

THE
LIBERAL CHRISTIAN.

VOL. I.

FEBRUARY, 1854.

No. 2.

THE CALL OF RELIGION.

BY REV. F. H. HEDGE.

SPECULATIVE unbelief is common enough ; but that is not the difficulty which the gospel has to contend with in winning men to its call, and extending its empire over the heart. There may be skepticism with regard to what is merely external, where there is great activity of religious sentiment. There is a stage, a period of skepticism, in the history of almost every active and enquiring mind. And provided it is earnest, provided it springs from love of the truth, and not from hatred or fear of the truth ; from inquisitiveness of the intellect, and not from perversion of the will, provided also it does not rest satisfied with doubting, but searches and inquires with earnest endeavour to know the truth, and candidly acknowledges the evidence on one side and the limits of the human understanding on the other ; it is not a dangerous but a healthy symptom. It indicates a more sound and hopeful state of mind than its opposite, — a fond and undiscerning acquiescence in the letter, with an utter absence of the spirit.

You are skeptical. It matters not, so long as you are a seeker, and honestly endeavour with patient investigation, in a docile and reverent temper, to know the truth. Be skeptical, question if you please, admit nothing without questioning, weigh, examine, prove! Christianity fears not the severest scrutiny; it invites, it demands it. "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side!" Its sublime truths do not rest on any thing which inquiry the most rigorous can overthrow. They do not depend on ink and parchment, on the carelessness or fidelity of records and translators. They are written in the fleshly tables of the heart. Their voucher is the moral sense. The Spirit of God is their ever-living witness and interpreter. Look at them thus witnessed and confirmed. Read the gospel as expounded by the heart. There is the character of Christ. Is that a fiction of the imagination, an invention of the human brain? Then why, in all the creations of genius, before or since, has there been no faint approximation to this sublime conception? There are the sayings of Jesus. Are they imaginary? What writer of fiction ever imagined such words as these?—"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live." There are his precepts; love to God and love to man, forgiveness of injuries:—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Is there any thing questionable in these? Can any criticism overthrow these great commandments?

You believe all this. It is not your skepticism, then, that prevents your leading a religious life, but your practical

unbelief, your want of faith in those things which in speculation you never doubted. You believe with the understanding, but not with the heart. With the understanding you believe in God and a moral law, in the dignity, the peace, and blessedness of a life devoted to the will of God and the cultivation of your moral nature. But with the heart you believe in worldly possessions and worldly lusts, and in the superior benefits to be derived from a life devoted to selfish and worldly ends. It is not your skepticism that is in the way. No speculation, no inquiry, no mere act of the intellect, will bring you any nearer to the point. You must compel yourself by an effort of the will to realize in practice what in theory you believe. It is not an act of the understanding, but an effort of the will, by which you give the heart to God.

You cannot, indeed, by merely willing it, become at once an altered man. But you can, at any moment, change the direction of your purposes and endeavours. The change of character is always a slow and gradual process, but the change of mind, on which that change of character depends, may be instantaneous. In fact, it always is so. Every resolution is, in its nature, instantaneous. There may have been a long preparation for it in the mind of the individual, a long struggle may have preceded it, but the act itself is instantaneous and complete. When John the Baptist preached repentance in the wilderness of Judea, and baptized those who came to him, in token of that repentance, neither he nor they expected that the use of that rite would be followed by an immediate and entire reform. Nevertheless it expressed, in most cases, no doubt, an immediate and entire change of purpose; and the execution of that purpose was no doubt aided by the use of that

rite, by which the convert formally consecrated himself to it. The drunkard does not become at once a temperate man by signing a pledge of total abstinence ; but he sets his face at once in that direction, and he does it by an instantaneous effort of the mind ; and there are many remarkable cases of entire reformation consequent on that effort. Every resolution to do otherwise than we have done, — otherwise than by long habit and settled bias we incline to do, — is a leap, a new birth, a new creation.

While, therefore, your domestication in the kingdom of heaven is a gradual process, your acceptance of the offer which invites you there must be instantaneous, — a sudden lift within the mind, by which you are raised above yourself into newness of life. It is an effort of the will by which we accept the call of God to lead a religious life, to sit down in his kingdom, to come to the marriage and partake of the feast ; — an effort without which nothing worthy was ever accomplished.

The call does not take us from our accustomed pursuits. The farm and the merchandise furnish no excuse for neglecting it. Religion is not an employment by itself, but a principle consecrating all employments to high and worthy ends. To every pursuit which is innocent and lawful in itself, it gives a new impulse, breathes into it a new spirit, and secures for it a better success. The feast to which we are called is not provided in a separate and solitary place, but the table is spread in the midst of the world. This visible world contains the topics about which we are to be principally employed. We must look to another for light, and strength, and motive ; but it is here that we are to look for the chief topics of our duty ; it is here that we are to live and to labor. There is no lawful

