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PRESENT TENDENCY OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN GREAT
BRITAIN AND IRELAND.*

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IN the end thought rules the world. At times, other and inferior agents appear more prominent on the visible scene; but behind, if you search, you may discover intelligence to set the instruments agoing, and directing and controlling their action. There are times when impulses and passions are more powerful in our world, but they soon expend themselves; while mind, acting constantly, is ready to drive them back, and to work when their energy is exhausted. It comes, then, to be an all-important question, What is the tendency of thought in religious matters throughout the three kingdoms in these times? As the tendency of religious thought in this age, so will be the results in the next. In my study of the history of mankind, I have found the opinions of young men between eighteen and twenty years of age to become, after being somewhat modified and sobered, the opinions of the country generally in the next generation. Hence the subject of my paper—hence the importance of it.

It is evident, at a glance, that we live in an age of inquiry, in an age of restlessness, in an age of discontent with the past, in an age of transition to something worse or something better. The day of the mediæval reaction is obviously past among all our young men in the Protestant Church. The cry is now for an onward march somewhither. The most quiescent and retiring must have heard it. It burst forth in a wild but somewhat uncertain sound in the "Essays and Reviews;" it took a more distinct denunciation in the attack on the Pentateuch. Its utterances are bolder since the decision of the Privy Council in regard to the two Essayists. You find the movement encouraged or opposed in nearly every one of our influential organs of periodical literature. We can not, if we would, shut our ears to the sound, which has become loud enough to wake the most sleepy, to disturb the most contented. It may be wise, instead of trying to shut our

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ears, to inquire seriously what all this noise is about. We who have passed the watershed of life, who have crossed the greatest heights and have begun to descend, are apt to complain that the young are showing too strong a disposition to cast off the old, the venerable, and the settled. Albeit myself reached a full middle age, in which my sun must not mount, but decline, I do not join in that cry. The old is to be respected, because it is old; but the old must not be allowed to crush the new because it is new. I rejoice in the spirit of inquiry that is abroad; I have hopes of an age of inquiry. Any thing is better than stupid indifference, than careless acquiescence in what exists, than a reigning secularity which accepts all that is established, because it does not wish to be troubled with thought or exertion of any kind. The age when Christianity was diffused, the age of the Reformation, were ages of inquiry. Give me life, at all hazards, rather than death, which has no perils because it has nothing to lose. I hail the young life of our day in religion. I can give, I can discover, no reason why the young should not inquire in this age, as their forefathers did in the ages which we are accustomed to regard as the purest and noblest. But an age of inquiry, while it is one which inspires hope, is also one which raises anxiety. The vessel will not move till the anchors are lifted; but it is when the ship is ready to move that we must see to it that the compass be in order, that the sails be right set, that the pilot be at the helm, lest the voyage end in a shipwreck. We fathers can not keep our young men from thinking for themselves, and setting out on their own course in life, as we have done ourselves in our day; but even when we hope for good, we may have apprehensions for them in these excited times, when the most sacred topics are discussed, old creeds searched, and old opinions weighed.

This age will not allow itself to be called an infidel one; nor does it deserve the name. For the Christian Church is strong in faith, in hope, in zeal, in activity. I doubt much whether it ever was in a healthier state in respect of its numerous and devoted membership, its missionary effort at home and abroad, its able defenders, and its literary organs. But it can not be denied that in front of it there is a formidable enemy, powerful in its intellectual ability, its literary accomplishments, its scientific, and, particularly, its geological attainments, and, above all, in its earnestness and understood compactness of combination. That power is not pre-

pared to avow itself an enemy to religion. Last century, it was the habit of skeptics to scoff at all serious faith, and to represent professed religious convictions as being either fanatical or hypocritical, and as, in fact, offering the greatest hindrances to the advancement of the race. It is now freely admitted that man is, in his very nature, a religious being; that he has spiritual instincts and propensities which must have an outlet, and which require to be gratified by some form of worship, enlightened or degraded. It is conceded that every community of mankind must have a religious faith and fellowship, and that all attempts to interfere with this must recoil on those who make them. But, alongside with this admission, there is an attack, vigorous and sustained, on the creed of the past—in some cases on Christianity, as having served its purpose and now become antiquated, but more frequently upon the old forms of Christianity, more especially as embodied in the formulas and confessions of every Church. Those who have been looking into our popular literature, particularly the periodical literature, are quite familiar with this. You may find it not only in an offensive form in the *Westminster*, but in a more reverential spirit in the *National* and *Fraser*, and, on occasions more or less rare, in the *Edinburgh* and *Saturday*. In the country in which we are met, the party seeking to sap the national creed has long had an able and persevering exponent in the *Scotsman* newspaper. I suppose it would be reckoned a recommendation to a lecturer for the Philosophical Institution in this city that he was supposed to be dissatisfied with the old theology. Whether this arises from the predilections of certain of the directors or the known wishes of the audience, I am not in a position to say; but, in either case, it is a sign of the times. Along with this, there is in the progressing Church itself a considerable discontent with the old theological phrases and modes of thought. Our independent youths proclaim that our forefathers had no right to impose their creed on their descendants. Our advanced spirits boast that, having reached manhood, they have outgrown the boyhood of the race. The hearts of the more timid, anxious, and doubting have been wrung, till feelings more bitter than tears have been wrung from them as they surveyed the contest. As the result, we have a general discontent with the old, a cry for reform, and an expectation and prediction that something new and better must appear. But this is not the only nor the peculiar

characteristic of the age. In this respect, it is like what other ages have been.

The peculiarity of this age is, that it can not or will not declare what it wants, wishes, and expects. It would compare itself to the seventeenth century, or to the Reformation epoch, or even at times, in its presumption, to the very time when Christianity arose. But there is, at least, this important difference: The Puritans, the Reformers, and the Apostles did not content themselves with expressing dissatisfaction with abuses, they had something positive to offer, and announced it clearly, explicitly, and boldly. But in the present age, there is a studied or a weak and vascillating uncertainty about the expected improvement. On the one hand, the infidel keeps his purpose wrapt up in a cloud, in which it bulks very largely and very shapelessly. He concedes that man is a religious animal, that a religion must be provided for him, and he promises that it shall and will come, and will be very pure, very rational, and very beneficent. But he never condescends to tell you where it is to come from, and he declines, for the present, to explain what it is to be; and if you insist on something more specific, he breaks forth into expressions about a belief in the good and the infinite, but never becomes more articulate in his utterances. There is a like indefiniteness and haziness about the reform and improvement sought by Christians of the progressive school. Some of them tell you that divine truth is too grand, wide, and comprehensive to submit to human definition or expression. They would scarcely go so far, indeed, as the ancient Alexandrian mystics, who opposed a refined paganism to the rapidly advancing Christianity, and declared that nothing could be predicated of God, and that it was profane to make any affirmation regarding Him. Some of those whose names are often quoted in connection with the expected improvement of Christianity very nearly approach this. I have heard the late Chevalier von Bunsen (a man whom no one could meet, as I have done in familiar intercourse, without at once recognizing in him a genuine Christian) declare that he could not allow God to be called a "person," and had doubts about the propriety of designating Him a "being." Many, who would draw back from such an extreme, decline to give any account of the nature of this new faith of which they cherish the expectation that it is to dispel all uncharitableness, and introduce a new era of peace and

