ARTICLE III.

THE PERMANENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE INTENTION OF ITS FOUNDER.[1]

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In closing his epistle to the Romans — that compact and comprehensive exposition of the gospel in its adaptation alike to the Jewish and to the Gentile world — the apostle Paul gives, in few words, a summary of Christianity as a final revelation of the one absolute and universal religion. In Rom. xvi. 25 – 27, in the condensed phrases of a single sentence — in form a doxology — the origin and the mission of Christianity are set forth in almost every feature and function that could characterize a revelation as being complete and final: its historic continuity in the scriptures; its gradual unveiling through the ages; its concentrated manifestation in the ministry of Christ; the universality of its sphere; the permanence and the absolute supremacy of its office as the religion appointed of God for the enlightenment and the reformation of mankind.

In these particulars, the close of the epistle tallies exactly with its opening.[2] There, Paul speaks of the gospel which God "had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures;" and here he describes the gospel as made known or opened up "by the scriptures of the prophets." There he speaks of Jesus Christ, his incarnation and his resurrection from the dead, as the very "gospel of God"; and here the preaching of Jesus Christ is the full revealing of that "mystery" which though "kept secret" as to the

[1] The substance of this Article was delivered as a Baccalaureate Address to the Senior Class in Andover Theological Seminary, in July, 1864; and also as an Anniversary Discourse before the American Missionary Association, at its meeting in New Haven, October, 1864.

[2] Rom. xvi. 25 seq., and i. 1–6.

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time and the manner of it, had been silently unfolding since the world began.[1] There, he speaks of himself as having received from Christ an apostleship of this gospel "among all nations"; here, again, he describes the gospel as appointed "to be made known to all nations, by commandment of the everlasting God." And alike in the opening of the epistle and at its close, to secure a universal "obedience to the faith," as herein declared, is the purpose of God in "giving commandment" for the propagation of the gospel. And this was the very formula by which our Lord defined the object, the method, and the duration of the Christian ministry. "Go make all nations my disciples; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Clearly, then, in the intention of its founder, and in the conception of its chief expounder and propagandist, the apostle Paul, Christianity, contemplated as an entire system of religious faith, unfolded with historical unity in the Bible, was designed to be the permanent, the universal, and the only religion of mankind; complete as a revelation of divine truth, and as the manifestation of the divine life and love; adequate to all the wants and all the phases of humanity, and adapted to all the coming ages of the world.

Whatever theory of Christ and Christianity men may adopt; however widely they may differ in their estimate of the facts of the gospel, or in their interpretation of its doctrines; whatever place they may assign to Christianity among the elements of our civilization; whatever value they may give it as a system of truth, or a power for social and moral progress; whether they accept it as a divine revelation authenticated by miracles, or construe it into a myth of purely human invention — there can be no question as to the claim of Christianity itself to have come from God to men, and to be, by divine appointment, the one, sufficient,

[1] Compare 1 Pet. i. 10–13.

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authoritative, and unchanging system of faith and of morals, and the only hope of the world with respect to an enlightened, spiritual, and saving progress. All this is claimed by him who said of himself that he "came into the world to bear witness unto the truth"; that he is "the way, the truth, and the life"; that he is "the light of the world," and that "the world must be saved through him"; and who said concerning the scriptures that testify of him and his kingdom, "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Completeness of adaptation to mankind, with a view to permanence of control in the sphere of morality and religion, and to universality of effect upon human society — this is written upon every page of the New Testament, from the announcement of the birth of Jesus as "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Israel," to the commission of the apostles "to make known the gospel unto all nations for their obedience to its faith," and onward through all the recorded and the promised triumphs of Christianity, until "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light" of the new and holy Jerusalem.[1]

Christianity, we repeat, in the intention of its Founder, is the complete and the final system of religious faith and practice for mankind; and the permanent, comprehensive, and universal agency for the moral advancement of the race. It is not one among religions; it is *the* religion. It is not one among agencies of moral reform and progress; it is *the* agency for constructing a true civilization. It is not one among systems of truth divinely accredited; it is *the* truth set forth by divine appointment to be everywhere received and obeyed.

But there has arisen of late years a social philosophy which treats all religions as the natural development of the human mind in successive stages of its progress, and which regards Christianity as simply a stage in that development; not a supernatural religion, ordained to be

[1] Rev. xxi. 24.

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universal and permanent, but a natural growth of its era, and destined in turn to give place to some higher product of philosophic thought.

Akin to this philosophy of social progress is the claim of some modern scientists, that their discoveries in nature antiquate the Bible as the crude product of an unscientific age, when mysteries were miracles, and the legends of superstition were accepted as supernatural facts. This form of disbelief has in it nothing of the rancor that marked the infidelity of the eighteenth century. It may be supercilious toward Christianity as a theological experiment that has had its day, or may affect to patronize it for certain ideas and principles worth retaining in the future of the race; but it does not denounce the Bible as wholesale imposture, or sneer at Christians as priest-ridden fools. Yet, because of this air of candor and superiority, which admits certain excellences in Christianity, but passes these to the credit of human nature, while it also claims that the world has outgrown the system whose virtues it retains, this form of disbelief challenges a more serious refutation than the old infidelity would now require.

