

which he receives simply means that he has fellowship again with Him in living. 'I will give him the crown of life' is just another way of saying, because I live he will live also; and the very life that I live he will live. And what is the life that He lives? He enters into the glory which He had with the Father before He came into the world. That glory, He tells us, consisted in loving and being loved (Jn 17²⁴). And to that He has now added the glory of love suffering. The crown of life is fellowship with Him (for life is fellowship, as death is isolation); it is fellowship in love that suffers and wins.

Of thirty picked servants who had started with me, twenty-eight had now abandoned me, and only two remained: faithful Chandan Sing and Mansing, the leper! The weather continued horrible, with no food for my men, and no fuel! I proposed to the two to go back also, and let me continue alone. I described to them the dangers of following me further, and warned them fully, but they

absolutely refused to leave me. 'Sahib, we are not Shokas,' were their words. 'If you die, we will die with you. We fear not death. We are sorry to see you suffer, sahib, but never mind us. We are only poor people, therefore it is of no consequence.'¹

And what are the means to be taken to maintain our faithfulness and obtain our reward? It is not in the face of stern death, it is mostly in the face of frivolous life that we have to maintain it. The means are prayer and the reading of the Word and some definite service.

Forenoon and afternoon and night,—forenoon
And afternoon and night,—forenoon and—what?
The empty song repeats itself. No more?

Yea, that is life: make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
And time is conquered, and thy crown is won.

¹ A. H. Savage Landor, *In the Forbidden Land*.

The Originality and Absoluteness of Christianity.

BY THE REV. A. S. MARTIN, B.D., ABERDEEN.

TIMES are changed since men affirmed without fear of contradiction that the Christian faith is the only true and the one perfect form of religion, undervived from man, descended direct from God. To-day the charge is common that Christianity is on the general historical level of all religions, subject like the rest to the law of evolution, traceable to natural causes in its beginnings and course of development, in its characteristic novelties as in its more commonplace resemblances; in a word, that it is neither original nor final.

I.

The charge demands investigation; and that the more so since it finds some real basis of justification in more than one region of thought in which the modern mind is at home. Three such quarters may be indicated. To begin with, as a matter of fact, Christianity is an *historical* religion; like other religions emerging at a certain time, taking origin among a particular people, and at a definite stage of human culture. Now, however new, it could gain footing only by association with its environment. Religion is a spirit,

but it is not a disembodied spirit. It must clothe itself in form and speech 'understanded of the people.' The human mind can take in new thoughts only when it relates them to its former mental content. Of necessity, then, since a point of connexion with the known must be found, Christianity must have entered into relations with contemporary beliefs and practices. Then in the second place, Christianity is, like all other religions, a *rational* belief; nay, it claims to be *the* rational faith. It generates like them ideas, spiritual conceptions and convictions. But scholarly research, in the comparative study of religions, into the different kinds and different developments of the various religions of mankind, has to very many minds made it manifest that no absolute separation can be set up between the ruling ideas of the Christian and the ethnic faiths, that in particular those of the Christian are not so specifically distinctive as to be able to bear the full weight of the claim to be alone from God and as such definitive and normative. In the third place, in this department of religious experience and thought, the doctrine of *evolution* applies as elsewhere. Now

that doctrine brings inevitably with it a bias against the whole idea of special origins and revealed absolutes. These were compatible enough with the older view of the universe and life. But since that mechanical view of nature has yielded to the organic view, they are out of date. The unity and progressiveness of nature are no longer regarded as secured by some external Deity, but by forces resident within nature itself. As a consequence, everything that is or will be is related to its neighbours before it or around it. Evolution and revelation would seem to be contradictories.

Around such considerations as the foregoing recent learning has laboured in considerable detail. It has flashed a flood of light on all parts of the religious tradition whether of heathenism or of Christian times. It has prompted to a new criticism of both, and also to new appreciation of both which cannot fail to prove to the reflecting mind of intense, exquisite interest. In the 'sincerity of light' cast by it, the original and normative character of Christianity, though strongly contested, has not been disproved. It still lifts its face, if not without rebuke, without shame.

II.

How may it vindicate its confidence? Along three lines. First, by making clear the *limits of evolution*. Secondly, by dispassionate investigation into the *historical relation of Christianity to other religions*. Thirdly, by penetrating insight into the *essence of the Christian Idea*.

