

EVANGELICAL CHRISTENDOM:

ITS STATE AND PROSPECTS.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL CONDUCTED BY MEMBERS

IN CONNEXION WITH

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

HERETO WE HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED, LET US WALK BY THE SAME RULE, LET US MIND THE SAME THING."—PHIL. III. 16.
" UBI AGNOVIMUS CHRISTUM, IBI AGNOVIMUS ET ECCLESIAM."—AUGUSTINE.

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Evangelical Christendom.

THEOLOGICAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH GERMANY.

PRESENT ENGLISH ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND LITERATURE.

IN continuation of the correspondence, of which we recently gave our readers so interesting and valuable a commencement in the letter of Dr. Dorner, of Göttingen, we hope soon to be able to submit to them a communication from Dr. Lechler, of Leipzig, on the history and present condition of the criticism of what is known in Germany, and begins to be known in this country, as the Tübingen School. Meanwhile we have great pleasure in publishing the following paper, from the pen of Dr. M'Cosh, of Belfast, being the first of the literary communications which it is intended should pass from the theologians of this country to our learned brethren in Germany. It is an interesting and valuable sketch, intended, as the esteemed author expresses it, "to give our German brethren a glimpse of what is doing among us, both of the good and the evil." The paper was especially designed to call the attention of Germany to the important work of Dr. Mansel, on "The Limits of Religious Thought," and the controversy which it has called forth among us, as it was felt that that was a topic to which the attention of our German brethren needs particularly to be turned, and upon which the philosophical and theological mind of that country is peculiarly well qualified to speak. It is expected that this paper, which has been communicated to Dr. Dorner, will appear in a translated form in an early number of the *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie*.

Belfast, July, 1860.

I am exceedingly gratified to find that there is to be a correspondence kept up between Christians in Germany and Christians in this country interested in the progress and purification of the Church of Christ in both countries. I am particularly pleased to find that it has been commenced in so admirable a manner and spirit by Dr. Dorner. From this correspondence both parties may confidently expect to obtain much benefit. The Churches of the one country may receive instruction and a wholesome stimulus from what is done by the Churches in the other country. But in order to this, each party should take only what is good in the other, and reject all else. Let us copy each other's excellences, and not at all each other's defects.

In this country two great movements are going on simultaneously, one in behalf of a living Christianity, and the other against it. The first is a very wide and daily-extending awakening of religious feeling, chiefly among the mass of the people, but going up to the middle class, and even to the wealthy and noble. The popular indices and exponents of this impulse are to be found in such men as Spurgeon, who draws thousands of the people to the preaching of the Gospel, whether he officiates from Sabbath to Sabbath in the great metropolis, or visits the villages in the country. This revival has, perhaps, reached the greatest intensity in the district in which I reside, that is, in the Province of Ulster, in Ireland. There never was in any country, or in any age, a deeper personal interest taken in the things which concern the salvation of the soul, than has been felt in many districts of this province during the last twelvemonth. I am happy to be able to report, and this I can do from a very extensive knowledge, that this work is thoroughly standing the test of time. The spiritual feeling, if not spreading so rapidly, is becoming deeper and more steadfast. During this last winter there has been a weekly prayer meeting held by the people themselves in, I believe, every street in our towns, and in every little district of our rural population in which there

are so many as twenty or thirty Protestant families. In these meetings all is quiet, and the whole services are characterised by a spirit of deep devotion. At these meetings, and at the meetings for public worship and the hearing of the Word on Sabbath, and by private reading, meditation, and prayer, believers are seeking to grow in knowledge and in grace, while the work of conversion is still spreading quietly from family to family and from individual to individual. What came to an intense glow all of a sudden in Ulster this last summer, has been proceeding in a more gradual manner, for many years back, in England and Scotland. It is to this feature of our country that the German Churches should, in my humble opinion, look with deepest interest. In respect of scholarship, our theologians are generally inferior to those of Germany. I shall show forthwith that we need to borrow weapons from the armoury of the German divines for the defence of the truth in this country. But it appears to me that the good men of the German Church should be labouring and praying to have a revival of religion among the people similar to that with which the Lord has been blessing the people of these kingdoms. Lest any should imagine that this popular movement may in any way be detrimental to the pastoral authority and character, let me state it as my opinion, and as the opinion of all who have witnessed the work, that the office and the services of the ministers of the Word are nowhere so highly valued as in the districts which have been visited with revival.