It goes beyond Mr. Parker's distinction between "the transient and the permanent in Christianity," and affirms that Christianity was in its very nature transitory, and is now ready to vanish away; that the claim of an historical revelation contained in a book, must yield to the "original revelation of consciousness[1]"; that "the interior spirit of any age is the spirit of God," and that the spirit of each age must appoint for it a "creed of its own;" that "the new religion of nature," in whose articles "revelation is the disclosure of truth to the active and simple reason," and "regeneration the bursting of the moral consciousness into flower"—this "theism of nature," interpreted by science, and developed from the human soul, must become the faith of the future, in place of the supernaturalism that has ruled in the faith of the past.[2]

[1] Miss Frances Power Cobbe, in "Bro[illegible]

[2] Address of Rev. O. B. Frothingham,

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Conceding to Christianity a place in the religious development of man, conceding that it was even an immeasurable advance upon foregoing religions, that it met certain needs of its time, and has accomplished vast good by its higher ethics, this new faith yet joins issue with it as a supernatural religion, introduced into the world by God for the permanent and universal governance of mankind. It seeks not to oppose Christianity by naked infidelity, nor by positive irreligion; but claims to advance upon the Bible by a more intellectual and more absolute conception of religion. Thus Comte, confounding, as French scepticism is apt to confound, the Church of the Middle Ages with Christianity, says of that theological polity, "no true philosopher will ever forget that it afforded the beneficent guardianship under which the formation and earliest development of modern societies took place; but it is equally incontestible that, for three centuries past, its influence among the most advanced nations has been essentially retrograde, notwithstanding some partial service."[1] Hence he asserts of this organized Christianity, that a system which "could not hold its ground before the natural progress of intelligence and of society, can never again serve as a basis of social order"; and then going beyond the polity to doctrine, he adds that the ascendancy of the scientific spirit must hinder any real restoration of the theological spirit; that "religious doctrine has lost its moral prerogatives," and that morality must be systemized by the normal growth of human faculties and affections, "without religious intervention."

And Mr. Herbert Spencer, while he disowns Comte's Positivism as the ultimate philosophy, yet treats all religions, from the grossest Fetichism up to the most refined creed of Christianity, simply as "so many natural products of human nature"; and holds that "the religious creeds through which mankind successively pass, are, during the eras in which they are severally held, the best that could

[1] Comte, Positive Philosophy (American ed.), pp. 40

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be held"; and that with the growth of humanity "the creed which each period evolves is one more in conformity with the needs of the time than the creed which preceded it."[1]

"These various beliefs," says the same writer, "are parts of the constituted order of things; and not accidental, but necessary parts. Seeing how one or other of them is everywhere present; is of perennial growth; and when cut down, develops in a form but slightly modified; we cannot avoid the inference that they are needful accompaniments of human life, severally fitted to the societies in which they are indigenous. From the highest point of view, we must recognize them as elements in that great evolution of which the beginning and end are beyond our knowledge or conception; as modes of manifestation of the Unknowable; and as having this for their warrant."[2]

A late number of the Westminster Review speaks of the Christian faith as already falling into desuetude, through the law of progress in man's moral nature: "The crumbling decay and eventual downfall of a wide-spread faith and cultus, which have existed for centuries," is with it a foregone conclusion. It tells us that sceptical opinions now fall on the public mind "like sparks on tinder. They pervade literature and society like an atmosphere or a gas which no doors or windows will exclude." "Has man," asks the Review, "once for all, been provided, in any of the traditional creeds of Christendom, with something invariable and indestructible, which no progress can throw out of date, no discovery permanently injure, no change of circumstances render unsuited to society? These questions are now fairly put before the world, and must be answered one way or the other."[3] In a word, the sum of the Positive philosophy, as taught by its various schools, is that Christianity can by no means be accepted as a finality in religion, but that something in advance of this as a system

[1] Essay on the Use of Anthropomorphism.
[2] First Principles, p. 121.
[3] April, 1864, pp. 184, 185.

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of belief is yet to be evolved from the world of science, the experience of history, and the nature of man.

If this be so, then our churches and our pulpits are a superfluity; or worse, they are a hinderance to the progress of true religion. If Christianity is already antiquated, then our schools of theology are a clog upon thought, since both their systems and their text-book are of the past. If human nature is to develop a higher, better faith than that of the Bible, then our missions will but delay the advancement of pagan nations, by imposing upon them doctrines and beliefs which human science and society have outgrown, and which they, in turn, must lay aside in order to a real and substantial progress. Why do, at so much pains and cost, that which philosophy and experience teach us must be undone, if we would accomplish the very end at which we aim — the permanent improvement of mankind in knowledge and the arts of life, in social condition and in moral character?

The question, then, whether Christianity was intended to be, and is adapted to be, the religion of mankind in all ages, is not a theoretical speculation, but a vital, practical question, — a question that should be fairly tested by the new lights of physical and social science, as well as by the older lights of history and experience. To establish the claim of Christianity to a universal and permanent domination in the sphere of religion, we must prove not only that in its origin it was a revelation from God, but also that it was given as a finality, and for universal diffusion. The Jewish ritual was equally of divine origin; yet this was of limited obligation, and was designed to be of limited duration. And it were conceivable that Christianity, though a revelation from God, could, like Judaism, have had some provisional or transient purpose in the progress of the race, leaving to after-times the full development of man through the discoveries of reason or by new revelations. But the peculiarity of Christianity is, that in its origin it was, in no manner, an outgrowth of its age, while in its spirit, its doctrine, its methods, and its scope, it is equally adapted to all ages.

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I. Christianity was not a natural development of human thought, but an incoming of divine thought and love upon the plane of our nature.

