and purely to live henceforth, and to die.'

Of course these ends would not imply that those, the hardness of whose impenitence remains entire, ought *to come* to the sacraments; but Erastus taught that such persons would not come; that the act of coming would betoken a desire; that there should be no rejection except self-rejection; and, as it were, that the first emotion of a right tendency rendered men proper subjects of the sacraments, as well and as much as of the word of exhortation. And here he follows up his purpose with an argument very formidable to his opponents:*

"I ask are the sacraments superior in authority or in dignity to the Word? Are they more useful or necessary? . . . Why then do we go about to exclude nobody from the Word, while from the sacraments, especially the Lord's table, we would exclude some, and that contrary to, or at least without, the express command of God?"

And again, in the concluding passage of the work:—

"It may happen that some spark may be kindled by the public preaching, which it may be not at all useless, but rather most beneficial, to cherish by every means not inconsistent with piety. And tell me, I pray how it can be otherwise than absurd, and therefore impious, to debar from a solemn thanksgiving and commemoration of the death of the Lord, a person who declares that he feels his heart prompts him so to do?"†

* Thesis XXXVIII. † Thesis LXXV.

36. Now, according to the religious system which has been called ultra-Protestantism, not only are the sacraments not superior, but they are much inferior in authority and in dignity to the Word: just as signs, gestures, copes and surplices, candlesticks and altar-cloths, sacred vessels and music, are undoubtedly inferior in dignity and authority to the Word. For sacraments, like these, are in that theory purely symbolical acts or things, and belong to a class essentially lower than that of direct appeals to the rational faculties of man. Why then should they be guarded with greater jealousy?

37. It may be said the sacraments are intended to testify our Christianity. Doubtless they are meant to serve the purpose, which is served by formulas of admission, and by renewals of the same; but it might be urged that the denomination of badges is only applicable to them in a restricted sense; that we may easily overstate their witnessing force, because they are scarcely witnesses to the world, and because the holy communion, according to the system now before us, is scarcely a badge or witness at all, though it may be a memento to the individual. Nay, in Scotland, for instance, the observance of the Lord's day is, in this sense, a far greater and more palpable and effective sacrament. But if the holy eucharist is to be regarded as a witness, why should it not be a witness to nascent, as well as to mature, desire? If it was intended to attest, much more was it intended to promote and ripen what it attested. And Erastus shows that the *onus* of proof clearly lies with the rejectors; with those who would withhold certain means of improvement, certain provocatives to holiness, from parties desirous to make use of them.

38. It is not hard to perceive that those, who think

there is an essential power and gift of grace in the Christian sacraments, may well feel it a very solemn obligation to keep them from profanation, and to endeavour to ascertain that all due pre-requisites exist in those who are to receive them. But what pre-requisite, beyond disposition in its crudest and weakest form, can be necessary in order to justify the use of a sign? The Church, indeed, can consistently refuse to admit to the familiar feast of the Lord those, who have not yet put on the wedding garment: but the persons of whom we speak deny His peculiar presence in the holy eucharist, and treat the inscrutable contact with Him which it affords, as a dream; so it would seem that when they repel, they are as it were forbidding men to prostrate themselves even at His chariot wheels, and to worship Him even as a sun from afar. So thought Erastus. And he cried, instead of forbidding, invite: by exclusion, you are marring and hindering your own work, you should rather urge them and compel them to come in. So also he asserted in another form the connection between restraint of admission to sacraments, and the dogma of grace in them; for he makes it a complaint that in consequence of the practice of repulsion "people began to ascribe salvation to the sacraments."* Conversely those who deny their inherent efficacy, as he argued, should give the freest access to them, and turn their utility as instruments to the largest account. Can his argument easily be impeached? We renounce the function of censuring him for ourselves; and it seems hard that it should be exercised by those who by separating the sacraments from their lawful administrators, have also emptied them of their in-dwelling spiritual

* Thesis LXXII.

grace, and have prepared and laid down the road which, trodden by Erastus with bolder step than theirs, has led him to a more advanced conclusion, and a riper development of error.

39. So much for admission to sacraments. Let us now briefly inquire whether the same apologies may not be offered on behalf of the physician of Heidelberg (we beg Dr. Lee's pardon for stumbling a little at his epithet, and thinking its omission on the whole the safer course), with respect to the kindred question of church power.

If any person at the present day were to teach, that sin, as contra-distinguished from crime, should be punished, not by exclusion from Sacraments and holy rites, and by excommunication, but by the civil magistrate, we should think it probable that he meant to secure its impunity, and confer on it a sort of social title to exempt it from rebuke or question; but should feel no doubt whatever, that such must be the result of the establishment and acceptance of his position. This idea we cannot but regard as a *reductio ad absurdum*, or something near it, of his sentence against repulsion from Sacraments. There may be a stage of the infancy of society, in which the magistrate, being both king and priest, may wield both swords, as the father of a family does, in a qualified sense, at all periods: but the entire impossibility of any such method of retribution in modern Christendom is so evident, its demonstration stands out in such strong relief from the public law of every civilised country, that argument would be wasted upon it. Erastians of the present day would probably repudiate it as much as their opponents; and, while approving of the fundamental principle of their chief, would shrink from vindicating the consistency of his system in the manner he has chosen, and would contend

that any punishment for sin, as such, which it is desirable to administer by human hands, should take the form of purely spiritual censure or privation. But it by no means follows that the notion was as visionary in the mind, or in the age, of Erastus himself: he contemplated, it is plain, a very stern reality. Perhaps the method of punishment by the magistrate was recommended to him by the very circumstance that he thought it promised to be more stringent and effective than that of ecclesiastical judgments. Let us, at any rate, listen to his language:

"Wherefore it would follow, that profligate persons should not be excluded from the Lord's Supper, but executed; a consequence which *I should admit without difficulty, and which I even desire;* for nothing do I more wish, than that a most vigorous discipline of manners should be maintained in the Christian Church: only let it be that which God has appointed, not that which men have devised." *

40. He wished, therefore, in the first place, with regard to the control of evil livers, not to relax the reins but to tighten them; in the second place, not to lower the sanction under which misconduct was restrained, but to raise it to a higher standard; to reject a title of human invention, and to recur to a divine appointment. He had before him the State, undoubtedly divine; he had also before him a model of Church power exercised by the State, which likewise was undoubtedly divine, though not divinely ordained to the permanence he would have given it. He had not before him the Episcopate to which the delivery of spiritual power, according to the sense of the Church, belongs; but he saw Presbyters professing to transmit that which they had received no charge to trans-

* Thesis XVII.

mit, and laymen pretending to give to others that which they had never received even for themselves. The question may arise whether he did not make the most logical choice, which the materials at his command would allow? Yet we must still alter the phrase of Dr. Lee, and call Erastus not the illustrious, but the unfortunate physician.

41. It was not only, however, the breach in the succession of the ministry, which might have led his thoughts in that direction. Calvin, to a certain extent, Zuinglius and others to a much greater degree, had lowered the idea of the Christian sacraments: Erastus simply outstripped them in their course. To judge from the doctrine promulgated in the Theses, of which specimens have been given, he had sunk to the level, which is that of most of the popular religionists of the present day, and towards which they were only sinking. We have shown how his judgment with regard to access to the Holy Communion involved his whole system. We have shown how his view of sacraments warranted and perhaps logically necessitated that judgment with regard to access. We have stated, for the matter is scarcely one of dispute, with how great a force separation from the Episcopate has been found experimentally to threaten the ancient doctrine of the Sacraments, and how that view has been gradually effaced wherever the doctrine of the succession is denied, and its chain severed. But the doctrine of succession *is* thus denied by the whole Protestantism of the Continent, and by no small portion of that of the British isles; and the notion of Sacraments, prevalent within the same region, is that of Erastus.* Why then, if the Established Church

* [I conceive that a reaction has since occurred, both in this country and abroad; but I am not able exactly to measure its extent.—W. E. G., 1878.]

of Scotland, or her ministers, in good faith follow out the principles on which they stand to their conclusions, should this be made a matter of vituperation to them, by those who agree in the principles, but have not as yet been vigilant enough to discover the goal to which they tend?

42. We repeat it; those who deny the succession, those who strip the Sacraments of their power, have no solid ground on which to resist the doctrine of Erastus. They have indeed the secondary arguments in favour of confiding the administration of religious offices to a distinct class of men. They can urge that the decorum, with which it is requisite to environ them, is thus best maintained; that a certain position in society for the ministers of religion is useful to religion itself, and that it is thus best secured; that the learning, necessary for the custody and illustration of the sacred records, could not be guaranteed by any other means. This is all very well; but it does not hit Erastus: he is as conscious of these things as his opponents. He says expressly:—

"I allow, indeed, the magistrate ought to consult, where doctrine is concerned, those who have particularly studied it." *

43. He agrees therefore that there should be in a State what Coleridge calls a clerisy. As in every civilised country there is a legal profession, so would he have a profession for theology and religion: but he would argue that the ministers of sacred things, having an access to the feelings and passions of men more ready and effective than any other class, and wielding therefore a greater power, should in proportion be placed under a more

* Thesis LXXIV.

effective subjection to the supreme will of the State. He would exclude the civil authorities from officiating, because that would destroy the distinctness of the professional class appointed for religion; but he says, as you do not pretend to a special custody of the Word and Sacraments delivered to you from Christ, through a succession of commissioned clergy; as you have rejected that bugbear of Popery, that relic of barbarism, that figment of the middle ages, therefore, upon the very same principle as that on which you will not allow voluntary magistrates, or voluntary soldiers (namely, because all great social powers should depend upon the State, as the necessary guarantee of its unity), you ought *a fortiori* to refer all title to administer religious offices to the same origin; or else, while you are taking caution from the weak, you will suffer the strong to go free. How this kind of argument is to be resisted in the abstract, we cannot conceive, especially when it is remembered how broad a basis early history affords for the union of religious prerogatives with civil magistracy; unless upon the ground that there actually exists another power not less real, not less historical, and even more properly and definitely divine, namely the power conferred by the charter of our Lord to the Apostles; "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

44. Those indeed who are of *this* faith: those who are not deterred by the charge of Popery from holding what they learned in their catechism, that sacraments are made up of two parts, whereof one is an inward spiritual grace; and who draw their ideas of Church power from the Ordination and Consecration Offices, may lament any forward step in that path of delusion; and, while endeavouring to vindicate individuals from censure, for mischiefs

entailed on them by their false position, may rather cherish the hope that a day is coming, in which the minds and hearts of all men desirous of the light of God's countenance, may revolt from the restlessness and the barrenness of such religion, as does not prove its conformity to the Divine Word by the incorrupt and united testimony of the Catholic Church.

45. Upon the whole, therefore, we submit, that while it may be quite true that in itself Erastianism has the seeds of a very "foul and dangerous heresy," yet the seeds of Erastianism, the premises which warrant and entail it, are to be found not merely in the particular view of the Scottish Church Establishment on ecclesiastical sentences, or Non-intrusion, but wherever the blessed Sacraments are denied to be intrinsically more than their outward signs; wherever the holy ministry of the Gospel is regarded as a conventional institution, and not as representing, by ecclesiastical descent, the Apostles, and that commission which they had from the hands of our Divine Redeemer.

46. We have already referred to the very singular picture which the ecclesiastical state of Scotland at the present time offers to view. Protestant dissent was strong and active in that country, even before the recent secession. In some parts of the country its numerical preponderance is now overwhelming; although the national Establishment is probably still owned by a majority of the entire population.* The strength of that Establishment lies partly in its civil connections and its position in the Act of Union, now more than ever important to it, partly in the orderly and decorous character of its recent traditions;

* [Apparently not so at this date.—W. E. G., 1878.]

partly we are bound to add, in the general, and we believe almost uniform respectability, both as to life and knowledge, of its ministers, and in their sincerity and diligence. A more angry and intractable spirit prevails, perhaps, in the ministers of the Free Church; but we do not envy the sceptical boldness of the man who can question their earnestness or magnanimity, or who can impute the sacrifice they have recently made to anything else, in the main, than a lofty determination to follow at all hazards the dictates of their consciences.

47. In the abandonment of a fixed and certain livelihood, and of a defined and highly respectable social position, by a large body of persons, most of them having wives and children wholly dependent upon them for support; in the splendid liberality with which all ranks and classes of the religious community they have formed, have contributed their temporal means for providing a religious organisation; in the activity, rapidity, and decision with which the proceedings of a body seemingly so large and loose, have been conducted on a scale so comprehensive; we think that every man must recognise, at the least, objects worthy of a searching curiosity, and we plead guilty for ourselves to perceiving in them abundant matter for admiring as well as sorrowful reflection. The causes of the admiration we have already explained or intimated; it is not difficult to explain the occasion which they afford for the sorrow and the shame justly attaching to our religious shortcomings.

48. We hear much of reviving zeal and activity in the English Church; if public notes of it were to be selected, perhaps most men would point to the recent subscription of £150,000 for the erection of schools in the manufacturing districts: and to the fund raised in London, under

the auspices and example of its excellent Bishop,* for the erection of churches; which amounts, we believe, to between £200,000 and £250,000. But compare for a moment the population of England with the population of Scotland, the wealth of England with the wealth of Scotland; then recollect that the Church of England is the Church of the noble and the rich, as well as of the people generally; that the Free Church has not perhaps an entire fourth of the population of Scotland for its adherents, and that of that fourth a very small proportion indeed are possessed of temporal abundance; that short indeed is the list of her noble names; and have we not ground for sorrow,—for that kind of sorrow which is full of bitter shame,—when we are told that the contributions to the Free Kirk of Scotland already reach nearly half a million sterling!

49. We know it has been said, that some of this is on paper, and will never be paid; that much of it has been abstracted from the contributions, that under the former system would have gone to the support of the poor; and that much of it has been collected by deceptive representations, by flattery, with addresses to the passions, and by a pertinacity of request almost carried to intimidation. This may be true of mere fractions; but it is not, as we are persuaded it cannot be, true of anything more; it does not impair an important general deduction; here are great masses of men ready to offer the sacrifices of faith according to their power, and beyond their power: with one heart, and with one soul; and that for the sake of a system, with regard to which we contend that its appeal, however elevated and touching it may be, has not the

* Dr. Blomfield.

Divine authority which we know to belong to the Body of Christ.

50. The minimum allowance for a preacher of the Free Kirk is fixed, we believe, at one hundred guineas from the public or central fund, over and above what may proceed from congregational contributions.

The Episcopal Communion of Scotland numbers among its adherents a large proportion of the nobility and other landed proprietors, as well as of the learned professions of that country. Of the lower (and, as one should suppose, the non-paying) class, it has but a small part. Yet it is only within the last few years that the minimum stipend of the incumbents of its churches has, mainly through the exertions of Dean Ramsay of Edinburgh, been raised to £80, including the offerings of their flocks; and the income which the Bishops derive from their sees amounts to about £100 a year upon the average, a moiety of that £100 proceeding from the bounty of the Crown.* Can there be found upon the face of the earth a more disgraceful contrast!

At the same time, there is some slender consolation in reflecting, that even the present state of things within the episcopal communion of Scotland is an improvement upon that to which it succeeds. It is, as we have stated, a *recent* effort that has secured to the clergy anything like a fixed stipend, however low. Another important undertaking is now in progress. About £20,000 have been raised for the erection of a college† in Perthshire, which is intended to bear the name of the Holy Trinity, and is

* [This state of things has been much mitigated by later efforts; while the State grant has been, I do not think improperly, withdrawn. —W. E. G., 1878.]

† [Now known as Trinity College, Glenalmond.—W. E. G., 1878.]

both to afford the means of training young men for orders, and likewise to offer to the members of the Church generally, what at present is unknown in Scotland, a good school on a large scale for their children, founded upon her principles.

51. When we observe the materials of religious excellence that everywhere abound in Scotland, and see how powerfully they work even in a narrow system, of human and secondary origin, it is impossible not to look with deep interest to the problem of her future destinies. What may not be expected from that land in times to come, if the beauty and the glory of the Lord's own house should once more become the desire of her people's heart, and should be restored by their willing hands throughout her borders?

II.

ON 'ECCE HOMO.'*

1868.

Part I.

1. No anonymous book, since the 'Vestiges of Creation' (now more than twenty years old)—indeed, it might almost be said no theological book, whether anonymous or of certified authorship—that has appeared within the same interval, has attracted anything like the amount of notice and of criticism which have been bestowed upon the remarkable volume entitled 'Ecce Homo.'

Probably we should have to travel much further back in order to find a work which, having drawn forth commendation so warm, and censure so sharp, had both acquired the one, and incurred the other, from the most directly opposite quarters. The fact, however, is undisputed, and the instances familiar enough: and the phenomenon admits, perhaps, of some explanation, though it may perhaps be a partial explanation only.

2. On the one hand, it is plain that the author

* 'Ecce Homo: a Survey of the Life and Works of Jesus Christ.' 8vo. Macmillan & Co. 1868. [This essay was first published in 'Good Words' for Jan., Feb., and Mar. 1866, and republished in a separate form by Strahan & Co. during the same year. Part III., consisting principally of extracts from Mr. Seeley's remarkable work, is not reprinted in this collection.]

repeatedly uses language, which could not consistently be employed in treating of Christianity from what is termed the orthodox point of view; and the offence which many have taken on this account has, in such cases unhappily, put a dead stop to any real investigation of the work in its general bearings. Or, if the process has been continued, yet a determined adhesion to fixed and unelastic modes of thought has made it so repulsive, as to ensure its ending in thorough-paced condemnation. On the other hand, what is loosely called society, and is represented by the literature, if not of the age, yet of the moment, has been making of late much of what may be termed proud flesh; a sign of ungoverned effort, and of life indeed, but of somewhat crude and disordered life. Into this tissue of proud flesh the work cuts, perhaps more deeply than any other production of recent years; not by direct insertion of the knife, but by bringing home to the reader's mind, with a wonderful force and freshness, this impression, that there is something or other called the Gospel, which, "whatever it may be," as was said by an old Pagan poet of the Deity, has very strong, and what may even turn out to be very formidable, claims, not merely on the intellectual condescension, but on the loyal allegiance and humble obedience of mankind. To drive home this impression to the heart and mind of the nineteenth century, now already grown elderly, and growing old, disturbs the self-complacency of a mind determined upon comfort; and naturally enough constitutes a grave offence in the views of those to whom the chequered but yet imposing fabric of actual Christianity, still casting its majestic light and shadow over the whole civilised world, is a rank eyesore, and an intolerable grievance.

3. This offence, serious enough in itself for those affected by it, is attended with aggravating circumstances. There is a tone of familiarity, to say the least, at the outset of the volume, and particularly in the Preface, which naturally tends to raise hopes that the history of Him, to whom so many nations, and so many ages, have bowed the knee, is about to receive a very free handling. And, indeed, the author, it is observed, actually by implication calls himself a critic of the widest scope. He apparently proposes "to accept those conclusions about Christ, not which church doctors or even apostles have sealed with their authority, but which the facts themselves, *critically weighed*, appear to warrant." And yet our "critic," forsooth, we by and by discover, does not conform to the first law of theological criticism, which seems to be with many not far from this: that every question of history or creed, hitherto held affirmatively, and now admitted to examination, is to be determined in the negative. Or, more pointedly, he does not conform to the canon which Dr. Strauss lays down as a postulate, if not an axiom, in his 'Life of Christ composed for the German People,'* where we have the following proposition: "A personality, which on one side indeed is of a man, but on the other is a being of higher order, a God or Son of God, and which, though born of a human mother, is begotten of no human father, such an object we hand over to fable and to poetry, but never think of making it the theme of a serious historical treatment." This staggering proposition our author does not adopt: nay, he believes in miracles, or at least has registered no vow to disbelieve them. Now this seems

* 'Das Leben Jesu für das Deutsche Volk bearbeitet.' Von D. F. Strauss. 2 Auflage, Leipzig, 1864. P. 1.

like taking the shibboleth of a party, and then turning out no better than a traitor in the camp. In fine, to the absolutely stereotyped forms both of faith and scepticism, to the "high and dry" believer, and to the "high and dry" non-believer. the author of 'Ecce Homo' has been a most unacceptable visitant, for apparently he has caused to both a good deal of vague perturbation.

4. This, however, as has been said, is but a partial explanation, especially as regards the objector on the side of orthodoxy. To him in particular this volume, quite apart from those occasional offences (as we will call them) of language that have already been mentioned, delivers a most serious challenge. Undoubtedly it exhibits the character of our Lord on the human side. It purports to show, and it actually shows Him as man: and it leaves us to see, through the fair curtain of His manhood, what we may. The objection taken to such a mode of treatment, in substance, perhaps amounts to this: that our Saviour is not a mere man, but is God made man; and that He ought not to be exhibited in any Christian work as a man only, but as God and man. And justice compels us to add, that those who challenge the author of 'Ecce Homo' on this ground are not always persons whose judgment can be summarily put aside on the score of bigotry and blindness.

5. Now, as to the matter of fact, the simple question, namely, whether this writer exhibits our Saviour as man only, let the objector, at any rate for argument's sake, have his way. It is plain that, to say the least, the human aspect so predominates in this volume, as to be at first sight almost the only one. But on the rights of the case, as distinguished from the bare matter of fact, there is much to be said. It is very difficult, it is, humanly

speaking, almost impossible, to maintain a just balance, together with a close union between two ideas of such immense disparity as God and man: the wailing infant, and the supreme Creator: the Victim of Death, and the Lord of Death: the despised of all, and the Judge of all. Heresy, from an early date, cut the heart of this difficulty by denying the divinity of Christ. The Christian Church, with its force undivided, and its attention concentrated on subjects of controversy, which then were as conspicuously few as they were profoundly vital, did indeed make good for itself a clear and solid theological standing-ground, in strict correspondence with the idea of an Emmanuel, or God with us. But the student of ecclesiastical history, or even the mere cursory inspector of the records of a few of the councils of the fourth century, knows that it was not until after many a fearful, and even what, to human eyes, might seem many a giddy reel, that a nearly unanimous Christendom settled down upon a centre of gravity in doctrinal expression, which has been perfectly stable through all the vicissitudes of fifteen hundred years, and which to all appearance nothing can now shake, except there come a shock under which all definite Christianity shall crumble.

6. This combined belief in the divinity and humanity of Christ has survived the impact and strain of all the convulsive forces which rent East from West, or as the Eastern Christians would, with more show of reason, say, West from East; which then broke off from the great Western mass so many integral parts of its closely articulated structure; and which have profoundly disorganised so much even of what they did not actually sever. Yet it is very difficult for the subjective Christianity of individuals, or even for systems, to maintain with precision

the equilibrium, which has been so laboriously won for its members by the action of the early Church. In the Roman communion, it has long seemed to observers from without, as if much of what belonged to the humanity of Christ in the first forms of Christian belief, and according to the common creeds, were virtually intercepted by devotion addressed in the first instance to intermediate objects, and too often apt to rest there. In England, and as some think, still more in Scotland, there is on the other hand a tendency among imperfectly informed Christians practically to merge the humanity in the divinity of our Lord, to underrate or overlook its continued existence and action; in some cases even to suppose that it terminated with the Theophany, or manifestation of the Divine Person in the flesh.

7. If this be so, then, perhaps, on the part of a book like 'Ecce Homo,' it may be right to retort a friendly expostulation, and to entreat objectors to consider with themselves whether their impatience of a detailed picture of our Lord in His humanity is really so unequivocal a sign of orthodoxy as they suppose; or whether, on the contrary, it may rather be a token that the religious mind among us has, from want of habitual cultivation, grown dry and irreceptive on that side of the Christian creed. On that supposition, the kind of writing which they encounter with rebuke and suspicion is, possibly, the very kind most needful in order to bring us back to the full vigour of that mixed conception of the character and person of our Lord, which in reality forms, according to the acknowledgment of nearly all communions carrying the Christian name, the central idea of the Christian system.

8. It may, however, be further said, and it may even

be true, that the author of 'Ecce Homo' does not throughout handle the subject of our Saviour's humanity with the care and caution of language which would be observed, and ought to be observed, by a sound believer, not to say by a trained theologian. And this form of the indictment brings us at length near, by the reply which it suggests, to that which, speaking without any special information, and merely using the materials of judgment which the work supplies, we should take to be the true position of the writer, and the legitimate office of the work.

9. In his brief preface the author of 'Ecce Homo' has informed us that he wrote it for the satisfaction of his own mind. The work then was the work of one who felt his way, and made his road as he went along. It was a tentative work, and a tentative work can ill afford to be judged by the rules applicable to one which is didactic. The didactic writer is in possession, when he begins, of all the knowledge with which he ends; the tentative writer gathers as he goes. The first is bound by the same rules all along; the other enlarges the scope of his vision at each step he makes, and may naturally and justifiably have employed language and assumed a tone, when he commenced his labours, which would be unbecoming from the more advanced position that he occupies at the close. Nor ought he of necessity to go back upon and recast his diction, so as to give himself one colour and one attitude from first to last. For, if he did so, he would be likely to efface from his composition those lineaments of truth and nature on which its effect as a whole might in great measure depend. For in such a work, which is essentially a work of self-education, that which, above all things, the reader ought to see is the

progression of effect, which the study of the subject, exhibited in the actual tissue of the book, has had upon the mind of the writer. He should be placed in a position to measure with some accuracy the distance between his author's point of departure and point of arrival; and, in order that he may do this, he must know the actual whereabout of the one as well as of the other. Now the very language by which the author of 'Ecce Homo' has, it may be, pained or startled the minds of numerous readers, may perhaps be no more than a true index of the unformed but upright state of mind in which he addressed himself to a subject, never, it would seem, effectually brought home to his understanding through those channels of tradition and authority which with most of us have been the earliest, and with some, it may be feared, the only, avenues of access for the Christian religion to our intellects as well as to our hearts.

I ought perhaps to ask pardon from this most able and honourable writer for the freedom of these assumptions, which cannot plead as their warrant any knowledge, except such as has been derived from the pages of the work itself. Yet, whether they are in themselves excusable or not, they may, at least, have the effect of accrediting the acknowledgments of obligation, and the professions of admiration, by which they will in the main be followed.

10. The chief objection, then, which is thought to lie against this work from the side of the ancient Christian belief is, that it exhibits our Lord in His human nature, or on the human side of His person only. And, as has been observed, probably those who urge this objection would follow it up by urging that the "word of truth" is to be "rightly divided"; that the several parts of religion

ought to be exhibited in their due proportions; that the severance of its limbs is fatal to its vitality; that the licence to teach half-truths is all that Falsehood can desire; and that, in point of fact, all the havoc made by Error has been effected by the use of this very method.

11. Now the answer to this reasoning, so far as it is of a general character, appears to be obvious enough. The teaching of half-truths is, indeed, indefensible and mischievous, when they are taught as whole truths. But there is an order and succession in the process of instruction: and that which is not good as a resting-place may be excellent and most necessary as a stage in an onward journey. It was not at the commencement of His career, but it was on the very evening of His passion, that our Lord Himself was pleased to say to His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."* Indeed, the negation of this principle would throw every established method of acquiring knowledge into confusion; and, if enforced and persevered in, would condemn the human understanding to a hopeless and imbecile sterility. For the doctrine, that the whole of a subject must be presented at once can only be reduced to practice by excluding from view all that is really elevated and advanced, by dwelling perpetually in the circle of the merest rudiments, and perhaps by presenting even these rudiments in forms which are at once extravagant and stunted.

12. Let us allow, then, that the author of 'Ecce Homo' approaches the character of our Saviour on its human side exclusively. This may sound as nearly an equivalent to exhibiting our Lord only in His human nature. The

* John xvi. 12.

difference tween the two will presently, perhaps, become more visible. For the present it may be enough to deal with the objection only in the first-named of these two forms. When so stated, the assertion it involves may be true. But the grave question remains, Is it really a just objection? Can no work, which confines itself to approaching the character of our Saviour on its human side, have its just and proper office in the Christian teaching of this, or of any, period of Christian experience? Or would it be too bold to assert, in direct opposition to such an opinion, that, while such a mode of treatment is open to no insurmountable preliminary objection, it is one eminently suited to the religious exigencies of the present times? Further still. If it be well accommodated to the needs of the time in which we live, does it purchase that accommodation by the sacrifice of anything which more permanent needs would require? Does it involve a departure from the spirit of the original and great *Evangelium* of the Gospels themselves? Nay, does it involve a departure from their very form?

13. In order to answer these questions aright, we must humbly endeavour to consider what was, in fact, according to the Gospels, the mode and process of manifestation chosen in order to open up the bosom of that which St. Paul so freely describes as "the mystery" of God, and to introduce to the world that Messiah for whom not only the pious and the worldly among the Hebrews, each according to his own conception, were in active longing, but whom, as we know from heathen sources,* "an ancient and constant opinion rife throughout the East" taught even the common run of men to expect.

* Suetonius, 'Life of Vespasian,' c. 4.

For this was no light question. No question of a meteor flitting or flaring across the sky, mounting in glare, and then descending into gloom. No question of an appeal to the rough-and-ready strength of passions and of prejudices, which, evoked and organised with skill, might have changed the surface, but the surface only, of society. The astounding fact of the manifestation of the Lord of Glory under the veil of human flesh may, and does, stagger in some minds the whole faculty of belief. Those minds, however, guided by equity, will admit that if this great Christian postulate be sound, much must follow from it. For then we must in reason expect to find, not only an elaborate preparation in the outer world for an event which, by the very statement of the terms, dwarfs the dimensions of every other known transaction, but likewise a most careful adjustment of the means by which, being so vast in itself, it could find entrance into the human mind and heart.

14. The religion of Christ had to adapt itself to the least as well as to the largest forms of our life and nature, while its central idea was in very truth of such a largeness, in comparison to all we are or can be, as to make the absolute distance between the greatest of human greatness, and the smallest of human littleness, sink into insignificance. No more in the inner than in the outer sphere did Christ come among us as a conqueror, making His appeal to force. We were neither to be consumed by the heat of the Divine presence, nor were we to be dazzled by its brightness. God was not in the storm, nor in the fire, nor in the flood, but He was in the still small voice. This vast treasure was not only to be conveyed to us, and to be set down as it were at our doors; it was to enter into us, to become part of us, and to become that part

which should rule the rest; it was to assimilate alike the mind and heart of every class and description of men. While, as a moral system, it aimed at an entire dominion in the heart, this dominion was to be founded upon an essential conformity to the whole of our original and true essence. It therefore recognised the freedom of man, and respected his understanding, even while it absolutely required him both to learn and to unlearn so largely; the whole of the new lessons were founded upon principles that were based in the deepest and best regions of his nature, and that had the sanction of his highest faculties in their moments of calm, and in circumstances of impartiality. The work was one of restoration, of return, and of enlargement, not of innovation. A space was to be bridged over, and it was vast: but a space where all the piers, and every foundation-stone of the connecting structure, were to be laid in the reason and common sense, in the history and experience, of man.

15. This movement, then, was to be a revolutionary movement, but only in the sense of a return from anarchy to order—it was to reconstitute society upon that principle of obedience to the great Father, and of correspondence with His will, which had been almost effaced from the high places and from the outer aspect of the world, and too sorely impaired, even when it lingered here and there in some shadowy retreat. But while, in this sense, revolutionary as to its aim, it was under the strictest restraint as to its means. It was tender, careful, and considerate of all that is found in the world, neither "breaking the bruised reed," nor "quenching the smoking flax"; respecting so much of it as had any title to respect, and enduring with much patience, "for the hardness of their

hearts," all such evils as could only have been removed at the cost of introducing greater evils.

16. These conditions of progress were sufficiently severe. But even these were not all. Provision had to be made not only for establishing aright the relation of Christianity to the world which it was to conquer, but for the subsequent relation, and due balance, of the internal forces, by which the new community was to live and work. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." The basis of the kingdom of God was to lie in Emmanuel, God with us, God made man, God in a human form, assumed and worn for our sakes. Now, this idea was not a new one. We know that it was not new to the Jew, from the written promises and narratives of the Book of Genesis; from the fourth Figure that moved in the fire with the Three Children; from the strain of prophecy; and from the oral tradition of the Jews. Neither was it new to the Gentile. The old mythology of Greece, casting off the worship of the elements to the right, and animal worship to the left, had for its central figure, in a carnal way, that very idea which the Gospel was to revive in a Christian way; namely, what is called anthropomorphism, or the humanising of its gods, with the counterpart of an equally established deification of its heroes. This close union of the two worlds and the two natures had supplied the Greek poets with the chief part of their materials, and had been the inspiring principle of Greek art. Now, the fact that both Jew and Gentile were, each in his own way, supplied with a form ready made (so to speak) in the mind, into which the idea of a Divine Deliverer clad in the flesh might drop, while on the one hand it gave a facility, on the other hand certainly constituted a danger, to the

infant religion. For the rule itself, by which all was to be measured, had gone awry; the form or matrix was itself deformed, and in receiving the idea was but too likely to deprave and distort it.

17. This was so in the case of the Jew, because with him Divine dispensations were regarded as fundamentally national; and, inasmuch as the foot of the Roman was on his neck, the first and leading characteristic in his idea of the deliverance to be wrought by the Messiah would naturally be, and was, deliverance from the Roman supremacy. This restoration to political liberty the Jew of our Lord's time—not the exceptional, but the ordinary Jew, not the Simeon or the Nathanael, but the Annas or the Caiaphas—so incurably believed to be his birthright, that he was able, while claiming as his own a history which contradicted him in every page, to boast before our Lord, "we were never in bondage to any man."* There was a danger that, acting in this sense, and accepting the Gospel as thus conceived, the Jews would at once go, as it is well known that the popular fanaticism under one or more false Messiahs did go, into fierce collision with the Roman government. In this way, not only would the new religion have been exposed to an unequal contest of physical strength with the one great power of the world, but it would have been placed in an entirely false position from the outset, as a kingdom of this world, appealing to force and not to reason for its means of rule. It may then be said, without presumption, that a necessity of the highest kind existed to make provision against that perversion of the great Gospel idea among its Jewish recipients which, to the vulgar eye, to

* John viii. 33.

the eye of the great as well as the little vulgar, would have seemed to be its acceptance, but which would in reality have been its utter depravation and corruption.

18. For reasons entirely different, a process not less ruinous had to be guarded against in the case of the Gentile. The theanthropic idea, the idea of God made man without ceasing to be God, was, as I have said, familiar and, indeed, fundamental to the old mythology. But the old mythology, which was sadly corrupt and sadly corrupting even while it continued to be a religion, had in the days of our Saviour ceased, for the thinking world, to be a religion at all. This proposition must be received with some, but with no great restraint. Not only under the gross outer husk of an idolatry covering a land, is it conceivable that there may be in the individual mind kernels of residuary belief, and, in the life, traces of humble obedience, but also, when even an idolatrous system has ceased to be real for a community at large, yet with respect to smouldering sparks of a true religious fire, if we are unable to affirm that they will still exist, neither must we venture to deny that they may. But, as regarded the mind and thought of man at the period of the advent of Christ, it is probably little beyond the most literal truth to say that the old mythology had, in the time of Tiberius Cæsar, ceased to exist as a religious power. The Roman letters and philosophy of that date appear to leave no room for doubt on the subject.

19. But if this were so, and when along with this there still abode in the world the speculative idea of manifestations of God in human form, associated at every point, as in the later shapes of the mythology it was associated, with every shape most foul and loathsome, how terrible would have been the consequences, if the tidings of this

new and greater Epiphany of a Divine Person had gone forth, so to speak, prematurely. That is to say, if our Lord had found His way, as under the all-admitting system of Roman policy he would have found His way, into the catalogue of accepted divinities, before the deep and strong and even stern lines had been effectually drawn, which were to fix an impassable gulf between Christianity and the virulent corruptions that were now in the very heart's core of the popular system, and that it came to subdue and to extirpate.

20. It may indeed be said, that the Crucifixion would have been a stumbling-block in the way of such reception as has been here supposed. This is probably true. That scratched caricature, which was drawn upon the wall of a vault or chamber of the Palatine Hill in Rome, and by which some Pagan soldier probably mocked the faith of a Christian comrade, illustrates, more aptly than could any commentary, the declaration of the Apostle that Christ *crucified* was to the Greeks (and the Greeks at this period in every question of mind led, and therefore represent, the Romans) nothing else than foolishness. But the falsified idea of an incarnate God, to which reference has been made, might, with the full and glorious list of the signs and wonders that He did, long before the end even of our Lord's brief course, have gone forth into the world, and, by its seeming coincidence with the old and first thought of the Hellenic mythology, have worked an inextricable confusion, an irreparable mischief.

21. Thus, then, the period of our Lord's coming, though it was in many points a period of advanced civilisation, was one at which the world was dark, very dark, in regard to what constitutes either the abstract truth, or the practical organism, of a religion. The pupil of the general

eye was contracted; and it had to be trained by time and care to admit the light: most of all, to be trained so to admit it, that the light, after being admitted, should not then become darkness, for "great would have been that darkness."

22. These ideas, however, as I have stated them, are anticipations only, or showings forth of what, with a view to the utmost attainable purity and durability, Christianity behoved to be. Such anticipations are of little moment in comparison with the facts, or unless supported by them. In speaking of the facts, I mean simply the facts as represented in the Gospels. Possibly the language used by the author of 'Ecce Homo,' in his Preface, may have created, and also may even have warranted, an expectation that he was about to undertake an examination of the external evidence, and of the critical evidence generally, for their authenticity and genuineness. It implies no disparagement of that sphere of labour or of those who have worked, or who work in it, to assert that there is another sphere or office quite distinct from it, and perfectly legitimate. It is to weigh, not the credentials of the messenger, but the nature of the message; to leave for a moment to others the seal and superscription, and to take a glance at the contents; to inquire what may be the moral and practical evidences of truth, which these bear upon their front. And I cannot but presume to think that this is a business exceedingly important even in its critical aspect. For the intrinsic nature of the documents, and of the lessons to be derived from them, may in itself supply the most powerful testimony with regard to their authorship and authority; or may, on the other hand, leave or disclose a gap in that testimony difficult or even impossible to be filled.

23. It is well, however, to remove out of the way a preliminary barrier in the way of a right approach to the question how the character of our Saviour is exhibited to us in the Gospels. In this country, amidst an infinitude of real blessings and solid privileges, we have also a fair, and perhaps rather a full, proportion of palpable counterfeits, and of assumptions that will not bear the application of a moment's thought. For example, because, through the mercy of Providence, we have a perfectly free access to Holy Scripture, we comfortably assume that we are in fact well acquainted with the sacred pages. And with this we join another assumption, scarcely less comfortable; namely, that, being thus familiar with the Bible, we have had and have no concern with tradition, which, for us, is supposed to have no existence. But we little know the breadth of meaning that lies in the word, or the relation in which we each and all stand to it. The truth is, that we are all of us *traditioners* in a degree much greater than we think. Few, indeed, are there among us whose religious belief and system has actually been formed either from Scripture as a whole, or even from that limited but singularly precious portion of it with which alone we are at this moment concerned. What we suppose to be from Scripture is really, as a general rule, from the catechism, or the schoolmaster, or the preacher, or the school of thought, in immediate contact with which we have been brought up; or, perhaps, it has come from the pastor or from the parent, and in some happy cases by the living and affectionate contact of mind with mind. But even then it has been tradition; that is to say, it is the delivery by them to us of truth in a form in which they possessed it, and in a form which they deemed the best for us. Now suppose they were right in the choice of that form, still

it does not follow that what is now the best for us, after Christianity has been rooted in the world for nearly two thousand years, was also the best shape and the best order of instruction for those to whom it was a novelty, and who were to be its first propagators, as well as its first receivers.