As one important means of producing, fostering, and feeding this spiritual life, we have, besides the popular preaching of the Word, a very extensive popular religious literature. In this respect, too, we have something to which the German Churches might look. In Germany theological books are written by the learned, and chiefly for the learned; in respect of such works we are decidedly inferior to the German divines. But it is a great advantage in our country that we have a great body of our most eminent divines delivering lectures to the people, and writing theological and religious works in so clear and engaging a style that thinking people in all ranks of life can understand them, and are in fact induced to read them. Then we have a great body of writers who cannot be described as great scholars, but who write most admirable works, histories, biographies, sermons, essays, discussions for the body of the people on all sorts of religious subjects, theoretical and practical, not a few of them composed with great eloquence, and some of them with a rich vein of poetry running through them. We have thus a theological literature propagated among the people of a sound and healthy character, and rendering them proof against the sophistries of infidel metaphysicians or scholars, whose ingenuities seem sufficiently ludicrous to men who have a practical knowledge of mankind. Some of these books, in the course of a few years, have a sale of ten, twenty, or fifty thousand copies, and one and the same work may be read on our quiet Sabbaths in the palace of our Queen and in the meanest hamlet of our tradesmen and labourers. Our most characteristic literature of this description is to be found in our cheap religious periodicals issued weekly or monthly, and dispensing much useful instruction both among rich and poor. Thus from Edinburgh alone there proceed three such publications, in addition to the denominational journals. The *Christian Treasury* and the *Family Treasury* have each, I believe, a circulation of above twenty thousand; and *Good Words*, started of a later date, has a circulation approaching the same high number. Such periodicals are eagerly read by hundreds of thousands of families scattered over the whole of Great Britain and many districts of Ireland, and with the happiest effects upon the intelligence and the religion of the population.

Contemporaneous with this general revival among the mass of the people, poor and rich, there is forming, as it appears to me, a very strong anti-Christian combination, scarcely noticed by the religious public, who live in a totally different atmosphere

—but, I am sorry to say, not without its influence on our young men. In certain portions it is openly infidel. The *Westminster Review* is the organ of this combination. We should not reproach Germany with its Tübingen school, for we have quite as bad a school forming in our own country. The *Westminster Review* is a literary organ, published quarterly, and gets access to nearly all our public libraries, and is on the tables of most of our clubs and reading-rooms. It has secured this by its clear, short articles, certainly not very profound or erudite, but taking up the topics of general interest at the time, and by its brief critical notices of nearly every work of importance published in this country or on the continent of Europe. It takes advantage of this very general circulation to instil a spirit of doubt into the souls of the youth of our land. In nearly every number there is an article attacking some fundamental truth of natural or revealed religion, or some cherished work or conviction of Christians. But its most dangerous articles are those in which it reviews works written for or against Christianity. Of the former it commonly speaks with contempt, and is acute in pointing out their mistakes and weaknesses. It is specially dexterous in quoting and dwelling upon any admissions made in behalf of infidelity, or against the accuracy of Scripture, by ministers of religion or professed defenders of Christianity. It is careful to give a summary of all that is advanced against the Scriptures by infidels in Germany or in this country, and takes care never to inform its readers that these objections have been answered. Some of the most distinguished writers in the *Review* are followers of M. Auguste Comte in France, and believe in nothing except in phenomena patent to the senses, or, at best, only in these and in floating feelings of the mind. These men have done much to make the positivism of Comte known in this country; they seize eagerly on the views of such men as Vogt and Moleschott in Germany, as to there being nothing in the world but matter and force, and they embrace with avidity the theory of Mr. Darwin as to the origin of species. While their general spirit is utilitarian and sensationalist, they are ready to take aid from any quarter in fighting against Christianity. They perseveringly repeat all that has been advanced by the school of Tübingen against the authenticity and inspiration of Scripture, while they give no account of the replies which have been furnished by the great theologians of Germany. They are ready, too, to take aid from far different quarters. If there be any ambitious youth who has lost himself in the mazes of Hegel, they are perfectly willing to take high idealistic or pantheistic articles from him, if only they be written with unhesitating pretension and some literary ability. While the *Westminster Review* is the most powerful organ of the movement, it is by no means the only one. There are others helping it on, though by no means going so far as the *Westminster*. Thus the *National Review*, the organ of the advanced Unitarian or Socinian party, though shrinking from the horrid infidelity of the *Westminster*, and by no means inclined to a low sensationalism or utilitarianism, is quite willing to admit articles attacking the inspiration and historical accuracy of the Scriptures; and it is extensively read, because of its eminent literary ability. The movement is also aided—whether intentionally or not, I will not venture to say—by certain clergymen of the Church of England, most of them connected with Oxford. The Commentaries of Professor Jowett, and the treatises on the Unity of Nature, by Professor Baden Powell (just deceased), and a volume of essays, lately published, to which these two and other Oxford men are contributors, are all—we may suppose without the parties being aware of it—tending towards Deism, as certainly as the critical and philosophic speculations of the German Rationalists of the end of last century did, and must issue logically and historically in a system of complete religious negation analogous to, though not identical with, that of Strauss and Feuerbach, in Germany. I would not leave the impression that this is a numerous party; on the contrary, they form, after all, only a comparatively small sect, or clique, or coterie, with the members studiously supporting each other. Still they are exercising, by