Christianity derived nothing either of doctrine, of precept, or of ritual from any system of philosophy or of religion outside of the land of Judea. Its founder never passed beyond the limits of his native Syria; he attended no school of secular learning; and his life at Nazareth was so remote from such means of education as his native country afforded, that his townsmen expressed their astonishment at his wisdom, knowing that he had had none of the advantages of the schools. Jesus of Nazareth never came under the influence of the Grecian philosophy. He did not grow up in an atmosphere of Roman culture. There is not a word of his recorded utterances that would suggest that he had ever read a line of Plato or of Aristotle, or had heard the then fresh fame of Cicero. He knows no book but the Hebrew scriptures; quotes no other as an authority for his sayings; mentions no name outside the line of Jewish history, and no opinion outside the pale of Jewish thought; but gives forth his own doctrine in simple, independent aphorisms, and in brief parables and discourses, without reference to any school of philosophy or system of theology in preceding ages, or then extant. Nor can the doctrines and precepts of Christ be traced by affinity or assimilation to any such school or system of antiquity. He borrowed nothing from his own age, nor from any prior age; and neither himself nor his religion was an outgrowth of his times; but both were a protest against the world as it then stood toward God.

With one exception, his apostles learned all they knew directly from the master. "Unlearned and ignorant men" was the designation given them by the Sanhedrim. Unskilled in languages, unversed in literature, knowing only that which Christ had taught them; they borrowed nothing from their age. Paul, the exceptional case, while he knew the drift of the Greek philosophy, and was personally

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familiar with the religious systems of his time, knew these but to condemn them as false, corrupt, and destructive. In the very centres of philosophy and art, he knew nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, though "to the Greeks the preaching of the cross was foolishness." Though an occasional resemblance may be traced between the ethical principles and maxims of Seneca and those of Paul—enough to establish an identity between natural and revealed religion; yet the grand doctrines of Paul's epistles concerning God's plan of restoration for a sinful race can be traced to no pagan writer of antiquity. So far from being a natural outgrowth of the times, Christianity was in oppugnation to the times, and the times were everywhere hostile to Christians. Beginning as a small minority among the Jews, they were hated and persecuted by their own nation. Then exiles scattered abroad, they were at first despised as weak enthusiasts, then persecuted as enemies of the state and of the gods. Christianity originating in a narrow, subjugated province, among a people unrecognized in the sphere of philosophy and of literary culture, originating independently of all foreign systems of philosophy and religion, won its way against the contempt of genius and learning, against the strength of social customs and religious usages, against popular superstitions, the prejudices of caste and race, and the persecutions of the civil power throughout the whole world. It encountered the keen intellectual weapons of a Celsus and a Julian, as well as the sharpness and pains of persecution. There is nothing either in its doctrines, in its spirit, or in its history to mark it as a natural outgrowth of its age, or a product of human nature in any age. Tacitus, the most intelligent and candid pagan historian of that period, has recorded how despicable and how hated was this new superstition of the despised and hated race of Jews.

There was, indeed, in the moral needs and failures of antiquity, in the decay of the old philosophies and religions, a silent, unconscious preparation of the world for the pure

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and sublime teachings and the remedial influences of Christianity; but the adaptation of Christianity to its age no more argues its natural outgrowth from that age, than the adaptation of the Sanitary Commission to the wants and the wounds of our soldiers argues that the Commission is a natural outgrowth of the spirit of war; no more than the adaptation of free institutions to recover the South from the material waste and the social dissolution of war argues that free institutions are the natural outgrowth of the system that has brought upon her these vast and terrible woes. The horrors of war occasioned the demand for that healing Commission which is a development, not of the age, but of the spirit of Christianity. The wastes of war have unveiled to us the curse of slavery, and the need of those remedial institutions which are the outgrowth of the spirit of freedom. So the acceptance of Christianity was, in some sense, "a symptom of the wants and aspirations struggling beneath the surface of the age." But let us not confound occasion with origin, nor an adaptation to heal with an outgrowth from the disease.

In one respect Christianity was an outgrowth, a development from that which had gone before. But this only in the line of the Hebrew scriptures and the Jewish ritual. It was the unveiling of the mystery that lay hidden under those ancient prophecies, within those venerable forms. It was the revelation of that great plan which was intimated to man directly upon his fall, yet which, in the manner of it, had been secret since the world began, whereby man should be restored to the likeness and the fellowship of God, and the earth should be renewed as the garden of the Lord. The mystery of ages, "How shall man be just with God," became a *manifestation* "through the preaching of Jesus Christ," according to "the scriptures of the prophets." And this doctrinal unity of the scriptures, in the great facts of the holiness and the justice of God in his moral government over the world, of the apostasy and the condemnation of mankind, and of the reunion of man with

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God through the divine sacrifice for man's redemption; this unity of thought in the narrow line of the Hebrew scriptures, apart from all the philosophies and religions of the world; unity in conceptions so just, so true, so unequalled, so sublime; a unity that stands unveiled in Christ from germ to stalk and to the crowning flower,—this argues not a spontaneous outgrowth from the soil of nature, but a special planting by the hand of God.

That calm and comprehensive historian of the Roman Empire, Mr. Merivale, speaking from the point of view of historical criticism, and contrasting the genius of Christianity with that of antecedent and contemporary faiths, shows how foreign from any and all of these was the conception and origin of the new belief: "The old beliefs of the primitive ages, which had done something at least to temper prosperity and sweeten the ills of life, had perished to a poisonous core in a shrivelled husk. The science of ethics was apparently exhausted. It had finished its career in blank disappointment, and there was no faith or courage to commence it afresh. Alexander wept on the margin of the eastern ocean that there were no more lands to conquer; Caesar, from the farthest bourn of philosophic speculation, may have confessed with a sigh that within the visible horizon of human intuitions there were no more provinces for reason to invade. The Great Disposer had yet another leaf to turn in the book of his manifold dispensations; but the rise and progress of a new religion, with vigor to control the jarring prejudices of nations and classes, asserting supernatural facts, and claiming divine authority, appealing with equal boldness on the one hand to history, on the other to conscience, shaping an outward creed, and revealing inward ideas, the law of the simple and the science of the wise, exalting obedience in the place of ambition, and expanding patriotism into philanthropy, was the last offspring of the womb of time that Caesar could have imagined, or Cicero have ventured to anticipate."[1]

[1] History of the Romans under the Empire, Vol. II. pp. 427. 428.