1. There is in evolution nothing subversive of the idea of revelation. There are leaders of science who reject special creation, whether of matter or spirit, but not on the ground that evolution offers an alternative to it, but because it is 'literally unthinkable' (H. Spencer). In technical language, evolution deals with secondary, *i.e.* derivative, creation, but does not touch primary creation. The scientific idea of evolution is not, however, that always held in the popular understanding. There are in the popular view three grave features of error: (a) the idea that evolution explains origins; (b) that evolution is always a progress; (c) that evolution makes God needless. It has therefore to be enforced that evolution expresses simply the ruling conception by which to interpret and formulate the *process* of things. It has nothing whatever to do with origins. Recent science is as emphatic on this point as the older—James of Harvard and Lodge

of Birmingham as sound as Huxley or Spencer. 'Of origins we know nothing'; 'Ultimate origins are inscrutable',—so they testify. Origins, we are free to claim, are the sphere of revelation. When evolution moves towards progress, it is by 'upward lifts,' or if we regard it as continuous, by 'upward lifting.' Whether those upward lifts come in at special points, the gaps in the evolutionary process, or the upward lifting is constant and immanent, a creative Power must be postulated, and a creative Power, limited in effort by His own laws and not by anything in the material on which He operates. There is nothing contrary to scientific evolution in the view that before from out of the primal mud and mist all creation up to man's mind and soul could arise, creative omnipresent force must have accompanied the process; in other words, that God made all things. 'Made' here means a mystic Act behind appearances; it never means that things have no physical parentage. From that Act all origin springs. The Christian origins likewise. The peculiar Spirit of Christ and of His truth while appearing in history, and having for their manifestation an historical setting and background, are no product of history, if from history itself we discover cogent grounds for the denial and for postulating a fresh incoming at that point, a new onward move, of that operation which, inscrutable to scientific method, we attribute to the Divine Being.

2. We proceed next to inquire whether the facts of history urge on us such a postulate. There is a reading of the evolution of religion which at once answers No. According to it religion began in a low and crude form, such as animism or fetichism. Man supposes that everywhere in the world there are souls like his own, which being potent or impotent require to be appeased and humoured and honoured. Gradually man attained to a deeper consciousness of the power around him. Out of these spirits arose the gods. Polydemonism led to polytheism. Later, mankind came to recognize that the multiplicity of powers is a united power. Then was born monotheism. Monotheism ran through several stages and shed various husks till it reached its highest in the Christian stage. That is a reading adopted by not a few. It is, however, as has been well said, more 'a series of historical hypotheses than any actual representation of an historical course.' It has no authority. It cannot prove its case. The religions of mankind are not to be conceived of as so many stages

and phases of faith all leading up to Christianity and passing on to it the truths which had been successively embodied in each. The religions of the races of mankind have no such common life, no common course of growth of culture through a series of stages which this theory demands. There is not the least trace of such. The heathen world has little inherent unity in its parts. It is essentially a complex or aggregate of coexistent peoples, with separate histories and no common spirit, each being isolated or in little more than external contact with each other, each acting on impulses or principles peculiar to itself, each proceeding on a different course from its neighbours. There can be no greater mistake than to imagine that evolution is always progressive. Huxley squashed that idea. You may evolve into degeneration as into regeneration. The history of religion exemplifies the remark. It does not witness to a straight line of progress. Fetichism is not wanting in high forms. Higher ideas are not wanting in fetichistic forms. From the lower forms, it is true, Christianity is never asserted to have come. But on the theory above mentioned, it is involved that the central principle of the lowest and the lower should appear also in the highest. Is this so?

3. To that question let us address ourselves: the distinctiveness of the central idea of the Christian faith. Without that distinctiveness Christianity would fail both in originality and absoluteness. Wherein does it consist? Religion consists in a personal consciousness, a rational, practical, and feeling consciousness. That is its content. The rank and worth of any religion will be determined by the measure in which it approximates to the realization of a content of that kind *perfect, i.e.* completely self-consistent in reason, completely satisfying to the heart, completely effective in working value.

Now the claim of Christianity here is that it alone of historical religions has exhibited the capacity referred to. The study of comparative religion brings out in this connexion matters of extreme interest. In the first place, you see in the ethnic development, everywhere increase and expansion of religious consciousness and religious conception. New gods are always being found, new modes of serving them come in, and these creations have an extraordinary persistence. The next feature we note is this—a constant accompanying movement, to reduce the mass of gathering material to simpler dimensions, to separate the

main facts from the side issues. A third point observable is that at the end of an epoch of advance, a critical and philosophic spirit enters to contend with the positive constituents of the religion. A fourth fact is remarkable. Whenever that philosophic temper succeeds in so universalizing the positive content of the religious consciousness as practically to dissolve it, the further power of the religion in question disappears. With the positive goes *pari passu* the power of faith. Now what is the inner meaning of all this? The soul in seeking after God and the goal of life, why should it be so restless? why travel from god to god? The meaning is that in the storm and stress of life, the soul finds no strength and no increase of life, no firm stand, until it find the true God. It is life, 'more life and fuller,' the soul seeks. In these pagan religions, man's soul has sought God in every conceivable object, driven from one to the other, in the search for life and satisfying experience. To them all, as at last also 'to the gods of Greece,' the soul has put its questions. They could give no answer. It was the end of the gods. Their 'twilight' had come. These religions are not stages in one single successive long evolving experience. They are separate, each one a refuge from the insufficiency of the other, and from its inconsistency and irrationality. These religions die because their devotees grow in life.

