

Schleiermacher.¹

BY THE REV. WILLIAM MORGAN, M.A., TARBOLTON.

SCHLEIERMACHER occupies in the theology of the present century a position only a little less prominent than that of Kant in its philosophy. Neither of the two men constructed a system that could be maintained by a school in its integrity; but they did what was greater. By the originality and fruitfulness of their thought they made an epoch. Every subsequent theological movement in the Evangelical Church bears, in one way or another, evident marks of Schleiermacher's influence.

The present year is the centenary of the publication of his first great work, *Addresses on Religion to its Cultured Despisers*. The occasion is celebrated by Pastor Fischer of Berlin in a modest volume, which hardly attempts anything like a critical estimate of Schleiermacher's contribution to theological thought, but is content to represent his leading doctrines, very largely in the master's own not too transparent language.

The exposition falls into three parts. The first is headed 'Schleiermacher as Prophet,' and is mainly occupied with his conception of the nature of religion. The title is not infelicitous; for Schleiermacher had in truth a message for his generation. He called back to God a world that had well-nigh lost all feeling for true religion. Given over to Dogmatism, Illuminism, Moralism, or worldly indifference, men had ceased to feel, or to believe in, the immediate presence of God to the human spirit. To the Illuminist or Rationalist (in Scotland he appeared as a Moderate) God was known merely as an idea, the product of rational reflection. It was necessary to believe in God's existence if the world was to be explained, and morality provided with adequate sanctions. The essence of religion was found in hope and fear, inspired by the thought of the rewards and punishments which God metes out to men in this world or the next. There was little sense of God's presence about us, still less of His presence within us. Kant had already introduced into

society a leaven of moral earnestness, but he had done nothing to revive religion. His God—who was simply a moral postulate—was no less remote than the God of the Rationalist.

By the emphasis he laid on the immediate character of our knowledge of God, Schleiermacher gave to the idea of religion a new vitality. God, he taught, is not to be reached by a process of thought, but to be apprehended by immediate intuition. The human spirit has a sense of the Divine which lives and moves within and around it. This intuitive knowledge of God Schleiermacher explained by saying that it comes to us in feeling. In his later writings he defined this feeling as one of absolute dependence. The feeling or sense—for the two words are for Schleiermacher synonymous—of our absolute dependence on the God who manifests Himself in every finite thing—that and nothing else is religion. But who or what is this God whose presence thus reveals itself to us? Schleiermacher's answer takes us to the very heart of his conception of religion. For Schleiermacher God is the Whole that manifests itself in the particular, the One in the many, the all-embracing Infinite in the finite, the Eternal in the temporal. Religion may therefore be more exactly described as the inner apprehension of the relation between the individual and the Universe, the consciousness that all finite things exist in and through the Infinite. When a man loses himself in the greater life of the Whole, and feels that in his own true life the Infinite possesses one of its forms, he comes to a just sense of himself, and to religion. Everything is glorified for him who feels the fire of the eternal streaming through his veins. There are, according to Schleiermacher, two channels by which God in this way reaches the hearts of men. The first is the material world. The individual feels himself involved in its laws and an element in its whole, and thus knows himself one with the eternal order that embraces all finite things. Not nature, however, but the human spirit itself, is the most primary and most adequate revelation of the deepest and holiest. The spiritual world is that which lies nearest to us, and through it the

¹ *Schleiermacher. Zum hundertjährigen Gedächtnis der Reden über die Religion an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern.* Von M. Fischer, Pfarrer in Berlin. Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke und Sohn; London: Williams and Norgate. 1899.

material first becomes intelligible. Schleiermacher does not, however, mean that we find God by retiring into the depths of our own individual consciousness. Only when, through love, we have made ourselves one with mankind, and become sensible that each individual is a more or less worthy manifestation of a universal human spirit, do we meet with God. God may thus be described, in higher terms than those of the material order, as the Universal Life, which unfolds itself in each human being in some one of its infinitely varied aspects, and gathers mankind into one. In religion we rise to the conception of an undivided humanity, and of our own life as one of the forms in which that human and yet divine spirit expresses itself.

One may recognize with Schleiermacher that our knowledge of God is not ratiocinative but immediate, and yet refuse to follow him in his conception of God and of religion. This conception represents an æsthetic rather than religious view of the world and human life. What Schleiermacher describes as religion is nothing else than the æsthetic Pantheism of Goethe. In no essential respect does it differ from the Hegelian thought that religion is the sense of the Absolute; this Absolute being the human spirit itself, in which all things find their beginning and end, and all contradictions are resolved. The artistic is treated as the highest category of thought. The universe is therefore regarded as, in its deepest meaning, a beautiful harmonious whole, whose highest expression is man; religion being the sense of this harmony.