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Call Christianity a development if we will; its germ lay not in the decaying husks of the old philosophies. Call it a development; its vital impulse came not from the current thoughts and hopes of its time. The almost contemporary writings of Cicero "may be searched in vain for a single expression of reliance on the progressive improvement of mankind. The two poles of his philosophy, between which he wavers with perpetual oscillation, are regret for the past and resignation to the present." [1] Christianity redeemed the past and created a future. Call it a development, if that term suits our philosophy; yet must we admit that this is a development from another source than any that philosophy had yet disclosed, and in another line from any that the best faiths of the world had indicated.

All the essential characteristics of Christianity — its doctrines, its methods, its aims, and its effects—prove it the development of a divine plan, "kept secret since the world began," but made manifest by the gospel of Jesus Christ illumining with one broad, glowing belt of light, the starlit heaven of the prophets.

II. But these very scriptures teach us also that, "according to the commandment of the everlasting God," this gospel is to be "made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith." It was designed to be the final, the universal, the perpetual religion of mankind. This it asserts as its aim and its prerogative. It is the gospel of truth and of salvation "to all nations" down to the end of the world. To justify this assertion, Christianity must prove itself equal, as a *religion*, to all the wants and all the capacities of mankind, in all phases of society and in all periods of time. Now Christianity has, thus far, met the religious wants of the race without exhausting itself, and it is to-day equal to the demands of the human soul and of human society, in all that pertains to religion, in an age of intellectual inquiry, of political progress, and of humanitary reform.

That Christianity has proved adequate to the needs of

[1] Merivale, Vol. II. p. 427.

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human society and the developments of human progress hitherto, history will testify by this one pregnant fact: that Christianity has lived on steadily through eighteen centuries, and no age has yet come up to its standard of personal living, or its measure of social regeneration. Here we summon a witness whom none will accuse of a superstitious veneration for the scriptures, or of a blind devotion to Christianity under any received form of theology or of worship. Speaking of the true spirit of Christianity, the late Theodore Parker said: "For eighteen hundred years this Christianity of Christ has been in the world, to warn and encourage. Violence and cunning, allies of sin, have opposed. Every weapon learning could snatch from the arsenals of the past, or science devise anew, or pride and cruelty and wit invent, has been used by mistaken men to destroy this fabric. Not a stone has fallen from the heavenly arch of real religion; not a loop-hole been found where a shot could enter."[1] How "vast has the influence of Jesus been. How his spirit wrought in the hearts of his disciples, rude, selfish, bigoted, as at first they were. How it has wrought in the world. His words judge the nations. The wisest son of man has not measured their height. They speak to what is deepest in profound men; what is holiest in good men; what is divinest in religious men. They kindle anew the flame of devotion in hearts long cold. They are spirit and life. His truth was not derived from Moses and Solomon; but the light of God shone through him, not colored nor bent aside. His life is the perpetual rebuke of all time since. It condemns ancient civilization; it condemns modern civilization. Wise men we have since had, and good men; but this Galilean youth strode before the world whole thousands of years, so much of divinity was in him. His words solve the questions of this present age.[2]..... Let men improve never so far in civilization, or soar never so high on the wings of religion and love, they can never

[1] Discourse of Religion, p. 296 seq.

[2] Parker's Miscellaneous Writings, p. 175.

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outgo the flight of truth and Christianity. It will always be above them. It is as if we were to fly towards a star, which becomes larger and more bright the nearer we approach, till we enter and are absorbed in its glory."[1]

When we analyze more particularly the adaptations of Christianity to our times, we find, in the first place:

(1) That the religion of the Bible is equal to the demands of man's spiritual nature in the most advanced stage of scientific thought, and under the highest stimulus of intellectual inquiry. To demand of a book of religion, written in the most ancient times, for popular instruction in religious truth and duty, that it should anticipate the discoveries of physical science by many centuries, that it should arrange the phenomena of nature under scientific formula and always speak of them in scientific terms, were an incongruity that science itself must condemn. That were to defeat the very object of the book, by making it unintelligible, and so far incredible. To charge such a book with scientific errors because it describes nature according to popular modes of conception and speech were equally illogical. As a book for the common people it could not do otherwise; and this very feature of it makes it a book for all ages and nations, at whatever grades of intellectual culture. Science can fairly demand of the Bible neither the facts nor the phrases which it employs within its own sphere. But it can insist, and ought to insist, that, as a scheme of religious thought and of spiritual life, the Bible shall be equal to the wants of an intellectual and inquiring age; and that in matters of fact it shall contravene no fact or principle fairly established from other sources. For if the Bible be not equal intellectually to the demands of human thought when enlightened and stimulated by science, then it must lose its hold upon the world as knowledge advances; and if it be found at variance with truths well established from nature and reason, then must it yield its claim to obedience as having divine authority.

Now with regard to matters of fact in the physical world,

[1] Parker's Miscellaneous Writings, p. 184.