Consider, on the contrary, the course of the Christian consciousness. Nothing of what appears in ethnic history characterizes it. It has never had a night, or even a twilight. It is old, yet ever new. It bears fruit in every age. It gives inspiration under every sun. It faces every faith and every philosophy, and although always modified in accidents, ever retains its own specialities.

How vast are the movements in the Western world alone the Christian religion has felt! Yet it has always ruled them. Interests changed, relations altered, new ideals crowd out the old, new needs rise, new tasks are received, but over the disappearance of old worlds and old cultures, over new world and new tendencies, over them all has continued to shine the light of the gospel. Within its own borders it has, like other religions, experienced in certain things decays, criticisms, reformations, but it is never destroyed. It is by them recalled to its first principles and pristine vigour, renewing men's lives, restoring men's souls. The heathenism perished by their own principles: Christianity re

vives by return to its principles, *that* is the amazing contrast. Paganism does not evolve, Christianity once started does. How shall we account for it but by the distinctiveness and the divinity of the Christian? It is a principle manifestly so exhaustless in rational and spiritual resourcefulness as adequately to meet every advancing increase of human reason and human aspiration—manifestly, therefore divine. The historical habiliments in which the Christian idea has clothed itself may, as has often been urged, have been borrowed, here from Mithraism, there from Greco-Roman civilization; its doctrines and ethics may have direct affinities, as it unquestionably has, with the Hebrews, and indirect with the Gentiles, but in all its borrowed raiment it has never lost itself; when seemingly buried, its own inexpugnable self-consciousness has

shot up and passed to new triumphs. Everything that has exalted itself against it has been subdued. Christianity is in history the one independent, isolated, exclusive form. Face to face with other forms, it stands unaccountable and aggressive. Its deeper instincts have always been opposed to the idea of mixing in any eclectic fellowship of cult or philosophy; and wherever Christianity has followed its deepest instincts, its original ideas prevail. This, we submit, could never be, if these instincts and ideas were the result or synthesis of previous religious growth. It is, on the contrary, due to one fact, and one only, the advent and incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, whose character has no pattern, pagan or Jewish, and who can be explained by no history but that of the influence He has so powerfully exerted on mankind.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Some Problems of the Prophetic Literature.

THE few pages of Habakkuk¹ 'have raised more questions than perhaps any other booklet of the same size in Hebrew literature.' Nicolardot offers no revolutionary solution. In the exegesis of Habakkuk, as elsewhere, 'revolutions are dangerous,' and serve little other purpose than to show 'the inexperience of the debutant.' Nicolardot prefers to traverse the good highway already made by the labours of older scholars, content if he be able to shed 'a little daylight' into nooks and crannies that still remain obscure.

A translation of Habakkuk into lucid, nervous French, with critical notes and an admirably full bibliography of recent studies of the problem, leads him to the main ground. The *Point de Vue Unitaire* is first discussed and disposed of (p. 33 ff.). Alike in its simple traditional form, and in the 'original, interesting, erudite,' but 'far from being proved, or even probable,' reconstructions of Peiser and Duhm, this view fails to do justice to the complexity of the problem. For Nicolardot the *point de résistance* is the 'Chaldean' application of 1^{6ff.}. There seems to him no good

ground for questioning the Massoretic reading *הַכְּשִׁימִי*. But even apart from this, he is satisfied, the description can apply neither to the Persians, nor to the Greeks, nor to the Assyrians, but only to the Chaldeans. If so, 'no single date can satisfy the demands of every part of the book' (p. 61). We are thus inevitably led to the *Point de Vue Analytique*.

From this point of view, chap. 3 presents little difficulty. Nicolardot agrees with the great majority of modern scholars in pronouncing the chapter 'a true Psalm,' from some post-exilic Psalter (as is evident from 'the tone and sentiment' of the piece, as well as the musical directions at the beginning and end), which was composed, perhaps, about the middle of the fourth century B.C., during the persecutions of the reign of Artaxerxes Ochus (p. 63 ff.). The historical setting of the triumphal Taunt-song in 2⁵⁻¹⁷ may also be ascertained with sufficient probability. The 'Woes' are directed against the foreign rulers of Israel, viz. the Chaldeans, on whom judgment is impending for their disregard of God and His righteous demands. The date must therefore be sought about the middle of the sixth century, when the victories of Cyrus opened prophetic eyes in Israel to the 'signs of the times' (p. 68 ff.). The thorniest problems gather round 1¹⁻². It

¹ *La Composition du Livre d'Habacuc*. Par Firmin Nicolardot, Dr.-ès-Lettres. Paris: Fischbacher.