pursuit that may not be made subservient to religious ends. All that we have, and do, and are, may conspire in the service of God. It is not necessary to exclude every thought but God from our minds, in order to serve him acceptably. To be guided by the light of day, it is not necessary that we keep our eyes for ever fixed on the sun. It is enough that we surround ourselves with the invisible element of which that sun is the source. And so, to serve God, it is not necessary that we make him the immediate and sole object of all our thoughts. It is enough that we make his law the light of our lives, and obedience to him the motive and the end. We serve God by every act and calling which tends to benefit and bless our kind. Every such calling and act has the spirit of religion, if not its form. And religion is not a form but a spirit. Fill the place and follow the calling which you are best fitted to fill and to follow, by natural endowment, by education, or circumstance. Be faithful to its duties, feel its worth in relation to the general good. Make it bear favorably on the interests of society, consider yourself responsible to God for the manner in which you improve the opportunities it affords; and that shall be your religion, an acceptable offering, a "reasonable service." Whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might, for God's sake. That is religion. Whatever your earthly calling, see that it harmonize with your "high calling," and follow it with right aims in an earnest and dutiful spirit, laboring not for the meat that perisheth, intent only on selfish gratification, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, — self-improvement and the good of mankind.

"GO UP HIGHER."*

BY REV. N. HALL.

- IN these souls of ours—an essential and inseparable element of their nature—is the principle, or capacity, of progress. From the birth of consciousness, their course—so designed by their Great Inspirer—made possible to them, though not necessitated—is upward. The pathway open to them—to their desire and their endeavor; roughened, it may be, by difficulties; overhung, it may be, at intervals, with depressing shades,—is one of ascent. Circuitously they may advance from point to point; retrogressive their way may seem to them; while surely, as fact or as preparation, it is onward. The call of the Creator is thus writ upon his work, in this investiture of capacity and power,—“go up higher.” That call is also felt in those earnest desires after excellence, which are the experience of every soul whenever it is itself, whenever it has come to its holier birth, the sure attendants of its better hours; desires, as if for something it must needs possess, as if for something with which its peace is bound; desires which are never satisfied, but spring afresh, at every point attained, and with an ever-augmenting force, for higher still; whose abatement is the certain signal of moral illness, whose entire cessation of moral death. It is the call of all Religion :—of this, native to the soul, which speaks through its diviner sentiments and capacities, and of that which addresses us from without, which has come through Prophet and Apostle and Redeemer. That last and highest of the Almighty’s utterances,—how does

* Luke xiv. 10.

it show forth, to the faith of the soul, the high path of its progress; how has it thrown thereon an illumination from heavenly spheres; how has it made it vocal with the soft beseechings of those gone upward to inhabit there; how has it communicated courage and animation, by its examples and its promises, to the striving believer! See an Apostle stretch out his fettered hands, while from his chainless soul breaks forth the exclamation,—“not that I have already attained; but forgetting the things that are behind, I *press on* to those that are before.” See the Holiest—having neared at every life-step the Infinite Goodness, in the adoring contemplation of which he sees none beside, none even in himself—as he stands at last on the Olivet-heights of that glorious excellence which the ministries of earth and heaven had helped him to attain, and says—if with reference to a local, yet more to a spiritual ascent, which not that passing hour was to consummate, nor yet the cycles of eternity—“I *ascend* to my Father.”

“Go up higher.” To a soul rightly attuned it is heard as the bidding of all events; it is felt in the tendency of all to aid in what thus they call to. Those that we dread the most, whose approach we shrink from, may prove, and more truly than those we welcome, the helpers of our progress—as the winds that roughen the sea impel the vessel, before a faithful helm, more swiftly on her course. The call to conflict is a call to the added strength which awaits the victor. Every temptation and difficulty and hardship and loss, is a trumpet-note for the soul to gird itself to a struggle, in which fidelity is success, and success is progress. And that event, shrouded, to the natural apprehension, is such appalling mystery, and

which puts an end to all earthly progress,— it but opens the way, to the faithful soul, for a surer and speedier ascent. It strikes off what may have become the clogs of flesh and sense, and leads it out to freedom, and bids it on forever. It comes to the way-worn pilgrim, overtaken by disappointment, beset with trials, struggling against infirmities, and upon whom these have done their purifying and exalting work, and says to him, as it lifts the overlaying burden of terrestrial things,—“ Friend, go up higher.” Attendant angels, in tones of cheer, melodiously repeat it, —“ Friend, go up higher ;” higher, not in space alone, nor habitation, nor any outward allotment ; but in goodness, in love, in spiritual power and capacity, in the freedom and force of a holy will ; higher on the path of angelic excellence and angelic beatitude ; higher towards the Infinite.

RELIGIOUS FORMS.

BY REV. A. P. PEABODY.

SOME maintain that true spirituality is independent of things outward, and should disdain all external aids? It seems to me that spirituality of character has directly the opposite tendency. We cannot get rid of our connection with the outward world. Our bodies, our relations to material things, are stubborn facts, which we cannot deny or evade ; and the truly spiritual man will recognise these facts, by attaching spiritual associations, so far as he finds it possible, to the outward objects with which he must needs be daily conversant. Unable to dispense with the material world, he will bend it to spiritual uses. He