24. Even within the compass of the New Testament we see the Christian system presented in various stages of development, by its various books, to those for whom they were originally intended. One of these, the earliest stage, is exhibited to us by the three first, or, as they are now commonly and conveniently termed, the Synoptical Gospels. Another by the Acts of the Apostles—a book in which we find our religion advanced to the stage of corporate or collective action. We find here the first form of that great society, the Church, which, under the name of the Kingdom of Heaven, our Lord had Himself, not established, but predicted. The two remaining stages are represented by the Gospel of St. John and the apostolical Epistles respectively. As between these it is not now necessary to consider the question of priority. The one may be regarded as crowning the Synoptical Gospels, and the other the Acts of the Apostles. For the apostolical Epistles, together with the Apocalypse, both exhibit in detail the nature and workings of the Christian society, and supply the most comprehensive model of that practical instruction which was given by the earliest and greatest fathers of the Church.

25. The Gospel of St John, on the other hand, supplies a fourth biography of our Lord. It was certainly given to the Church, according to the general judgment of Christendom, after the three other Gospels; and it also presents the teaching of our Saviour under a new aspect,

much more doctrinal, and also more abstract, than that which it bears in the works of the Synoptical writers, to whose compositions it adds little in matters of fact, unless when special teaching was connected with them, or when, as in the two closing chapters, the Evangelist had to record circumstances immediately connected with the foundation of the Church. In this simple description, I seek to avoid wholly the controverted questions whether this was a supplementary Gospel, intended by its author to fill up what his predecessors had left unsupplied of the history of our Lord's life; or whether it was a polemical Gospel, written for the confutation of heresies then already budding in the Church; or whether its aim was one purely didactic, but with views more comprehensive and profound than those of the preceding Evangelists; or in what proportions and modes either or all of these purposes may have been combined in its composition. It is quite enough for the present purpose to refer to a matter of fact which cannot be confuted, though it may be, and has been, exaggerated, namely this—that there is a difference between the general strain of the Synoptical Evangelists (so far as it is common to the three) and of the fourth, and that this difference consists in a greater development, in deeper soundings, in a higher elevation.

26. M. Renan, in his work on the Life of Christ, which he himself ingenuously declares to be the production of one who is not, though he has been, in the ordinary sense, a believer,* and which some persons have, as I think most unaptly, compared with the 'Ecce Homo,' treats this difference as destructive of the truthfulness either of the earlier or of the later picture. To my mind, though there

* 'Vie de Jésus,' Introduction, p. lviii.

is no real difficulty in either, the notable reciprocal correspondence of the first three Evangelists would seem quite as apt to suggest suspicion as the marked distinctions of the fourth. Of the fact there can be no question. It has, if I mistake not, been pointedly noticed by Coleridge; on whose refined and penetrating mind the Gospel of St. John exercised a most happy influence in bringing him to the belief of the accepted Christian doctrine. But why should it be incredible, or even strange, that of any teaching whatever, much more then of such marvellous teaching as our Lord's, some elements should pass more easily into some minds, and others into other minds of a different complexion or affinity? The disciple "whom Jesus loved" has given us the fullest and deepest picture of His love; and, together with His love, of His Person. But it has been justly remarked by Dean Alford that there are scattered over the pages of the Synoptics a certain number of passages, which are in precise correspondence with the general strain of St John.

27. And it cannot be too carefully borne in mind, that while St. John discloses to us a more inward aspect of the doctrine of our Lord, and supplies many propositions that we could not directly gather from his predecessors, the moral and practical bearings of the Four Evangelists are in close and thorough correspondence. They have the very same ethical basis, and they go to produce the very same frame of mind and course of action; and by this very fact, the case of the Gospels is for ever separated from any true analogy with the rival representations of Socrates in the works of Plato and of Xenophon respectively, where the ethical bearings of the two systems appear to be widely different, if not altogether irreconcilable. But I have, perhaps, pursued too long this interesting subject,

of which a fuller development would on this occasion be out of place.

28. It is enough for us to perceive that the communication of our Lord's life, discourses, and actions to believers, by means of the four Gospels was so arranged, in the order of God's providence, that they should be first supplied with biographies of Him which have for their staple His miracles and His ethical teaching, while the mere doctrinal and abstract portion of His instructions was a later addition to the patrimony of the Christian Church. So far as it goes, such a fact may serve to raise presumptions in favour of the author of 'Ecce Homo,' inasmuch as he is principally charged with this, that he has not put into his foreground the full splendour and majesty, which belong to the Person of the Redeemer, about whom he writes. If this be true of him, it is true also thus far of the Gospels.

29. But now let us carry the investigation further. Let us pass from the biographies to the life, from the picture to the Person; and let us inquire whether in any and in what degree it is true that the method pursued also by Him, and if so then the method which an absolute and perfect wisdom prompted, was a method of graduation; a method in which the great Christian ideas were presented not simultaneously, nor in a mass, but with a certain succession, and a studied order. If so, and if we can find what it was, and if we can also, in some slight degree, perceive the advantages it received and the dangers it avoided, we shall derive from our humble labour new cause for thankfulness, and new grounds for contemplating with reverence and adoration the providential action of the Most High.

30. Thus far, then, I have endeavoured to show that

the method and order of religious teaching may vary, as between the period of first introduction, on the one hand, and of established possession and hereditary transmission on the other; that there were reasons in the state of the world, at the period of the Advent, for a careful and delicate regulation of the approaches for the new religion to the mind of man: and that in the matter and succession of the Gospels we may find a succinct testimony to this system of providential adjustment.

It will remain principally to examine how far the manner, in which the author of 'Ecce Homo' exhibits the picture of our Lord, finds analogies and support in His own method of teaching; and how far the recurrence to such a method in such a work is well or ill adapted to the needs of the time in which we live.

PART II.

1. We have now to inquire, what was the order, or economy, observed by the Saviour in making known to the world the religion He had come on earth to found.

That religion is, indeed, summed up in His own Person. M. Renan has told us a truth we should hardly have expected to hear from him. "He did not preach His opinions: He preached Himself." * In yet fewer words—Christianity is Christ. St. John did not teach rhetorically, when he delivered the two-edged saying: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that

* 'Vie de Jésus,' p. 76.

Jesus is come in the flesh, is not of God."* But true as this is of the faith full formed and born into the world, it is not in just the same manner true of the embryo. We must go back from the language, to the alphabet, of religion; and must observe in what shape and order the Master conveyed the first elements of divine knowledge to the stammering lips of a blind and bewildered race. And many, perhaps, among those to whom the subject may be new, will be struck with the reserve and limitation that attends the teaching of our Lord, as reported by the Synoptical Evangelists, in regard to the central and fundamental doctrine concerning His own Person.

2. Let us proceed to examine the question briefly under each of the following heads:—

(1). The personal history of our Lord, as given in the first three Gospels.

(2). The discourses of the first three Gospels: and certain summaries given in them of our Lord's teaching.

(3). The injunctions often delivered to those who had been the subjects, or the witnesses, of miraculous cure or relief.

(4). The method of teeahing by parable.

(5). The commissions or charges given to the twelve Apostles, and to the seventy disciples.

(6). The distribution of doctrinal teaching in the Gospel of St. John.

3. Those portions of the narrative in the Synoptical Gospels, which principally bear upon the Divinity of our Lord, refer to matter which formed, it will be found, no part of His public ministry. Such are the account of His Birth and infancy in the first two chapters of St. Matthew,

* 1 John iv. 2, 3.

and the first two chapters of St. Luke: the Baptism, as it is recorded in the third chapter of St. Matthew, the first of St. Mark, and the third of St. Luke; the Temptation, in the fourth of St. Matthew, and the fourth of St. Luke; and the Transfiguration, in the seventeenth of St. Matthew, and the ninth of St. Mark and St. Luke respectively. Now of these great occasions, not so much as one appears to have been known even to the whole of the Apostles at the time of its occurrence. The Birth and infancy speak for themselves. The Baptism seems to have preceded the calling of the very earliest among them.* The Temptation was a part of that mysterious training of the Saviour, in which He trod the wine-press alone, and none could share with Him. Lastly, the Transfiguration was reserved for the three leading Apostles, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John; and we are told that "Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead."† This injunction is most of all remarkable when we call to mind that it excluded from knowledge of the event the nine remaining Apostles, besides the Mother and the nearest relatives of Christ. And we happen to know that it was obeyed: for, says St. Luke, "They kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."‡

4. Until after the Transfiguration, that is, until a somewhat advanced period of our Saviour's ministry, He does not appear to have predicted or indicated in any manner, even to the three, His own impending death. The full

* Cf. Mark i. 16. And observe that St. Peter (2 Ep. chap. i. verses 16–18), establishing his own authority as a witness, refers only to the voice at the Transfiguration, and not to the voice at the Baptism.

† Matt. xviii. 9; Mark ix. 9. ‡ Luke ix. 36.

and glowing confession of Him by St. Peter as the Son of the living God, has all the appearance of a great progression, newly achieved in that ardent soul; and it was met accordingly by a reward in the famous announcement of Matt. xvi. 17–19. But this remarkable confession was not yet to be given to the world. For the Evangelist proceeds to say, "Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ." *

No doubt the entry into Jerusalem on the day of Palms was a very solemn and very suggestive assumption of the character of Mes-iahship; but it belongs rather to the Passion than the Life: it is the beginning of the end, the opening act of the closing scene.

5. If we pass on from the great events of our Lord's personal history to His teachings, as recorded in His discourses and sayings by the Synoptic writers, we shall find that they, too, are remarkable for the general absence of direct reference to His Divinity, and, indeed, to the dignity of His Person altogether.

6. The very first notice of our Saviour's teaching by St. Matthew, gives us to understand that He began His ministry by simply echoing the words of the Forerunner, St. John Baptist: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." † And when He unfolded the true meaning of that wide and deep word, "Repent," in the Sermon on the Mount, He asserted, indeed, His own authority as a teacher, His title to be heard, whatever the seeming relation of His teaching to the established traditional lore, and to be heard without appeal: but He asserted nothing more. And even this was done by implication only; not dogmatically. While His precepts are sustained by the

* Matt. xvi. 20.

† Matt. iv. 17; comp. iii. 2.

assumption of authority, and this assumption in its turn is (so to speak) buttressed by His miracles, He makes as yet no separate claim to the reception or recognition of Himself, and He tells no tale about Himself. In a word, for the time, He Himself, as apart from His sayings, is nowhere. In the weighty and even awful comparisons with the house upon the rock, and the house upon the sand, which form the climax of the discourse, the cases which they illustrate are those of the man who receives, and the man who does not receive, His sayings, not His Person. It is only in the tenth chapter that we find even an allusion to the reception of Himself—"He that received you receiveth me: *and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me.*" * And this is in an address to His disciples, not in a discourse to the people. To them He is for the present more like what His ministers are now. He is a messenger; and His only present concern is about His message, His only present duty to carry and deliver it to those for whom it is intended. He has not yet told the multitude that He is the Son of God: He speaks of "your" Father, and "thy" Father, not, as afterwards, or elsewhere, of "my Father." † He has not yet told them He is the Son of Man, in that pre-eminent sense which was to connect Him with the House of David, and to make Him the Heir of the promises, and the representative of the race. Yet, in the midst of this remarkable abstention, He laid by that discourse the foundations of a morality far transcending the rarest and the best among all the rare or good of what had yet been delivered to mankind; and thus He set about constructing, as it

* Matt. x. 40.

† With one exception only, near the close (Matt. vii. 21), and not found in St. Luke.

were, the strong and stable pedestal, on which thereafter His own glorious image might be securely raised, and exhibited for the worship of the world.

7. St. Mark* gives an account, almost verbally the same with St. Matthew's, of the opening of our Lord's ministry. St. Luke seems to pass by what they have recorded, and commences his narrative with the reading, in the synagogue at Nazareth, of the prophecy: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."† On which His only comment was, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." This is a clear and undeniable declaration of His claim to be a Teacher sent from God, and of certain strongly-marked moral results, which were to be, not the consequence only, but also the proof of His mission. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, *because* He hath appointed me" to convey the blessings before enumerated. Yet here we find, not alone that He keeps silence on the subject of His Deity, but that even for His claim to Divine sanction and inspiration He appeals to results.

8. Nor was this principle less remarkably exemplified in the answer which He gave to the disciples of John, when they asked Him (whether it was in their own name or in his need not now to be inquired), "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Whereupon He replies, not by an arbitrary *ipse dixo*, an unsustained assertion of His own Messiahship: all such,

* Mark i. 15. † Luke iv. 18, 19, 21.

as we presently find, He rebuked when He said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."* Neither did He reply by an argument resting only or mainly upon the power which marked His acts, but upon a paramount regard to their beneficent and loving character, upon His care for the lowly, and His constant war against the mass of suffering in the world, to hem it within narrower and yet narrower bounds. "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."† On these premises rests the sequel: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."‡ Truly this was the crown of the Lord's humility, that He was content in this lowly wise to solicit, through the assent of our understanding, the allegiance which He was entitled, as Creator and Master, to command at once from our will. But in that humility did there not lie the wisdom of the Master Builder, who proceeded by precept upon precept, line upon line; who was minded to set, each in their proper place and degree, the stones of the spiritual temple, so that "the whole body" might be "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part?"§

9. Thus far what we seem to see is almost a total suppression of the personality of our Lord in His oral teaching, except upon the single point, which was essential to His purpose from the first; this, namely, that He should not descend into the arena of mere argumentative disputes

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* John v. 31. † Matt. xi. 4, 5. ‡ Matt. xi. 6.
§ Eph. iv. 16.

with adversaries, but should assume authority. This claim is involved in the whole strain even of the Sermon on the Mount, which is couched in the language of command, and of inappellable assumption of His right. It is repeated as often as we find the words, "I say unto you." But it seems, independently even of His words, to have been expressed also in His manner, to have been made legible in the midst of all His meekness. It is not only mentioned by St. Matthew* at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, but it is also recorded by St. Mark in a place where that Evangelist gives not even a hint as to the matter of His teaching. "He entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: *for* He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."† Beyond telling them this of Himself, we may thus far say, He told them nothing. He set a picture before their eyes: He left them to be the judges, by the composition, the drawing, and the colour, from whose hand it came.

10. Yet even of His work, as distinguished from His person, He did not, to all eyes, exhibit the whole. Though the general rule was a free exhibition by our Lord of His miraculous powers, yet when, in the case of the daughter of the ruler Jairus,‡ He proceeded to exercise them in a conquest over death, only the three preferred Apostles were allowed to be witnesses, together with the parents of the maiden, to this exercise of His might; the people having been put forth. On the parents He laid the charge, "that they should tell no man what was done." There was but one other occasion, until close upon the

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* Matt. vii. 28. † Mark i. 21, 22.
‡ Matt. ix. 25; Luke xi. 51, 58.

end of His career, when He exercised a like power: namely, the case of the widow of Nain.

11. We have now seen how in one great miracle in which He set Himself against the last enemy, He had cast a veil over the exercise of His power, and had told it only as a man tells a secret to a few. But this reserve extends much farther. On the Gentile centurion, indeed, whose faith He so greatly commends, and whose servant He healed, He laid no injunction of secrecy. There was no fear that a good soldier of the Roman army would fall into the snare that beset the Hebrew, or would clutch at the idea of a carnal or political Messiahship. Other considerations may have borne upon the case. The preparation of the centurion's mind, it is evident, was greatly advanced; and perhaps we shall be right in thinking that such an one could be trusted, while others could not, to make a judicious and discriminating use of the wonder he had seen.

12. On the evil spirits, who "believed and trembled," we are told that He laid an injunction that they should not bear witness to Him. Even the proclamation of the truth was not to proceed from the tainted source of a rebellious will and intelligence. "And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils: and He suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him."* Knowing Him, they knew that He was God as well as man; and not even from His own lips had this truth yet proceeded in His popular teaching throughout the land. On men, too, He had in many cases laid similar commands. For example: in the first miracle recorded by the first Evangelist we find these words:

* Mark i. 34. In Luke iv. 41, is an equivalent declaration.

"See thou tell no man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." *

13. Of course it is not meant to be asserted that our Lord's miracles were generally secret. From where would then have been that sad responsibility of Capernaum and Chorazin and Bethsaida, which gave them a place before Sodom and Gomorrah on the awful roll of the divine judgment? The rule of the miracles was publicity; but the exceptions to the rule are remarkable, and seem to mark out clearly the bounds within which they were meant to operate. Without doubt, as we know from a multitude of passages of Scripture, not less than from the reason of the case, they were meant to produce in all men the conviction so well expressed by Nicodemus: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." † The purpose of the exhibition of miraculous powers seems to have been to produce this very conviction; and perhaps it was, in the first instance, to produce nothing more.

14. Rapidity of movement was no part of the providential design. Like the seed to which Christ himself compares the Gospel, all the early stages of its life were to be silent and to be slow. Gradually to lay a broad basis of such evidence as ought through all time to satisfy the reason and the heart of mankind, seems to have been the object with which our Saviour wrought. The general, if he be a good general, and has his choice, will deploy his whole army on the battle-field, before any portion of it begins to fight. The hot and fierce assent of a few

* Matt. viii. 4. † John iii. 2.

enthusiasts might doubtless have been had on easy terms: like a fire of straw, come and gone in a moment, and leaving neither light nor warmth behind.

15. Are any startled at the idea that our Lord's first object may have been in the main limited to fixing well in the minds of His hearers the belief in His divine mission only? Will they say in answer, that by His reply to the confession of Nicodemus He emphatically teaches the insufficiency of the belief to which that ruler had theretofore attained? For the answer of Christ is not a commendation or an acquiescence, but a solemn monition: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* As much as to say, "It is not enough that you have examined my credentials, and that, approving them, you own me as a teacher carrying a commission from on high. You must accept deeper results of my mission than any you have yet thought of, and must give your mind and spirit to be translated into the region of a new and better life." Such is, I suppose, an approximation to the sense of our Lord's reply. The confession, then, of Nicodemus was insufficient. But so is the first step of a flight of stairs without those, that are to carry us onward to the level above; yet the laying well and solidly the first steps, without any visible sign of regard to those that are to follow, may be the way, and the only way, to construct a practicable and durable ascent.

16. There is, however, a peculiar delicacy, if this phrase may be allowed, in this method of procedure adopted by the Great Teacher. Along with that element of superhuman power which was to establish a superhuman

* John iii. 3.

origin for His mission, there was combined a certain character of love, of pity, of unwearying help, of tender and watchful care, which is to be read in the deeds of our Lord from first to last; the only two exceptions, which may have had excellent reasons of their own, being those of the fig-tree and the swine; exceptions not touching the race of man. Now the gross and carnal temper in man is far more easily caught by power than by love. To a certain extent, then, the display of power, intended to show that Christ had come from God to carry us back along with Himself to God, tended to counteract that very object, if it should relatively lower in our minds the force of the attraction of love; if, of the two great functions of Deity exhibited in the miracles, the one which was more splendid and imposing should eclipse the one more modest, but more precious and more authentic. Hence, perhaps, it is that we find a certain veiling of the power that was in Christ, by these reserves and injunctions of secrecy. In the rude repetition of the miracles from mouth to mouth, they would have fared as the picture of some great artist fares when it is copied at second, third, and fourth hand: the finer and deeper graces disappear; the clothing of the idea disappears, and only a coarse outline survives. And so it really seems as if our Saviour had desired to place considerable checks on the circulation of mere report concerning the miracles; and in lieu of its confused and bewildering echoes, to trust rather to each man's seeing for himself, and then calmly reflecting on so much as he had seen.

17. What we have thus far observed in the discourses and the miracles, we shall further see in what still remains to be surveyed of our Saviour's pastoral career. Let us try next the Parables. It is not necessary here

to dwell on the characteristics of this method of teaching; to show how they win a way into the willing soul; how, waiving immediate and striking effects, they provide the means of illumination for the meditative mind as the sense of the allegory gradually opens on it; how they supply the indolent with an excuse for his indolence, and, as if it were judicially, exasperate the contempt and aversion of the proud. But there is another characteristic of the Parables, which appears to be strictly germane to the purpose of these remarks. In all of the greater ones, which present their subject in detail, He himself, when they are interpreted, fills a much higher place than that simply of a teacher divinely accredited. They all shadow forth a dispensation, which, in all its parts, stands related to, and dependent on, a central figure; and that central figure is, in every case but two, our Saviour Himself.

18. He is the Sower of the seed, the Owner of the vineyard, the Householder in whose field of wheat the enemy intermixed the tares, the Lord of the unforgiving servant, the Nobleman who went into a far country and gave out the talents and said, "Occupy till I come:" lastly, the Bridegroom among the virgins, wise and foolish. In every one of these, our Saviour appears in the attitude of kingship. He rules, directs, and furnishes all; He punishes and rewards. Every one of these, when the sense is fully apprehended, repeats, as it were, or anticipates the procession of the day of Palms, and asserts His title to dominion. They must be considered, surely, as very nearly akin, if they are not more than nearly akin to declarations of His Deity.

19. Two others there are which have not yet been mentioned. One is the parable of the householder, who

planted a vineyard and went into a far country, and sent his servants to receive his share of the produce. In this parable our Lord is not the master, but the master's heir, the person whose the vineyard is to be, and who, being sent to perform the office in which the other messengers had failed, is put to death, by the cruel and contumacious tenants.* But this parable, if it sets forth something less than His kingship, also sets forth much more, and embodies the great mystery of His death by wicked hands. There is also the parable of a certain king, which made a marriage for his son;† a relation which involves far more, than had commonly been expressed in the direct teaching. Upon the whole, then, the proposition will stand good that these parables differ from, and are in advance of, the general instruction respecting the person of the Redeemer in the three Synoptic Gospels, and place Him in a rank wholly above that of a mere teacher, however true and holy. They set forth that difference from previous prophets and agents of the Almighty, which has been noticed by the Apostle to the Hebrews, where he says that "Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant; but Christ as a son, over His own house."‡ Now, we have to sum up this branch of the inquiry with observing that, in that very chapter of instruction where the proper dignity and weight of the Redeemer in one of His high offices, namely, as a King, begin to be significantly conveyed, there is a veil interposed, as if to cast the scene into shadow. The truth is there; but it ceases to thrust itself upon the mind, and stands rather as the reward to be obtained in after-thought by a docile attention.

* Matt. xxi. † Matt. xxii. 1. ‡ Heb. iii. 5, 6.

20. Upon the field, then, which we are now examining, our Lord does not so much teach Himself, as prepare the way for the teaching of Himself, and act once more, though from a different point, and in a new relation, the part of His own forerunner. There is yet another portion of that field, upon which we have to cast a glance. During the brief course of His own ministry, our Saviour gave a commission to His twelve Apostles, and likewise one to the seventy disciples. Each went forth with a separate set of full and clear instructions. The commission to the Twelve will be found most fully given in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew: that to the Seventy in the tenth of St. Luke. In conformity with what we have already seen, both are silent in respect to the Person of our Lord. They seem to aim at reproducing in miniature His own ministry. To the Apostles He says, "Preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."* To the disciples He says, "Heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."† The announcement of a Society, not then founded, but about to be founded upon earth, the obligation of the hearer to believe in what is announced,‡ the exhibition of works of relief and love, that love taking effect through a preternatural exercise of power,—here is the Gospel as it was ordered to be preached by the followers of our Lord during His lifetime, and before He had begun to open, even to the Twelve, the awful picture of His coming Death.§

21. Notable, indeed, is the difference, it might almost be said the contrast, between these commissions, and those

* Matt. x. 7, 8.
† Luke x. 9.
‡ Matt. x. 22; Luke x. 10–16.
§ Matt. xvi. 21.

which were given after the Resurrection, as they are related in St. Matthew xxviii. 18–20; St. Mark xvi. 15–18; St. Luke xxiv. 45–49; St. John xx. 21–23, and xxi. 15–17. In these latter commissions, the Person of Christ has emerged in all its grandeur, from the shadow to the foreground: it is His power that is given over to them, into Him they are to baptise, in His name they are to preach repentance and remission of sins.

22. To sum up, then; there was a twilight before the dawn, and a dawn before the morning, and a morning before the day. The contrast between the two classes of commissions, that we have just seen, receives its most vivid illustration on the day of Pentecost, which may perhaps not unfitly be termed the birthday of the Church. This contrast is really a proof, not of dissonances in the Divine counsels, but of an harmonious and adapted progression in their development, and thus of their essential and steady oneness of design. During our Lord's life, the bulwarks of the kingdom of evil were being smitten again and again by constant exhibitions of His command over the seen and unseen worlds; and its foundations were being sapped by the winning force of His benevolence and love. Even before this work approached its ripeness, He cried, in prophetic anticipation of His triumph, "I beheld Satan like lightning fall from heaven."* When He had died, and risen, and ascended, then the undermining process was complete; and the rushing noise of Pentecost† was like the trumpet-blast about the walls of Jericho, when "the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him; and they took the city."‡

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* Luke x. 18. † Acts ii. 2. ‡ Joshua vi. 20.

23. It is time, however, to turn a brief consideration of the question, how far this representation is set aside, or modified, by the contents of the Gospel of St. John. And here I venture on this general proposition: that, transcendent as is the elevation and inestimable as is the value of the contents, of that Gospel, it is the works of the three Synoptical writers, and not the Gospel of St. John, which exhibit to us, so far as a judgment can be formed, the ordinary and average tenor of our Saviour's life, and the true picture of its daily exhibition to the world. Let this assertion be substantially if rudely tested by a brief glance at the structure of that Gospel. Of the general character, however, of our Lord's teaching contained in it, so much as this may, perhaps, be said by way of preface. It appears as if our Lord commonly was employed in those kinds of word and deed which, repeated in substance over and over again in a large number of places, and before great multitudes of witnesses, were to constitute the main ground of His appeal to the conscience of the world, and the first basis of the general belief in Him; the basis, upon which all the rest was in due time to be built up. But while He thus wrought from day to day and from place to place, He was also at times employed in sowing a seed which was to lie longer in the ground before the time of germination.

24. Sometimes He set Himself to sow it in capable minds and willing hearts, like those of the Apostles, or like that of Nicodemus; sometimes to let it fall apart from the common beat of the chosen people, and where it could not be choked by their peculiar prejudices, as with the woman of Samaria. But also in Jerusalem itself, at least by one series of discourses, He was pleased to state sufficiently, in the hearing both of the people and of their

guides, the dignity and claims of His Person; so that this authentic declaration from His own lips, of the truths which were after the Resurrection to be developed in apostolic teaching, might accredit that teaching to minds that would otherwise have stumbled at the contrast, or would have been unable to fill the void between such doctrine posthumously preached, and the common tenor of our Lord's words and acts as they are given in the Synoptical Gospels. In this view, such portions of St. John's Gospel, as I now refer to, may be regarded as the golden link between the Sermon on the Mount, and the theology of the Apostolic Epistles.

25. Though the strain of St. John's Gospel, and of the teaching of Christ in it, is very even, the occasions and audiences are very different. The last ten chapters, or nearly one-half of the whole, consist entirely of the narrative of the Passion and its sequel, together with discourses and acts wholly of the inner circle, addressed, that is to say, not to the world, or to the adversaries of Christ, but to those whom He had specially elected to be His friends and followers. In the first two chapters nothing in the way of narrative is contained to distinguish His lessons here from those of the earlier Gospels. The third is composed of discourses to selected persons; namely, to Nicodemus, and to certain disciples of the Baptist. When, in the fourth, our Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria, and afterwards to the people of the city, the effect produced was remarkably powerful and distinct. It was not only (as in the Synoptical Gospels) that they were astonished, or that His fame went abroad, or that "they glorified God which had given such power unto men," * or even that in general terms they believed

* Matt. ix. 8.

on Him; they went further, and said, as St. Peter had said, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."* But the subject-matter of this our Lord's only visit to the outcasts of Samaria, with whom the Jews would not hold intercourse, could have no effect on the general impressions concerning Him in the places of His ordinary travel and resort through Judea or Galilee.

26. The exceptional teaching, as I would venture to call it, of our Lord among the Jewish people, which would materially tend to modify (by deepening and enlarging them) such impressions as men would naturally take from the acts and discourses of the Synoptic Gospels, is really contained in the six chapters from the fifth to the tenth. When we examine these six chapters, we seem to find in them a kind of progression, as if with a view to some special purpose. In the fifth, after the miracle He had performed on the cripple of Bethesda, He conveyed Himself away, "a multitude being in that place."† But He declared to the Jews, no great number of them we must suppose, within the temple, His Sonship, His being invested with the authority of judge over the world, and His claim to the promises and predictions of the Old Testament. In the sixth, He delivered the wonderful discourse of the "bread of God" at Capernaum, to such of the people forming the five thousand of the day before as remained, and as were able to follow Him by ship across the lake.‡ But a ray of light is let fall upon the general circumspection and measure in the lessons of our Lord, when we learn that a great reaction followed this discourse, not only among the multitude, but

* John iv. 42. † John v. 13. ‡ John vi. 15, 22–25.

among the disciples of our Lord. "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."*

27. Here is one sad and sufficient reason for the careful graduation of His course of teaching. He then, after a visit to Galilee, goes up to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles,† and resumes His discourses or conversations in the temple, to much the same general effect as in the fifth chapter. He proclaims Himself the light of the world, He dwells on His special relation to the Father, and He points to the lifting up of the Son of Man. After which, says St. John,‡ many believed on Him; but after a little more discourse, when He had told them "before Abraham was, I am," they took up stones to cast at Him.§ Then come the ninth and tenth chapters, in which, having given sight to a man blind from his birth, He finds Himself again in conflict with the spirit of unbelief among the Jews. He now delivers the discourse of the tenth chapter, in which He is the Good Shepherd, and mankind are His sheep; and He gives them eternal life; and this is by His Father's ordinance; and finally reaching the climax of the doctrine, He and His Father are one.‖ But mark the end, "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." "Therefore they sought again to take Him; but He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan."¶

28. All this portion of our Lord's instruction, then, is profoundly charged with doctrine concerning His Person. It is full and large in instruction for all times and all persons. But it seems to have been delivered to no great

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* John vi. 66. † John vii. 10. ‡ John viii. 30.
§ John viii. 59. ‖ John x. 14, 16, 28–30. ¶ John x. 31, 39, 40.

number; perhaps, too, within a limited space of time. It stands in marked distinctness from the general tenor of His teaching; and it stands also in contrast with that teaching as to the mode of its reception. It shows that, for the reception of such instruction, the field was not as yet white to the harvest. The scandal and offence were doubtless incurred for the wisest purposes, but they seem to have been the general result; while in the case of the lessons conveyed in the other Gospels, we find no such consequence; but we see there a disposition to hear, and to give praise to God, which was a preparation, at the least, for full, intelligent, and durable belief. Nor does it seem rash or unreasonable to suppose that while, with a view to completing the solid chain of testimony, it behoved our Lord, during His career, thus to bear an explicit testimony to His own personal dignity and claims, and this before persons who were not already His partisans; it also behoved that, because of the weakness of the flesh, and the dulness of the eye, and the slackness of the will of man, the performance of that duty should be confined within narrow limits, and that all beyond these limits should be reserved for a happier season.

29. I have not yet noticed the most touching among all the touching and loving acts of Christ. It is the raising of Lazarus, recorded in the eleventh chapter of St. John. In this narrative we may remark a method of proceeding* quite different from that which had been pursued on the occasion of raising the daughter of Jairus.† 'Many of the Jews had gathered about Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. They attend the Saviour

* John xi. 19, 31.

† [When He suffered no man to be present except the parents of the maiden, and the three selected disciples. Luke viii.—W. E. G., 1878.]

at the grave: far from repelling them, He appeals to His Father in their presence,* and renders thanks in order to be heard by them: the miracle is performed before their eyes, and many believed,† while some went to warn the Pharisees. But the time of the great Offering was now hard at hand; and it is probable, if not plain, that at such a time the reasons for limiting the disclosures of the all-conquering power of Christ would cease to operate.

30. It appears, then, on the whole, as respects the Person of our Lord, that its ordinary exhibition to ordinary hearers and spectators, was that of a Man engaged in the best, and holiest, and tenderest ministries, among all the saddest of human miseries and trials; of One teaching in word, too, the best, and holiest, and tenderest lessons; and claiming, unequivocally and without appeal, a paramount authority for what He said and did; but, beyond this, asserting respecting Himself nothing, and leaving Himself to be freely judged by the character of His words and deeds.

31. It may be for the same reasons, or for reasons of which these form a part, that we find that very remarkable adjustment in the Gospels, and in the Gospel of St. John as well as in the Synoptical writers, under which the kingdom of our Lord, while it is abundantly predicted, is nowhere explained; and the doctrine concerning it is kept even in a deeper shade than the doctrine respecting the Person of Christ. John the Baptist had prophesied of the Christian Baptism as one differing from and much excelling his own: but our Lord did not renew the prophecy, and the baptism administered during His lifetime

* John xi. 41, 42. † John xi. 45, 46.

by His disciples appears to have been of the same character as that of the Forerunner.

32. It seems that the minds of the Apostles themselves stood in need, on this subject, of peculiar preparation. For not even in discourse with them does our Lord explain the nature of His kingdom. Nay, the remarkable promise to St. Peter, which followed upon and sealed his confession of the Messiahship, was imparted in figure, and was calculated rather to be retained and pondered in the heart, than to convey immediate light to the mind: nor was it incompatible, as we see, with an energetic protest from the Apostle, following immediately, against the coming humiliation of his Master, or with the rebuke, bordering upon sternness, in which that Master apprised him that he then still savoured of, not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men. So late as in the great discourse of the Last Supper, Christ tells His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" and it is only in the very last stage of His adorable career, and when He has now put His scholars through the severest trial of their faith by His Death and Resurrection, that during those forty days before the Ascension, which once were called the great forty days, He dwelt among them, and "spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." *

33. I would presume, in this place, to make an addition to what has been already said of the large use of parable by our Lord as a vehicle of instruction. Another leading feature in almost all the parables is the social and collective aspect of Christianity, incorporated with what the Gospels ordinarily call the Kingdom of Heaven. The

* Acts i. 3.

parables are so contrived that, without explaining in detail the constitution of that kingdom, they familiarly impress the mind with its idea; with the image of some scheme or system into which men were to be brought, so that they should habitually live in it, and that they should ultimately be judged by the laws appointed for its government. The kingdom as well as the kingship, the appointment of a new dispensation of brotherhood among men, as well as the supremacy of our Lord in that brotherhood, were thus, as it were, things sown and stored in the mind of the Apostles to abide their time; like the spark laid up in ashes to await the moment when it should be kindled into flame.

34. If the reader has patiently followed the argument to this point, it is now time to release him by proceeding to apply it to the case of 'Ecce Homo.' Supposing, then, that the author of that work has approached his subject on the human side, has dealt with our Lord as with a man, has exhibited to us what purport to be a human form and lineaments, is he therefore at once to be condemned? Certainly not at once, if it be true, as it seems to be true, that in this respect he has only done what our Lord himself, by His ordinary and usual exhibition of Himself, both did, and encouraged the common hearer of His addresses, and beholder of His deeds, to do. The question whether this writer is to be discarded as an auxiliary in religious inquiry, or whether, on the contrary, we are his debtors for an eloquent, earnest, searching, and stirring 'Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ,' cannot, then, be decided until we have considered whether his method, being one admissible in principle is also one suited to the needs of the times in which we live.

35. Before concluding with a few words addressed to

the solution of that question, two observations require to be made. The first is that the defence and apology (in the polemical sense of the word,) which have here been offered, are of a general nature, and do not extend to the manner in which the task has been executed, but only to the principle on which the execution has been based. The language and the general tone must be judged on their own merits. On some points of expression I might not care to defend; on others I might even presume to differ. But to those who have dealt in broader censures I would at least suggest their inquiring of themselves, whether all their zeal in the matter has been according to knowledge: and whether in some cases where we are inclined to jar with the author, the cause possibly may be that he has taken a wider and more adequate measure of the conditions of our Saviour's humanity than we have.

36. I will venture upon a single, and at first sight it may be a rather startling instance. In his second chapter,* on the Temptation, the author says:—

"We are to conceive Him, therefore, as becoming now for the first time conscious of miraculous powers."

Such words may, at the first sight or hearing, send a chill through the blood of some. It is so far *now* to travel back from the glory of His triumph and His reward, His everlasting Priesthood and government in heaven, to the dark and depressed career, and to the earliest and most depressed stages of the depressed career, on earth. But if He did not despise the Virgin's womb, if He lay in the cradle a wailing or a feeble infant, if He exhausted the years of childhood and of youth in submission to His Mother and to Joseph, if all that time He grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and was ever travelling the long

* 'Ecce Homo,' p. 12.

stages of the road to a perfection by us inconceivable; if, even when the burden of His great ministry was upon Him, He has Himself told us that as His divine power was placed in abeyance, so likewise a bound was mysteriously set upon His knowledge—what follows from all this? That there was accession to His mind and soul, from time to time, of what had not been there before: and that He was content to hold in measure, and to hold as a thing received, what, but for His humiliation in the flesh, was His without limit, and His as springing from within. And, if so, might it not well be, that in this crisis of the Temptation, when His normal use of miraculous power had not yet begun, the wicked suggestion to abuse it might give rise to a vivid consciousness in His mind, such as had not been there before?

37. So considered, perhaps, this declaration is really within the limits marked out by the Sacred Text itself, when it tells us that Christ was straitened in spirit at the view of the baptism that He was to be baptised with, until it were accomplished; and that His soul grew heavy and sorrowful, even unto death, as the dread image of the Passion came upon His nearer view. And thus the revulsion in our minds, upon the first perusal of such words, will have been a proof, not of their irreverent use, but of our too narrow acquaintance with the great truth of our Lord's humanity, and will itself have been a discipline for which we have to thank our author.

38. Is, then, his method—this alone remains to ask—suited or unsuited to the needs of our particular day and generation? To me it appears to be eminently suited to those needs; and, with much deference to the judgment and authority of others, I will endeavour to explain the reason.

The mighty change which Christ achieved in the whole frame and attitude of the human mind with respect to Divine things, was transmitted from age to age, but not by effort and agony like His, or like the subordinate but kindred agency of those who were chosen by Him to co-operate in the great revolution. Sometimes it was, indeed, both sustained and developed by the great powers and by the faith and zeal of individuals, and by a constancy even unto death; but in the main it passed on from age to age by traditional, insensible, and unconscious influences. As the ages grew, and as the historic no less than the social weight of Christianity rapidly accumulated, men, by no unnatural process, came to rely more and more on the evidence afforded by the simple prevalence of the religion in the world, which, if taken with all its incidents, was in truth a very great element of proof; less and less upon the results of any original investigation reaching upwards to the fountain-head. The adhesion of the civil power, the weight of a clergy, the solidity and mass of Christian institutions, the general accommodation of law to principles derived from the Holy Scripture, that very flavour of at least an historic Christianity which, after a long undisputed possession, pervades and scents the whole atmosphere of social life; all these in ordinary times seem to the mass of men to be, as proofs, so sufficient, that to seek for others would be waste of time and labour.