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the portraiture of nature in the Hebrew poetry, Humboldt being witness, is marvellous for its comprehensiveness and its accuracy.[1] No physicist could improve upon it for purposes of popular description and of devotional meditation. So of the Mosaic record of the creation. Neither the principles of Hebrew criticism nor the theories of geology are yet in a condition to warrant a minute "parallelism between the ages of nature, as revealed to us in the fossiliferous strata, and the days of creation described in the first chapter of Genesis." Yet, as a Christian scientist, Dr. Duns observes: "Intelligent readers must often have noticed the remarkable way in which many of the most striking words of Genesis fit into the requirements of true science. Take the last and most scientific treatise on meteorology, and, in the light of all it makes known of the action of light and heat on the elements which compose our atmosphere, of evaporation, and of the watery treasures which the air holds suspended in it, you will be struck with the harmony between these phenomena and the changes described upon the second day of creation, when God divided the waters from the waters, lifted the vapory clouds from the face of the deep, and made

> "The firmament, expanse of liquid, pure,
> Transparent, elemental air."[2]

Taken in its broad outlines as a scheme of the world's origin, this record of the physical creation, together with the unity of the race and the geographical dispersion of the primitive nations therein described, finds a growing confirmation in the soberer judgments of science. Science is still in the stage of hypothesis concerning that far antiquity; and what to-day seems contrary to some received interpretation of the Bible, may hereafter be harmonized, through new discoveries or a wiser criticism. The account of the creation in Genesis is marked by that sublime principle of *order* which is among the highest results of science, and by

[1] Cosmos, Vol. II., Hebrew Poetry.
[2] Duns's Biblical Natural Science, Vol I. pp. 57 58

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the assertion of a *cause* which science itself must recognize as the end of all inquiry.[1] That general order or plan of the creation the mature results of science tend more and more to verify; and the biblical account of nature, when interpreted as popular, unscientific language should be understood, stands as good for this age of microscopic scrutiny and mathematical analysis, as for an age when the eye was the only observer, and unlettered traditions were the only record. The Bible speaks of physical phenomena in that tropical language which is the habit of the East; but "let not western metaphysics misjudge, lest it be found to misunderstand, eastern aesthetics."[2]

While thus unimpeached upon the physical count, when tested by sound interpretation, this religion of the Bible stands above and beyond all science in its exhibition of the spiritual forces of the universe. Mr. Spencer himself, who proposes a complete philosophy of nature as the basis of a higher religion, makes this candid admission: "The sincere man of science, content to follow wherever the evidence leads him, becomes by each new inquiry more profoundly convinced that the universe is an insoluble problem. Alike in the external and the internal worlds, he sees himself in the midst of perpetual changes, of which he can discover neither the beginning nor the end. If, tracing back the evolution of things, he allows himself to entertain the hypothesis that matter once existed in a diffused form, he finds it utterly impossible to conceive how this came to be so; and equally, if he speculates on the future, he can assign no limit to the grand succession of phenomena ever unfolding themselves before him. ..... When, again, he turns from the succession of phenomena to their essential nature, he is equally at fault. Though he may succeed in resolving all properties of objects into manifestations of force, he is not thereby enabled to realize what force is; but finds, on the contrary, that the more he thinks about it,

[1] See Prof. Blackie on the Mosaic Cosmogony, in "Good Words," Oct. 1861.
[2] Murphy on Genesis, p. 43.

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the more he is baffled. ..... In all directions his investigations eventually bring him face to face with the unknowable; and he ever more clearly perceives it to be the unknowable..... He feels, with a vividness which no others can, the utter incomprehensibleness of the simplest fact, considered in itself. He alone truly *sees* that absolute knowledge is impossible. He alone *knows* that under all things there lies an impenetrable mystery."[1]

In these days of vagrant hypotheses, that assume the air of established theories, it is refreshing now and then to hear from some true scientist the confession of an impenetrable mystery in nature. How confident at first was the nebular hpyothesis of solving the formation of the universe![2] Yet plausible and self-consistent as was this hypothesis, fifty years have added nothing to confirm the ingenious guesses of Herschell and Laplace. It remains only an *hypothesis;* and an eminent authority does not scruple to suggest that "all nebulosity may arise from deficiency in the optical powers of the astronomer, rather than inhere in the constitution of the nebulae themselves." In any event, "the nebular hypothesis throws no light on the origin of diffused matter; and diffused matter as much needs accounting for as concrete matter." So with the hypothesis of development—not yet raised to the dignity of a theory. Like the hypothesis of apostolical succession, it fails at the vital point of the first links; there is nothing to

[1] Illustrations of Universal Progress, pp. 59, 60.

[2] "Laplace once went in form to present an edition of his Systéme du Monde to the first consul. Napoleon, whom some wags had told that this book contained no mention of the name of God, and who was fond of putting embarrassing questions, received it with: 'M. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never even mentioned its Creator.' Laplace, who, though the most supple of politicians, was as stiff as a martyr on every point of his philosophy or religion (e.g. even under Charles X. he never concealed his dislike of the priests), drew himself up, and answered bluntly, 'Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse là.' Napoleon, greatly amused, told this reply to Lagrange, who exclaimed, 'Ah! c'est une belle hypothèse; ca explique beaucoup de choses.'"—Prof. de Morgan, in the Athenaeum.

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hook it to the beginning; since, "the first strata, had they been preserved, instead of containing the lowest rudiments of life, might have contained the foot-prints of the present archangels."[1] It is becoming, then, in science to admit at the beginning, "an impenetrable mystery."

But just where science confesses itself incompetent, Christianity comes forward to unveil the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. It brings us face to face with a personal God, the creator of the universe and its lord; and it brings God face to face with us in Jesus Christ, the incarnation, which was also the manifestation, the unveiling.