will connect its scenes and seasons with thoughts and images of the unseen and the eternal, with pure affections and lofty aspirations. That such is the tendency of spiritual tastes and habits, we may perceive from what takes place in various departments and relations of common life. Thus, for instance, to a coarse and low mind, the dress or jewellery of a deceased friend is like any other raiment, his favorite walk like any other path, his peculiar tastes mere whims, not worth a thought after he has gone. But to the refined and spiritual a special consecration rests on whatever the departed friend has used or loved,—there are certain objects set aside from their kind, and hallowed by the most tender associations, for his sake,—there is often a ritual of affection kept up for months and years in memory of his cherished tastes and habits. It is by the most spiritual that all the forms of courtesy and kindness in domestic and social life are the most dearly prized and the most scrupulously observed. Now, there is surely no reason why religion should not, like every other pure affection, appropriate its own share of outward forms and objects, shedding over them the loftiest of all associations, and consecrating them to the noblest and holiest uses. Indeed, Christianity seems to me, even by its mere ritual, to render essential aid in the cultivation of spirituality, inasmuch as it extends its hallowing forms over a very wide range of outward scenes and objects, blessing the table and the family meeting, making the river and the fountain typical of its own purity, and spreading its commemorative festival with the choicest fruits of a benignant Providence.

Do you say, These forms cripple my freedom? I reply, that there is a kind of freedom which they do cripple, and

which ought to be crippled. There are many who are equally unwilling to dismiss religious thoughts, and to own religious responsibilities. They want to wear the crown, but not to bear the cross. So long as religious ideas float dimly before their minds, and seem to present a distant and possible resource in future emergencies, they bid them welcome; but they refuse to give shape and definiteness to these ideas, and to induce them with a pervading and controlling power over their hearts and lives. They do not like the process of self-searching. They do not like to hear the admonishing voice in little things, and on the constantly recurring occasions of duty in daily life. They prefer a *sentimental* to a *practical* religion. Now one principal office of religious forms, when faithfully observed, is to invite to self-examination, to reveal deficiencies, and to prescribe an ever higher standard of devotion. Thus the father who leads the devotions of the family altar is held back from utter worldiness and levity. He cannot assume his priestly robes in the morning, and cast them off before mid-day, without his sins coming up in remembrance when he again appears before his God. In the service of the Lord's Supper, too, there is admonition as well as comfort. We there come into self-comparison with our Saviour. His character is a mirror for our own. We are made sensible of our frailties, follies and sins, and urged on to new diligence in duty and fervor of spirit, by every remembrance of Christ, by the voices of his cross, and the power of his death. But this is the only restraint which religious forms can impose,—the restraint of duty, the yoke of Christ. They create no new obligations, but only render us more sensible of those that already exist, and more

solicitous to discharge them. Our responsibilities are born with us, and grow with us, and cannot die with us. They are not of our own choosing, but of God's ordaining, and can be neglected only to our unspeakable loss and sorrow. Ought we not, then, to cherish those religious forms which may remind us of them, and suggest essential motives and bestow needed aid in meeting and bearing them? The freedom which sets these forms aside, or holds them subject to momentary convenience or caprice, is indeed congenial to an indolent and sluggish mind. In a worldly point of view, it is comfortable to have our relation to Christianity so loose and indefinite, that we may obey the passing impulse, whatever it be, whether it bid us float on the current of superficial religious sentiment, or push us off into a broader license of speech and conduct than accords with Christian duty. But the all-important question is, How far is this freedom consistent with the actual growth of character? How will it be regarded in future years, from the bed of death, from the judgment-seat of Christ?

In treating of religious forms, I have not given the prominence which some might give to the power of our example over others; for I cannot admit that either writer or reader is so little in need of these forms, on his own account, as to be called upon to adopt them from purely disinterested and philanthropic motives. And where one performs the ritual of piety, or any part of it, in that patronising way and spirit which seem to say, "All this I do, not for my own sake, but for the sake of others, who need it more," there is so much heartlessness in the service as to repel and disgust those whom it is designed to draw. I place as high an estimate as any one on the

power of example, but I want no one to go coldly to work setting an example ; for the efficacy of example depends on its not being set — on its being the simple, unostentatious result of conviction, principle and conscience. Yet it may increase our esteem for religious forms, and our desire to participate in them, to reflect how essential they are to the diffusion and transmission of our religion. They are and must ever be, to a great degree, the expression and embodiment of the amount of religious faith and principle existing in the community. They are, therefore, an essential means of religious impression and influence ; and their efficacy depends on the numbers that engage in them, and the apparent sincerity with which they are attended. Thus in a religious congregation the minister is not the sole preacher, nor do his words in the pulpit have merely the power over the individual heart which the same words might have in the house or by the wayside. His people, when they assemble in full numbers, help him to preach, and preach to one another. They bear, all to each, concurrent and accumulated testimony to the dignity and the momentous importance of the truths and duties to which they have consecrated their house of worship. When, on the other hand, the members of a congregation let trifling causes, which would keep them from no secular engagment, reduce their numbers, they not only chill and discourage their minister by the sight of their vacant places ; but those who absent themselves preach against him, bear the opposite testimony to that which they expect him to utter, and leave on many hearts the impression that religion is but a secondary concern, and that its duties may be fittingly held in subservience to any paltry considerations of ease, convenience, or ca-

price. So, too, by the use or neglect of any of the appointed or established forms of Christianity, one cannot help bearing testimony for or against the religion which must in these forms have its outward habitation and utter its voices. Let me, then, solicit you, reader, not to bear false witness; and, if you at heart respect and love religion, I would ask you whether, in neglecting its forms, you are not bearing false witness,—uttering a testimony against conviction and against conscience.

