REVIEW

THE FAITH OF A QUAKER. By J. W. Graham. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 444. Price 2ls. net.

THE author of this impressive volume is the Principal of Dalton Hall in the University of Manchester. While writing, as he tells us, with definite reference to the Society of Friends, he believes that his book will have more than denominational interest. "One cannot touch the foundations of Quakerism without touching the foundations of all religion, our attitude to God, man, and the Universe." Probably not, nor the foundations of any other religion, though the vaunt that Quakerism is "the only considerable adventure in organized Mysticism which has made for itself a permanent place in Christian history during modern times" is a boast very typical of a certain superiority which robs an able book of much of the attractiveness which Quakerism in its old-world dress of dove-coloured silk, as Michael Fairless describes it in *The Grey Brethren*, quiet, peaceable, lowly-hearted, never failed to exert. Mr. Graham seems to attempt for Quakerism something of what St. Thomas Aquinas did for his day, and what the Catholic world now so sorely needs, a *Summa Theologiæ*, a synthesis of modern knowledge in its bearing on religion. Though apparently without the trained mind of a theologian, he has behind him a long life of more general scientific culture. He is, for example, well informed on the results of Biblical criticism, an ardent devotee of psychical research, and a student of psychology and biology. It is probable, however, that many Quakers would read with regret such sentences as these:

"The doctrine of Nicæa (The Trinity) may have been a useful thought-form for the time when it arose; it may have been crystallized experience and speculation in the best shape then possible; but it is not a living part of contemporary thought, and I doubt the usefulness of the washed-out or attenuated forms of the doctrine in which triple manifestations of some kind can be noted or discerned in God. They are really only more polite and less dangerous ways of denying the old conception . . . which has no more authority than a Roman Emperor and a Church Council under his presidency and control can give it. It was no part of the thought of Jesus nor of Paul. The two passages where it occurs are interpolations of the usual doctrinal type. . . . The doctrine represents one of those hard-and-fast lines of division and classification which are never of more than temporary use as scaffolding, and are really in their permanence the bane of theology."

This is a cheap and shallow criticism of a doctrine which has held the mind of Christendom in its articulate form for

seventeen centuries. Further reflection, not to say a more thorough-going belief in the guiding Spirit, and in the Inner Light as the universal possession of Christian men, and more reverence for the experience of friends of God in the past who have lived upon this "bane of theology" for so long, would have deleted or rewritten this and many another passage like it. Indeed, Mr. H. G. Wells, to whom Mr. Graham refers as a teacher with whom he has much in common, though with marked differences in his malignant onslaught on the doctrine of the Trinity, is himself proof how impossible it is for any man honestly to set down his experience of God without at least "an attenuated form" of "triple manifestation." Mr. Wells, with his Creator God, the Veiled Unknown Being; his Finite God, sharing our suffering and struggle; his Immanent Presence, closer than breathing, is the evidence that the Nicene doctrine will never be outgrown while the soul's experience of its God is fundamentally unchanged. Nicæa supplies precisely what alone would make rational the deity of Mr. Wells, the undivided and indivisible unity of God. The consciousness of God, wherever it is articulate, is in essence Trinitarian. Similarly, when speaking of the validity of prayer, our author roundly asserts the uselessness of prayer for victory in war, for success in business, or for fine weather. "No prayer of this kind has ever been of the least avail outside its purely subjective effect upon the devotee or its telepathic message to some other mind." This is surely the extreme of dogmatism. The immanental conception of God is, as we should expect in a Quaker writer, vividly realized and finely expressed. "An indwelling God at the back of the heart of man," so that "we cannot say where God ends and man begins within us." But it is a curious application of that sound doctrine to say of vocal congregational prayer that "in reaching the hearts of the hearers through their ears we reach God within them by setting them individually praying. . . . God is not to be reached by way of the sky."

Mr. Graham in his earlier and doctrinal chapters seeks, by the aid of Dr. Sanday's *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, to interpret the Personality of Christ in the terms of the subliminal.

"We have come to believe that the greater part of our personality is subconscious, and that we only use for current purposes so many of the resources of the self as have been found terrestrially useful. It is through our subliminal capacities that we have touch with God; they are the source of inspiration and the fountain of genius, the organ of prayer and the scene of the experience of the mystics. Dr. Sanday suggests that in this mysterious and little-known region may lie the secret of the personality of Jesus, that His supraliminal consciousness was human and the product of heredity under terrestrial evolution, but that in the subliminal lay His secret."

M. Bergson appears to us to be more illuminating. Insisting strongly on an intuitive awareness of life as man's greatest endowment, he recognizes that intuition reaches its highest flight when it is able to lift its perceptions within the range, grasp, and criticism of reflective reason. It is not true to say that the subliminal is the organ of prayer. That is to exclude the reason from its noblest function. It would be true to say that it is from a presence in the soul at once beneath and above the reasoning consciousness that the impulse to prayer springs, and to the immediate consciousness of that presence in its higher reaches it attains. But it may well be that we shall find here a solution of many of the problems of the Personality of Christ. In Him intuition was infallible. It was an immediate awareness of eternal life and reality; hence He speaks with the final authority of God wherever He speaks of the eternal. His moral and spiritual verdict is irrefragable. Nor need His incarnate acceptance of the limitation of human ignorance, His "will not to know" in the sphere of the transitory and finite, shake our absolute reliance upon those profound intuitions of eternal life and truth, intuitions which in the great souls of all time have been the pathway of man's spiritual evolution, but which in Him stand unique in their completeness and perfection of perception, for in Him the very Self is the Spirit of God perfectly incarnated, wholly immersed in our humanity, yet not for one instant ceasing to be Himself, God's self. Mr. Graham keeps his footing on the rock when he speaks of the Christ. His Quaker faith stands him in good stead. The Indwelling Christ is for him the same as Christ in the flesh. It is not in vain that the Friends have based their creed on an immanent presence, an inner light, a Christ living and speaking in the soul. Only a Divine Christ could satisfy that demand, and our author positively revels in the storms of criticism and new thought which sweep so many others off their feet. Quakerism is not disturbed when the authority of the Bible seems to be falling, when old interpretations of great articles of the creed are being dismissed as crudities. There are some advantages in days of transition like our own in a faith which, resting on no external supports, fears no earthquakes.

