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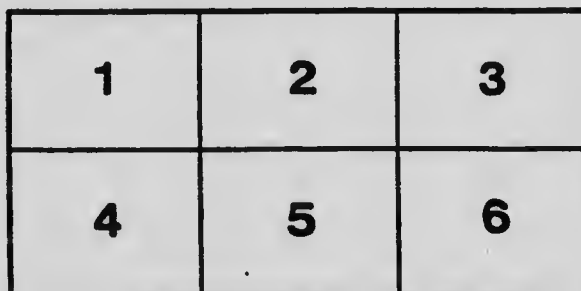
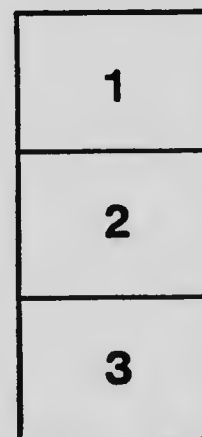
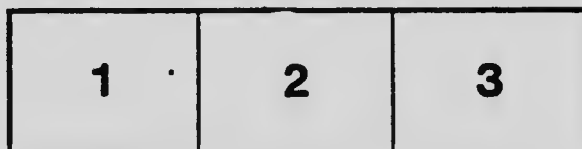
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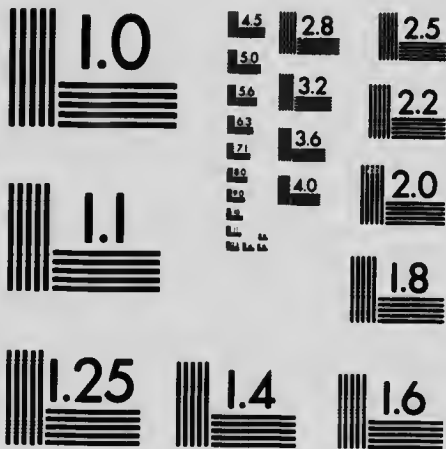
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THE MEANING OF CHRIST



THE MEANING OF CHRIST
AS INTERPRETED BY
POETS AND PATRIOTS

BY
RICHARD ROBERTS

Minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Westbourne Grove

CHEAP EDITION

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To
Miss Lucy Lees

PREFACE

THE Lectures which go to make up this little book were delivered to my own congregation on Sunday evenings during the Spring of this year. They are printed as they were spoken, save only for such minor changes as are incidental to extempore speech.

The purpose of the Lectures was to indicate in a popular way the place which Jesus Christ has occupied in the minds of some of the leaders of human thought and action ; and the point of view is, I think, made sufficiently clear in the first Lecture. The selection of the persons whose conceptions of Christ are here dealt with was determined by the simple fact that the writer owes a larger debt, in respect of stimulus to thought and action, to them than to any others.

The Lectures are, from their nature, admittedly slight ; and make no pretensions to any considerable depth or newness of thought. The debt I owe to many writers is too extensive to be set forth here

in detail ; but, where acknowledgment was due, it has been made in the body of the book.

The quotations, which necessarily constitute so large a part of the volume, save it from being wholly valueless ; but I am not without hope, as I certainly do pray, that some, at least, of those who may chance to read the book may find in it something to enrich their thought and experience of Christ, and to lead them to fuller devotion and larger obedience to Him.

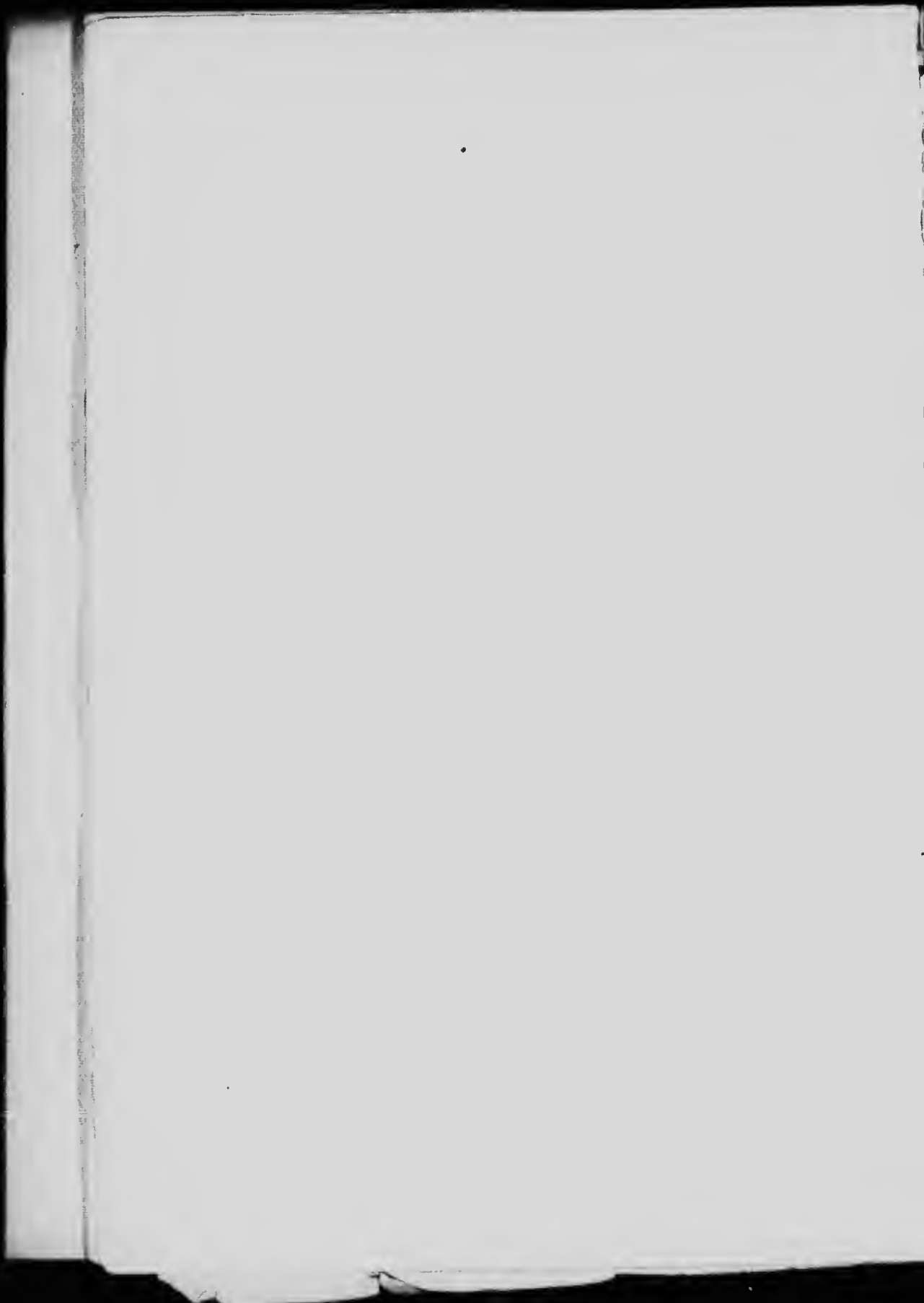
RICHARD ROBERTS.

ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
WESTBOURNE GROVE, W.,

September 11, 1906.

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I
INTRODUCTORY

2 Cor. iv. 6 : "The light of the knowledge of the glory
of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Introductory

IT was one of the postulates of John Ruskin's critical work that a people inevitably tells the story of its soul in three volumes, to wit, its history, its literature, and its art. We may adapt the principle to our present purpose by saying that in the three volumes of its history, its art and its literature, Christendom has expressed its thought of Christ. A reading of these three volumes ought therefore to enable us to discover what and how much our Lord Jesus Christ has stood for in the life of mankind.

It is no part of our enterprise to examine the witness of history to the personality and power of Jesus Christ. Much of that wonderful story has often been told;¹ the whole of it, never. If all "the things which Jesus did" came to be written "the world could not contain the books which should be written." The larger outlook we possess, the humaner laws we are subject to, the kindlier air we breathe, these and much more do we gratefully trace to Bethlehem. Our present concern, however, is mainly with some of those chapters of the "litera-

¹ E.g. in C. L. Brace's *Gesta Christi*.

ture-volume " in which Christendom has enshrined its thought of Christ.

I think you will agree with me in believing that such an undertaking as is now proposed should be exceedingly valuable in enabling us to understand something of the reaction of Christ upon the life of the world. We shall not discover anything like adequate material for a complete estimate of the significance of our Lord. Far from it, indeed. The centuries have all contributed something to our knowledge of Christ ; but His personality has yet in it vast depths unplumbed. He is so many-sided that almost every generation of men has discovered some new aspect of His wonderful import and beauty. That ancient challenge "What think ye of Christ ?" has not yet been fully answered. Indeed, the passing of time, so far from bringing us nearer the final word concerning Christ, makes it ever more hopeless to reach a complete understanding of His Person and the inexhaustible wealth of His work.

The makers of the creeds have, it is true, fitted Jesus Christ into their schemes of Christian truth, and have summed Him up in this formula or that. But a formula gives us no more adequate conception of Christ than does a diagram of the Solar System of the vast reality it represents. The creeds are important in so far as they furnish the landmarks by which we trace the slow but certain growth of larger ideas concerning Christ. But they have so frequently emerged out of the wild fires of controversy, that they cannot in any real sense be regarded as authentic or, at least, normal human

documents. We shall discover more clearly the meaning of Christ to mankind in what the heart of man has felt and spontaneously expressed concerning Him. The creed may tell the theologian much, but the average man will find deeper and more frequent points of contact with Christ in the work of the poet and the painter. The Literature-volume, and the Art-volume in which Christendom has expressed its mind concerning Christ are human documents, telling a supremely human story. They have a message to our hearts. Here we may discover what men have found Christ to be in the common concerns of life. We may read a story told not in the cryptic and often ambiguous language of the schools but in the speech of the heart, the *lingua franca* of a whole world. It is therefore not extravagant to hope that a study of these extra-canonical scriptures will enrich our own thought and experience of Christ, and will enable us to set Him in that place in our own lives which He has always claimed—the highest.

If we could send a man, who possessed no previous knowledge, to examine the literature of the last twenty-five centuries, it is beyond question that his first impression would be, that, at a certain point, a Personality altogether unique in wealth and power impinged on the life of man, gradually changing the tone and the character of literature and exerting a permanent influence upon it. If that same man were sent through a modern art-gallery, where he might see some of the great masterpieces of painting, he could not fail to observe that the supreme interest has centred upon this same Person,

who is represented in an endless variety of aspects, yet is always easily recognizable. The absolute pre-eminence of Jesus Christ in the art and literature of nineteen centuries is beyond serious question. At the same time it should be remarked that the growth of Christ's influence in literature and art has not been a constant quantity. There have been periods during the Christian era of strange sterility in both domains. For one period of a thousand years, indeed, art has practically nothing new to tell us, and literature very little, concerning the significance of Jesus Christ. Here and there a voice in the wilderness may be heard speaking not uncertainly the name of the Lord. Such was Cynewulf in England, who sang of

The great Leader, the Prince majestic,
who

Twixt God and man placed a ghostly pledge of Love.

That was about the year 800 A.D., almost the very middle point of that dreary millennium.

Now, it was not that men did not think much of Christ that art and literature say comparatively so little of Him during that period. That there was no such growth in the apprehension of His significance during that period as in the previous three and the subsequent six centuries seems to be due in the main to the tendency to place the Church at the chief centre of interest rather than Christ. It was the period of ecclesiasticism, of the elaboration of the Catholic idea and practice; the ideals of the Church moreover became so materialistic that there was no vision until the eyes of a Dante like flames

of fire burnt a way into the Unseen and the Holiest. The history of Christian Art will illustrate this point.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Art sought at a very early period to represent Christ, now by a simple symbol, again by a more pretentious attempt at portraiture. Whether these earlier portraits of Christ did convey a real likeness of that Face in which men saw "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" is a matter of controversy. Sir Wyke Bayliss asserts that the traditional likeness of Christ is genuine; Dean Farrar denies that there is any ground for such a belief. But it really does not matter very much. One thing, however, is significant enough—namely, that almost from the beginning the artist put into his picture what is virtually a confession of failure to include in the portrait of Christ all that he knew ought to be there. Was not the Aureole intended to symbolize that glory which John beheld but which refused to submit to pencil or pigment?

But perhaps the most significant thing of all in the story of Christian art is the complete change which came over the conception of Christ in art after the lapse of the sterile millennium. During that long period art had simply reproduced the earlier tradition; but with the great awakening of modern enlightenment in the fourteenth century there came a new race of painters as fresh and prolific in their ideas as their immediate predecessors had been stale and unproductive.

Christian art made its first faltering attempts to represent Christ in the Catacombs, in the second and

third centuries, doubtlessly perpetuating an even earlier tradition. Our Lord is frequently represented as the "Good Shepherd," "a beautiful, graceful figure," as Dean Stanley says. This fact is altogether suggestive of the freshness and bloom which the early Christians discerned in the world after the coming of Christ. Before He came the world had become old and grey and weary; the pallor of death was upon its face. Pan, great Pan, was sick unto death. But the coming of Christ rejuvenated this old decadent world, a new joy and light entered into it, and the exuberance and bound of men newly regenerate in a world in which Hope had been raised from the dead, found expression in the fresh, joyful young Shepherd of the Catacomb pictures. All this, mark, in the Catacombs where the young Church lay in hiding, where its martyrs were laid to rest. So strong was the new hope that Christ had awakened that the gloom of the Catacombs with all their memorials of bitter persecution failed to dispel it. And on those walls it graved for itself and its Cause a witness which abides to this day.

There is one characteristic of the Catacomb pictures of the Good Shepherd which has frequently been mentioned, and which we may recall here. In one of the doctrinal controversies in which the Church was involved the "fierce Tertullian" had asserted: "The sheep He saves, the goats He does not save"; and perhaps in conscious protest against the African Father's severity the artists of the Catacombs represented Christ as carrying not a lamb, but a kid.

She sighed,
The infant Church! of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave,
And then she smiled; and in the Catacombs
With eye suffused, but heart inspired true
On those walls subterranean, where she hid
Her head, 'mid ignominy, death and tombs,
She her good Shepherd's hasty image drew,
And on His shoulder, not a lamb, a kid.

The mercy, the hope which are in Christ, these were the outstanding features of the Christian experience of the early centuries. That youthful joyous "Good Shepherd" on the Catacomb walls is no mean contribution to our understanding of Christ.

Look now for a moment at the other end of that middle period in which art simply repeated and added nothing to what the first centuries had discerned in Christ. During the early and middle periods of Christian Art "we look," says Sir Wyke Bayliss, "in vain for expression in the face of Christ." It was this—*expression*—which the painters of the great awakening added to the portraiture of Christ. But does not this imply a deeper understanding of Christ? The painter executes not the mere likeness of a man—"nera can do that—but

So paints him that his face,
The shape, the colour of a mind and life
Lives for his children, ever at its best.

In some respects the Renaissance painters follow tradition, but in their own distinctive contribution to the portraiture of Christ it was this further thing indicated by Tennyson that they accomplished.

The awakening began in the fourteenth century, and it gave us Dante, Petrarch and Langland in literature, as it began a new era in Christian art. Giotto and Cimabue, first of all, then Fra Angelico in Italy and Van Eyck in Holland took up the tale, until we arrive at the age of Michael Angelo, Titian, Raphael, Correggio and Da Vinci. "From this quintet," says one who ought to know, "have come the finest interpretations of the face of Christ the world has ever seen." And what wonder? The spirit in which these men approached their work is well illustrated in a story told of Da Vinci. A friend who came to see his great picture—"The Last Supper," while it was yet in the artist's possession, remarked first of all the brilliance of the silver cup upon the table. Da Vinci took his brush and painted the cup out—he would have nothing in his picture which drew attention from Christ. The picture itself has almost perished, and we owe our knowledge of it to a finished study which the artist had made and which is still extant. In that study we read clearly that sad tender grace which Da Vinci had discerned in the "face of Jesus Christ." And as Da Vinci has given us a presentment of the tender, gracious, comforting Christ, so Michael Angelo has shown us Christ's hatred of the sin which persists in spite of His grace, in his "*Dies Irae*." Raphael in his picture of the Transfiguration leads us into the secret places of Christ's power—His intense communion with God. Titian has shown us in his picture, "The Tribute Money," that completely balanced, strong character, the perfect reserve of which only revealed its perfect strength, and which

is only explicable on the ground of that rapt communion with God which Raphael has portrayed. Correggio's "*Ecce Homo*" is a fine representation of the suffering Saviour. All these have their own unmistakable contribution to make to our understanding of Christ; they tell us of the grace and the gentleness, the blazing purity and holiness, the quiet strength and suffering of Him who "bought us with a price."