In conclusion, let me refer briefly, but most emphatically, to the example of Christ. He, if any one, was above ordinances, too spiritual to need them, too exalted to stoop to them. But, either because he found in them a fit expression for his own spirituality, or because they brought him into closer fellowship with the brethren for whose sake he lived and died, or because he wished to commend them by his own example to those who might look down upon them as beggarly elements suited only to the earliest and lowest stages of spiritual progress, for one or all of these reasons, he was constant and assiduous in his attendance upon the outward forms of piety. He sought the baptism of water. He hallowed the Sabbath-day. He frequented the worshipping assembly. He broke the bread, and poured the cup of blessing. He held sacred every religious observance, which might fence in the fold for the feeblest lamb in his flock. “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and for the servant that he be as his Lord.”

A THOUGHT ON CHRISTIANITY.

BY REV. J. CROMPTON.

I AM convinced, and every day only assures me of it, that in spite of all the preaching and professions of religion we have, men do not know what Christianity is. True religion has never had a fair chance yet; nor will it be thoroughly understood till men agree better upon it, and cease to form narrow sects, exclude each other from their churches, and put their own doctrines forward instead of Christ's. For instance, the first great doctrine that Jesus Christ the Saviour teaches, is that there is *One God the Father, and therefore all men are Brethren*. Nobody can deny this doctrine, but who teaches it thoroughly? What church or sect ever makes this which is Christ's own faith and prayer its head and chief doctrine? Which of them applies it home to men? The spirit of this doctrine is generous, free and holy—it gives rise to mutual respect, assistance, kindness, and love. Only so far as a man lives according to it is he a Christian—all society and all churches must be founded on it, and be bound together by it, or they are not fit to be called by that name. We have much preaching of religion in our churches and chapels, but it is to be practised in the counting-house, in the store, in the work-shop, every day and hour of our lives.

It is notorious that we are far from practically believing in this doctrine. Whence come the angry feelings between man and man employed in the same business, working perhaps under the same roof, but from a gross neglect of it. There are employers, great ones and small,

some with hundreds of workmen and women, and some with only one or two boys or girls, some of whom reduce wages as low as they can ; despising, or, at least, not caring about the welfare of those under them ; if, now, there was written on their counters, " all men are brethren," and by some extraordinary chance, they should believe and act upon it, what a change would come over them in heart and hand. Again, there are in all large cities, especially in Europe, working men, living in yards together by dozens, often pressed down by bad times, and all scrambling for a living against each other : some abusing and grumbling against masters and employers ; others indulging in every imaginable sort of bad spirit against each other. Now, let me write up before these, " There is one God the Father, and ye are all brethren ;" if they should be struck by it and believe, would there not come a perfect revolution in them ? The change would not be greater if we were to find ourselves transported some morning to another country ten thousand miles off, or altogether into another world.

What can we all have been doing and preaching, that such doctrines as these are not more understood, and followed, and made the chief matters of faith and practice, rather than the peculiarities of parties and sects.

Men are crying for all manner of remedies for their distresses ; but they want a good sound religion, such as this, *to unite them together* in honesty, in justice, in good will, and firm faith in God above. Nothing but this ever will help them ; and when they shall believe in it heartily, and live up to it, then no power on earth will ever stop them gaining all justice, and rights, and liberty. Give me a thousand men of all conditions in a city believing

and joining heart and hand in this one doctrine, and what is there that is good that they could not accomplish?

This is an application of Christianity to public life, now for a more private one. I find a very common complaint, that the young are not so easily guided and well trained at home as they used to be. If this is true, it bodes us terrible evil in future. I believe the fact is, that the parents and elders, in such cases, do not care for religion, and keep up no regular habits of worship. Children are sent to Sunday schools perhaps, but in many cases the parents and families do not care to come to worship, or to cultivate quiet, steady habits of a religious life, and then they wonder that the children when they grow older care as little as themselves for religion, become restless, wild, and disobedient; I should wonder if they did not do so, after such miserable teaching. A parent who sends a child to school, or church, or chapel regularly, and only goes there himself or herself irregularly, is practically telling and teaching the child a falsehood; he is telling him that he is very anxious about that which his own example proves he does not care for.

We want true Christianity in our homes; and first of all our great doctrine, "there is one God the Father." Every father and mother in the land, ought to make their fireside an altar for this doctrine; they should feel and always show that love to God which they wish to see in their children. Nobody knows the feelings of a father or mother but a parent, and those feelings are given to help us to a deep and constant religion. I, and all ministers of the gospel, see various kinds of homes, and I can truly say, that where there is no religion, no steady and regular habits of worship, no interest felt in religion, there is no peace in

the house, no comfort or domestic love, and there cannot be; for love to God and love to brethren and children go together: where these good habits are, there is far more happiness, and union, and purity of life, even in greatest poverty; distress is softened, and even sin if it creeps in is more easily reclaimed. There are thousands of families daily proving these things by their good and bad habits; by the folly, ignorance, dirt, and discomfort of the one, and the comfort and peace of the other.