Now we need not deny that the sense of an eternal Whole, of which our life is a part, has a certain value for religion. Is there not true devotional feeling in these well-known lines of Wordsworth?—

And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Nevertheless the kernel of religion is not to be found in this feeling for the world harmonies. Not in our feeling for the Whole, but in our sense

of the absolute worth and claim of certain elements in the whole, do we come to faith in the living God. The worth of our personal life with its moral qualities and moral ends, as contrasted with nature and its laws, this it is supplies the impulse to bring our life into connexion with a God who is more than nature. And the living God reveals Himself to us, not in the unity of all finite things, nor even in the idea of a universal humanity, but in the spiritual forces that mould our ethico-religious life, and in certain acts and events that have significance for the establishment and support of that life. Men find in Christ the perfect revelation of God, because in Him God discloses and imparts to men His innermost nature, brings to clear expression His will and purpose with them, and enters into their life as a redeeming force of righteousness and love. When feeling for the Eternal is made the essential thing in religion, the moral attributes and moral activity of God are inevitably thrust into the background; not to speak of the fact that they are subjected to a process of reinterpretation that robs them of their real significance. This is evident enough to any student of Schleiermacher. The fatherhood of God, in any ethical sense of the term, has no place in Schleiermacher's system. Even the personality of God he refused to regard as vital to religion. It belongs, not to the intuition of piety, but only to the intellectual form in which we represent God to our thought. Piety is equally possible when God is conceived in a pantheistic way as impersonal; all that is necessary for piety being an intuition of the Infinite. Schleiermacher failed to see that precisely the things that he treated as inessential are the vital things. Remove from our thought of God the determination of personality and fatherhood, and you take from it its power to support a living faith. The indefinite Eternal, which remains after the traits of grace and truth revealed in Christ have been withdrawn, is not the living God, but only the shadow cast by the finite world. The idea of the Eternal first obtains religious value when we know what that Being is to whom eternity belongs.

The radical defect in Schleiermacher's conception of God, and therefore of religion, comes prominently into view in his treatment of the relation between religion and morality. In his zeal to establish religion as a thing *sui generis*, he drew a sharp line of distinction, not only between

religion and the activity of thought, but also between religion and the moral impulse. Knowledge, morality, and religion are all regarded as specifically different, though inseparably related, functions of the human spirit. In moral action, the individual separates itself from the whole; and from itself as centre, and in consciousness of its freedom, shapes the internal and the external world. In religion, on the other hand, the consciousness of a relative freedom is submerged in the higher consciousness of absolute dependence on the Whole within which freedom has its place. Here the individual is passive; living, not in its self-activity, but in the consciousness of the all-embracing life which manifests itself even in this very activity. Religion in itself, Schleiermacher asserts, supplies no motive for action. Alone, it would produce no deeds. We are not indeed to suppose that a man must withdraw from religion in order to become moral. Though nothing should be done from the impulse of religion, everything should be done *with* religion. Religion ought to accompany the active life as with sweet music; suffusing the heart, wearied by thought and action, with a glow of glad and tranquil feeling.

In thus dividing religion from morality, Schleiermacher was true to his basal conceptions. There can be nothing ethical in our relation to a God who is merely the Whole manifesting itself in the particular. But Schleiermacher's consistency serves only to seal the condemnation of his system. A religion that supplies no impulse to action is a dead religion; and it corresponds but little with any faith that has ever appeared on the stage of this world's history. Least of all does it represent Christianity, in which the religious and the ethical ideals are one. Moreover, such a separation of the ethical and religious can be carried out, as we have already hinted, only by subjecting the leading Christian ideas to a process of transformation, which leaves to them but little of what we must regard as their vital significance. In his latest work, the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher sought to interpret his system in a way that would bring it into closer correspondence with the religious consciousness of the Christian community; but it is easy to recognize the Spinozistic body behind the thin garb of a Christian terminology. He speaks of sin, but the meaning he attaches to the word is very different from anything taught in