Time will not permit me to follow the subsequent course of Christian art. Velasquez in his picture of the Crucifixion gives us the merest glimpse of the Saviour's face, leaving us to read into it what unutterable depths of sorrowing love we may. Rembrandt's picture of Christ blessing little children is in the true succession of the larger conception of Christ. In our own day Burne Jones and Holman Hunt have given no unworthy expression to their sense of the significance of Christ. The well-known picture of the latter, "*The Light of the World*," stands out as perhaps the most eloquent Gospel appeal ever suffered. You have the whole Gospel in the attitude and gesture of the knocking, waiting Christ.

And yet, "what painter ever yet produced a wholly satisfactory face of Christ?"¹ When Leon Bonnat, the modern French realist, took a dead body from the Morgue and hung it up on a cross, and having painted it, labelled the picture, "*The Crucifixion*," we do not wonder that he failed to produce even a remotely satisfactory portrait of Christ. Even those whose imagination has been

¹ J. C. Van Dyke, *The Meaning of Pictures*, p. 28.

illuminated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and whose hearts have been attuned to His, leave out the one thing which most of all struck those who saw it in the face of our Lord. After all they have but painted the man Christ Jesus, and we are glad and grateful that they have helped us to form a conception of that strong, gentle, gracious, humanity. Their failure to do more was not their fault. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father." That same glory still meets the eye of faith when it is turned to Christ, but it is supremely something which no art can set down upon a canvas.

It has been asserted that violence has been done to the character of our Lord by interpreting it so completely in the light of Old Testament prophecy. The identification of Christ with the suffering servant of God, the despised and rejected of men, has caused wholly inordinate interest to attach to the darker and more tragic aspects of His history. The result is that "with but few exceptions the Christ of the Masters is the Man of Sorrows whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, and who is stricken for the transgressions of His people."¹ The joyous young Shepherd of the Catacomb pictures is—so it is averred—a more faithful presentment of the character of our Lord than the great masterpieces of the Renaissance. Renan, for instance, accounts for Christ by saying that he was "entranced by the vision of the Divine life, and gave himself with delight to its expression." Mr. Zangwill speaks of Him as "not the tortured God but the joyous com-

¹ Peabody, *Christ and Christian Character*, p. 46.

rade . . . the lover of warm life and warm sunlight and all that is simple and fresh and pure and beautiful." And in consequence we have a protest against the ordinary conception of the Christian character as based upon a self-renunciation and a scorn of the world which seem foreign to the disposition of One who, in the words of a modern Christian preacher, was the "incarnation of the spirit of joy." This protest, however, is based upon a quite complete misconception of the real nature of the bases of the Christian character and of the nature of the reaction of Christ upon the soul. So far from blinding the human eye to beauty and shutting out the joy of life, Jesus Christ it is who awakens the sense of true beauty and the permanent feeling of joy in life. "When a man begins to appreciate scenery," wrote a missionary in Africa recently, "it shows that our efforts are beginning to take effect."¹ It is a fact not a little significant that the first real landscape paintings belong to the same period as the great masterpieces which depict the Man of Sorrows. Indeed the very first landscape, executed on the altar at Ghent, was completed in 1432 by the brothers Van Eyck, one of whom, already named, gave us the deep strong painting of the "King of Kings," which constitutes one of the triumphs of the Renaissance spirit. What does this imply? Does it not mean that with the growing sense of the redeeming love of Christ, there came a new sense of the beauty of the world in which He had delighted? Have we not here practically a commentary upon that deep word—"By His stripes

¹ *The East and the West*, vol. iv. p. 82.

we are *healed*”? “Mediaeval art,” says Sir Wyke Bayliss, “in its first splendour was art transfigured by contact with the divine character and person of Christ.” It was not until the sixth century that Christian art ventured upon an attempt to paint the Crucifixion, but that was in the gloomy millennium, and it came to nothing. With the Renaissance came a fuller and deeper appreciation of the significance of the Saviour who came to lay down His life a ransom, and by that act to give men “life more abundant.” The healing power of the “stripes” came home to men’s hearts with larger meaning, and out of that new abundance of life came a revitalized art and then a revitalized religion. The great discovery of that period, surely, was the deep truth that without a suffering Saviour there could be no profound or permanent joy in life. “By His stripes we are healed,” and His joy in life has become ours through His sorrow. The Man of Sorrows is the real author of true joy. Is not this simply another way of saying that at the Renaissance “Greece came up from the dead with the New Testament in its hands”?

“The one central figure that in the splendour of His divine beauty consecrated art for ever” was that of our Lord, and elsewhere He has done no less. He is the supreme figure of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the very ground of Milton’s scheme of things. Bunyan gives Him a similar place; and every man who has followed Him acclaims their verdict. To these masters of literature Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the Saviour of sinners, and since they regard sin as the most prodigious fact of human life, they must

necessarily give Him the pre-eminence. The greatest figure in a world which stands first of all in need of redemption is He who came to redeem it and gave His life a hostage for its redemption. But whatsoever hopes men's hearts have been set on, for the health of their kind, they have sought their chief inspiration in Jesus Christ. Is it Social Reform? Then they turn to Christ. When Dr. Abbott yearns that the working men of England should say—"We used to think that Christ was a fiction of the priests . . . but now we find that He was a man, after all, like us, a poor working man who had a heart for the poor . . . now we understand this, we say, though we do not understand it all or anything like it, He is the Man for us," he was only expressing what of necessity men must feel when they do honestly face Christ. Dr. Peabody quotes in his volume, *Jesus Christ and the Social Problem*, a number of statements made by German working men of their thought of Christ. "Christ was a true friend of the working people," says one of them (and this instance must suffice), "not in His words alone but in His deeds." And this is no modern discovery, this sense of the social significance of Christ. When Wycliffe's "poor priests" were impregnating the peasantry of England with those social ideas which led up to the Peasants' Revolt, when John Ball, the mad priest of Kent, led his followers in an attempt to overthrow the social system of the time, an English poet, William Langland, gave expression in verse to the spirit which inspired these movements—

For our joy and our health, Jesus Christ of Heaven
In poor man's apparel pursueth us ever—

* * * * *

For all we are Christ's creatures, and of His coffers rich,
And brethren of one blood, as well beggars as earls.

In circumstances widely different, fighting the cause of Italian unity, Mazzini turned also for inspiration to the same source, that Christ "who bent over the corpse of a dead world and whispered a word of faith . . . whose victory began on the Cross and still endures." Wherever men have yearned for the uplifting of man, they have sought first to hear the voice of Christ. To-day more than ever we are turning back to the Man of Nazareth for light and guidance in the way we shall go to establish in the world of man that order in which "a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment," out of which social oppression and injustice shall be utterly banished by "the larger heart, the kindlier hand."

So through the ages Christ has passed, bringing the mind and will and heart of men into subjection. In the mass of men He has perhaps awakened no quick individual consciousness of His passing by. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving," but there have been those in whose hearts "God hath shined to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." This light has affected the whole race; even the unbelieving, who know not whence it comes, rejoice in it. God elevates the race by making giants of great lifting capacity, and He makes such giants by bringing men to the Christ who Himself was "lifted up." Whosoever He has revealed Christ

to men there has been a surrender of mind, heart, and will to Him. His perfect kingliness commands obedience. A company of English literary men including Lamb, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and others, fell to discussing persons they would like to have seen, and after naming every possible name in the gallery of literary, historical or artistic distinction, Charles Lamb said to the company—"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this . . . If Shakespeare was to come into this room we should all rise up to meet him ; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment." And that is the impression He has always made upon those whose hearts and minds have been open to the Vision.

There are few writers of any great account in the Christian era in whose works we fail to find material for some kind of estimate of Jesus Christ. Oddly enough one of these exceptions is Shakespeare. It is a moot point whether Shakespeare was a Catholic or a Protestant—a case can be made out for both views—but in either case his silence on this matter requires explanation. Dean Stubbs inclines to think that it was because "the off . . . theology of Puritan England does appear to be based upon a Christianity from which the Personality of Christ Himself seems to have almost vanished."¹ Quite apart from the questionable justice of this account of early English Protestantism, the reason here urged does not seem adequate. The bitterness of theological controversy was certainly not an atmosphere in which Christ could be

¹ *The Christ of English Poetry*, p. 131.

clearly seen, and it is probable that the severe aspect of the young Puritanism of the period repelled the playwright. Yet this does not seem to be the whole explanation of Shakespeare's silence. Can it not be, in part at least, due to the fact that play-acting was then in such hands that the name of Christ could scarcely have been introduced without irreverence? The silence of the poet under such circumstances is almost the most eloquent witness he could have offered to Christ. In any case we know it was neither ignorance nor neglect of the significance of Christ that caused his silence. When he makes Portia say that

Earthly power shows likest God's
When mercy seasons justice,

he expresses what we recognize to be the central truth of the Atonement. And stronger than any evidence that isolated passages can give is the uniform witness of the poet to the true spirit of Christian morality. His insistence upon "the divinity of forgiveness, of perpetual mercy, of constant patience, of everlasting gentleness, the stainless purity of thought and motive, the clear-sighted perception of a soul of goodness in things evil, the unfailing sense of the equal providence of justice, the royalty of witness to sovereign truth"¹—all this proves Shakespeare possessed of the Christian moral ideal; and his witness to Christ, though more indirect, is nevertheless not less clear or powerful than others who have given us definite presentments of their view of Christ. And in this

¹ Stubbs, *The Christ of English Poetry*, p. 126.

way Shakespeare also takes account of Jesus Christ with the other great minds of Christendom. The challenge indeed is inevitable. "Whom do ye say that I am?" Few they be that succeed in evading it. There was a man of great ability who loomed large in the literary life of this country some years ago, who had society at his feet, commanded a large following, and might have established a tradition in literature had not a nameless sin overthrown him. He was sent to expiate the crime against his country's laws in prison, and there he had time to think. And as he thought, in due time his mind lit on Christ; and one of the most tragic things in literature is the attempt which this man made to estimate Christ. Wholly inadequate and superficial this estimate was, but such as it was he had to make it. Once more, "when the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst." This man saw nothing of the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But the whole incident serves as a witness to the utter inevitability of Jesus Christ. He is the One Person in history of whom every man in the world must take account.

When Jesus Christ asked His disciples long ago—"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" the variety of the answers He received showed how men already recognized His uniqueness. And the key to this uniqueness is surely to be found in that double description of Him which we find in the record of this incident—"Son of Man," "Son of God." He combines in Himself the moral nature of the Most High with all that is best and noblest

and completest in our humanity. So men in their needs and aspirations have spontaneously turned to Him, for in Him

Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And love the human form divine,
And peace a human dress.

Then every man in every clime
Who prays in his distress
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

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II
DANTE

Phil. ii. 8, 9: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him."

II

Dante¹

NO quarrel is at all conceivable with the statement that Dante is one of the world's three greatest poets. Dante, however, stands alone in this, that he wrote his great poem with a definite moral and spiritual purpose, while the ethical teaching of his only peers, Homer and Shakespeare, is a by-product rather than the chief end of their work.

To say that the *Divine Comedy* was written with a definite moral and spiritual purpose is, however, to make a broad statement which covers a multitude of elements, each of which has to be disentangled from the central mass and properly appreciated before anything of the huge and many-sided significance of the poem can even be remotely apprehended. Dante himself had vowed that he would, when he could discourse worthily concerning Beatrice (which skill he laboured all he could to attain), write "concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman."² In the *Divine Comedy* he amply discharged his vow.

¹ The quotations in verse are from Carey's translation; those in prose from the translations in the *Temple Classics*.

² Vita Nuova (*Dante and His Circle*, p. 95).

Beatrice it is who befriends him in his strange journey through the Unseen, and though in his scheme she is the personification of Divine Philosophy, she never ceases to be that Beatrice Portinari of Florence in whom the flaming love of the poet discovered everything that was pure and honest and lovely and of good report. So, it comes to pass that the *Divine Comedy* is the most pure and exalted memorial of a human love in all literature.

There is, however, another most important element in the *Divine Comedy*. It was intended to serve a contemporary political end. Italy, as Dante saw it, was in a state of unspeakable confusion. The Guelfs and Ghibellines were involved in a bitter and unceasing enmity, and the political principle which was at issue between them was complicated beyond measure by a great mass of treason and corruption, feud and hate. Not only was this internal trouble devastating his country, but Dante saw with great misgiving how French princes were watching their opportunity to serve their own ends at the expense of Italy. The Church, moreover, was corrupt; it had allowed its spiritual significance to be overlaid by papal greed of temporal power. The popes were "laying waste the vineyard for which Peter and Paul died." They were using their spiritual prerogatives for material ends. "The sword is joined to the crook." But Dante, by the love he bore Italy and the Church, rose above this welter of intrigue and corruption, and, though himself a Guelf, understood that there was no hope for Italy except in a "firm hand which would repress the turbulent factions which rent

her bosom." ¹ Out of this grew the poet's hope of a political Messiah—a hope which survived many a bitter disappointment. And Dante did not cease to preach in season and out of season the gospel of a spiritual Church unfettered by temporal entanglements, and of an united Italy freed from feud within and interference from without. Of this gospel the *Divine Comedy* was the supreme expression.

It would be interesting to follow out in more detail these various elements in the significance of the *Divine Comedy*; but our present purpose confines us to what may be apparently a narrower investigation, though it need not surprise us if our quest leads us to the very central thought of the poem. Dante was born in 1265, and he is by far the greatest figure we see at the ruddy dawn of the human mind's awakening after the torpor of the sterile millennium. His education seems to have given him a clearness and breadth of vision beyond his fellows. Walter Bagehot says of Milton that he had "an ascetic nature in a sheath of beauty," and this is almost a true account of Dante. Austerity and a keen, warm sense of beauty were wedded in his nature with a perfect congruity. His pure love for Beatrice made his moral feeling a burning passion; and his strong religious sense transfigured his whole being, making him such a prophet as the world had not known since John the Baptist and Paul the Apostle. In that wilderness of feud and faction and intrigue he lifted his voice not uncertainly and without ceasing, plunging into the politi-

¹ Wicksteed, *Dante*, p. 16.

cal vortex in which he saw Italy and Florence involved, in the hope that he might bring something of order out of the confusion. But the enemy prevailed, and in 1300 Dante was banished from his own fair city of Florence. In the nineteen years which elapsed before his death he composed the *Divine Comedy*.

Three great Christian scriptures were written during enforced seclusion—and they all are records of visions. From lonely Patmos came the Apocalypse, from Bedford Jail came the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Dante produced in exile the *Divine Comedy*. The poem is in three parts, the visions of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. Through Hell and Purgatory the poet is guided by Virgil, the personification of Human Philosophy, the emissary of Beatrice, who herself personifying Divine Philosophy leads him through the ascending cycles of Paradise. The poem is an account of what the poet saw on this strange journey. Interpolated here and there are philosophical and theological discussions, which are inserted with such consummate artistry, that they never seem to be irrelevant or incongruous. Contemporary allusions, which might conceivably have been inapposite in an imaginative work of this character, nevertheless take their place without effort. So complete was Dante's vision of past and present and future, so deeply was he sensible of the intimate relations of the material and spiritual worlds, so vast yet so exact was his survey of the sweep of the moral order, so profound his insight into human history and his reading of human life, that he was able to weld into

one perfect organic whole all the facts of his knowledge and experience, the conclusions of his philosophy and his theology. So true was his sense of the fitness of things, so keen was his penetration through the form to the abiding reality, that his poem has never lost its bloom and the freshness of its youth. It still remains, in spite of much that was purely local and temporary in its content, a human document of universal and irresistible significance.