The first thing to be entreated, is regular habits of public worship and private religion. Some exertion ought to be made for the purpose; no excuse is allowed to put off pleasure or any domestic duty, none but a real one should be suffered to stand in the way of these higher duties. If we would have our homes happy, first believe thoroughly and live as though we felt we had God ever with us, a Father ever loving and watching each family.

The world is perishing for want of a sound vital understanding of Christianity. The simple doctrines given by Christ and the Apostles are infinitely better than all sect divisions—think whether this one which only I have yet mentioned is not much wanted in the world and in our homes. This is the first doctrine of Christ, let us see this carried out, before we add to it and darken it by words not Christ's. Let us worship together, not regarding whether we are rich or poor, but as brethren; let us live in the world as such, and at home also; we all want this doctrine—the rich, that he may be humble; the poor, that he may not forget God; the father, that he may rear his children in love; the young that they may be bound in fear and affection to each other, to their parents, and to God. Seek this doctrine where best you find it in Christ's Gos-

pel ; let no man mystify it to you. Let this be the first article of your creed, this fill your hearts with faith, hope and charity.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

FROM NEANDER.

CHRISTIANITY we regard not as a power that has sprung up out of the hidden depths of man's nature, but as one which descended from above, because heaven opened itself for the rescue of revolted humanity ; a power which, as it is exalted above all that human nature can create out of its own resources, must impart to that nature a new life, and change it from its inmost centre. The great source of this power is the person whose life its appearance exhibits to us — Jesus of Nazareth — the Redeemer of mankind when alienated from God by sin. In the submission of faith to him, and the appropriation of the truth which he revealed, consists the essence of Christianity, and of that fellowship of the divine life resulting from it, which we designate under the name of the church. Out of this springs the common consciousness, which unites all its members in one, however separated from one another by space or time. The continuance of all those agencies, whereby Christianity has given a new turn to the life of our race, depends on our holding fast to this, its peculiar essence, to the same that has been the spring of these agencies from the beginning. To the Kingdom of God, which derived its origin from these influences in humanity, and which must ever continue to spring up afresh from the same, may be applied the remark of an

ancient historian respecting the kingdoms of the world, that they will be preserved by the same means to which they were indebted for their foundation.

But although Christianity can be understood only as something which is above nature and reason, something communicated to them from a higher source, yet it stands in necessary connection with the essence of these powers and their mode of development—otherwise, indeed, it could not be fitted to elevate them to any higher stage; otherwise it would not operate on them at all. And such a connection, considered by itself, we must presume to exist in the works of God, in the mutual and harmonious agreement of which is manifested the divine order of the universe. The connection of which we now speak consists in this; that what has by their Creator been implanted in the essence of human nature and reason, what has its ground in their idea and their destination, can attain to its full realization only by means of that higher principle, as we see it actually realized in Him who is its Source, and in whom is expressed the original type and model, after which humanity has to strive. And accordingly, we see the evidence of this connection, whenever we observe how human nature and reason do, by virtue of this, their original capacity, actually strive, in their historical development, towards this higher principle, which needs to be communicated to them in order to their own completion; and how, by the same capacity they are made receptive of this principle, and conducted onward till they yield to it, and become moulded by its influence. It is simply because such a connection exists, because in all cases where, through the historic preparation, the soil has been rendered suitable for its reception, Christianity enters readily into

all that is human, striving to assimilate it to its own nature, and to inter-penetrate it with its own power, that on a superficial view, it appears that Christianity itself were only a product resulting from the combination of the different spiritual elements it had drawn together; and the *opinion* has found advocates, that it could *thus* be explained. So may it also become blended for a while with the impure elements, attracted by its influence, and in its manifestation assume a shape which wholly resembles them; till at length, by its own intrinsic power, it begins a process of purification, from which it issues forth refined and ennobled, even in its outward form. But this circumstance, again, might seem to furnish some hold for the *opinion*, as if all those impure elements, which only attach themselves to Christianity in its outward manifestation, sprang from its essence; while on the contrary, the real operation of its essence, as the process of development went on, was to separate and reject them. In the contemplation of history, as of nature, it is always in truth a very difficult thing to avoid confounding accidental symptoms with more deep-seated agencies, to distinguish clearly the true cause from what merely works on the surface.

If this holds good, so far as it concerns the relation of Christianity to the development of human nature generally, it will be found to apply with peculiar force to that great period, which was chosen for the appearance of the Saviour of the world; and for the diffusion among mankind, from him, as the source, of those powers from above, which formed the commencement of that new creation, whose progressive work became thenceforth the final problem and the goal of history. It is therefore, only from its historical connection with the previous development

of that portion of mankind, among whom Christianity first appeared, that its effects can be rightly understood ; and such a connected view of the subject is necessary, in order to clear the way of false explanations.

