

III.

THE COURSES OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.*

1876.

1. I HAVE been bold in my title; and, in order to convey a distinct idea, have promised what I cannot do more than most imperfectly perform.

This paper is a paper for the day. We live in a time when the interest in religious thought, or in thought concerning religion, is diffused over an area unusually wide, but also when the aspect of such thought is singularly multiform and confused. It defies all attempts at reduction to an unity, and recalls the Ovidian account of chaos:

“Nulli sua forma manebat,
Obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
Frigida pugnabant calidis, humentia siccis,
Mollia cum duris, sine pondere habentia pondus.” †

At every point there start into action multitudes of aimless or erratic forces, crossing and jostling one another, and refusing not only to be governed, but even to be classified. Any attempt to group them, however slightly and however roughly, if not hopeless, is daring; but, as they act upon us all, by attraction or by repulsion, we are all concerned in knowing what we can of their nature and direction; and an initial effort, however

* Reprinted from the *Contemporary Review* for June 6, 1876.

† *Ov. Metam.* i. 17.

feeble, may lead the way to more comprehensive and accurate performances.

2. I shall endeavour, therefore, to indicate in a rude manner what seem to be in our day the principal currents of thought concerning religion; and as, in a matter of this kind, the effect can hardly be well considered without the cause, I also hope in a future paper briefly to touch the question, how and why these currents have been put into their present sharp and unordered motion.*

The channels, in which they mainly run, according to my view, are five. But this Punjaub differs from the Punjaub known to geography, in that its rivers do not converge; although for certain purposes and between certain points they, or some of them, may run parallel. Neither do they, like Po and his tributaries, sweep from the hill into the plain to find their rest; † but, for the time at least, the farther they run, they seem to brawl the more.

3. My rude map will not reach beyond the borders of Christendom. There are those who seem to think that, as of old, wise men will come to us from the East, and give us instruction upon thoughts and things. It will be time enough to examine into these speculations, as to any practical value they may possess, when we shall have been favoured with a far clearer view, than we now possess, of the true moral and spiritual interior of the vast regions of the rising sun. We may thus, and then, form some idea of the relations both between their theoretical and their actual religion, and between their beliefs and their personal and social practice; and we may be

* [This more formidable effort has not been made.—W. E. G., 1878.]

† Dante, Div. Comm. v. 98.

able in some degree to estimate their capacity for bearing the searching strain of a transition from a stagnant, to a vivid and active, condition of secular life. At present we seem to be, for the most part, in the dark on these capital questions, and where, as in the case of Islam, we have a few rays of light; the prospect of any help to be drawn from such a quarter is far from encouraging.

4. Provisionally, then, I set out with the assumption that, in handling this question for Christendom, we are touching it at its very heart. The Christian thought, the Christian tradition, the Christian society, are the great, the imperial thought, the tradition, and society of this earth. It is from Christendom outwards that power and influence radiate, not towards it and into it that they flow. There seems to be one point at least on the surface of the earth—namely, among the negro races of West Africa—where Mahometanism gains ground upon Christianity; but that assuredly is not the seat of government from whence will issue the *fiats* of the future, to direct the destinies of mankind.

5. Yet other remarks I must prefix. One is apologetic, another admonitory. First, I admit that many writers, many minds and characters, such for example as Mr. J. S. Mill, and such as the school of Paulus, and such as many of those now called Broad-Churchmen, will not fall *clean* into any one of the five divisions, but will lie between two, or will range over, and partake the notes of, several. This must happen in all classifications of thought, more or less. And here, probably, more rather than less; for the distinctions are complex, and the operation difficult.

6. Secondly, my aim is to exhibit principles, as contra-

distinguished from opinions. Let it not be supposed that these always go together, any more than sons are always like their parents. Principles are, indeed, the fathers of opinions; and they will ultimately be able to assert the parentage by determining the lineaments of the descendants. Men, individually and in series, commonly know their own opinions, but are often ignorant of their own principles. Yet in the long run it is the principles that govern; and the opinions must go to the wall.

But this is a work of time; in many cases, a work of much time. With some men, nothing less than life suffices for it; and with some life itself is not sufficient.