Now we shall not understand Dante's way of looking at things unless we remember at what point of time he appeared. He is, as I have already said, the outstanding figure in a period of transition—a period heralding another, the importance of which is second only to that of the Advent of Christ. He may be rightly regarded, in the words of one of his most illuminating commentators, as "the great morning star of modern enlightenment." But Dante, like all other persons who have stood in similar places, was in a very real sense a product of the past as well as a herald of the future. During that dreary period which had lasted for nearly a thousand years before Dante's time, there had been flowing a stream of true piety. This piety naturally took its peculiar hue from the Catholic idea, which had grown so amply during that period. It had, however, no affinity with the passion then prevalent at Rome to possess authority of a temporal character. When Rome had been sacked by the Huns and the Goths and the Empire broke up, what was of value in its spirit and its institutions was preserved by the Church. But sadly for the Church itself it chose

also to adopt certain of the political ideals of the Empire, and the greed of temporal power grew with the passing of time. But there were still those who looked suspiciously upon this development, regarded it as an evil and an alien thing; and it is to this succession that Dante belonged. The empire of the Church was in his view wholly spiritual because it was laid on a spiritual basis. To use its power to gain temporal authority was to prostitute it, to render to Caesar what was God's. Caesar had his own place and business, but it was not the Church. The Church had no more right to adopt Caesar's ideals than Caesar had to meddle with the Church. Rome, he says,

Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams
Cast light on either way, the world's and God's,
One since hath quenched the other; and the sword
Is grafted on the crook; and so conjoined
Each must perforce decline to worse.¹

Dante represents the true Catholic spirit, not that hybrid thing with which we are sufficiently acquainted, and which still schemes and intrigues to secure temporal power. Because this particular aspect of Romanism is apt to force itself most intimately upon our observation we tend to do rather less than justice to the truth of the pure Catholic idea. Dante was too early in point of time to see that the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome had no ground in Scripture or reason, or, for that matter, in history; and the Papacy was therefore an inherent part of his Catholicism. Apart from that, however, there is little in Dante's view of the Church's form or its

¹ *Purg.* xvi. 109-15.

external relationships which a modern Free Churchman need quarrel with. The most extreme Voluntary of our day insists no more emphatically than Dante did upon the distinctive and separate functions of Church and State. "It appeared to him as monstrous for the Pope to seek political influence and to use his spiritual powers for political ends as he would have judged it for the Emperor to exercise spiritual tyranny over the faith of Christians." ¹

Froude in one of his essays ² has stated the Catholic view of the Church with not a little insight. "At last, [Jesus Christ] passed away to heaven; but while in heaven, He was still on earth. His body became the body of His Church, not in metaphor but in fact—His very material body in which and by which the faithful would be saved. His flesh and blood were thenceforward to be their food. . . . As they fed on it, it would grow into them and it would become their own real body." At a time when the traditional conception of matter seems to be in the melting-pot, it might be perilous to insist overmuch upon the essential distinction between spiritual and material. Yet the distinction must hold in so far as it relates to the spiritual life of man as contrasted with what is purely physical in human life. Much of what is characteristic of Catholicism, such as that doctrine of Transubstantiation which is implied in Froude's words, arises out of a strange confusion of the material and the spiritual. Yet

¹ Wicksteed, *Dante*, p. 17.

² "The Philosophy of Christianity" (p. 191 of *Essays in Literature and History—Everyman's Library*).

if we make the necessary allowance for this confusion, the view is substantially true. It is indeed not a little necessary that we should for our saving health re-emphasize this Catholic doctrine to-day in its purely spiritual aspects.

All one body we,

and that is the body of Christ. This is true Catholicism, and the negation of modern Romanism and its Anglican counterpart. And this was the Catholicism of Dante.

But the Church was to the poet something more than a corporation of which he could give a theological account. It was a "lovely flower,"

the fair bride who with the lance and nails
Was won.¹

His heart went out to it with a passionate intensity. In it were involved the hopes of a race; through it the great increasing purpose was destined to be accomplished. When he saw it prostituted to meaner ends, his soul was aflame. At a time when the superficiality and the trifling of its ministers were obscuring its supreme offices, he cried—

Christ said not to His first conventicle
Go forth and preach impostures to the world,
But gave them truth to build on, and the sound
Was mighty on their lips; nor needed they,
Beside the Gospel, other spear or shield
To aid them in their warfare for the faith.²

The business of the Church, according to Dante,

¹ *Par.* xxxii. 126.

² *Ibid.* xxix. 109-14.

was the awakening of faith by the proclamation of the Gospel.

Christ's promise to be with His own to the end of the world was construed by mediaeval Catholicism to mean that His presence was implied in the existence of the Church, His body. The gift of Pentecost made the Church the representative and the agent, and its head the Vicar, of Christ on earth. His personal presence as an actual and appreciable factor in the Church and in the world was not a prominent element in the Catholic view. It was natural, therefore, that Dante should place his vision of Christ in the third part of his poem, his ascent through Paradise, and there he sees Him as the central glory of the army of the redeemed. For above all others the ruling idea in Dante's conception of Christ is His character as Redeemer. He thinks of Him as "Christ, Son of the supreme God and Son of the Virgin Mary, very man, who was slain by us to bring us life, who was the light which enlightens us in the darkness."¹ And this emphasis upon the redeeming quality of the death of Christ is a constant element in Dante's view of the meaning of the Incarnation. It was to this end that He became incarnate—"the Son of God willed to load Himself with our pain."² He fully accomplished His purpose. He appeared in Hell, preaching to the spirits in prison—

a puissant one . . .
 . . . with victorious trophy crowned.³

And the victory was won on the "tree" whither

¹ Convito, vi. ² *Par.* xxxii. 14. ³ *Inf.* iv. 49.

Christ was led
To call on Eli, joyful, when He paid
Our ransom from his vein.¹

The memory of our Lord's death remains on earth
as the great motive of love to God,² while in Paradise
it has given Him a name which is above every name.
Dante sees the hosts of Christ's triumph—

In bright preeminence so saw I there
O'er million lamps a sun, from whom all drew
Their radiance, as from ours the starry train
And through the living light, so lustrous glowed
The substance that my ken endured it not.³

And in another place,

In fashion as a snow-white rose lay then
Before my view the saintly multitude,
Which in His own blood Christ espoused.⁴

"The white rose of the *Divina Commedia* is the great company of the redeemed, the petals are individual believers. And as a rose, even a white rose, deepens in colour towards the heart of it, so the wide circles of this saintly host as they approach the centre become incarnadine with the very life-blood of Christ."⁵

And of the glory of Christ in the midst of the redeemed, Dante confesses himself unable to give adequate account, but he says that those who see Him will understand the reason. The quadrant in Mars "so flashed forth Christ that I may not find example worthy."

¹ *Purg.* xxiii. 67-9.

² *Par.* xxvi. 55-60.

³ *Ibid.* xxiii. 28-33.

⁴ *Ibid.* xxxi. 1-3.

⁵ Sir Wyke Bayliss, *Rex Regum*, p. xv.

But whoso takes His Cross and follows Christ
Will pardon me for that I leave untold,
When in the fleckered dawning he shall spy
The glitterance of Christ.¹

Service and sacrifice are the conditions of the vision of Christ's glory. Yet Dante was so completely permeated with the notions of mediaeval Catholicism that he could not regard the vision as being possible ultimately save as it is mediated through the Virgin.

Now raise thy view
Unto the visage most resembling Christ,
For in her splendour only shalt thou win
The power to look on Him.²

The place which Mary occupies in the Catholic view is one for which we recognize no adequate ground. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the worship of Mary arose as the result of a human craving which mediaeval Catholicism did not satisfy in spite of all its theory to the contrary. The tendency of the Church has been on the whole to forget our Lord's humanity rather than His divinity. Catholic dogma regarded Him, it is true, as very God and true man, and Dante gives frequent expression to this view. He sees the dual nature of our Lord in the reflection of the griffin in the eyes of Beatrice.³ Nevertheless there was a feeling that Christ dwelt in¹

Heavens too high for our aspiring.

¹ *Pcr.* xiv. 103-8.

² *Ibid.* xxxii. 85-8.

³ *Ibid.* xxxi. 121-3. The griffin was frequently used as a symbol of Christ, the eagle head representing His deity, the lion body His humanity.

and the craving for the human touch has expressed itself in more than one way. The doctrine of the "Sacred Heart," that human heart of Christ which is in the midst of heaven,

A heart that hath a mother and a treasure of red blood,
A heart that man can pray to and feed upon for food,

and which even now is

Beating hot with love of me,¹

is an attempt to recover the point of contact with the human element in Christ; and the worship of Mary represents the same tendency. The error arises from the fundamental fallacy that Christ is only vicariously present on the earth, and is therefore accessible only indirectly. But we have not so learned Christ.

The main concern of the *Divine Comedy* is with the vast and perplexing problem of sin. Christian theology has always rightly regarded the fact of sin as the outstanding feature of the situation as between man and God; and Dante makes it his business to state the case in all its bearings as he sees it. In the *Inferno* he shows us the nature and the consequences of sin. "The wages of sin is death," and this living death descends in cycle below cycle to ever more unspeakable depths of utter ruin. But the *Purgatorio* begins to proclaim a message of grace. Repented and renounced sin is seen bearing the full measure of its consequences, but no longer as a punishment but as a discipline. The doctrine of the intermediate state is one on which Scripture

¹ F. W. Faber, *Hymns*, pp. 114, 115, ed. 1862.

gives us no certain light. The data are very meagre. But the other element in the meaning of Purgatory is one of the commonplaces of our experience. The sins against God may be forgiven, but the "deeds done in the body" follow us. Their significance however is changed upon repentance. In the *Inferno* they are a punishment; in the *Purgatoria* they constitute a process of chastening by which the sinful disposition is eradicated and perfect holiness attained. But this, according to Dante, is possible only on the ground of Christ's sacrifice. That which cleanses from all sin is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and so when a soul is exalted to Paradise, it is another witness to the triumph of redeeming love. Dante sees Christ surrounded by a countless multitude of such souls, the petals of the white rose, each a seal of His victory. The unspeakable glory of the Triumphant Redeemer is Dante's contribution to our thought of Christ. But the glory is the consequence of the humiliation. Paradise stands on Calvary.

The foundation of the whole process by which a sinful man becomes a petal of the rose, on the human side—is faith. "To this realm," says Dante of Paradise, "never rose one who believed not in Christ."¹ The two essential facts of redemption are the love of God manifested in Christ and the faith of man. Human faith in divine love, this is the pivot of the whole Gospel as Dante conceived it. And surely "this is the word of good tidings which has been preached to us." May we, therefore, be vouchsafed the vision of redeeming love

¹ *Par.* xix. 106-7.

to the end that our faith thus enkindled may lead us to repentance and to the ministry of sanctifying grace, so that at last we also may be implanted in "the fair garden which flowereth beneath the rays of Christ." ¹

¹ *Par.* xxiii. 71-2.

/ III

SHELLEY

1 Cor. xiii. 12: "Now I know in part."

Shelley

IT is a far cry from Dante to Shelley. Yet this juxtaposition of the two poets will help to bring into clearer relief their respective conceptions of Christ. To some it may appear strange that Shelley should be expected to teach us anything of value concerning Christ. But Shelley looked upon Christ, and it will be instructive to discover what he saw, from his own particular point of view. The traditional idea of Shelley is that he was the protagonist of a peculiarly violent and aggressive atheism, and this is no doubt in a measure true. But it is only those who are ignorant of Shelley's thought and its tendency who are content to take him entirely at his own valuation of himself. Those who are acquainted with the poet's work recognize a certain movement of his mind which might conceivably have led to a real faith. Shelley died when he was thirty years of age; had he lived another thirty years, who knows whither his restless mind might have led him? Inviting as such a speculation is, we must not, however, indulge in it. What we do know is that there is a very discernible enlargement of view concerning man and life and the ultimate realities in Shelley's later thought, and that this development comes to an

abrupt close. What might have been can never be written.

Shelley's nature was peculiarly constituted. His chief characteristic seems to have been an instinctive hatred of restraint, and this was due to the fact that impulse was the predominant element in his constitution. "Shelley was probably," so says one of his critics, "the most remarkable instance of a purely impulsive character." Most of us recognize that our conduct is determined commonly by the issue of the conflict of certain opposed elements in our nature. Shelley's self was not so divided, at least it was not so equally divided, that a serious and deliberate balancing of alternative courses of conduct could ever have been possible. When an impulse arises in such a man, "it cramps the intellect, it pushes aside the faculties, it constrains the nature, it bolts forward into action." But it is conceivable that these impulses may generally emanate from the same universe, and so give the character a quality of coherence and uniformity which would otherwise be lacking. Having their common origin in a single supreme passion, they will necessarily possess a common direction. This was the case with our poet. The supreme passion of Shelley was for reforming mankind, and this was the habitually dominant universe from which his impulses were derived.

It is clear, however, that admirable as such a character may be, it lacks that balance necessary to accomplish results commensurate with the energy it expends. There is always a wide margin of distortion and exaggeration which is sheer waste of

power. One of the first conditions of substantial and effective service in reform is a recognition of all the relevant facts. From things as they are to things as they are to be is a journey which no man can help his kind to accomplish who does not quite frankly first of all face the things that are just as they are. No multitude of emphatic assertions, no volume of strong language, can make up for this elementary defect. It was at this point that Shelley failed. He had that type of mind which runs instinctively to abstractions. He had none of that patience which seeks out diligently the data necessary to a reform or a theory. This gave Shelley something of the character of a firebrand. And firebrands are apt to give out more smoke than light. At the same time it is to be remembered that even Shelley's exaggerations and distortions are to be laid down to the reaction of a quick sympathy with the suffering and the oppressed, and a hot passion for liberty, upon his impulsive nature. Not a few of the burning poems by which Shelley lives were set ablaze by the anger aroused in him by some story of "man's inhumanity to man."

It almost follows as a corollary that Shelley's moral sense was not normal. By this is not meant that it was not quick and strong, but that it was somewhat oblique in its operation. For Shelley the great Bad was restraint, the great Good was liberty, and this seems to have been the ethical standard by which he judged all things. The ordinary canons of morality he would have nothing to do with. They were an integral part of those settled institutions which exercised a restraint

against which he instinctively rebelled. Nor did Shelley here or anywhere else conceive that there could be anything singular or abnormal in his own view. He read all humanity in his own heart. "The evidence of Shelley's poems confirms this impression of him. The characters which he delineates have all this kind of pure impulse. The reforming impulse is especially felt. In almost every one of his works there is some character of whom all we know is that he or she had a passionate disposition to reform mankind. We know nothing else about them, and they are all the same."¹

Shelley's attitude to the religion of his time is one of uncompromising antagonism; and as soon as his mind had arrived at a state of independence, he embraced atheism. And an atheist, strictly speaking, he remained, though the quality of his belief or unbelief underwent considerable modification. Nor does the term atheism give any kind of indication of the positive elements of his philosophy. He began by believing that there was nothing but matter; but his poet's soul could find no resting-place in the desert of materialism, and with characteristic thoroughness he presently swung to the extreme opposite pole and began to doubt whether there was even matter. But this kind of idealism inevitably drives a mobile mind to a spiritual Monism, according to which all perceived phenomena are but parts and manifestations of some great im-

¹ Walter Bagshot, *Literary Studies*, i. p. 81. Browning similarly—"Not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity, he has to do; and he digs where he stands, preferring to seek them in his own soul as the nearest reflex of the absolute mind."

material unity. Shelley came to believe, as Walter Bagehot says, that "passing phenomena were imperfect types and resemblances, imperfect incarnations, so to speak, of certain immovable, eternal, archetypal realities," but these realities themselves have a common basis in the ultimate One. And

The one remains, the many change and pass,
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly,
Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments.

It seems but a step from this to a belief in God ; and to this One Shelley does indeed give the name of God. The "one" of whom the poet speaks in terms which a Christian might adopt is, however, very far from being the Christian God. There is no hint that personality is an attribute of the "one," and consequently the "one" can have no moral character. In his famous letter to Lord Ellenborough Shelley asserts roundly—"Moral qualities are such as only a human being can possess. To attribute them to the Spirit of the Universe, or to suppose it is capable of altering them, is to degrade God into man, and to annex to this incomprehensible being qualities incompatible with any possible definition of its nature." But where God is conceived of as devoid of moral qualities there can in no deep sense be any religious feeling. If God is impersonal or unmoral the question of any relation of dependence to Him, which is the very essence of religion, does not arise. And yet there is in Shelley not a little that witnesses to the innate yearning for

fellowship with the Unseen which is the basis of faith. Martensen, speaking of those Pantheists whose intellectual attitude to religion was not dissimilar to Shelley's, says—"We think we can discern in them a yearning and a striving, of which they themselves were unconscious, after an ethical personal God such as their system denies. In their moments of greatest enthusiasm they have experienced a need of holding intercourse with that highest idea as though it were a personal being. Even in Spinoza a certain bent towards personality is discernible; for example, where he speaks of intellectual love to God and styles it a part of that infinite love with which God loves Himself. Shelley, Fichte, and Hegel were too stirred by a religious, an ethical mysticism which contained the germs of a personal relation to a personal God."¹ From the expression of the same yearning Shelley did not escape. In *Alastor* he addresses the

Mother of this unfathomable world,
and asks her to

Favour my solemn song; for I have loved
Thee ever and thee only. I have watched
Thy shadow and the darkness of thy step,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries.