It is the more surprising that the Holy Spirit finds so little mention in Mr. Graham's pages. I recall but one, and that is illuminating. "Such is God in action as distinct from God in essence, . . . what thinkers meant by the Logos and what we generally now describe as the Holy Spirit. It is His communicated life that we have. A religious soul that begins with experience and bases its thought thereon can find in Him a home"

Quakerism has been strong by reason of insistence on the Spirit, and its identification of the Spirit of Jesus with the Spirit of God. Its present service to Christian thought would lie rather in a fresh concentration of its thought upon the Holy Ghost. We could have spared many pages in Mr. Graham's book where he gives rein to the fighting instincts, which Quakerism diverts rather than destroys, in sharp onslaught on other men's religion. Belligerence and superiority are blemishes that spoil an otherwise able and attractive book. Quakers dispense with a professional ministry, with music and musicians, and other aids to worship. They are welcome to do so, but it does not follow that others who use them are of necessity stupid or unspiritual. Our author indulges in a violent onslaught upon Evangelicalism and its "terrible theology," but he does not spare a word for that which was the saving grace of Evangelical theology, its concentration upon the Person of our Lord Jesus, and on the redemptive power of His Cross. It was that Divine central reality, not the wordy arguments by which it was encumbered, that gave to Evangelicalism its power. He indulges, as we should expect, in an attack on sacraments, calling criticism to his aid in an attempt to prove that Christ never intended the Holy Communion to be repeated. It was St. Paul who did the mischief, with no better ground than direct inspiration, "he received it of the Lord"! A strange condemnation this on the lips of a Quaker. We had thought that Quakers still believed in "personal inward revelation." St. Paul, too, was not without inward light. And it is asking too much to ask us to believe, whatever be the solution of the Synoptic account of the Last Supper, that the spiritual instinct of the universal Church, with insignificant exceptions, went hopelessly, blindly wrong, and nourished the souls of martyrs and saints through nineteen centuries on a pure delusion. If it were so, then any faith in a guiding Spirit and an inner light is utterly at an end. The best elements of Quakerism should have saved Mr. Graham from such puerilities. In days like these, when men of goodwill all the world over are drawing nearer to one another, it is more unpardonable to write this kind of controversy. Let us look rather for the truth that lies hid even in one another's errors. Quakerism has proved that it is possible to live the Christian life without sacraments. The Church always said so, given a good conscience even if an ignorant one—*Deus non obligatur sacramentis suis*—but it has not proved that it is better to do so. It has, in effect, shown that the attempt to do without sacraments is unsuitable to the general religious experience. Quakerism is fitted, perhaps, for high-minded exceptions whose numerical smallness supplies

in itself a fresh spiritual stimulus and subtle charm, but it remains out of the broad stream of human need to which the sacramental appeal is generally necessary. To compare sacraments to stimulants which lose their strength through familiarity is to talk without knowledge. Has it proved so? Have sacramental Churches died out? The Quaker Grellet was nearer the mark when he sought to lift every meal to the level of a sacrament. Familiarity with God and the things of God is the method of the Incarnation, and he would be a bold man who would say that in Catholic countries, where worship revolves round the Mass, and the crucifix meets the eye in every lane and street, God was the less remembered.

There is a somewhat purple passage in which Mr. Graham sits apart in a stall in Westminster Abbey contemplating the asceticism of Quaker ways.

"The glorious music of the white-robed choir is sounding beyond the radiant windows, glowing with the afternoon sun, up to the dim roof above. All is ancient and honourable, and at peace. To be sure, the words of the service do not matter—are indeed hardly audible, and difficult for a Quaker listener to follow. He has come for a rest from very practical duties outside with which the intoned ceremony appears to have little to do. It belongs to another order of things from the moral issues being fought out in the white light of day in the Houses of Parliament and the stately offices round about where the government of the Empire is being carried on with all its freight of good and evil. There would seem not to be any moral value in the service, but there is an undoubted æsthetic value deeply felt, with its blessing of harmony and rest, by the tired stranger in the stall. He thinks more of those plain meeting-houses where he and his fellows, in much poverty of the outward, are trying to achieve the kingdom of God on earth."

We are sorry to think that our author saw no more in our worship than this. But the statues and monuments of the great men of the past who have made England what it is must, however æsthetically deplorable, have caught his eyes wherever they turned. They might have suggested to him, had his mind been less closed by the narrowness of a denominational judgment, that whatever be the defects of Anglicanism as enshrined in the Abbey, at least divorce from the national life was not one of them. But, indeed, the reflection, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are," seldom widens the vision or enlarges the sympathies.

There is plenty of food for thought in Mr. Graham's pages, more that helps than hinders, more that refreshes than annoys. The reviewer not the less regrets the element of controversy which perforce absorbs the space he would more willingly have given to those qualities of the book for which he feels both gratitude and appreciation.

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