A notable historic instance of the distinction is to be found in those English Puritans of the seventeenth century, who rejected in block the authority of creeds, tests, and formularies. Their opinions were either Calvinistic, or at the least Evangelical. After three or four generations it was found that, while retaining the title of Presbyterians, the congregations had as a rule become Unitarian; and yet that they remained in possession of buildings, and other endowments, given by Trinitarian believers. Upon a case of this character arose the well-known suit of Lady Hewley's Charity. Sir Lancelot Shadwell, who decided it, knew well that every hair of Lady Hewley's head would have stood on end, had she known what manner of gospel her funds were to be used to support; and he decided that they could only be employed in general conformity with her opinions. Satisfied with a first view of the case, the public applauded the judgment; and it has not been reversed. But the parties in possession of the endowments were not to be dislodged by the artillery of such pleas. They appealed to Parliament. They showed that their Puritan forefathers had

instructed them to discard all intermediate authorities; and to interpret Scripture for themselves, to the best of their ability. It would indeed have been intolerable if those, who taught the rejection of such authority when it was ancient and widely spread, should, in their own persons, have reconstituted it, all recent and raw, as a bond upon conscience. The Unitarians contended that they had obeyed the lesson they were taught; and that it was not their fault, if the result of their fidelity was that they differed from their teachers. Parliament dived into the question, which the Bench had only skimmed; and confirmed the title of the parties in possession.

7. And again. As men may hold different opinions under the shelter of the same principle, so they may have the same opinions while they are governed by principles distinct or opposite. No man was in principle more opposed to the Church of Rome, than the late Mr. Henry Drummond. But he expressed in the House of Commons a conception of the Eucharistic sacrifice so lofty, as must have satisfied a divine of the Latin Church. Again, the doctrine of Transubstantiation was received in the thirteenth century on the authority of a Papal Council; but it is probable that many of the "Old Catholics," who have renounced the tribunal, may still agree in the tenet.

8. I think it will be found that these remarks will explain the cases, already indicated, of persons who do not fall into any of the five classes. They are I think, chiefly, either the indolent, who take up at a venture with narrow and fragmentary glimpses of the domain of religious thought; or the lovers of the picturesque, who are governed by exterior colour and other superficial signs; or they are writers in a state of transition, who have

received a shock that has driven them from their original base, but have not yet found a region suited to restore to them their equilibrium; a fluid, of the same specific gravity with themselves.*

9. I take no notice of the system termed Erastian.† It can hardly, as far as I see, be called a system of or concerning religious thought at all. Its centre of gravity is not within the religious precinct. The most violent Ultramontane, the most determined Agnostic, may alike make excellent Erastians, according to the varieties of time and circumstance. If we follow the Erastian idea, it does not matter what God we worship, or how we worship Him, provided we derive both belief and worship from the civil ruler, or hold them subject to his orders. Many most respectable persons have been, or have thought themselves to be, Erastians; but the system, in the developments of which it is capable, is among the most debased ever known to man.

“Non ragioniam di lui; ma guarda, e passa.”

10. Lastly, it is plain that a Chart of Religion, such as I am endeavouring to present in outline, has reference to the *Ecclesia docens*, rather than to the *Ecclesia discens*; to the scientific or speculative basis of the respective systems, and the few who deal with it; not to their development in general life and practice, a subject far too difficult, and too invidious, for me to consider.

* [The reader may also be reminded that this paper has reference to those who deal more or less *ex professo* with the subject matter. There may be writers, and even theologians of importance, who treat of specialties, or move in distinct provinces, and who in no way fall within the scope of my statement.—W. E. G., 1878.]

† On the opinions, and principles, of Erastus himself, see No. I. in this volume.

11. I may now set out the five main schools or systems, which are constituted as follows. We have:—

- I. Those who accept the Papal monarchy: or the Ultramontane school.
- II. Those who, rejecting the Papal monarchy, believe in the visibility of the Church: or the Historical school.
- III. Those who, rejecting the Papal monarchy and the visibility of the Church, believe in the great central dogmas of the Christian system, the Trinity and the Incarnation. These will be here termed the Protestant Evangelical school.
- IV. Those who, professedly rejecting all known expressions of dogma, are nevertheless believers in a moral Governor of the Universe, and in a state of probation for mankind; whether annexing or not annexing to this belief any of the usual particulars of the Christian system, either doctrinal or moral. These I denominate the Theistic school.
- V. The Negative school. Negative, that is to say, as to thought which can be called religious in the most accustomed sense. Under this head I am obliged to place a number of schemes, of which the adherents may resent the collocation. They are so placed, on the ground that they agree in denying categorically, or else in declining to recognise or affirm, the reign of a moral Governor or Providence, and the existence of a state of discipline or probation. To this aggregate seem to belong—
 1. Scepticism.
 2. Atheism.
 3. Agnosticism.
 4. Secularism.
 5. (Revived) Paganism.
 6. Materialism.
 7. Pantheism.
 8. Positivism.