Here is that same fundamental tendency of human nature as Martensen discerns in the Pantheists. It is true that Shelley puts these words in *Alastor's* mouth: but if *Alastor* was not Shelley, then there never was a Shelley. This same craving manifests

¹ *Christian Dogmatics* (Eng. trans.), p. 82.

itself in a tendency to "personify isolated qualities or impulses—equality, liberty, revenge and so on." It might, however, be urged that these are only poetic devices, but if a poem be, as Shelley himself has said, "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth," "the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature," then these devices may and do represent a deep human instinct. The real implications of the existence of this instinct have been stated by a modern scientist. "If the religious instincts of the human race point out to no reality as their object, they are out of analogy with other instinctive endowments. Elsewhere in the animal world we never meet with such a thing as an instinct pointing aimlessly."¹

These two elements in Shelley's intellectual life, his conception of the Oneness of the ultimate Reality, the real, though unrecognized, tendency to seek some kind of fellowship with the Unseen, might not inconceivably have led Shelley to what seems to be the logical issue of it all, the ascription of personality and moral character to the Deity. But between the premises and this conclusion there are some intermediate stages, and one of these is the attainment of a straight and well-balanced ethical view. There is some evidence at least that there was in Shelley's mind a tendency in this direction.

When a mind of this peculiar content and habit regards Jesus Christ, what is it likely to discover? We may at once indicate some things that are excluded from its view by the circumstances of the case. The idea of Incarnation was to Shelley

¹ Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 82.

unthinkable, save only as that impersonal essence which stood to him for God is, as it were, incarnate in all things. That Jesus Christ should be regarded as in any unique way God Incarnate Shelley deemed a mere superstition, and the whole scheme of human redemption through the Incarnate Son of God seemed to him the wildest foolishness. In *Queen Mab*, an early poem of which he does not seem latterly to have been very proud, he even goes so far as to satirize it. After attributing the responsibility of human sin to God, this is the way he describes the divine provision for the pardon of sin—

One way remains—

I will beget a Son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world ; he shall arise
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
And there shall die upon a cross and purge
The universal crime ; so that the few
On whom my grace descends, those who are marked
As vessels to the honour of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice and save
Their souls alive ; millions shall live and die
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.

It is possible that we have become so habituated to the Gospel story that we have lost the sense of its staggering strangeness. Shelley stood remote from it and saw much of that uniqueness and singularity to which habit blinds us ; and it was so completely foreign to his own universe that in his own impulsive way he put it down as an absurdity, and any belief in it as mere foolishness. Here as elsewhere Shelley's incapacity to master the significance of all the relevant facts led him into a

position from which a little patience would have delivered him as a maturer judgment ultimately did. But *Queen Mab* was the product of youthful and rather blatant atheism, and it is not difficult to believe, in spite of the wonderful genius which the poem displays, that his wife spoke truly when she said that she thought his mature taste would have condemned it.

To Shelley then Jesus Christ would simply appear a man; and from what we know of Shelley's habits of thought it would not be difficult to divine with what character he would invest Him. Of his admiration of Christ there can be no question; but it was inevitable that He should be classed among the goodly company of reformers. "Jesus Christ was crucified," he wrote to Lord Ellenborough, "because He attempted to supersede the ritual of Moses with regulations more moral and humane—his very judge made public acknowledgment of his innocence, but an ignorant and bigoted mob demanded the deed of horror,—Barabbas the traitor and murderer was released. The meek reformer Jesus was immolated to the sanguinary deity of the Jews." This passage implies a characteristic misreading of the actual facts, but it shows clearly the category in which Shelley placed Jesus Christ. Any ascription to Him of a character transcending the reformer's, Shelley regarded as the superstition of an unenlightened mind.

In his *Essay on Christianity* Shelley makes a serious attempt to estimate the significance of Jesus Christ and His teaching. At the outset he acknowledges "His extraordinary genius, the

wide and rapid effect of His unexampled doctrines, His invincible gentleness and benignity, the devoted love borne to Him by His adherents." "We discover," he says in a later part of the Essay, "that He is the enemy of oppression and falsehood; that He is an advocate of equal justice, that He is neither disposed to sanction bloodshed nor deceit, under whatsoever pretences their practice may be vindicated. We discover that He was a man of meek and majestic demeanour, calm in danger, of natural and simple thoughts and habits, beloved to adoration by His adherents; unmoved, solemn, and severe." Such is Shelley's picture of Christ, and as far as it goes we have no quarrel with it. It is true that Shelley found it necessary in order to produce this picture to excise certain parts of the Gospel narratives which seemed to him to tell another story—a proceeding, however well intended, that is neither scientific nor just. But what is really very significant is this—that when Shelley came to look upon Jesus Christ, he found Him so completely admirable that he would not even allow the historical records of Christ (as he understood or misunderstood them) to cast a shadow upon His perfect beauty.

In his account of our Lord's teaching, Shelley makes a brave attempt to reconcile it with his own view of things. "God is represented by Jesus Christ as the power from which and through which the streams of all that is delightful and excellent flow, the power which models as they pass all the elements of this mixed universe to the purest and most perfect shape which it belongs to their nature

to assume. Jesus Christ attributes to this power the faculty of Will. How far such a doctrine in its ordinary sense may be philosophically true, or how far Jesus Christ intentionally availed Himself of a metaphor easily understood, it is foreign to the subject to consider. This much is certain, that Jesus Christ represents God as the fountain of all goodness, the eternal enemy of pain and evil, the uniform and unchanging motive of the salutary operations of the material world." How remote all this is, surely, from the Master's own words—"After this manner therefore pray ye, 'Our Father which art in heaven,'" and "I know that Thou hearest Me always!" But Shelley with all his ingenuity is unable to compress the religious conceptions of Jesus Christ within the bounds of his own view. "We die, says Jesus Christ, and when we awaken from the languor of disease the glories and the happiness of Paradise are around us. All evil and pain have ceased for ever. Our happiness corresponds with and is adapted to the nature of what is most excellent in our being. We see God and see that He is good. How delightful, even if it is not all true! How magnificent is the conception which this bold theory suggests to the contemplation, even if it be no more than the imagination of some sublimest and most holy poet, who, impressed by the loveliness and majesty of his own nature, is impatient with the narrow limits which this imperfect life and the dark grave have assigned for ever as his melancholy portion." Shelley's philosophy could not lift him to this plane.

He recognizes that our Lord's ethical teaching rests upon His conception of the moral nature of God, but it is quite in keeping with Shelley's habit of mind that He should find the distinctive element in our Lord's ethics in the injunctions against retaliation and revenge. "Jesus Christ instructed His disciples to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, declaring at the same time His belief that this perfection requires the refraining from revenge and retribution in its various shapes." Our author has no sufficiently clear grasp of Christ's teaching to enable him to see that Godlikeness is held to consist in no negative but in a definite positive virtue. "*Love your enemies.*" Of our Lord's general view of man's nature Shelley gives an account that is just enough. "He simply exposes with the passionate rhetoric of enthusiastic love towards all human beings the misery and the mischiefs of that system which makes all things subservient to the subsistence of the material frame of man. He warns them that no man can serve two masters, God and Mammon, that it is impossible at once to be highminded and just and wise, and to comply with the accustomed forms of human society, seek power, wealth or empire, from idolatry of habit or as the direct instruments of sensual gratification." When our Lord said, "Man shall not live by bread alone," He was simply repeating an ancient word which is also the last word about the fundamental distinctiveness of the nature of man.

It is evident that Shelley has nothing new to tell us directly concerning Christ. Indirectly however I think he has a good deal to teach us. To

begin with, you have in Shelley a mind entirely emptied of any presuppositions sympathetic to religion, and altogether at enmity with all forms of organized religion. And it is surely not a little interesting and important to discover how Christ affects such a mind. That there was a very considerable change of intellectual position in the interval which elapsed between *Queen Mab* and the *Essay on Christianity* is scarcely open to question. But this change is in no wise comparable to the complete revolution of temper which has taken place in the same interval. In the *Essay* there is nothing of the bitter satire of *Queen Mab*; on the contrary there is a sensible atmosphere of sympathy. The care already alluded to that nothing shall sully the fame of Christ, not even the supposed extravagances of the Evangelists, shows how the figure of Christ has influenced the poet's temper. Yet his vision yields him no adequate picture of Christ. The disparity between the Christ of Shelley's *Essay* and the Christ of the Gospel story is considerable. But is the story not told of one who, as sight came to him, saw men as trees walking? And this unclear vision of Shelley seems to me to be not so much the result of defective sight as the premonition of a growing and more clear sight. As he settled down to study Christ, his eyes began to be opened. Who can tell, had not the angel of death come so early, but that Shelley might in due time have come to see clearly and to behold the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? He had travelled far from the days of *Queen Mab* by the time he came to write the *Essay*. It may have

been, it assuredly was, the high road to the open vision; and what was to Shelley on earth but a "broken arc" is, maybe, to-day the "perfect round." God only knows.

It has already been remarked how Shelley reproduced himself in his heroes. He similarly found what he regarded as his own highest qualities in Christ also. Shelley like all men of this kind believed in himself and his mission intensely. That a man should be a poet and a reformer was to attain the summit of manhood; and it was the poet and the reformer that Shelley saw in Christ. He was "sublimest and most holy poet." And also—"He tramples upon all received opinions, on all cherished luxuries and superstitions of mankind. He bids them cast aside the claims of custom and blind faith by which they have been encompassed from the very cradle of their being." Shelley tended overmuch to identify mere iconoclasm with reform; and in this passage he was merely executing a portrait of himself.

But have we not here an illustration of that certain truth, that the measure of our sympathy with a given person is the measure of our understanding of him? This is supremely true of our Lord. The extent of Shelley's sympathy with our Lord was determined by his own inadequate ethical outlook. The criterion by which he judged an institution or a principle or an action was its effect, beneficent or injurious, upon liberty; and his highest morality was that of the reformer who cast away all restraints on liberty, whether natural or social. But where Shelley put liberty our Lord

put love and holiness. It is only those who seek after the love and holiness which our Lord by example and doctrine commanded, who are likely to see His face in its beauty. A passion for liberty is a very real but a very inadequate nexus to Christ. A passion for Christlikeness alone can lead to the perfect vision, and as we grow more like Him the more shall we see of His glory. Here at best we all see darkly—some more darkly than others—but in due time we shall see Him face to face. But then, when He appeareth, we shall be like Him, and it is only at this time when we shall be like Him that it is promised that we shall see Him as He is.

IV
BROWNING

Eph. i. 9, 10 : "He purposed . . . to sum up all things in Christ."

Col. ii. 3 : "Christ in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden."

IV

Browning

IN the attempt which we made to examine Shelley's attitude towards Jesus Christ, I ventured the statement that there is clearly discernible in Shelley's thought a movement which might not inconceivably have led him to a Christian faith. Since then I have discovered that Browning held this view—"I shall say what I think: had Shelley lived he would finally have ranged himself with the Christians."

This is referred to here because I believe that Browning's opinion on this matter will serve us as a fingerpost which will help us into such an understanding of Browning's own thought of these things as will be necessary in order to appreciate properly his conception of Christ. Shelley, you will remember, believed that behind the sum of things there existed some one great immaterial Reality of which everything that is is a manifestation. But to this Ultimate One Shelley denied personality and therefore moral character. Yet in one respect Shelley came very near ascribing something like a moral character to this One. He was compelled by the

necessities of his thought to believe that love was "interwoven through all the mazes of being," welding all things together into a coherent whole; but love itself clearly could have no existence save only as this "one spirit's plastic stress." Shelley's conception of love, however, bore the impress of his own peculiar habit of thought. He regarded it as a somewhat arbitrary and impulsive thing which recognized neither law nor restraint. But just as liberty becomes something other than liberty when it disregards certain necessary restrictions, so love is no longer love when it knows no law. Here as elsewhere Shelley's thought is vitiated by his oblique moral sense. But make due allowance for this, and add to what remains—firstly the obvious change in the poet's temper with the passing of time, and secondly the equally obvious (though unrecognized) craving which he manifests for some fellowship with the Unseen such as his system denies him—and you have, I believe, a sum of tendencies the natural issue of which is belief in the Christian God. They are certainly only tendencies, having direction but having no sure end, yet inclining to converge on one point. The death of the poet left so many loose ends of thought which a longer life might have gathered up into a strong faith.

What we recognize as tendencies in Shelley have pushed to their inevitable end in the robust faith of Robert Browning. It is true that we cannot trace very clearly the preliminary stages of the movement of Browning's thought into the faith of his poetry. It is doubtful whether it is at all possible

to give an exactly logical account of our poet's mental development. He did not altogether argue himself into his creed. "I know," he once wrote, "I myself have been aware of the communication of something more subtle than a ratiocinative process, when the convictions of 'genius' have thrilled my soul to its depths." He assuredly did not despise the normal processes of reasoning, but he had discovered other avenues into truth, the laws of which are not always those of logic. Browning's faith does nevertheless stand out as a coherent whole of which it is not difficult to give a fairly complete account within even narrow limits. It is scarcely necessary to say that a careful analysis of the whole content of the poet's faith would reveal many contradictions; but what virile faith ever was without its antinomies? Without its antinomies, would it be faith at all?

What then was Browning's faith? Like Shelley he sees that behind all things there is some one Ultimate Reality of which they are but the manifestations. This is God,

From whom all being emanates; all power
Proceeds, in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form includes.

He dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man, the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life.

This language, capable as it is of a pantheistic interpretation, is not, however, that of a pantheist. Strong as was Browning's sense of the divine imman-

ence, he nevertheless does not identify God with the Universe.

Choice of the world, choice of the thing I am,
Both emanate alike from Thy dread play
Of operation *outside* this our sphere,

says the Pope in *The Ring and the Book*, and the view is Browning's own. God immanent and God transcendent—the combination of these two conceptions in his thought of God saved him from Deism on the one hand and Pantheism on the other. It is probably the case that Browning's view of the Divine Immanence was saved from degenerating into a mere Pantheism by reason of his strong belief in the individual and indivisible personality of man. The idea that the divine mind realized itself through the totality of the human had no attraction for the poet. God was immanent in man, but was not man, was above man.

Man was made, however, on the divine image, and that implies a sufficiently intimate correspondence between the divine nature and the human to make possible the apprehension by man of the self-revelation of God.

O Thou as represented here to me
In such conception as my soul allows,
Under thy measureless, my atom width,

* * * *

Existent somewhere, somehow, as a whole,
Here as a whole proportioned to our sense;
There (which is nowhere, speech must babble thus)
In the absolute immensity.
Appreciable solely by Thyself;
Here by the little mind of man, reduced
To littleness that suits his faculty.

BROWNING

Man's apprehension of God has its obvious limits, but these limits are broad enough to compass all of God that man may need. At the same time, such manifestations of the mind of God as are discernible in the universe do not convey a complete presentment of the nature of God.

Conjecture of the worker by the work.
Is there strength there ? Enough. Intelligence ?
Ample ; but goodness in like degree ?
Not to the human eye in the present state.

And Browning compares the revelation of God in the universe to an isosceles triangle, the two equal sides of which, *strength* and *intelligence*, are clear enough, but the base of which, to wit, *goodness*, is not discernible. Where then are we to seek this base ?

Our poet clearly finds it in the Incarnation. The story of Christ it is that completes God's self-revelation. This "tale" of God in the world's mouth supplies the "instance"

Of love without a limit. So is strength,
So is intelligence ; let love be so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
Then is the tale true and God shows complete.

This in Browning's view is the meaning of Christ. He is supremely the manifestation of the divine love, and because He is this, He is the key to all the perplexing problems which the universe presents. Our poet believed what he made the dying Apostle John say—

I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the universe and out of it.

Browning looked abroad upon the universe, recognized the might and wisdom of its Maker, but he could not discover in the universe evidence of that love which alone could make it intelligible. He, in Tennyson's words—

trusted God was love indeed,
And love Creation's final law,
Though nature, red in tooth and claw,
With ravine shrieked against the creed;

but when he came to regard Christ he discovered the evidence of love which the universe failed to provide. Here was that additional element hitherto missing, but essential to a coherent account of the universe. Shelley introduced the idea of love among the constituent elements of his philosophy because it was a necessary postulate, and its necessity was its justification. Browning regarded it likewise as a necessary postulate, but he admitted it into his calculations not because it was a necessity, but because it seemed to him to be the real implication of the Gospel story.

We should, however, do less than justice to Browning's view of Christ if we imagined that he regarded Him solely as a necessary element in a coherent and intelligible philosophy of the universe. Jesus Christ had to the poet a very definite and intimate personal significance. He has no patience with the Renans who seek to whittle Christ down to such dimensions as will enable them to fit Him into their own narrow and arbitrary categories. He was not a little impatient of those critical methods, the first principle of which was a heavy emphasis upon the important part played by

the ineptitude of the tune
 And the penman's prejudice,
 in the growth of the "popular story" of Christ, and
 which having "strained and abated" that story

Of foreign matter, left for residuum
 A man!—a right true man however,
 Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour.