Scripture. What he understands by sin is a consciousness so bound to the sensuous, particular, and finite, that the sense of God, *i.e.* of the Eternal, is impeded or destroyed. The root of sin is found, not in the opposition of the human will to the Divine, but in the predominance of the sense-consciousness over the God-consciousness; a fact which, according to Schleiermacher, has its natural rise in the priority of man's sensuous development to his spiritual development, and which, moreover, loses its character of evil when viewed *sub specie eternitatis*. In all this account of sin the moral point of view is subordinated to the metaphysical, and sin is toned down into the general *malum metaphysicum* of the finite. The conception of Redemption, in which Schleiermacher finds the characteristic feature of the Christian religion, undergoes a similar transformation. Man, since by nature he is bound to the sensuous and finite, requires a higher mediation in order to enter into a true union with God, and into consciousness of that union. This mediation is accomplished by Christ; or rather completed by Him, for the process runs through all history. What qualified Christ for the task was the fact that He Himself, every moment of His life, knew Himself one with God. With glorious clearness the Eternal mirrored itself in His spirit; and this God-consciousness of His is the divine element in His personality. Through the power of this God-consciousness it is that Christ works redemption in the lives of men; emancipating them from bondage to the finite and particular, and lifting them into union with God. Salvation, as described in Schleiermacher's terminology, is the state in which the God-consciousness in a man so predominates over the sense-consciousness as every moment to determine it.

It is not difficult to see that what Schleiermacher has done has been to empty the ideas of sin and salvation of their ethical content, and to substitute in its room a content derived from a pantheistic metaphysic. And it is no less evident that these ideas come out of this transforming process stripped of all that is specifically Christian. No other result was possible if Schleiermacher was to remain true to his presuppositions. His conception of God as the Eternal, and of religion as the sense of the Eternal, has as its correlate the separation of the religious and the moral impulse. And this separation, when carried out, involves

the extrusion of ethical matter from religious ideas. If the religious and ethical are again united, it can only be in an external way. But the truth is that religion, so far from being distinct from morality, is rooted in the moral impulse. We believe in God because we attach such value to the moral qualities and moral ends of a personal life, that we dare to set them on the throne of the universe. And all piety worthy of the name arises in response to a God whose essential attributes are righteousness, mercy, and truth. Moral feeling and purpose are therefore not adventitious to piety, but part of its essential nature. There can be no true theology which has not its foundation laid in a true ethic.

It is not the least important element in Schleiermacher's epoch-making significance, that he was the first to carry out the thought that religion and theology are two different things. Dogmatist and Rationalist alike had found in doctrine the real object of religious faith; though the one had based doctrine on authority, and the other on reason. Schleiermacher's conception of religion as the sense of God's immediate presence, necessarily led him to the conclusion that a doctrine about God, however true, cannot play in our religious experience the part that belongs to God Himself. Abundance of religious knowledge, he pointed out, does not make a man pious. He went, however, to an indefensible extreme, when he asserted that piety can quite well exist, and even communicate itself from one to another, without anything in the way of knowledge. He failed to see that faith has a knowledge of its own; and *that* not adventitious, but belonging to its proper nature. Here, as elsewhere, Schleiermacher was led astray by his conception of God and of religion. If piety consists in a sense of the being common to the individual and the all, then nothing more definite is needed for its contemplation than a vague, if spacious, image of the Infinite. When theologians manifest a disinclination to hazard definite statements about God, and insist over-much on the fluidity of doctrine, the motive is usually to be found in a pantheistic and unethical conception of His Being. When, however, we have put aside what is pantheistic in Schleiermacher's statement, the important truth remains, that doctrine, while the utterance of faith, is not that object by contact with which faith comes to birth.

We can also claim for Schleiermacher that he rediscovered the fact, long lost sight of, and still frequently ignored, that religious knowledge has a character of its own; resting, as it does, on a different basis from the knowledge of the theoretical reason. Religious knowledge presupposes religious experience, and without such experience cannot be really understood. Unlike theoretical knowledge it is practically conditioned. We cannot, however, accept the way in which Schleiermacher carried out this, in itself, true thought. According to him religious knowledge is the product of reflection on, and comparison of, pious states of feeling. Only our feeling of God is immediate; our knowledge of His attributes is merely a deduction from the fact that our religious feelings are not uniform in character, but assume various modes. These modes we proceed to refer to different aspects of the divine causality. Since, for example, we connect the feeling of guilt with evil, we are led to think of God as the holy and just; and since we are conscious of salvation, we think of God as the power of love that has brought salvation about. Schleiermacher plunged so deeply into subjectivism that he hesitated to ascribe objectivity to these distinctions in the nature of God, in case they should imperil His infinity, and bring Him into the region of antithesis. They belong merely to our human consciousness of God, and have no foundation in His objective nature.

