

me to attempt an exposition or analysis of Coleridge's religious philosophy to-night, these testimonies may incline you to inquire for yourselves. But do not be taken in by the only American edition I have seen; one that has the audacity to offer you the *Biographia Literaria* and *Friend*, as his collected prose works. Coleridge's prose without even the "Aids to Reflection"! A dish of bacon and beans without the bacon, is nothing to that. And it was by his prose works and his conversation, rather than by his poems that he moulded the age as far as it was moulded by him. Some have regretted that he turned from poetry to prose; but never was there greater mistake. It was only in virtue of his being a poet that he was able to make the discoveries in morals and theology that he did; and none but men who forget how terribly real and pressing are the root questions there, would have kept him singing all his life even "Genevieves" and "Ancient Mariners." For while Coleridge was everything, he was emphatically the religious philosopher.

What was the path he trode? He began life as a Radical; he ended as a Conservative politician. If every man is born either an Aristotelian or a Platonist, we may say that he began as the former and ended as the latter. He began life as an Unitarian preacher; he ended a profound believer in the Trinity, the Fall of Man, and the redemption by Christ.

The eighteenth century had gone on the principle that all our knowledge comes to us through the senses, and that what we cannot form a definite conception of, does not exist. It seemed a most satisfactory common sense principle, it offered to explain everything, it suited a sleek and shallow age. Of course it explained everything that it could explain, but then it left all the great puzzles of thought and life untouched. It is easy enough to construct a philosophy that ignores the primal instincts, the most stubborn facts of our nature, but what is the good of it? Yet such was the only system then taught in the English Universities, and they are the fountain-head of national life. As the Universities of Britain are to-day, so is the whole tone of British sentiment to-morrow. Of course such a philosophy made men Unitarians, or unbelievers altogether, it substituted utility for morals, egotism for reverence, jingle for poetry, and "wax figgers" for art. Coleridge accepted it—as he always accepted everything—devoutly, and every step of the way, from that Sahara to "the land flowing with milk and honey" at which at length he arrived, he had to fight. When from the Mystics who appealed to what he felt was a higher faculty in him than the logical understanding, he got to Kant and learned that there was a faculty in man in virtue of which he was brought into immediate contact with super-sensible truth, the scales fell from his eyes. The rest of his way as a philosopher was easy.