This connection is hinted at by the Apostle Paul, where he says that Christ appeared *when the fulness of the time was come*. For herein, certainly, it is implied, that the precise time when he appeared had some particular relation to his appearance ; that the preparatory steps, through the previous development in the history of the nations, had been directed precisely to this point, and were destined to proceed just so far, in order to admit of this appearance — the goal and central point of all. It is true, this appearance stands in an altogether peculiar relation to the religion of the Hebrews, which was designed to prepare the way for it in an altogether peculiar sense. It is connected with this religion by the common element of a divine revelation — the super-natural and supra-rational element ; by the common interest of Theism and the Theocracy ; as all revealed religion, the entire development of Theism and the Theocracy, points from the beginning towards one end ; which being reached, every thing must be recognised as belonging to one organic whole—a whole wherein all the principal *momenta* served to announce beforehand, and to prepare the way for, the end towards which they were tending as their last fulfilment and consummation. It is in this reference, Christ says of his relation to *this* religion, what he could not say after the same manner, of his relation to any other ;— that he was not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil ; although it remains none the less true, that Christ stands in the relation of one, who came not to destroy but to

fulfil, to all the truth at bottom in all religions, to the purely human element wherever it may be found. But still we must not confine ourselves here to the connection of the appearance of Christianity with Judaism alone. Judaism itself, as the revealed religion of Theism, can be understood in its true significance, only as contrasted with the Nature-religion of Paganism. While on the one hand, the seed of divine truth out of which Christianity sprang, was communicated to reason by divine revelation; so on the other hand, reason unfolding itself from beneath, must seek, especially among that great historical people, the Greeks, how far it could singly, and by its own power, advance in the knowledge of divine things. To this the Apostle Paul alludes, when he says, "God hath determined for all nations the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation—how long they should continue, and how far they should extend their sway—that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him." And so, too, when he says of the times immediately preceding the revelation of the gospel, that the world, by its own wisdom, sought to know God in his wisdom, but could not know him. As it had been intrusted to the Hebrews to preserve and transmit the heaven-derived element of the Theistic religion, so it was ordained that among the Greeks, all seeds of *human culture* should unfold themselves in beautiful harmony, to a complete and perfect whole; and then Christianity, taking up the opposition between the divine and the human, was to unite both in one, and show how it was necessary that both should co-operate to prepare for the appearance of itself, and to the unfolding of what it contains. Origen had no hesitation in admitting, what Celsus the great an-

tagonist of Christianity maintained, when he ascribed to the Greeks a peculiar adaptation of talents and fitness of position, which qualified them for applying human culture to the development and elaboration of those elements of divine knowledge they had received from other quarters, namely from the East.

Besides, among Pagans, the transient flashes of a deeply seated consciousness of God — the sporadic revelations of Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and who has not left Himself without witness among any people — are too clear to be mistaken; the *testimonia animæ naturaliter christianæ*, as it is expressed by an ancient father, which pointed to Christianity. And while it was necessary that the influence of Judaism should penetrate into the heathen world, in order to prepare the way and open a point of communication for Christianity, so was it needful also, that the stern and repulsive stiffness of Judaism should be softened and expanded by the elements of Hellenic culture, in order to become recipient for what was new in the presentations of the Gospel. The three great historical nations had to contribute, each in its own peculiar way, to prepare the soil for the planting of Christianity — the Jews on the side of the religious element; the Greeks on the side of science and art; the Romans, as masters of the world, on the side of the political element. When the fulness of the time was arrived, and Christ appeared — when the goal of history had thus been reached — then it was that through him, and by the power of the spirit that proceeded from him — the might of Christianity — all the threads, hitherto separated, of human development, were to be brought together and interwoven in one web.

SPREAD OF LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY.

IN looking at the prospects of the religious world and the relative positions of liberal and sectarian Christianity, there is a prominent and general fact which forces itself upon our attention. The sectarian religions are perpetuated and extended by human contrivances—by ecclesiastical machinery; whereas the tendencies of the age, of science, and literature, of God's universal providence, of all good influences which are extra-ecclesiastical, are in favor of liberal Christianity. The sectarian religions must be kept up by artificial appliances, and these being relaxed, they dissolve and disappear as surely as water left to itself will find its level. Spiritual Christianity on the other hand is preached out of pulpits and outside of churches by myriads of living tongues, by God's free spirit as it sweeps the chords of the human heart, by the spirit of humanity that bathes the common sentiment, by nature herself as her various mysteries unfold. The number of the churches and preachers, the number of communicants, and the yearly admissions, measure the progress of the sectarian theologies, or rather show them to be on the wane. But no such rule can be applied to measure the progress of true spiritual Christianity. Let all the machinery of man stand still, and it will still go on, stealing into the heart of the world, changing and elevating our whole style of thought, creating all things new, not excepting the old theologies themselves.

We see it stated on reliable authority, that the number of preachers sent out annually by the orthodox theological schools is decreasing from year to year, and that the additions to the churches during the last few years do not

average two to each church annually. We should be alarmed at this did we suppose it indicated a corresponding decay of the religious sentiment, or a withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the hearts of men. We do not thus interpret the sign. But we do see evidence on every side of us that Christianity is to be preached in coming time by other agencies than those of the pulpit alone, and more days in the week than one. And it is to be preached in a spirit less dogmatic and technical, and according more with the wants and the nature of man. The pulpit and the church will still be needed for the highest utterance of truth and its highest embodiment; but the pulpit and the church will both be enlarged and liberalized and swept clear of scholastic trammels by the new coming of Christ into the heart of humanity.