12. Of these five main divisions, the first is much before any one of the others in material extension. Its ostensible numbers may nearly equal those of the second and the third taken together. The fourth and the fifth are made up of votaries who are scattered and isolated; or whose creed is unavowed; or who, if they exist in communities at all, exist only in such minute communities, as to form but specks in the general prospect.

The Ultramontane system has also the great advantage, for working purposes, of by far the most elastic, the most closely knit, and the most highly centralised organisation.

13. Again, it derives its origin by an unbroken succession from Christ and His Apostles. No more imposing title can well be conceived; yet it naturally has no conclusive weight with such as remember or believe that a theistic system, given by the Almighty to our first progenitors, passed, in classic times, and in like manner, through far more vital mutations. It was by a series of insensible deviations, and without the shock of any one revolutionary change, that in a long course of ages, after a pure beginning, there were built up many forms of religion, which, at the period of the Advent, had come to be in the main both foul and false. The allegation may possibly be made that the traditions, as well as the personal succession, of the Latin Church, are unbroken. But this will of course be denied by those who regard the Council of 1870 as having imported, at a stroke, a fundamental change into the articles of the Christian faith. To the vast numerical majority, however, the Roman authorities seem to have succeeded in recommending their propositions: and the claim passes popularly current.

14. This singular system, receiving the Sacred Scriptures, and nominally attaching a high authority to the

witness of tradition, holds both in subjection to such construction as may be placed upon them from time to time, either by an assemblage of Bishops, together with certain other high functionaries, which derives its authority from the Pope, or by the Pope himself, when he thinks fit to take upon himself the office. It is true, that he is said to take advice; but he is the sole judge what advice he shall ask, and whether he shall follow it. It is true that whatever he promulgates as an article of faith he declares to have been contained in the original revelation; but by his vision alone can the question be determined, whether it is there or not. To the common eye it seems, as if many articles of Christian belief had at the first been written in invisible ink; and as if the Pope alone assumed the office of putting the paper to the fire, and exhibiting these novel antiquities to the gaze of an admiring world.

15. With regard, however, to matters of discipline and government, he is not restrained even by the profession of following antiquity. The Christian community under him is organised like an army, of which each order is in strict subjection to every order that is above it. A thousand Bishops are its generals; some two hundred thousand clergy are its subordinate officers; the laity are its proletarians. The auxiliary forces of this great military establishment are the monastic orders. And they differ from the auxiliaries of other armies, in that they have a yet stricter discipline, and a more complete dependence on the head, than the ordinary soldiery. Of these four ranks in the hierarchy, two things may be asserted unconditionally: that no rights belong to the laity, and that all right resides in the Pope. All other rights but his are provisional only; and are called rights only by way of accommodation, for they are withdrawable at will.

The rights of laymen as against priests, of priests as against Bishops, of Bishops as against the Pope, depend entirely upon his judgment, or his pleasure, whichever he may think fit to call it. To all commands issued by and from him, under this system, and joined with a demand for absolute obedience, an absolute obedience is due.

16. To the charm of an unbroken continuity, to the majesty of an immense mass, to the energy of a closely serried organisation, the system now justly called Papalism, or Vaticanism, adds another and a more legitimate source of strength. It undeniably contains within itself a large portion of the individual religious life of Christendom. The faith, the hope, the charity, which it was the office of the Gospel to engender, flourish within this precinct in the hearts of millions upon millions, who feel little, and know less, of its extreme claims, and of their constantly progressive development. Many beautiful, and many noble, characters grow up within it. Moreover, the babes and sucklings of the Gospel, the poor, the weak, the uninstructed, the simple souls who in tranquil spheres give the heart and will to God, and whose shady path is not scorched by the burning questions of human thought and life, these persons are probably in the Roman Church by no means worse, than they would be under other Christian systems. They swell the mass of the main body; they obey the word of command when it reaches them; and they help to supply the resources, by which a vast machinery is kept in motion.