39. If there be unreason in this blind reliance, there is probably not less, but much more unreason shown, when the period of reaction comes, and when a credulity carried to excess is placed in the fashion of the day by an incredulity that wanders and runs wild in the furthest outbreaks of extravagance: an incredulity, not only which argues from the narrowest premises to the broadest conclusions,

but which, oftentimes dispensing with argument altogether, assumes that whatever in religion has heretofore been believed to be true is therefore likely to be false, and exhibits a ludicrous contrast between the overweening confidence of men in their own faculties, and their contempt for the faculties of those out of whose loins, with no intervening change of species, they were born.

40. I do not suggest that a description so broad could be justly applied to the present age. But it is in this direction that we have been lately tending; and we have at least travelled so far upon the road as this, that the evidences purely traditional have lost their command (among others) over those large classes of minds which, in other times, before a shock was given, or the tide of mere fashion turned, would perhaps most steadily and even blindly have received them. Their minds are like what I believe is said of a cargo of corn on board ship. It is stowed in bulk, and in fair weather the vessel trims well enough; but when there is a gale the mass of grain strains over to the leeward side, and this dead weight increases the difficulty and the danger, and does it this way or that mechanically, according to the point of the compass from which the wind may chance to blow.

41. In such a time, there is a disposition either to deny outright the authority which Christianity may justly claim from its long historic existence, and from its having borne triumphantly the strain of so many tempests, or else, and perhaps with more danger, silently to slight them and pass them by, and to live a life deprived alike of the restraints and the consolations of a strong and solid belief. Under these circumstances, may it not be the duty of the scribe rightly instructed in the things concerning the kingdom of God, when the old weapons cease for the moment to

penetrate, that he should resort to other weapons which at the time are new, though in reality they are the oldest of all, and had only been laid aside because they were supposed to have done their work?

42. Such I understand to be the position assumed by the author of 'Ecce Homo.' He thrusts aside, with a hand certainly not too reverent, perhaps even somewhat brisk and rough, all intermediate testimony of whatever kind. He invites his reader to consider for the moment all Christian tradition, all Christian institutions, all the long and diversified experience of the Faith in the world, as non-existent: to ascend with him the stream of time for more than eighteen hundred years; and to go direct into the presence of Christ, not such as He now presents Himself to us, bearing in His hand the long roll of His conquests, but such as beside the sea of Galilee, or in the synagogue of Capernaum, or the Temple of Jerusalem, He then offered himself to the ordinary Jew, with no other arms but those of His commission and His character, and the character of His acts and words.

43. This is the journey that the attentive reader of 'Ecce Homo' has to make under the author's guidance. He passes into the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, and there, without any foregone conclusion, either of submission or of dissent, gives that heed to the word and acts of the unfriended Teacher, which the honest Jew would give when those words were spoken, and those acts were done. And what is the result? I appeal, for the answer, to the book. I appeal to a vitality, an earnestness, an eloquence, a power, all of them derived from the deep and overflowing life of the wondrous Figure which it contemplates and sets forth. Yes, even as to this hour

> "The world's unwithering countenance
> Is fresh as on creation's day"

—so the unwithering countenance of Christ beams upon us in the pages of this latest exposition of His character, with the virgin freshness and the penetrating power that it might have presented to the view, when instead of being among the older, it was the very latest birth of time. True of the Gospel, as it here appears to us, is that which was nobly said of one of its harbingers, at the time when, as measured by years, old age was upon him, "Its eye is not dim, nor its natural force abated." *

44. Doubtless, when we ask about results from such a work, we come to a question which must be settled in the last resort by the individual mind for itself. By argument we may, I have thought, show, that to approach our Lord, and to paint the sacred portrait, on the human side, is no unlawful process; and, likewise, that when the secondary and immediate authorities are disregarded, it may be wise thus to seek at once for access to the presence of the Great King, and to sit among the listeners at His feet. But the question of questions remains: When we arrive in that presence, how does it make good its claims to supreme majesty and supreme command? To me it appears that each page of the book breathes out as it proceeds what we may call an air, which grows musical by degrees, and which, becoming more distinct even as it swells, takes form, so in due time we find, in the articulate conclusion, "Surely this is the Son of God: surely this is the King of Heaven." "And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us."†

45. So, then, through the fair gloss of His Manhood, we perceive the rich bloom of His Divinity; and from the author we accept his own moving precept: "Cling to Christ, cling ever closer unto Christ." And surely this

* Deut. xxxiv. 7. † Matt. i. 23.

we may say: if He is not now without an assailant, at least He is without a rival. If He be not the Sun of righteousness, the Physician of souls, the Friend that gives His life for His friends, and that sticketh closer than a brother, the unfailing Consoler, the constant Guide, the everlasting Priest and King, at least, as all must confess, there is no other come into His room. And we may reasonably hope to find that the present tendency to treat the old belief of man with a precipitate, shallow, and unexamining disparagement, is simply a distemper that infects for a time the moral atmosphere: that is due, like plagues and fevers, to our own previous folly and neglect; and that, when it has served its work of admonition and reform, will be allowed to pass away. Towards this result the author of 'Ecce Homo,' if I read him right, will have the consolation and the praise of having furnished an earnest, powerful, and original contribution.

III.

THE COURSES OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.*

1876.

1. I HAVE been bold in my title; and, in order to convey a distinct idea, have promised what I cannot do more than most imperfectly perform.

This paper is a paper for the day. We live in a time when the interest in religious thought, or in thought concerning religion, is diffused over an area unusually wide, but also when the aspect of such thought is singularly multiform and confused. It defies all attempts at reduction to an unity, and recalls the Ovidian account of chaos:

> "Nulli sua forma manebat,
> Obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
> Frigida pugnabant calidis, humentia siccis,
> Mollia cum duris, sine pondere habentia pondus." †

At every point there start into action multitudes of aimless or erratic forces, crossing and jostling one another, and refusing not only to be governed, but even to be classified. Any attempt to group them, however slightly and however roughly, if not hopeless, is daring; but, as they act upon us all, by attraction or by repulsion, we are all concerned in knowing what we can of their nature and direction; and an initial effort, however

* Reprinted from the *Contemporary Review* for June 6, 1876.
† Ov. Metam. i. 17.

feeble, may lead the way to more comprehensive and accurate performances.

2. I shall endeavour, therefore, to indicate in a rude manner what seem to be in our day the principal currents of thought concerning religion; and as, in a matter of this kind, the effect can hardly be well considered without the cause, I also hope in a future paper briefly to touch the question, how and why these currents have been put into their present sharp and unordered motion.*

The channels, in which they mainly run, according to my view, are five. But this Punjaub differs from the Punjaub known to geography, in that its rivers do not converge; although for certain purposes and between certain points they, or some of them, may run parallel. Neither do they, like Po and his tributaries, sweep from the hill into the plain to find their rest;† but, for the time at least, the farther they run, they seem to brawl the more.

3. My rude map will not reach beyond the borders of Christendom. There are those who seem to think that, as of old, wise men will come to us from the East, and give us instruction upon thoughts and things. It will be time enough to examine into these speculations, as to any practical value they may possess, when we shall have been favoured with a far clearer view, than we now possess, of the true moral and spiritual interior of the vast regions of the rising sun. We may thus, and then, form some idea of the relations both between their theoretical and their actual religion, and between their beliefs and their personal and social practice; and we may be

* [This more formidable effort has not been made.—W. E. G., 1878.]

† Dante, Div. Comm. v. 98.

able in some degree to estimate their capacity for bearing the searching strain of a transition from a stagnant, to a vivid and active, condition of secular life. At present we seem to be, for the most part, in the dark on these capital questions, and where, as in the case of Islam, we have a few rays of light; the prospect of any help to be drawn from such a quarter is far from encouraging.

4. Provisionally, then, I set out with the assumption that, in handling this question for Christendom, we are touching it at its very heart. The Christian thought, the Christian tradition, the Christian society, are the great, the imperial thought, the tradition, and society of this earth. It is from Christendom outwards that power and influence radiate, not towards it and into it that they flow. There seems to be one point at least on the surface of the earth—namely, among the negro races of West Africa—where Mahometanism gains ground upon Christianity; but that assuredly is not the seat of government from whence will issue the *fiats* of the future, to direct the destinies of mankind.

5. Yet other remarks I must prefix. One is apologetic, another admonitory. First, I admit that many writers, many minds and characters, such for example as Mr. J. S. Mill, and such as the school of Paulus, and such as many of those now called Broad-Churchmen, will not fall *clean* into any one of the five divisions, but will lie between two, or will range over, and partake the notes of, several. This must happen in all classifications of thought, more or less. And here, probably, more rather than less; for the distinctions are complex, and the operation difficult.

6. Secondly, my aim is to exhibit principles, as contra-

distinguished from opinions. Let it not be supposed that these always go together, any more than sons are always like their parents. Principles are, indeed, the fathers of opinions; and they will ultimately be able to assert the parentage by determining the lineaments of the descendants. Men, individually and in series, commonly know their own opinions, but are often ignorant of their own principles. Yet in the long run it is the principles that govern; and the opinions must go to the wall.

But this is a work of time; in many cases, a work of much time. With some men, nothing less than life suffices for it; and with some life itself is not sufficient.

A notable historic instance of the distinction is to be found in those English Puritans of the seventeenth century, who rejected in block the authority of creeds, tests, and formularies. Their opinions were either Calvinistic, or at the least Evangelical. After three or four generations it was found that, while retaining the title of Presbyterians, the congregations had as a rule become Unitarian; and yet that they remained in possession of buildings, and other endowments, given by Trinitarian believers. Upon a case of this character arose the well-known suit of Lady Hewley's Charity. Sir Lancelot Shadwell, who decided it, knew well that every hair of Lady Hewley's head would have stood on end, had she known what manner of gospel her funds were to be used to support; and he decided that they could only be employed in general conformity with her opinions. Satisfied with a first view of the case, the public applauded the judgment; and it has not been reversed. But the parties in possession of the endowments were not to be dislodged by the artillery of such pleas. They appealed to Parliament. They showed that their Puritan forefathers had

instructed them to discard all intermediate authorities; and to interpret Scripture for themselves, to the best of their ability. It would indeed have been intolerable if those, who taught the rejection of such authority when it was ancient and widely spread, should, in their own persons, have reconstituted it, all recent and raw, as a bond upon conscience. The Unitarians contended that they had obeyed the lesson they were taught: and that it was not their fault, if the result of their fidelity was that they differed from their teachers. Parliament dived into the question, which the Bench had only skimmed; and confirmed the title of the parties in possession.

7. And again. As men may hold different opinions under the shelter of the same principle, so they may have the same opinions while they are governed by principles distinct or opposite. No man was in principle more opposed to the Church of Rome, than the late Mr. Henry Drummond. But he expressed in the House of Commons a conception of the Eucharistic sacrifice so lofty, as must have satisfied a divine of the Latin Church. Again, the doctrine of Transubstantiation was received in the thirteenth century on the authority of a Papal Council: but it is probable that many of the "Old Catholics," who have renounced the tribunal, may still agree in the tenet.

8. I think it will be found that these remarks will explain the cases, already indicated, of persons who do not fall into any of the five classes. They are I think, chiefly, either the indolent, who take up at a venture with narrow and fragmentary glimpses of the domain of religious thought; or the lovers of the picturesque, who are governed by exterior colour and other superficial signs; or they are writers in a state of transition, who have

received a shock that has driven them from their original base, but have not yet found a region suited to restore to them their equilibrium; a fluid, of the same specific gravity with themselves.*

9. I take no notice of the system termed Erastian.† It can hardly, as far as I see, be called a system of or concerning religious thought at all. Its centre of gravity is not within the religious precinct. The most violent Ultramontane, the most determined Agnostic, may alike make excellent Erastians, according to the varieties of time and circumstance. If we follow the Erastian idea, it does not matter what God we worship, or how we worship Him, provided we derive both belief and worship from the civil ruler, or hold them subject to his orders. Many most respectable persons have been, or have thought themselves to be, Erastians; but the system, in the developments of which it is capable, is among the most debased ever known to man.

"Non ragioniam di lui; ma guarda, e passa."

10. Lastly, it is plain that a Chart of Religion, such as I am endeavouring to present in outline, has reference to the *Ecclesia docens*, rather than to the *Ecclesia discens;* to the scientific or speculative basis of the respective systems, and the few who deal with it; not to their development in general life and practice, a subject far too difficult, and too invidious, for me to consider.

* [The reader may also be reminded that this paper has reference to those who deal more or loss *ex professo* with the subject matter. There may be writers, and even theologians of importance, who treat of specialties, or move in distinct provinces, and who in no way fall within the scope of my statement.—W. E. G., 1878.]

† On the opinions, and principles, of Erastus himself, see No. I. in this volume.

11. I may now set out the five main schools or systems, which are constituted as follows. We have:—

I. Those who accept the Papal monarchy: or the Ultramontane school.

II. Those who, rejecting the Papal monarchy, believe in the visibility of the Church: or the Historical school.

III. Those who, rejecting the Papal monarchy and the visibility of the Church, believe in the great central dogmas of the Christian system, the Trinity and the Incarnation. These will be here termed the Protestant Evangelical school.

IV. Those who, professedly rejecting all known expressions of dogma, are nevertheless believers in a moral Governor of the Universe, and in a state of probation for mankind; whether annexing or not annexing to this belief any of the usual particulars of the Christian system, either doctrinal or moral. These I denominate the Theistic school.

V. The Negative school. Negative, that is to say, as to thought which can be called religious in the most accustomed sense. Under this head I am obliged to place a number of schemes, of which the adherents may resent the collocation. They are so placed, on the ground that they agree in denying categorically, or else in declining to recognise or affirm, the reign of a moral Governor or Providence, and the existence of a state of discipline or probation. To this aggregate seem to belong—

1. Scepticism.
2. Atheism.
3. Agnosticism.
4. Secularism.
5. (Revived) Paganism.
6. Materialism.
7. Pantheism.
8. Positivism.

12. Of these five main divisions, the first is much before any one of the others in material extension. Its ostensible numbers may nearly equal those of the second and the third taken together. The fourth and the fifth are made up of votaries who are scattered and isolated; or whose creed is unavowed; or who, if they exist in communities at all, exist only in such minute communities, as to form but specks in the general prospect.

The Ultramontane system has also the great advantage, for working purposes, of by far the most elastic, the most closely knit, and the most highly centralised organisation.

13. Again, it derives its origin by an unbroken succession from Christ and His Apostles. No more imposing title can well be conceived; yet it naturally has no conclusive weight with such as remember or believe that a theistic system, given by the Almighty to our first progenitors, passed, in classic times, and in like manner, through far more vital mutations. It was by a series of insensible deviations, and without the shock of any one revolutionary change, that in a long course of ages, after a pure beginning, there were built up many forms of religion, which, at the period of the Advent, had come to be in the main both foul and false. The allegation may possibly be made that the traditions, as well as the personal succession, of the Latin Church, are unbroken. But this will of course be denied by those who regard the Council of 1870 as having imported, at a stroke, a fundamental change into the articles of the Christian faith. To the vast numerical majority, however, the Roman authorities seem to have succeeded in recommending their propositions: and the claim passes popularly current.

14. This singular system, receiving the Sacred Scriptures, and nominally attaching a high authority to the

witness of tradition, holds both in subjection to such construction as may be placed upon them from time to time, either by an assemblage of Bishops, together with certain other high functionaries, which derives its authority from the Pope, or by the Pope himself, when he thinks fit to take upon himself the office. It is true, that he is said to take advice; but he is the sole judge what advice he shall ask, and whether he shall follow it. It is true that whatever he promulgates as an article of faith he declares to have been contained in the original revelation; but by his vision alone can the question be determined, whether it is there or not. To the common eye it seems, as if many articles of Christian belief had at the first been written in invisible ink; and as if the Pope alone assumed the office of putting the paper to the fire, and exhibiting these novel antiquities to the gaze of an admiring world.

15. With regard, however, to matters of discipline and government, he is not restrained even by the profession of following antiquity. The Christian community under him is organised like an army, of which each order is in strict subjection to every order that is above it. A thousand Bishops are its generals; some two hundred thousand clergy are its subordinate officers; the laity are its proletarians. The auxiliary forces of this great military establishment are the monastic orders. And they differ from the auxiliaries of other armies, in that they have a yet stricter discipline, and a more complete dependence on the head, than the ordinary soldiery. Of these four ranks in the hierarchy, two things may be asserted unconditionally: that no rights belong to the laity, and that all right resides in the Pope. All other rights but his are provisional only; and are called rights only by way of accommodation, for they are withdrawable at will.

The rights of laymen as against priests, of priests as against Bishops, of Bishops as against the Pope, depend entirely upon his judgment, or his pleasure, whichever he may think fit to call it. To all commands issued by and from him, under this system, and joined with a demand for absolute obedience, an absolute obedience is due.

16. To the charm of an unbroken continuity, to the majesty of an immense mass, to the energy of a closely serried organisation, the system now justly called Papalism, or Vaticanism, adds another and a more legitimate source of strength. It undeniably contains within itself a large portion of the individual religious life of Christendom. The faith, the hope, the charity, which it was the office of the Gospel to engender, flourish within this precinct in the hearts of millions upon millions, who feel little, and know less, of its extreme claims, and of their constantly progressive development. Many beautiful, and many noble, characters grow up within it. Moreover, the babes and sucklings of the Gospel, the poor, the weak, the uninstructed, the simple souls who in tranquil spheres give the heart and will to God, and whose shady path is not scorched by the burning questions of human thought and life, these persons are probably in the Roman Church by no means worse, than they would be under other Christian systems. They swell the mass of the main body; they obey the word of command when it reaches them; and they help to supply the resources, by which a vast machinery is kept in motion.

17. Yet once more. The Papal host has reason to congratulate itself on the compliments it receives from its extremest opponents, when they are contrasted with the scorn, which those opponents feel for all that lies between. Thus E. von Hartmann, the chief living oracle

of German Pantheism, says it is with an honourable spirit of consistency (*Consequenz*) that "Catholicism" has, after a long slumber, declared war to the knife against modern culture, and the highest acquisitions of the recent mental development.* And he observes that, while he utterly denounces the mummy-like effeteness and religious incapacity of Ultramontanism, still "It ought to feel flattered by my recognising in it the legitimate champion of historical Christianity, and denoting its measures against modern culture as the last effort of that system at self-preservation."† Accordingly, his most severe denunciations are reserved for "Liberal Protestantism," his next neighbour, even as the loudest thunders of the Vatican are issued to proclaim the iniquities of "Liberal Catholics."‡

18. I shall recite more briefly the besetting causes of weakness in the Ultramontane system. These I take to be principally: (1) its hostility to mental freedom at large; (2) its incompatibility with the thought and movement of modern civilisation; (3) its pretensions against the State; (4) its pretensions against parental and conjugal rights; (5) its jealousy, abated in some quarters, of the free circulation and use of the Holy Scripture; (6) the *de facto* alienation of the educated mind of the countries in which it prevails; (7) its detrimental effects on the comparative strength and morality of the States in which it has sway; (8) its tendency to sap veracity in the individual mind. If this charge were thought harsh, I could

* 'Der Selbstzersetzung des Christenthums,' p. 15 (Berlin, 1874).

† *Ibid.* 'Vorwort,' p. x.

‡ The latest specimen may be seen in a Pastoral of Bishop Bourget, of Montreal, the hero of the remarkable and rather famous Guibord case. Published in the *Montreal Weekly Witness* of Feb. 10, 1876.

refer for a much stronger statement to the works of the late Mr. Simpson, himself a convert of great ability to the Roman system from the English Church.

19. Next in order to the Ultramontane school comes a school, which may perhaps best be designated as Historical; because, without holding that all, which has been, has been right, it regards the general consent of Christendom, honestly examined and sufficiently ascertained, as a leading auxiliary, at the least, to the individual reason in the search for religious truth. To this belong those "Liberal Catholics" who have just been mentioned, and who, unlike the "Old Catholics," remain externally in the Latin communion, bravely and generously hoping against hope, under conditions which must ensure to them a highly comfortable existence. Their position appears to be substantially identical with that of a portion of the Protestants of the sixteenth century, who in perfectly good faith believed that they were maintaining the true system of Christianity, as attested by Scripture and sacred history, but who had to uphold this as their own conviction in the teeth of the constituted tribunals of the Latin Church. The appeal at present made, indeed, is from the Council of the Vatican to a Council lawfully conducted. But the right of appeal is denied by the living authority, and appears therefore, now that that authority holds itself to have given a final utterance on the dogma of Infallibility, to rest only on the ultimate groundwork of private judgment.

20. The question here, however, is not so much their ecclesiastical position, as their form of religious thought, and their proper place in the general scheme or chart. Few they may be, and isolated they certainly are. But they are essentially in sympathy with many who do not

wear the same badge with themselves; in short with all who, rejecting the Papal monarchy, adhere to the ancient dogma formulated in the Creeds, and who believe that our Lord, and His Apostles acting under His authority, founded a society with a promise of visible perpetuity, and with a commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. That Gospel is the faith once delivered to the saints; and, while some of these believers would admit that the Church may err, they would all agree in holding that she cannot err fatally or finally, and that the pledge of her vitality, if not of her health, is unconditional; unconditional, however, not to any or to every part, but to the whole, as a whole. They would agree that she is divinely kept in the possession of all essential truth. They would agree in accepting those declarations of it, which proceeded, now between twelve and fifteen centuries ago, from her as one united body, acting in lawful Councils, which received their final seal from the general acceptance of the faithful. They would recognise no final authority subordinate to that of the united Church; and would plead for a reasonable and free acceptance of that authority on the part of the individual Christian. Or, if these propositions lead us too far into detail, they believe in an historical Church, constitutional rather than despotic, with its faith long ago immutably, and to all appearance adequately, defined: and they are not to be induced, by the pretext of development, to allow palpable innovations to take their place beside the truths acknowledged through fifty generations.

21. If to those, who are thus minded, I give the title of historical, it is because they seem to conform to the essential type of Christianity as it was exhibited under the Apostolical, the Episcopal, and the Patriarchal system;

and because they do not tamper in practice with that traditional testimony, of which in theory they admit the real validity and weight, and the great utility in conjunction with the appeal of the Church to Holy Scripture.

22. This, in its essential outlines, is the system which constitutes the scientific basis of the Eastern or Orthodox Churches. I do not speak of the defects, faults, and abuses, which doubtless abound in them, as in one shape or another they are to be found in every religious body; but of the ultimate grounds, which, when put on their defence, they would assume as the warrant of what is essential to their system.

Great, without doubt, is in every case the interval between the written theory and the practice of ecclesiastical bodies. The difference is scarcely less between their authorised doctrine, in the proper sense, which they hold as of obligation, and the developments which that doctrine receives through the unchecked, or little checked, predominance of the prevailing bias in the works of individual writers, and in the popular tradition. It is with the former only that I have here to do. Inasmuch, however, as few or none of them are judged among us (in my opinion) so superficially and harshly as the Churches of the East, I would observe, on their behalf, that they know nothing of five great conflicts, which more than ever distract the Latin Church as a whole: conflict between the Church and the State; conflict between the Church and the Scripture; conflict between the Church and the family; conflict between the Church and the individual mind; conflict between the Church, and modern culture, science, and civilisation.

23. While the largest numerical following of this scheme of belief is to be found in the Eastern Churches,

a recurrence to the outline, by which I have described it, will show that it includes, together with the so-called Liberal Catholics whom the Papal Court regards as the parasitic vermin of its Church, and the Old Catholics whom it has succeeded in visibly expelling, the classical theology of the English Church. This may be said to form one of its wings. The standard books and the recognised writers, that express the theological mind of Anglicanism, proceed throughout on the assertion, or the assumption, that the Church is a visible society or congregation; and her leaders and episcopal rulers preserved with an unfailing strictness the succession of Bishops, at a time, and under circumstances, when the policy of the hour would have recommended their treating it as a matter of indifference. This proposition is in no manner weakened by the fact that, in most or many cases, they made large allowance for the position of the Protestants of the Continent. The position of those important bodies was then, to a great extent, undefined and provisional, and was capable of being regarded as in a certain sense representing, with respect to government and order, a case of necessity. The changes, made in England during the sixteenth century as to tenets and usages, they treat as having been originally within the competence of the local Church which accepted them, and as never having been condemned by a legitimate authority; and they fear lest the general rejection of tradition should really mean contempt of history. These principles are treated by many who view them from an exterior standing point, for example by Lord Macaulay, as "the crotchets of the High Church party." But it is an established fact, of that order which an historian should respect, that "The High Church party" is but another name, rough perhaps, but

true, for the powerful influence which has moulded the theology of the English Church, or rather of the Anglican Churches, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth down to the present hour.

24. Among non-episcopal Protestants, a small portion of the German divines are, perhaps, alone in sympathy with the system here described. As a recent, yet not too recent, specimen of this class, I would mention Rothe.* But, in other times, the description would have included many of the weightiest names of Protestantism, such as Casaubon and Grotius, and, towering even over these, the great Leibnitz.

25. The strength of this system lies generally, first in its hold upon antiquity, and in the authority and consent of the earlier Christian writers, known as the Fathers; every one of whom holds the visibility and teaching office of the Church, while it is only the wrenching of a word here and there from a very few of their works into forced prominence and isolation, that can bring any one of them so much as upon speaking terms with the Papal Monarchy. At this point, a distinction must be taken between East and West. Oppression and poverty have thrown the Churches of the East into a defensive attitude, and have of necessity limited the range of learning, and condemned them specially to the evils of stagnation. But their doctrinal continuity is not liable to the challenge, which impeaches that of the Roman Church. In old times, they appear as Protestant, in the most legitimate and historic sense of the word, against the innovations of the Papal Supremacy, and of interpolation in the Creed of Nice and Constantinople. At the present day, they are

* 'Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche.' Wittenberg, 1837.

the most determined, and the most dreaded, of the antagonists to the Vatican Council. In the West, this scheme of religion has rested on learning and weight, rather than on numbers and organisation. But its respect for history and mental freedom, and the general moderation of its views of ecclesiastical power, had, at any rate down to our own day, sensibly mitigated the violent asperities of the Roman system: and, under the Anglican form, have in some way enabled it to maintain, and in recent times even to strengthen, its hold upon a large portion of the most active, and the most self-asserting, among all the nations of the Old world. Lastly, the scheme has the advantage that it is not the mere profession of a school, and a system, on paper or in the brain; but is firmly, though variously, incorporated in the authentic documents, and historical traditions, of large ecclesiastical bodies, great limbs of Christendom.

26. If such be the strength of the second among my five schemes when impartially viewed, it has likewise marks of weakness properly its own. Its adherents, while they teach that Christians ought to be united in the visible organisation of the Church, are *de facto* severed one from another, as well as (most of them) from the largest portion of the Christian world. What is still worse, in a merely popular sense—and it is only in the popular sense that I now presume to speak of strength or weakness—is, that it lies essentially in a mean: that it accepts the basis of religious belief in much the same fashion as we have all to accept those of Providential guidance, and moral duty, in practical life. It acknowledges the authority of the Church, but cannot, so to speak, lay its finger on any means whereby that authority can, at any given moment, be fully and finally exercised. It allows Holy Scripture to be

supreme in matters of faith; but it interposes more or less of an interpretative sense, in controverted subjects, between the Divine Word and the individual mind. What men like most in religion is simplicity and directness. But this method does not speak with the directness, or the simplicity, of either of its neighbour systems: whereof one directs inquiries straight to the priest, the Bishop, and the Pope; and the other promises a private and personal infallibility, which is to follow the pious exercise of the mind upon the Divine Word. The same thing happens to them in a great religious crisis as to the moderate shades of political opinion in times of revolutionary excitement. They are apt to disappear like the Presbyterians before Cromwell, or like Lafayette before the Gironde, which was, in its turn, to give place to the Terror. The most sharply defined propositions are those, which most relieve the understanding by satisfying the emotional part of our nature. Both on this side and on that, the stammering lips are silenced; and adherents are individually liable, as experience has shown, to be hustled into the opposite camps, where such propositions are the watchwords of the rival hosts.

27. The third to be noticed of the great powers * on the map of religious thought and feeling is that which I have made bold to term the Protestant Evangelical. For

* A remarkable effort has been made to incorporate the idea, which I have described as the basis of this Third Division, in what was formerly known as the Surrey Chapel. It was originally founded for the Rev. Rowland Hill; and now, under the ministry of the Rev. Newman Hall, the congregation is about to migrate to a larger and more stately building. The scheme rests upon a "Schedule of Doctrines," which excludes the visible Church as an historical institution or polity, but requires dogmatic belief, of the character stated in the text, and it does not require, or include, connection with any particular persuasion of professing Christians.

the pure and simple name Protestant is now largely and loosely used; sometimes even by men who, themselves believing nothing, nevertheless want countenance for their ends from among those who believe something; and who trust for this to the charm that still invests the early stages of its career, and associates it with the idea of a battle manfully fought for freedom against oppression and abuse. To fasten down its sense, the affix "Evangelical" may suffice. The phrase, thus developed, comprehends all who, rejecting the Papal monarchy, either reject, or at least do not accept, the doctrine of a Catholic Church, visible and historical; and who, without always proceeding to an abstract repudiation of all aid from authority or tradition, are on behalf of human freedom extremely jealous of such aid, and disposed rather to rely on the simple contact of the individual mind with the Divine Word. Such is their negative side.

28. But they adhere to all, or nearly all, the great affirmations of the Creeds. They believe strongly, if not scientifically, in revelation, inspiration, prophecy; in the dispensation of God manifest in the flesh; in an atoning Sacrifice for the sin of the world; in a converting and sanctifying Spirit; in short, they accept with fulness, in parts perhaps with crude exaggerations, what are termed the doctrines of grace. It is evident that we have here the very heart of the great Christian tradition, even if that heart be not encased in the well-knit skeleton of a dogmatic and ecclesiastical system, such as is maintained in principle by the ancient Churches. It is also surely evident to the unprejudiced mind that we have before us a true incorporation of Christian belief to some extent in institutions, and to a far larger extent in life and character. And this scheme may claim without doubt, not

less truly than those which have gone before, to be a tree bearing fruit. It has framed large communities. It has formed Christian nations; or at least, has not un-formed them. It has sustained an experience of ten generations of men. It may be that it does not generate largely the most refined forms of religion, or much of the very highest spirituality; but he would be a bold man, who should attempt to fasten on it any clearly marked and palpable inferiority of moral results, as compared with those of other Christian schemes.

29. I do not enter on the controvertible question of the claim it would probably advance to a marked superiority. My object is to record, on its behalf, that it has to a great extent made good its ground in the world of Christian fact: that it cannot be put out of the way by any expedient or figure of controversy, such as that it is a branch torn from the stem, with a life only derivative and provisional. Open to criticism it is, as may easily be shown: but it is one great factor of the Christian system, as that system now exists in the world. It is eminently outspoken, and tells of its own weaknesses as freely as of its victories or merits: it rallies millions, nay scores of millions, to its standard: and while it entirely harmonises with the movement of modern civilisation, it exhibits its seal in the work of all works, namely, in uniting the human soul to Christ.

30. The phrase I have employed would at the period of the Reformation have correctly described, with insignificant exceptions, the Reformed communities of the Continent. Now, in the nineteenth century, I apprehend it can only be considered to represent a party, larger or smaller, in each of those communions: a party, of which the numerical strength is hard to esti-

mate even by conjecture. But it may be numerically very large. In the United Kingdom, assuredly, it may claim nearly the entire body of Presbyterians and Nonconformists under their various denominations. Moreover, that section of the Church of England which is termed the Evangelical or Low Church, not now very large, but still active and zealous, seems in great measure to belong to it. Of the English-speaking population in the New World, that is to say, in the United States and the British Colonies, which may be roughly taken at fifty millions, it may claim perhaps as many as thirty for its own: nor does any portion of the entire group seem to be endowed with greater vigour than this, which has grown up in new soil, and far from the possibly chilling shadow of National Establishments of religion.

31. On its popular and working side, in its pastoral and missionary energy, in the almost unrestrained freedom of its movements, the group is strong. Nor need it suffer greatly from the reproach of severances in outward communion, when it is considered that the particular forms of religious organisation are, in its view, matters of comparative indifference, and that the intermixture of ministerial offices, so incongruous and unseemly where enjoined principles draw the line of demarcation, is, for its respective sections, nothing else than a fostering and cheering sign of brotherly good-will. Its weakness is on the side of thought. This is the form of the Christian idea, which, and which alone, accepts the responsibility of upholding the main part of the dogmatic system of the first ages, yet renounces, for fear of ulterior consequences, the immense assistance which the argument on the text and *corpus* of the sacred books derives from the living development, through so many ages, of the Christian

system, and the continuous assent of the Church to one and the same faith.

32. It is burdened with the necessities of an exclusive scheme; for it not only denounces, as desertion from the faith, the abandonment of the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, but likewise, in some of its sections, it interpolates new essentials of its own, such as personal assurance, particular election, final perseverance, and peculiar conceptions respecting the atonement of Christ and the doctrine of justification. In respect of this last, it has often ascribed to faith the character and efficacy of a moral work; seemingly not even aware that it was thereby cutting from beneath its feet the famous *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. It has a logical difficulty in ridding itself of such excrescences; seeing that the excrescence and that to which it clings grow out of one and the same soil, as they are received upon one and the same warrant, whether it be that of a favourite religious teacher, or of a personal illumination.

33. Most of all, it has very severely suffered from the recent assaults on the *corpus* of Scripture, which it had received simply as a self-attested volume; and on its verbal inspiration, a question which has never offered so serious a dilemma to such as are content to take their stand on the ancient constitution of the Church, and to allow its witnessing and teaching office. Grounding itself with rather rigid exclusiveness upon the canon of the Bible, it is obliged to protest against the government, and many of the doctrines, that subsisted in the Church at the very epoch when that canon was made up. Its repudiations are so considerable, and so far-reaching, that there remains hardly any adequate standing ground for the defence of that which it is not less decidedly set

upon retaining. It is therefore, as might be expected, a school poor as yet in the literature of Church history, of dogmatic theology, and of philosophic thought.

34. Its own annals, from the sixteenth century downwards, supply abundant proof of its lying open, at many points, to the largest disintegration. This disintegration is not, as in the last case, personal and atomic. It is not the mere occasional departure of individual deserters: it is decrepitude and decadence under organic laws. Even now, amidst a profusion of excellences, there are signs that danger is at hand. Indeed, were it not for the ground of hope ever furnished by true piety and zeal, it seems hard to assign any limit to the future range of the destructive principle. Even the evanescence of Calvinistic crudities, once required as the very quintessence of the Gospel, may excite misgiving in the minds of friendly though extraneous observers, when they reflect that no higher or other authority, than that which these crudities have enjoyed, is allowed to the highest and most central verities of the ancient creeds.

35. We now pass away, by a great stride, into the region of Theism. We have quitted the zone in which all alike adore the name and person of the Messiah; in which Scripture is supreme; in which is recognised a supernatural, as well as a providential order; in which religion is authoritative and obligatory, and based on an objective standard. We have entered a zone in which the subjective instinct, the need or appetite of man for religion, is regarded as its title and as its measure; in which, as far as religion is concerned (not, I presume, in other matters), truth is mainly that which a man troweth; and in which the individual, growing towards maturity, instead of accepting and using the tradition of his fathers, until

his adult faculties see ground to question it, is rather warned against such acceptance, as enhancing the difficulties of impartial choice. We are here commonly introduced, at least in theory, to a new mode of training. In things touching his bodily and his intelligent life, the youth is indeed allowed to profit by the vast capital, which has been accumulated by the labour and experience of his race. But, in respect to the world unseen, and to its Author, he must not be imbued with prejudice; there is no such thing as established or presumptive truth, of which he can avail himself; he is doomed, or counselled, to begin anew. What he attains, as it began with his infancy, so it will die with his death. He inherited from no one, and no one will inherit from him.

In making this transition, I confess to feeling a great change of climate. It is not simply that certain tenets have been dropped. The mental attitude, the method of knowledge, have been changed. Under the three former systems that method was traditional and continuous: it is here independent, and simply renewable upon a lease to each man for his life.

36. Such a sketch is, I think, conformable to the theory of modern Theism, and such is its goal or final standing point in practice. But this is not the whole picture. It is time to show its positive side. It recognises one Almighty Governor of the world; and, if it has scruples about calling Him a Person, yet conscious of Him as one who will deal with us, and with whom we have to deal, as persons deal with one another, this Almighty Being has placed us under discipline in the world; and will in some real and effective manner bring it about that the good shall be happy, and that those who do evil shall surely suffer for it. These are truths of the utmost value

in themselves. Nay, who shall say that, were the great disease of the moral world less virulent than it is, they would not, of themselves, supply it with a sufficient medicine? But further, most of the Theists have come to be such, not by a rejection of Christianity, but by a declension from it. Hence, in quitting their ancient home, they have carried away with them a portion, sometimes a large portion, of the furniture; a deep personal reverence for the person of the Saviour, and a warm adhesion to the greater part at least of His moral teaching; nay, even, as for example in the writings of Mr. Martineau, a devout recognition of its higher spiritual aims.

37. There may be observed, however, on the part of this school of teachers, not exclusively but specially, a disposition to recommend their system by associating it with what is called universalism; or, the doctrine that all human, or more properly all created being, however averse and remote it may now be from God, shall at some future time be brought into conformity, and consequent felicity. There can be no doubt of the predisposition of very many to fall in with a notion of this kind. It gives the sort of pleasure, which we may conceive to attend the removal of a strongly-constructed bit from the mouth of a restive horse. But it propounds a belief; and an affirmative proposition must have for its foundation something more solid than a mere sense of relief. In order that a scheme of this kind may attain to weight and authority, as distinguished from mere popularity, it seems requisite that some effort should be made, I will not say to support it from Scripture or tradition, but to establish for it a place among the recognised principles of natural religion; to sustain it by analogies and presumptions from human experience, and from the observation of

life, character, and the scheme of things under which we live. When, by a solid use of the methods of Butler, it shall have been shown that a scheme of this kind takes hold of and fits into the moral government of the world, and the natural workings of the human conscience, then indeed some progress will have been made towards obtaining a hearing for its claim to be accounted an article of religion. But till that time comes, it will not perhaps be a source to its advocates of great intellectual or moral strength.

38. Now, we have no right whatever to impute bad faith to the profession of the Unitarians and others, that they cannot and will not part with the name of Christians; that they are the true professors of a reformed Christianity; and that they have effected with thoroughness and consistency that reduction of it to the form of its original promulgation by its illustrious Teacher, which, in the sixteenth century, others were either too timid, or not enough enlightened, to effect.

Since the time of Belsham, considerable changes seem to have taken place in the scheme of Unitarianism. At the present day, it probably includes much variety of religious thought. But I am not aware that it has abandoned the claim to be the best representative of the primitive Gospel as it was delivered by Christ Himself.

39. The Jews, who, taken together, form a rather large community, have hitherto commonly believed themselves to be the stewards of an unfulfilled Redemption. But it seems that a portion at least of them are now disposed to resolve their expected Messiah into a typical personage, prefiguring the blessings of civilisation. It may be doubted whether such a modification, as is thus indicated, would greatly add to the moral force of Judaism, or make

its alliance more valuable to the group which I am endeavouring to sketch.