their literary ability and activity, a far greater amount of evil than the religious public in Britain is at all aware of. There are, however, vigorous attempts to meet them. The *British Quarterly Review*, a literary organ representing the great Nonconformist party of England, gives considerable attention to the subject; and occasional articles in answer to the infidel attacks appear from time to time in the *Quarterly Review*, a literary organ representing the Church of England Conservatist party; in the *North British Review*, which is largely supported by the Presbyterians of Scotland, especially of the Free Church; in the *London Review*, conducted by the Methodists; and the *Eclectic*, another organ of the Nonconformists. In meeting these infidel objections, British writers must resort to the weapons which have been furnished by the great theologians of Germany in the conflict through which they have passed. I rejoice to find that not a few of the more promising theological students belonging to nearly all our religious denominations are in the way of spending a year or two at some one or other of the great German Universities, and are thus preparing themselves for a conflict in this country, in which we shall need thoroughly-trained and disciplined soldiers.

Those of whom I have hitherto been speaking openly oppose the Bible as a revelation of the will of God. There are others, who, while they profess, and I believe sincerely, to entertain a reverence for the Bible, are seeking to oppress and overwhelm it with a variety of foreign elements. These persons cannot well be described as Rationalists; they profess to set no value on logic and the logical understanding in the discussion of religious topics. I am accustomed to call them "Intuitionists." They appeal to something much deeper or higher in our nature than the senses, or the generalising processes upon the materials derived from the senses; they appeal to feeling, faith, sentiment, or intuition. So far as they allow that they have a founder, they may be said to have sprung from Coleridge, who again drew largely from Schelling and the philosophers of his age in Germany. Their views, and their method of expounding them, are not unlike those of some of the theologians of Germany, who, thirty years ago, felt the influence of Schleiermacher, but were not indisposed to adopt some of the principles of Hegel. It should be added, that the exposition of their views takes, after all, quite an English character, and is not so systematic or laborious as the German dissertations. Their views have met with some little acceptance among a few of the Independent or Congregational Ministers of England, but their chief seat is among the young men of Oxford and Cambridge. A distinguished divine of Germany, much opposed to the Evangelical Alliance, has, I know, reasoned himself into the belief that the "High Churchism" and "Puseyism" of Oxford would prove an effectual barrier to Rationalism in England. He never committed so great a blunder. The reaction against Mediævalism in Oxford has issued in an "Intuitionism" which is fully as perilous as the cold Rationalism of last century. It would be difficult to find now in Oxford a young man of high ability, who is a fervent Puseyite. Puseyism has still its adherents among persons of intellectual power and influence, but it is among men of middle age or past it, and so far as it is found among the young it is confined chiefly to romantic ladies, or gentlemen with a good deal of the feminine character. But not a few of the young men, both of Oxford and Cambridge, are high Intuitionists, and you may find traces of their views in a weekly paper, of decided literary ability and of great pretensions, called the *Saturday Review*, which is the avowed organ of Young Oxford and Cambridge. But in the very place in which these views are being entertained and propagated, they have met with a most powerful opponent. I allude to Dr. Mansel, of Oxford. He is the author of not a few logical and metaphysical works of great learning and ability, such as his "Prolegomena Logica," and his "Metaphysics." But his most distinguished work is his Bampton Lectures, "On the Limits of Religious Thought." This work has had an almost unexampled circulation for a phi-

losophical or theological work. Within about a year and a-half it reached a fourth edition, and has been extensively read and reviewed by clergymen and thinking laymen all over the three kingdoms. It is a book of great erudition. In this respect Dr. Mansel is quite equal to the most distinguished of the German philosophers and divines. It is a work of extraordinary subtlety, acuteness, and logical power. It is also distinguished in many parts by a fervour and a high eloquence which carry the reader with pleasure through the driest portion of his discussions.