love. This age has a special aversion to a settled creed. It is, to some extent, a reaction against the attempt of the theologians of the seventeenth century to fix every divine truth in logical formulæ. The pendulum is now swinging to the other side. If before we had the high so cold and rugged, we have now the hollow, with its damps and curling mists. The flow may have been too great, but the ebb is quite as excessive, with its exposed sludge, in which we run some risk of sinking, and its floating malaria, which may gender fever. A clear idea, a settled conviction, is now represented as a thing impossible, and not desirable if it were possible. Doubt is exalted to the rank of a virtue. Cloudiness is thought to be preferable to clearness. Using but abusing the language of Scripture, they tell us that we must all be baptized in the cloud and the sea. This must, necessarily, be a transition state of things. People will not remain long in their present position of vagueness and vacillation. Suspense is at all times painful, and persons hasten out of it as soon as possible, preferring even the worst certainty to uncertainty. It is this circumstance which renders these times so momentous. We are come to a point from which two roads diverge; our eager youths will not long remain there, and they will betake themselves to the right or to the left. I fear, as to some, that they may take the path which leads toward infidelity, without knowing it. I have confidence, however, as to most of these, that when they do know whither they are journeying, they will draw back before they are left in a desert of unbelief. Meanwhile, they will be allured forward on the pretext that, at the next turning of the road, some grand prospect will be disclosed. The present doubt and uncertainty, they acknowledge, are very uncomfortable, very much like the melting of the snow and the breaking up of the ice, in which there are deep roads and flooded waters, where there is bad walking and difficult standing; but they are told that a spring-time is at hand. The mist in which they are at present enveloped is, they acknowledge, thick, heavy, and unwholesome; but there it is, the mist of the morning, which is soon to clear away, and disclose a bright and bracing day. They are confidently assured that something new and better is to appear. Let them ask their leaders to tell them precisely what it is to be. The answer, if they condescend to give one, must be that it is a new country which is to be disclosed, and that it is wrong in us to demand a

premature map of it. All the remark that I have to make on this, in passing, is, that it is quite clear that these leaders of thought have nothing, absolutely nothing, positive to present to us. They would have our young men commit themselves to a current which is drifting on they will not tell us whither, only holding out some hope of a sunny land, to which we may apply the language of our great living poet, the Poet-Laureate of the new school—

“I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,
Vague brightness!”

But if they will not answer the first question, there is a second which you should put, and to which you are entitled to have an answer from these would-be leaders of religious thought. If they will not or can not tell you what this new thing is to be, let them, at least, specify the quarter from which we are to expect it. Do they suppose that some great man, or set of men, in Germany, in France, in London, or at Oxford will be able to fashion it? I rather think that this is too preposterous a proposal to be seriously made by them. When Napoleon Bonaparte was purposing to restore the Roman Catholic religion, which had been swept away at the Revolution, the infidels of France proposed to him that he should frame a new religion instead. But the shrewd observer of mankind laughed at the idea. As to the German professors, they might be more profitably employed in settling the constitution of their country than in devising a new religion; and in this work they will find that they have to begin by removing that wide-spread infidelity which they have produced among the people, and which is, in fact, the greatest obstacle to the advance of the cause of order and progressive liberty in that country. As to the French *savans*, they might be better engaged in preparing their country for making a good use of liberty, the great obstacle in the way of which is just the want of a belief in a pure Christianity. As to the London *literati*, they are able to write brilliant articles, but they would be amazed if any one were to ask them to concoct a new faith.

The Oxford Essayists, however powerful in destruction, have, as yet, shown no aptness for construction. If pushed for an answer to the question, Whence are we to expect the new religion? the answer must be, From further research and inquiry—in short, from human intelligence. Yes, it is to this they must come, that

they look for it from human reason. Now, it would not do for me to seek to disparage the faculties of man. In my published writings, I have labored to show what truth in religion can be established by proper research. It is the business of my life, as Professor of Logic and Philosophy, to unfold the nature and the laws of human intelligence. But what can human reason do in regard to religion? Has not the history of human reason, in this respect, been a history of wanderings? Some evidently dream, and hint in broken expressions as they do so, that we might set aside the Bible and yet have a religion. The illustrious Bacon has sketched what the religion of nature can do. "As concerning Divine philosophy or natural theology, it is that knowledge or rudiment of knowledge concerning God which may be obtained by the contemplation of His creatures, which knowledge may be truly termed Divine in respect of the object, and natural in respect of the light. The bounds of this knowledge are, that it sufficeth to convince atheism, but not to inform religion."

But it is urged that we might still have a God, a morality, and the immortality of a soul. The majority of those who have abandoned Christianity, and who have not gone on to atheism, are pantheists. And what is pantheism? I am not asking what the adherents of it believe it to be. I am inquiring what it is. It means that God and the creature are one; that man is some mode of God; that man when he sins is God; that man when he tells a lie, that man when he commits adultery, that man when he murders a neighbor, is a part of God. This is the creed avowed by the great body of the Germans who have turned away from the Bible. M. Renan is exceedingly indignant at those who affirm that he has no religion; he wishes, he says, to be religious, and regrets that he is so much cut off from communion with religious people. I give him all credit for longing, in the depths of his heart, for a religion and for a communion with fellow-worshippers; and I am sure he often feels a want, and he seems to me to give vent to it, at times, in plaintive tones, as if he felt that, like Esau, he had lost his birthright. But what has he left to satisfy him? He professes to believe in God. But what sort of God has he left? He does not avow pantheism, but his God is evidently the God of a vague sentimental pantheism. He is ever breaking forth into raptures about an absolute morality, an eternal morality; but what this is he does not condescend to tell us. I fear that the