40. Inasmuch as it was the doctrine of the Incarnation which gave to Love, as a practical power, its place in religion, so we might suppose that, upon the denial of that doctrine, that seraph would unfold its wings, and quit the shrine it had so long warmed and blessed. But it is not so. Whatever be the cause, devotion and fervour still reside, possibly it should be said still linger, within this precinct of somewhat chill abstractions. There are within it many men not only irreproachable in life, but excellent; and many who have written, both in this country and on the Continent, with no less power than earnestness, in defence of the foundations of the belief which they retain. Such are, for example, Professor Frohschammer in Germany and M. Laveleye in Belgium: while in this country, without pretending to exhaust the list, I would pay a debt of honour and respect to Mr. Martineau, Mr. Greg, Dr. Carpenter, and Mr. Jevons. See, for example, Mr. Greg's last edition of the 'Creed of Christendom': Dr. Carpenter's address to the British Association at Bristol; the remarkable chapter with which Mr. Jevons has closed his work on Scientific Method; and, most recent of all, the powerful productions contributed to this REVIEW, in which Mr. Martineau has exhibited the "theologic conception" of the great Causal Will, as the "inmost nucleus of dynamic thought." *

41. The truth is, that the school consists not of a nation or tribe, with its promiscuous and often coarse materials, but of select individuals, scattered here and

* March No., pp. 531, 546.

there, and connected by little more than coincident opinion. They are generally men exempt from such temptations as distress entails, and fortified with such restraints as culture can supply. It is not extravagantly charitable to suppose that a portion of them at least may be such as, from a happy moral, as well as mental constitution, have never felt in themselves the need of the severer and more efficacious control, supplied by the doctrines of the Christian Church. In this sense, under the conditions of our human state, goodness itself may in one sense be a snare. In any attempt, however, to estimate the system as a system, it must be recollected that the moral standard of individuals is fixed not alone, and sometimes not principally, by their personal convictions, but by the principles, the traditions, and the habits of the society in which they live, and below which it is a point of honour, as well as of duty, not to sink. A religious system is only then truly tested, when it is set to reform and to train, on a territory of its own, great masses of mankind.

42. Still, we should not hastily be led, by antagonism of opinion, to estimate lightly the influence which a school, limited like this in numbers, may exercise on the future. For, if they are not rulers, they rule those who are. They belong to the class of thinkers and teachers; and it is from within this circle, always, and even in the largest organisations, a narrow one, that there go forth the influences which one by one form the minds of men, and in their aggregate determine the course of affairs, the fate of institutions, and the happiness of the human race. What I am disposed to apprehend is that, contrary to their own intentions, while the aggregate result of the destructive part of their operations may be large, in their

positive and constructive teaching, tried on a large scale, they will greatly fail.

43. It is not their numerical weakness alone which impresses me with the fear that, if once belief were reduced to the dimensions allowed by this class of teachers, its attenuated residue would fall an easy prey to the destroyer. It is partly because the scheme has never been able to endure the test of practice in great communities. The only analogous case of a large monotheism, known to historic times, is that of Mahomet; and, without wishing to judge that system harshly, I presume that none regard it as competent to fill the vacuum which would be left by the crumbling away of historical Christianity. The general monotheism, which many inquirers, and most Christians, trace in the most primitive times, did not live long enough to stamp even so much as a clear footprint on the ground of history. The monotheism of the Hebrews lived, upon a narrow and secluded area, a fluctuating chequered life, and apparently owed that life to aids altogether exceptional. The monotheism of the philosophic schools was little more than a declamation and a dream. Let us listen for a moment to Macaulay on the old philosophers: —

"God the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust."*

* Essay on Milton. Essays, i. 22.

44. This system then is dry, abstract, unattractive, without a way to the general heart. And surely there are yet graver and more conclusive reasons why it should, in its sickly revival, add another failure to those which have hitherto marked, and indeed formed, its annals. It is intellectually charged with burdens, which it cannot bear. We live, as men, in a labyrinth of problems, and of moral problems, from which there is no escape permitted us. The prevalence of pain and sin, the limitations of free will, approximating sometimes to its virtual extinction, the mysterious laws of our independence, the indeterminateness for most or many men of the discipline of life, the cross purposes that seem at so many points to traverse the dispensations of an Almighty benevolence, can only be encountered by a large, an almost immeasurable, suspense of judgment. Solution for them we have none.

45. But a scheme came eighteen hundred years ago into the world, which is an earnest and harbinger of solution: which has banished from the earth, or frightened into the darkness, many of the foulest monsters that laid waste humanity; which has restored woman to her place in the natural order; which has set up the law of right against the rule of force; which has proclaimed, and in many great particulars enforced, the canon of mutual love; which has opened from within sources of strength for poverty and weakness, and put a bit in the mouth, and a bridle on the neck, of pride. In a word, this scheme, by mitigating the present pressure of one and all of these tremendous problems, has entitled itself to be heard when it boldly assures us that a day will come, in which we shall know as we are known, and when their pressure shall no longer baffle the strong intellects and

characters among us, nor drive the weaker even to despair. Meantime no man, save by his own wilful fault, is the worse for the Advent of Christ, while at least many are the better. Then, in shedding upon us the substance of so many gifts, and the earnest of so many more, it has done nothing to aggravate such burdens of the soul as it did not remove. For adventitious, forced, and artificial theories of particular men, times, and places, it cannot be held responsible. Judged by its own authentic and universal documents, I take it to be in its very heart, a remedial, an alleviating scheme.

46. It is a singular puzzle of psychology to comprehend how men can reject its aids, bounteous even if limited, and thus doom themselves to face with crippled resources the whole host of the enemy. For, as Theists, they have, to make all the admissions, to do battle with all the objections, which appear to lie against the established provision for the government of the world; but they deprive themselves of the invaluable title to appeal either to the benevolent doctrines of historical Christianity, or to the noble, if only partial, results that it has wrought.

But it is now time to set out upon the last stage of our journey.

47. I need not repeat the catalogue of schemes, which appear to fall under my fifth and last head, and which have been given on a former page.

It is a social truism that to tell A he is like B in most cases offends him; and to tell B he is like A commonly has the same effect. I fear the classifications thus far attempted may have a similar consequence, and with more reason; for we are bound to think well of our beliefs, but not of our countenances. Still less acceptable may

possibly be the bracketing, in which no less than eight systems will now be presented to view. Let me as far as may be anticipate and forego displeasure by stating anew that the principle of classification is negative; and that the common tie of the systems now to be named together is that they do not acknowledge, or leave space for, a personal government and personal Governor of the world, in the sense in which these phrases have recently been defined. Religion, in its popular and usual sense, they seem by a necessity of their systems to renounce; but to say that they all renounce it in its sense of a binding tie to something which is external to themselves, is beyond my proposition, and beyond my intention.

48. Hartmann, in the work I have already referred to, gives us what he thinks a religion, to replace departing Christianity, under the name of Pantheism: Strauss offers us the worship of the *Universum* in his *Alte und Neue Glaube:* Comte claims to produce a more perfect apparatus in the Religion of Humanity. This profession is one which I may be unable to distinguish from an hallucination, but I am far from presuming to pronounce or believe it an imposture. Nay, more than this: in the individual case, it may not be an hallucination at all. To many an ancient Stoic the image of virtue, to many a Peripatetic the constitution and law of his own nature as it had been analysed and described by Aristotle, may have constituted in a greater or a less degree an object of true reverence and worship, a restraint upon tendencies to evil, an encouragement to endeavour after good, nay, even a consolation in adversity and suffering, and some resource on the approach of death. In many a moderate speculator images like these, nay, and systems far less rational than these, may at this moment live, and open, or at the

worst live without closing, the same fountains of good influence.

49. But, as in wines, it is one question what mode of composition will produce a commodity drinkable in the country of origin, and what further provision may be requisite in order that the product may bear a sea voyage without turning into vinegar. so, in the matter of belief, select individuals may subsist on a poor, thin, sodden, and attenuated diet, which would simply be death to the multitude. Schemes, then, may suffice for the moral wants of a few intellectual and cultivated men, which cannot be propagated, and cannot be transmitted; which cannot bear the wear and tear of constant re-delivery; which cannot meet the countless and ever-shifting exigencies of our nature taken at large; which cannot do the rough work of the world. The colours, that will endure through the term of a butterfly's existence, would not avail to carry the works of Titian down from generation to generation and century to century. Think of twelve agnostics, or twelve pantheists, or twelve materialists, setting out from some modern Jerusalem to do the work of the twelve Apostles!

50. But, whatever the systems in question may seem to me to threaten in their eventual results, I desire to avoid even the appearance of charging the professors of them, as such, with mental or moral lawlessness. I am not unmindful of the saying of an eminent Presbyterian, Dr. Norman Macleod, that many an opponent of dogma is nearer to God than many an orthodox believer; or of the words of Laertes on the dead Ophelia and the priest:

> "A ministering angel shall my sister be,
> When thou liest howling."*

* 'Hamlet,' v. 1.

I shall not attempt to include in this paper, which has already perhaps exceeded its legitimate boundaries, any incisive sketch of these several systems, or to pass, indeed, greatly beyond the province of a dictionary.

51. By the Sceptic, I understand one who, under the pressure either of intellectual or of moral difficulties, presented to him in the scheme of Revelation or Providence, makes universal that suspense of judgment, in regard to the unseen, which the believer in Christ, or in some form of religion, may admit as partially warrantable; and who consequently, by conviction in part, and in part by habit, allows the influence of the unseen upon his mind to sink to zero. This outline would leave a broad distinction between the sceptic proper, and the questioner who is, in good faith and with a practical aim, searching for an answer to his questions; even though the two may be agreed at the moment in their stopping short of all affirmative conclusions.

52. By the Atheist I understand the man who not only holds off, like the sceptic, from the affirmative, but who drives himself, or is driven, to the negative assertion in regard either to the whole Unseen, or to the existence of God.

53. By the Agnostic, again, is signified one who formulates into a proposition the universal doubt of the sceptic; agreeing with him, in that he declines to predicate the non-existence of the objects of religion, but agreeing with the atheist in so far that he removes them, by a dogma, from the sphere open and possible to human knowledge, either absolute or practical.

54. Then comes the Secularist. Him I understand to stop short of the three former schools, in that he does not of necessity assert anything but the positive and exclusive

claims of the purposes, the enjoyments, and the needs, presented to us in the world of sight and experience. He does not require, in principle, even the universal suspense of scepticism; but, putting the two worlds into two scales of value, he finds that the one weighs much, the other either nothing, or nothing that can be appreciated. At the utmost he is like a chemist who, in a testing analysis, after putting into percentages all that he can measure, if he finds something behind so minute as to refuse any quantitative estimate, calls it by the name of "trace." *

55. Next of kin to the secularist would be the professor of what I have described as a revived Paganism. I would rather have termed it Hellenism, were it not that there lives and breathes, in the world of fact, another Hellenism with a superior title to the name. This scheme evokes from the distant past what at any rate once was an historical reality, and held through ages the place, and presented to the eye the shell, of a religion, for communities of men who have profoundly marked the records of our race. It may perhaps be called secularism glorified. It asserted, or assumed, not only the exclusive claims of this life, but the all-sufficiency of the life on behalf of which these claims were made. It was plainly a religion for

* The following paragraph is from the prospectus of a weekly periodical:—"The *Secularist* is an exponent of that philosophy of life termed Secularism, which deprecates the old policy of sacrificing the certain welfare of humanity on earth to the merely possible and altogether unknown requirements of a life beyond the grave; which concentrates human attention on the life which now is, instead of upon a dubious life to come; which declares Science to be the only available Providence of man; which repudiates groundless faith and accepts the sole guide of reason; and makes conduciveness to human welfare the criterion of right and wrong."

Dives and not for Lazarus; a religion, of which it was a first necessity that the mass of the community should be slaves to do the hard rough work of life, and should be excluded from its scope; and of which it was an undoubted result to make the nominally free woman, as a rule, the virtual slave of the free man. But its great distinction was that it was a reality, and not a simple speculation. It trained men boldly, and completely, in all the organs of the flesh and of the mind, and taught them to live as statesmen, soldiers, citizens, scholars, philosophers, epicures, and sensualists. It had, too, its schisms and its heresies; an Aristophanes with a scheme more masculine, an Alcibiades with one more effeminate. It had likewise a copious phantasmagoria of deities; a hierarchy above, represented in the every-day world by a priesthood without force either social or moral, yet supplying a portion of the grandeur required by the splendid and elaborate art-life of the people, and perhaps still partially serving the purpose of the legislator, by imposing the restraint of terror upon the lower passions of the vulgar.

56. To the masses of men, this system did not absolutely prohibit religion; a religion idolatrous in form, but not on that account wholly without value. To the educated life of the free citizen, the prohibition was as complete as it could be made; and the spectacle of that life in the classical age of Greece can hardly be satisfactory to those, who teach that we have, in the inborn craving of the human heart for religion as a part of its necessary sustenance, a guarantee for the conservation of all that is essential to it as a power, and as an instrument of our discipline. This, then, I dismiss as the religion of "the sufficiency of life"; with a debased worship appended to it for the ignorant, but with no relegating, no binding

power, between the educated man on the one side, and anything beyond the framework of the visible world on the other. Such a scheme as this could not but end in utter selfishness and degeneracy; still we must not forget, how long it takes our wayward and inconsequent race to work out the last results of its principles. So long as men are only on the way to moral ruin, there has been, and there may again be, space and scope for much patriotism, much honour, and even much love.

57. Materialism finds in matter the base and source of all that is. Perhaps this is properly and strictly a doctrine of philosophy rather than one touching religion. I am too slightly possessed of the real laws and limits of the conception to speak with confidence: but I do not at present see the answer to the following proposition. In our actual world we have presented to us objects and powers simply material; and we have also presented to us objects and powers *including* what is wholly different in fashion and operation from matter. If, then, upon a materialistic basis we can have 'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth,' the works of Aristotle, the *Divina Commedia*, the Imitation of Christ, the Gospels and Epistles, there may in the unseen world possibly be reared, on this same basis, all that theology has taught us. And thus materialism would join hands with orthodoxy. Such may be the scheme from one point of view. In common use, and in what is perhaps the most consistent use, I am afraid the phrase is appropriated by those who desire to express, in a form the most crude and crass, the exclusion of Deity from the world and the mind of man, and from the government of his life; and the eventual descent into matter of all that now idly seems to our eyes to be above it. Such a materialism is the special danger of comfortable and money-making

times. The multiplication of the appliances of material and worldly life, and the increased command of them through the ever-mounting aggregate of wealth in the favoured sections of society, silently but steadily tend to enfeeble in our minds the sense of dependence, and to efface the kindred sense of sin. On the other hand they are as steadily increasing the avenues of desire, and enhancing the absorbing effect of enjoyment. With this comes the deadening of the higher conception of existence, and the disposition to accept the lower, nay the lowest, one.

58. A candidate in greater favour for the place, which it is supposed Christianity and Theism are about to vacate, is Pantheism. Meeting it often in its negative and polemical aspects, I am not so well aware from what source to draw an authentic statement of its positive character. It sins, perhaps, in ambiguity of definition, more than any of the other symbols adopted to designate a scheme of religion. It may be understood to conceive of God as the centre of the system, by will and might penetrating and pervading all Being to its outermost circumference, and immanent in each thing and each organism, in proportion to its constitution, capacity, and end. Or, this moral centre of all life and power may be resolved into the negative centre of the circle in mathematics, the point which hath position but not parts, and whose imagined gravitating power is but a name for the sum of forces not its own, which happen to find at that point their maximum, and which give it accordingly a conventional entity, so as to denote in concentration what exists only in diffusion.

59. In the former of these two senses, I am by no means sure that Dante is not a Pantheist. For he thus

speaks of the Divine will: and by the mouth, too, of a spirit in bliss:—

> "In la sua volontade è nostra pace:
> Ella è quel mare, al qual tutto si muove,
> O ch' Ella cria, o che Natura face.'*

In this sense Pantheism is, or may be, the highest Christianity. But in the other sense of the phrase, the conception of God is diluted, not enlarged; the visible creation, which is called His robe, is a robe laid upon a lay figure. All by which He indicates a will, all by which He governs, all by which He inspires the awe, reverence, and love that cluster round a person; all that places us in personal relation to Him, and makes personal dealings with Him possible, is disintegrated and held in solution, and can no more fulfil its proper function than the copper, which is dissolved in acid, can before precipitation serve the purpose of a die.†

60. There now remains of this formidable octave only the subject of Comtism or Positivism, or, as it might be called, Humanism. In a general view, it seems to improve upon Pantheism, by bringing into the account certain assets, which Pantheism does not stoop to notice, namely, the vast roll of the life and experience of the great human past, summed into an unit. In human characters, aggregate or select, it sees, or thinks it sees, a noble picture; in human achievement, a large accumulation of moral and social, as well as material capital: in the one a fit and

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* Div. Comm., Parad. c. 111.

† The various possible senses of Pantheism are set out with clearness at the opening of Mr. Hunt's First Chapter in his Essay on the subject (Longmans, 1866). Of Mr. Hunt's proposition that personality involves limitation (p. 341) I have never yet seen anything approaching to a proof.

capable object to move the veneration, and thus mould the moral being of the race; in the other, the means and appliances needful for continued progress in the prospective career. When this system is viewed from the standing ground of belief, nothing can redeem it from the charge of that great initial act of destruction, in which it partakes with the seven competitors: yet there is, one would think, much of faith and of chivalry in this constructive effort; and some sympathy will be felt for a gallant endeavour to build up a working substitute for the old belief, and to efface the Ichabod written on the tablets of a deserted shrine.

61. Several of the schemes, which I have presumed to arrange in this fifth division, are, in the mouths of their more selfish and vulgar professors, mere names to cover the abandonment of all religion; sometimes, perhaps, even of much moral obligation. With regard to the rest, I think it important to dwell upon the observation that they are, from one cause or another, exceptional and not ordinary men—men so conditioned that the relation between belief and life in their case affords no indication whatever of the consequences with which a like state as to belief, becoming widely prevalent, and in a measure permanent, would be followed among the mass of men. And this on many grounds. They are, for example, *rari nantes;* for though their aggregate number, in the circle of men devoted to intellectual pursuits, may be at this moment large, the number of those whose witness agrees together, who are (so to speak) in any positive sense of the same communion, is small; and small sects of opinion, not emboldened by wide and general countenance, do not rapidly develop, even in their own consciousness, the extreme consequences that their schemes would produce in practice. From many

motives, good as well as inferior, they are content to breathe the moral atmosphere of the community around them, are governed by its traditions and its fashions, and wear its habiliments, which they oftentimes mistake for the work of their own hands. Again, they are men whose life is absorbed in intellectual pursuits, and who are saved by the high interest of their profession, or their function, from the mischiefs left to idle hands and idle minds, cursed as these so often are with unbounded means and opportunities of indulgence.

62. Once more: I lately ventured, in this REVIEW, to propound an opinion comforting to some, and not offensive, I hope, to any, that in some cases the disposition to undervalue, or retrench, or even abandon the old Christian belief, may be due to a composition happier than the average in the small amount of energy of its tendencies to evil, and in a consequent insensibility to the real need both of restraining and of renovating powers for the true work of life.* While conscious, however, of no disposition to restrict admissions of this kind, but rather willing to enlarge them, I earnestly protest against the inference, in whatever shape, that no other fruits than such as are known to be reaped from the isolated and depressed existence of these schemes would follow upon their general adoption. Let me repeat it: I should as readily admit it to be possible that the life and health of an entire community could be sustained upon a dietary framed on the scale that has sufficed in those very singular cases, occasionally to be met with, of persons who are able to live, and in a manner thrive, on an incredibly small amount of aliment, and

* *Sup.* vol. i. p. 54.

who seem already to have passed into an existence half-ethereal.

63. When dealing with the four first departments of this rude chart of religious thought, I have in each case attempted to indicate some of the special sources of weakness in the several schemes, and of their strength respectively. In regard to the fifth, I postpone any such attempt, as it would lead me into a general consideration of the causes which have recently brought about, and which are still stimulating, a great movement of disintegration in the religious domain. The patience of the reader has been too severely taxed already to allow of my entering on a new field of discussion. I therefore leave for the present as it stands this multitudinous array of dislocated, and to a great extent conflicting, force; sensible that my account may wear in some eyes the appearance of an endeavour to describe the field, and the eve, of the Battle of Armageddon.

IV.

THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF OPINION.*

1877.

1. Many are the tricks of speech; and it has become almost a commonplace of our time to set up, in matters of opinion, an opposition between authority and truth, and to treat them as excluding one another. It would be about as reasonable to set up an opposition between butcher's meat and food. Commonplaces of this character are no better than expressions of a sentiment, which the understanding, betraying its trust, allows to pass unexamined because it flatters the prevailing fashion. For the fashion is to call in question, and to reject as needlessly irksome, all such rules of mental discipline as, within the sphere of opinion, require from us a circumspect consideration, according to the subject-matter, of the several kinds as well as degrees of evidence. These rules are troublesome rules; they sadly detract from the ease and slacken the rapidity of the journey towards our conclusions, and thus postpone the enjoyment of mental rest.

2. Sir Gilbert Lewis has done good service, which I hope rather than expect will be appreciated, in republishing the valuable work by his elder brother, Sir George, 'On the Influence of Authority in Matters of

* Reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century*, March 1877. The main argument is founded on the work of Sir G. C. Lewis, 'An Essay on the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion.' London, 1849; and 2nd edition, 1875.

Opinion.' It is perhaps the best monument of that learned, modest, most dispassionate, and most able man. The volume had become extremely rare, and could only be obtained at a high price. Yet, though the admirers were in earnest, the circle of them was very narrow. Only a few, a very few, hundred copies ever passed into the hands of the public. It appeared in 1849, at a time when comparative calm prevailed in the world of philosophy and speculation. The remarkable sobriety of the author, his abhorrence of paradox, his indifference to ornament, his rigidly conscientious handling, made it difficult for him to please the palate of the public, which even then required, as it now more exactingly requires, highly seasoned food.

3. Still, this unpretending book, it seems, could not die. Its republication may probably make the work known to a new set of readers; and, as the students of such a book are ordinarily men who severally act upon the minds of others, it may, and I hope will, attain to an influence relatively wide. It must be owned that the volume contains a considerable amount of matter which would be more appropriately placed in a treatise on the Science of Politics. But the main argument is so important, that I am desirous to present a summary which may convey a fair conception of its contents, and invite to a direct examination. Nor will this be done in the spirit of a partisan; for I shall try to extend the conclusion of this weighty writer on a point of the utmost weight, affecting not the frame of his argument, but its application.

4. I begin, too, with stating a difference, though one of small moment. Sir George Lewis traces the origin of the word authority through the Latin *auctor;* and the account

he gives is that "an *auctor* meant the creator or originator of anything. . . . Hence any person who determines our belief is called an *auctor*. . . . As writers, particularly of history, were the authorities for facts, *auctor* came to mean a writer."* But the word *augeo* properly means to increase, to make to grow, not to create;† and, while it is plain that *auctor* means on the one hand maker or originator, and on the other hand voucher, surety, witness, I cannot but think that the last-named is the original sense, and the preceding one secondary. The proper idea is that of one who *adds*. In strictness, this must be adding to what existed before, as a witness adds to the thing his testimony about the thing; a surety, his own liability to the liability of the principal. From this original form the meaning passes on to a gradual creation, the creation of something that receives successive increment, as in "auctor frugum";‡ "generis nec Dardanus auctor."§ If my view be sound, the use of the word author for writer is strictly correct, and belongs to the original sense. An "author" comes between us and the facts or ideas, and adds to them a πίστις, or ground of belief in his own assurance to us respecting them. And Dante is dealing with the word in its first intention when he says, addressing Virgil,

"Tu se 'il mio maestro, e 'l mio autore."‖

So he himself explains it in the *Convito* as "degno di fede e di ubbidienza;" "des Gehorsams und Glaubens würdig,"

* P. 6, note, edit. 1849, to which all references belong.

† Scheller cites Lucr. v. 323 and 389, as bearing the sense of creation, but they in no degree require it; and I think this interpretation of the word *auctor* has been, so to speak, reflected upon it from the known use of the derivative *authority*.

‡ Georg. i. 27. § Æn. iv. 365. ‖ 'Inferno,' i. 83.

in the note of the King of Saxony to his translation of the Poem. But the secondary sense is that used in Milton:

"Thou art my father, thou my author, thou." *

5. And hence we obtain the largest and clearest idea of "authority," as that which comes between us and an object, and in relation to us adds something to the object which is extrinsic to it, which is apart from any examination of it by ourselves, but which forms a motive, of greater or less weight as the case may be, for belief or action respectively in their several spheres.

It is with authority for belief or opinion alone, not distinguishing the two, that the work before us deals. It leaves aside authority applicable to action, whether freely or otherwise, as that of the law, of the parent, of the military officer, physician, clergyman, or other professional or specially instructed persons. I shall presently take a portion of these topics into view.

6. Now, it would sound strangely in our ears were any one of the most distinguished dealers in commonplace, instead of proclaiming, "not authority, but truth," to take for his text, "not examination, not inquiry, but truth." We should at once reply that examination or inquiry was no more in conflict with truth than our road to London is in conflict with London. The cases are parallel. Inquiry is a road to truth, and authority is a road to truth. Identical in aim, diverse in means and in effect, but both resting on the same basis. Inquiry is the more normal, the more excellent way; but penury of time and faculty absolutely precludes the human being from obtaining, by this truly royal road, a sufficient stock of knowledge for

* 'Paradise Lost,' ii. 864.

the necessary action of life; and authority is the humble but useful substitute.

7. Nor is the distinction between them in any sense one of antagonism; on the contrary, there is, besides the oneness of their ultimate sanction, this notable affinity betwixt them: the knowledge, referable to action, which we obtain by inquiry, is altogether or commonly probable knowledge; and authority is probable knowledge too. Of course both the authority and the inquiry must be regulated by the laws that belong to their respective kinds. The rule for us, in whatever case, is one: to make the best practicable use of the best available means for thinking truly and acting rightly, using inquiry where we can, accepting authority where we cannot effectually use inquiry.

8. Having taken this general view of the region before us, I will now follow the guidance of Sir George Lewis, premising that he seems to aim at working definitions rather than such as are strictly scientific.

(*a*). His inquiry has no reference to matters of fact; and these he defines as "anything of which we obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness, or any individual event or phenomenon which is the object of sensation."*

(*b*). Disputed questions of fact pass into the region of matters of opinion. And, more largely, matters of opinion are "general propositions or theorems relating to laws of nature or mind, principles and rules of human conduct, future probabilities, deductions from hypotheses, and the like, *about which a doubt may reasonably exist.*"†

(*c*). Opinions may be entertained from compulsion, or from inducement of interest.‡ These, I should say, may

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* P. 1. † P. 3. ‡ P. 6.

conveniently be called authority improper; but they rest upon authority proper, when embraced without reasoning because others, believed or assumed to be competent, entertain them.

(*d*). "A large proportion of the general opinions of mankind are derived merely from authority."* And the advice of competent judges has great influence in questions of practice. When truths have been discovered by original inquirers, and received by competent judges, it is principally by authority that they are accredited and diffused.† Such adoption cannot lead to an improvement of knowledge, or to discovery of new truths: "the utmost he can hope is to adopt the belief of those who, at the time, are least likely to be in error." We are, of course, to assume this proposition to apply to the cases where it is necessary or harmless to have some belief, and where there are not such patent grounds for doubt or question as to recommend that valuable though sometimes despised expedient, suspense of judgment.

9. In his second chapter, Sir George Lewis shows the great extent of the opinions founded upon authority. These are such as we derive from instruction in childhood, or from seniors, or from fashion. He shows the extremely limited power of inquiry by the working class; and how even the well-informed rely chiefly on compendia and secondary authorities. He shows how, in strict truth, when we act upon conclusions of our own, for which the original reasons are no longer present to our minds, we become *authorities* to ourselves; and the direct action of reason is as much ousted, as if we were acting on some authority extrinsic to us. Then there is the deference

* P. 7. † P. 8.

shown, in the region of practice, to professional or specially instructed persons; or to friends having experience, which enables a man to discern grounds of belief invisible to the unpractised eye. In these matters we take into view the amount of attention given, the ability of the person, his responsibility, and his impartiality. In his third chapter, our author delivers, as he passes on, a remarkable *dictum:*

"That high degree of intellectual power which we call genius, and which the ancients attributed to the inspiration of the gods, is in itself inexplicable, and can only be judged by its effects. But some ray of that light is requisite in order to enable a person to be classed among the original teachers and guides of mankind."*

Nor can I refuse the satisfaction of making another citation:

"The moral sentiments may be so ill directed as to deprave the judgment, even when the understanding is remarkably strong. Men of this sort may be *great*, but cannot be *wise;* for by wisdom we mean the power of judging when the intellectual and moral faculties are *both* in a sound state. Napoleon affords a striking instance of the corruption of the judgment in consequence of the misdirection of the moral sentiments."†

10. The authority of the old philosophers as to ethical science‡ was much weakened by their dissensions; while§ "astronomy furnishes an example of a science as to which there has been a general agreement of its professors for more than a century." Mesmerism, homœopathy, and phrenology are rather contemptuously dismissed as "mock sciences." ‖ But the general description of pretenders is admirable: ¶

* P. 30. † P. 38. ‡ P. 44. § P. 43.
‖ P. 51. ¶ P. 56.

"Nothing is more characteristic of the pretender to philosophy than his readiness to explain, without examination or reflection, all phenomena which may be presented to him. Doubt, hesitation, suspense of the judgment, inquiry before decision, balancing of apparently opposite facts, followed, perhaps, by a qualified and provisional opinion—all these are processes utterly foreign to his mind, and indicative, in his view, of nothing but weakness and ignorance."

Medicine has always been the favourite field of pretenders; and medical science (for he does not withhold the name) forms an important exception to the rule that "the physical are better ascertained than the moral sciences." *

11. Lewis also inquires what countries, as well as what persons or classes, are to be allowed to weigh in the matter of authority; † and finds, that we may justly confine the field of discussion to "the civilised nations of Europe," ‡ with the Greeks at their head, and the Romans as their pupils following them:

"They made the first great step from barbarism to scientific knowledge; which, perhaps, is more difficult, and more important, than any further advance which they left to be made by their successors."

He excludes not only barbarians, but Chinese, Hindoos, Persians, and Turks, on the ground of their want of progress "in political institutions and scientific knowledge," from the suffrage, so to speak, or the title to count in that consent which makes up authority.

12. In the light of these remarks, we may approach his general statement: §

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* P. 57. † P. 59. ‡ P. 60. § P. 50.

"In general, it may be said that the authority of the professors of any science is trustworthy in proportion as the points of agreement among them are numerous and important, and the points of difference few and unimportant."

"The opposition which is sometimes made between authority and reason rests on a confusion of thought." *

And this confusion is favoured partly by the fact that the mind, after the choice of its guide, becomes passive, partly by the use of the word authority, in certain cases, for coercive power. But—

"The choice of a guide is as much a matter of free determination as the adoption of an opinion on argumentative grounds." † He illustrates the position by reference to the case of a Roman Catholic. ‡

13. The illustration becomes most forcible when, among Roman Catholics of various colours, we choose the school which has now gained, whether finally or provisionally, the upper hand in the Latin Church. The determination to accept as the final rule of belief all declarations by the Pope, which the Pope himself may define to be *ex cathedrâ*, is as much an act of "private individual judgment" as if the determination were to follow Luther, or Wesley, or Swedenborg. I venture upon adding that, if this decision be taken lightly and without observance of the general rules which reasonably guide mankind in the search for truth, it may even be an use of private judgment in the highest degree licentious. The servant in the parable who wrapped his talent in a napkin, and thus (as it were) gave it away from his own use, exercised his private judgment just as much as the fellow-servant who

* P. 63. † *Ibid.* ‡ P. 64.

employed it constantly and steadily, and obtained large increase from it. He used his private judgment as much, only he used it in a wrong direction; just as if a free citizen of this country were to repair to a country where slavery prevails, and there to sell himself into bondage.

14. The fourth chapter treats of "The Applicability of the Principle of Authority to Questions of Religion." And it begins with a brief description, which seems to belong to the general subject, and therefore to all of the earlier chapters. In it he shows how the authority of which he treats is not that of individuals only. Traditive systems grow up in a course of generations, and by collection, purgation, adjustment, and enlargement or advance, acquire those kinds and degrees of adhesion according to which "a trustworthy authority may at length be formed, to which a person uninformed on the subject may reasonably defer." * He proceeds:

"This description, however, is not applicable to religion, or at least is only applicable to it within certain limits."

15. Now, thus far I have sat at the feet of Gamaliel: I must, however, take upon myself to canvass the limits within which the principle of authority is legitimately applicable to the choice of a religion.

The "at least" of the sentence I have quoted spans a gulf of a breadth immeasurable. The assertion without "at least" is that the doctrine of authority has no application to religion. But, with the pacifying intervention of this useful mediator, the proposition only asserts that the application of it is limited and conditional. To this assertion there may be objectors; but surely no other than such as embrace, in all its extravagance, as a rule of belief

* P. 67.

and action for the human being, the rule that he is to be *prout cadaver, vel baculus in manu ambulantis.* Short of this, there would not be on the believing or affirmative side of the gulf a single opponent. Vaticanism, for example, might point out that there are many Papal utterances beyond the line of the obligatory definition, many pious opinions broadly distinguished from articles of faith, many propositions belonging to the subject-matter of religion which may be freely affirmed or denied without peril. Such would be its theory; and even in its practice it does not and cannot wholly shut out the immediate action of the mind on the object, or the impressions or conclusions which may follow from the theory, and which are things distinct from it.

16. It is, however, clear upon the whole, that the "at least," in the foregoing proposition really sets aside the unqualified form which immediately precedes it, and that the candour of the author's mind led him to conclude that the principle of authority was truly applicable to the subject of religion, "within certain limits."

17. What those limits are, he presently proceeds to explain.

(*a*). He conceives, in the first place, that "all nations have agreed in the substantial recognition of a divine power, superhuman and imperceptible by our senses."* Nearly all human opinion, and all the human opinion entitled to weight, has concurred in this affirmation.

(*b*). Secondly, he conceives that the whole civilised or authoritative world has also agreed in the acceptance of Christianity.

* P. 69.

"Christendom includes the entire civilised world; that is to say all nations whose agreement on a matter of opinion has any real weight or authority."*

(*c*). This, however, he limits to the acceptance of "some form of the Christian religion." He proceeds to show that the nations are not agreed in the acceptance of a particular Church; that the rule of Vincentius, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, is incapable of a strictly literal application; and generally "there is no consent of competent judges over the civilised world. Inconsistent and opposite forms of Christianity continue to exist side by side." †

(*d*). He has still, however, another very important concession to make to particular Churches. The authority of the Church of England (and, if we understand him right, of every Church) is limited to its own members. So limited, he thinks Hooker is right in considering it to be "more competent, in a corporate capacity, to decide doubtful questions than any of its individual members."

18. The candour, acumen, breadth, and attainments of Lewis give a great weight to the convictions he has thus expressed. They may be summed up in few words as follows:

(*a*). The consent of mankind binds us in reason to acknowledge the being of God.

(*b*). The consent of civilised mankind similarly binds us to the acceptance of Christianity.

(*c*). The details of Christianity are contested; but in doubtful questions the Church, and, *e.g.*, the Church of England at large with respect to its own members, is more competent than they are individually; and the

* P. 69. † P. 97.

business and duty of a reasonable man, so far as in these matters he is bound to have an opinion, is to follow the best opinion.

19. At the same time I do not suppose that our author would have placed the obligation implied by the third proposition on a level, in point of stringency, with that of the two former. He would, I presume, have said (in technical language), a readiness of the individual to submit himself was in this case of imperfect, but in those of perfect obligation.

20. Nor, we are safe in supposing, would he have held it a duty to know all that had been considered and determined by a Church, or to refrain from any testing inquiries; but only to have practical dealings with what offered itself to the mind in the course of Providence and of duty, and to conduct inquiry according to the true laws of reason.

21. I am inclined to think that Hooker has placed the doctrine of submission in matter of opinion to a local or special Church higher than, if he had had the experience of the last three centuries to assist him, he would have thought safe; and that Lewis, who had not a particle of egoism or self-assertion to sharpen unduly his critical faculty, may in this remarkable instance have been to a limited extent amiably misled by deference to a great writer.

22. On the other hand, I shall endeavour to show ground for supposing that, on the premisses which sustain the first two propositions, we ought to widen the conclusions at which Lewis has arrived; and this not so much upon ecclesiastical principles, in obedience to the authority either of a particular Church, or of the Church at large, *quâ* Church, as upon philosophical principles, in deference

to that general sense of mankind, which in such matters is entitled to claim authority. I take my departure, however, from the standing-ground of the two propositions, and do not go behind them, or argue with such as contend, in opposition to Lewis, that there is no just authority of consent in existence with respect either to the existence of God, or the acceptance of the Christian religion.

23. In the first place, belief in God surely implies much more than that He is superhuman and imperceptible. It seems to involve, as a general rule, the following particulars, which Lewis has not specified, but may by no means have intended to exclude.

(*a*). That He is conceived of as possessing in Himself all attributes whatsoever which conduce to excellence, and these in a degree indefinitely beyond the power of the human mind to measure.

(*b*). Over and above what He is in Himself, He is conceived of as standing in certain relations to us; as carrying on a moral government of the world. He is held to prescribe and favour what is right; to forbid and regard with displeasure what is wrong; and to dispose the courses of events in such a way that, in general and upon the whole, there is a tendency of virtue to bring satisfaction and happiness, and of vice to entail the reverse of these, even when appearances, and external advantages, might not convey such an indication.

(*c*). The same wide consent of mankind, which sustains belief in a God, and invests Him with a certain character, has everywhere perceptibly, though variably and sometimes with a great vagueness of outline, carried the sphere of the moral government which it assigns to Him beyond the limits of the visible world. In that larger region,

though it lie beyond the scope of our present narrow view, the belief of theistical mankind has been, that the laws of this moral government would be more clearly developed, and the normal relation between good and evil, and between their respective consequences, fully established.

(*d*). Along, therefore, with belief in a God we have to register the acknowledgment of another truth, the doctrine of a future state of man, which has had a not less ample acceptance in all the quarters from whence the elements of authority can be drawn; and has, indeed, in the darkest periods and places of religion, been found difficult to eradicate, even when the Divine Idea had been so broken up and degraded, as to seem divested of all its most splendid attributes.

24. In the second place, I come to the proposition of Sir George Lewis, that the acceptance of Christianity is required of us by a scientific application of the principle of authority, but without any reference to this or that particular form, or tenet, of the religion.

But as we found, in the prior instance of simple theism, that the authority of consent would carry us much beyond the acknowledgment of a disembodied abstraction, so, upon examining the case of Christianity, we shall find that what has been handed down to us under that name as part of the common knowledge and common patrimony of men is not a bare skeleton, but is instinct with vital warmth from a centre, and has the character, notwithstanding all the dissensions that prevail, of a living and working system not without the most essential features of an unity.

This I shall endeavour to show as to the following points:

(*a*). The doctrine of Revelation.
(*b*). The use of Sacraments.
(*c*). The Christian Ethics.
(*d*). The Creed.
(*e*). The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

25. Regarded historically, believers in Christ, casting anchor, so to speak, in an older dispensation, have uniformly acknowledged that God had "at sundry times and in divers manners"* made Himself known to the rational mind of man by a special communication or inspiration, over and above that knowledge of Himself which He had imparted by the books of nature and of life or experience. And this finally in the Gospel. They therefore have held themselves to be in possession of a special treasure of divine knowledge, communicated in a manner which carried with it a peculiar certainty; and such a belief, called the belief in *inspiration*, and pervading the whole of Christendom from the very first, is of itself a material amplification of the idea conveyed by the mere name of Christianity.