We have had during the last few years most interesting illustrations of the truth that the Gospel spreads not by creeds, but in spite of them. We do not dwell upon the familiar fact, that a purer Christianity is melting its way through the formulas of theological schools. The tone and spirit of the best popular literature is opposed to the school theologies. But there is another fact which is deeply instructive and auspicious. Sectarians for the last few years have been watching "the Unitarian movement" in New England, shaking their heads and saying, "It will die out! it will die out!" These statisticians imagine that the number of converts which a denomination makes from other communions, the number of heads which can be counted off in its favor, marks the spread of its sentiments. Meanwhile large numbers of earnest and devout minds in various portions of the United States were becoming restive under the despotism of human creeds. They did

not think of changing their faith, but only of holding it on a different tenure and authority. They came to the simple ground of primitive Christianity. "No creed but the Bible, and no master but Jesus Christ." Scattered throughout the Union, they had no concert with each other. But as soon as the creeds fell away, the technical theologies fell away with them. Hence the "Christian" denomination sprang spontaneously into being; and it furnishes a living and practical demonstration of the fact, that the old theologies are kept up and imposed by ecclesiastical authority, and are not the creation of God's spirit working freely upon the heart. Knock out these artificial props, and they tumble down as inevitably as an arch without its pillars. These people (the Christians) number at this time, it is said, 1500 churches, as many preachers, and three hundred and fifty thousand members, all standing on the broad ground of liberal Christianity. Their spread and growth has been almost unprecedented; yet nobody was sent to convert them but the Divine Truth that works in the secret heart, and hence a large and growing denomination coming fresh from the bosom of the people. They have just established a college under the happiest auspices, which commands the whole field of the west, and which, according to present appearances, will at the end of three years be crowded with a thousand students.

All anxieties as to the ultimate triumph of a pure spiritual Christianity may be dismissed. And we do not mean by this the precise form of opinion which any denomination may happen to hold. We mean that Christianity which existed in the conceptions of Jesus Christ, and towards which the world makes approximations from age to age.

Meanwhile our duties are to the present hour, and we ought to be more anxious for a deep and growing piety, a more pervading spiritual life in our churches than for any spread which can be expressed or summed up in numbers. If Christianity among us is so conceived and so preached as to make spiritual interests supreme, so to melt the heart as to bring it lowly before God, so to open the world to come, that its heavenly voices shall "overpower the Babel tongues of earth," its spirit will be transfused through us to leaven the whole mass of society. But whether we fail or not, whether we will be saved by the Gospel or not, God has other agencies for its success than we will take note of, as the reapers with "sickles bright," go forth to the harvest of the world.—*Christian Register*.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND WOMAN'S WRONGS.

THE question of Woman's Rights and Woman's Wrongs is now fairly launched into the agitated sea of social reforms. What its ultimate fate may be, some future generation must witness. Go where we will in these days, we meet with some earnest band of persons resolutely bent on bettering the condition of society, and freely using the platform and the press to give effect to their cherished desires. The paternal governments of continental Europe, indeed, are rather apt to cut short the remonstrances of such reformers by means more potent and decided, for present purposes at least, than the strongest logic, or the most glowing rhetoric. Pio Nono, Czar Nicholas, Louis Napoleon, Francis Joseph, have summary methods for

silencing all agitators, social, political, or theological. But on this fresh American continent, every idea which gains the uppermost place in any mind may safely assert its right to a hearing, and lift up its voice with what power it may. The greater mental activity of the United States throws out more agitated social questions upon public attention than we meet with in Canada. But the rapidly increasing intercourse between the two countries is rendering us more familiar every day with the habits of thought of our neighbors on the other side of the line, and giving us a livelier interest in their various topics of discussion.

Since the question of Woman's Rights and Wrongs has been taken up by the party most directly interested — by the women themselves — it is not likely to die quietly, and without some sign. In some quarters, at least, it is urged with a pertinacity worthy the popular estimate of the less amiable of the sex. When John Mitchel, fresh from his penal residence in Australia, came to New York a few weeks since, and started his new weekly newspaper, he was not allowed to pass his first sheet through the press without being required to define his position on the rights and wrongs of "one half of the human race." We cannot say that the Irish exile's answer was quite philosophic, and we can only pronounce it dubiously gallant. From the tenor of his reply we strongly suspect that his questioners will place him in that unenviable category of persons whose

". . . . throats will bawl for Civil Rights—
No woman named."

And if it be even so, he will stand no worse than the great mass of newspaper editors. We must speak with

great respect of the newspaper press, for verily it is a power in the state, but we must at the same time be allowed to express our conviction, that newspaper writers very rarely treat this question in a manner corresponding to its intrinsic importance. In the present condition of society, the spectacle of women agitating for woman's rights presents a strong temptation to banter and ridicule. A spicy paragraph, or column of paragraphs, can be readily served up from it, which our humorous public exceedingly enjoy. Yet there are very grave social consequences involved in this question — consequences which touch us all at some point or other. Some of the higher periodicals have already recognised its importance, and devoted their pages to its consideration. The *Westminster Review* has given it a lengthened and ably reasoned article. On this side the Atlantic, the *Christian Examiner* has spoken in its last number, in a manner which seems to us, on the whole, quite just and discriminating, and which certainly contrasts favorably with an article on the same topic which had a place in the same journal some two years since.