This concession which the critics are compelled
 to make is no inconsiderable one—and yet it

leaves you—Vacuity.
 This much of Christ does he reject?
 And what retain? His intellect?
 What is it I must reverence duly?
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,
 Which leaves me simply what was told
 (If mere morality, bereft
 Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
 Elsewhere by voices manifold.

* * * * *

Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better?
 Strange goodness, which upon the score
 Of being goodness, the mere due,
 Of man to fellowman, much more
 To God—should take another view
 Of its possessor's privilege
 And bid him rule his race.

Christ's supremacy does not rest on any morality
 He may have possessed or taught, though

Morality to the uttermost
 Supreme in Christ, we all confess,

but upon His own person, as He Himself claimed.

Does the precept run—"Believe in good,
 In justice, truth, now understood

For the first time " ? or " Believe in Me
Who lived and died, yet essentially
Am Lord of Life " ?

And this carries with it the faith that the Gospel
brings to man, not merely

A motive and injunction
For practising what we know already,

but

A new truth ; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense,
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

Any interpretation of Christ save as the supreme revelation of God seemed to Browning quite inadequate. It may be true, as Professor Herford says, that the Christ of Browning was not the Redeemer of the orthodox creed. But what man who ever thought at all deeply upon Christ has ever discovered the formula which includes all he knows Christ to be ? This at least is sure, that Browning had no quarrel with Christ's own view of Himself. He rejects with emphasis the supposition that the soul can find God without the mediation of Christ.

From the gift looking to the giver,
From the cistern to the river,
And from finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity,

this space can only be traversed by way of Christ.
" No one cometh unto the Father but by Me." And
he who goes to God by that way finds himself fulfilled in Christ and finds Christ an abiding reality.

That One Face far from vanish rather grows
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Becomes my universe that feels and knows.

These two things then Browning finds in Christ—the revelation of divine love which gives him a coherent philosophy, and the assurance of his own personal fulfilment. Let us inquire for a moment how this affects his own disposition and attitude to the world.

To begin with, his whole being and work is permeated by a radiant invincible hopefulness. Browning had too true an eye not to recognize the tragedy of which our life is so full, but his philosophy enabled him to see in the very brokenness and imperfection of human life not a reason for despair, but the very ground of hope for man's future. Man is not in a state of *being* so much as of *becoming*. Progress is

Man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts'; He is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.

All man's struggles constitute the evidence of his as yet unrealized destiny. He stumbles and falls on his upward way. But of these failures our poet has two things to say. First of all, man is judged, not by his attainments but by his intentions. The great passage in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* is well known—

Not on the vulgar mass called "Work"
Shall sentence pass.
Things done that caught the eye and had the prize—

* * * *

But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,

All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount,
 Thoughts hardly to be packed
 Into a narrow act,
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped.
 All I could never be,
 All men ignored in me,
 This, I was worth to God whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

'Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man
 would do,

cried David in *Saul*. The other thing Browning
 has to say of human failures is this—

And what is our failure but the triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of days ? Have we withered or agonized ?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might
 issue thence ?
 Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be
 prized ?

We are surely moving onward : of this our failures and
 falls assure us ; but Browning sees no goal for us on
 earth.

Life is a probation and the earth no goal,
 But starting point of man.

Our perfect destiny lies beyond the veil. The
 poet's faith in a future life was the necessary
 corollary of his belief in the inviolate individuality
 of man. In that future life man will be all that he
 now has the capacity of becoming. And

There shall never be one lost good ! What was shall live
 as before,
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound,
 What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
 more ;
 On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven a perfect
 round.

This sane, splendid optimism Browning derived from his conception of the meaning of Christ. That God revealed in Christ was essential love meant, not only that, as Pippa sang—

God's in His heaven
All's right with the world,

but that

The mightiness of love was curled
Inextricably round about

all the beauty and the power in the world. This fundamental and pervasive vitality of love is the "energy of integration which makes a cosmos of the sum of things." It secured the essential benevolence of the cosmic processes. In a world thus governed it is always the best that ultimately happens.

What was it in Christ that revealed to Browning this stupendous meaning? Nowhere, perhaps, shall we discover the answer to this question more readily than in that magnificent poem *Saul*. David in this poem is "occupied with no speculative question, but with the practical problem of saving a ruined soul." He sweeps the universe and his own soul in quest of healing for the King. But it is all in vain. Then he turns to God. He himself had been willing to give his life for Saul's redemption. Was his own love which prompted this readiness less than God's?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it?

What David's love would lead him to do, had he the power, would not God, who had the power, do ?

Would I suffer for Him that I love ? So wouldst thou !
So wilt thou !
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown,
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down,
One spot for the creature to stand in !

David reads his own love into God's heart—the love which gave the gift of love to man must be of a piece with it. What man's love would do, God's love will assuredly do—and more. When Mr. Barrie says that the God that little boys say their prayers to has a face very much like their mother's, he is only putting David's argument in *Saul* in a different way. David seeks and finds his flesh in the Godhead, and the inevitable conclusion is—

O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee, a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever, a Hand like this
hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee. See the
Christ stand !

The energy of David's thinking projects his vision through the long years, and he sees in the Incarnation the natural sequel of his thought of God. It is inevitably so. Since it is God's will to reveal Himself to man, and since He made man in His own image, His perfect self-revelation must be through and in a man, if man is to apprehend it. The gift of divine love is the incarnate humanity of God, this complete self-manifestation in the perfect Man, whose perfection is only intelligible on

the assumption that it is the very divine perfection within self-imposed human limits.—

This fact of Incarnation implies that the life of Christ is a reproduction in little of the life of God, and the Sacrifice of Love, which reached its climax on Calvary, is a projection into time and space of the eternal sacrifice of divine love, which is the very secret of the life of the Godhead. The Lamb verily was slain before the foundation of the world. For Browning, Christ was necessarily Christ crucified; the supreme self-emptying of the death of the Cross was to Browning the clue to the whole character and attitude of the heart of God to the world; and the poet's radiant and unfading optimism was just the result of reading the whole of life in the light of Calvary, that

transcendent act,
Beside which even the Creation fades
Into a puny exercise of power.

While the Incarnation has thus its larger place and meaning "amid this sum of things," the love of God in Christ has also a personal significance for the individual. It is the assurance of mercy for the contrite and the promise of the soul's salvation "Saul the mistake, Saul the failure," may put his trust in Christ: but Browning is not forgetful that unrepented evil must make Christ other than Saviour. "John, the master of the Temple of God," was being burnt in Paris for his misdeeds, and in his extremity calls on Christ. But it is not the cry of a penitent soul, and

So as John called now through the fire amain
On the Name he had cursed with, all his life,
To the Person, he had bought and sold again,
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife,—
Feature by feature It took Its place,
And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark,
At the steady whole of the Judge's face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

The deep tragedy of impenitence is that it converts the merciful Saviour into the unbending Judge.

This is Browning's tale of Christ, and we cannot fail to be struck by its vast epic character. He has looked upon Christ "with open face," unbiassed by any prejudice against organized Christianity (the defects of which none knew better), and uninfluenced by any credal preconceptions; and the result is that his conception of Christ has a breadth and a freshness to find the like of which we need to travel as far back as the Apostle Paul. Does Browning find in Christ the clue to a satisfying and coherent account of the universe? No less Paul. Says the Apostle in language in no wise less noble than the poet's— "In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." Does Browning see in Christ the very crown and climax and destiny of all things in the universe and out of it? So does Paul, who declares that God "purposed . . . to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth." Between Paul's day and Browning's many things have happened. We live in the blaze of a larger and fiercer light on the things that are. Science and philosophy have scanned the heights and plumbed the depths, and their findings have caused the faith of many to wax faint. But

standing in this larger light, in full and complete knowledge of all the new facts that have emerged during eighteen centuries, Browning looks upon Christ, and the result is that he virtually repeats the daring affirmations of Paul. The larger knowledge has made Christ the more glorious. Biblical criticism may have something to say to the structure of the evangelic records, but it can abate not one jot or tittle of the meaning and power of the fact of Christ. That remains, unaffected by the changes and the modifications which growing knowledge may necessitate elsewhere, independent of all the vicissitudes of human fortune on the fields of history—the one great final revelation of the divine love in which lies the solution of every mystery in “nature’s infinite book of secrecy,” the hope of the race of man, and the redemption and the fulfilment of the individual soul. There surely can be no apter summary of Browning’s attitude to Christ than that in which Frederic Myers has summarized Paul’s—

Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through
 sinning
Christ shall suffice me for He hath sufficed,
Christ is the end, for Christ is the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

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V

TENNYSON

John i. 14 : "The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us."

2 Tim. i. 10 : "Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel."

V

Tennyson

WHEN inquiries were addressed to Lord Tennyson concerning Jesus Christ, the poet would say to his son—"Answer them that I have given my belief in *In Memoriam*." Our quest need therefore lead us no farther afield than that—the greatest of all Tennyson's works.

Tennyson was compelled to live in an intellectual atmosphere which was in a state of much confusion. The impact of new knowledge upon old beliefs created a condition of things which necessitated a recasting of the forms of thought and a severe scrutiny of the foundations of faith. Darwinism in particular seemed to imply a view of the universe which could not be reconciled with the traditional faith of Christendom in an omnipotent and benevolent Creator. The protagonists of the new knowledge held that the only useful knowledge was that discoverable by the methods and processes of scientific investigation; of the regions in which these methods and processes could not operate, they simply said, "We do not know"; and this seemed to many to be so reasonable and satisfying an attitude

that a multitude adopted it. Agnosticism became the fashion.

The instinctive conservatism of many, however, set them in violent antagonism to the new knowledge and its supposed implications. They condemned them unsparingly as blasphemous and subversive of faith. Others there were whose love of the older faith was none the less passionate who faced the new knowledge with equanimity, confident that increase of knowledge could in no wise destroy the essence of faith, however necessary it might make a change in the *forms* of faith. They believed that there was certainly a very strong presumption that when the smoke of the conflict cleared away the new knowledge and the old faith would be co-ordinated to the immense enrichment of both. Their own personal assurance of the truth of the essentials of Christianity could never be shaken—they had received “a kingdom which cannot be moved,” and their certainty that there was a vast region beyond the reach of scientific method which faith alone could explore, and the knowledge of which is essential to the life of man, led them to insist that Darwin and Huxley and Tyndall had not spoken the last word concerning “this sum of things.” “Believing,” as Tennyson said, “where we cannot prove,” they held fast to the essentials of faith; and in an age which tended to unbelief they held aloft the banner of faith, in no wise despising the new knowledge, but in all assurance of the reality of those things eternal which are “not seen.”

A man in the thick of the battle cannot possibly see the whole field, and the Agnostic leaders were

too near the zone of fire to be able to take a comprehensive view of the whole position. The facts with which they dealt did not cover the whole field of life, for they denied the relevancy and the value of all facts that were not capable of being observed and verified through the senses. That sense-impressions, reason and logic are the sole determinants of truth is a fallacy. "Reason," says G. J. Romanes,¹ "is not the only attribute of man, nor is it the only faculty which he habitually employs for the ascertainment of truth. Moral and spiritual faculties are of no less importance in their respective spheres even of every-day life; faith, trust, taste, etc., are as needful in ascertaining truth as to character, beauty, etc., as is reason. Indeed we may take it that reason is concerned in ascertaining truth only where *causation* is concerned; the appropriate organs for its ascertainment where anything else is concerned belong to the moral and spiritual region." And the refusal to recognize the value of spiritual and moral intuitions and experiences as facts equally relevant with physical phenomena has been the real weakness of scientific agnosticism. Tennyson, however, in spite of his enthusiasm for scientific knowledge, escaped this error.

If 'er when faith had fallen asleep
I heard a voice—"Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled on the Godless deep,

A warmth within the heart would melt
The freezing reason's colder part

¹ In *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 112.

And like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

Not indeed that Tennyson would have *feeling* arrogantly usurp the place of *reason*, as reason does tend to usurp the legitimate place of feeling—he simply insists that the point where the resources of reason break down does not represent the outmost limit of our knowledge.

This outer region beyond the reach of reason the poet very frequently found wrapped up in a dense haze, and it afforded him no firm foothold. The seeming contradiction between the witness of Nature to God on the one hand and the witness of man's own spirit on the other involved him in much doubt; and in particular was this doubt distressing in respect of the future life. Nature's prodigality of the single life as contrasted with that which at first sight seems her care of the type, but which a closer scrutiny reveals to be her utter carelessness of the type, seems to imply a denial of the hope of life beyond the grave. The contemplation of this contradiction makes the poet cry—

I falter where I firmly stood,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

It is clear that the scientific thought of the time had affected the poet's mind very deeply; it was indeed through the eyes of the scientist that he

looked at Nature. To Tennyson "the physical world," says Professor Sedgwick, "is always the world as known to us through physical science; the scientific view of it dominates his thought about it; and his general acceptance of this view is real and sincere, even when he utters the intensest feeling of its inadequacy to satisfy our deepest needs." He saw

Nature red in tooth and claw
With ravine,]

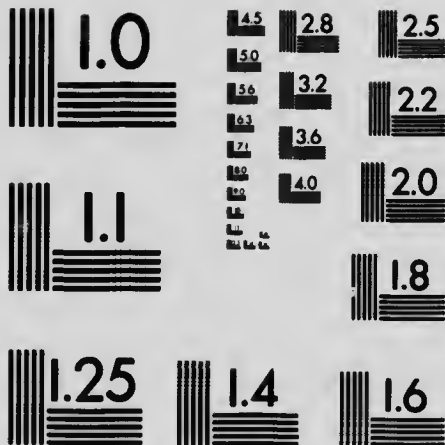
—the "Struggle for Existence," the "Survival of the Fittest" were laws written with blood upon the face of things. One of the obvious conclusions of this view is the denial of moral character to God; but Tennyson refused to accept it; and though he could offer no adequate or satisfying reason for the seeming cruelty of Nature, he persists in maintaining an attitude of hopefulness.

Behold we know not anything—
I can but trust that good will fall
At last, far off, at last to all,
And every winter change to spring!

Not all the knowledge that science could bring could destroy the poet's faith in the fundamental benevolence of the Spirit of the Universe.

Strictly speaking this expression—"Behold we know not anything," is not a true statement of Tennyson's position. It is only true so far as it refers to a reasoned and adequate explanation of the apparent cruelty of the operations of Nature. All that any of us this side of the veil can do in reference to such matters as this is to profess a





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frank agnosticism. We do not know why Nature is ordered so, simply—

We trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill.

But we are left in this state of thin and vague hopefulness only so long as we confine our observation and thought to the physical universe. There is *other* evidence, *other* knowledge which may convert this slender trust into a robust faith. And of this *other* knowledge our poet has much to say.

One thing that Tennyson found himself forced to postulate was the "self-conscious personality of God." "Take away belief in that," he said, "and you take away the backbone of the world." While he admitted with Browning and all of us that God could not be known in "His whole world-self and all in all," yet he believed that God does communicate Himself to men. "I believe," he said, "that God reveals Himself in each individual soul"; and he therefore very strongly believed in the essential truth of the witness of our highest intuitions to the nature of God. That God is love is a belief we get "from ourselves, from what is highest within us"; and the fact that the wish to live, the hope of immortality, derives

from what we have
The likest God within the soul,

was to Tennyson very good presumptive evidence of the truth of the belief in the future life. "If you allow a God, and God allows this strong instinct and universal yearning for another life, surely that is

in a measure a presumption of its truth—we cannot give up the mighty hopes that make us men.”

Tennyson said once to Bishop Lightfoot—“The cardinal point of Christianity is the life after death.” Certainly this is the cardinal point of Tennyson’s own faith. He believed no less strongly than Browning in the powerlessness of death to dissolve human personality. “I can hardly understand how any great imaginative man who has deeply lived, suffered, thought and wrought, can doubt of the soul’s continuous progress in the after-life.” Tennyson is supremely the poet of Immortality; and the “intimations of immortality” were ever with him. This is his master-thought, and it was natural that he should approach Jesus Christ from this point. I think Paul’s words, “Jesus Christ who brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel,” summarize pretty accurately Tennyson’s view of the mission of Christ. Unlike Browning, who believed that the soul discovers “a new truth” in Christ, Tennyson held that Jesus Christ brought into the perfect light those truths concerning God and man of which we all have dim intuitions.

Though truths in manhood darkly join
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him who made them current coin;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf
Or builds the house or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

"Truth embodied in a tale" must surely refer to the historical manifestation of the Incarnate Word—"the revelation of the eternal thought of the universe." And since God does reveal Himself to men, and men dimly and feebly apprehend the revelation, the Incarnate Word must fully and completely bring to light all that range of intuitions in which we recognize the self-communication of the divine nature to our souls. We are to find our intuitions interpreted in the Incarnate Word—not, mark, in Christ's teaching so much as in His life, His character, His person, for He wrought the "creed of creeds" "in loveliness of perfect deeds." What Christ does for us is to interpret us to ourselves. He brings, by His own life, "life and incorruption to light."

