

sunlight is by the air through which it shines. Hence the need for an incarnation—a man who is no mere man, no fragmentary chip of human nature, no bondsman of peculiar prejudices, no slave of passion, no theological partisan; but a fresh new nature, partaking constitutionally of so much of God that the holy Divine Spirit will be able to dwell there without measure, and utter, through sinless lips, the whole unvarnished truth of holy love and infinite power, working out an unlimited salvation for the human race.—A. BROWN.

ONE great Voice august
Is speaking always in this world of men;
Speaking direct—no need of word or pen—
Mystic and yet so clear!

Do you hear a Voice
Calling sweetly, softly through the years;
Through the wrong and sorrow, through the tears
Of a wasted life?

Have you heard a Voice
Resonant in times of hot, mad sin,
When the chalice of the heart within
Dripp'd with poisoned wine?

Have you heard a Voice
Whispering sadly as the soul stoop'd down,
Groveling to some baseness,—its fair crown
Dimm'd and blurr'd with shame?

Have you heard a Voice
Calling gladly as the soul arose,
Patient and strong, brave to endure all blows
In this world's strife?
Looking up to heaven with quiet smile,
Feeling some omnipotence the while,
Bearing up the life?

'Tis the Voice of God,
Sweet, appealing as in Eden's grove;
Sternly warning in His righteous love,
'Tis the Father's Voice.

Ay, the Father's voice,
Calling ever, always, through the years,
Through all wrong and sorrow—through all tears—
Calling children home!—A. NORRIS.

Sermons for Reference.

- Allon (H.), *Indwelling Christ*, 301.
Banks (L. A.), *Paul and His Friends*, 13.
Bellars (W.), *Our Inheritance in the Old Testament*, 32.
Brown (A.), *God's Great Salvation*, 2, 8.
Davies (D.), *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, vi. 247.
Driver (S. R.), *Sermons on Subjects connected with the Old Testament*, 119.
Hardy (E. J.), *Doubt and Faith*, 75.
Harper (F.), *Year with Christ*, 111.
Hort (F. J. A.), *Village Sermons*, 128.
Kirkpatrick (A. F.), *Divine Library of the Old Testament*, 1.
Leckie (J.), *Life and Religion*, 166.
Meyer (F. B.), *Way into the Holiest*, 9.
Oosterzee (J. J. van), *Year of Salvation*, ii.
Robertson (F. W.), *Sermons*, ii. 136.
Saphir (A.), *Expository Lectures on Hebrews*, i. 20, 44.
Smyth (N.), *Old Faiths in New Light*, 23.
Snell (B. J.), *Gain or Loss?* 31.
Temple (F.), *Religion and Science*, 125.
Thackeray (H. St. J.), *Eton Sermons*, 47.
Vaughan (C. J.), *Epiphany, Lent and Easter*, 457.
Wace (H.), *Christianity and Morality*, 258.
„ „ *Foundations of Belief*, 55.
Westcott (B. F.), *Incarnation and Common Life*, 278.
Wilson (J. M.), *Rochdale Sermons*, 261.
Wordsworth (C.), *Truth of the Gospel*, 1.

Harnack on the Nature of Christianity.¹

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

THIS book, by the well-known author of the *History of Dogma*, is made up of a series of lectures delivered during the past winter to the students of all faculties in Berlin University. The task which Professor Harnack sets himself is to answer the question, What is the Christian religion, and to distinguish those elements that are essential and enduring from the temporal and local elements that have, in the course of its history, been mixed

¹ *Das Wesen des Christentums*. Von Adolph Harnack. Leipzig, 1900; London: Williams & Norgate.

up with it. He has accomplished his task in the most brilliant fashion. The book is a great book, and cannot fail to exercise a deep and wide influence. It exhibits an originality and insight, a mastery of the history of ideas, a power of lucid, and often glowing, expression,—the whole suffused with the deepest Christian piety—a combination of qualities as splendid as it is rare. One rises from the reading of this book with a deeper sense of the high and enduring significance of Christ's gospel, and with a new religious impulse.

Although not cast in apologetic form, it is, as a matter of fact, the most powerful apology for the Christian religion, and for the Protestant conception of it, that has seen the light for many a year.

The author's method is the historical one. Through an examination of the historically changing forms under which the gospel has appeared, he seeks to bring out its valid and permanent content. Naturally the life and teaching of Christ Himself form his starting-point. But as every great creative personality first reveals part of its nature in those in whom it works, Harnack proceeds further to consider the experience and witness of the first generation of Christ's disciples. From this he passes to the later products of the Christian spirit, to the Church of the second century in its development into Catholicism, to Greek Catholicism, Roman Catholicism, and finally to Protestantism. In a book so packed with matter—every sentence being significant—it will not be possible to give anything but the barest outline of its contents.