We are of those who believe that this question of Woman's Rights and Wrongs is one which ought to be fairly met and honestly considered by the public. It ought not to be hustled aside, or hid away, either in jest or earnest. A multitude of facts stare us in the face which require to be investigated — a multitude of evils which require to be removed. The position of woman now is one of sheer dependence. She ought to have a wider sphere for her activity, to the end that she may become more self-reliant and self-dependent. Without touching the higher questions which would reasonably

involve debate, we may safely say, that women have a natural right to a more extensive range of remunerative employment than they now possess, and to a more thorough and systematic mental training than they now generally receive. We believe that all this might be given without making them a whit less womanly, or disqualifying them at all for their special domestic function. Nay, we are sure that they would be rendered thereby all the more worthy of their womanly nature and womanly calling. A mere drudge is surely not the proper type of woman, nor is the mere toy, whose highest interest attaches to the last fashion-plate. A proper woman has her three-fold form of endowment, intellect, conscience, affection, generously trained and harmoniously developed. And such a woman, while she can help herself, if she have husband and children, will be all the better qualified to help them too. We need scarcely add here, that her intellectual, moral and affectional nature must be baptised in the fountain of Christ's generous and blessed religion, if it would reach the most excellent grace, for it is this only which gives the crowning glory to man or woman.

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EVERYWHERE we see men who disfigure religion by vain attempts to make it accord with their own caprices. One is fervent in prayer, but he is insensible to the miseries and weaknesses of his neighbor. Another talks much of the love of God and of self-sacrifice, whilst he is not willing to suffer the least contradiction. Another deprives himself of allowed pleasures, that he may indulge himself in those that are forbidden. This woman is fervent and scrupulous in works of supererogation, but faithless in the most common and positive duties; she fasts and prays, but she does not restrain her pride or the violence of her temper. Thus we see people who think because they do what they are not commanded to do, that they may dispense with what is required.—*Fenelon.*

BOOK NOTICES.

HYPATIA ; or New Faces with an Old Face. By Charles Kingsley, Jun., Rector of Eversley, author of "Alton Locke," &c. Boston : Crosby, Nichols & Co. Sold in Montreal, by John Armour, Great St. James Street.

MR. KINGSLEY is one of the most attractive writers of the present day. A beneficed clergyman of the Church of England, with generous culture, enlarged sympathies, and vivid imagination, his pages have the full charm of freshness, while they abound with instruction and interest. In "Alton Locke," he let us see that he was at least no stranger to the doubts, difficulties, and sufferings of the working-classes in his native land at the present day. And in "Hypatia" he lets us see, farther, that he has a close acquaintance with the doubts, difficulties, conflicting opinions, and unhappy strifes, which in ancient times agitated and disturbed other lands. If the name of his former hero was fictitious, the name of his present heroine is historical. Hypatia was an eminent and accomplished woman of Alexandria, who flourished in the early part of the fifth century. She was a Neo-Platonist,* and lectured in the Museum to crowds of admiring disciples. Cotemporary with her in Alexandria were Orestes, the Roman Prefect, and Cyril, the Christian Bishop. She was accused of influencing the Prefect, to the prejudice of the Christians, and fell a victim to the fanaticism of the monks. Mr. Kingsley's book presents a vivid picture of the times ; and in the various characters which he introduces, shows us how forms of thought, substantially the same with many which now occupy attention, lived and flourished there likewise. These, together with certain priestly and fanatical practices not wholly unknown in our day, are the "foes" presented with the "old face,"

* Perhaps it may be useful to say here, that after the death of Plato, his disciples differed concerning the interpretation of his doctrines. Hence we have Old School and New School Platonists. In history, the New School are commonly styled Neo-Platonists.

and in ancient dress. These are the foes which the simple Gospel has had to contend with in all times. Vanquished in one age, the natural offspring of human infirmity, they reappear in another. To those disposed to such studies, the leading characters in the book, especially that of Raphael Aben-Ezra, will afford fine subjects.

GOD WITH MEN ; or *Footprints of Providential Leaders.*

By Samuel Osgood, author of "Studies in Christian Biography," &c. Boston : Crosby, Nichols & Co. Sold in Montreal, by C. Bryson, St. Francois Xavier Street.

THE author of this book is Dr. Dewey's successor in the charge of the congregation worshipping in the Church of the Messiah, New York. He is a man of great industry, extensive attainments, and writes in a style at once highly agreeable and highly instructive. The aim of the present volume is distinctly enough indicated by its second, or alternative title : "Footprints of Providential Leaders." The design is a happy one, being that of presenting the representative characters of the Bible, associated with the ideas or institutions which they represent — showing the mark which they left upon their respective ages, and thus illustrating the progressive unfolding of the divine designs with respect to men. By lighting up each character as a lamp, he illuminates the dim vista of remote providential history. In his preface, Mr. Osgood tells us that the book was prepared for the benefit of youth ; but we can aver that it contains attractive reading for persons of all ages. We subjoin the table of contents : Abraham and the Empire of Faith ; Moses and the Law ; Aaron and the Priesthood ; Saul and the Throne ; David and the Psalms ; Solomon and the Hebrew Wisdom ; Isaiah and the Prophets ; John the Baptist and the Precursors of the Messiah ; the Messiah in his Preparation and Plan ; the Messiah and his Ministry ; Peter and the Keys ; Paul and the Gospel Liberty ; John and the Word ; the Disciples and the Unseen Witness ; the Theologians and the World to Come.