17. Yet once more. The Papal host has reason to congratulate itself on the compliments it receives from its extremest opponents, when they are contrasted with the scorn, which those opponents feel for all that lies between. Thus E. von Hartmann, the chief living oracle

of German Pantheism, says it is with an honourable spirit of consistency (*Consequenz*) that "Catholicism" has, after a long slumber, declared war to the knife against modern culture, and the highest acquisitions of the recent mental development.* And he observes that, while he utterly denounces the mummy-like effeteness and religious incapacity of Ultramontanism, still "It ought to feel flattered by my recognising in it the legitimate champion of historical Christianity, and denoting its measures against modern culture as the last effort of that system at self-preservation."† Accordingly, his most severe denunciations are reserved for "Liberal Protestantism," his next neighbour, even as the loudest thunders of the Vatican are issued to proclaim the iniquities of "Liberal Catholics."‡

18. I shall recite more briefly the besetting causes of weakness in the Ultramontane system. These I take to be principally: (1) its hostility to mental freedom at large; (2) its incompatibility with the thought and movement of modern civilisation; (3) its pretensions against the State; (4) its pretensions against parental and conjugal rights; (5) its jealousy, abated in some quarters, of the free circulation and use of the Holy Scripture; (6) the *de facto* alienation of the educated mind of the countries in which it prevails; (7) its detrimental effects on the comparative strength and morality of the States in which it has sway; (8) its tendency to sap veracity in the individual mind. If this charge were thought harsh, I could

* 'Der Selbstzersetzung des Christenthums,' p. 15 (Berlin, 1874).

† *Ibid.* 'Vorwort,' p. x.

‡ The latest specimen may be seen in a Pastoral of Bishop Bourget, of Montreal, the hero of the remarkable and rather famous Guibord case. Published in the *Montreal Weekly Witness* of Feb. 10, 1876.

refer for a much stronger statement to the works of the late Mr. Simpson, himself a convert of great ability to the Roman system from the English Church.

19. Next in order to the Ultramontane school comes a school, which may perhaps best be designated as Historical; because, without holding that all, which has been, has been right, it regards the general consent of Christendom, honestly examined and sufficiently ascertained, as a leading auxiliary, at the least, to the individual reason in the search for religious truth. To this belong those "Liberal Catholics" who have just been mentioned, and who, unlike the "Old Catholics," remain externally in the Latin communion, bravely and generously hoping against hope, under conditions which must ensure to them a highly comfortable existence. Their position appears to be substantially identical with that of a portion of the Protestants of the sixteenth century, who in perfectly good faith believed that they were maintaining the true system of Christianity, as attested by Scripture and sacred history, but who had to uphold this as their own conviction in the teeth of the constituted tribunals of the Latin Church. The appeal at present made, indeed, is from the Council of the Vatican to a Council lawfully conducted. But the right of appeal is denied by the living authority, and appears therefore, now that that authority holds itself to have given a final utterance on the dogma of Infallibility, to rest only on the ultimate groundwork of private judgment.

20. The question here, however, is not so much their ecclesiastical position, as their form of religious thought, and their proper place in the general scheme or chart. Few they may be, and isolated they certainly are. But they are essentially in sympathy with many who do not

wear the same badge with themselves; in short with all who, rejecting the Papal monarchy, adhere to the ancient dogma formulated in the Creeds, and who believe that our Lord, and His Apostles acting under His authority, founded a society with a promise of visible perpetuity, and with a commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. That Gospel is the faith once delivered to the saints; and, while some of these believers would admit that the Church may err, they would all agree in holding that she cannot err fatally or finally, and that the pledge of her vitality, if not of her health, is unconditional; unconditional, however, not to any or to every part, but to the whole, as a whole. They would agree that she is divinely kept in the possession of all essential truth. They would agree in accepting those declarations of it, which proceeded, now between twelve and fifteen centuries ago, from her as one united body, acting in lawful Councils, which received their final seal from the general acceptance of the faithful. They would recognise no final authority subordinate to that of the united Church; and would plead for a reasonable and free acceptance of that authority on the part of the individual Christian. Or, if these propositions lead us too far into detail, they believe in an historical Church, constitutional rather than despotic, with its faith long ago immutably, and to all appearance adequately, defined: and they are not to be induced, by the pretext of development, to allow palpable innovations to take their place beside the truths acknowledged through fifty generations.