Tennyson consistently refused to commit himself to any formal definition of the person of Christ, but it is quite clear that no description of Christ short of the "Incarnate Word" would have seemed to him adequate. Men in the heat of theological controversy have dared to put the mystery into a phrase, forgetting that "none knoweth the Son save the Father."

In divinity and love
What's best worth saying can't be said—

and with respect to Christ particularly it is just that which cannot exactly be said which constitutes

His real distinctiveness. Tennyson, it is clear, felt the vast fascination of the personality of Jesus and stood with unshod feet in His presence. "I am always amazed when I read the New Testament at the splendour of Christ's purity and holiness and at His infinite pity." He recognized the truth that the person of Christ is an essential element of Christianity. There is a refinement of faith which seeks to avoid the critical difficulties of the evangelic history by exalting the spirit of Christ at the expense of the person of Christ, by magnifying "what Christ stood for" at the expense of Christ Himself. This is utter futility, as Tennyson clearly saw. "Christianity with its divine morality, but without the central figure of Christ, *the* Son of Man, would become cold." The truth of this statement is absolute.

That Christ, the Incarnate Word, is the "revelation of the eternal thought of the universe" is a conception which implies a still deeper thought. For such self-communication of God as has been granted to man has originated in His love. And Tennyson, like Browning, though with perhaps less emphasis, recognized that the manifestation of divine love in Christ had its own significance in relation to the brokenness of Nature. It might not help us to trace the adaptation of particular means to particular ends, to discover why progress cannot be save through suffering—but the conception of divine love as underlying and controlling the universe does imply that its processes are ultimately beneficent. And surely it is only by the ministry of such a thought that our minds can be at

peace in the midst of all the contradictions and the brokenness of Nature and of our own life. It is when we appeal to the "Immortal Love" revealed in Christ that the unrest and disquietude induced by the tale of science and the witness of history and the common experience of the individual man subside and give way to a deep and abiding calm. But of this faith Browning gives a more robust expression than Tennyson, though Tennyson's optimism, his sense that the universe is moving onward to a glorious goal, was very deep and eager. In *Locksley Hall* he had sung—

I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
and in the sequel, *Sixty Years After*, he foretells the time on earth, when

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion killed,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert tilled,
Robed in universal harvest, up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles,

and then away beyond the limits of time he sees the final end of all things in God—

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

If Tennyson's conception of the mission of Christ might be expressed in Paul's phrase—He "brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel," there is no doubt that his view of the person of Christ was most influenced by John. "The Word had breath" is simply a paraphrase of "The Word

became flesh," and he stated categorically that his use of the expression *Love* as designating the essence of God was identical with that of John. Certainly the doctrine of the person of Christ implied in Tennyson's poems will satisfy the most tenacious believer in the traditional view. "Strong Son of God," he calls Him, and it is well to remember in this connexion that the poet was wont to say that "*the* Son of Man is the most tremendous title possible." And with reference to this epithet "strong" it is interesting to recall his remark concerning "the man-woman," that is the union of strength and tenderness, in Christ. "Son of God," "Son of Man,"—Tennyson accepts this, our Lord's own estimate of Himself. He did not attempt to distinguish between the divinity and the humanity of Christ. All he knew that Christ was all divine, all human—

Thou seemest human and divine,
The holiest, highest manhood, thou ;

that is to say—one of us, a man like ourselves, and yet so supremely above us that we must fall down before Him—

Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

All that John attributes to the Word that was with God and was God, Tennyson also ascribes to Him. "All things were made by Him," says John, and this is Tennyson's version—

Thine are these orbs of light and shade,
Thou madest life in man and brute.

John proceeds—"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men," and Tennyson follows—

Thou madest death ; and lo, Thy foot
Is on the skull which Thou hast made.
Thou wilt not leave us in the dust.
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die,
And Thou hast made him ; Thou art just.

"There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world," says the Evangelist, and the modern poet thus—

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day, they cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Our knowledge we owe to Christ, but the pride of knowledge may lead us to stumble, and so the poet goes on—

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell,
That mind and soul according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight,
We mock Thee when we do not fear,
But help Thy foolish ones to bear,
Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light !

"Who knows," he asked once, "whether Revelation be not itself a veil to hide the glory of that love which we could not look upon without marring the sight and our onward progress ?" In the presence of "these unfathomable mysteries" humility and reverence alone befit a sinful man. The bigotry

of the man who fondly believes that his formulæ contain all the faith, and who anathematizes those who hold them lightly, as well as the boastings of the man who loudly vaunts his emancipation from the forms of faith, were both alike the symptoms of a dangerous pride altogether inconsistent with the Christian spirit. Still, he sympathized with those who felt that "formal statements of the truth" cannot contain all the truth, and felt that

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Yet, forms of faith have their value, and "faith through form" may be as pure and as productive of goodness as that faith which is independent of form. But forms are provisional and temporary; and increasing light must mean constant change and modification. The essence, the spirit of faith can never change, it must abide constant and immutable through all the changes that come upon the form into which successive ages cast it, until it at length emerges free and glorious, untainted by the passions of men, unlimited by their narrowness, that truth which for us men once became incarnate in Jesus Christ. And as the spirit of faith persists and grows, with it shall grow the soul of goodness in time, until the spirit of Jesus Christ, in religion, in conduct, in the whole of life, individual and collective, shall be enthroned for evermore. And it is the strong eager yearning for this glad time that he expresses in perhaps the best known of all his lines—

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite,
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand,
Ring out the darkness of the land;
Ring in the Christ that is to be!

But while yet the vision of the future seemed afar off, the poet put his trust in Christ for the immediate business of life and death. In his own words concerning Mary the sister of Lazarus, his gaze rested on "the Life indeed." Thus was he sustained in life, and so as he passed he was able to sing—

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar!

VI
RUSKIN

John ii. 5 : " Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."
Luke xxiv. 35 : " He was known of them in the breaking
of the bread."

VI

Ruskin

“WHEN people read,” wrote Ruskin in *Modern Painters*, “‘the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Christ,’ do they suppose it means that the law was *ungracious* or *untrue*? The law was given for a foundation, the grace (or mercy) and truth for fulfilment; the whole forming one glorious trinity of judgment, mercy and truth.” When this passage was reproduced in *Frondees Agrestes*, many years after, the writer added this footnote: “A great deal of presumption and narrowness caused by my having been bred in the evangelical schools, and which now fill me with shame and distress in re-reading *Modern Painters*, is, to my present mind, atoned for by the accurate thinking by which I broke my way through to the great truth expressed in this passage, which all my later writings, without exception, have been directed to maintain and illustrate.” Without waiting to inquire whether Ruskin’s interpretation of the scripture he quotes is correct (I do not think it is more than partly right), we may assume that we have here the fundamental principles of our author’s critical and constructive work. To think justly, to

love mercy, to speak and act truthfully—these are conditions without which there can be neither goodness nor greatness, in art or in literature, in the state or in the individual life. Any work not firmly established upon these basal moralities must by the very nature of things be inadequate and wrong and therefore perishable.

Life, whether of the individual or of the nation, thrives on judgment, mercy and truth; and this because the moral order which enforces these moralities is inherent in the world. By the working of its inscrutable but by no means uncertain laws it causes them to prosper who observe it with all their hearts, while it visits with decay and ruin those who ignore or disobey it. Ruskin has shown in *The Stones of Venice* how the period of Venetian prosperity and the golden age of its art was also the time of its devotion to high ethical ideals; and how, when the moral landmarks became obscure, and “in the ingenuity of indulgence, in the varieties of vanity, Venice surpassed the cities of Christendom as of old she had surpassed them in fortitude and devotion,” her art declined, and “by the inner burning of her own passions, as fatal as the fiery rain of Gomorrah, she was consumed from her place among the nations; and her ashes are choking the channels of the dead, salt sea.” All this is a true philosophy of history. Over and over again we read it in the annals of our kind. And the fact that the laws which operate thus mightily are universal implies that there is no smallest part of human life which is outside their influence.

This is, however, no part of a deistic view

which regards these laws as having been once instituted and now operating by their own momentum and which relegates the Mind and Power which set them in motion to

Heights too high for our aspiring,
Coldly sublime, intolerably just.

Ruskin thinks that these laws reveal the character of a Creator with whom communion is not only possible but essential to man. The possibility of such communion rests upon two conditions. The first is the presence in man of the same moralities as those which are attributes of God, and recognized as such in the operations of the moral order. "It is only," says Ruskin, "to a nature capable of truth, desirous of it, distinguishing it, feeding upon it, that revelation is possible. To a being undesirous of it and hating it, revelation is impossible. There can be none to a brute or fiend. In so far therefore as you love truth and live therein, in so far revelation can exist for you; and in so far, your mind is the image of God." This is simply an expansion of an older word—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is in the measure that truth and justice and love are elements of our own spiritual constitution that we shall be able to receive and apprehend the self-manifestations of God. The image of God within us is "defiled, if you will, broken, if you will, all but effaced, if you will, by death and the shadow of it." For all that, it is "a mirror wherein may be seen darkly the image of the mind of God."

The other condition of communion with God

is that God's mind should be expressed in terms that man can understand, that God's infinitude should become subject to limitations which will enable the finite mind of man to grasp it. "In order to render this communion possible, the Deity has stooped from His throne and has not only in the person of the Son taken upon Him the veil of our human flesh, but in the person of the Father taken upon Him the veil of our human thoughts and permitted us . . . to conceive Him simply and clearly as a loving Father and Friend—a being to be walked with and reasoned with, to be moved by our entreaties, angered by our rebellion, alienated by our coldness, pleased by our love and glorified by our labour ; and finally to be beheld in immediate and active presence in all the powers and changes of creation. This conception of God, which is the child's, is evidently the only one which can be universal, and therefore the only one which, FOR US, can be true."

Of the truth of the Incarnation as indicated in this passage Ruskin seems never to have been in doubt ; and there is a wealth and a variety in his thought of the meaning of Christ to man of which it will not be easy to give any adequate conception within a small compass. Sometimes our author's ingenuity discovers a meaning which seems altogether too fanciful to be true ; but there can be no doubt of his profound understanding of the supreme significance of the Master. He had been brought up in the straitest evangelicalism—a phase of Christian thought which, because it was largely a protest against the desiccated latitudin-

arianism on the one hand, and what is by now called the "old-fashioned" High-Churchmanship on the other hand, of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, cast itself into more rigid forms than a larger outlook could possibly justify. While Ruskin deplored the narrowness which this type of Christianity had induced in him, and while he had relinquished the inelastic formulae in which it enshrined the truth of the Gospel, many of its essential principles remained with him to the end. When he wrote *Modern Painters*, he was still under the influence of the older ideas; but he shows in *Praeterita* that he had not abandoned every part of his earlier heritage of religious thought. "What a child cannot understand of Christianity no one need try to. . . . The total meaning was and is that the God who made earth and its creatures took at a certain time on the earth the flesh and form of man; in that flesh sustained the pain and died the death of the creature He had made; rose again after death into glorious human life; and when the date of the human race is ended, will return in visible human form and render to every man according to his work. Christianity is the belief in, and love of God thus manifested." There is no great disparity between the view expressed here and the earlier conception in *Modern Painters*. But there is one important respect in which Ruskin broke away very completely from his early views. The evangelicalism in which he had been bred had chiefly emphasized the death of Christ. Ruskin shifted the larger emphasis from the crucified to the risen Christ. Not indeed

that he denied very profound significance to our Lord's death, but he felt rather the immenser and more wonderful meaning of the fact that Christ lives to-day, and that the supreme business of His disciples is to establish themselves in the right relationship of perfect obedience to their living Lord. In the *Lectures on Art* he speaks of the wasted time and the wasted emotion of "the tender and delicate women of Christendom" when they have been called, through "the four arts of eloquence, music, painting and sculpture," to contemplate "the bodily pain, long since passed," of "the Master who is not dead, and who is not now fainting under His Cross, but requiring us to take up ours." Speaking of the sculpture on the great central porch of Amiens Cathedral he says—"Christ never appears, or is for a moment thought of, as the Crucified or the Dead; but as the Incarnate Word, as the present Friend—as the Prince of Peace on earth, and as the Everlasting King in heaven. What His life *is*, what His commands *are*, and what His judgment *will be*, are the things taught here; not what He once did, nor what He once suffered, but what He is now doing and what He requires us to do. That is the pure, joyful, beautiful lesson of Christianity, and the fall from that faith and the corruptions of its abortive practice may be summed up briefly as the habitual contemplation of Christ's death instead of His life; the substitution of His past suffering for our present duty." While we feel that Ruskin does not seem to have adequately appreciated the inner meaning of the Death of Christ, who shall say that

for the rest he was wrong when the greatest of the Apostles himself had said, "For if . . . we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by *His life*" ?

The Christ that is, who is making clear and irresistible demands upon those who follow Him, who sustains His saints according to His gracious promises, is preeminently the Christ of Ruskin's later philosophy.

He does not at all undervalue the Gospel history and its place in the whole scheme of Christian truth. He speaks of "three facts without assurance of which all faith is vain, namely, that Christ died, that He rose again, and that He ascended into heaven, there to prepare a place for His elect." And, indeed, it is only from what we know of the historical Christ that we are enabled to understand anything of the glorified Christ ; and to this end our author insists strongly upon the real and eternal manhood of Christ. The glorified Christ is still the man Christ Jesus. "Our preachers," he complains, "are continually trying in all manner of subtle ways to explain the union of the Divinity with the Manhood—an explanation which certainly involves first their being able to describe the nature of the Deity itself, or, in plain words, to comprehend God. They never can explain, in any one particular, the union of the natures : they only succeed in weakening the faith of their hearers as to the entireness of either. The thing they have to do is precisely the contrary of this—to insist upon the *entireness* of both. We never think of Christ enough

as God, never enough as man ; the instinctive habit of our minds being always to miss of the divinity, and the reasoning and enforced habit to miss of the humanity. We are afraid to harbour in our own hearts, or to utter in the hearing of others, any thought of our Lord as hungering, tired, sorrowful, having a human soul, a human will and affected by events of human life, as a finite creature is ; and yet one half of the efficiency of His atonement and the whole of the efficiency of His example depend upon His having been this to the full."

The example of the Christ of history is for His disciples the law of the Christ of glory. And the commandments of this law are not merely the words of an ancient record but words which come to us straight from the throne on which the living Lord is set. In His law is our life. Christ has revealed not only God but man ; and by His life has shown us wherein our life consists. And just as the Son of Man came to minister, and as He ministered above all to the poor and the outcast and the broken, so also is our life to consist in such lowliness of service. "Could we," asks Ruskin, "possibly have had more distinct indication of the purpose of the Master, borne first by the witness of shepherds, in a cattleshed, then by the witness of the person for whom He had done most and who loved Him best, in the garden and in gardener's guise, and not known even by His familiar friends till He gave them bread—could it be told us, I repeat, more definitely by any sign or indication whatsoever that the noblest human life was appointed to be by the cattlefold and in the garden,

and to be known as noble in the breaking of bread." This expression "the breaking of bread" is symbolical throughout Ruskin's works of deeds of mercy, of loving care for the poor and the spent; and the reward of those who break bread is that it brings them the vision of Christ.

And this is the sum of the rewards of the life to which Christ commands us. "Take Christ at His literal word, and so sure as His word is true He will be known of you in the breaking of bread. Refuse that servant's duty because it is plain, seek either to serve God or know Him in any other way: your service will become mockery of Him, and your knowledge darkness." Ruskin is here simply enforcing the principle which we found in a previous citation—that the measure of our likeness to God is the measure of our apprehension of Him. It is the same with the understanding of Christ. "There is only one light by which you can read the life of Christ—the light of the life which you now lead in the flesh; and that not the natural, but the *won* life. 'Nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' " But the indwelling Christ will through us do the works of Christ; and in that service is vision. In a passage in *Sesame and Lilies*, where he speaks of the poor and broken and helpless children of our land, "the feeble florets, with all their fresh leaves torn and their stems broken," he asks, "Will you not go down among them nor set them in order in their little fragrant beds, nor fence them, in their trembling, from the fierce wind?" And after quoting Tennyson's,

Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone,

he proceeds—"Who is it, think you, who stands at the gate of the sweeter garden, alone, waiting for you? Did you ever hear not of a Maud but a Madeleine who went down to her garden in the dawn and found One waiting at the gate whom she supposed to be the gardener? Have you not sought Him often, sought Him in vain, all through the night, sought Him in vain at the gate of that old garden where the fiery sword is set? He is never there, but at the gate of *this* garden He is waiting always, waiting to take your hand, ready to see the fruits of the valley, to see whether the vine has flourished and the pomegranate budded." James Russell Lowell has expressed the thought in another way in that striking poem "The Search." The poet had sought Christ in Nature, in the halls of the rich and in the houses of worship; and turning from his vain quest into the streets of the city, he saw the print of bleeding feet.