26. Next, there is a similar universality of Christian testimony in favour of the use of certain rites called Sacraments, as essentially belonging to, and marking out to view, the Christian scheme. I have nothing here to do with the question whether the Christian Sacraments are two or seven, or any other number in particular; or whether, as was suggested by Bishop Pecock in conformity with St. Augustine and others, the word be in itself susceptible of even a wider application. Nor again with the various bodies of separatists who at different times have rejected infant baptism. The fact that, re-

* Heb. i. 1.

jecting the catholic and immemorial practice of baptism in infancy, they should still have retained the rite, renders them even stronger witnesses in its favour than they would have been if they had agreed as to the proper season of administration.

27. Again, it is to be observed that the sacraments have not been held as bare signs. Even the Scotch early Reformers, who may be said to represent a kind of *ultima Thule* in the opinions of the day, did "utterly damn" those who thus held. They have been deemed, according to the Anglican definition, to be "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace." When the exact relation of the sign to the thing signified comes to be considered, then indeed no inconsiderable body of differences comes into view, and the argument of consent can hardly be pressed within the definitions of our author. But up to that point it is strictly applicable. The very limited exception of a society founded among the English more than sixteen hundred years after Christ, scarcely embracing a thousandth part even of that race, and unable to quote by way of precedent * more than a handful of dubious individual cases in all history, cannot, however respectable on social grounds, constitute an appreciable deduction from the weight of the Christian testimony. It could hardly be taken into account if it had, which it has not, at any time developed into a theology that basis of sentiment on which it mainly reposes.

28. Thirdly, the entire breadth of the Christian consent sustains a system of morality which is no less distinctive of the Gospel than is its doctrine.

Lewis has nowhere applied to morality the limitations

* Barclay's 'Apology,' Prop. xii. Objection 6.

to which he considered that religion must submit before it could take the benefit of the scientific principle of authority. He appears to hold that morality enjoys authority in a manner substantially the same as other established knowledge. It is plain that the authority of consent tells in its behalf more widely than in behalf of Christianity. Not, however, as to any complete code, for here too we have to contend with something of the same difficulty, arising from diversity about particulars, as in the case of Christian doctrine; but as to this great and broad proposition, that there exists a law of duty, what Sophocles called a ὑψίπους νόμος, binding man and man. We find abundant evidence of this in a multitude of quarters beyond the precinct of Divine Revelation: in the various systems of religion, especially as they were projected by their founders, for example in that of Mahomet; in the provisions of public law, in the works of many philosophers, in primitive manners as they are developed by the monuments of Egypt, or, if not more fully yet less conventionally, by the poems of Homer.

29. All these were with great variation, both as to the behaviour enjoined, and as to the persons towards whom such behaviour was binding. But the Christian morality, gathering together the scattered fragments, and building them into a great temple of Duty, was a new thing as a whole, though in respect to its basis, and to the acknowledgment and even the practice of its parts disjointedly, it was able to call in the aid of non-christian and pre-christian testimony. The culmination and perfection of the Christian morality was found in that high and severe doctrine of marriage, against which, we may confidently anticipate, and almost venture to predict, that the anti-christian spirit will direct its first great attack, encouraged

by those preliminary operations in the legislative recognition of divorce which have already, from a variety of ill-omened causes, found a place upon our own, as well as upon other statute-books.

30. Some have been bold enough to say that the wide recognition, at the present day, of ethical doctrines in practical forms is due not to Christianity, but to the progress of civilisation. In answer to them, I will only halt for a moment, to ask the question how it came that the Greek and, in its turn, the Roman civilisation, each advancing to so great a height, did not similarly elevate the moral standards. And I shall by anticipation put in a *caveat* against any attempt to reply merely by exhibiting here and there an unit picked out of the philosophic schools, or the ideal pictures which may be found in the writings of a tragedian; pictures which have no more to do with the practical life of contemporary Greece, than have the representations of the Virgin and the Child, so much admired in our galleries, with the lives and characters of those who look on them, or in most instances of those who painted them.

31. A comparison between Epictetus and Paley, or between Aristotle and Escobar, would be curious, but would not touch the point. I do not inquire how low some Christian may have descended, or how high some heathen may have risen, in theory, any more than in practice. When I speak of the morality of a religion, I mean the principles and practices for which it has obtained the assent of the mind and heart of man: which it has incorporated into the acknowledged and standing code of its professors; which it has exhibited in the traditional practices, sometimes of the generality, sometimes only of the best. But this is a large subject, and lies apart. My

present argument is only with those who, like Sir George Lewis, hold that Christianity lies within the true scope of the principle of authority, but do not develop the phrase Christianity into its specific meanings.

32. To such it may be fairly put that under this name of Christianity we are to understand something that has some sort of claims and sanctions peculiarly its own; for it is not religion only, but Christian religion, which comes to us accredited by legitimate authority. Now I hope to obtain a general assent when I contend that Christianity can have no exclusive or preferential claim upon us, unless that, which distinguishes it as a religion, has some proportionate representation in the sphere of morality. In its ultimate, general, and permanent effects upon morality, largely understood, the test of the value of a religion is to be found; and if mankind, in its most enlightened portions, has lent the weight of its authority to Christianity, we must needs understand the word to carry and include some moral elements due and peculiar to the religious system.

33. And it is not difficult to sketch in outline some at least of the features which give speciality to Christian morals, without disturbing their relation to the general, and especially the best, non-Christian morality of mankind. First and foremost, they are founded on the character and pattern of a Person, even more, if possible, than on his words. In Him they recognise the standard of consummate and divine perfection. Secondly, they draw all forms of duty, to God, to men, and to ourselves, from one and the same source. Thirdly, they are to be practised towards all men alike, independently of station or race, or even life or creed. Fourthly, they are meant and fitted for all men equally to hold; and their most

profound vitality, if not their largest and most varied development, is within the reach of the lowly and uninstructed, in whose minds and hearts it has, for the most part, fewer and less formidable barriers to surmount, or "strongholds," in the Apostle's language, to cast down.

34. Fifthly, the Christian law has placed the relation of man and woman, as such, in the great institution of marriage, and the provision for the continuance, through the family, of the species, upon such a footing as is nowhere else to be found. I do not say that this is not a restitution of a primitive law; but, if so, it was one the strain of which was found too great for those to whom it was given to bear. This law, with all its restraints of kin, of unity, and of perpetuity, is perhaps the subtlest, as well as the most powerful, of all the social instruments which the Almighty has put into use for the education of the race; and it is one, I am firmly persuaded, which no self-acting force, no considerations of policy, will ever be able to uphold in modern societies, when it shall have been severed from its authoritative source.

35. I will not dwell in detail on the mode in which the Gospel treats the law of love, the law of purity, or that which is perhaps most peculiar to it, the law of pain; but will be content with saying, sixthly and lastly, that Christian morals, as a whole—as an entire system covering the whole life, nature, and experience of man—stand broadly distinguished by their rich, complete, and searching character from other forms of moral teaching now extant in the world. The limitation implied in these last words has been introduced simply because it would be inconvenient on this occasion to examine whether, and in what respects, the Christian morals exhibit a reproduc-

tion of a primitive law once in force among the whole or a portion of mankind.

36. It seems, then, that, if the argument of authority, or consent, be available on behalf of Christianity, we cannot do otherwise than include in the scheme thus recommended a peculiar body of moral teaching, together with the notions of an inspired origin, and of certain outward or sacramental rites, universal, perpetual, and inseparable from the system to which they are attached.

37. I now proceed a step further; and contend that this Christianity must in reason be understood to include a doctrinal, as well as a moral and a symbolical, system. I am not so desirous to fix the exact particulars of that doctrinal system, as to show that, when we speak of Christianity as having received the favourable verdict of the portion of mankind alone or best qualified to judge in such a matter, we do not mean the mere acknowledgment of a name, but we mean, along with other things, the acceptance of a body of truths which have for their centre the person and work of Christ. This body of truths has its foremost expression in the Creed known as that of the Apostles, and in a document of greater precision and development and of equal and more formal authority—the Creed of Constantinople, commonly called the Nicene Creed. If the authority of civilised and intellectual man be available on behalf of something that we agree to call Christianity, my contention is that it is likewise available for these two great historic documents. We cannot reasonably make any sensible deduction from the weight of the propounding authority when, in the formula of consent, for the word Christianity we substitute the Creed of the Apostles, together with the Nicene Creed.

38. The human mind (I have said) is accustomed to play tricks with itself in every form; and one of the forms, in which it most frequently resorts to this operation, is when it attenuates the labour of thought, and evades the responsibility of definite decision, by the adoption of a general word that we purposely keep undefined to our own consciousness. So men admire the British Constitution without knowing or inquiring what it is, and profess Christianity but decline to say or think what it means. In such cases the general word, instead of indicating, like the title of an author's works, a multitude of particulars, becomes a blind, which, on the one hand, excludes knowledge, and, on the other, leaves us imbued with the notion that we possess it.

39. And my contention is that, whatever be the momentary fashion of the day in which we live, that same tradition and testimony of the ages, which commends Christianity to us, has not been a chimera or a chameleon, but has had from the first, up to a certain point of development, one substantially definite meaning for the word, a meaning of mental as well as moral significance; and has, as a matter of history, expressed this meaning in the Creeds. This Christianity has shed off from it, on this side and on that, after debate and scrutiny, and furthermore after doubt and even sometimes convulsion, all the conceptions irreconcilably hostile to its own essence, by a standing provision as normal as are the reparatory processes of material nature; and has been handed on continuously in uniformity of life, though not, it may be, in uniformity of health. So that reason requires us, when we speak of Christianity, to expound the phrase agreeably to history, if we mean to claim on its behalf the authority of civilised man, since it is to the expounded

phrase, and not the bare shell, that that authority attaches. It is in this sense what the visible Church also claims to be, a city set on a hill; not, indeed, a city within walls that can neither grow nor dwindle, but yet a city widely spread, with a fixed heart and centre, if with a fluctuating outline; a mass alike unchangeable, perceptible, and also determinate, not absolutely or mathematically, but in a degree sufficient for its providential purpose in the education of mankind. Of this mass, compounded of tenets, moral laws, and institutions, the core, so far as tenets are concerned, is exhibited in the Creeds.

40. If I have not named the Athanasian Creed as standing in the same category, it is not because its direct doctrinal statements have received an inferior acceptance from the students of Christian theology, but because it has not been, in at all the same sense, an instrument either of Christian profession or of Christian instruction.

If I do not dwell upon the difference between the East and the West in respect to what is called the Double Procession, it is because both parties are agreed that the variance of form does not oblige us to assert a difference of meaning. If I do not lay stress on those dogmatic distinctions among Christian communities of the East, which cause some of them to be placed in the class of heretical bodies, it is because, so far as I can understand, those differences seem to rest in the region of verbal expression, much more than to take effect in the practical conceptions of religion. If I pass lightly by the fact that large bodies of Protestants do not formally recognise the Creeds as documents, it is because I apprehend their objection not to lie against the contents, but only against the recognition, so that they continue available as witnesses to the substance which the documents enshrine.

41. Again, if I do not attach importance to the want of absolute coherency between the terminology of some of the early Fathers and the final expression of doctrine adopted by the Councils and sealed by the permanent assent of the Catholic Church, it is because I conceive such Fathers to have spoken without scientific precision in matters where human rashness and conceit had not yet created a necessity for scientific discussion and decision, and for the selection, and an authoritative sealing and stamping, of such phrases as seemed, upon the whole, the best and safest to indicate, rather than express, unfathomable verities; on which our hands indeed (so to speak) may lay effectual hold, but which our arms are totally unable to embrace. If I do not expatiate upon the undoubted truth that the recitals of the Creeds themselves are so largely those of fact rather than pure dogma, it is because the circumstance is no more than a normal result of a religious system founded upon a living Person, rather than an abstract conception.

42. It was profoundly observed by Möhler, in his *Symbolik*, that the controversies of the sixteenth century had been controversies concerning the human, not the divine, side of Christianity. Our forefathers, in the earlier ages of the Church, had fought and won for us the battles in which the question lay between safe and unsafe, adequate and inadequate, conceptions of the Divine Object of worship. They sowed, and we reap; they suffered, and we enjoy. But the primitive Creeds, which have now, not less than heretofore, their great office to fulfil, naturally belong to that supreme province, that theology proper, upon which, among the great body of Christians, neither the din of debate, nor the pain of doubt, is now or has for many ages been sensible.

43. New ranges of controversy have been opened, lying in lower though still elevated regions. They have turned on the condition of man apart from the Gospel, the mode of his approach to God, the reflection of his new state in his consciousness, his relation to the Church, his relation to the saints, his existence after death. To the common view, it is rather the points which at any given time are most contested, than those which lie deepest in the system, that are tenaciously held, and, because tenaciously held, are placed in the first rank of dignity. This is a dislocation of the natural order of appreciation, but it is in great part due to the fact that the propositions of the Creeds are taken for granted among us. For the modern mind, we may use a translation of language.

44. We will now say no more of the Creeds; but urge that that authority of general consent, which presses upon us the claims of Christianity, means by the phrase a system founded on the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the incarnation of our Lord. All notions opposed to those doctrines were, in early times, successively put upon their trial, and decisively, though not always easily, ejected from the great idea of the Christian revelation. Since the time of the two Socini, a different conception of the Deity and of redemption, which has counted among its adherents men remarkable for ability and character, has just been able to maintain a fluctuating and generally rather feeble existence. Its note of dissonance has been so slightly audible in the great and solemn concert of the ancient belief, that, like the deviations of the first four centuries, it can make no appreciable breach in, or deduction from, the authority which vindicates for these great conceptions the central seat in the Christian system.

45. Here I break off. Desirous to renounce illusions,

and to eschew the indulgence of any private partiality, I should hesitate to ask for the inclusion of any more particular or complete conception of Christianity in that use of the phrase which, according to the reasoning of Lewis, is entitled to the same benefit from the principle of authority, as established truths of other sciences. I should regret to strain the argument; and am content to say that the Christianity which claims our obedience is a Christianity inspired, sacramental, ethical, embodied in certain great historic documents, involving certain profoundly powerful and operative doctrinal conceptions. A great mass and momentum of authority may be pleaded for much that lies beyond the outline I have drawn. Nearly half the Christian world adopts the entire Roman system. Throwing in the Eastern Churches, nearly three-fourths of it agree in certain usages or tenets, such as the invocation of saints, and some kind, not uniform, of religious devotion towards images. This large proportion is yet further swelled by the accession of the Anglican family of Churches, in regard to the framework of the visible Church or polity of Christians, and to those other points by which they are thought by many to savour more of the unreformed scheme of Christianity than the reformed. But all these are matters on which a large section of the Christian world, amounting to perhaps a sixth of the whole, and composed of the many active bodies of evangelical Protestants, introduce so large an element of dissent, that although authority by no means quits the field, yet it calls in the aid of reasoning to decide the day, inasmuch as nothing short of the general consent approaching to universality, or, as it has been called, to moral unanimity, can dispose of the case without that aid.

46. The sphere of religion is wide and diversified; and authority, in this region, stands as a hierarchy, constituted in degrees and orders, with many subaltern shades of diversity. But it is broadly distinguished from a *stratarchy*, from the corps of officers in an army, where an obedience both immediate and absolute is due from the private soldier, and from every successive grade, to a superior, till the command be reversed from above; and there is not granted to the inferior even that bare initiative of redress, which is implied in a right of appeal.

47. The species of authority with which we have been dealing, as endowed, under the laws of our rational being, with a binding force, may be called, for convenience, the major authority. Of that minor authority, which may still constitute a great element in rational discussion, and which admits great diversity of degree, we have a good instance in a remarkable passage, which was quoted by Dr. Newman in one of his controversial works on behalf of the English Church,* from Bishop Van Mildert:

"If a candid investigation be made of the points generally agreed upon by the Church Universal, it will probably be found that at no period of its history has any fundamental or essential truth of the Gospel been authoritatively disowned. . . . As far as the Church Catholic can be deemed responsible, the substance of sound doctrine still remains undestroyed at least, if not unimpaired. Let us take, for instance, those articles of faith, which have already been shown to be essential to the Christian covenant: the doctrines of the Trinity, of our Lord's Divinity and Incarnation, of his Atonement and Intercession, of our Sanctification by the Holy Spirit, of the terms of acceptance, and the Ordinances of the Christian Sacraments and Priesthood. At what period of the Church have these doctrines, or either of them, been by any public act disowned or called in question?"

* 'Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church,' p. 253, from Bishop Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures, viii.

Only the length of the passage forbids my adding to the citation.

48. Although, then, authority loses its commanding position when the great volume of human consent is broken into leaves or sections, we are not to infer that it is reduced to zero. Admitting that, while the Christian world is wonderfully agreed on the central verities of faith, and still more widely on those of morals, its many fractions are severed in relation to matters of grave import, I would still contend that the authority of each of those fractions is not indeed final, but yet real and weighty for those who belong to it, and they ought not to depart, except upon serious and humble examination, as well as clear conviction, from the religion they have been brought up to profess, even though non-christian; for it is the school of character and belief, in which Providence has placed them. Even though non-christian; and even while I follow Lewis in urging that the undivided authority of civilised and progressive man demands of us the acceptance of Christianity. For even the acceptance of such authority is a moral act, and cannot be performed without certain operations both of the mind and of the heart. Suppose that as a Hindoo or Mahometan, having studied history, I am moved by the argument of Lewis to embrace Christianity, I must still learn what it is I accept, and the very assent to such an argument requires time and implies a mental process. Nothing is more rash, I had almost said more shocking, than levity or irreverence in the change of religion; and this levity, rashness, and irreverence may be exhibited even in the act of submission to authority when clothed in its most extravagant and exaggerated form.

49. Although I am persuaded that the substance of Lewis's work is unassailable, I am not insensible to some

defects in its form. I have noticed already that a large portion of it seems to belong to a work on politics. It is oddly annexed to the main argument, for in politics authority is coercive; and nothing, perhaps, has more tended to confuse the public mind as to that authority which is both moral and graduated, than the fact that we are chiefly familiar with an authority which, as towards the individual, is both absolute and compulsory. Next to this authority of the State, we are accustomed to the idea of parental authority. In it the two great elements are mingled; but there is too great a tendency on the part of parents, and that not seldom found in conjunction with strong affection, to give prominence to the coercive aspect. Our author would have done us a further service, had he laid out with clearness, and even sharpness, the several kinds of authority; for the region which he traverses is occupied by a garrison of jealous and self-interested fallacies, always in arms against the intrusion of those sober truths which bring many a catastrophe upon our castles of conceit. I will endeavour in conclusion to present a succinct outline of the case.

50. Be it observed, then, that authority claims a legitimate place in the province of opinion, not as a bar to truth, but as a guarantee for it; not as an absolute guarantee, but only when it is as the best that may be had; not in preference to personal inquiry reaching up to the sources, but as the proper substitute in the multitude of instances where this is impracticable. Authority, rightly understood, has a substantial meaning: in that meaning, it is not at variance or in competition either with truth, or with private inquiry and private judgment. It is a crutch, rather than a leg; but the natural energy of the leg is limited, and, when the leg cannot work, the crutch may.

51. Further, the fact to which we ought to be alive, but for the most part are not, is that the whole human family, and the best and highest races of it, and the best and highest minds of those races, are to a great extent upon crutches, the crutches which authority has lent them. Even in the days of Bacon, even in the days of Dante, when knowledge, as the word is commonly understood, was so limited that some elect minds of uncommon capacity and vigour could grasp the whole mass of it, they still depended largely upon authority. For that aggregate of knowledge, which they were able to grasp, was but book-knowledge, and not source-knowledge. It was to a great extent not knowledge of subjects, but of what specially qualified men had said upon subjects. As we now stand, no individual man holds or can hold that relation to universal knowledge, which was held by Dante, or by Bacon, or by Leibnitz. A few subjects, in most cases a very few indeed, are or can be known in themselves by direct and immediate study; a larger number by an immediate knowledge of what writers, or the most accredited writers, have said upon them; the largest number by far only from indirect accounts, of as it were rumours, of the results which writers and students have attained.

"Ad nos vix tenuis famæ perlabitur aura."

52. It seems, however, safe to say that the largest part even of civilised nations, in the greater proportion of the subjects that pass through the mind, or touch the course of common action, have not even this, but have only a vague unverified impression that the multitude, or the best, think so and so, and that they had better act and think accordingly. To some this may be an unwelcome announcement. The fact of their ignorance, and its burden, they

have borne in patience; but it is less easy to bear equably the discovery how great that burden is.

53. Authority, in matters of opinion, divides itself (say) into three principal classes. There is the authority of witnesses. They testify to matters of fact: the judgment upon these is commonly thought not always easy; but this testimony is always the substitution of the faculties of others for our own, which, taken largely, constitutes the essence of authority. This is the kind which we justly admit with the smallest jealousy. Yet not always: one man admits, another refuses, the authority of a sea-captain and a sailor or two (repeated from time to time), on the existence of the sea-serpent.

54. Then there is the authority of judges. To such authority we have constantly to submit. And this too is done for the most part willingly; but unwillingly, as soon as we are told what we have been about. These judges sometimes supply us with opinions upon facts, sometimes with facts themselves. The results, in pure science, are accepted by us as facts; but on the methods by which they are reached, the mass, even of intelligent and cultivated men, are not competently informed. Judgments on difficult questions of finance are made into compulsory laws, in parliaments where only one man in a score, possibly no more than one in a hundred, thoroughly comprehends them. All kinds of professional advice belong to this order in the classification of authorities.

55. But, thirdly, as Lewis has observed with much acuteness, we are in the constant habit of following yet another kind of authority, the authority of ourselves. In very many cases, where we have reached certain results by our own inquiries, the process and the evidence have been forgotten, and are no longer present to the mind at times

when we are called upon to act; they are laid aside as no longer necessary; we are satisfied with the knowledge that we acquired at a former time. We now hold to the conclusion, not remembering accurately its warrant, but remembering only that we once decided that it had a warrant. In its essence, this is acting upon authority. From this sort of action upon authority I believe no man of active life, however tenacious be his memory, can escape. And no man, who is content to act on this kind of authority, is entitled to object in principle to acting on other kinds. That I myself am the authority for myself is only an accident of the case. It would be more, could I lay down the dogma that an inquiry by me is better and more conclusive than an inquiry by others. We are bound to act on the best presumption, whether that presumption happens to rest on something done by others, or on something we have done ourselves.

56. While the naked exhibition of the amount of guidance found for us by authority is certainly unflattering, it has a moral use in the inculcation of much humility. It also offers to the understanding a subject of profound and wondering contemplation, by revealing to us, in measureless extent, the law of human interdependence, which again should have its moral use in deepening the sense of the brotherhood of man.

57. A general revolt, then, against authority, even in matters of opinion, is a childish or anile superstition, not to be excused by the pretext that it is only due to the love of freedom cherished in excess. The love of freedom is an essential principle of healthy human action, but is only one of its essential principles. Such a superstition, due only to excess in the love of freedom, may remind us that we should be burned to cinders were the earth capable of

imitating its wayward denizens, and indulging itself only in an excess of the centripetal force. We may indeed allow that, when personal inquiry has been thorough, unbiassed, and entire, it seems a violation of natural law to say that the inquirer should put it aside in deference to others, even of presumably superior qualification. Here there enters into the case a kind of sacred right of insurrection, essential as a condition of human progress. But the number of the cases in which a man can be sure that his own inquiry fulfils these conditions is comparatively insignificant. Whenever it falls short of fulfilling them, what may be called the subjective speciality of duty disappears; there remains only the paramount law of allegiance to objective truth, and that law, commonly dealing with probable evidence, binds us to take not that evidence with which we ourselves have most to do, but that which, whether our own or not, offers the smallest among the several likelihoods of error. The common cases of opposition lie not between authority and reasonable conviction, but between authority and fancy; authority and lame, or weak, or hasty, or shallow, processes of the mind; authority and sheer self-conceit or headstrong or indolent self-love.

58. There is something noble in a jealousy of authority, when the intention is to substitute for it a strong persistent course of mental labour. Such labour involves sacrifice, and sacrifice can dignify much error. But unhappily the rejection of authority is too often a cover for indolence as well as wantonness of mind, and the rejection of solid and venerable authority is avenged by lapse into the most ignoble servitudes. Those who think lightly of the testimony of the ages, the tradition of their race, which at all events keeps them in communion with it,

are often found the slaves of Mr. A or Mr. B, of their newspaper or of their club. In a time of much mental movement, men are apt to think that it must be right with them, provided only that they move; and they are slow to distinguish between progress, and what is running to and fro. If it be a glory of the age to have discovered the unsuspected width of the sway of law in external nature, let it crown the exploit by cultivating a severer study, than is commonly in use, of the law weighty beyond all others, the law which fixes, so to speak, the equation of the mind of man in the orbit appointed for the consummation of his destiny.

V.

REJOINDER ON AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF OPINION.*

1877.

1. Having long believed that no small mass of opinion was in this our day running very wild on the subject of Authority, both in itself and in its relation to human thought and action, I thought myself fortunate in being able, four months ago, to invite public attention to a work by Sir George Lewis, which had never obtained the amount of attention it seemed to me to deserve.

2. It was, I believe, with surprise and a startled emotion that many readers found themselves confronted with an adverse witness, whom they had counted as, by a kind of presumptive right, their own; and I could not have complained, if it had been their first thought that I had been purloining the aid of his calm and weighty judgment.

I am therefore pleased to find that Sir James Stephen, who has grappled more methodically than others (as far as I know) with my statements, finds it only difficult to agree with me that Lewis has written this and that, and mainly relies upon the proposition that he ought not to have so written; that the passages I have cited are in direct opposition to "a great number of other passages" which lay deeper in his mind, and which ought to overrule hasty expressions into which he had been casually betrayed. I think myself to be thus possessed of an advantage over my

* Reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century*, July 1877.

courteous though formidable antagonist, in that he is compelled in a measure to assail the consistency of Sir G. Lewis, and to show that, for once, he did not duly measure the sense of the words he used; whereas I am able to acknowledge that he is thoroughly coherent, and pay to his work, which I only seek further to develop, a tribute of less reserved admiration.

3. The principle of authority I take to be this: that the mass and quality of prior assent to a proposition in some minds may be, without examination of the grounds, a legitimate ground of assent for other minds, in matters of knowledge, and in matters of voluntary action.

The definition of authority cannot perhaps be better given than in a passage near the end of the work of Lewis. It is "the influence which determines the belief without a comprehension of the proof." *

Although Lewis is limited by his title to matters of opinion, his definition † includes "principles and rules of human conduct, and all matters about which a doubt may reasonably exist;" consequently, all fairly disputable matter of fact. His work is, therefore, largely conversant with the sphere of action; and, though his title is accurate, it will not, without due attention to his definition, be accurately understood.

It excludes, on the one hand, matters of certainty; on the other hand, matters of compulsion. In matters of certainty (whether they are few or many, I do not now inquire, but I believe them to be few), authority passes out of view; and in matters of compulsion, opinion need not be considered.

4. Authority, however, is not an ideal or normal, but a

* Essay, p. 359. † *Ibid.* p. 3.

practical or working, standard. It may be thought, in the case of a being whose nature is based on intelligence and freedom, to present an anomaly: it certainly presents a limitation. But not (in mathematical phrase) a constant limitation. There is no point, at which we may not throw back the boundary, and enlarge the sphere of direct knowledge, and of conviction and action founded thereupon. There is no point, at which we ought not to so throw it back, according to our means and opportunities. Life should be spent in a strong continuous effort to improve the apparatus for the guidance of life, both in thought and action. We must ever be trying to know more and more what are the things to be believed and done. In pursuing the end, the exercise of free intelligent thought may, indeed, greatly enlarge the sphere of authority. For example, in learning facts of physical science, as when we inquire about the results obtained by the 'Challenger'; or in becoming more largely acquainted with the laws of health from the mouth of a judicious physician. This duty, however, is covered and overlapped by another duty: the duty of constantly endeavouring, within the limit of our means, to corroborate or test authority by inquiry, which finally means to supplant trust by knowledge. And this duty is supreme. But it is insidiously dogged by the danger of mistaking the limit of our means, and thus supplanting trust, not by our knowledge, but by our ignorance dressed out in the garb of knowledge.

5. Some advantage has been taken of my having compared authority to the crutch * which we use as a substitute for a missing or a halting limb; on the ground that the man must himself move the crutch. My antithesis, how-

* *The Nineteenth Century*, p. 293.

ever, is not between the crutch and the man, but the crutch and the limb. To place the antithesis between the crutch and the man is the reintroduction of that old "confusion of thought" which places reason in antagonism to authority, and which Lewis has endeavoured to explode. If we resolve the figure into fact, reason is the man; and the question is whether, in the absence or imperfection of his limb, which is knowledge, and which alone expresses the fullest development of his nature, he shall use his crutch, which is authority.

6. Or, varying the illustration to meet the taste of the objector, I may compare authority to a carriage in which we may properly take our places to perform long distances that we cannot achieve on foot. But, of course, there is excess as well as defect in the use of authority; and of this excess we are guilty when we suffer the love of knowledge to grow cold, when we cease to court the genial warmth imparted by a real basking in the sun of Truth, and when we are satisfied with a lazy, servile acquiescence in the opinions of other men. The proper function of authority is to enlarge, not to contract, our horizon. It is the function of a telescope, which enables us to see what without it we could not see at all; but what, if we could see it with the naked eye, we should, I suppose, see better.

7. While authority, as between men and man, is in the nature of a substitute for observation and reflection, the two methods are likewise susceptible of combination in every varying degree. Much knowledge, which we have erroneously believed to be complete, proves itself, in process of time or thought, to be incomplete; but authority, resting as a stay behind it, may bring the aggregate of evidence up to the point which justifies or requires

belief or action as the case may be. And, on the other hand, where authority by itself reaches a certain way, but is not so clear or constant as to supply a full-formed motive, an independent examination, in itself partial, may supply confirmatory considerations which fill up the void. Evidence ought to be sufficient, but need not be homogeneous. It may be made up of direct and indirect; the direct evidence of inquiry, which places us mentally in contact with the thing to be received, or the indirect evidence of authority, which gives a mediate contact with it, through the minds of others. In all these modes and shapes of the question, it is implied that the knowledge is not perfect, and that the authority is not absolute. Even in their combination, they will commonly form no more than a preponderance of reason on behalf of what is proposed for our acceptance. But this preponderance is all that can generally be had; in other words, we fall back upon the great dictum of Butler, that probable evidence is the guide of life.

8. As by the conditions of our nature we can rarely (at most) have access to absolute knowledge, so we have in this inquiry no concern with absolute authority. The only absolute authority, as between men and man, is that which commands and enforces action, for example, that of the State. And we are not now contemplating that absolute authority over the mind, which lies not between men and man, but between God and man. For whatever Revelation and Inspiration be, we of this day do not claim to be in the condition of their immediate receivers. The mode of our own personal access to what they have conveyed must be considered as subject to the general laws which govern the attainment of knowledge and the direction of conduct. It may be that the hindrances

offered to the entry of truth into the mind by selfishness, prejudice, and passion are such as to require a divine influence for their removal. But that divine influence is not to be supposed to operate in derogation of regular mental laws. It may be needed to remove barriers out of their way, and to open up the field for their action; for these laws do not of themselves carry and impart the capacity or disposition to obey.

In these remarks I have dealt with authority at large, and irrespective of its application to any particular subject-matter. Let me now approach the contested part of the inquiry, as it has been handled by Sir J. Stephen.

9. He begins with a summary of my summary of the work. I must, for my own safety in waiving a detailed examination, make a general remark. He disputes the accuracy of my account, rather than attempts to disprove it. He supports * his impeachment by reference to the difference between my habits of mind and those of Sir George Lewis; might he not better have withheld the assignment of a cause until he had verified, from Lewis's text, his allegation of the effect? I will make no retaliatory references to habits of mind. There is no profession, for example, more liable, as Mr. Burke has noticed, to entail peculiarities of mental habit, than the distinguished and noble profession of an advocate; but without doubt Sir James Stephen has taken care to purge himself of all these peculiarities. I therefore simply decline to acknowledge this general portraiture of the summary as corresponding with my original. Fortunately for our readers, they have now the means of judging the plea and the counterplea, by that resort to the work on

* Pp. 270–1.

their own behalf which it was my "general object"* to suggest.

10. Farther on,† Sir James Stephen becomes more definite in his criticism. He places in parallel columns the admirable passage, with which Lewis opens his fourth Chapter, and the lines in which I have endeavoured to compress that passage into about one-fourth of its length. In passing from the one to the other, I am indeed painfully conscious of descent, but my opponent holds:—

(*a*). That I seem to miss the point of the passage, which is written to contrast the growth of scientific with the growth of religious opinion.

(*b*). That I likewise add to the passage, by imputing to Lewis the notion that "the mere gradual growth" of "traditive systems" invests them with "trustworthy authority."

11. On reference to the page,‡ the reader will see that for neither of these allegations is there any real ground. Lewis does not here say a word of the contrast between two kinds of growth, scientific and religious. He describes the conditions of scientific growth, and these alone, from a state of crudity to a state of maturity. The forms of this growth, stated in eighteen lines, I have indicated, and could do no more than indicate, in two, as "collection, purgation, adjustment, and enlargement or advance." He then says: "A trustworthy authority is thus at length formed." And then we arrive at the important passage: "This description, however, is not applicable to religion, or at least is only applicable to it within certain limits." That is to say, having described the true conditions of scientific growth, he must, in due

* P. 270. † P. 275. ‡ Essay, p. 66.

order, proceed to consider whether at all, and if at all how far, these conditions are found in the case of religion. But up to this point the description is absolutely general; it might have been written by St. Thomas Aquinas, or it might have been written by John Stuart Mill: of either comparison or contrast there is not a trace in the passage.

12. Next, with respect to the second criticism. I have pointed out that Lewis here shows authority to be not that of individuals only: as if with a prevision that he would, in the vicissitudes of time, be handled by writers who treat the vast and varied subject of mental and moral evidence as if it were confined within the close and pew-like barriers of evidence merely legal; and handle authority at large as if it were only and always the testimony of A, B, and C, or even of A only, in a witness-box. Instead of which, it sometimes is like the cairn, made of stones varied in shape and size, that represent the contributions of hands unknown and innumerable; contributions, of which many are in themselves insignificant, while their aggregate is broad, solid, lofty, and defies the storm. Or, again, it is the solemn psalm, or, if this be too theological, the united shout of a vast congregation of men, in which the value of the several voices is infinitely diversified, but the few thoroughly discordant notes are lost and neutralised in the unison of the loud acclaim.

13. In the passage cited, I describe the growth of traditive systems, without specifying that I mean only such traditive systems as are scientific. Accordingly my opponent steps in and says I have ascribed authority to "the mere gradual growth" of traditive systems. With all respect, I have done no such thing. My passage is short; but the patience of my critic, I fear, failed him before he had arrived at the end. Lewis, having at the outset

supplied the needful limitation of his meaning to such systems as are scientific, concludes with saying "a trustworthy authority *is* thus at length formed." I, not having in my very brief abstract previously supplied that limitation, supply it in giving the conclusion, and say "a trustworthy authority *may* at length be formed." There is no more vestige, therefore, here of "mere gradual growth" than there was under the former head of an imaginary contrast; and both my addition to Lewis and my deviation from him have, as I think, vanished away.

14. Still, as we are now at close quarters, and it is a question of modes of interpreting the language and representing the thoughts of others, I must follow my opponent himself into these rather slippery departments; I hope without departing in any way from the tones of equity and kindness, which he has invariably maintained.

Text of Reply, p. 272.	Note on Text of Reply, p. 273.
"Fact is defined" p. 1. (*i.e.* in the work of Sir Geo. Lewis): "Anything of which we obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness, or any individual event or phenomenon which is the object of sensation."*	"* This exactly corresponds to the definition of fact given in the Indian Evidence Act, s. 1: "'Fact' means and includes, 1, any thing, state of things, or relation of things capable of being perceived by the senses. 2. Any mental condition of which any person is conscious. "I am responsible for this definition."

15. Now here I am willing to join issue. Instead of an exact correspondence, I propound that there is here a striking, nay a glaring, and a scarcely measurable difference. My opponent limits fact, when not capable of being perceived by the senses, to "a mental condition of

which any person is conscious." He seems to be entangled in that which was the contracted philosophy of Locke, the *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, with no other supplement than that charitable addition which appeared to some to be sufficient, the *nisi intellectus ipse*. The function of the individual mind, when not concerned in dealing with what the senses have imported, is limited to the perception of itself, in its various parts, and in the interaction of those parts. There is either no spiritual or no material world, apart from sense, or, if there is, we have no faculty of perceiving it, or at the least of perceiving it in such a way and with such evidence as to promote any of its phenomena to the high dignity of fact. If this be the true theory of metaphysics, then indeed I cannot wonder at any amount of struggle to get rid of authority as applicable to religion; but those who may succeed in the attempt will, I apprehend, get rid of a good deal besides authority, and even of a good deal besides religion.

16. When I turn to the definition of a fact as it has been given by Lewis, I read it in a very different sense. A fact, apart from sensible fact, is "anything of which we obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness." Has not Sir James Stephen been misled by the mere use of the word consciousness? When Lewis wrote these words, did he mean that there was no one thing of which we could obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness excepting of some form of our own mental condition individually? And this, be it recollected, as a privilege reserved to each man for himself. It is only within himself, and of himself, that, according to this singular theory, he can have what I may call fact-knowledge. For, so soon as he attempts to convey this knowledge to another,

the thing reported loses caste, and cannot rise above the order of an image, a rumour, a conjecture, or a dream. Within each man, and as to what forms part of himself, there is a true objectivity; but to any other man this becomes merely subjective, for of the mind of another we can have no fact-knowledge. The narrow store of mental facts allowed to us is given only for our own enjoyment, like the miser's hoard. There is no free trade in this kind of facts, no exchange of them free or otherwise, and what we see in ourselves we cannot verify by observation of others, for we have no faculty wherewith to observe what is beyond our minds.

17. The very form of Lewis's expressions seems to me to show that he had no such limitation in his view. It would surely have been inaccurate, almost absurd, to speak of "anything" thus at large, of which we obtain a conviction from our consciousness, if our consciousness were something that could have no object except itself. Plain enough, then, in the particular passage, his meaning becomes plainer still from a comparison of two passages in p. 72. He speaks, in one of them, about our experience as limited to things "derived either from internal consciousness or external sensation." But immediately before he speaks of matters "within the subjects of consciousness or intuition, not within the range of the senses;" and the context renders it indisputable that the compass of the two passages, the one affirmative in form and the other negative, is identical. Dealing then with them as with an equation, we find that he sometimes speaks of intuition as a faculty co-ordinate with consciousness, and sometimes, in language of insufficient precision, uses consciousness in a wider sense for mental perception at large, and makes it cover both.

18. But Sir James Stephen seems to pass by Lewis's reference to intuition as of no account. It is only by this Draconic process of annihilating intuition that he is enabled to raise an inference in favour of his doctrine of conflicting passages, and thereby to extinguish Lewis's declaration that his principle of authority legitimately embraces the being of God, and the acceptance of "Christianity." But it is surely better to abide by all his own words, and find him coherent, than, by shutting some of them out of view, to convict him of inconsistency.