Harnack accepts the narrative of the Synoptists as substantially historical. The Gospels are neither party-writings nor mythical products of a later age. Unhistorical elements do indeed enter,—the idea of the fulfilment of prophecy has not been without influence, the marvellous element is augmented, and the infancy stories show at points the touch of imagination,—but these troublings do not reach to the heart of the narrative, and they are easily corrected by comparison of sources, and by critical judgment. In this connexion Harnack presents us with a most interesting excursus on the subject of the miraculous. He rightly emphasizes the fact that the modern and strict conception of miracle, as involving a suspension or breach of natural law, was altogether foreign to the Gospel writers, who had neither our conception of inviolable law, nor our knowledge of what is possible and what impossible, of what is rule and what exception. Any extraordinary occurrence, viewed in the light of Divine Providence, was for them a miracle. The faith element that underlies belief in the miraculous is simply this,—that we are not helplessly shut up in an inexorable necessity, but that there is a God who reigns, and that all forces and laws are only the angels and ministers of His grace. We can so meet these laws and forces with an inner power of divine life, as that all shall work for the best. In particular events this experience is always felt as a miracle. A religious man may have such

conviction and experience, and still hold by the inviolability of nature's laws. The historicity of particular miracle narratives is not a question of faith or of metaphysic, but of historical evidence. And, in weighing this evidence, we have to bear in mind that we are by no means acquainted with all the forces that are operative in the world. Particularly is this true with respect to the action of soul on body. We may not believe that a tempest was stilled by a word; but that, through the power of Christ, the lame walked, the blind saw, the deaf heard, there is no reason to doubt. For the rest, Christ was far from attaching to His miracles any decisive importance as factors in His work.

Unlike Ritschl, Harnack does not gather up Christ's teaching under a single architectonic idea. Rather he finds three such ideas, which may be so conceived as to contain within their circuit the whole proclamation. These ideas are: The Kingdom of God and its coming; God the Father and the infinite worth of the human soul; and, last, the better righteousness and the commandment of love. Behind each of them, giving it its significance and power, lies the person of Christ Himself. Speak, that I may see thee!

With regard to the first of these conceptions, Harnack finds the distinctively Christian element in the character of the Kingdom as a present fact in the world—a power working inwardly and secretly, God in the human heart judging and saving. The dramatic elements in the picture—the thrones and the day of judgment—Christ took over from contemporary Judaism; and they must be interpreted in the light of His own distinctive ideas. The purely inward character of the Kingdom appears when we consider what Christ meant by its coming. The Kingdom comes when He heals, but above all, when He forgives sin. The call to the sinner is the decisive thing. Everything external and merely future is here stripped off. There is a new creation, a new humanity; and the Kingdom is at once the power and the goal. In its light the meaning and purpose of life first disclose themselves.

Our recognition of the infinite worth of the human soul is dependent on our knowledge of God as the Father. Judged from a natural point of view, the soul can claim no such value as Jesus claimed for it. We are exalted above heaven and earth, because we can look up to the Lord of

heaven and earth, and say, 'My Father.' Plato, indeed, recognized the worth of the soul, but it was as over-against matter; and he meant the knowing soul, and spoke to the cultured. Christ was the first to recognize that every soul is precious in God's sight.

The gospel can also be exhibited as an ethical message without emptying it of its significance. The main characteristics of Christ's ethical teaching are found in the fact that He places the seat of morality in the heart, that He traces it back to the one root-motive of love, and that He looses it from its connexion with statutory religion. There is, however, one decisive point at which Christ connects morality and religion. This point is the grace of humility, which is not so much a single virtue, but rather pure receptivity, the expression of inner need, longing for God's grace and forgiveness, openness towards God. Such humility—and it is only another expression for the love of God—is the enduring disposition of the good, and that out of which all goodness springs and grows.

The character of Christ's teaching is further brought out in the discussion of six great questions that have never ceased to agitate the minds of men regarding it. These questions are: The Gospel and the World, or the question of asceticism; the Gospel and Poverty, or the social question; the Gospel and Civil Law, or the question of the earthly order; the Gospel and Work, or the question of culture; the Gospel and the Son of God, or the question of Christology; the Gospel and Doctrine, or the question of knowledge.

With respect to the second of these questions, Harnack lays stress on the fact that Christ did not involve Himself in economic and transient relations by promulgating any social programme for the extirpation of poverty and misery. Precepts about such matters must soon have become antiquated. And yet never has there been a religion with so powerful a social message, or that has identified itself so closely with it. And this because Jesus took seriously the words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' and made the maxim a religious one. With these words He entered into all the concrete relations of life—into the world of hunger, poverty, and misery.