I followed where they led,
And in a hovel rude,
With naught to fence the weather from His head,
The king I sought for meekly stood.
A naked hungry child
Clung round His gracious knee,
And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled
To bless the smile that set him free.
New miracles I saw His presence do,
No more I knew the hovel bare and poor,
The gathered chips into a woodpile grew,
The broken morsel swelled to goodly store.
I knelt and wept. My Christ no more I seek,
His throne is with the outcast and the weak.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." The service of Christ is the service of the broken and the spent; and there is no service the rewards of which are richer. For we have the vision of Christ for our prize, and all that such a vision implies. "Obey the word (of Christ) in its simplicity, in wholeness of purpose and serenity of sacrifice . . . and truly you shall receive sevenfold into your bosom in this present life as in the world to come, life everlasting. All your knowledge will become to you clear and sure, all your footsteps safe; in the present brightness of domestic life you will foretaste the joy of Paradise, and to your children's children bequeath not only noble fame but endless virtue."

Ruskin constantly insists upon the absolute necessity of this obedience, for all good in life hangs upon it. "The strength and joy and height of achievement of any group or race of mankind has, from the day of Christ's nativity to this hour, been in exact proportion to their power of apprehending and honesty in obeying the truth of His gospel"; and the moral is, obviously, on all counts—"Be sure that you are serving Christ, till you are tired and can do no more; for that time: and then even if you have not breath enough left to say '*Master, Master*' with—He will not mind. Begin therefore 'to-day' . . . to do good for Him—whether you live or die." And those who thus obey find the strength for their service in Christ, who will become to them "all in all." "The early Christians . . . knew that the believer who had Christ had all. Did he need fortitude? Christ

was his rock : Equity ? Christ was his righteousness : Holiness ? Christ was his sanctification : Liberty ? Christ was his redemption : Temperance ? Christ was his ruler : Wisdom ? Christ was his light : Truthfulness ? Christ was the truth : Charity ? Christ was love." Throughout his life he is sustained by Christ ; and the consciousness of His support is his assurance of perfect union with Him. " It is enough for Christ's sheep that they find themselves on Christ's shoulders."

It was this great conception of the present and immediate sovereignty of the living Christ that determined the whole character of Ruskin's own work as He would have it determine the work of others. In Christ he found the embodiment of " whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are fine, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gracious " : ¹ and it is in the spirit of Jesus Christ that we must approach all our work whatever it be. For all labour however humble is sanctified for ever, for He once laboured ; and " the trivial round, the common task " done in His name, in His spirit, is supremely the observance of His law and the key into His presence. And when we shall with one accord conceive and carry out all our undertakings in His spirit, we shall contribute according to our capacity to the hastening of the perfect day. " And perfect the day shall be," says our author, " when it is of all men understood that the beauty of holiness must be in labour as in rest. Nay ! *more*, if it may be, in labour ; in our

¹ R.V., margin.

strength rather than in our weakness ; and in the choice of what we shall work for through the six days, and may know to be good at their evening time, than in the choice of what we pray for on the seventh, of reward or repose. With the multitude that keep holiday, we may perhaps sometimes vainly have gone up to the house of the Lord and vainly there have asked for what we fancied would be mercy ; but for the few who labour as their Lord would have them, the mercy needs no seeking and their wide home no hallowing. Surely goodness and mercy shall *follow* them all the days of their life, and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

VII
SAVONAROLA

Acts xvii. 7: " . . . Another King, one Jesus."

VII

Savonarola

A HUNDRED and eighty years after Dante had been exiled from Florence there came thither a young Dominican monk whose name was destined to be associated with the city with even greater intimacy than that of Dante. Dante and Savonarola had indeed much in common. Both were imbued with the deep historical insight and the passion for righteousness of the Hebrew prophets. Both plunged fearlessly into the vortex of intrigue and faction in which Florentine history was for the larger part being made, if by any means they might deliver the city out of the oppressive hands of greedy princes and their greedier friends. Both suffered at length the kind of penalty which the prophet must needs expect at the hands of the perfidious crowd—it was exile for Dante, a martyr's death for Savonarola.

In the period which lies between Dante and Savonarola much had happened, but the main characteristics of Italian history had remained very much the same. The same disunion and

jealousy was tearing out the country's heart. The united Italy of which Dante had dared to dream seemed no nearer, and it is a fact with no little significance that it was not until many centuries after, when the Papacy had been stripped of its temporal power, that Dante's dream came true. There was in Savonarola's time the same danger arising out of the designs of French princes on Italy, though Savonarola and the Florentines, reading history less deeply than their famous townsman of an earlier day, were at one time inclined to hail the coming of a French king into Italy as a great deliverance. But the deepest trouble of all was certainly the greed and the rapacity of the Papacy. The vicars of Christ were conspicuous by their lack of the spirit of Christ; and that great gulf which yawned between the temper of Rome and the spirit of the Gospel in Dante's day had become none the narrower at the end of the fifteenth century. Dante's denunciations of the avarice and the excesses of the popes might have been repeated with heavier emphasis in the Italy of Savonarola.

The great happening of the period between Dante and Savonarola was the re-birth of learning. It does not belong to our enterprise to tell the story of that wonderful rediscovery of the treasures of antiquity, with its profound reaction upon philosophy, literature and art. The ancient world seemed to be brought to life again. But in the clash of the old with the new, there was of necessity much confusion of thought. The relationship of the whole philosophy of Greece to the beliefs of mediaeval catholicism was very obscurely under-

stood, and many strange things were said and done in that dim twilight ; and it is full of interest to observe men diligently but with indifferent success seeking to work themselves into an intelligible and logical position between the old light and the new.

It was in the midst of this political, ecclesiastical and intellectual confusion that Savonarola appeared in Florence. That city was already renowned for the zeal with which it had fostered the new knowledge ; under Lorenzo de Medici, known as the Magnificent, literature and art had been greatly encouraged. Lorenzo himself was a very complex character. A sincere friend of the arts, his personal morality was nevertheless of no high order. His government of Florence was harsh and unscrupulous ; he resorted to many highly questionable means to secure his authority and to increase his wealth. Savonarola's earlier years in Florence coincided with the later years of Lorenzo's reign. The monk with his stern uncompromising demand for purity of life had scant respect for the evil-living prince and made little effort to disguise his feeling. Lorenzo in his turn disliked Savonarola intensely. After a time of quiet service teaching novitiates in the convent of St. Mark's, Savonarola's great preaching gift asserted itself and before long his name was known through Italy. Feeling with something akin to agony the corruption in Church and State he condemned it unsparingly in both places ; and it took the people no long time to discover that a prophet had arisen, to whom they listened gladly. Utterly fearless, altogether sure of his message, wielding an unique spiritual power, he soon became the

most considerable figure in Florence. His mettle was proved when Lorenzo, lying on his death-bed, sent for him to give him absolution. Savonarola laid down as a condition that Lorenzo should restore the liberties of Florence. Lorenzo refused, and the monk went away leaving the dying prince unabsolved.

Piero, Lorenzo's son, reigned in his stead. Possessing none of his father's good qualities, he had all his worst ones in an aggravated form. He was a weak profligate, and the new life then stirring in Florence made his rule impossible. Some intrigue with Charles VI of France, who was then invading Italy, was made the occasion of his deposition. In the events which followed, Savonarola was virtually governor of Florence. The new government which was established was devised and secured by him. The people accepted his counsel unquestioningly. A great reformation of morals and manners coincided with the political revolution, and Florence seemed at length to be emerging into a new and substantial corporate life, based upon righteousness and justice.

Of the purely political side of Savonarola's work this is not the place to speak. That is a matter for the expert in political science. What is relevant to our present inquiry is that Savonarola established in Florence the principle that no stable political institutions could ever be raised except on a definitely moral foundation. All political problems are at bottom moral problems, and no amount of statesmanship or management can avail to secure the stability of a political structure which is not first of all solidly laid upon the rock of

morality. But Savonarola cut down beneath this rock to discover that itself rested upon another rock, namely Religion. The place of the prophet in the state is to teach that religion which will secure the morality on which a people's institutions can alone be stable. Savonarola only unwillingly entered into the tumult of politics, for he conceived his function to be to induce and foster the spirit and conscience necessary to good government. The business of the Church is not at all with political ways and means, but with the creation of a public conscience which will determine the ways and ends of government in accordance with the highest moral ideals.

The first word of a prophet's message is "Repent." This was the first message of Savonarola to the people of Florence. He had all the prophet's freedom from the trammels of convention and tradition; but the intellectual twilight of his time made it almost impossible for him to establish himself in a clear self-consistent position of thought. At one moment, for instance, he seems to accept without question the authority of the Church as expressed through the Pope. At another he insists

the passion of a Luther on the absolute supremacy of the Scriptures; and there seems no evidence that he was conscious of any conflict between the two positions. But a prophet is the last person in the world from whom to expect the appearance of a perfect consistency. The force of circumstances, however, led Savonarola to ascribe less authority, as time went on, to the Pope, and to make his appeal increasingly to the Scriptures.

An attempt has been made to interpret the Italian Renaissance as a resurgence of paganism ; and no doubt the discovery of the wealth of wisdom and beauty in the ancient world had a momentary tendency to obscure the riches of the Gospel. It is indeed no wonder that it should have been so. The interpretation of the Gospel which then held the field was the arid theology of the Schoolmen, a dressing of Christianity in the habit of Aristotle ; and it was bound to suffer from the impact upon it of the rediscovery of the glory of the ancient world. Art and literature flourished greatly during the ascendancy of the Greek spirit ; and it has been assumed by some that because Savonarola withstood the neo-paganism of Lorenzo's reign he was an enemy of the arts and a hindrance to the new spirit. So far from this being the case, Savonarola, perhaps unconsciously, was one of the means by which the Renaissance received a definitely Christian character. In his own convent of St. Mark's he encouraged the fine arts ; and Michael Angelo and Botticelli, to name only two of the great Renaissance artists, derived their inspiration very largely from the teaching of Savonarola. It was however just in the measure that Savonarola broke away from the theology and teaching of mediaeval catholicism that he was able to imbue not only artists but the common people also with that enlarged, liberal spirit in which the glories of the ancient world and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ were to find a common meeting-ground, and in which the true proportions of both would appear. The utter and absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ, everywhere,

in philosophy, in art and in the State—this was the end of Savonarola's message as the call to repentance had been its beginning.

Savonarola's attitude to the Church was orthodox enough in theory. The Church militant on earth was a "counterfeit presentment" of the Church triumphant in heaven. And as the head of the latter was the Lord Christ, so the head of the former was Christ's vicar the Pope. "Wherefore," he says in a little tractate called *The Triumph of the Cross*, "it is manifest that all the faithful should be united under the Pope as the supreme head of the Roman Church, the mother of all other Churches, and that whosoever departs from the unity and the doctrine of the Roman Church unquestionably departs from Christ." But whatever Savonarola's theory might have been, in practice he considers that his supreme head is Christ Himself rather than the Pope. It may have been that he regarded the Pope of his own day as an usurper who had no right to the office he held ; but Savonarola clearly regarded his own commission as held directly from Christ. When the Pope excommunicated him, he said, "For me it is enough not to be interdicted by Christ." So lightly did he hold the excommunication that he went on to say—"O my Lord, if I should seek to be absolved from this excommunication, let me be sent to hell."

It is not mere partisanship that sees in this a sign of that coming revolt from papal authority, and that growing consciousness of the true relation of the Church, whether in heaven or on earth, to its only Head, which led to the Protestant Reforma-

tion. For it is confirmed by the whole tenour of Savonarola's teaching. The complex machinery of the Roman Church for the spiritual development of its children he sweeps away, and insists that the increase of ceremonies means a decrease of real spirituality. "Wherefore," he says, "we are come to declare to the world that outward worship must give way to inward, and that ceremonies are nought save as a means of stirring the spirit." The essence of the Christian religion is the love of Christ, "that lively affection which inspires the faithful with the desire to bring his soul to unity, as it were, with that of Christ; and live the life of the Lord not by external imitation but by inward and divine inspiration." In this love is the power to raise man "from humanity to divinity," and unites "the finite creature with the infinite Creator." It is this love which Savonarola sought to imbue the Florentines with, by adducing the example of Christ Himself. "Take the example of Christ," he said in one of his sermons, "who came to us as a little child, in all things like unto the sons of men, submitting to hunger and thirst, to heat and to cold and discomfort. What hath urged Him to do this? Love. He spoke now with just men, now with publicans and sinners, and He led a life that all men and all women, small and great, rich and poor, may imitate, all after their own way and according to their condition, and thus undoubtedly win their salvation. And what made Him live so poor and so marvellous a life? Undoubtedly, love. . . . Charity bound Him to the pillar, led Him to the Cross, raised Him from the dead and

made Him ascend unto heaven, and thus accomplish the mysteries of our redemption." And to Christ Savonarola was bound by such ties of intimate love that he declared—"They may kill me as they please, but they will never tear Christ from my heart." When at last Florence came to kill him and a priest asked him, "In what spirit dost thou bear this martyrdom?" he answered, "The Lord hath suffered so much for me." "Into thy hands, O Lord," he cried, as they fixed the halter on his neck, "do I commend my spirit."

"That Christ is our ultimate end, and that only through Him can we attain salvation"—in these words our prophet expressed his own faith. But it was not the Saviourhood of Christ so much as His Kingship that Savonarola emphasized most deeply in his dealings with the Florentines. However he might have placed Christ in his theology, the more important matter is the part he assigned to Christ in the practical affairs and the common life of Florence. We cannot but be impressed by the very direct way in which he sought to establish Christ in a definite relation to the city and its people. In a sermon he preached in 1494, after the establishment of the new government, he announced that "it was the Lord's will to give a new head to the city of Florence," and after keeping the people in suspense for some time he finally declared—"The new head is Jesus Christ, He seeks to become your King." The idea so laid hold of the Florentines that the streets came to echo with the cry—"Long live Christ our King." I have read somewhere, though I am unable to verify the statement

now, that a tablet on one of the public buildings of Florence bore the inscription, "Jesus Christ is the King of Florence." But in any case the sentiment was engraved on the people's hearts, which was very much more to the point. In a poem written by Savonarola, the expression "Jesus, King of Florence" occurs; but perhaps the most striking instance of the expression of this idea was when on a certain Palm Sunday a service for children was held in the Duomo previously to a procession, and after speaking to the children awhile Savonarola turned to the men and women present and cried—"Florence, behold! This is the Lord of the Universe and would fain be thine. Wilt thou have Him for thy King?" And the multitude answered—"Long live Christ our King."

The absolute and unquestioned sovereignty of Jesus Christ in the heart of the individual and of the community—this was the practical principle of Savonarola's apostolate; and this is the really relevant matter to our inquiry. We can afford to neglect our prophet's theology. The intellectual confusion of the time, the conflict of tradition and liberty in his own mind, the tremendous and unbroken whirl into which circumstances forced him in his later years in Florence made it impossible for him to work out a complete and coherent theological system. But as we follow the man through all the fever of those tumultuous years, as we see him essaying statecraft, there emerges from it all the great principle which was not for a moment at all obscured—the supreme Lordship of Christ over

soul and city. Though schooled in an atmosphere of tradition, a child of mediaeval catholicism, yet the stirring events of Florentine history helped him to cut through the mere impedimenta of the schools and the ceremonies of the Church to the great bed-rock principles of the Christian faith. He was "a reformer before the Reformation." Not yet sufficiently mature to break away formally from the Roman Church, he nevertheless heralds not uncertainly that great movement which a generation after his death was to revolutionize Western Europe. Martin Luther was fifteen years of age at the time of Savonarola's death; and it was the tattered banner of revolt which the Florentine prophet had laid down all too prematurely in 1498 which Luther raised in 1517 when he nailed his Theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.

Savonarola has left us for his monument the great conception that Jesus Christ is to be the great overlord of our corporate life. Dante had in his day enunciated the principle of the distinctive and separate functions of the civil and spiritual authorities, each with their separate heads, deriving their right from God. It is simply a more concrete form of one side of this view that Savonarola insisted upon when he declared Jesus Christ to be the King of the Florentines.