19. Sir James Stephen proceeds to say:*—"The two passages quoted from Sir George Lewis by Mr. Gladstone do not state in terms the propositions to which Mr. Gladstone considers them to be equivalent, but they do hint at and suggest them."

The reference seems to be not quite accurate. There are no two passages "quoted" by me, and considered to be equivalent to two propositions of Lewis. I have quoted one passage, and have made out another piecemeal. With this preface, Let us consider the question of equivalence.

20. (*a*). We have in the 'Essay,' p. 69, the passage which I quote. After citing, with manifest approval, a passage from Bishop Burnet, beginning with "That there is a God," and after admitting many diversities both among the philosophers and in the popular systems of old, Lewis says:—"In the substantial recognition of a Divine Power, superhuman and imperceptible by our senses, all nations have agreed."

The discussion thus closed by himself, I sum up as follows, in the strictest conformity (I believe) with the

* P. 275.

rules of Lewis in the 'Treatise':*—"The consent of mankind binds us in reason to acknowledge the being of God."

Under this head all that is allowed me by my critic is that Lewis's proposition "hints and suggests." This is a scanty—shall I say stingy?—admission. Allowing for brevity, which was an object all through, my proposition is a simple reproduction of the proposition of Lewis, together with its contextual matter. If so, he does not hint or suggest, but asserts, what I have asserted. In his analytical table of contents † his own summary is: "All nations agree in recognising the existence of a God."

21. (*b*). The second proposition relates to Christianity. Here I have made not a quotation, but a construction, out of the text of Lewis. On referring to it again, I see that, so far from having exaggerated, I have erred rather by enfeebling the text. It is fairly represented by the following, which I present as an alternative form:‡—"All the civilised nations of the modern world . . . . agree, not merely in believing in the existence of a God . . . but in recognising some form of the Christian religion. . . . That is to say, all nations whose agreement on a matter of opinion has any real weight or authority." My summary§ is:—"The consent of mankind similarly binds us to the acceptance of Christianity."

Apart from the meaning of the word Christianity, which I proceeded to define and discuss, I again say that my short proposition is a short, clear, irrefutable, and inevitable reproduction of the longer form in which Lewis has stated the proposition; and that he does not hint or

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* P. 9. † Essay, p. vi. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 69.
§ P. 9.

suggest, but in stringent terms asserts, that which I have undertaken to assert for him.

22. And now we come to the real gist of Sir James Stephen's paper. All that has gone before, all attempts to establish that my account departs from the sense of my author's words, are (in military language) so many feints; and I cannot blame nor wonder at any amount of anxiety to avoid losing the benefit of a great "authority in matters of opinion." We now come to the true attack; and it is really not an attack upon my commentary, but upon the text of Lewis. Sir James Stephen proceeds as follows:—

"They (the passages) are, however, if taken as asserting what they suggest, inconsistent with the general spirit of the book, and with many other passages contained in it. If, therefore, Mr. Gladstone wishes to follow Sir G. Lewis, he ought to reject, or at least to qualify, these passages, instead of extending them to other subjects than those to which their author in terms applied them."

23. Before considering the "other passages," this is the place to remark that there is a third doctrine laid down by Lewis, which, if rather less important, is hardly less remarkable than the other two. It is the doctrine that a Church, being more competent than the individuals who compose it, has authority over its members. There is, of course, no technical or scientific peculiarity of sense in his use of the word Church. He seems to mean nothing Catholic or Apostolic in particular, but simply an organised society of Christians. He has not formulated this opinion in a summary proposition which can be cited as at once fully and succinctly expressing it. But it is, as I have already pointed out,* a subaltern, an indeterminate,

* P. 9.

authority which he claims for religious societies over their own members. Yet it is a real one.

"In all controversies and discussions carried on between members of the same Church, the works of the received text-writers, and leading divines, of their Church will be referred to as a common authority and standard of decision." *

24. These then are the three propositions upon which, according to Lewis, proceeding always upon scientific rules, the principle of authority embraces the subject-matter of religion: 1. The being of God; 2. The acceptance of Christianity; 3. The authority of a Church over its own members. The third head may require explanation and development before it can be exactly apprehended. For example, if a Church does not claim final authority, but acknowledges subordination to a larger combination, questions may arise for its members between the subaltern and the superior tribunal, which may, in the first instance, have to be decided by the individual judgment. But this head is not in dispute, and need not now be dwelt on. Upon the first two heads, says my opponent,† one who wishes to follow Lewis ought "to reject or at least to qualify" what I say the Essay asserts, and what he does not dispute that it hints or suggests.

25. And now let us see why. Sir James Stephen gives us‡ an abstract of the work of Sir G. Lewis, in which he mixes together at the most important points his argument on the text and on my view of the text. Then, at the close of the abstract, he begins his argument anew. There arises from hence a certain complication of the

* Essay, p. 102; see also p. 97.

† P. 277.

‡ Between pp. 272 and 281.

subject. He here, however, defines for himself three heads of inquiry: *

(*a*). Has Lewis said what I allege?

(*b*). Is what I allege consistent with the rest of the book?

(*c*). Are my extensions of it warrantable?

26. For greater order and clearness, I will here try to dispose of the resumed argument on the first head† before passing to the second. It is urged that the consent about the being of a God is only stated by Lewis as a fact. I answer, the consent indeed is stated as a fact, but in direct connection with the whole argument of the work that such consent binds. It is "conjectured" that he only meant that the consents were "as far as they went, and to some extent," evidence in favour of the doctrines. I answer, that Lewis takes no note here of doubtful πίστεις at all; but only of the question how far there is in religion a binding authority, and that any gloss which substitutes another meaning, besides making the whole Chapter void of sense, wholly destroys the force of the contrast drawn between "Christianity" and the disputed doctrines of Churches, as to which last Lewis broadly holds that no such authority exists. But, in truth, these little pleas are but expiring efforts of argument:

> "The bubbling cry,
> Of some strong swimmer in his agony." ‡

27. And it is high time to pass to the serious contention, the real attack, which is directed against the consistency of the passages with the general strain of the book. This consistency is impugned by the following arguments:—

(*a*). To be a trustworthy authority, "a man should have

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* P. 281. † P. 282. ‡ 'Don Juan,' c. II. 53.

devoted much study and thought to the subject,"* should be competent in power, and free from bias. Few fulfil, with regard to the being of God or the acceptance of Christianity, any of these attributes, and the few differ irreconcilably.

Now, whether this be a confutation or not, it is not a confutation from the book of Sir George Lewis. Be it what it may, it proceeds from the brain of Sir James Stephen. Sir George Lewis does not say either that few competent men have inquired, or that those few have differed. He says, as to the Divine Power, there is a "substantial recognition," and "all nations have agreed" in it. No doubt he includes eminent individuals, but he does not recognise in them a monopoly, whereas Sir James Stephen still seems to be dealing with a list of witnesses in a box. Lewis has nowhere said that in a case of this kind the reasonings of the very select few are incapable of deriving corroboration from the many. A broad line does not separate in this matter the few from the many; as if we were separating witnesses for the prosecution from witnesses for the defence. Indeed, defining too rigidly the qualifications of the few, we shall make them not few, but none at all. Who is there that, in such a subject-matter, combines perfect assiduity with perfect competency, and both with perfect freedom from bias? Who is there that has perfect competency? In the contact between the mind of man and such a subject as the being of God, the best men are not like the poppies in Herodotus, towering far above the grain; they are but as blades of grass, of which no one is greatly taller than his nearest fellows. The different elements of competency are, in different subjects, differently combined; and their

* P. 282.

distribution oftentimes corroborates their force. There is here, too, a competency of the race as well as of the individual: the greatest can know but little, the smallest may know something, and perhaps in a different way.

28. These are topics, I admit, little applicable to judicial proceedings; but there are questions larger than a trial in a court. They are appropriate, I think, in all questions where we have to deal with the broader human interests; for instance, in all great political causes, convictions, and attachments. It would be deplorably irrational to say that the utmost amount of authority they can carry is the authority of A, B, and C, even though these three be the Horatii or the Curiatii of the land. Parliamentary tradition hands down the saying of a singularly acute observer,* often commended by others not less competent, "that the House of Commons was greater and wiser than any individual within it." It is not possible to reduce to philosophic *formula* that principle, which at some epoch of the middle ages took popular form in the cry "Vox populi, vox Dei;" but the human race will be poor indeed when it is denied every mental possession, except such as can be reduced to philosophic *formula*.

29. All this is, I grant, commentary of mine, for which the text of Lewis is in no respect responsible. I think, however, it unfolds some part of the meaning of that text, in a case where Lewis himself has not fully developed it. For the immediate purpose of the particular argument it is enough to remark this: Lewis has not stated that the competent inquirers were few, nor that the results were conflicting. He says that the results agreed, and that the inquirers were all nations, and all Christian nations,

* Mr. Robert Percy Smith, familiarly known as Bobus Smith.

respectively; and he seems to have thought, not unnaturally, that the adhesion of the inferior minds, even if it added but little to the common stock, certainly neither destroyed nor impaired the authority of those minds which were superior. In saying that all nations agreed, Lewis says *ipso facto* that the competent men of all nations agreed. And our author is not inconsistent, even if he be wrong, simply because his critic argues that they differed: an argument, indeed, of the greatest moment, but one into which it is no part of my present purpose to enter.

30. The next argument of Sir James Stephen is this:* "The recognition of a Divine Power, superhuman and imperceptible by our senses," which he grants only "for argument's sake," really amounts to nothing. Three men, believing in the Trinity, Allah, and Nirvana respectively, are like three men who agree that they saw something at a given time and place, but one says it was a man, one a horse, one a bird.

I observe, in answer, first that this argument is really irrelevant to its purpose. The purpose is to show that two statements made by Lewis, or imputed to him, are inconsistent with other and over-ruling portions of his book. The argument is on the first of those statements, and goes to show that it has no substantive meaning, and is, therefore, valueless. True or false, it fails to impeach Lewis's coherence.

31. Secondly, I question its premiss. Neither the statement of facts nor the application seems to be accurate. That third of the human race who are set down as believers in Nirvana, if they so believe, have no colour of agreement with the Theists at all, and are not within the

* Pp. 282–3.

scope of the reasoning. According to such information as I possess, Buddhism, in the mass, with very partial exceptions, has long lost sight of the very abstract notions and atheism of its founder,* and is now for the most part a mixture of polytheism and saint-worship, for which I will not undertake to find an exact definition. Next, as to the application. Doubly it fails to touch Lewis. The discord of Mahometan and Christian turns not upon the question whether there is a living God, but whether the one Deity has a plural "personality." But, first, on this question, Lewis has nowhere affirmed a concord. Secondly, he is in no way bound to take cognisance of Mahometans or Buddhists; for his starting-point is that Christendom of itself constitutes a binding authority; although in this matter he takes in other nations as supererogatory allies, believing, and I apprehend rightly, that they, as he understands the phrase, agree with Christendom.

32. The next argument† carries us over to the second proposition, that relating to consent in the acceptance of Christianity. Paley, Wesley, and De Maistre, it is urged, were all Christians; but "their fundamental assumptions differed utterly." To say they agreed in any definite system, because they were all Christians, is like saying that red, orange, and green resemble each other, because they are all colours.

I confess that to my mind the argument (which has nothing to do with Lewis's coherency) and the illustration are alike unhappy. For red, green, and orange, I apprehend, do, and very substantially, resemble each other in this, that they are (considered objectively) so many portions

* See for example Dod's 'Mahomet, Buddha, and Christ,' pp. 279–85.

† P. 283.

of decomposed and refracted light. Thus I believe the ruby, the sapphire, the oriental emerald, and the oriental topaz, though different stones, have one and the same base. There is room then for much resemblance, together with much difference. And the main proposition will surely not bear the scrutiny of a moment. Paley, Wesley, and De Maistre would each have repeated the Nicene Creed, and they would have repeated it in the same sense throughout, except that they would have given possibly two meanings, and at any rate more than one shade of meaning, to the single article which expresses belief in the Church as One, Catholic, and Apostolic. It would be far nearer the truth to say that in all fundamental assumptions they agreed, while in secondary tenets they differed; but, as Lewis assumes no agreement beyond the acceptance of Christianity, he manifestly stands unharmed.

33. Having thus disposed of persons who had "given much thought" to the matter, my opponent shows that Lewis, among the conditions of competency, requires "mental power adequate to the task of comprehending the subject." What class of persons, he then asks, "comprehend" the doctrine of the Trinity? Again I am glad to see that Lewis lies comfortably in the dead water, while my opponent and I are in the stream. I answer by asking, is there not among civilised men a solid and established (though it may be limited) concurrence of judgment upon many questions (for example) of human character; upon the characters, say, of Phocion, of Catiline, of Saint Louis, of Washington, of Wellington, of Mrs. Fry? Is that argument worthless or visionary? No; yet is there any one of us so presumptuous, so irrational, as to say that he has ever really comprehended any single human character? Can we deal with its subtle ingredients as the

scales of Zeus weighed the contending fates of Hector* and Achilles, and determine once for all what shall descend and what shall kick the beam? I will go farther and say, can we completely judge any single human action? Nay, passing into the region of nature with its boasted certainty, do we "comprehend" the growth of a single blade of grass in a single field on the surface of the earth?

34. Yet one step further. The mathematician has a formula which asserts that nothing divided by nothing, or rather which has zero for numerator and zero for denominator ($\frac{0}{0}$), is equal to anything. He abides by this formula: he finds it verified by results. But may it not be permitted us to doubt whether, in the strict sense of the term, he "comprehends" it: whether it does not descend into the region of the infinitesimal farther than human wit can follow it? The truth is, as far as experience and reflection have enabled me to grasp it, that small indeed is the number of subjects or ideas which, in the sense of absolute comprehension, mankind have ever comprehended; that what is given to us, as a general rule, is comprehension in degree—comprehension by contact with a subject at certain of its points, which in a manner give the outline, as the naturalist constructs the creature from the bone—comprehension not absolute, but relative to our state and wants; limited, and thus teaching humility, but adequate to establish reasonable conclusions, and to work out those laws of probable evidence which, sustained by our experience of their operation, fit it to be the guide of life. In this, the old Christian reading of the laws of knowledge, our intellectual discipline is every-

* 'Iliad,' xii. 210.

where intertwined with moral teaching, and the employments farthest from the direct subject-matter of religion minister to its highest purposes, like the Queen of the South bringing her choicest gifts to the elect King of the people of God.

35. While Lewis speaks of "mental powers sufficient to comprehend a subject," he has not, to my knowledge, supplied an explanation of his language directly available for the present purpose. It appears to me that "the subject" to be comprehended is whether this or that proposition should or should not be accepted; for instance, whether we ought to believe that the grass grows; and not whether the entire meaning of each of the terms of the proposition lies within the compass of the understanding of the individual whose assent is in question.

36. Sir James Stephen next argues * that, like the first and the second, so neither can the third condition of competency be fulfilled: namely, disinterestedness. Neither Bossuet, nor Voltaire, nor Butler, to whom I rejoice to see that the masculine understanding of Sir James Stephen pays due honour, was, in his opinion, impartial.

Lewis, however, does not require the absence of interest as an essential condition of competency. He allows a substitute to be introduced; and it is that there shall be a capacity to rise above the interest which tends to bias us, and thus to escape all sinister control.†

Of the three eminent men here quoted, I should have said that Butler was the only one who could be considered to possess the judicial quality, and that he possessed it in an eminent degree. It may still be true that his argument (in the 'Apology') is the argument of an advocate; not,

* P. 284. † Essay, p. 27.

however, in the sense of suppressing or evading objections, but in this sense—that, after having judicially concluded which cause is the right one, he uses all his resources to set it forth.

37. But the question of religion in its elementary principles, like that of morals, is pre-eminently one in which human nature at large is entitled, with due consideration of degree, to be heard. And, therefore, it is less important to consider what was the bias in A or B—a question in most cases very hard to determine—than what is the bias of mankind at large, under the actual circumstances of their condition. It appears to be various. The many, to whom this world is a world of care and suffering, may seem likely to have a bias towards a world beyond. But these are mostly they, who live and die in silent obscurity. If I am to look for a community living on a high level of general intelligence, I should incline to seek it in Attic Greece; and the history of the religious principle among the Athenians, not as a speculation, but as a power, tends to the belief that the natural bias, among those who form opinion and tradition, is to dwell on and magnify things seen, to overlook and undervalue things unseen.

38. Often, in considering the enormous share preoccupied, and as it were mortgaged, to the senses in the sphere of life, it seems to me wonderful that faith should be able to do battle at all against sight, that remote wants should at all assert themselves against immediate, refined and ethereal desires against desires coarser and more earthy. Fear and superstition may have often propped the belief in a Divine Power; but their action is for the most part occasional, and it does not go to form the tradition of the intelligent. It is this tradition on which Lewis relies, and as to which I here venture to

observe, that a true intelligence is found not only in masses like the rock, but in fragments like the pebble. Under this head of bias, I am prepared to contend that, upon the whole, religion lies under an actual prejudice; that the balance of forces, acting upon man otherwise than through his intelligence, is an adverse balance; that, but for the struggle of reason against bias, we could scarcely have had that authoritative consent which Lewis has recorded in the first two propositions.

39. I must concede to my opponent that the general *dicta* of the Sixth Chapter of the Essay, in favour of the few and against the multitude, sound as if they were in his favour. But I entreat him, in dealing with our author, to be like Lancelot and like Arthur, each of whom,

> "In open battle or the tilting-field,
> Forbore his own advantage,"

and to give due weight to what I shall now point out.

The work of Lewis is an Essay, and not a strictly scientific treatise, or handbook of instruction. It contains many excellent and careful definitions; but it is, for the most part, a commentary clothed in at least semi-popular phrase. He does not, therefore, in every sentence guard himself against every other sentence; but trusts to an impartial collection of his general view. In general terms, he broadly distinguishes the *turba* from the few; as he limits the competency of the few each to his own branch.* It is plain also to the impartial observer, that his book deals mainly with secular knowledge. The Chapter on Religion is fitted into it with care; but outside that Chapter religion hardly appears, and in the

* Essay, p. 167.

entire work the great subject of morals, with all that borders on it, is but slightly touched.

40. In this Sixth Chapter, on which Sir James Stephen relies, Lewis begins by setting out a number of subjects* —science, arts, history, general literature, law, medicine, architecture, navigation, &c.; and my opponent will hardly say that religion and morals were in this *et cætera*. In none of these subjects does he mention the "consent of nations"; but in touching on religion he does. Again he specifies "questions of morality"† among those on which the judgment of the public is "more correct" than on "questions of speculation and abstract truth." So that we have a wider basis laid, by Lewis himself, for authority in religion and morals, than in ordinary sciences. And this assumption is surely conformable to the nature of things. Science is made for few men; but duty is the mistress of all men: they cannot be men without it; and, small as is the space which its twin pillars, religion and morals, occupy in the Essay, he has admitted in his treatment of these two a modification of his phraseology that breaks down the hard line of exclusion between the few and the many, applicable more strictly to all kinds of knowledge and pursuits that are not the universal and personal concerns of man.

41. He seems to me, I say, to treat both religion and morals as belonging to the common patrimony of mankind, and as having appropriate modes of recognition accordingly; wherein, though the few lead, the many also have a share. My opponent appears anxious to obtain the aid of Lewis in support of the doctrine that there may be a consent as to morals, while there is none as to religion.

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* Essay, p. 169. † *Ibid.* p. 174.

Accordingly we find it said:* "He contrasts the diversity of Christian Creeds with the 'nearly uniform standard of morality, which prevails throughout the world.'"

42. But he has here fallen into a serious error of citation; for the expression of Lewis is not, throughout the world, but "throughout the *civilised* world."† And he has before supplied the definition of this phrase by saying that "all the civilised nations of the modern world"‡ accept Christianity. All, therefore, that he asserts is that, while Christian doctrines greatly vary, Christian morality is nearly uniform: that is to say, that Christian consent in morality is more extended and emphatic than Christian consent in religion. A highly suggestive proposition, which I cannot now examine; but not one that denies, though it abridges, consent in religion.

43. I will only say that, if morality is either wholly or in great part the fruit of religion, then it may take a long time for a religion, slowly, very slowly, percolating through society, effectually to reconstruct its morality. But the morality so reconstructed may wholly or in part survive, if not permanently, yet for a time, the parent stock. I submit that the existing unity, such as it is, of morality, is greatly due to the remaining unity of religion. And it may also be, that the indubitable present excess of moral consent over religious consent may be a survival from the operation of that wider religious consent, which for so long a time prevailed in the Christian world. This, however, I am aware, is suggestion and not proof.

44. In following my antagonist to this point, I have

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* P. 278. † Essay, p. 74. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 69.

not been able to disentangle his argument against my account of Lewis from his argument to show that Lewis is against himself. But I have still to deal with the citation of special passages which he has made in pp. 277–9, and which he thinks nullify the propositions that there is an authoritative consent as to the being of God, and as to the acceptance of Christianity. I must still contend, as well as I can, with an inconvenient mixture of the two subjects; but I will state, as briefly and fairly as I can, what I take to be the substance of the allegations I have to oppose. They are these:

(*a*). Lewis says there is an agreement of the civilised world "in recognising some form of the Christian religion." *

(*b*). But no such agreement "respecting the particular doctrines of Christianity." †

(*c*). A cause of this is that it "first assumed a dogmatic form in the hands of the later Greeks," ‡ who inherited and applied to the Christian religion, "a subtle, refined, and abstruse metaphysical philosophy." From them he passes to the schoolmen, and the Reformation.

(*d*). After pointing out these three great fountainheads of controversy, he assigns a cause overreaching them all: "That religion as such is conversant with matters which are neither the subjects of consciousness or intuition, nor within the range of the senses." §

(*e*). Hence, lines of difference have hardened; and the tenets do not coalesce, but continue to run in different channels.

(*f*). Finally, my opponent cites a passage which

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* Essay, p. 69. † *Ibid.* p. 70. ‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.* p. 72.

begins with the words: "There is no consent of competent judges over the civilised world." * But he omits to observe the sentence which precedes: "*No one Church* can justly make any claim to authority in matters of religious belief, upon the grounds on which opinions in matters of science require authority;" plainly showing that he refers to the matters disputed among Churches.

45. On these heads I have to point out:

(*a*). That my opponent annuls particular assertions of Lewis, on the ground of wide general propositions held to be inconsistent with them.

(*b*). That (as I think) he misapprehends, and overstates, the scope of these general propositions.

Now, on the first of these I hold it unsafe and unphilosophical to teach that deliberate particular assertions are, of necessity, to be overturned, on the ground that they fall within the sweep of some wide general proposition, which, if mathematically applied, would annul them.

46. The human mind is capable of taking a more close and accurate survey of a limited and homogeneous subject-matter than when it embraces at once a vast circumference, a magazine of *omne scibile*. Just as an artist, beholding a tree, has a more exact record of it on his brain, than he can receive when he gazes over an horizon, Lewis has attempted in an Essay to deal with all human knowledge and quasi-knowledge, except such as is taken to be already of absolute certainty. In so doing, he very naturally adapts his language, in the description of general rules and otherwise, to the subjects which form by far the greater part of that knowledge, the subjects in which the teachers and the taught are broadly separated.

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* Essay, p. 97.

It is consequently less minutely applicable to the two great sciences of Duty, Religion and Morals, in which it may be popularly said all have something to teach, and all have much to learn. It is illusory, I think, and futile to argue on this account that Lewis could not have meant what he has deliberately said on either of those sciences.

47. It is not possible, with the utmost care, so to regulate diction in these matters, that it shall embrace every case alike, as if we were teaching from the text "action and reaction are equal, and in opposite directions." Nor is forethought often sufficiently alive, in dealing with generals, to make an entirely sufficient provision for every particular they may include. Take, for instance, the law of political economy, that the same article cannot be sold at two prices in the same market. Viewed as expressive of general or average results, this law is sound, and probably necessary; but, if taken as a literal statistical account of every exchange of commodities that happens, it is untrue, it is absurd. In describing the early stages of scientific growth, Lewis himself says* "there is much hasty induction from single facts, and partial phenomena;" and what is his own work but an initial effort towards laying the foundation stones of a science almost wholly new, the science of "Authority in matters of opinion"? Supposing that in an autobiography we found on one page "I do not catch cold from wet," and on another "Yesterday I got wet and caught a cold from it," with nothing in particular to discredit either proposition, which would be more rational; to cancel and disbelieve the particular proposition, or to

* Essay, p. 66.

hold that the broader assertion had not embraced every point in the experience of life, and that the rule did not exclude an exception?

48. I contend, then, that Lewis's declarations *—"All nations agree in recognising the existence of a God; all civilised nations agree in recognising some form of Christianity"—must stand even against abstract and general *dicta* inconsistent with them on the following broad ground: it is probable that an author has more exact knowledge of his particular proposition, than he could have of each and all the particulars comprised within the sweep of his general proposition.†

49. I, however, do not think that Lewis wants the succour of the plea which, after all, only human infirmity would supply. I contend that he has included nothing in his general *dicta* which militates against his particular propositions; and that the only fault, if fault it be, lies in this—that he has not verbally developed the method that secures their harmony.

50. Civilised nations, according to him, agree in accepting Christianity, but not any one form or mode of Christianity. He goes into reasons; and the passage which presses most on his consistency is evidently that in which he says that "religion as such" deals with matters neither sensible, nor "subjects of consciousness or intuition." It appears to me that my critic has overlooked the importance of the introduction in this place of the word intui-

* Essay, Table of Contents, p. 6.

† The reader of Aldrich will recollect the amusing logical fallacy: Epimenides the Cretan says that all Cretans are liars. Therefore Epimenides is a liar. Therefore the Cretans are not liars. Therefore Epimenides is not a liar. Therefore the Cretans are liars. And so on *ad infinitum*.

tion. It appears to me to establish a chasm between Lewis and the Lockian philosophy: between Lewis and Sir James Stephen. It is plain that he thought there is an office, and there are objects, of intuition both apart from sense, and apart from self-contemplation. Unless there be such a faculty of intuition, the whole science of morals vanishes, and leaves "not a wrack behind," except a debased materialising Hedonism. With virtue, truth melts away, and with truth beauty—I would almost add "and all that makes a man." What I am here concerned with is the undoubted fact that, according to Lewis, there are some objects of intuition. Yet he says, "religion as such" does not deal with them. Did he then mean to assert that there is no discernment of God by the mental eye and by spiritual experience? If discernment of God is founded neither on intuition, nor upon a just consideration and comparison of what we know by sense or by consciousness, how is the consent of nations in the being of God erected, as he tells us it has been erected, into an authority rationally binding on us?

51. The answer is, I think, perfectly simple for every unbiassed and careful reader of Lewis's forcible Chapter. It seems to me plain that the distinction is to be taken between belief in God, and attempts at scientific exposition in detail of that belief, and of the multitude of matters which may cluster round it: between acceptance of Christianity, and acceptance (as absolutely true) of any of the particular forms and modes of Christianity. And that when he speaks of "religion as such" he has in view, not the general forms of belief implied in his use of the words "God" and "Christianity," but religion as such when placed under scientific handling; the questions that at once arise, when we endeavour to clothe within

the narrow dimensions of our human speech truths that surpass all such limits; and of which I suppose every reasoning Christian would allow that some glimpses, and thin outlines, and faint shadows, are all that words can convey to us.

52. That Lewis is too parsimonious in his admissions as to religion, I have elsewhere argued; but he is perfectly consistent if, in construing his text, we give reasonable heed to his context. Throughout his detailed exposition of conflicts in theology, it will be found that he is speaking of the special matters in which Churches differ; but he has nowhere said there is nothing common to them in which they agree. He denies that any one of them is for mankind a complete authority; but in their aggregate they form a Christendom, and, in that character, establish the title of "Christianity" to acceptance. No one will suppose for a moment that he used that word as a mere counter. As a Theist, he did not recognise the Ark of the Covenant, but he recognised the Presence within it as true, though undefinable; while, as a Christian, he would not philosophically pronounce between one Church and another.

53. He did not allow (as I think he ought to have allowed) a place in a philosophic system to any documents of Christian theology; but, in the name of their reason, he demanded of all men that they should be Christians. And, though he has appointed no one his expositor, I think it not immoderate to say that by Christianity he meant clearly nothing less than this; a special agency, divinely organised for the deliverance, instruction, and elevation of mankind—an agency, at the least, giving scope for the prayer of Milton in his great exordium:

"What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support." *

There is not, I believe, one line in the Fourth Chapter, which will not harmonise with these remarks, and thus establish the coherency of a singularly temperate, upright, and discerning writer.

54. I must say, however, parenthetically, that I do not undertake to stand by all that is contained in the six heads given above. I doubt whether I am, and even whether Lewis was, qualified by study to discuss all the topics they contain. I do not precisely know what persons Lewis means to indicate when he speaks of "the later Greeks." His remark may have force in relation to Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and some other early Christian writers. But the material question is, whether it can justly be applied to those upon whom fell the arduous duty of giving verbal form to the Christian dogma. Now I have never learned (§ 3) that these Greek Fathers were hampered by any "subtle, refined, and abstruse, metaphysical philosophy," or have imported it into the Christian creed. We are familiar, indeed, with an allegation of this kind in respect to some of the later Scriptures; but not from Lewis.

55. To me, viewing the matter from below and from without, it seems that the Greek Christian Fathers were guided to their ultimate results by a circumspection not less remarkable than their acuteness; that it is hard to trace in their dogmatic terminology the influence of any entangling philosophy whatever; that, upon the whole, they used the imperfect instrument of human language,

* 'Paradise Lost,' B. i.

moving as they did always *inter apices*, about as well as it could be used by man. What their difficulties were, may in some degree be gathered from that remarkable Treatise, Dr. Newman's *History of the Arians*. I do not speak now of criticisms, which may be suggested upon a comparison of some of the established Latin phrases with their Greek equivalents. Still less do I raise the question whether the Aristotelian philosophy has entered essentially, a thousand years later into some of the Tridentine definitions. But Lewis writes as if he had been led into error at this point by assuming a resemblance of basis between the Homoousion of the Greeks and the *substantia* of St. Thomas Aquinas; a supposition which I conceive to be altogether groundless.*

56. I think also that, if he had worked out more fully his two succinct comparisons between consent in religion and consent in morality, there would have been some valuable results. That comparison, indeed, is not stated by my opponent in a manner to which I can subscribe. Lewis certainly alleges a wider present consent in morality than in religion; but he asserts a consent of "all nations" in religion—namely, as to the being of God—whereas he only asserts a consent of all Christian nations in morality. I have said already that I do not deny the greater breadth of subject-matter embraced in this Christian consent as to morality, and I have even suggested one of the reasons for it. But I am inclined only to admit the fact itself in a certain sense, not universally. I submit that the consent as to morality is eminently a consent belonging to

* [That is to say: I apprehend that, in the Homoousion, the *on* expressed is the I am, the Absolute Existence: whereas in the *substantia* it is an assumed basis of being for conditioned and material objects.—W. E. G., December 1878.]

the popular Christian tradition, which stands, and has ever stood, in immediate relation to the Christian dogma. It is what I may term theological morality, with regard to which this consent may boldly and thankfully be predicated.

57. But when we come to philosophical morality, apart from the simple Divine command, it appears to me that we are all at sea. Is it governed by necessity or option? Is it founded in the will of God, or in His attributes apart from will, or in the nature of things apart from Deity? Is the ultimate criterion of actions to be found in goodness or in enjoyment? There are hardly two stones of the foundation, on the setting of which the philosophers are as yet agreed, or likely to agree. I know not what the future may have in store for us, but such is the upshot of the present and the past. Neither do I see much of that tendency to convergence, which my author and my critic are at one in justly noting as to the other sciences. Historically, the subsisting Christian agreement in the highest doctrines of religion seems to me far more remarkable, far more authoritative, than any philosophical agreement as to the basis of morality apart from religion. I am not, however, hereby driven to scepticism as to the reality and solidity of moral any more than of religious science; and I find an adequate explanation of the greater diversity of sense as to these, when compared with most other sciences, in the loftiness and profundity of their subject-matter, and in the terrible abundance and multiformity of bewildering, deadening, and misleading influences. But the lengthening shadows warn me to have done, and I shall deal briefly with the closing part of Sir James Stephen's article.

58. With a clearness which leaves nothing to be

desired, he contends* (1) that "authority is only another name for the evidence of experts;" (2) that assent upon authority is only warrantable when the assenting person has some knowledge of the principles of the subject and of the methods pursued; so that it is his knowledge, not his ignorance, which gives the evidence its value. Considered in respect to the subject at large, these assertions appear to me far too sweeping. Many persons, not without cultivation, are totally ignorant of the principles and methods of physics, but they may still act rationally in giving credit to a prediction by the storm-signal; or, even without view, to what Tyndall would tell them on the severance of heat and light, or Whitworth on his millionth of an inch. Or, again, to take Sir James Stephen's own illustration, they would reasonably assent to an astronomer predicting an eclipse; for they would know that he was acting within his own science, and without presumable cause of deviating from its laws, these laws being recognised by the general assent of the persons either specially or generally competent.

59. But his belief in an astrologer predicting a birth would be irrational; for neither the opinion of the instructed nor the opinion of mankind at large asserts or allows the existence of a science of astrology, and without it there cannot even be an expert. In every case where authority is to be pleaded, there must be a *primâ facie* case, a point of departure, involving certain conditions, of which the first seems to be that the existence of a subject-matter, of a possible science, should be recognised. Here there is no point of departure, no *primâ facie* case. It is true then, as my opponent asserts, that it is by knowledge

* Pp. 286–97.

and not by ignorance that we accept authority, but untrue that it must be a knowledge of the principles and methods of the particular subject. It may be a mediate, not an immediate knowledge, a knowledge of the general rules of good sense and experience, according to which an authority ought to know, and probably does know, and thus knowing supplies us with a ground of action or belief reasonable, and if reasonable then so far obligatory.

60. I have thought it a fundamental defect in my opponent's philosophy, that it does not seem to recognise the vast diversities which have place in the forms of evidence according to diversities of subject-matter There are sciences in which light is entirely with the few whom we call experts; for example, pure mathematics, and I am disposed to add philology. There are sciences in which a little light is given to all, by all meaning always all such as are not without good sense: as such in the material order I might name medicine; still more, when we pass out of the material order, in the three great branches of politics, morals, and religion. In these branches of knowledge it is not possible to lay down a fast and clear line between experts and non-experts, more than between day and night. With mathematicians or philologists we are slow to interfere, but with those who teach in politics, in morals, or in religion, we interfere very freely. In these departments especially it is that ignorant self-assertion prevails, but in these also it is that the most fatal dangers attend upon an invasion of just liberty; and, as is common in human affairs, that which is in itself an excess counteracts or neutralises another and opposite excess, yet more injurious.

61. In the case of these subjects, I can approximate to

the two propositions of my opponent now under discussion. Here, too, there are experts, and there are non-experts: there is a line between them, as between day and night, real, though indeterminate. The non-expert of average qualities in modern Christendom has a general knowledge of the subject-matter, not in the scientific forms, but yet in the elementary notions which those scientific forms are intended to methodise, conserve, develop, and apply.

62. And woe were it to him, if he were not thus far at least equipped. For he has come into a world where he finds his life conditioned by the family and the State, by the Bible and the Christian Church; which touch him at a thousand points, and take a large share in the government of his life. As food and liquids are a necessity for all, nature provides all with some knowledge how to eat and drink. As society, personal duty, and religion make urgent demands on him, some of which cannot be rejected, while the rest are not always easy to reject, nature does not leave him wholly destitute of the primary instruments for handling these subjects in the practical forms suited to his condition, and he is thus placed in more or less of possible relation to their more developed aspects. Such knowledge as he has of his own disposes and helps him to recognise authority, to recognise an authority that proceeds both from experts and from the race; for few will assert that St. Augustine wrote nonsense when he wrote the remarkable, though indeterminate, words: *securus judicat orbis terrarum.*

63. I contend, then, that there is no reason why a trustworthy authority should not be generated, in an appropriate manner, for the benefit of mankind, in these matters of universal concern—politics, morals, and religion. As

to the limits of this authority in religion, I refer to my former paper, where this topic is partially considered. But I am anxious here to insist on the close analogy, which prevails between the three subjects. That analogy there seems to be, on the "other side" generally, an indisposition either to recognise or to deny. To assert a trustworthy authority in morals would sadly damage the argument, historical or philosophical, for denying a trustworthy authority in religion. To deny a trustworthy authority in morals would probably too much alarm the age. But Sir James Stephen justly observes upon the great progress of disintegration in religious thought during the twenty-eight years which have passed since Lewis published in 1849. In twenty-eight more years, perhaps, those of us who may be alive will have nerve to look in the face the proposal that the unreal theory, which separates religious doctrine and practice, shall be allowed to go the way of all flesh; and that the doctrine of a trustworthy authority in morals shall be abandoned, as well as that of a trustworthy authority in religion.

64. Using his happy faculty of illustration, Sir James Stephen closes with two parables.* In the latter, one of two seeing men lays claim to a superior kind of sight, called "intueing," and not possessed by all, which discloses to him what is passing in sun, moon, and stars. Such a parallel emphatically convicts pretenders to a transcendental faculty. But against those who take their stand, in good faith, on the general constitution, which God has given to His human creatures, it is really a pointless dart. There are some philosophies, which maim this

* P. 297.

constitution by declining to take account of some of its most important offices and organs. He who argues against the Hedonist, that there is such a thing discerned or discernible by men as good apart from pleasure, asserts nothing for himself which he does not assert for humanity at large. All or most faculties may indeed enlarge, multiply, and vary their powers by vigorous and judicious exercise; or may stunt and finally lose them by disuse. But the starting-point is the same if the goal is not, and the race is run along level ground on even terms. By intuition I only mean mental sight, the faculty common to us all. I do not ask how far it is an original power, or how far it is one trained or reached by the exercise of other powers. How we know God, this is hardly the place to inquire. But it may be the place to say I cannot assert any method of knowing Him otherwise than by operations in strict conformity with the general laws of our nature. I agree with the deceased Mr. Dalgairns, "that my knowledge of God is as real as my knowledge of man;" and bold, or more than bold, is he who affirms that his knowledge of man is limited to what his senses can discern in man.

65. The disintegration of belief, to which Sir James Stephen refers, is, I believe, very largely exaggerated in the estimates of some of these who have suffered it; but is yet in itself both remarkable and ominous. Among the special causes which have promoted or favoured it has probably, I admit, been that unusual rapidity of material progress, to stimulating which a great portion of my own life and efforts, in the line of my public duty, have been directed. In extremely kind terms, Sir James Stephen challenges me on this subject. I do not deny the fact, nor my own relation to it. I plead,

however, first, that whatever zeal I had in the cause was inspired by the hope, not of our increasing the wealth or weight of the wealthy, but of our bringing millions upon millions out of a depressing poverty into a capacity at least of tolerable comfort; and that, in acting otherwise, I should have been like a physician refusing to use the appropriate means for bringing back to health a patient of questionable habits, lest he should misuse the blessing when attained. There can be little doubt that, with this abnormal rapidity in the creation of masses of wealth, there has come a shock to moral and mental equilibrium, and a perceptible overweight of material objects and pursuits. Yet on the other hand it may be allowed us at least to hope that the effect of such a shock may pass away, like an atmospheric disturbance, when it has produced its proper amount either of discomfort or of mischief. But here again we stand at the door of a large subject, which it would be especially unsuitable to prosecute at the end of a paper already carried to an extent that may well have exhausted the patience of the most willing reader.