Christ has sometimes been criticised for His indifference to the ideal goods of life other than the religious. Strauss complained that the gospel had no feeling for culture and progress. Harnack

has some wise words on the subject. We receive thankfully what progress brings; and yet we know that our inner situation, the questions that move us, and the fundamental relations in which we stand, are not essentially altered by it. We feel ourselves in the old position, and must resort to the same springs of power our fathers sought. We must win a home in the kingdom of God—the kingdom of the eternal and of love. 'Mankind advances; man remains ever the same.'

The question of Christology is that round which theological interest especially gathers. Here Harnack deals with Christ's self-witness. It is a mistake to set up a doctrine of Christ's person between the soul and Christ Himself. To formulate such a doctrine, independent of His gospel, lay outside Christ's view. He wished no other faith in His person, and no other kind of attachment to Himself, than that which is included in keeping His commandments. Christ's self-witness is summed up in the two titles, Son of God and Son of Man. With respect to the first, the knowledge of God as the Father is, rightly understood, the whole content of the Son name. Two things must, however, be kept in view. Christ was convinced that He knew God as no one before Him, and that it was His divine vocation to communicate, through word and deed, this God-knowledge, and therefore God-Sonship, to others. In this consciousness He knew Himself as *the* Son; and could say, 'My God,' and 'My Father,' expressing in that address something which belonged only to Himself. How He came to the consciousness of the uniqueness of His relation to God, and of the mission involved in it—that is His secret, and no psychology can make it clearer.

Notwithstanding Wellhausen, Harnack believes that Jesus described Himself as the Messiah, and that the title Son of Man has this meaning. What significance had the Messianic name as applied to Jesus? It was, says Harnack, the necessary means, in order that He who was called inside Jewish history should succeed in winning absolute recognition. It was as the Messiah that Christ was *first* set on the throne of history. Having affected this, the mission of the idea was exhausted. When the Church was no longer Jewish but Gentile, the Messianic name speedily passed into the background, to make way for other categories more significant for the Greek mind.

If we ask what place Christ occupies in His gospel, Harnack answers that He enters into it, not as a constituent, but as its personal realization and power. He calls men to Himself, because it is His to lead them to God; and *that* not only through His word, but still more through what He is and does, and finally through what He suffers. This is no dogma, but the expression of a fact.

The second half of Harnack's book deals with the historical course of the Christian religion, from the Apostolic Age downwards. He finds three main elements in the bond that held together the early community. There was a common recognition of Jesus as the risen Lord; each individual had come into vital relation to God; there was a common life in purity and brotherhood, and a common expectation of the speedy return of their Master.

Most suggestive is the discussion of the question as to the meaning of the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. Christ was Lord because He was the authoritative teacher whose word is the rule of life; but still more because He had offered His life for them, and because they were convinced that He was risen from the dead, and seated at the right hand of God. The adoration paid to Christ here received its content, and on this ground Christology grew up. In the first two generations everything was said of Christ that men could say. He was hailed as exalted to the right hand of God, as the Judge of all flesh, as Conqueror of death and sin, as the Prince of life, as the Power of a new life, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Messianic conception allowed them to set Christ on the throne of God without endangering monotheism. Such an estimate of Christ was the result of the impression produced on His disciples, in the first place by His personality and teaching, and in the second place by His death for our sins, and His resurrection. The latter confirmed the former. In this connexion the significance of the death and the resurrection comes up for discussion.

Harnack considers the death under three aspects. It is first of all an offering or sacrifice. The old sacrificial system, though it had fallen into decay, corresponded to a genuine religious need, and a deep religious thought lay at the heart of it. (It must be said that the writer has left the precise character of this thought in much vagueness.)

This need found its satisfaction in Christ. Those who regarded His death as an offering ceased to bring the old sacrifices. Further, while confessing the untenableness of all substitutionary theories, Harnack, in the spirit of Is 53, recognizes in Christ's death a real vicarious element. Whoever looks into history must recognize that not words but deeds, and not merely deeds, but deeds of self-devotion, and not merely deeds of self-devotion but the surrender of life, has decided the great advances in history. The more morally sensitive a man is, the more certainly will he, in the face of the great transactions in history, feel such sufferings as vicarious, and relate them to himself. Finally, Christ's death was an atonement. Here again Harnack confesses the futility of all theories; but none the less he maintains that no 'rational' reflection will blot out from the moral consciousness of mankind the conviction that unrighteousness demands punishment, and that, when the righteous suffer, a convicting and purifying atonement is accomplished. This belief springs from the depths in which we all feel ourselves as one, and is indestructible. Through the sufferings of death Christ has done something decisive in the world's history, and done it for us.