In order to understand the line of defence taken up by Dr. Mansel, it is necessary to state that when M. Cousin published his brilliant "Cours de Philosophie," in 1828, it was reviewed by an eminent Scottish metaphysician, Sir William Hamilton (afterwards Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh), in an article in the *Edinburgh Review* (October, 1829), an article which was republished in "Hamilton's Discussions on Philosophy" in 1852. In this article he takes up the views of the "Unconditioned," given by Kant, by Schelling, and by Cousin, examines each with extraordinary power, and arrives at the conclusion that the "Unconditioned" is incognisable and inconceivable, its notion being only the negative of the conditioned, which last can alone be positively known or conceived. For the last thirty years this article has been appealed to by many in this country as a triumphant reply to every form of transcendental idealism.

Sir William Hamilton reared an influential school of disciples in Scotland, and there are a few men of high eminence in Oxford, who, though not precisely followers, yet have adopted many of his logical and philosophical doctrines. In particular, Dr. Mansel has made an application of Hamilton's doctrine of the unconditioned to theology, with the view of cutting up by the roots Dogmatism and Rationalism; the former of which would force reason into agreement with revelation, while the latter would force revelation into agreement with reason. For this purpose he enters, first, upon an examination of the fundamental ideas of Rational theology, the Absolute, the Infinite, the First Cause, shows that there are mutual contradictions involved in these three ideas, and would thus drive us to the conclusion, that all attempts to construct a metaphysical theology must be false. He then institutes an examination of the philosophy of religion from the psychological side; and establishes the impossibility of constructing a Rational theology, from a determination of the conditions of all human consciousness. One of these conditions of consciousness is the *Distinction between one Object and another*: this implies limitation, and, consequently, the impossibility of conceiving the Infinite. A second condition is *Relation between Subject and Object*, and consequent impossibility of conceiving the Absolute. A third condition is *Succession and Duration in Time*, and consequent impossibility of conceiving Creation and counter impossibility of conceiving finite existence as uncreated. The fourth condition is *Personality*, which is a limitation, and hence inadequate to represent the Infinite. He then proceeds to enounce what he regards as the two principal modes of religious consciousness—the Feeling of Dependence and the Conviction of Moral Obligation, and endeavours to show that our religious knowledge is *regulative*, and not *speculative*. He dwells at great length on the distinction between speculative and regulative truth, and would thus account for all the mysteries of natural and revealed religion—they arise from our knowledge being relative. He makes even morality, as known to us, not absolute, but relative. He arrives at the conclusion that the office of philosophy is not to give us a knowledge of the absolute nature of God, but to teach us ourselves and the limits of our faculties, and he would thus shut us up into a humble trust in the Inspired Word.

It would be out of place in me to enter into a criticism of the work in this paper. I have ventured to give my opinion of it in an article in the *North British Review* for February, 1859. I look upon the philosophy of Hamilton, and the application of it to

theology by Mansel, as too negative and destructive in their character. In my recently published work on the "Intuitions of the Mind," I have followed a somewhat different method from Dr. Mansel. I have sought, in an inductive manner, to ascertain what is involved in our native cognitions, beliefs, and judgments, intellectual and moral, and in the close to expound their relation to religious truth. Dr. Mansel, as it appears to me, has so limited the human capacity as to prevent us from getting a proper foundation for certain great truths which the Bible pre-supposes, and to deprive us of some of the internal evidences in favour of Christianity which apologists have been accustomed, and, I think, legitimately, to advance. In particular I have doubts of the soundness or safety of Dr. Mansel's theory as to our views of morality being relative; if not absolute, I hold them to be at least positive. At the same time, I am convinced that it is the great excellence of the work that, with an acuteness which has never been surpassed, he succeeds in showing how we land ourselves in darkness and difficulties whenever we, who know but in part, make assertions as if we knew the whole; and that those who would construct a rational theology out of the ideas of Infinity and First Cause land themselves in positive contradiction.