21. If to those, who are thus minded, I give the title of historical, it is because they seem to conform to the essential type of Christianity as it was exhibited under the Apostolical, the Episcopal, and the Patriarchal system;

and because they do not tamper in practice with that traditional testimony, of which in theory they admit the real validity and weight, and the great utility in conjunction with the appeal of the Church to Holy Scripture.

22. This, in its essential outlines, is the system which constitutes the scientific basis of the Eastern or Orthodox Churches. I do not speak of the defects, faults, and abuses, which doubtless abound in them, as in one shape or another they are to be found in every religious body; but of the ultimate grounds, which, when put on their defence, they would assume as the warrant of what is essential to their system.

Great, without doubt, is in every case the interval between the written theory and the practice of ecclesiastical bodies. The difference is scarcely less between their authorised doctrine, in the proper sense, which they hold as of obligation, and the developments which that doctrine receives through the unchecked, or little checked, predominance of the prevailing bias in the works of individual writers, and in the popular tradition. It is with the former only that I have here to do. Inasmuch, however, as few or none of them are judged among us (in my opinion) so superficially and harshly as the Churches of the East, I would observe, on their behalf, that they know nothing of five great conflicts, which more than ever distract the Latin Church as a whole: conflict between the Church and the State; conflict between the Church and the Scripture; conflict between the Church and the family; conflict between the Church and the individual mind; conflict between the Church, and modern culture, science, and civilisation.

23. While the largest numerical following of this scheme of belief is to be found in the Eastern Churches,

a recurrence to the outline, by which I have described it, will show that it includes, together with the so-called Liberal Catholics whom the Papal Court regards as the parasitic vermin of its Church, and the Old Catholics whom it has succeeded in visibly expelling, the classical theology of the English Church. This may be said to form one of its wings. The standard books and the recognised writers, that express the theological mind of Anglicanism, proceed throughout on the assertion, or the assumption, that the Church is a visible society or congregation; and her leaders and episcopal rulers preserved with an unfailling strictness the succession of Bishops, at a time, and under circumstances, when the policy of the hour would have recommended their treating it as a matter of indifference. This proposition is in no manner weakened by the fact that, in most or many cases, they made large allowance for the position of the Protestants of the Continent. The position of those important bodies was then, to a great extent, undefined and provisional, and was capable of being regarded as in a certain sense representing, with respect to government and order, a case of necessity. The changes, made in England during the sixteenth century as to tenets and usages, they treat as having been originally within the competence of the local Church which accepted them, and as never having been condemned by a legitimate authority; and they fear lest the general rejection of tradition should really mean contempt of history. These principles are treated by many who view them from an exterior standing point, for example by Lord Macaulay, as "the crotchets of the High Church party." But it is an established fact, of that order which an historian should respect, that "The High Church party" is but another name, rough perhaps, but

true, for the powerful influence which has moulded the theology of the English Church, or rather of the Anglican Churches, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth down to the present hour.

24. Among non-episcopal Protestants, a small portion of the German divines are, perhaps, alone in sympathy with the system here described. As a recent, yet not too recent, specimen of this class, I would mention Rothe.* But, in other times, the description would have included many of the weightiest names of Protestantism, such as Casaubon and Grotius, and, towering even over these, the great Leibnitz.