morality which remains after you have taken away a personal God to guard it, and to call men to account at a judgment-day, will not be an eternal morality, but of a very changing and transitory character. And as to the immortality of the soul, what is the doctrine left? The Frenchman, evidently, thinks that man can not be held to be composed of two substances, and that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is inconsistent with physiology. The following passage contains all that he is allowed to hope: "Those who do not stoop to conceive of man as composed of two substances, and who find the theistical dogma of the immortality of the soul in contradiction with physiology, love to rest in the hope of a final reparation, which, under an unknown form, will satisfy the want of the human heart." And what is this (mark his word): "Who knows but that the last term of progression, in millions of ages, may bring forth the absolute consciousness of the universe, and in that consciousness the awakening of all that has lived?" It is put in the form of a question, Who knows? and no decisive answer is given. But, admitting that he does wish us to answer in the affirmative, will it satisfy the wants of the human heart as we stand by the corpse of a beloved friend, as we ourselves look forward to death and the grave? In his "Life of Jesus," he admits the most of the events of our Lord's life down to His death on the cross, and here he closes the volume. It is a suitable close. This fifth Gospel gives us a death, but gives us no resurrection. In the Christian Church, as at the creation of the world, the evening and the morning constitute the day; in this new religion, which is to supersede the Christian, the night cometh, but there is no morning.

I suppose that I happen to be thrown into the circle of the influential writers of our periodical literature—including young men reared at Oxford and Cambridge, and at Edinburgh—in fact, what I am now to give you is a real conversation in a distinguished literary company, only somewhat disguised to avoid references to individuals. I was, first of all, not a little surprised to find that the conversation could not be turned away from religion. To whatever other topic it led for a time, it always swung back to this. The spirit of these leaders of opinion was, We must have something better than we now have—it is coming, it is rapidly coming. I did not choose to enter into direct argument with the formidable and apparently united phalanx. As I was in so small

a minority, I thought it might be more prudent simply to toss in a barley-cake into the camp, such as the man saw in his dream tumbling into the host of Midian. As I had been reading Plato, shortly before, I tried, at a great distance, to follow the Socratic method. I told them I had a great desire to know what this new faith might be, from which so much was expected by distinguished men, and I declared, honestly, that if they could show it to be a better I would adopt it. I sat waiting for information, only wishing them to allow that man must have a religion, which they all freely allowed. As students of human nature, which some of them were, as conversant with history, which they all were, they acknowledged that man had religious inclinations and wants, and that, in all ages and countries, mankind have had some sort of apprehension, faith, or hope, in regard to a supernatural being or power. Well, I said, gentlemen, we are now ready to start on this exploring expedition after truth. The boldest of the thinkers declared that we must have something better than Christianity, which, he said, had had its day, and done its work, upon the whole a beneficent one, but was now ready to vanish away. Half a dozen voices interposed, and I was silent. Where are you to get this new religion? said one. Are you to go back to paganism? Not just that, was the reply; we must advance and not retrograde. From mesmerism and clairvoyance? asked a second, referring significantly to some who had abandoned Christianity and taken refuge from a black atheism, staring them in the face, in spirit-rapping. A scoff was all the reply given by our shrewd infidel, who was not to be taken in by such pretenses. From a new revelation by God? was the inquiry of a third; to which he answered that he believed in no revelation in time past, and expected none in time to come. From human reason? asked several simultaneously; and it was shown successfully that the history of human reason in religious matters had been, in time past, a history of wanderings, and it was shown that the advocates of human reason, even in this enlightened age, were not agreed on almost any thing. It was shown that some thought that the works of nature could prove that there was a God, while others were doubtful whether Hume's objections and Kant's criticism had been answered. It was shown that of those who believed in a God, a considerable number were pantheists. One remarked that, apart from the resurrection of Christ, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body

had nothing to sustain it; and another declared that he was not convinced, by the arguments of natural theology, of the doctrine of the life of the soul after the death of the body. As to morality, it was allowed that the great body of those who rejected Christianity made virtue consist in mere utility, and, in supporting their utilitarian theory, had great difficulty in showing how man was obliged to do any more than look after his own happiness. The half-dozen asked triumphantly what religion would remain in the world, what faith, what worship, if revelation were discarded.

The infidel, finding himself in a minority, drew off, seated himself beside me, and said he would not allow the supporters of Christianity to settle these disputes. The most advanced of the professing Christians now took the lead. He would have a new Christianity, improved in form and spirit. I said that, as having a belief in the perfection of Christianity, but no faith in the perfection of Christian sects or individuals, this was what I wished, and I asked how he proposed to accomplish his reform. The heart, said he, the heart is the seat of all religion. It matters little what men believe if the heart is right. Let us have the fervor of the best Christians, there can be no religion without feeling. But we may have all this without believing in an inspired book—certainly without submitting to a stiff creed. I revere Jesus Christ, exclaimed he, as the noblest manifestation of God; that is my religion. I said I was glad to hear so much, and wished him to unfold the grounds which led him to believe and admit so much. The advanced Christian was now assailed by as many able opponents as the infidel had been, and the infidel joined them. It was shown, by one of the students of human nature, that feeling could not be kept up without an object to love; that we could not love a person if we did not believe him to exist, and that we ought not, and could not, in fact, believe without some reasons or grounds; and it was shown that we must, after all, come back to the New Testament, particularly the Four Gospels. "Not," added the ablest speaker, at this stage, turning to me as he said so, "not that I believe that the Bible is mechanically inspired or free from error. I follow Dr. Colenso so far, and I am not sure about the Old Testament, at least the Pentateuch." Our speaker had instantly the old opponents and new ones. It was shown that the Old Testament and the New were a piece; that the one was a precursor of the other, and that Jesus sanctioned the Old Testament,

including the Books of Moses, very specially. The speaker, a clergyman, who established this point most clearly, now began to tell us that for himself he cared little for the letter of the Bible; he was all for the spirit. I told him that I agreed with him in the latter point; I was for the spirit, but I begged to ask him how a sinner without the spirit, selfish and ungodly, was to get the spirit except by being instructed by the written Word. Half a dozen came to my aid, and I gave up the work to them. The clergyman was asked if he believed in the deity of Christ, and he replied, boldly, that he held the doctrine to be a cardinal one. He was asked on what grounds, and he was obliged to reply because it was contained in the Bible; and it was shown that if the Bible be sufficient to establish the astounding doctrine that Jesus, the Son of Mary, who was crucified at Jerusalem one thousand eight hundred and thirty years ago, was really a Divine person, we need not stagger at any other doctrine set forth in it. It was further shown how unsatisfactory it was to reject the written Word, and throw us back upon the spirit, as it made every man's spirit, and that possibly a very carnal spirit, the judge of what is to be received and what is to be rejected; and the infidel took a special pleasure in proving that this method threw us back on that reason which, it had been alleged against him, so often wanders, and, at best, sees religious truth so dimly.