This work has been criticised to a greater extent than any work published in England within the last few years. It has been opposed by the whole Socinian school and by the Intuitionist school. In particular the Rev. Frederick D. Maurice, Chaplain of Lincoln's-inn, London, has written a reply to it in a set of sermons, with appended letters, and called "What is Revelation?" The work is characterised, as all Mr. Maurice's works are, by many literary beauties, and especially by much noble sentiment and poetical play of fancy. His strictures on Dr. Mansel are often acute, and at times seem to me to be just as against his excessive limitation of the human faculties. But he is not a close thinker or a consecutive reasoner. There is a great want in all his writings of an exact categorical enunciation of what his views are, and of what he is labouring to prove. In his numerous theological works he has failed to take firm hold of certain great doctrines of the Word; in particular he seems to many to have diluted the doctrine of the Atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ. In this work the object is negatively to cut down certain of the positions of Dr. Mansel, and positively to show that the Infinite God has truly manifested Himself to man in a natural and in a written revelation. This Dr. Mansel would not deny—only he would say, that what is thus revealed must, from the nature of our faculties, be relative and not absolute. Dr. Mansel has replied to Mr. Maurice, in a pamphlet of considerable size, entitled "An Examination of the Rev. F. D. Maurice's Strictures," to which Mr. Maurice has a counter reply, in a volume, "A Sequel to 'What is Revelation?'" In these two controversial works little new light has been thrown on the subject-matter, the disputants being chiefly occupied in assailing and defending each other's alleged inconsistencies or misapprehensions of authors and systems. In order to complete this account, it is necessary to state that there are some who take the same views of theological truth as Dr. Mansel, who do not approve of the stringent limits he has laid on human reason. This, in particular, is the position taken by Dr. Young, in his work just published, on the "Province of Reason."

In this imperfect sketch, I have sought to give our German brethren a glimpse of what is doing among us, both of the good and of the evil. Our philosophical and theological activity may not be equal to that of Germany, still we are not without a body of able writers defending Christianity, and of thinking readers devouring their writings. Our chief excellence, however, is to be found in the revived Christian life among the mass of the people, and in the means employed to create, feed, and strengthen that life by effective preaching, accompanied in many places by diligent pastoral visitation, and by a popular, but by no means superficial, religious literature.

JAMES M'COSE.

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[We rather regret that it did not occur to Dr. M'Cosh to lay some more distinct stress upon the circulation of the Word of God itself amongst the British people; and the habit of thought produced by the constant reading of the Word, which we are convinced lies at the very root of all that distinctive popular religion and religious literature to which he has so well directed attention. The contrast between Great Britain and all other countries, in this respect, is something very remarkable. The publication of the "Book and its Mission," and of "The Missing Link," afford many gratifying proofs of the wonderful power which attends the circulation of God's own Word. The attention of our German brethren ought to be called to these and similar publications.—Eds.]

GREEK THE LANGUAGE OF INSPIRATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It is not a mere curious question in literature, to inquire in what language the books of the New Testament, the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse, were written, but it is one that is, we believe, intimately connected with their inspired character and consequent authority; for it must be of the utmost importance to us, in relation to books having the gift of inspiration, and claiming—as they have a right to claim—all the authority that belongs to that Divine influence, to know whether we have the original inspired works, or only translations of these. Some would contend, as in the case of St. Matthew's Gospel, that the inspired original was in Hebrew, and therefore that the Greek we have was not the inspired original, but only a version of it; and thus they do, however unwittingly and without any malice aforethought, depreciate the Greek of St. Matthew's Gospel, as not *the* inspired Gospel of Matthew, but only a translation of that. This charge against it we repudiate, and are prepared to uphold the Greek Gospel of St. Matthew as the Gospel of St. Matthew, written by him under the guidance and protection of inspiration. We deny not, but on the contrary, we believe and maintain, upon historical evidence that cannot be impeached and gainsaid, that Matthew wrote an original narrative of Gospel events in Hebrew; which original Hebrew has not come down to us, and which its not coming down to us is, we contend, both *a priori* and *prima facie* evidence that, though *original*, it was *not inspired*; and thus, while we deny not an original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, we contend that his Greek one is his inspired one. And, as in his case, we contend that his Greek Gospel is his original inspired composition, so we are also prepared to contend that all the other Scriptures in the New Testament that we have in Greek were also written in that tongue, under the influence of inspiration, and consequently that our thesis is true—Greek is the language of inspiration in the New Testament.

We intend to deal with this matter not learnedly, but popularly. We mean not thereby to eschew learning, the best, such as it may be, that we can bring to this subject, or consecrate in any way to the service of God; but we believe that the *results* of learning can be made to tell just as powerfully without displaying the learning itself, and that as the figures in the Fantocini show the semblance of life and intelligence without the wires that animate them being visible, so it is possible to make even a learned subject plain and intelligible, agreeable and edifying, without exhibiting all the learning and research that have been exercised in elaborating the results that are developed by them. Indeed, the very first step that we take in our argument, and which is a very large one, is exceedingly simple and intelligible. It clears the subject very considerably. Of St. Paul's fourteen Epistles, all of them, except those to the Romans and the Hebrews, were addressed to Churches and people whose vernacular language was Greek; and even in the two cases excepted, the Romans and the Hebrews, since the Apostle wrote not merely for the edification of these two nations, the one using the Latin tongue, the other the Hebrew,