66. I shall close with a single remark on the celebrated *dictum* of Vincentius, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus;* on which Lewis has offered critical observations that, in their letter, it would be difficult to dispute. My remarks shall be not on its positive but on its negative value. It supplies, or ought to supply, an useful safeguard against the mental panic to which some give way when they perceive, or think they perceive, some violent rush of popular opinion. It is a good antidote against the sentiment, which has not yet assumed the form of a counter-adage, but which may be fairly expressed in the words *quod nunc, quod hic, quod a paucis.* It may supply

some fresh securities for our mental freedom against the hurried and crowded, and yet rather too imperious demands of our own day and place; and may remind us that the promises and purposes of the Creator are not for an age but for the ages, and not for a tribe but for mankind.

VI.

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY ARRAIGNED BEFORE THE NINETEENTH:

A STUDY ON THE REFORMATION.*

1878.

"Optat supremo collocare Sisyphus
In monte saxum: sed vetant leges Jovis."
HOR. *Ep. d.* xvii. 68.

1. IN the month of October 1850 was kindled a strong political excitement, which ran through this island in all its districts, and gave birth to the measure, at once defiant and impotent, which, under the name of the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, encumbered the Statute Book for a quarter of a century, and then silently closed its unwept existence. Public susceptibility had been quickened at the time by a number of secessions from the Church of England to the Church of Rome, large in relation to the previous rarity of such occurrences, and important from the high character of the seceders, and the talents of many, as well as the fine and subtle genius of one, among them. It happened that I had occasion to travel by post in the centre of France at the period when the stir began. Resting for Sunday at Roanne, I attended the *paroisse;* and heard an earnest

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* Republished from the *Contemporary Review* for October 1878.

preacher on the triumphs of the Church. His capital point was, that these triumphs were in no way confined to the earlier centuries: they were even now as conspicuous as ever; at the very time when he addressed them the great fortress of heresy was crumbling away, and the people of England were returning in crowds within the one true fold of Christ.

2. Is the worthy preacher now alive? Has he observed the currents of the religious and the ecclesiastical world? What does he think of his description, and of the prediction which it involved? Is he satisfied with the statistics of conversion? Or does he look deeper than statistics, which can at best speak only for the hour that is? Does he dive into causes, and, estimating moral and mental resource in all its deep diversities, does he still see in the opening future that golden harvest, with the glow of which his vision was then delighted?

3. As for the statistics, they are obstinately stationary. The fraction of Roman Catholics in the population of this country, as computed from the yearly returns of marriages, has for a generation past been between five and four per cent.; and, out of this small portion, by far the larger part, probably not less than five-sixths, are of Irish birth. The slight variation observable has, on the whole, been rather downwards than upwards. The fraction itself, which approached five per cent. in 1854, now rises little above four. There is, in short, no sign that an impression has been made on the mass of the British nation. This is especially remarkable on two grounds. First, that a new lodgment has really been effected in the body of the aristocracy. Now, high station is in this country a capital element of attractive power. Fully half-a score of peers, or heirs apparent to peerages, have, within forty years,

joined the Latin communion; and have carried thither in several cases the weight of high character, in one or two that of noted abilities or accomplishments. But, secondly, these years have beyond all question effected an enormous augmentation in the arguing and teaching capacity of the Anglo-Roman body. I do not speak of merely mechanical appliances as buildings. It is probable, that the secessions have multiplied at least fivefold the stock of educated ability and learning, available for all its purposes. The aggregate addition might perhaps claim to be equivalent in force to the entire body of honour-men at Oxford or Cambridge for several years. The zeal of the seceders has been even more conspicuous than their talents. Yet this great afflux of missionary energy has entirely failed to mark the work of propagandism either by an increase of relative numbers, or, as every observer must admit, by an augmentation of civil, political, or social force.

4. Upon this curious state of things, a French priest, the Abbé Martin,* looks in a state of mind more curious still. For him, and for those on this side the water who may have prompted him, the whole argument in the Roman controversy is on one side. Though there has been a great historical controversy, worked out, during many centuries, in many countries, through the most disturbed and complex human action, and often, as all candid men allow, through the vilest human instruments, and through means equivocally good or unequivocally bad, yet this is not one of the matters in which real weights lie in the opposite scales of argument, and we have to be led by the "probable evidence" which is "the guide of life."

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* 'What hinders the Ritualists from becoming Roman Catholics?' By the Abbé Martin. *Contemporary Review*, August 1878, pp. 113–136.

The case on his side is as clear as a little rill of water, a couple of inches deep. Then these Ritualists, of whom the Abbé writes, have gone so provokingly near him; and yet, like the asymptote of the hyperbola, they will not touch him. They seem to hug and scrape the boundary, and yet refuse to pass it. So the Abbé and his friends are as men standing under a tree, whose branches bend under a weight of golden fruit; and they shake the tree with all their might, yet, he says, the apples will not fall. Or they are like a professor of a popular natural science in his lecture-room, with all his paraphernalia around him: his explanation is clear, his description of what he is about to do has not a shadow of a doubt upon it; but, when he comes to his experiment, his instrument will not work, and he finds that there is something wrong. If Mr. Babbage's calculating machine had given him an erroneous result, he would at once have suspected a fundamental error in his adjustment of the parts; but this is the very last thing that would occur to the Abbé or his friends.

5. No unkind or discourteous word, indeed, drops from his pen. The glove he wears in his helmet is perfumed "sweet as damask roses."* He has all manner of reasons to excuse these Ritualists; reasons of unconscious, concealed interest, of feeling, of tradition. But his article is entirely subjective; all on the men, nothing on the question. Anything and everything suggests itself to him, except that he finds no reason, great or small, lying in the heart and essence of the case itself; a supposition, which the self-centred certainty of the Roman Church forbids any of her sons to entertain. And certainly his

* 'Winter's Tale,' iv. 3.

case is so far a hard one, that the rush of converts forty, thirty, and twenty years ago was such as to raise a fair presumption that so many teachers would surely be followed by a corresponding multitude of the taught, and to afford at once temptation and excuse for many an unwary and precipitate anticipation.

6. The general proposition announced by the Abbé at the outset seems to be this: that a portion of the English Church much resembles the Latin Church in ritual, usage, and doctrine, and it is therefore matter of astonishment that the resemblance does not merge into identity; in other words, that they do not enter the Papal fold. Now, it may relieve the Abbé's mind of a portion of the pain of this astonishment if he asks himself another question; it is this. There is another body, whose ritual and doctrine is deemed by his own communion to be very much closer to its own, than those of any portion of the Church of England. The ritual and doctrine of the Eastern Church have received from the Latin Church an acknowledgment it has never granted to any Anglican faction or section whatsoever; it is admitted that, in these capital points, that Church stands unassailable. Accordingly, it is only impeached on the charge of schism, a charge which the Eastern polemics retort in a manner highly inconvenient to the defenders of the *Filioque*, the Supremacy, and the Infallibility. Now, the Abbé must be aware not only of the admitted nearness of the Easterns to the Roman pattern, but also of the fact that nothing is so rare as a theological or ecclesiastical conversion from among them to the Latin communion. He may, then, do well to take the beam of the non-conversion of Greeks and Russians out of his eye, before he troubles himself so seriously with the mote of the non-conversion of Ritualists.

7. The Abbé is not coherent in his account of these Ritualists. At one time (C. R. pp. 113, 126) they do not truly belong to the Church of England; at another (p. 125) they "only continue the traditions of Anglicanism under a rather more subtle and dangerous guise." Which of these is the Abbé's meaning? Perhaps, though it might seem difficult, he holds by both. If, then, these Ritualists are people who have found out a form of Anglicanism "rather more subtle," *i.e.* difficult for an opponent to grapple with, and "rather more dangerous," *i.e.* to the Roman controversialist, is it any great wonder that they should remain in the communion where they may think, as they are indeed assured by the Abbé, they have found out new means of making good the positions held by their fathers for a term now of three and a half centuries?

8. But, in truth, this article is not an argument merely about Ritualists, as the term is commonly understood among us. The point of the weapon is directed towards them; but the blade is one which cuts down together all, under whatever name, who are either unable to recognise the paramount claims of the actual Roman Church, or resolutely determined to repel them. While the Abbé cannot understand—but I hope my reference to the Eastern Church may have advanced him at least one step towards understanding—how there can be a Ritualist, who is not a Romanist, so neither can he, in the same page (113), comprehend how there can be a Protestant who is not a Rationalist. In both cases alike, he sees the fact, but he cannot unravel the question how it comes about. Into any of the specialties attaching to the name of Ritualist, or the name of Protestant, I will not enter. I pass by the men, and go to the case. The appeal which

I wish to recognise, is really a broader one, on more open ground, in fresher air.

"Es machte mir zu eng, ich musste fort."*

It is an appeal to all the disobedient; and it summons them all alike to repent and to obey.

9. What the Abbé does not understand is the fact presented rudely, but substantially, by the statistics I have cited: the incompatibility, be it for good or be it for evil, of the English mind with the Roman claims, and the system which those claims introduce. Now to this system, whether under the name of Rome or of Ritual, or whatever other name, I hold it perfectly certain that this nation will, at least until it has undergone an extensive moral as well as theological transformation, decline to submit. And yet not on the ground which the Abbé Martin, exhibiting herein a want of acquaintance with the state of opinion and feeling among us, appears to imagine. He thinks that the people of this country in general suppose the Roman Catholic religion to be "a tissue of error and iniquity" (pp. 117, 118). In this idea I believe he does them great injustice.

10. Among the only admissible witnesses, namely, men thoughtful and trained, the great Latin Church as often perhaps receives more than justice, as less. In her vastness, in her continuity, and in the close cohesion of her clergy, she has great and telling advantages. These, let me add, are enhanced by the aspect of unity and standard of zeal which, in this country, existing as a small and marked sect, she exhibits even in her lay members.

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* Schiller's 'Wallenstein.'

Beyond all doubt, partly as fact and partly as idea, she makes a most powerful appeal to the imagination, by the side of the little fenced-in "Anglican paddock," as Mr. Dowden has happily denominated the system which resulted from English action on Church matters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gregory VII., Innocent III., Thomas à Becket, are great and imposing figures to us all; but Archbishop Laud, who was the Gregory VII. or the Innocent III., or the Thomas à Becket, of our little "paddock," seems to take hold of nobody's imagination, and has been set down by Macaulay before his millions of readers as an individual truly contemptible.

11. Our bishops are indeed Peers of Parliament; but they have as good as ceased to take part in its debates, except on matters relating to the paddock. Their incomes are carefully regulated by statute, and I believe most properly and becomingly laid out; but they do not partake much of the ideal, even in the sense in which the ideal may be recognised in the eighty and sixty thousand a year inherited at this day by some of the Austro-Sclavonian prelates from the middle ages. Luther, quarried out of the rock rather than shaped out of the marble, the Huguenots, the Puritans—these, among them, have taken up the imaginative sides of the great reforming movement. They exhibit all its poetry; Anglicanism shows little but the prose of compromise and the *via media*. Cranmer, notwithstanding his great position, and his latest moments on the heights of heroism, has never excited half the living human interest that has been given to Margaret Wilson, drowned at a stake by the advancing tide on the western coast of Scotland; as to

whom Mr. Napier has lately shown it to be somewhat probable that she never was drowned, or otherwise "done to death," at all.*

This want of hold upon one of the great sovereign faculties of human nature has, I am persuaded, been a main cause why the English Church has been unable to retain some of her loftiest minds. She is a Church which makes a double appeal to the Catholic and to the Reformed traditions; but she exhibits each of them in shapes in which they are disowned by the more acknowledged representatives of the two respectively.

12. Nor is this all. There has, it is manifest, been a rather marked tendency to Erastianism in the "Anglican paddock"; the natural result of the care which the State bestowed on fencing it, and the legitimate parent of a strong tendency to worldliness. This has been encouraged by historical events. The Puritans were ejected in 1662, and the Nonjurors after the Revolution. Without doubt, the bulk of those who remained were as conscientious as those who departed. But there is usually, almost inevitably, on such occasions, a worldly leaven, a more or less corrupt minority, that loves to abide where the "loaves and fishes" are to be had; and this minority lowers the average tone of the mass, in which it remains. The Puritan and the Nonjuring clergies were alike in this, that they carried with them a very small laity, and at the same time a portion

* [Since this passage was written, I have seen a further development of the subject in the work of the Rev. A. Stewart, minister of Glasserton, 'History vindicated in the case of the Wigton Martyrs.' I do not undertake to pronounce a judgment in the case; but there is much to be said for the hypothesis, that the execution did take place, against or without the authority of the Government, and as the act of subordinate persons on the spot.—W. E. G., 1878.]

relatively large of the zeal, and love, and faith, which are the life of a Church.

13. But there are other reasons which seem, on one side at least, to blunt the sword of controversy. We think ourselves to be great lovers of historic truth. Partly by our origin, partly by our institutions, partly by our habits, we are bound to its service; chained, as it were, to its car, whether we will or no. So that, even if we break the chain, we drag the fragment; it entangles all our movements; we have not the undisturbed complacency, the tripping step, of those who settle every debate as the old Neapolitan police, when they tapped a man on the shoulder and apprehended him, met his inquiries for a cause with the conclusive reply: *per ordine superiore.*

14. No country, again, has produced more temperate reasoners than this country. Witness Richard Hooker, witness Bishop Butler; I add a third, not unworthy to be named with them for learning and for love, Bishop Forbes of Edinburgh, the author of the 'Considerationes Modestæ.' Nor, I believe, has any country produced a greater number of Henotic writers; the theological peacemakers, who, hoping against hope, have striven, by charitable corrections, and favourable interpretations, to close the breaches of Christendom. It is true, indeed, that we have also to this day a section of almost fanatical combatants against the Church of Rome, and everything in which they can trace a resemblance to it. But their productions are supposed to pass with unusual dispatch into the waste-paper basket, and it may truly be said of that Church that, in this country at least, she is even more happy in her extremest adversaries, than in her friends.

15. In point of fact this servitude, a noble servitude so

far as it is realised, to historic truth, is what I cannot bring myself even to stigmatise as inconvenient, if we measure convenience largely, and by eventual results. However this may stand, without doubt the general habit of mind, encouraged by the causes I have named, derives a more direct encouragement from the spirit of the Christian religion such as we profess it. For it is undoubtedly a spirit of examination; even as the spirit inculcated, and generally prevailing, in the Latin communion is a spirit of acquiescence. And here it is that the conditions of any discussion with one in the position of the Abbé come into such violent discrepancy on the two sides respectively, that I can hardly hope to convey with any fulness or clearness to his mind what is the point of view from which, according to our national habits of thought, his position is regarded. If two men meet in argument, one of them desirous to measure fully and accurately the points of strength and weakness on both sides, but especially the points of weakness on his own, and the other with an equal honesty of intention, but with a mental habit formed and hardened under influences which forbid not only any condemnation but even any critical scrutiny of the system he belongs to, they can have no common measure of truth, no means of comprehending one another. They are like men, neither of whom understands the language spoken by his adversary.

16. My countrymen in general will I think give their full and final adhesion only to a method which bends submissively to all historic evidence; which handles that evidence in the domain of Church history on the same principles as in any other domain; and which has for its aim nothing else than this, to come at the clear and entire truth, without fear or favour. And there is need of a

disposition of this kind. In every religious body without exception, there forms itself a stalactite, so to speak, of special tradition; an atmosphere, in which its members habitually live and breathe, and according to which all their ideas arrange and shape themselves. In every case, and not alone in the Roman case, this tradition lapses and slides far away from the truth of history. For it is not formed upon facts alone, but upon passions, sympathies, prepossessions: it is the offspring of man's promiscuous nature, and not only of the faculties given him for searching out the truth; and it is matter of much difficulty, even where no authoritative inhibition intervenes, to get out of the mist and the dusk which this tradition sheds around us, and to look at the face of things as they are in themselves, and after they have been stripped of their spurious integument.

17. Now the first consequence of such a resolute method of proceeding is one unpalatable to every sincere controversialist. He must stoop to the effort of making admissions. I will proceed to make one. Believing the general enterprise of Roman Propagandism to be hopeless throughout Great Britain, I nevertheless can also believe that, between the bold and confident assumptions of the Latin Church, the shock given to many minds through the sceptical movement, and the real faults and shortcomings easy enough to be discerned in the Church reformed after the Anglican fashion as well as in every other Church, the Roman fishermen will from time to time gather a handful of fish into their net.

18. The matter of those faults and shortcomings requires a more detailed notice in one branch. Abuses properly so called, that is to say, corrupt deflections from the acknowledged standard, have in no Church been more

rife and rank, than they were in the Church of England for several generations. But these are in a great degree things of the past; they are generally and strongly renounced, at any rate, by the clergy, in spite of whom they exist, so far as they exist at all. But the defects, other than mere abuses, have a deeper seat.

19. The Protestant, and the Anglican tradition of this country, in the sense in which I recently described, starts from a position allowed by all, that the Christian Church in general had, in the course of time, fallen away in various particulars from its purity. This was the state of declension which prevailed until the Sixteenth Century. Then there came upon Christendom, initiated by the bravery of Luther, a powerful impulse, which passed into a mighty struggle. This conflict was carried on through many years, with many vicissitudes. But it resulted in a new state of things. On the one side, there remained the Latin Church with its dogma generally unchanged, but with many current opinions and practices hardened into dogma. On the other side stood a variety of Protestant or Reformed communions, differing it is true on several points among themselves, but differing more profoundly or more sensibly, or both, from the great Latin communion which had rejected, or had been rejected by, them. Speaking roughly, there were now set up in Western Christendom two systems of doctrine, discipline, and ritual, instead of one: issue had been joined on a multitude of points, and upon all of them where the controversy lay between reformed and unreformed, the second, according to the Protestant tradition as I have described it, was simply wrong, and the first simply right.

20. The Reformers were regarded, not indeed as inspired, but as those who had displaced a false system, and

either devised or replaced a true one, in such a sense that it was obligatory, or wise at the very least, to follow them in each and every point as they had delivered it, under pain of impeachment for disloyalty. There was a kind of latent reserve on behalf of those who wished to go beyond the Reformers, though this reserve was again subjected to reservation, and was not held to shelter Unitarians. But for such as fell short of the Reformers, there was no mercy. To adhere to the Gospel in its republication was a duty, as much as to have adhered to it in the form of its original publication. The new system was to be reasoned from, not reasoned on. Private judgment was legitimate, if it resulted in accepting on trial the conclusions of a particular time and crisis; but the lawfulness of its exercise was conditional upon its thinking generally as the Reformers thought, and in each country as the Reformers of that particular country thought.

21. In England, it had so happened that the Reformation-period, popularly thus called, had left the Church of the land in a state of inward conflict between two schools, alike determined in rejecting the jurisdiction of Rome, and various other matters along with it, but seriously differing on sacramental doctrines, on the nature and government of the Church, and generally on their relation to the framework of the old religion apart from the more recent Roman peculiarities. It was not for a hundred years, namely, not until 1661, that this feud was brought to a decisive issue by the final triumph of the historical or traditional school, which has commonly been called Anglican, and which is represented in the phrase of the "Anglican Paddock."

22. The framers of the scheme then settled were really the final Reformers of the Church of England. But, in

the thought and language of the Protestant tradition, they were believed to savour somewhat of reaction; and never took the benefit of that peculiar authority, above the natural though below the supernatural, above the Patristic though below the Apostolic, which the Protestant tradition ascribed to the Reformers. But, though their authority may be little recognised in the abstract, it is beyond doubt that, through the medium of the Common Prayer Book they have operated very powerfully on the religious mind of those within the pale of the Anglican Church, and have helped to lift it some would say above, and others would say away from, the true Reformation-standard. In the main, however, it is the body of ideas evolved in the sixteenth century, as accepted in England, which has been the treasure, it may even be said the idol, of our "Protestant tradition"; and has been popularly deemed to hold a place beyond the reach of ordinary criticism. This conception, however, is now very widely felt to be one which it is difficult for the philosopher to conceive, or for the reasoner to defend.

23. It is a serious matter to shake any tradition established with regard to religion. For the invisible world contends against the visible at many and terrible disadvantages, and gets so much less than fair play in the general competition, that there should be much tenderness and caution about shaking any part of the ground it actually holds. But such motives, though they recommend care and forbid precipitancy, cannot establish a standing law in derogation of historic truth; and it is the attempt so to derogate which may often generate the most violent and dangerous reactions. The English mind, under the guidance of liberty,

"Libertas, quæ, sera, tamen respexit inertem,"

has found it impossible to justify the practice of looking at the Reformation as if it had been a Revelation. We cannot be bound even to approve all the proceedings of the primitive Church in its dealings with the heathen world. Much less can we suppose that in the civil wars of Christianity, the conduct of either side had a monopoly of virtue, or its thought of religious truth.

24. It does not follow that the work of the sixteenth century is to be hastily or harshly judged. Its case before the court, so to speak, of posterity is like that of the men of Magna Charta, of the Revolution of 1688, or of the Reform Act. All of these are recognised as signal public benefactors; but none of them are exempt from criticism, or even censure, in the points where it may be found that their workmanship has been defective. But as the passions attending those great political epochs were less fierce, violent, and subtle than those of the Reformation, and again as the business of the Reformation was one far more complex and difficult to deal with, we must be prepared in its case to find, without astonishment, more excesses and more failures mixed with the details of a great and immortal performance. And, when we find them, we must estimate them with judicial calm, but with historic freedom.

25. The mental and moral upheaving, both of nations and of individuals, at the date of the Reformation was an effort such as civilised man had never before been called upon to make. For Christianity, from its origin, wound itself but slowly into the body of society. And, although the early controversies, such as those of the Fourth Century, went much nearer the foundations of the faith, they were carried on (so to speak) in the scientific region, and did not greatly enter into the moulding of ordinary

life and character. But the struggle of the Reformation was not confined to the mental and moral sphere. At every point, it was prosecuted or repressed by the axe and the stake, by sword and cannon. When reason and feeling were thus fiercely and inextricably blended with "blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke,"* it was impossible that the action of mind could be normal and duly measured, or that its results should come forth without bearing upon them the marks of the agony and convulsion of their birth. To treat the particular tenets of the Reformation one by one, and the verbal forms in which they are expressed, as purely scientific products of human thought, is contrary to all the lessons of history, to the whole analogy of our nature. The circumstances of the Reformation as a great uprising in vindication of human right, and as a manful protest against corruptions now admitted and lamented by every candid man, gave it a great authority, in the philosophic sense of that word; but this was in its broad outlines and in the main scope of its moral purposes, and cannot be shown to ramify and descend equably into the detail of all its processes.

26. Of this we have a marked example, as I think, in the doctrine of justification. For Luther, it was the note and test of life or death, the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. Yet the Anglican Church seems to have steered amidst these troubled waters clear of all the difficulty. Some may think it requires a strong appetite for controversy to detect a radical incompatibility between the Anglican Article on this subject and the Tridentine teaching in its positive part.† The complemental doctrine of assurance, so widely taught on the Continent as

* Acts ii. 19.

† Art. xi. Conc. Trid. Sessio vi. capp. viii. ix.

a thing necessary for the Christian, has never at any time been sanctioned by the Church of England. The 'Considerationes Modestæ' of Bishop Forbes present abundant materials for a view of the controversy of justification; and that work, together with the 'Symbolik' of Möhler, written from the opposite side, appears to supply all that reasonable minds can require in order to close the contest.* Accordingly, the divines, who met at Bonn in 1874, do not seem to have encountered much difficulty in the composition of a reconciling formula, which has not, so far as I have learned, given cause for any scandal in this country.

27. There were other points, at which partisanship has left its mark, if not on the body of doctrine formulated in the Sixteenth Century, yet on the Protestant tradition, which is for the greater number of minds its living representative. The strong and just reaction from the Purgatorial system, prevailing in the Latin Church of the period, went far to account for, and even excuse, that stark and rigid conception of the effect of death on the state of the human being, which led to an abandonment of the uniform practice of the earliest ages of the Church, as testified by the Liturgies, in the commendation of the faithful departed to God, for an increase of their rest and peace. But what caused, nay even what might excuse, the violence thus done to nature, as well as to religion, did not frustrate its mischievous effects in narrowing the range of Christian sympathies, and establishing an anomaly in the general doctrine of prayer.

28. With the obscuration of an universal tradition there

* Bishop Forbes's 'Consid. Modest.,' Books 1–5; and Möhler's 'Symbolik,' i. 1–3.

came, indeed, manifold confusions of doctrine: the final judgment, with its solemn import, seemed to have no place left for it, when the intermediate state of souls had been reduced almost to a cipher. Worst of all, the new standard appeared to be in hopeless conflict with the widest experience: for it implied that the entire work of discipline was in every case fully accomplished on this side the grave; that every soul passed away into the unseen in a state of ripeness for a final destiny of bliss or woe. But violence begets violence. Within the last twenty years a reaction has arisen, under the force of which a crowd of Protestants, and even many who deem themselves to be of the cream of Protestantism, have adopted ideas of trial and purgation beyond the grave, which vastly exceed in latitude anything ever taught by the Church of Rome.

29. Again, if it be true that, in the current doctrine and practice of the Eucharist, the sacrificial idea had, before the Reformation, and not for the best purposes, been allowed to assume an undue and enormous predominance over that of communion, it came, in the course of controversy, to be so depressed on the Protestant side, that it was almost effaced from the common mind. This could hardly be done without a serious dislocation of the historical relations between that great Sacrament and its historic types. Nor, again, without seriously lowering the general conception of Christian life and worship as a true sacrifice to God, which had the Eucharistic sacrifice for its central point. St. Paul seems to lift upward the whole fabric of Christian observance, when he exhorts the faithful to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which, he says, is "your reasonable service."* And, if

* Rom. xii. 1; cf. 1 Peter ii. 5.

so, whatever tends to impair the efficacy of that idea, tends in like degree to lower the Christian obedience from the level of the filial, towards that of the servile, standard.

30. A fourth point, in which the general interest of Christian truth took damage from the course of the controversy, related to the authority of Holy Scripture. Exultation in the recovered access of the people to the Divine Word concurred with the jealousy of it exhibited on the Roman side to heighten our conception of its exalted function under the economy of the Gospel. The bald announcement of a co-ordinate authority in dogmatic traditions, exterior to the sacred Volume,* the wide door thus laid open to arbitrary assertion, and the unlimited use made of Church authority against human freedom, provoked the reforming parties into the total rejection of that authority, and the substitution of the invisible for the visible Church. It thus became alike a logical and practical necessity to lay upon Scripture the entire stress of defining and proving itself, and to hold the Almighty pledged as it were to every letter forming part of its *corpus*, with a particularity and rigour hardly known to former ages. It has become long since evident that this was a straining of the truth ; and that the superstition thus engendered might, when it wore out and disappeared, make room for scepticism. It can hardly be doubted that the Christian world is, in our day, suffering seriously from this cause. Diminishing, by an arbitrary process, the aggregate of testimony which the wisdom of God had supplied for the establishment and determination of the Gospel, and finding the stock, when thus diminished, to

* Perrone, De Loc. Theol., pars ii. sect. ii. 1.

be insufficient, we impeach the Revelation itself for a want, which is due only to our improvidence.

31. This great and menacing mischief was inherent in the course of the foreign, much more than of the Anglican, Reformation. But another evil was an especial growth of the movement as it shaped itself in England. The Popedom was, after the rupture had been consummated through the folly of Pope Pius V., virtually effaced from the national Christianity. So serious a void there was a temptation, perhaps a necessity, to fill; and through the force of events, more than any formal declaration, it was filled in the main by the Sovereign. This was a result extremely adverse to civil freedom. It further heightened that excess of regal power, which had already marked the Tudor period. The doctrines of divine right, and of passive obedience, took deep root in England; and they were peculiarly the growth of the English Reformation. The strength of the Crown had, indeed, in many respects eased the religious process; and the ill-effects in this department were greatly mitigated by the sagacity of "great Elizabeth," and by an undoubted sincerity of attachment to the Church in the two first sovereigns of the Stuart line. But, on the whole, the tendency of the exaggeration I have noted was to depress spiritual life and energy, and to promote and perpetuate a civil intolerance, which the marked theological moderation of the Church of England would of itself have greatly discouraged.

32. Now, I would warn the Abbé Martin—the repeated recurrence of whose name in this paper I trust will not offend, as it is rather typical than personal—that he will not on all hands receive the benefit of such admissions as have here been made. Many among us will demur to them on their merits, many more out of deference to tra-

dition, *videlicet*, the current popular tradition. Some will probably go so far, as to censure any writer, by whom they are made. But doubt, says Dante ('Parad.' iv. 130), nestles at the root of truth, and no lesson more profound is to be learned among the many that have proceeded from that great and royal teacher. To tradition, as the witness of history, the highest regard is due. Tradition, as the floating opinion of a sect or party, has only a presumptive title to respect even among the members of that sect or party, and cannot be pleaded against a serious investigator, like a privileged communication in an English court of justice.

33. Again, Abbé Martin may find rained down upon him in abundance, as reproaches, in answer to his inquiry, all those accretions to the Christian faith, partly in the current usages and tradition of his Church, partly in its more authoritative documents, which have been urged by our controversialists with much power, at the various periods when they have seriously drawn the sword of controversy. This ground I leave to professional combatants. I waive, therefore, much advantage, and rather desire to make every possible admission; in the belief that, for the time in which we live, the ultimate issues of discussion will be mainly governed, not by the topics which the propagandist loves, and which he uses in individual cases with great effect, but by those which take a broader grasp of the general reason of mankind. At the same time, while I shall speak of the Roman Church in Roman Catholic countries, on the other side I limit myself to English ground; for I do not feel myself possessed of that acquaintance with the entire case, as it stands in Protestant lands abroad, which is necessary to warrant the degree of pretension implied in the very act of making

any contribution to a public discussion. The religion of each side I take where it is the prevalent religion; for where it represents but a handful, the comparison is vitiated by exceptional, and therefore misleading particulars.

34. Admitting, then, for argument's sake, that certain conceptions, material to a largely developed Christianity, have been impaired or curtailed, and consenting to pass by the countervailing inquiry whether our common religion has not on the other side suffered more deeply from exaggerations which practically mutilate, I take the case at the worst, and I compare the condition of Christian belief, as such, in the great Latin communion with what it is, for example, in England. I will not rely upon the case of the respective clergies, which we may safely take to be, as a general rule, firm in the faith which they profess. Yet I cannot dismiss their case without a remark. In the Roman Church, they are a body trained, from an early age, in jealous and careful severance from the laity. In adult life, this severance continues; so that belief among the clergy tells us nothing as to belief among the educated laity. In England, as also in the Eastern Churches, the clergyman is everywhere a citizen, and everywhere (I include our Nonconformists) in sympathy either with all or many of the educated laity; so that here the general fidelity of the priesthood or ministry does tell us a great deal as to the existence of belief among the educated laity. Nor will it be disputed that the state of belief among those of the general community, who have received the highest instruction, is likely in the course of time, perhaps to determine, at any rate largely and vitally to affect, the belief of the mass.

35. I suppose it too, to be undisputed that, in the early,

though not in the earliest, days of the mediæval culture, a strong spirit of reaction against faith asserted its place in the contemporary literature; that is to say, in the permanent, incorporated thought of man for the period. This spirit, mainly known by its relation to the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, I shall describe by the name of Paganism. And for one most signal manifestation of it I go back to the middle of the fourteenth, and to the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio; a work which has undoubtedly become part of the literary inheritance of mankind through all generations. This production is saturated from top to toe with the Pagan spirit. Many a book composed with the direct intention of assailing dogmatic religion, is far less profoundly estranged from it than the 'Decameron.' I do not now speak mainly of its indecencies: partly because there has been a change in the general tone, if not the framework of ideas, which makes an exact judgment on the point difficult: partly because that offence has been committed by others, who have left evidence of a strong spirit of Christian belief and feeling, such as Margaret, Queen of Navarre, has given in her very beautiful verses "Qui veut être vrai Chrétien."

36. The profound Paganism of the *Decamerone* again, is not principally to be proved by its merciless exhibition of corruption among the priests, monks, and nuns; although the chastisement is couched in a tone as different as possible from that of a reformer. It seems as though it was their being specially bound to the exhibition of the great anti-pagan system, which, instead of exciting grave sorrow and shame, gave zest and intensity to the pleasure of the author in exposing their worldly and fleshly vices. But it is the entire strain, the atmosphere, nay, the very basis of the work, which is Pagan, and ultra-Pagan. It

lies in the exhibition of dissolute life, upon Epicurean principles, as the proper and natural refuge of the very choicest spirits in Florentine society, women as well as men, from the horrors, and from the solemn duties, brought to their doors by the Black Death of the period.

37. This revival of the *carpe diem* * as the guide of human life, close to the head-quarters of Latin Christianity, is the more remarkable, because the book makes no attack on speculative belief. It was truly a fact in the life of the country of its birth, and of its own and the following generations, such in magnitude and moment as to have no parallel, for the purpose of the present argument, in literary history. It was a national event. It entered into the business of States, and the circle of diplomacy. Produced close to the central seat of Latin Christianity, it became the subject of one or more embassies to Rome from Florence. Under Paul IV. and Pius IV. it was in the *Index Prohibitorum Librorum;* but in 1573, under Gregory XIII., it was published at Florence, with express approval from the Roman Inquisition, and with a Brief from the Pope, which granted the copyright to the publishers, and excommunicated all who should anywhere infringe it, besides fining them heavily if in the Roman States. It had been corrected: but how? Mainly by the omission of one out of the Hundred tales, and by certain omissions, such for example as the omission of ecclesiastical personages, for whom schoolmasters and students were commonly substituted. This concession, which would be incredible if it were not

* Admirably described in the Preface to the new edition of Maçon's (1545) Translation. Paris: Liseux. 1878. The subsequent regret of Boccaccio, if established (see Ugo Foscolo's Discourse), will not affect the argument.

indisputable, tells more than many a volume might be written to tell, of the strong and impregnable position which had been taken by Paganism, at the very heart of the whole civilised and Christian world. Unhappily it would be quite easy to widen this illustration, though deepened it could not be; as, for example, by reference to the 'Canti Carnascialeschi' of the Medicean Court, to the remarkable Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini, and to the now infamous, but then famous, person and works of Pietro Aretino, Knight of St. Peter by favour of Julius III.

38. When Christian morality had been to so great an extent shaken and displaced in the mind, and in the practice, of the educated and refined, we cannot be surprised at the violence with which, upon the wider introduction of the new studies from the East, the Christian dogma also was touched by the influence of Greek thought. If ever in the natural world a tempest was required to re-establish atmospheric equilibrium, the great earthquake of the Lutheran movement was needed to shake the very ground under the feet of the Roman Court, to compel reflection, to revive religion, and to abash and overbear the interests opposed to disciplinary reform. In this sense I suppose it to be admitted by many members of the Roman Church that it was not only helped, but saved, by the Reformation. The reforms, however, which were accomplished by, and after, the Council of Trent, were confined to the ecclesiastical sphere, and did not exorcise the spirit of Paganism. That scandal of scandals which I have set forth, the acceptance and commendation of the *Decamerone* from the Roman chair, was effected amidst the storm of religious war in France and in the Low Countries, and one year only after the same reigning

Pontiff had struck a medal, and ordered a thanksgiving, in honour of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

39. As early, indeed, at least, as in the time of Dante, the severance of the supreme Christian teaching from Christian practice had come to be such, as to produce results highly significant of the future. The Poet, than whom there had been no more profound believer, and perhaps no greater spiritual writer, since the Apostolic time, has described the Court of Rome in terms which would have satisfied the highest transports of Luther; and gave tokens of attachment to human liberty sufficient to mark him as a dangerous man. In our own time, a devoted adherent of the Popedom has published an elaborate work to prove him an heretic, as well as a revolutionist and a socialist.*

40. But the further lodgment of the enemy had not then been made within the precinct where was to dwell "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle;" even "the King's daughter, all glorious within," and having "her clothing of wrought gold." Made it was, and seemingly before another century had passed. To this day, he has never been dislodged. Nay more, he has enlarged his tents enormously; and it is no secret that among the educated men of France and Italy, with the exception of a few individuals, the Christian dogma has ceased to hold an authoritative sway over either intellect or life. It is not this or that tenet which they doubt: the whole basis has crumbled, the whole superstructure fallen to the ground; and what even in this day moves some of them when they come to England is, astonishment at the large number of believers.

* 'Dante Hérétique, Révolutionnaire et Socialiste.' Par E. Aroux, Ancien Député. Paris, 1855.

41. All minor assaults upon belief the Latin Church has indeed put down in her own precinct, with the same success as that which she achieved in defeating the reforms of Scipio Ricci and the Synod of Pistoia, or in blasting the promise of Port Royal. Nothing can be more splendid than the external tokens of victory. Jansenism, and Josephism, and the *Petite Eglise* of France, before our time, and in our own day Hermesianism and the movement of Ronge, have gone the way of all flesh. It remains to see what will be the fate of the Old Catholicism of Germany, and of the sister-associations elsewhere. But, while so many attacks have been repulsed, so many rebellions quelled, in detail, the foundations themselves have been sapped, and the educated thought of civilised man, in the countries of the Roman obedience, has broken, and to all appearance finally broken, with Christian belief.

42. Now it must be most instructive to compare, even in the rudest and briefest outline, the experience of the Pagan movement in our own country with its history abroad. I say in our own country, for the Abbé Martin's appeal is to us, whom he seeks to draw out of our Churchless, shelterless condition, into the shelter he so much enjoys. But many of us doubt whether we are quite so Churchless, and still more of us whether we are quite so shelterless, as he supposes.

43. The rebellion of Paganism against the Faith was felt throughout Western Europe. It was a barometrical indication of the condition of a moral atmosphere, which overspread all Christendom, and pervaded its essentially common life. England was an early recipient of the Greek studies in her two Universities; and the close connection of her rising literature with Italy ensured her

sharing largely in all the impulses which had convulsed or touched the mother-country of our civilisation. The marks not only of Italy, but of Boccaccio, are stamped upon English letters from Chaucer onwards. But Chaucer exhibits neither the moral foulness, nor that deep underlying of the pagan spirit, which marks the great Italian novelist. His "goodman of religion," is purely and strongly Christian:

> "But Criste's lore, and his Apostles twelve,
> He taught; but first he followed it himselve." *

44. One of the very sweetest and most perfect of Christian poems is 'The Merle and the Nightingale,' by Dunbar. If it be said that this difference was national and not religious, it has also to be replied that England was distinguished from Italy between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, first by a doctrinal reaction among a portion of the people, which found vent in Wiclif and in Lollardism; secondly, by that strong and truly national reaction against the court and see of Rome, which touched its climax in the proceedings of the reign of Henry VIII. So much for the first stage in the history of the Italian Paganism.

45. The second stage was that, which it reached under the influence of the classical *renaissance*. And here I suppose, that the British analogue to the Italian manifestation of the sixteenth century is to be found in the Elizabethan literature, the terrene spirit of which has been very powerfully described by Mr. Dowden in his remarkable works on Shakespeare. Let us estimate that literature first in its prince. Shakespeare undoubtedly exhibits a strong reaction against the transcendental spiritualism of the

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* 'Canterbury Tales,' Prologue.

middle ages. It is hard to measure the distance between his mental attitude and that of Thomas à Kempis, or even that of Dante, who was, outwardly at least, a man of the world, a practical politician and partisan. The mediæval Church, or rather that part of it which aimed at fidelity to its mission, in its anxiety to keep religion pure and lofty, had set a gulf between it and the rude common life. Its idea was lofty; but it was not the idea of training the human being in every faculty and for every function of the present existence as the normal means of preparing him for a remoter future. Mary it followed; but Martha, who of necessity must be more typical of the mass of Christians, it rather proscribed. The conditions of earthly existence were renounced, rather than sanctified, in the religious ideal.