As the discussion was now becoming very keen, I thought best to interfere. I ventured to express my disappointment at finding that those who were heralding this new religious era could agree on so little, and had, in fact, nothing to meet and supply the wants of human nature. But I confessed that I too was a reformer; that I too was looking for a brighter epoch and a better Church; that certainly I had no idea of giving up the written Word, but that I did hope that, by means of the letter, Christians would rise beyond the letter to the spirit that is love, which is the spirit of Jesus, which is the spirit of God, for "God is love." It is allowed, in the present day, that every community must have a religion, but it is proposed to have a religion without a creed. Worship, and fervor, and feeling, all these are commended. It is acknowledged that, without emotion and ardor, religion could have no power for good. But, then, it is imagined that we may have all these without a faith in any fixed doctrine. And here I may mention that there was an analogous, though by no means an identical, movement

in the last century. The proposal then was to retain and promote morality without a faith in fixed doctrine. It was acknowledged to be all-important to the individual and the community to keep up virtue, including honesty, neighborly kindness, and temperance, but they supposed that all this might be had without a belief in any deep or mysterious religious tenets. Francis Hutcheson, the celebrated Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, wrote to a non-subscribing minister in Ireland, in 1742. "I have been laboring," he says, "to get Mr. Lechman appointed Professor of Theology. If he succeed, it will put a new face upon theology in Scotland." This professor, discouraging all doctrinal expositions and all rousing appeals to the conscience, would have preachers recommend the Christian religion as embracing a pure morality, and holding out a hope of a blessed immortality; but, meanwhile, providing no pardon to the poor sinner anxious about the past, nor gracious aid to help him in his struggles to deliver himself from sin in the future. "He will put a new face upon the theology of Scotland."

If it had aimed at giving a *better heart* to the theology of Scotland—a more tolerant, a wider, and more sympathizing heart—the attempt would have been commendable; and, with the new heart, there would have been a new face, as the expression of the inward sentiment. But the attempt to get the new face without the internal conviction gave only an artificial blandness to the countenance, which could not conceal the hollowness within. The preachers reared may be taken as represented by Jupiter Carlyle, whom I need not describe, for he has described himself. The new device to make men moral ended in making them very immoral. The influence was first upon the upper classes; we see it going down to the peasant class in the days of Robert Burns, and, by the end of the century, it infected the whole of Scottish society. It was at this time that the ungodly masses sprang up in our great cities, with none to care for their souls. It was when Evangelical religion revived, that, at the call of Chalmers and other earnest men, women went forth to visit the dwellings of the poor and reclaim the outcast. Now, there is an attempt in our day, not just the same as that of last century, but considerably like it. It is allowed that in religious matters there should be life and feeling, but it is expected that this may be had independent of all the old forms of orthodoxy and of the letter of the Word of God.

But where, I ask, is this life to come from? How is this feeling to be raised? The appeal in our day is to inward feelings, sentiments, and intuitions. But what, I ask, is to evoke these from our hearts, so selfish and so sinful? Perhaps they tell us that affection may be called forth by the grand and glorious ideas of the good, the infinite. M. Renan has somewhere a flourish of this kind, to the effect that you need not be afraid of religion dying or disappearing, though the Gospel history is set aside; for have we not, says he, the infinite, the eternal? Now, I admit that man can entertain such ideas; and I have set myself in opposition to that philosophy of our day which makes them a mere negation—a view capable of being turned, and actually being turned, by Herbert Spencer to a dismal form of infidelity. But these ideas call forth love only when associated with a living being whose love is infinite, whose love is eternal. To raise the affections, there must be an object; there must be a living being to draw them toward himself. And, in order to this, we must know something of that being; we must believe in his reality and in his excellence. I can love a being whom I have not seen, “whom having not seen we love;” but I can not love a person of whom I have no idea, and in whose reality, I have no faith. The being who calls forth my love is Jesus Christ, set forth to my faith in the written Word, and it is the belief in him that creates feeling and stirs up zeal and activity. The life which is not sustained by scriptural truth must be of a very wavering and transient character. By all means, let us have the fire and the flame too; but no fire can be kept up without a solid material. That material is Christ, presented in the Word. “I am glad,” wrote David Hume to Hutcheson, “to see such just philosophy and such instructive morals to have once set their foot in the schools. I hope they will next get into the world, and then into the Churches.” I suppose this is what is aimed at in the present day, to get the new creeds, or rather sentiments, into the universities, into the world, and into the Churches; and many, who are lending themselves to the movement, do not see the issue.

The attempt to keep up feeling, without a settled faith in truth, must end in making the people first unbelieving, then cold, and finally immoral; the flame with nothing to feed on will die down, and only ashes remain. I admit that there may be religion in the individual without a long or complex formalized creed; but,

surely, there can not be a religion without faith. There can not be piety without a belief in God ; there can not be Christian piety without a belief in Christ, "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." I am prepared to maintain that a religious belief has its influence, in some cases, unhappily, not so much as it should, the religion being good ; in others more than it should, the religion being bad. The belief of a people must find expression, and gather round it a worship, and sentiments, and social practices, and will force itself, sooner or later, on a creed opposed to prevailing heresies, wanderings, and schism ; and the whole must have its influence upon communities and individuals. Is there no difference visible between those lands which have a pagan and those which have a Christian creed ? Is there no difference between those communities which have a Protestant and scriptural, and those which have a Papal and priestly faith ? I maintain that it is impossible, according to the principles of human nature, to keep up a religion without faith of some kind. In every walk of life, in every path of duty, faith is needed in order to exertion, to hope, to activity. If I do not believe a particular man to be honest and deserving, I will not put myself to trouble to promote his advancement in the world. If some one were to convince me that a brother is dishonorable, that a sister is treacherous, my esteem and affection would henceforth be much diminished. I may be much moved, for the moment, by the sufferings and sorrows of the heroine of a novel, but, as not believing in her danger, I do not set out to relieve her, unless, indeed, I am to become a Don Quixote ; and even Don Quixote had to be made to believe in the existence of Dulcinea, before he set forth to fight her battles. If the clever Frenchman could convince me, which he is not likely to do, that our Lord could be guilty of artifice at the grave of Lazarus, my reverence and love for Him would henceforth cease. There may be piety in the bosom, I admit, when there are no very clear ideas in the head. But it is another question whether they are fitted to teach others who have not themselves attained somewhat clear notions and settled convictions. I have known some men of warm Evangelical piety who have had a very scanty and defective creed. There could be no doubt about admitting such to the fellowship of the Church, but, surely there might be a doubt about the propriety of authorizing