Not long ago there was set up in a public square in the city of Frankfort, a huge frame, which purported to contain a work of art designed for a national memorial. For many days it stood there unopened and unexplained; only the dim outlines of a colossal statue were visible to the curious through the chinks of the screens. At length, on an appointed day, the magistrates, the artists, and the literary men of the city, with government officers of rank, accompanied by a band and a chorus of musicians, went in procession to the square, and there, in presence of an immense concourse, the screens were carefully and ceremoniously removed. But curiosity was still baffled by a thick white veil enveloping the statue from head to foot. A long and learned oration sounded forth the genius and worth of a great poet and historian of Germany; and a grand overture of Mendelssohn rendered its homage to the hour. Yet all the while the eager crowd saw nothing but the outlines of a figure veiled in white. At last, the speech and the music over, the ropes were cut from behind, the veil fell, and amid the huzzas of the vast crowd, *Schiller* stood revealed, holding in one hand an open book, in the other a ready pen.

Long time there stood, in the high place of human thought and concourse, seen of many, penetrated by none, a mysterious screen, behind which was said to be hidden the

[1] North American Review, July, 1864, p. 16.

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source of all thought and power, the poem of life and of the universe. At length, when art and culture, and science and philosophy had achieved their highest renown, the trumpets sound, the world gives ear, and some Plato or Aristotle discoursing, with majestic music, of nature and the divine, the screens are drawn aside, and there stands the figure — still covered with an impenetrable veil. Art, music, poetry, all bring their homage, science and philosophy essay their description, but there is no vision, no motion, no life. Only the outer screens are removed; the veil remains untaken away. Then, in the fulness of time, there reaches forth from the Invisible a hand that cuts the cord; the veil drops, and we behold "the brightness of the Father's glory," the "image of his person;" in his hand the Book of life, and the pen that reveals all truth, that writes all destinies. Does science sneer at "the mechanical God of Paley," and insist that the theory of development presents a loftier ideal of the First Cause; that "creation by manufacture is a much lower thing than creation by evolution." We care not to argue the secondary question between these methods or processes of creation, since the scriptures, which admit as well of either or both, at the very beginning lift us to a far higher plane of thought. For the first presentation of God in the Bible is of a personal Spirit, having will, wisdom, power, as put forth in the act of creation, be that instantaneous or immeasurable in time; be its method mechanical or derivative, by collocation or by growth. And the next view is of a loving Father caring for the children made in his own image; and the next, of the just Ruler condemning sin; and thus on, in the series of divine manifestations, until Sinai sets forth the holy and merciful Sovereign, and Calvary the righteous and the redeeming God. No pantheistic emanation, no scientific theory of evolution, no metaphysical scheme of the Absolute, can ever so task, so elevate, so satisfy, so exhaust the intellect of man. Robert Browning shows herein a larger faculty than Herbert Spencer, whose highest faith reaches

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only to some "unknown reality which underlies both spirit and matter":

> "I say that miracle was duly wrought
> When, save for it, no faith was possible.
> So faith grew, making void more miracles,
> Because, too much, they would compel, not help.
> I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise."[1]

(2) Christianity is equal to the whole work of social reform and of humanitary progress which our age proposes, and will accomplish that work by the wisest, the simplest, and the surest methods. It might well be argued that the very impulses toward reform that mark this as an age of practical philanthropy, owe their origin to Christianity; for Christianity exists not merely as a doctrine in a text-book, and as an institution in the organic form of the church, but is abroad in the world as a light and an atmosphere; so that the organic philanthropy which is a distinguishing feature of this century, has come into being after so many centuries of Christian influence in *humanizing* mankind, and as a side-growth from its ever-diffusive spirit of charity. This philanthropy originates nowhere outside the pale of Christendom. Though sometimes magnified as a practical religion by men who reject the theology of the Bible, it does not spring from the spirit of religious scepticism as its root, and cannot be sustained by that as its vital force. But all works of philanthropy affiliate themselves with Christianity by a law of natural affinity; they rely mainly upon Christian charity for resources, and upon Christian activity for their accomplishment; and when all is done, philanthropy can be nothing more than a practical improvement of the beatitudes of Christ and his sermon at Nazareth; its achievements can never go beyond the simple record of his life — the Son of man came to seek and to save that

[1] Browning's "Death in the Desert."

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which is lost; he went about doing good, healing all manner of diseases and infirmities, and all that were oppressed of the devil; and philanthropy can frame no higher motto than that which the Lord Jesus gave his disciples: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

A theist of the new school, who unites a masculine vigor of intellect with a feminine delicacy of sentiment, affirms that "the faith founded on consciousness must look for its moral law to the intuitions of the soul, and not to the authority of a book"; and this faith of intuition, she thinks, will teach us the brotherhood of mankind; the love of the weak and the lowly, even though they be unlovely; and will "pour the spirit of love into duty."[1] But we have a book that teaches all this, and more, in its ten commandments and its Sermon on the Mount. Why, then, give up the faith this book has taught us, and which stands transfigured in the life of Christ, only to reconstruct the same of doubtful "intuitions."

Christianity equal to the demands of the age for reform! What but Christianity has given birth and utterance to these demands? What but Christianity has produced an age capable of embracing the interests of humanity, and of making the elevation of man the theme of literature and the care of politics? "In modern times," says one, "all moral and political speculation is forward-looking, and is full of anticipations of new discoveries in happiness and knowledge. But Roman statesmen and philosophers took no such comprehensive survey of the destinies of their race."[2] That survey can be gained only through the gospel, which at once declares that God made of one blood all nations of men, that he hath redeemed them with the blood of his Son, and that he will judge them in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. Man, the offspring and the image of God; man, so loved of God that God spared not his own Son to redeem him; man, so great in his sphere of moral action and in his immortality that God will judge him for his ways

[1] Frances Power Cobbe, "Broken Lights," Chap. XI.