46. In order to the eventual re-establishment of the balance between the worlds, there required to be a strong reassertion, not only of the reality of this world and of life in it, but of their legitimacy. They, and not the cloister, were the school, in which the Almighty had appointed his children to be taught and reared. Hence came, as the grand characteristic of our Elizabethan age, what Mr. Dowden calls "devotion to the fact," "attainment of the fact," "rich feeling for positive, concrete fact."* In this reaching out with one arm, so to speak, of our nature over the whole terrestrial domain, there was a real widening of the scope of life; and if we look back impartially to the history of that great period, it seems difficult to deny that there was also a great accession of new human energy to the pre-existing stock. It was the office of the other arm to embrace the unseen life; and probably

* Dowden's 'Mind and Art of Shakespeare,' pp. 18, 19, 23.

this grasp was weakened for the time. It could hardly be but that, as in all human reactions, the function restored should trespass on the province of the function previously in too exclusive possession.

47. We need not then be surprised that the works of Shakespeare, as a whole, bear a somewhat worldly aspect; that in their exhibition of human nature, entirely unrivalled in all literature for largeness and variety, with depth, so small a portion should be seen on the side lying heavenward; that saintship, where it appears in Henry VI., is emasculated and incoherent; that not only in our early plays, such as 'Romeo and Juliet,' but in the later and greater works, 'Macbeth,' 'Othello,' 'Hamlet,' 'Lear,' the deep problems of our life and duty are handled upon a basis which is but negatively Christian. This is the more noteworthy, because a multitude of passages exhibit Shakespeare as an undoubting believer. But religion had been wrenched away from life; and life, in its recoil, busied with the gathering of all its energies, had not recovered the key to its own harmony with religion.

48. I have endeavoured here not to understate the charge, which a *Beatrice* might be warranted in making against our Elizabethan age. But when we compare the English "Paganism," as exhibited in Shakespeare, with the Italian Paganism, hardened into an Epicurean creed and sanctioned by the Roman court, or teaching with the very same pen, as in the "divine" Aretino, the vilest profligacy and the most orthodox theology, or even as it is exhibited in the splendid poetry of Bojardo and Ariosto, I cannot but think that, in fidelity to history and the fact, we must allow that the comparison is favourable, as far as it goes, both to England and to the Reformation.

49. Mr. Dowden has chosen with great judgment four

names as being together typical of the Elizabethan age in letters: Shakespeare, Bacon, Spenser, Hooker. The magnificent intellect of Bacon is held by Mr. Dowden to have been profoundly indifferent to religion. Is this truly so? I do not presume to deny that in Bacon's character "the world that now is" weighed for more than "that which is to come." But I would appeal with some confidence to his account, for example, of the fall of man, as a proof that he rendered a solid faith and fealty to the Christian dogma. As for Spenser, it is surely notable that, forming himself as he did upon the poets of the Italian romance, he utterly renounced their uncleanness, and, as it were, "passed by on the other side." More still is it to be noted that, while far from being the most robust of the band, Spenser is the one who seems to have taken the best aim at the literary restoration of a true theory of life. All virtue, all duty, all activeness of the human character, are set out by him, under the forms of chivalry, for our instruction: but his ideal Knight is Christian to the core.

> "And on his breast a bloody Cross he bore,
> The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,
> For whose sweet sake that glorious badge he wore,
> And, dead as living, ever him adored." *

Nor was Hooker less a restorer than his great compeers. For was it not given to him to recall our theology from the hungry region of mere polemics to that of positive and fruitful truth, and to become the father of a long line of divines, reared undoubtedly in the mere Anglican paddock, yet not without name and honour in the wide pastures of the Christian world?

50. I know not whether the Abbé Martin will recognise

* 'Faerie Queene,' i. 2.

the relevancy of a discussion of this kind. He may think it *ἀπροσδιόνυσον*; far from the mark. I admit that it fetches a compass; but this is precisely what, in strategy, often hems in the adversary with a zone of iron. The case, I think, may be thus exhibited. Religion lives in various forms: but it has to a great extent the same evils to contend with. These evils are failure in the law of human duty, and failure in the Christian dogma, without which dogma, as Christians believe, the laws of human duty cannot on a large scale be maintained. Obviously our controversies would be solved, could we see plainly in which of its rival forms our religion dealt with these foes most effectually. But then comparison of the dogma is the polemical business, which in this paper has been waived. Comparison of the morality, on an adequate scale, of the countries of the Latin Church and the countries of the Reformed communions would be most instructive; but the facts are so manifold and complex, as to defy reduction to a simple issue. It is something, then, gained towards the establishment of truth, if we can obtain hints for tracing the intellectual history of these countries respectively, in its relation to religion. Such a hint I have sought to supply by exhibiting the effect upon the two systems, or upon the two frames of mind, of the great paganising movement dating about the close of the middle age. We might find here something that may faintly resemble the parables of our Lord, and their adaptedness for public instruction; wherein the truth (as I think Whately observes) is perceived before its application to contending parties has come into view.

51. Upon the whole I believe, that a continuation of the inquiry into the lay literature of the respective countries down to our own day would tell the same very significant story;

and would show that, with all our faults, which are countless, yet, taken at large, religion has dealt and deals more hopefully with the great anti-dogmatic movements here in England, than in the lands of the Papal Church. Suppose, for example, that we bring into the field Tasso on the one side, and Milton on the other. Undoubtedly the chief work of Tasso rests upon a basis of Christian facts: yet it may be doubted whether the Christianity of Milton, as exhibited in his works, with all its errors or offences, had not in it far more of the character of a living operative power, holding the allegiance of heart and will. Again, while, in the last century, the Voltairian torrent carried away the mind of France, the three most prominent contemporary names in English literature, those of Johnson, Burke, and Richardson, were eminently Christian. At a later period we can point to at least four great contemporary poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Scott, none of them professional * or theological, but all markedly Christian. It might be difficult to find a parallel within the Roman pale. Men such as these, it must be remembered, are fountain-heads of thought, moulders and makers of the generations yet to come,

"Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood o' the world." †

52. At the present moment, indeed, belief in the revelation of the unseen is undergoing, here as elsewhere, a shock which is without parallel, at least in the history of this country, for the activity of its manifestations; and is suffering a sharp retribution for all the errors of all its professors. But it remains to be seen whether what we

* I do not think Coleridge's early function, as a preacher of a creed soon abandoned, requires me to qualify this epithet.

† Tennyson's 'Princess,' ii.

witness is a structural change, like those which fill the record of geological time, or whether it is the wave of a cyclone, which wastes and submerges, and is then itself reabsorbed. So it was with the unbelief which Bishop Butler described; so it may be again. It is, however, even now, my persuasion that, so far as men of mature life are concerned, there is exaggeration abroad, if not as to the world of physical science—which has not yet become the "mother and mistress of all the sciences"—yet as to the world of literature; still more as to the sphere of those professions, which are mainly conversant with human life and action, and which, as I cannot but think, must best prepare men to judge of any scheme, which has for its object the training of mankind.

53. But whatever modesty, whatever reserve the present rampancy of the non-believing movement may inspire, it will hardly prompt us to look to the Latin Church as invested with the reconciling mission between faith and the human reason. It is true that the central authority of that Church has recently pointed out another method of settling the difference. It proposes to effect the work by the simple action of authority: and this method, boldly proclaimed, and well echoed through the world, may attract a fragmentary proportion even of English minds. The Abbé Martin says (p. 132), "The fundamental principle of Catholic discipline is respect for authority:" and he calls on us to "understand very clearly" (p. 131) that those, who accept his invitation, must, "in religious matters, make an entire surrender of their personal liberty and of their own will."

54. Freedom, then, is quietly trodden under foot. Now, this is not a lawless country. It constantly excites the surprise of foreigners that, when Revolution shakes

or saps the Continent, Authority sits undisturbed in England. But that, it will be said, is temporal authority. It is not temporal authority alone. Rely upon it, the acknowledgment of a law external to ourselves in things unseen is the absolute condition, under which alone authority can uphold itself in the sphere of the visible and tangible. But it is met by the counteracting play of liberty; met, yet not extinguished. Authority can only be defended by reason: it is a part of what reason sanctions and recommends. But there is no escape from this, that it must be tried by reason; as even the being of God, with reverence be it spoken, must be tried by reason. Tried by reason, under a great responsibility; but under no external coercion, either physical or moral.

55. What the English mind demands, and will demand, is that the contest between belief and non-belief shall be fought out upon equal terms. This does not mean that human consent, that the tradition of ages, shall be cast aside as a thing of no account; but means that it shall be weighed, and account taken of its weight, by that faculty which God has made to be the very door of our matured minds, and through which alone lawful entrance into them can be had. The principle of authority, the fact of Revelation, the stability and perpetuity of the Catholic Creed, all these, I trust, will remain firmly grounded among us; but they can only be maintained through a frank acceptance of the challenge to make good their claims by reason.

56. This demand of the English mind has been met by the Roman Church with the allegation, that her head is infallible. But then we know that, until eight years ago, this very thing was freely denied by the highest

authorities in her communion. She likewise asserts her universality; but does not this seem to be somewhat impaired by the fact that the Christians, who are not of her communion, are quite as numerous as those who are? She claims, too, a right to override the conclusions of science; but will candid reflection regard the plea as strong enough to stand the shock of hard and concrete facts? We observe in the Roman Church a most powerful organisation, and a great faculty of action upon all those who do not laboriously think, or largely contribute to supply mankind with its stock of thought: but we observe also, when we look to the countries of her unbroken dominion, an apparent want of capacity to meet the human mind in its questioning attitude; so that it has simply broken away from her control, and the communications between the two are like the voices of men severed on this side and on that by a broad and deep stream that neither of them can cross. The non-believing guerillas are busy in the field of science, of archæology, of language, of pre-historic facts, of speculative philosophy, of Biblical and all archaic criticism. In every one of these they challenge Christians to the fight. What, within the last thirty years, the current generation —during which the trumpet of defiance has been ever sounding in her ears—have this vast clergy and Church effected in answer to the challenge? And why are Ritualists, or anybody else, to be in a hurry to surrender their Christianity to a body that shows so small capacity to defend a territory, which nevertheless it claims exclusively to occupy?

57. The truth is that the Reformation, amidst its convulsive throes, lifted again to the surface a gigantic question which had long lain buried beneath the *débris* of

the current religious traditions; namely, whether freedom is one of the vital and normal coefficients for all healthy life and action of the human soul? It answered this question, too, not at once, but partly led and partly driven by the logic of events, in the affirmative. Neither had the Roman Church, before the Reformation, replied to it in the negative. Since that great epoch, her attitude has become in many ways more artificial and constrained. The tendencies adverse to freedom within her pale are supposed to be due to the order of Jesuits. But Loyola is himself only the first, and most prominent, index and result of those tendencies. The foe was everywhere around the walls: sentries had to be multiplied, passwords appointed, and doors formerly open kept fast with lock and key.

58. Jesuitism was only rendered possible by the Reformation: it was, by reflex action, the Reformation's child. Compulsory confession was a yoke which one-half Europe had refused to bear: but, in the post-Reformation Church, that rule was developed into the system of direction. Now Tartaros was as far beneath the ground, as the ground was beneath heaven; and direction was as far beyond mere confession, as confession was beyond the lines of human autonomy. Religion became more sensuous, more artificial, more feminine. The saints of this period differ from earlier saints, not merely as the ages differ, but from the specific reflex effect which had been wrought upon the Latin religion. What a difference, for instance, between Saint Bernard and Saint Francis de Sales: how much more human, natural, and universal is the one, how much more removed is the other from the largeness of the true type of manhood. And so it still seems to be a continual tendency, nay, a standing policy,

to depress the man in the priest, and to make the common type of the order force down the growths of individual character.

59. Finally, what the Reformation did once, the French Revolution did anew. It stimulated and centralised the ecclesiastical spirit, narrowing its precinct, making it more intense within that precinct, but widening the gap between it and the lay Christian world, and wearing away the hope of reconciliation between them. It is easy to denounce from the Roman chair all opposers, as simply representing the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the question will recur to calm minds whether that absoluteness of rule which it establishes, from the head downwards, through the several stages of its clergy, ending in the dominion of them all over the flock, and in the establishment of an unchecked clerical supremacy over the detail of life, is really healthful for mankind; really according to the laws of the constitution given us from on high; really the due form of the remedy appointed for the healing, the restoration, and the full development of human nature?

60. A variety of circumstances tend to confirm this mistrust in the capacity of a Church, such as the Abbé Martin recommends, for becoming a successful champion of belief. We know, for example, that forty, thirty, or twenty years ago the fortress of thought and of scientific theology, for the Latin Church, was in South Germany. But we also know that the band of men, who were then her joy and crown, have been driven, since the Council of 1870, out of her communion; and are now known as Old Catholics. If we cross the Rhine into France, we observe that Lamennais, the greatest genius of the French clergy of his day, and Hyacinthe, once their most famous preacher,

each, though in different directions, became estranged from their Church; that Montalembert* is widely believed, and Gratry is more or less suspected, to have died in mental estrangement from the Council of the Vatican. If we carry our view into Italy, we find that nearly all the most remarkable men of its clergy for the last half-century have been unable to hold their positions, or have fallen under the positive censures of the Church: Rosmini, Gioberti, Ventura, Passaglia: a list to which two notable names, at least, of men now living might be added. In England it is true that a large number of notable persons were, within our memory, induced to cross the Roman border. They changed the colour of their small but respected Anglo-Roman communion, and some of them have been active in polemical campaigning; but what has this clergy effected in the great warfare for belief?

61. There was a time when the champions of the Latin Church were content to pursue the historic method, and to trace through the sacred Scriptures, the writings of Fathers, the structure of liturgies, and the decrees of Councils, those severed elements of proof, which, as they thought, welding themselves by degrees into a mass, presented the features of a true historic growth, and justified them in inscribing over the portals of their Church the proud title of the Unchanged. There was not only a material but a formal difference between this mode of arguing, and the mode now in use. For it was a process carried on in the open, level arena, upon the common ground of an appeal to history, and to rational judgment, upon a wide range of actual fact. The method is now

* [The reader, if desirous of further information, will naturally consult his Biography by Mrs. Oliphant. The subject is discussed in vol. ii. pp. 390–9, but with a certain amount of reserve.—W. E. G., 1878.]

disused; and such men as the Bossuets, the Nicoles, or as the great divines of Constance, are discredited and even denounced; a change in tactics, which must have a cause, and which suggests no other cause than this; that, in the face of the profound alterations lately effected in the Roman system, the appeal to history has become a patent peril, and must be not only laid aside but inhibited. But do the modes of argument, which have been substituted, better sustain the ordeal, through which they have to pass in every reflective and impartial mind?

62. For example, in lieu of showing what has been in the world, and what is, or is not to be deduced from the abundant facts of history bearing on the case, recourse is now often had to the argument *à priori*. This may well be called the domineering argument; as, in order to instruct man, it lays down the law for God, and determines the provision it was needful for Him to make in order to ensure the fulfilment of His promise to the Church that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; or, that the Christian faith, and the society to whose stewardship it was to be intrusted, should endure throughout all the ages, until the work of the Redeemer should have been fully accomplished. To this end, we are often told, it was necessary that there should be an ecclesiastical organisation with one head exercising supremacy over the entire body.

63. But when we look through or over the wall of the Western Church, into the precincts of the Eastern, we seem to find a living confutation of this argument. For there a vast body, nearly a fourth of Christendom, has subsisted from the great day of Pentecost to our day, which not only does not enjoy, but which renounces and condemns, the whole doctrine of supremacy; and which,

under the old Patriarchal constitution of the Church, retains the Christian faith entire, by the acknowledgment of Rome herself, which invites, and invites in vain, to her Councils those unyielding patriarchs of the East. And what is the answer? We may really marvel that human lips can be found to speak, or hands to write it. It is, says Abbé Martin (p. 125), that the Eastern Churches are "almost all of them dead or dying for the last many centuries." Dying for the last many centuries! It is told, I think, of Fontenelle, that he was warned against coffee as a slow poison. "A very slow one," he replied; "I have drunk it through eighty years." Surely it is a poor, thin, transparent shift, which the dire necessities of exhausted polemics may rather account for than excuse.

64. I shall attempt no reply except to say that the score of millions of those Christians, who inhabit the Turkish Empire, have for almost a corresponding tale of generations enjoyed the highest of all honours; they have been sufferers for their faith. They have been its martyrs and its confessors. They alone have continuously filled that character. Many a tender maid, at the threshold of her young life, has gladly met her doom, when the words that accepted Islam, the act that invested her with the yatchak, would have made her in a moment a free and honoured member of a privileged, a dominant community. Ever since the Turkish hoof began to lay waste the Levant, those twenty millions have had before them, on the one side peace and freedom, on the other side the Gospel. They have chosen the Gospel; and have paid the forfeit. And whatever be their faults and errors, it is not for us of the West, amidst our ease and prosperity, our abundant sins and scandals, to stigmatise them as professors of a dead or dying Christianity, and thus to

disparage the most splendid and irrefragable, perhaps, of all the testimonies which man can render to the religion of the Cross. Of this deplorable plea I should confidently hope never to hear again, but that I believe none better can be found to serve its controversial purpose.

65. There may be many, who believe in the perpetuity of the Christian faith, and Christian Society or Church, and therefore in its preservation in all necessary truth; and yet who, on the broad ground of rational interpretation of Scripture, would utterly deny, or resolutely question, the assumption that either the Roman Pontiff, or any organ or organs of the Church whatever, have a guaranteed immunity from error. The life of the Church is one thing; its health, and the perfection of its health, surely are another. A promise of life to an individual does not exclude sickness: why should the promise of life to the Church? It is surely futile to reply that she cannot err, because immunity from error is essential to the perfect discharge of her duties. Here we have again the *à priori* doctrine, and rules of conduct laid down for One whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways.* But the assumption is not only arbitrary; it is in straight contradiction to the whole constitution of things, under which we live. For in it every provision for the performance of duty, for the attainment of good, is marked with the imperfection thus haughtily refused. To this rule there is no exception. Even the very "creature,"† the beautiful material world, is touched and streaked with it; lest perchance, if it had been faultless, it might suggest to us a claim for immunities that seem to have been advisedly withheld by the Supreme Wisdom.

* Isaiah lv. 8. † Rom. viii.

But also this daring argument, which threatens, like Capaneus, to scale the gates and walls of heaven, is, after all, quite insufficient for its purpose. If we are to believe in the inerrability of a person, or a body of persons, because it is, forsooth, necessary for the full preservation of the truth, we must then also believe in all besides that can be shown to be needful for the perfect attainment of that end. Now, the conservation of all spiritual truth is not a mere operation of the intellect. It requires the faultless action of the perceiving power of the spirit. That is to say, it requires the exclusion of sin; and the man or body that is to be infallible, must also be a sinless organ. I here deal, it will be observed, only with the argument *à priori*, which proclaims that infallibility must be true, because it is necessary for the perfect maintenance of truth and exclusion of error. If this be so, there is something else that is necessary for infallibility. It is necessary that the tainting, blinding, distorting power of sin should be shut out from the spiritual eye of the infallible judge. In a word, one-half of the claim is too glaringly at variance with the facts of every day to be prudently employed; yet it is requisite, in order to make good in reason the other half, which is only advanced with greater safety, because its detection depends upon long, and more complicated and disputable processes.

66. Another argument which has been recently brought into use, and has dealt a heavy blow to the old and revered motto of *Semper eadem*, has been that which may indeed be called *Nunquam eadem;* or, the doctrine of development. When Dr. Newman explained to the world that this was the instrument which had opened for him the way from his mother Church and university into the

Roman communion, he felt the necessity of supplying tests, which might serve to distinguish a development from a corruption. Of these he enumerated no less than seven.* They were :—

1. Preservation of type or idea.
2. Continuity of principles.
3. Power of assimilation.
4. Early anticipation.
5. Logical sequence.
6. Preservative additions.
7. Chronic continuance.

67. Now I submit that these seven tests, imposing as they sound, are radically insufficient to guarantee a normal and healthy growth, which is, I apprehend, the only legitimate development; for they do not include either maintenance of the equilibrium of the system, or the due proportion of its parts. Certainly they afford a warrant against the removal of the old essence and the substitution of a new one ; against the transubstantiation, so to speak, of the Church. But they afford no more. Suppose a child to be born weaker in one leg than in the other, and suppose that weak leg to be bandaged up and never put to the ground. The child develops—that is, he grows up, though he grows up a cripple, with a shrunken limb. But the type or idea of a human body remains; the principle of its life is continuous; it assimilates, for it is nourished by food; the early anticipation was shown in the weakness of the limb ; the logical sequence is the continuity of growth ; the preservative additions which, on Dr. Newman's principles, must be accessories only, are found in his duly measured clothes; and the chronic duration is in the long life, to which such a person may, and often does, attain, like another of seemlier formation. But the equilibrium is gone, and he wants a crutch;

* Newman on Development of Doctrine, chap. i. London, 1845.

the parts have lost their just proportion, and exhibit only the contrast of a strong side and a weak one.

68. Now this, if I may presume so far, not unfairly describes the development of the Roman out of the Apostolic Church. No doubt (as I for one believe) the Church began with a clergy; nay, began in a clergy. It had its centre of life, and of self-propagating power, in the Apostolic College, which gradually called into being those orders that form the full equipment of the Christian ministry. I could not in candour deny that Holy Scripture assigns to St. Peter some kind of leadership or primacy. Thus far, and if this had been all, we have, I admit, the germ of an absolute hierarchy, capable of development into the full organism. But these principles of life were girt about on every side with limiting conditions, of an equally active kind. As between St. Peter and the Apostles, by the independence of each upon every other individually, extending even to the power of remonstrance and rebuke, and by the superior authority of the Apostolic College and the Council of the Church. As between the ministry and its flocks, by their free admission to the Word of God without stint or limit; by the authorised, nay, commanded, exercise of their rational mind upon it: by their having some share in appointing to the ministerial office, for surely it was the *cheirotony* of the Acts that expended into lay assent, perhaps lay patronage, in the subsequent history of the Church: by their actual participation in government, which I suppose might very well be developed out of the Council of Jerusalem; and finally by their paramount control over temporalities.

69. I do not dispute the historical and huge development in the Latin Church of the first set of principles and powers. But what has become of the second?

The access to the Divine Word of Scripture has, to say the least, been greatly narrowed. The duty to prove is replaced (see Abbé Martin) by the duty to submit. Not only are lay rights in regard to appointments fast passing into clerical hands, but presbyteral and episcopal rights are in course of rapid absorption into the will of one single supreme clergyman, the Roman Pontiff. The last remnant of lay influence, from within the Church, over its government was effaced in principle and fact, by the exclusion of the representatives of States from the Council of the Vatican. Even of the care of temporalities the Church went far to relieve the people, when, besides the tithes and the voluntary offerings, it possessed before the Reformation from one-third to one-half the land of various countries. And at this day it is held to be vital by a party, that the Pope ought also to be a King, in order that he may be temporally independent. The whole space, given for the growth of two sets of principles, has been monopolised by one. In the structure of the Chur h system, the original equilibrium has been thus wholly dislocated, and a new one devised, with a crutch. The proportion of parts is lost; the laity count but do not weigh; hardly a vestige of their ecclesiastical rights remains; that vestige is only in the form of patronage; and it is marked for early extinction.

70. It is, I think, clear that, for the purposes of popular influence as well as of controversy, the Roman Church derives vast practical advantage from the continuity of her traditions. She is like a State that has never undergone a Revolution. I will not say she is like Russia, as compared with England: since I feel that the illustration is imperfect. For in a State, when evils become intolerable, a radical and violent change must come; inasmuch as to

be in the State is, and is felt to be, a first necessity of life. In these times, there is no corresponding sense of a first necessity to be in a Church, that is, to be truly in it, as among its living and working members. So it is quite possible that, in lieu of the trouble, the pain, the agony, of a convulsive change, like revolution in a State, men in a Church may tacitly withdraw, and may pass, through a comprehensive but noiseless disobedience, into a dogmatic vacuum, if not into spiritual death.

71. This much it is right to allow; that traditions, unbroken by any shock of change, offer undoubtedly an imposing spectacle; but they supply no test of truth in religious controversy, any more than they supplied a test of health and safety in the France of 1788. It had unbroken traditions; but it was to come down with a crash in 1789. England, on the other hand, by deposing bad sovereigns, and extorting Magna Charta and the Triennial Bill and the Bill of Rights, in a series of revolutions, had won her way to a true stability of civil existence. A just parallel, a sound illustration, is to be found, as I think, in the Pagan or Olympian system of the classic ages. From what original did that system draw its lineage? The Abbé Martin will probably agree with me in believing that a primitive religion was given, as the Scriptures tell us, in the cradle of our race. It was not by the shock of religious revolution, by the violence of Luthers, and Zuingles, and Calvins, that this primitive religion was dismatured and deformed. Here and there we have indications of minute local conflicts between an old god and a new; but they were purely local. It was not by persecuting laws, by tribunals of inquisition, or by wars of religion, that the old monotheism was (so to speak) transelemented, and caricatured, into the gorgeous but

gross and motley religion of the Greek and Italian Peninsulas. It was by continually importing new matter, of a particular quality and bearing. And these were very "preservative additions"; insomuch that they supplied the most civilised part of man, through fifteen hundred years, with what, "in chronic continuance," served them for a religion.

72. But they gradually and slowly drew the system off its old axis, and pitched it on a new one; and so handled it, that at last it seemed to lose all features of religion considered as a discipline for man. It then no longer presented the first of the seven tests in the preservation of the type or idea. Let it not be supposed that I mean to insinuate such a charge against the Latin Church. The type or idea, that of redemption and renovation through our Lord and Saviour, is, I rejoice to think, still held with a marvellous consent by nearly the entire body, however broken up, of professing Christians. My argument is one *à fortiori*, and is this;—that the plea of continuous traditions is of no binding force, because, as we see from the case of the Olympian system, this feature may subsist, and yet not merely corruption and debasement, but even possibly change of the type, and loss of the essence, may arrive.

73. Another imposing plea, the plea to which the Latin Church commonly owes what success she may achieve in making proselytes, is the great advantage, or, as it is sometimes put, the necessity, of certainty in religion, for the satisfaction and establishment of the soul. In this department of theology has been elaborated the doctrine of a "divine faith," the privilege of every Latin Christian, distinct, from the first, in its nature from even the most normal process and fullest ripeness of persuasion and con-

viction. Without doubt faith is distinct from knowledge, in things human as well as in things divine. But, over and above this, it is taught that faith is in essence different from the just appreciation of motives of credibility,* and a claim seems to be made for every Latin Christian of what is essentially a separate and specific revelation. Thus infallibility, on the one side, in the living voice of the Church, seems to be met by a divine certainty on the other in receiving it. No more ingenious scheme could be devised for shutting out that scrutiny of doctrine and ecclesiastical title, which is recommended to the members of all other religious communions, and inhibited to her own.

74. But, when the interior parts of this machinery come to be examined, it is found to exhibit fatal flaws. For there are no infallible means provided for carrying the message from the infallible mouth to the person happily endowed with a gift of "divine certainty" for receiving it. The priest who instructs him is not infallible, nor is the bishop who overrules the priest, nor is the Synod which outweighs the bishop. As to the priest, I need not enlarge. As to the bishop, in 1822 Bishop Baynes, a great authority, published his belief that no one in his communion, throughout England and Ireland, believed in the infallibility of the Pope. As to Synods, the national Synod of Ireland, in 1810, declared that no Roman Catholic could be "required to believe or profess" that infallibility, and also declared this freedom to be "a part of the Roman Catholic religion."† Into what terrible

* Perrone, De Loc. Theol. iii. 1, 2, 137, 138: "Credit perinde ac si cerneret intuitu suo, immò magis."

† Defence against Dr. Moysey, p. 230. Slater on Roman Catholic Tenets, pp. 14, 15.

pitfalls, then, may the Latin believer fall headlong unawares! for to-day he may be assured by a Synod, in the name of the entire Roman Church, that he cannot be required to believe a proposition, and to-morrow a Council, meeting at the Vatican, can lay on him that very obligation. What shock to certainty, comparable for a moment to this, has ever been imparted by any act done in the Anglican communion?

75. I do not wish to use any expression that can wound. But surely, in the sonorous pretensions of the Latin controversialists, there is a great deal of what in common affairs would be adjudged to be no better than "tall talk." The impression on my mind is, that it is no difficult matter to establish a very formidable and damaging indictment against any one of the portions of the Christian Church: damaging enough to excite, unsettle, terrify any one of its members, who does not resort to the unpalatable, but restorative, medicine of examining with an equal care such "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" as may perhaps be detected in the community he is solicited to join.

76. I fear that the restless and eager prosecution of the business of proselytism has often done irreparable mischief. First, in exposing the cause of belief to those cavils and scoffs, which it has provoked from men who do not believe. Secondly, and yet worse, in unsettling the foundations of that reverence, which every one ought to feel for the faith in which he has been reared, even as for the breasts at which he has first been fed. How often has it shaken the foundations of authority in the very first ordinance of God, the family! How often has it promoted a supposed orthodoxy of belief, to the neglect or to the detriment of those laws of conduct, the support of which

is the work, and end, and the true and only renown, of orthodoxy! How often, in accepting the hasty process, often of an unformed and youthful mind, as a sufficient warrant for the tremendous operation of changing a religion, does it, by an unfelt but inevitable influence, impair the strength and sanctity of those bonds which, if sincerely entertained, a religion must as such have woven round the mind and heart! How apt is it to insinuate, "Unless you believe what I tell you, you have no warrant to believe at all!" How eagerly does it inculcate authority upon principles of rebellion, and obtain the surrender of mental freedom through the operation of unbridled mental licence! I do not say that no man is to change a false religion for a true; or a less true religion for one with fuller truth; but that the change ought to be recognised for what it is, in fully developed minds, at the best a terrible convulsion, and at times such a rent in the spiritual life, as nothing can repair. Still less do I say that the spirit which our Lord once rebuked is confined to any sect or body: but I fear there is little doubt, upon a survey of the Christian world, which is its most favoured seat.

77. In writing this paper I have obeyed, as far as I could, the injunctions of the Abbé Martin, who deprecates dwelling on detail, and urges that "a great institution ought to be taken as a whole," judged "by its broad outlines," tested by its general results (pp. 127, 134). Anxious to avoid the sorer points of contact, I have avoided questions of morality; but he should know that we in England generally do not like the actual teaching of his Church as to the relative places given to particular sins and virtues. We fear that, in that teaching, a supreme law, the love of truth, comes off but second best; so that in the intercourse

of life with his co-religionists, we rely a great deal more on the individual, than on the Church.

78. I have taken little notice of his own observations as to details. It is no matter for wonder that his knowledge of things as they are with us, like ours of things as they are in France, should be but remote and inaccurate. Had he been a closer student of our history, he never could have said that there was no peace in the English Church, except when the State tightened the reins. The time of this tightening of the reins has usually been with us the time of the greatest disturbance. The State promoted a lethargic peace during the eighteenth century: not by tightening the reins, but by appointing Hanoverian Bishops, who could not exercise a sharp control over a Jacobite clergy; and thus by loosening, not tightening discipline. Nor could he have said, that the Church worked worst in periods of vigour. Hardly any one denies the enormous increase of good wrought in our own time, amidst all its troubles and all its scandals. He sets out in much detail trivial causes, which he thinks prevent conversion. It seems only to occur to him by accident, and as he draws near a close, that his Ritualists abide in the Anglican Church because they believe it to be "a part of the true Church of Jesus Christ" (p. 130). But if he is right,—and doubtless he is right,—in imputing to them this belief, how is it that he does not see how it supplies, until overthrown,—and he has done nothing to overthrow it,—the sufficient and conclusive answer to his question?

79. His courtesy and evident goodwill inspire the wish that he knew more closely the state of religion in this non-Roman world. He offers us a religion with "authority for its fundamental principle" (p. 132), but authority

blended with "great kindness and condescension" (p. 127). The freedom which we think to be, by the ordinance of God, an inseparable law of our life, and condition of all its healthful energy, has thus tranquilly disappeared from the system of the Abbé. What we want is not so much authority "blended with great kindness and condescension," as authority freely entertained and accepted by reason, met by it, and "blended" with it. Were he more familiar with us, he would see that in this country, conformably to its essential character, there exists no question as to the maintenance of religion without this freedom; the serious question is whether it is to be maintained with it, or not to be maintained at all.

80. The liberal coquetry of Von Hartmann* with the Latin Church, as the only foe that Negation can stoop to recognise, has, except as to individuals, little meaning for England. Yet there is here a great mass of positive belief, both within and without the Church of the nation. Among the Presbyterians of Scotland, and the Nonconformists of England, extremes of doctrine have been greatly mitigated; but theology is on the rise, and culture is held in increased esteem. No doubt the principles called Anglican, which have also greatly advanced in positiveness and in practical vitality, exhibit notable distinctions from the Protestant system, as it exists outside the Church of the land. But both this evangelical Protestantism, and the Anglican system, have crossed the Oceans, and sprung up in the remotest portions of the earth, with vigorous organisations to sustain them, and with no small exhibition of expansive force in efforts to reclaim the heathen. Of the Church of England and her

* 'Die Selbstzersetzung des Christenthum,' p. xv.

daughters beyond sea, it may with no gross immodesty be said,

> "Tum, fortes latè ramos et brachia tendens
> Hue illuc, media ipsa ingentem sustinet umbram." *

81. There are Roman divines, who seem to boast of the disintegration of Protestantism. Yet I hardly understand how the candid mind, be it Roman or other, can fail to see that these two, which I have described, are great and powerful factors, for the present and for the future, in the composition and direction of the Christian world. They differ in their respective distances from the Church of Rome, in their conceptions of Church communion, of sacraments, of authority, and of Christian tradition. But both prize as an inestimable boon the power of free and universal access for all Christians to the written Word, the most powerful and pure of all instruments of human education: and that boon was obtained for both by the struggle of the Sixteenth Century. Both turn their eyes, with a common anxiety, to the great issues that are now debated in every form, and in the hearing of every class and every person. Both look to the determination of those issues, as involving the alternative of the further advancement, or the eventual degeneracy, of man.

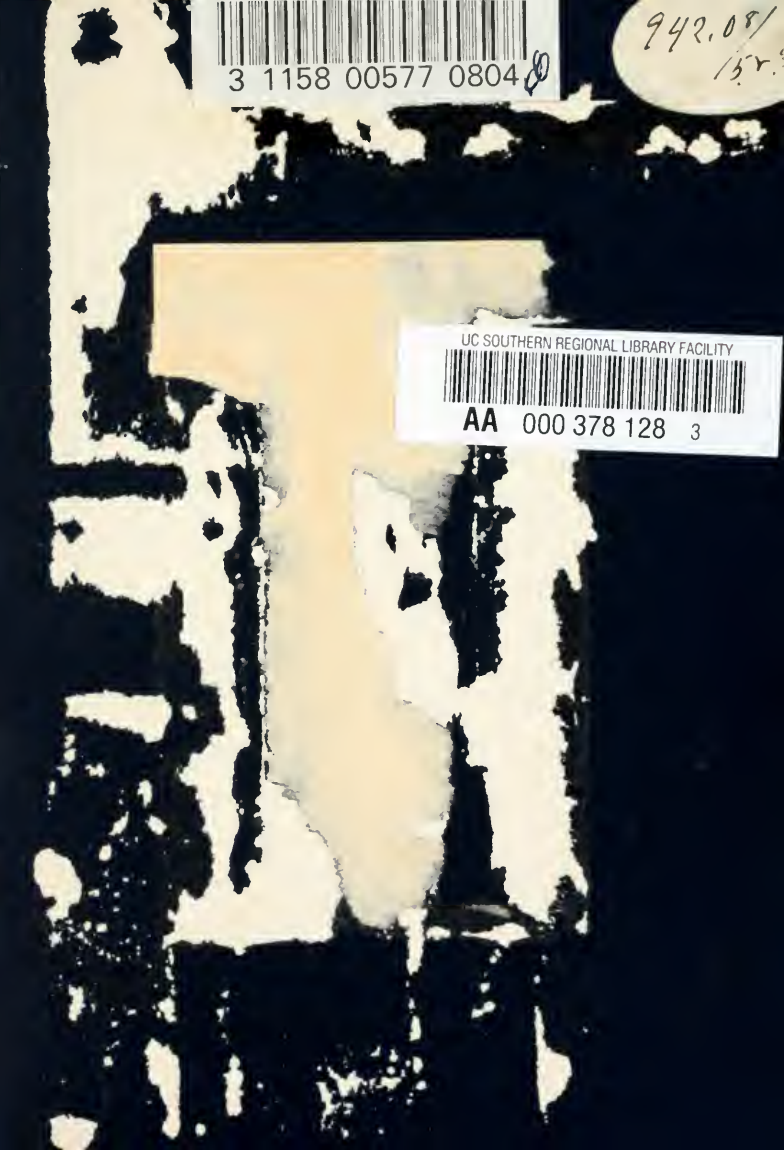
82. For them the question of questions is, what *modus vivendi*, what terms of respective possession and reciprocal influence, can be established between the Christian Revelation and the more and more restless, but also more and more awakened and busy, reason of man. The foundations of the great deep are indeed broken up; and men have to contend for the first beginnings, elements, and

* Virg. Georg. ii. 296.

foundations of the truth. The specific idea of Revelation; the limit of inspiration in the Divine Word; the relation between the past and the passing generation in the acceptance and delivery of truth, between the ancient expressions of it and the play of recent thought upon and around them, between the action of freedom in which our nature is grounded, and the reaction of authority, which is as much an essential of mental as of external life; the place of law in the visible creation, and of miracle in relation to experience; the nature and range of intercourse by prayer between the creature and the Creator; the rules by which the dubious conflicts of righteousness in this world shall work out into its final triumph, and the probation of the human being, oftentimes so narrow and inadequate, to our human view, shall usher him onwards to a definite condition: these are some of the questions within the region of Theism, to say nothing of those beyond it, which call importunately for the vindication or readjustment of old replies, or the construction of new ones.

83. Nor do they call in vain. There is no acquiescence in the attempt to divorce morality from religion, or religion from theology. Though the contest be close and urgent, and all the more so from the respect due to so many of the assailants, there is no despondency as to the issue. But it is felt that the time has come, when discussion has to be substituted for anathema as the main instrument of defence. If the Latin Church will gird herself for that discussion, and show that she can surpass Anglicans and Nonconformists, Lutherans and Reformed, in vindicating the authority of religion, and establishing its harmony with the advised and persistent demands of the human reason, she may then only secure for herself the *spolia opima* of battle in the best of causes. She would thus,

assuredly, do more to bring about the ultimate triumph of her own particular claim, than by wondering, while admitting, that all Protestants are not Rationalists, or that all Ritualists do not leave a Church, which is said at the same time, as a true Church, to command their allegiance (p. 130); and, as "the living embodiment of every high and holy thought, memory, purpose, hope," to warm their heart.



Gleanings of Past Years

Gladstone