them to give instruction to the people. It is not for me to say what should be the measure proposed, by that commission which has been appointed by Her Majesty, to settle practically what should be the nature and the place of tests in the Church of England. I may be allowed, however, to give it as my own opinion, and the opinion of many others, both within and beyond her communion, that a more responsible trust has not been committed to any public body for the last two centuries. I feel that it does not belong to me to say how the creed of the Church of England is to be guarded. But as loving all that is good, and receiving all that is great in that Church, and being convinced that a departure from the faith in that Church would be followed by tremendous consequences throughout universal Christendom, I may be permitted to express my wish and prayer that she will come out of her present trial, retaining for Christ and His Word the high place which they have hitherto had in her Articles. I hope she will be able to do so, notwithstanding the opposing influence of very learned, of very intellectual, and, I believe, very good men. If we transport ourselves back one hundred and fifty years, and look upon the half century preceding, and ask what were the great names of the epoch, every one would point to four great men rising up, like mountains, shoulder-high above all their compeers—to Milton, to Newton, to Locke, and to Samuel Clarke. Now, it is well known that the whole of these great men abandoned a doctrine which Christians have almost universally acknowledged to be a fundamental one in our faith; not one of them believed in the proper divinity of our Lord. It is matter of history that the timid youths of the beginning of last century were afraid that this doctrine would have to be abandoned, and that the more advanced youths were demanding that it should be expunged from the binding creed of the Churches. But the Church of England, even in that age, usually reckoned one of the darkest ages in her history, was too faithful to her Lord to consent to omit this doctrine from her creed, where it still remains; while the creeds of the intellectual giants to whom I have referred have become so entirely antiquated, that it would be difficult now to find any person of weight or name to take up their precise position. The attack is not now, on the part of professing Christians, on the divinity of our Lord. Some of the thinkers of our time have brought themselves to believe (on the grounds which seem to me, I confess, to

be far from satisfactory) that the Trinity is a doctrine of the higher reason, as well as of revelation.

Now, is there not a lesson in all this to those who might be tempted to abandon some other great truths, such as the atonement of Christ, and the inspiration of the Bible? Let not the eyes of our young men be so dazzled by the intellectual greatness of some of those who would give up these truths, as to neglect to look at the consequences. You can not, it is urged, be wrong in following such men, so great and so good. My good friends, do not you see that the proposal is merely to make you give up creeds in order to follow men supposed to be great; to tempt you to abandon the combined wisdom of many, in order to follow the wisdom of some individual thinkers. The late Archdeacon Hare has made a profound remark which bears on this subject: "To form a correct judgment concerning the tendency of any doctrine, we should rather look at the fruit it bears in the disciples than in the teacher. *For he only made it; they are made by it.*" I would not choose to be molded, or that my children should be *made*, by a system which abandoned the inspiration of the Bible, and the doctrine of reconciliation to God by the blood of sprinkling. I should tremble for the country and for the ages which might be *made* by such a system or want of system. However I may love the individuals and respect the eminence which they have reached, I can not forget that many a clever man, just because he has reached a height, has set a stone rolling, without perceiving or anticipating the destruction it would work in its downward progress. But should there not, it is asked, be a universal toleration of opinion in the nation, and in the Church as a national institution? And then an attractive picture is drawn of the beauty of diversity of sentiment. It is described as a harmony made up of a diversity of sounds; it is likened to the parti-colored garment worn by Joseph, to the forest or lawn with trees of different forms, to the garden with flowers of varied hues, or an army made up of troops with various banners—

"Each has his gift.

Our souls are organ-pipes of diverse stop
And various pitch; each with its proper notes
Thrilling the self-same breath of God;
Though poor alone, yet joined they're harmony."

Great evil, they say, must arise to religion if the clergyman is known to be so fettered that he dare not form or express an independent opinion, and can not advance with the knowledge of the times. What a testimony to the truth is given when the minister of religion, while free to hold any opinion, does yet set forth the doctrines of the cross in their purity.

Now, I am not to say a word against a universal toleration in the nation. All history has shown that error is not to be put down by the arm of the civil power, but by far different weapons. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual," and there it is that they are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. But, surely, it would be going too far to affirm that there should be a universal toleration of opinion in a Church of Christ. This mingling of all creeds and of none might be looked at, and might look pretty enough in a collegiate body, a consulting committee, or a debating society met to discuss all possible points. But the Church of England, while it is a national institution, is also a Church of Christ, and is adopted, as I understand, into the constitution because it is a Church of Christ, and fulfills its high and holy end because it is a Church of Christ. "We hold," says the illustrious Guizot, in a paper presented, the other day, to the Conference of the Reformed Churches in France, "as firmly as any, both for those who differ from us and for ourselves, the tutelary principles of religious liberty. In virtue of this principle, every one is free to profess openly his belief, and to unite with those who also profess it; but we can not comprehend the idea of a Church without a common faith, or as a body in which the most diverse or even contradictory creeds might be alike professed. Such a state of things would not be the exercise of religious liberty, but the destruction of religious society, which needs, more than any other society, intimate and serious sympathy." When the Irish would not take David Hume as Chief Secretary because he was a Scotchman, a philosophic English princess proposed, as being an easier thing, to make him an Irish bishop. I believe she made the remark as a joke; but he would surely be a bold man who would make such a proposal in earnest.

I am quite willing to admit that there should be diversities in a Church, but there must be a substantial unity, otherwise our Zion would not be the perfection of beauty, which has never, so far as I know, been defined as diversity, but as unity with divers-

ity. I am not just inclined, for the present, to put the lion and the lamb together till the Millennium, when the lion, I suppose, must get somewhat of the nature of the lamb. Let us draw out the entire picture, not as fancy would paint it, but as it would really be. In this parish you have a Socinian, in the next parish you have a preacher of justification by faith, and, in the parish beyond, a Puseyite. What, I ask, are the people of this district to think of the religion which is exhibited before them? The inhabitant of the first parish is told that Jesus was a mere man, and that we do not need a Savior; the inhabitant of the next is assured that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Savior that all men need; while, in the third, the people are exhorted to hear the Church instead of Christ. What, I ask, must be the effect of this? One of two consequences would follow. Either the people, still looking on religious questions as of surpassing interest, would be forever quarreling about doctrine and worship, and the Church would not exhibit that perfect picture of decorum, and peace, and love which are expected to spring from universal toleration; or, what I reckon as a more probable result, first, the shrewder minds of the community, and then the great body of the people, would come to the conclusion that there could be no truth ascertained, or, that truth was not worth seeking after, when their teachers so disagreed, and were so allowed and encouraged to disagree, and would regard all religion with profound indifference.