It is in his treatment of the resurrection that Harnack will be felt to have departed most widely from orthodox lines. Only it is to be kept in mind that the divergence does not in any sense relate to a matter of faith, but concerns merely the value of certain historical evidence. The New Testament itself, Harnack maintains, distinguishes between the Easter message of the empty grave and the appearances of Jesus on the one hand, and the Easter faith on the other. Although it attaches the highest value to that message, it requires the Easter faith without it. The disciples at Emmaus are reproached for their unbelief, although they had not yet received the message; and to Thomas it is said, 'Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.' It is a mistake to regard belief in Christ's resurrection as if it were based on the reports of His empty sepulchre, and of His bodily appearance after death. The Easter faith is the conviction that the Crucified has triumphed over death, and that He lives as the first born among many brethren. It is faith, not in the credibility of any testimony, but in the righteousness and power of God. In any case, from Christ's grave has arisen the in-

vincible belief in the overcoming of death, and in eternal life. Appeal is sometimes made to Plato, to the Persian religion, to late Judaism. But all that would have perished, and has perished. The conviction that Jesus lives is the foundation of all our hope.

In discussing the second bond of fellowship among early Christians, Harnack remarks with astonishment on the largeness of their spiritual freedom. When one considers the place that Christ occupied in their lives, one would expect that their piety would take the form of absolute subjection to His words, leading to a kind of free servitude. Paul and Acts show it otherwise. The words of Jesus are revered, and yet the individual Christian is set in a wholly personal relation to God; he knows himself inspired by the Divine Spirit, and in this consciousness he dares to think and to act independently. This commingling of obedient submission to Christ with freedom in the Spirit, is one of the mightiest characteristics of the Christian religion, and the seal of its greatness.

The subject of the place and work of the Apostle Paul is treated with much insight and appreciation. Paul was neither the perverter nor the founder of Christianity; but the man who understood the Master, and carried forward His work. His historical greatness consists above all in the fact that it was he first spoke the word that the old order was abolished and a new order begun. It is true that, before Paul's missionary activity, nameless Christians in the Diaspora had received Gentiles into the new community, and had put aside the statutory forms of the law with the explanation that they were to be understood, not in a literal, but in a spiritual and symbolic manner. Freedom from historical Judaism might possibly have gradually been won in this way, but the result was not certain. So long as the word, 'the old is annulled,' remained unspoken, there was always the danger that it might return in the next generation, in all the hardness and tyranny of its literal signification. Paul made the breach, and cleared the ground for the new order. And this momentous service he was able to perform, because he had reached a new conception of the gospel. It was he who first definitely conceived the gospel as the message of an *accomplished* redemption, and of a salvation already present. He proclaimed the crucified and risen Christ,

who has brought us access to God, and therefore righteousness and peace. The apocalyptic element passed from the centre to the periphery. Moreover, this new religion belonged to the individual, and therefore to all. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was broken down. Finally, it was Paul who brought the gospel under the great schema of spirit and flesh, inner and outer life, life and death. He, the born Jew and Pharisee, gave it the speech that made it intelligible not only to Greeks but to mankind, and that enabled it to enter into combination with the whole spiritual capital historically won. So doing he laid the foundation of Western culture. The work of Alexander fell to the ground, Paul's work remains. That some of his conceptions, when developed apart from Christian experience and according to a logic of their own, led men far from the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel, can, in view of the facts, hardly be denied. Harnack points out the directions in which such perverse development proceeded. But all this cannot fairly be charged as a fault against the great apostle. With Paul himself the moral and spiritual reality is ever the main thing, and the intellectual form is only the vehicle for its expression. All we can say is, that while the danger could not attach to Christ's own words, Paul's formulation was not so secure against it.

Space forbids us to follow Harnack in his review of the subsequent history of the Church. In many ways it appears as a story of decadence and perversion. The second century saw the triumph of Greek intellectualism. By the sixth the ritual of the Church had been to a large extent paganized. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the author has an eye for nothing but the darker aspects of the picture. He is quick to recognize and appreciate the elements of truth underlying even the forms and formulas most alien to the spirit of the gospel, to recognize also whatever historical justification these last may possess. It would be hard to find a more succinct and yet comprehensive characterization of the three great Churches that divide the realm of Christendom, or a fairer estimate of their past services, and their present strength or weakness. It is to be hoped that the translation, which we understand is in course of preparation, will not be unduly delayed.