In seeking the root of this false subjectivism we are again led back to Schleiermacher's pantheistic conception of God. A faith that is interpreted as the sense of a somewhat vague Eternal has no room in it for knowledge. It cannot be regarded as an organ of knowledge; and religious knowledge must therefore be referred to a secondary process. But the object of faith is nothing so indefinite as Schleiermacher's Eternal. That object is a God who has revealed His nature and will in a personal life. Faith is trust in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It therefore presupposes a definite knowledge of God. Faith is, in fact, an act of insight as well as an act of will. It is true that faith-knowledge is practically conditioned. It depends on our judgment as to the relative value of the goods and ends of our human life. But it is not on that account to be regarded as merely knowledge of our own subjective feelings. It is not self-knowledge, but knowledge of God. And faith-

knowledge possesses a certainty, which, though different in kind, is not less in degree than the certainty that belongs to the knowledge of the theoretical reason. A man's practical judgments are precisely those behind which the whole force of his life masses itself.

The second and third sections of Fischer's book deal with Schleiermacher as philosopher and as preacher. The one reproduces his thoughts on the relation of philosophy to religion, and on the

philosophy of religion; the other gathers together the leading ideas of his later sermons. We cannot say that this volume does much to justify its existence. It contains nothing that can be called new, and it affords but little to help the student to an understanding of the intricate problems in which the writings of Schleiermacher abound. At the best it is but a paraphrase; and even as such it is fragmentary, only a portion of the available material being made use of.

Contributions and Comments.

The Wisdom of Ben-Sira.

'DR. F. PERLES (in the *Oriental Literaturzeitung* of 15th March) speaks in extremely laudatory terms of Professor König's examination of the originality of the Hebrew Sirach, . . . and commends the important and perfectly original argument by which König shows that certain corruptions of the Hebrew text are explicable only if we hold that the earliest form of this text was committed to writing at a time when the employment of the final letters was not yet in vogue.' See p. 352 of this volume of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES (May 1900).

In the article, 'Studies in Ben-Sira,' in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for April 1898, I wrote in explanation of a word in the Syriac of Sir 39¹⁷ (Lewis-Gibson folio, l. 3), that it 'is easily accounted for by supposing that the translator read עיריב for עיריך, which may have been written with a medial כ at the end,'—adding in a footnote, 'In my unpublished *Catalogue* of Aboth MSS No. 90 has no distinctive form for final פ.' See p. 47 of this *Catalogue*, which has now been published (1900).

In the Cambridge *Wisdom of Ben-Sira* (1899) I have given other examples. Thus in Sir 35²⁰—

Mercy from the Lord in time of affliction
Is as cloud of rains in season of drought,

it is assumed that for כעת before חזיונים we should 'read כעננ, that is, כענן with medial nun at the end.' This verse is of interest as having perhaps suggested Shakespeare's 'The quality of mercy, etc.' The Cambridge *B.S.*, except the Appendix,

was written before the controversy started by 'The Origin of the "Original Hebrew" of Ecclesiasticus' had arisen. C. TAYLOR.

Cambridge.

The Seven Words from the Cross.

How are 'the seven words' to be arranged in a Harmony of the Passion?

(a) In the Harmony in official use in the Evangelical Church of Würtemberg they follow in the order: (1) Father, forgive; (2) *Paradise*; (3) *Woman*; (4) Eli; (5) Thirst; (6) Finished; (7) Commend.

(b) But this seems to be an innovation. In the time of Luther, Gerhardt, Bengel, Hiller—there are impressive hymns on the words by the latter three—they were arranged: (1) Father, forgive; (2) *Woman*; (3) *Paradise*.

(c) The strangest order is to be found in the oldest Harmony of the Gospels, in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, at least in its Arabic form, as we have it at present. He arranged: (1) *Paradise*; (2) *Woman*; (3) Eli; (4) Thirst; (5) Finished; (6) *Father, forgive*; (7) Commend.

The words of the *Diatessaron* are (see the translation of F. W. Hogg in the Additional Volume of Clark's 'Ante-Nicene Christian Library,' 1897): 'And when Jesus had taken that vinegar, He said, "Everything is finished" (Jn 19^{30a}). But the rest said, "Let be, that we may see whether Elijah cometh to save Him" (Mt 27⁴⁹). And Jesus said, "My Father, forgive them; for they know not what