

of fellowship ; they had no power to attain to it. But while man is looking for God, God is looking for man. If man needs God, God also needs man, and cannot maintain indifference towards him. As Luthardt expressively says : " Man is the first and last thought of God, the resolution of His will, the beloved of His heart." It is this that distinguishes the religion of the Bible from all others. These, indeed, are the outcome of man's searching after God ; but this is the outcome of God's search after man, the marvellous quest of the Divine love which found its full expression in the mission of Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost. The Old Testament not only foretold a universal fellowship of righteousness, but showed how it was to be established. The prophets pointed to a coming One, the Messenger of the Divine will, and the manifestation of the Divine mercy, by whose work and self-sacrifice the glorious fellowship would be brought into existence.

We perceive, then, how deeply are laid the foundations of the Church of Jesus Christ ; that in its essential idea of a fellowship of men with God and with one another, it reaches back into the very *origines* of man's being, and is the fulfilment of God's design in man's creation. In its ideal and consummation, it will prove to be the satisfaction of the earnest expectation of the creation, which waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, as well as the fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets. The Church is intended to become the realization of that fellowship for which man has been waiting through the weary ages of his travail, and which God has been planning through the ineffable ages of His eternal love and wisdom. The Church is no after-thought ; no accident, no outcome of mere human wisdom or of human self-will ; but the offspring of the ages, the goal of that increasing purpose of God which runs through them all.