But, we have not yet looked at the whole evil. There is, we may suppose, a remote country parish, with a scattered population, which has one clergyman, and is so poor that it can not have any other, whether chapel of ease or Dissenting house of worship. That one clergyman is the only one who preaches to them; and he preaches that man needs no Savior, that his parishioners may trust to their supposed good works, which, in such a case, will soon, I believe, be very bad works, and waxing worse and worse. I am entitled—nay, required—to apply the language of the Apostle to such a state of things: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” And what should we say of a Church which, knowingly and deliberately,

authorizes and accredits such a clergyman to be the sole minister of Jesus in the parish to old and young, to young men, and maidens, and little children, perhaps, for a whole generation? Such an institution might receive support from the men of the world; but I believe that good men within that Church would combine with good men beyond it in sweeping it off the face of the earth as an intolerable evil. Verily, I believe that at the judgment day the lost sinner would stand up against it, and those who insisted on supporting it, and affirm that it might be different with me, had I been told, when on earth, of a loving and suffering Savior, who made atonement for transgression.

I am bound to allow that some present evil may arise from the existing ferment and dissatisfaction. I have already said that the attempted resuscitation of mediæval—that is, of an ecclesiastical and priestly faith—has proved altogether a failure in this nineteenth century. It has been like the attempt that is sometimes made by a lady advanced in years to bring back her youth simply by putting on the dress of her former years; the project could only be kept up for a brief period, and has been extinguished by ridicule. The extravagance of the Oxford school of the last age has only helped to bring about the criticism and the doubt of the Oxford school of this age; and I expect nothing from a younger Oxford, which has cheered the Bishop of Oxford, and at one and the same time hissed the Dean of Westminster and Mr. Spurgeon. The mediæval revival has disappeared as a fixed belief, and has left no enduring impression, so far as I can see, except a certain æsthetic or artistic sentiment, favoring Church music and architecture, unless we should add a reaction in favor of rationalism.

It is an instructive circumstance that the age of the higher, or what is called ideal pantheism in philosophy, is also passing away, having left, in like manner, only its one impression, in a vague general sentiment, of all nature being full of life and full of beauty. It is my duty carefully to watch the tendency of thought in philosophy; and it seems to me that, looking to the more powerful and influential minds in Europe, and to the disposition of our advanced youths, we are coming back to the materialistic or sensational doctrine of the last century, made somewhat more attractive by a pantheistic spirit pervading it. One class of speculators assure us that man is descended from the brutes by natural

generation; another class derive thought from physical, from nervous, and from brain force; and there are eminent men trying to account for all the phenomena of the world by matter and force. These are symptoms of a downward inclination, and give us a glimpse of the depths into which some are prepared to descend. And the question comes to be anxiously put by many, Are these views to go down to the mass of the people? We know what has taken place in Germany. The professors in the universities were the first to lose their faith, and, in the next age, the people became unbelieving. The praise be to the grace of God; the theological (I fear not the other) professors are now comparatively sound and Evangelical; but, so far as I have been able to observe, the great body of the nation has not come back to a Bible faith. It is a historical proof, that it is much easier in our world to do evil than to do good, and that men do evil which they can not undo. If the infidelity goes down in this country to the common people, it will assume in our practical country a more practical and, I fear, a more vulgar and debasing form. It is vain to expect that the people of England and Scotland, after their fixed creed has gone, will retain that head enthusiasm and ideal fervor which a German cherishes. But I entertain a deep and decided hope that the evil will not reach such a stage in our land; for if the enemy be strong, the Church of Christ is also strong, thanks to its Great Head—strong in its ability and scholarship—strong in its piety. Meanwhile, our professors of theology and of philosophy have a very important duty to discharge, in sending forth from our colleges a body of young men thoroughly furnished with principles and with learning, to meet and throw back the advancing evil. Not, indeed, that I would expect, or even wish, that all, or the great body of our young preachers, should be encouraged to go forth and do battle with the infidel. On the contrary, I am convinced that it would be an unmitigated evil to find our ordinary preachers appearing before our promiscuous congregations, not to preach Jesus Christ to perishing sinners, and recommend holiness of life, but to meet objections which the audience, perhaps, never heard of till a feeble attempt was made to reply to them.

What I venture to suggest is, that by special classes, theological or philosophical, in our colleges, or by special courses of study pursued under the superintendence of the professors, or by

societies, formed among the students themselves, for reading and mutual stimulus—and it may be by study for a time in Germany—a select few, with talents fitted for the work, may be trained for the special work of throwing back the infidelity of the day, and creating a new and a higher feeling in our great cities and throughout the land. It would be far wrong, I think, in the Evangelical Alliance, to take up the position of an alarmist, and to prophesy only evil. I am cherishing the confident expectation that much good will come out of these agitations and discussions. Following out the principles allowed them by mistaken Christians, infidels have brought us to the edge of the precipice, and compelled us to look into the dark abyss below. I do fear that some vain and reckless youths may be tempted to leap over, and will find, in the downward plunge, that below the visible deep there is a lower still. But sober thinkers will draw back. Persons who were not alarmed by the “*Essays and Reviews*,” who were not frightened by Dr. Colenso, have been keenly offended by the attack on the reality and the purity of our Lord’s life, by M. Renan. It is an instructive fact, that when Strauss’s work was published in Germany, nearly thirty years ago, the tide began to turn, and that country has, since that time, produced the most learned defenses of the faith ever written. I have observed, with much interest, in our own land, that some, who were on the road to infidelity without being aware of it, have seen that it is time to stop, and are beginning to retrace their steps.

In these times of searching, we may have to give up some few things which our fathers believed in, which we ourselves revered in our youth. But, is it for the good of religion that we should stand up for all that has been alleged to be Christianity—for all that is traditional? If there be an inquirer who, in an honest, independent judgment, is inclined to say, “I do not like that old scholastic distinction, that old theological phrase brought in by the fathers, or in the early Church, or by the schoolmen of the middle ages, or by the Reformers, or by the Puritans,” I say to him, You are quite entitled to examine it, quite at liberty to reject it, if it can not stand a fair trial. Only, as he professes to be a sincere inquirer, I would have him inquire whether it may not, after all, be a good distinction, and a very apposite phrase, fitted to set aside error that had appeared, or to body forth dis-

tinctly some great truth which had been denied; and, if it does, he may as well keep it till he gets a better. But, on the other hand, this is not a time to fight for additions, which theologians may have made, on the pretense that they are buttresses of the truth. I for one do not feel that I am called on to fight for the supplements which men, even great and good men, have made to divine truth. There is a curse pronounced, at the close of the Book of Revelation, against those who diminish aught from it: "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophesy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." But there is a curse pronounced equally on those who would add: "For I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophesy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book." When our Lord was preaching His holy doctrine, the timid disciples came to Him in alarm, and said that the Scribes and Pharisees were offended. "But he answered, and said, Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." This is an age in which God seems to be saying, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn," which signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which can not be shaken may remain. I do hope that, by these collisions and rubbings, some of the sharper and more bristling points of our traditional belief may be ground down. Keeping our Bible as the Word of God, we may be restrained from interpreting it in so narrow a spirit.