[2] Merivale's Roman Empire, Vol. II. p. 427.

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—ah! here is a subject for philanthropy, and a motive as well, greater than all that nature and science and philosophy can supply.

(3) Christianity is adequate to the work of political reconstruction for which the nations are yearning with hardly suppressed griefs, or heaving with internal fires. While it is as true to-day as when our Lord spake it to Pilate, that his kingdom is not of this world, and that the gospel does not teach political science, nor furnish a model for civil government, nor pronounce upon the forms of government that men have instituted; it is true also that the New Testament is the best manual of political ethics and of civil polity that any age or nation has seen, and that no political society has yet attained to the perfection which the spirit and principles of Christianity would produce, did they once pervade the body politic.

We may even go further and affirm, with a Jewish publicist of France, that there does not exist in Europe to-day a government which, in regard for justice, for liberty, for equality, will compare with the civil state established by Moses, "a democracy based upon duty," in which Duty and its correlative Right are the basis of all law, and the general good the motive of the law. "When," he demands, "has an agitator, from Savonarola to Robespierre, assailed tyranny and proclaimed liberty in the name of Plato or of Plutarch?"[1]

Where shall we look for a description of the origin and functions of civil government and of the obligations of loyalty, so wise, so just, so comprehensive, as that given by Paul in the letter addressed to Romans living under a despotism, yet as appropriate to Americans under a constitutional republic?—that government is an ordinance of God for maintaining justice, for protecting the good, for punishing the evil; that obedience to government, thus constituted and administered, is a religious duty; that tribute should be paid, not under coercion, but for conscience' sake; and that every

[1] Moïse et le Talmud, par Alexandre Weill.

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subject of government should simply and always "do that which is good." What rule of good citizenship, of good neighborhood, of commercial honesty, of social intercourse will once compare with this: "Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor; owe no man anything, but to love one another."? Or this: "To obey magistrates; to be ready to every good work; to speak evil of no man; to be no brawlers."? Or where shall we look for such an adjustment of political equality and the rights of man, with proper elective affiliations in society, and with reverence for just authority, human and divine, as in these sententious precepts: "Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king"? What is it that Mexico needs for her true development? An imported emperor? A bauble throne, floated to her from over the sea? These may arrest for a time her chronic state of revolution; but her regeneration must come through the enlightenment of the masses by the word of God.

What is it that the South needs for the reconstruction of social order? What "resources of statesmanship" are required to quell rebellion and restore our peace, save these simple rules, that masters should render to their servants that which is just and equal, and should submit themselves to those civil ordinances which God hath sanctioned in this land, whether it be to the central and supreme authority, or unto governors as appointed for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well? The state of this nation to-day is proof at once of the necessity for the Christian faith, and of its vital presence.

As with a purposed rebuke of that social and humanitary science that affects to supercede her prerogative of reform, Christianity calmly and resolutely addresses herself to the gravest problem that has tasked human society since Jesus came to preach deliverance to the captives, and the gospel to the poor; how, in the face of social prejudice, of political outlawry, and of judicial contempt, to lift a race subjected

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to two centuries of legalized injustice and of irresponsible cruelty, up to the standard of the Christian citizen. How marvellous the testimony to the living power of Christianity that is given by the faith, the patience, the hope, the love of four million slaves now being transformed into freemen! Fort Wagner and the ramparts of Petersburg and Richmond bear witness that, not cowardice nor incapacity, but a sublime faith in God, kept these simple people patient under almost hopeless wrongs. Their forbearance to avenge these wrongs, when the promise of deliverance from without combined with the atrocities of their rebel lords to provoke an uprising; their grateful devotion to the government that has set them free; their ready industry and application stimulated by religious feeling, and the desire to possess all the blessings of the gospel,—these demonstrate the indestructible and elastic life of Christianity, though buried under all the strata of ignorance and barbarism that ages of wrong could deposit. Call it a mere Hebrew tradition—yet the story of Moses and the exodus has been as a pillar of fire to these dwellers in Egyptian night; their cry has been to the God of Israel; and when at last he came to them personified in the President whose name had been the scorn and the dread of their oppressors, not Abraham's faith was more implicit and resolved than theirs. The song of Miriam has echoed on the banks of the Mississippi, the Tennessee, the Potomac, the James, as these ransomed ones have seen the salvation of the Lord; and all the glory of the New Jerusalem has lighted their way, as they have come up out of the house of bondage, singing Hallelujah to the name of Jesus:

> "It must be now de kingdom comin',
> An' de year ob jubilo."

That an antiquated religion which is capable of such majestic achievements of faith and love! which can go down into the lowest deeps of our humanity, and there inspire the patience of hope, and then, when the convulsions of the

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nation stir those deeps, can bear aloft a rescued race in its regenerating arms! Call that a tradition, a superstition of the past, which is alive with all the forces of the present to reform evil, to renovate man, to reconstruct society upon the basis of justice, of freedom, and of virtue!

Well enough, will some say, down there at the low level of the African mind, with a sensuous imagination to be wrought upon by its legends and its symbols; but outgrown by the maturity of the Anglo-Saxon with his arts and inventions, his physical science and his political philosophy? But what if the old master of the South had, to-day, that faith in God and that love to Jesus which characterize the just emancipated slave? What if *his* belief in a just God and an overruling Providence should leaven our political action and our entire social condition? Have we yet outgrown the need of such a virtue and such a justice as the gospel inculcates and provides?