It needs to be declared with no less emphasis to-day that Jesus Christ should be established and recognized as the overlord of the State; not that His religion should be established in a position of privilege, but that our legislation shall be conceived in His spirit, that it shall be enacted and adminis-

tered along the lines of His will, that our public bodies, from the Houses of Parliament to the veriest sub-committee of a parish council, shall sit under His presidency and be controlled by His spirit. Let His will be the criterion of our enactments, let His principles become the fundamentals of our civic and national life, let His character become the citizen's ideal. No less of London, of Britain, of the Britains beyond the seas than of Florence should Jesus Christ become king; and no brighter day will dawn on the land we love than that on which we shall make its city streets and village lanes echo the cry of the Florentines—"LONG LIVE CHRIST OUR KING."

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VIII
MAZZINI

Matt. ix. 36: "When He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd."

Col. iii. 10, 11: "The new man . . . where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all."

VIII

Mazzini

TO be a prophet has almost always implied being a patriot. John the Baptist alone of the succession of Hebrew prophets gives no direct evidence of patriotic fervour. The patriotism of the prophet is of a distinct order. The blatant assumption of superiority over other peoples, an inflated national pride—these things that sometimes pass for patriotism bear the name falsely. The true patriotism has other attributes. In its essence it is a passionate love for one's people, its traditions and its institutions joined to a profound faith in the people's possibilities, in its divine appointment to a specific office in the great plan of history. It is not at all akin to that exclusive and selfish temper which regards the securing of certain benefits and prerogatives for a people as an end in itself, but on the contrary it seeks such advantages as will enable the people to fill its own place in the larger life of the race. Such narrow cries as "England for the English," "Scotland for the Scots," "Wales for the Welsh," it trans-

mates into the nobler sentiment—"England and the English, Scotland and the Scots, Wales and the Welsh for the whole world." It is in this sense that Tennyson wrote truly—

That man's the best cosmopolite,
Who loves his native country most.

The patriot-prophet always appears at a time when his country is becoming degenerate and incapable of making its own contribution to the life of the world. He starts by seeing what our Lord once saw, and feeling then as He felt—"When He saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." The putrescence of national life, the disintegration of decay press upon him with irresistible power, and he emerges out of the wilderness or the cloister into the highways and the city streets with a great call to repentance. His one passion is to stay the degeneracy, to snatch his people from that perilous incline down which they are drifting to destruction and to set them again upon the path they have forsaken, which alone can lead them to their predestined niche in the manifold economy of God.

The Italy of Mazzini's day was not less broken and distressed than that of Dante's or Savonarola's. A great European statesman had sneered at Italy as merely "a geographical expression"; and the description was not untrue. That dream of an united Italy which Dante had dared to dream five hundred years before was still in the clouds. It was to this ideal that Mazzini devoted himself

while yet a young man, for it he lived and suffered and fought. Though that republic in which he had hoped to see Italy united was never established, he nevertheless lived to see Italy a nation, settling down to order its new-found life on lines which would enable it to stand unashamed in the Councils of Europe, and to make its own contribution to the enrichment of the common life of man. Mazzini, unlike his friend Ruffini, was not permitted to die for Italy—he was compelled to do that more difficult —to *live* for his country. In one of his essays, he quotes Lamennais, that noble French priest—"Faith demands action, not tears. It demands of us the power of sacrifice, sole origin of our salvation. It seeks Christians capable of looking down upon the world from on high and facing its fatigues without fear; Christians capable of saying, '*We will die for this*'; above all, Christians capable of saying, '*We will LIVE for this.*'" Such an one was Mazzini himself.

Christian certainly in no orthodox sense, yet in ideal, in outlook, in conduct essentially Christian, he looked abroad upon the life of Italy with agony for its sorrows, and a passionate yearning for its redemption. It was no inspiring spectacle that Italy presented at that time. National vitality there was none. The people were plunged into a gross materialism where they were not buried in a desperate indifference. The society of the Carbonari which Mazzini joined was zealous enough for Italian independence, but its spirit was utilitarian, its methods altogether opportunist. Mazzini himself was neither the one nor the other. "I

believed," he says, "that the great problem of the day was a religious problem to which all other questions were secondary." "The people," he wrote in the great manifesto, *Faith and the Future*, "lack faith . . . the faith that arouses the multitudes, faith in their own destiny, in their own mission and in the mission of the epoch; the faith that combats and prays; the faith that enlightens and bids men advance fearlessly in the ways of God and humanity, with the sword of the people in their hand, the religion of the people in their heart and the future of the people in their soul." Faith, in Mazzini's view, was essentially the power of "seeing the invisible," the faculty of deriving inspiration from its eternal sources in the unseen. He had little patience with the devious ways and the compromising spirit of orthodox statecraft; and the redemption of Italy must be sought along another path. The soul of the people needed revitalizing, to be raised from the very dead, indeed. This was possible only by calling upon them, as another prophet of old had called upon his people, to "lift up their eyes on high." Mazzini broke away utterly from that revolutionary spirit the ideals of which rose no higher than the stomach or the pocket, and preached to a people held in the deadly grip of an arid materialism, the old Gospel that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God."

Mazzini's early agitations ended disastrously for himself; he suffered a long exile full of strange vicissitudes. Nevertheless, he preached his Gospel in season and out of season; and his exile in many

respects served him in good stead. It enlarged his already large outlook, gave him a truer perspective than he would otherwise have had, and so made him the prophet not of a nation merely, but of a whole continent. He saw on the broad plain of European history what he saw in little in Italy. This did not in the least weaken the intensity of his feeling for Italy. On the contrary, it deepened it, for it was in and through Italy that he hoped to see accomplished that synthesis of the European peoples which would virtually be the new birth of Man. It is a commonplace of history and biography that Rome has a glamour which profoundly affects all minds that are sensitive to its atmosphere and its traditions. Mr. Morley has told us what a great revolution his first visit to Rome wrought in the mind and the religious temper of the late Mr. Gladstone. Mazzini fell under the same spell. "God chose Rome," he says, "as the Interpreter of His design among the nations. Twice has she given unity to the world; she will bestow it a third time and forever." The course of history seems to have drifted away from the channel of Mazzini's political anticipations; but it is none the less important for our understanding of Mazzini that we should remember that he looked to Rome for the enunciation of the new idea, the message of the new epoch, which was to transmute the jealous peoples of Europe into one vast commonwealth bound together by a common religious ideal.

The message of the nineteenth century, according to Mazzini, was to be "synthesis" or "association." The Protestant Reformation he regarded as having

established finally the great principle of individual rights. It was the revolt of the individual intellect and conscience against the organized tyranny of an obsolete and unspiritual Church. He agreed that the French Revolution was in a sense the "political translation" of this principle; but he was in no wise inclined to hail that episode with the same fervent approval as others had done, for he regarded it in its ultimate issue as a demonstration of the real and inevitable end of the principle of individualism pushed to the extreme—it had led to despotism. This principle has to be qualified by the other—"association," "collectivism." There are not only personal rights but also personal duties. The mission of the nineteenth century was the establishment of the collectivist principle in national and international life, setting the obligations of the individual by the side of his prerogatives. The previous epoch had shown what society owed to the individual, the nineteenth century would show what the individual owed to society. How far Mazzini was right in his prognostications, the student of Mr. Dicey's recent work, *Law and Opinion in England*, will recognize. While the trend of legislation in the first half of the nineteenth century, dominated by Benthamism, had been individualistic, the trend of the latter half, speaking generally, has been collectivist. And the same tendency is discernible elsewhere than in this country.

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,

and each age adds its own chapter. With a true prophet's insight, Mazzini discovered what manner

of addition the nineteenth century would make ; and if all that in the fervour of his idealism he had anticipated did not come to pass, yet in the main he saw truly. The Chartists, the Christian Socialists of the mid-century, the Labour movement of our own day, and all the varied manifestations of co-operation and of the democratic spirit are all alike evidence of that "social faith" in which Mazzini saw the only hope of the peoples. ²

"For God and Man"—these were the words inscribed on the banner which Mazzini carried so long and so bravely. He believed in spite of all appearance to the contrary that the passing of time meant surely and certainly the unfolding of the divine purpose in man. The cause of God and man are one. "Man," says Dr. Garvie, "must be conceived as a means towards God's ends, but not as merely a means, but a means in such sense that he fulfils his own ends in realizing God's." ¹ To this statement Mazzini would have subscribed. Starting from a faith in the inviolability of the human ego, Mazzini asserts that the individual has "his own mission of citizenship within the sphere of the Fatherland." But the Fatherland, while itself the home of an association of individuals, is in its turn a unit in the larger association of the peoples, and Mazzini asserts that all progress depends upon a frank and practical recognition of this principle. Humanity must move onward in the mass. It is through the mass-movement of the race that the individual comes into his own ; and this mass-movement was to be the next great stage in the

¹ *The Ritschlian Theology*, p. 169.

unfolding of the divine purpose. That human history, as Carlyle said, was at bottom the history of certain great men ; that God had elevated the race by the giants He had made (a fact of which Mazzini himself provides a splendid instance) may have been true in the past, but it was no longer to be so. "No achievement," however, "of the past is rejected. Before us is the evolution of a future in which the two eternal elements of every organization—the individual and humanity, liberty and association—will be harmonized ; in which one whole synthesis, a veritable religious formula, will, without suppressing any in favour of the rest, embrace all the revelations of progress, all the holy ideas that have been successively transmitted to us by providential design."

Because God was "in the beginning," Mazzini believed, in spite of all the reactions and setbacks of the tale of which human history is so full, that the great principles of progress had been permanently active. He condemns what he calls the "circular movement" school of history, which holds that because human nature is always and everywhere the same, history must of necessity repeat itself. Newman has expressed the idea—

The world has cycles in its course,
That once has been is acted o'er again,
Not by some fated law which need appal
Our faith or binds our deed as with a chain,
But by men's separate sins which blended still
The same bad round fulfil.

That history does, though it need not, repeat itself was Newman's idea ; but Mazzini denied that

history ever repeated itself at all. Parallels, analogies there may be, but never "the *same* bad round." The "increasing purpose" may be retarded, but never altogether stayed; and notwithstanding the discouragements and reverses he suffered in his own day and mission he believed that the race was moving grandly to its goal—

When the schemes and all the systems, kingdoms and
republics fall,
Something higher, kindlier, holier—all for each and each
for all,
All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and
Truth,
All the millions one at length with the visions of my youth :
Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue,
I have seen her far away, for is not earth as yet so young ?

Mazzini in one place tells the story of Galileo before the Inquisition. He had recanted, had withdrawn the damnable heresy of the earth's mobility, but as he was departing from the court, he turned back and cried—"And yet it moves!" "Child of Humanity," cries Mazzini, "raise thy brow to the Sun of God and read upon the heavens, IT MOVES! Faith and action! The future is ours."

Whence, we may justly inquire, did Mazzini derive this faith? It was due, no doubt, in part to his own temperamental optimism; but had he no firmer ground than this for its faith, it must frequently have given way before the discouragements and the reverses of his career. There is one noble passage in *Faith and the Future* which shows that our prophet's faith rested upon more solid ground than the vacillating intuitions of the human heart. After describing the state of utter

hopelessness and darkness of the world under the Roman empire, when "philosophy had sunk first into scepticism, then into epicureanism, then into subtlety and words, when poetry had been transformed into satire," he goes on—

"Yet there were moments when men were terror-stricken by the solitude around them, and trembled at their isolation. They ran to embrace the cold and naked statues of their once venerated gods, to implore of them a spark of moral life, a ray of faith, even an illusion. They departed, their prayers unheard, with despair in their hearts and blasphemy on their lips. . . .

"Yet this was not the death agony of the world. It was the conclusion of one evolution of the world which had reached its ultimate expression. A great epoch was exhausted, and passing away to give place to another the first utterances of which had already been heard in the north, and which wanted but the *Initiator* to be revealed.

"He came. The soul the most full of love, the most sacredly virtuous, the most deeply inspired by God and the future, that men have yet seen on earth—Jesus. He bent over the corpse of the dead world, and whispered a word of faith. Over the clay that had lost all of man but the movement and the form he uttered words until then unknown, *Love, Sacrifice, a heavenly origin*. And the dead arose. A new life circulated through the clay which philosophy had tried in vain to reanimate. From that corpse arose the Christian world, the world of liberty and equality. From that clay arose the true Man, the image of God, the precursor of humanity.

"Christ expired. All He had asked of mankind wherewith to save them, says Lamennais, was a Cross whereon to die. But ere He died He had announced the *glad tidings* to the people. To those who asked of Him whence He had received it, He answered—From God, the Father. From the height of His Cross He had invoked Him twice. Therefore, upon the Cross did His victory begin and still does it endure." J

There is here no explicit doctrine of the person of Christ, or of the Atonement : but there is here a frank recognition of the supreme place Christ fills in human history. But there is also a good deal more. Properly understood, this passage like several others rests upon something like the Pauline conception of our Lord as "the representative man." The point of view and the application are different from those of Paul, but the essential truth is one in both. It is not very important whether Mazzini knew exactly the theological implications of these great affirmations ; but it is clear that to him Christ is the epitome of humanity, Calvary a summary of history. That linking of God and man which Christ in life, supremely in death, accomplished was not the promise so much as the guarantee of the realization of human destiny, for man's destiny is in God. In what Christ has done we see the pledge of what man will be, and by that same path of love and sacrifice which led Christ to Calvary shall humanity pass up to God. The story of Christ is in little the story of the race. Christ is the Captain of the salvation not only of men but of Man. The path He trod is the highway of the eternal purpose.

By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I
track,
Toiling up new Calvaries with the Cross that turns not back.
And those mounts of anguish number how each generation
learned
One new word of that grand Credo which in prophet-hearts
has burned,
Since the First Man stood, God-conquered, with his face to
heaven upturned.

For humanity sweeps onward. Where to-day the martyr
stands
There to-morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his
hands.
Far in front the Cross stands ready and the crackling faggots
burn,
And the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return
To gather up the scattered fragments into History's golden
urn.

"We advance," says our prophet, "encouraged by the sacred promise of Jesus"—the promise not only spoken in words but implied in His life and work. For assuredly His practice was not behind, but rather before His precept; and Christ's supreme promise and message to mankind was its destiny in God. It is true He "bestowed upon the human race that sublime formula of *brotherhood*," but that in Mazzini's view was not an end, but simply a means to a larger end. He believed that men cannot relate themselves adequately to God save through "collective humanity." This is the truth that Christianity recognizes in the emphasis it places upon the "communion of the saints." Man only realizes himself in fellowship; and it is therefore only so far as he consciously participates in the forward movement of his kind, that he can fully bring himself into union with God. Mazzini did not at any time,

as far as I am aware, deny the possibility of direct personal communion with God, but it was relevant to his message to emphasize the indubitable fact that it is only through conscious and deliberate identification of oneself with the body of mankind, that the union of God and man—man's true end and God's chief aim—can in the end be secured.

Christ in His relation to collective man—that is the contribution which Mazzini makes to our thought of Christ. Our prophet had an eye for the multitude, and the sins and the imperfections of the individual were for him merged in the need of the whole. "In contemplating men, say soldiers, weavers, colliers, in a collective body," says one of Dora Greenwell's *Two Friends*, "we feel the heart drawn out in a deepened sympathy and interest, which none among them perhaps as individuals would command." "Does it not," is the answer, "arise from being brought within the influences of the broad tendencies of humanity where individual limitations disappear, swept away by the force of the current? Such moments seem to say to us, 'Behold the Man': they are baptismal and endue the soul with much strength. . . . Passion, interest, caprice belong to the individual, and in this surely lies the strength of the saying, VOX POPULI, VOX DEI, that a number of persons acting together are naturally less under the control of circumstance, 'this world's unspiritual God,' and less fettered by prejudice than the few. Also we know that in every lump there is a leaven of nobleness, some, perhaps many, tender and truthful souls. The heart of a people, if it could but speak, is *always in its right*

place." . . . "And it is this too, which gives such a double dye to all sins against national freedom, which is but the expression of a people's life. If it is a crime to slay a man, what must it be to strike at a nation ; to kill a man in his organic life. . . . To break faith with a nation is to break a deeper trust, to blight a fuller hope than can be involved in any treachery towards the individual. Who is this, the true Antichrist, he that denieth the Father and the Son, but the absolutist and the tyrant ? We are not surely sufficiently sensible of the atheism involved in the deep iniquity of oppression. *It is the denial of God through the denial of man.*" Mazzini's view could not really be better expressed, and it was because he believed thus far so intensely that he extends the principle and says that "the lips of patriots will cease to utter the word 'foreigner' as a term of reproach, which in men calling themselves brothers is a blasphemy against the Cross of Christ." On Calvary, Mazzini saw the pledge and promise of human solidarity, because there he saw the representative Man in perfect union with God. The Cross of Christ is the seal of human brotherhood, the triumph of the Cross the earnest of that higher synthesis, that "perfect man," wherein "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ." THE SON OF MAN, "is all and in all."

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