Instead of counting the words or letters, as if we were Jewish rabbis, or exercising our logical ingenuity, in drawing out long and minute doctrinal deductions by human reasoning, we may be more profitably employed in explaining it fairly and honestly, and not according to a preconceived system, in apprehending its broad and simple meaning, and finally falling under its quickening and regenerating power. We Scotchmen will surely be made to feel, in these times, that we can not remain satisfied with the mere form of religion. We who live in other lands know how often it is brought as a reproach against our countrymen, that they have been satisfied with their orthodox creed, with their attendance at the house of God, and their reverence for the Bible and the Sabbath. This it is that gives a pretext to the enemies of the Evan-

gical religion, when they declare that religious professors are no better than others, and to affirm that if Jesus were among us, He would address ministers and people, "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Such a formal religion is offensive to man, even as it is displeasing to God. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforward good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot." By the very opposition offered, we are made to see and acknowledge, feel and realize, what is the nature and what the essence of religion, and to know that the spirit of religion is the spirit of Jesus. And if Christ be exalted, and love be exalted, I do not care what else, what individuals, or even what Churches be abased. "Say not, then, what is the cause that the former days were better than these, for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

There are some ever telling us that the theology of former times is so much superior to that of our day. Some prefer the theology of the so-called fathers of the Church, some that of the Reformation, some that of the Puritans. Now, I believe that it may be good for us to look at the way in which great and good men have conceived, expressed, and enforced the truth in divers ages, were it only to widen our narrow views, and recall attention to catholic verities which particular ages or sects have allowed to sink out of sight. Let us, by all means, rise, from time to time, above the contracted valleys in which we dwell, and ascend a high whence we may observe the whole broad and diversified territory which God has given us as an inheritance, and the relation of the varied parts which branch out from Christ as the center, as do the hills and valleys of our country from some great mountain, the axis of its range. There is, we should acknowledge, an attractive simplicity in the exposition of divine truth by the early fathers; and we are under deep obligations to the divines of the fourth century for establishing, on Scripture evidence, the doctrine of the Trinity. Those who look into it, with a desire to discover what is good, will find not a little even in the mediæval divinity, notwithstanding the restraints laid on it by crutches and bandages. It is not to be forgotten that Thomas a Kempis lived in what are called the dark ages, and that we owe to a philosophic divine of those times (Anselm), not, certainly, the doctrine of the atonement, which had been in the revealed religion of God since Adam and

Abel offered lambs in sacrifice, but a more masterly and comprehensive exposition of that cardinal truth than had been previously given. The grace which had been so limited and hindered in the priestly and ecclesiastical ages breathes, from every page of the Reformers, as fragrance does from the flower. The Puritan preaching is unsurpassed in clear enunciation of divine truth, accompanied-with close searching and fervent appeal, which now shakes the whole soul as the earthquake did the prison at Philippi, and anon relieves it by the command and promise, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But we should put implicit confidence in no human, or hereditary, or traditional theology; in no theology, indeed, except what comes direct from the Bible, interpreted according to the letter, but received after the spirit. How often does it happen that you will know what sect a man belongs to by the favorite passages which he quotes in his sermons and in his very prayers, showing how apt we are to take our very Scriptures from the traditions of our Churches. We act as if the well were shut out from us, and as if we were obliged to go to the streams which may have caught earthliness in their course, and which, at the best, can not be so fresh as the fountain.

That is the theology best suited to the age which is put forth by living men of the age, drinking of the living Word for themselves by the power of the living Spirit. There are persons, in our day, ever telling us that the old theology of Scotland was, in many respects, defective. Our old Scotch divines, and those who follow them, have not, they say, set forth Christ with sufficient prominence as a living person in his love and sympathy, and as the proper object of faith. They declare that, as many in the last century, and the beginning of this, preached a cold morality, and not the Savior, so are not a few in this age preaching formal doctrine, and not Christ. Now, I am not inclined to say that there is no justice in this reproof. No believer should allow himself to blame those who, with a genuine heart, would magnify the person of the Savior. Certainly, they can not be wrong who make Christ the head; when he is there, he keeps all else. He keeps doctrine; he keeps the Church; he keeps ordinances in their proper place, in an honored but still subordinate place, as members of his mystical body. So far as this new theology, of which we hear so much, errs, as I believe it does err, it is not in what it incul-

cates, but in what it omits; not in what it teaches, but in what it does not teach; not in what it affirms, but in what it denies. It does not err in exalting Christ; it does not err in saying that our faith must not be in a doctrine about Christ, but a faith in Christ himself; it can not err in seeking to present Christ before us in his fullness of life and all his attractiveness. Where it errs, as I fear it does err, in some quarters, is in exhibiting a mutilated Christ. It calls our attention to certain lovely features of his character, and here it can not be wrong; but it leaves out others, and deadly error must come in at the open gap. In particular, it is losing sight of the expiatory character of the work and sufferings of the Redeemer. And, verily, I can not at all understand my Lord's life or death; I can not comprehend those deep groans, that fearful agony, that exceeding sorrow even unto death, that awful cloud on the Father's face, till I connect them with my sins. I believe the burden is off me when I see it laid on him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree. In reading certain books published in our day, and hearing certain sermons, I am inclined to say with the young Isaac, "Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" How relieved am I when I hear the declaration, "My son, God will provide." His name is Jehovah-Jireh. He has the living lamb for the burnt-offering. While we retain our Bible divine and inspired, and so distinguished from every other book, I think we see more fully that we are at liberty, and that we should be ready to accept lessons from every quarter, from nature and from history, from literature and from art.