A religion that can inspire the lowliest with hope by inspiring the loftiest with the sentiment of justice; that can teach the weak and suffering to be patient, and the strong to be magnanimous; that can restore humanity from the imbruting degradation of slavery, and reconstruct society from the chaos of war,—a religion that can solve all social, moral, political, and humanitary questions that the wrongs of the past have transmitted, or the spirit of the age has raised, is the religion for this age and for all ages—is the religion for man, and is given him of God.

(4) Christianity alone can meet those spiritual wants of man which are as vital as the soul and as lasting as the race. Science, philanthropy, politics, paramount as they seem to those who make either a specialty, are, after all, but secondary and superficial in view of the compound nature of man, and of the inner and higher life of the soul. These concern themselves with the organization and details of man's outward condition, and with the development of intelligence and sensibility for wise and useful ends, with respect to life as it is. But religion addresses itself to the soul as a

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spiritual substance and life, the central part of the man himself, the central force of all material and social organization, and also an integral part in that vast spiritual system, whose centre is God, and whose cycle is eternity. Your mere physicist cries aloud his facts — hard, stubborn facts; your positivist boasts his laws — immutable and inevitable laws; and each would have us bound the universe of thought and being by his discoveries in physical fact, or his determinations of phenomenal laws. But God's universe is not a mere bundle of facts and laws; there are POWERS as well; and the soul is a power over nature, and a maker as well as a subject of law.

> "For though the giant ages heave the hill
> And break the shore, and evermore
> Make and break and work their will;
> Though worlds on worlds in myriad myriads roll
> Round us, each with different powers,
> And other forms of life than ours —
> What know we greater than the soul?" [1]

The facts of consciousness and the laws of moral action are as real as are the mountains, and as much more grand than they as the soul is greater than a stone.

Laboulaye has finely said, that "while physicists, shut up within the material universe, have failed to find God, and have not recognized his presence in the living laws that govern all things, Moses, in a few words, makes us acquainted with the divine liberty and with our own; a truth that science does not give, but which our souls feel, and which is the very foundation of religion." [2]

Christianity alone fitly recognizes the moral condition and needs of the human soul. No law of development in human nature has outgrown the fearful fact of sin, or antiquated that aboriginal decree of death, that hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Be it that the stars were compressed into shining spheroids by the slow rota-

[1] Tennyson.

[2] Etudes Morales et Politiques, p. 98.

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tion of impalpable nebulous rings; my conscience gets no cover from the clouds; it wins no hope from the stars. Be it that man is only the latest development from some primitive monad of existence; still he has that which no antecedent link in the series of being has known — the consciousness of personal guilt. Be it that man had his age of iron, his age of bronze, his age of stone, in a far antiquity; he lives now in an age of sin, and traces that damning mark over all the history of his race. And *that* fact no physical science, nor metaphysical speculation, nor social philosophy can alter, remove, or even palliate. Christianity alone provides for this one baleful yet characteristic fact of human nature a philosophical and a sufficient remedy. Science, which vainly attempts to evolve from its own facts the mysteries that lie behind them, is utterly helpless and speechless when summoned to the work of restoration in the human soul, where sin has wrecked peace, happiness, hope. Not progress, nor education, nor development is the key to that mystery. Redemption, *Redemption* is the mystic word that alone can reach it; and that is not a word or fact of human origin, but is born into the language and the history of the race from above. This makes Christianity as permanent as the race itself.

It stands, then, as true to-day as when Paul uttered it amid Greek philosophy and art, and Roman prowess, letters, and luxury, that a true civilization is to be attained, a true humanity developed, a golden age of light and love to be restored, through the preaching of Jesus Christ to all nations "for the obedience of faith." They who are called to preach the Gospel should have the utmost confidence in its efficaciousness for overcoming all evil, and ensuring all good, while the world shall stand. They should learn not to fear philosophy, but to frame it to their use; not to shrink from the criticism of the Bible, but to employ this for the exposition and the defense of the Christian faith; not to stand aghast at science as a foe to revelation, but to wring from science new proofs of a personal God, to whom

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that which for us is supernatural in the government of the world, is but the natural outgoing of his power and love. And being thus trained to an intelligent freedom under the laws of systematic truth, instead of running behind the breastworks at every alarm, the preacher of the gospel will rightly measure the strength and resources of the enemy, and will meet and rout him upon every field.

It is time that we had done with the apologetics of Christianity and had better proved its dynamics. Believing in the gospel as the divine religion for all time, the Christian church should go forth to the conquest of the world, and "fight it out on this line." Abandoning the defensive for the aggressive, holding ever to the right and the duty of a world-conquest for Christ, she should turn the very fortresses of error into pivots for the truth to swing round upon, while "by the left flank forward," she marches to the final victory. In the confidence of this gospel, and in the living faith and love of it, she should preach it in centres of culture and of criticism, of a sceptical sensualism, and a scientific pantheism. In the confidence of this gospel the church should seek to re-create society in the disorganized wastes of the Sonth, to establish a Christian order and beauty in the growing empire of the West. In the confidence of this gospel she should go to humanize the barbarian tribes of Africa; and to purify and ennoble the traditional civilization of the East; go to elevate and save mankind by subduing them to the cross of Christ, and cease not from labor or from hope till God shall bring all nations unto the obedience of faith. And "to Him that is of power to establish us according to his gospel, to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

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