I met, the other day, with the following extract from a work where some would not expect it: "So often," says John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, "as we look into profane writers, let us be admonished, by that light of truth which shines forth admirably in them, that the mind of man, however much it may have fallen and been perverted from its integrity, is still clothed and adorned with excellent gifts of God. If we consider the Spirit of God the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject nor condemn that truth wherever it appears, unless we choose to be contemptuous to the Spirit of God. For the gifts of the Spirit are not reviled without contempt and opprobrium of the Spirit himself. What, shall we deny that truth shone upon those ancient jurists who set forth, with so much correctness, the order and dis-

cipline of civil life? Shall we say that philosophers have been blinded, both in their exquisite contemplation of nature and in their artistic description of her beauties? Shall we say that capacity was wanting to those who, elaborating the art of discourse, have taught us to speak in accordance with reason?"* We may be allowed to remember that Stephen tells us how the founder of the Hebrew Commonwealth was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and the principal propagator of the Christian faith in Europe was acquainted with both Jewish and Greek learning, and quoted, when it served his purpose, from the Grecian poets. We may surely, without being reckoned heathens, be ready to receive some instruction from Socrates as to the beauty of virtue and the wisdom of Providence; and, without being regarded as profane, allow Shakspeare to unfold to us the infinite varieties of human character. The narrow Church may here learn something from the broad Church.

All this, however, must be on the condition that, while we take from the world, we must beware of accommodating ourselves to it, or catching its spirit. We must guard against the temptation of trying to serve both God and the world, even though that world should be the world of literature, the world of scholarship. Religion serves its high end, not by going down to the level of the world, but standing above it, and seeking to draw it up to its own elevation. The attempt, renewed from age to age, of gaining the world by descending to it, has ever turned out to be a vain one. When it acts otherwise; when, Samson-like, it yields to seduction and betrays its secret, it is quickly deprived of its vision, and becomes the object of mockery and scorn. "If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of man." What we take from the world must, like ourselves, be converted and baptized before it can enter the kingdom; must "be born of water and of the Spirit." But, cherishing this spirit, our ears should not be stopped to any sound of loveliness; our eyes should be opened to every hue of beauty, to every form of gracefulness. All the works of God, in particular, are ready to instruct us, and we should receive impressions for good from the

* This passage is quoted from the *Weekly Review*, for which it was translated from Calvin's Latin.

stars of heaven, from the lilies of the field, from "all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

I am in hopes that another beneficial effect will flow from this state of things. There may occur in an individual's life an event fitted to make the man or woman review the whole past, and form entirely new life purposes for the future. We are arrived, I rather think, at such an era in the history of the Church—an era when Christians are called to review the condition of the Church in general, and, what is more difficult, to review the position of their own sect. Let me ask, Is the professing Church of Christ in the state in which it ought to be; in the state in which you should like it to be? I rather think that the answer of every one will be that it is not. All will declare that they could wish it improved. But then I ask, further, How do you expect to improve it? Perhaps some will reply, Oh, it would be improved if it were after the model of my own denomination. But, without inquiring what ground you can have for hoping that the Church at large is likely to be converted to your denominational views, I put a more pointed question, Are you satisfied with your own denomination, that it is, in every respect, as it should be? Would the Church universal be altogether after the pattern shown in the New Testament, provided only it were after the model of our sect? Perhaps the reply now is that this would be the case, provided our denomination were what it should be. This brings us to the point that, as the Church at large, so each denomination is not what it should be. And why so anxious, you say, to establish this point? Not, certainly, for the purpose of making any discontented with their sect, or their fellowship, or their minister, because not perfect; but solely to make us long and pray for a better state of things; to make us ready to look, every one, not merely on his own affairs, but on those of others also, and prepare to consider how the scattered forces of the Church may be, I do not say incorporated, but combined for the common good.

I am cherishing the expectation that, in front of a formidable

enemy, Christians of different Evangelical denominations may be made to combine, first in action, then in spirit and sentiment, and, in the end, in fellowship. I am convinced that God has some great purpose to accomplish by allowing this restless feeling to spring up, this understood combination to be formed against the Church. I was greatly struck, lately, in reading the language ascribed to Abraham Lincoln, as to the awful struggles going on in America: "I claim not," says he, "to have controlled events, but confess, plainly, that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills, also, that we of the North, as well as of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God." Just as the American conflict seems to be working for the ultimate destruction of slavery, without the parties having contemplated it, so these contests within the Church, and attacks from without, appear to be intended by God to constrain the living members of Christ's Church to come to a clearer understanding, and to enter into a closer union; of all which the glory will belong to God, as it has not been the end designed by men. The Evangelical Alliance has not, perhaps, been visibly a great power—at least, in the view of the world; but, invisibly and inaudibly, it has exercised not a little influence for good; and, in our world, the unseen and the silent forces are, after all, the most efficacious. The light which comes so pleasantly from the sun produces greater effects than the lightning with its thunders; the gently-flowing stream has in its course more influence than the rushing waterfall. Supposing the Church of Christ to be represented by the "wheel in the midst of a wheel," seen in vision by Ezekiel, I believe the Evangelical Alliance has, by its prayers and the spirit which it has diffused, supplied an oil which has helped to keep the wheels from creaking, and made the machine move on with more ease and greater velocity. If it has not produced universal love, it has, at least, softened asperities; it has quietly created a public sentiment, and given expression to that sentiment. If it has not accomplished union, it has made Christians long for union, and prepared the way for coming unions. It is a favorite idea, in the present day,

that all the physical forces are modifications of one power, which shines in the light, which warms in the fire, which attracts planet to sun and sun to sun, which lives in the planet and moves in the animal. This one force, appearing in such diverse modes of action, is an expressive emblem of the one spirit, which lives, and breathes, and energizes in the Church of God, manifesting itself in divers ways, in different individuals and different Churches; but, after all, one, essentially one, and making the Church one; so that this is still part of our creed, though at times forgotten by Protestants, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN INDIA.

THE conversion of every idolater or Mohammedan counts in Asia for far more than the spiritual conversion in Europe of an individual nominally Christian. Each Hindoo is held fast by the whole force of the native superstition; hence his conversion is a triumph over the whole might of paganism, and creates a sensation throughout the entire fabric of society. Every addition, therefore, to the body of converts increases the moral force opposed to heathen opinion in a constantly increasing ratio.

The reception given to the Gospel in any country depends, in a great measure, upon the activity of the national conscience, developing the sense of sin, and awakening the desire for pardon and salvation. The Hindoo conscience has been wholly perverted by ages of abominable heathenism. It is now being reformed and created anew by the operation of European thought, and, especially, by the action of the law courts. In every province our government administers a civil and criminal code, formed by Christian jurists; and, since the natives are very litigious, they learn in these law courts the Christian definitions of right and wrong. Their crimes and vices are exposed and punished by the magistrate, and the national conscience is thus prepared for the operation of the Gospel. The law entered, that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace will much more abound. In this case, as in the history of Israel, the law is a schoolmaster, to bring the Indian nations to Christ.

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