25. The strength of this system lies generally, first in its hold upon antiquity, and in the authority and consent of the earlier Christian writers, known as the Fathers; every one of whom holds the visibility and teaching office of the Church, while it is only the wrenching of a word here and there from a very few of their works into forced prominence and isolation, that can bring any one of them so much as upon speaking terms with the Papal Monarchy. At this point, a distinction must be taken between East and West. Oppression and poverty have thrown the Churches of the East into a defensive attitude, and have of necessity limited the range of learning, and condemned them specially to the evils of stagnation. But their doctrinal continuity is not liable to the challenge, which impeaches that of the Roman Church. In old times, they appear as Protestant, in the most legitimate and historic sense of the word, against the innovations of the Papal Supremacy, and of interpolation in the Creed of Nice and Constantinople. At the present day, they are

* 'Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche.' Wittenberg, 1837.

the most determined, and the most dreaded, of the antagonists to the Vatican Council. In the West, this scheme of religion has rested on learning and weight, rather than on numbers and organisation. But its respect for history and mental freedom, and the general moderation of its views of ecclesiastical power, had, at any rate down to our own day, sensibly mitigated the violent asperities of the Roman system: and, under the Anglican form, have in some way enabled it to maintain, and in recent times even to strengthen, its hold upon a large portion of the most active, and the most self-asserting, among all the nations of the Old world. Lastly, the scheme has the advantage that it is not the mere profession of a school, and a system, on paper or in the brain; but is firmly, though variously, incorporated in the authentic documents, and historical traditions, of large ecclesiastical bodies, great limbs of Christendom.

26. If such be the strength of the second among my five schemes when impartially viewed, it has likewise marks of weakness properly its own. Its adherents, while they teach that Christians ought to be united in the visible organisation of the Church, are *de facto* severed one from another, as well as (most of them) from the largest portion of the Christian world. What is still worse, in a merely popular sense—and it is only in the popular sense that I now presume to speak of strength or weakness—is, that it lies essentially in a mean: that it accepts the basis of religious belief in much the same fashion as we have all to accept those of Providential guidance, and moral duty, in practical life. It acknowledges the authority of the Church, but cannot, so to speak, lay its finger on any means whereby that authority can, at any given moment, be fully and finally exercised. It allows Holy Scripture to be,

supreme in matters of faith ; but it interposes more or less of an interpretative sense, in controverted subjects, between the Divine Word and the individual mind. What men like most in religion is simplicity and directness. But this method does not speak with the directness, or the simplicity, of either of its neighbour systems : whereof one directs inquiries straight to the priest, the Bishop, and the Pope ; and the other promises a private and personal infallibility, which is to follow the pious exercise of the mind upon the Divine Word. The same thing happens to them in a great religious crisis as to the moderate shades of political opinion in times of revolutionary excitement. They are apt to disappear like the Presbyterians before Cromwell, or like Lafayette before the Gironde, which was, in its turn, to give place to the Terror. The most sharply defined propositions are those, which most relieve the understanding by satisfying the emotional part of our nature. Both on this side and on that, the stammering lips are silenced ; and adherents are individually liable, as experience has shown, to be hustled into the opposite camps, where such propositions are the watchwords of the rival hosts.

27. The third to be noticed of the great powers* on the map of religious thought and feeling is that which I have made bold to term the Protestant Evangelical. For

* A remarkable effort has been made to incorporate the idea, which I have described as the basis of this Third Division, in what was formerly known as the Surrey Chapel. It was originally founded for the Rev. Rowland Hill ; and now, under the ministry of the Rev. Newman Hall, the congregation is about to migrate to a larger and more stately building. The scheme rests upon a "Schedule of Doctrines," which excludes the visible Church as an historical institution or polity, but requires dogmatic belief, of the character stated in the text ; and it does not require, or include, connection with any particular persuasion of professing Christians.

the pure and simple name Protestant is now largely and loosely used; sometimes even by men who, themselves believing nothing, nevertheless want countenance for their ends from among those who believe something; and who trust for this to the charm that still invests the early stages of its career, and associates it with the idea of a battle manfully fought for freedom against oppression and abuse. To fasten down its sense, the affix "Evangelical" may suffice. The phrase, thus developed, comprehends all who, rejecting the Papal monarchy, either reject, or at least do not accept, the doctrine of a Catholic Church, visible and historical; and who, without always proceeding to an abstract repudiation of all aid from authority or tradition, are on behalf of human freedom extremely jealous of such aid, and disposed rather to rely on the simple contact of the individual mind with the Divine Word. Such is their negative side.

28. But they adhere to all, or nearly all, the great affirmations of the Creeds. They believe strongly, if not scientifically, in revelation, inspiration, prophecy; in the dispensation of God manifest in the flesh; in an atoning Sacrifice for the sin of the world; in a converting and sanctifying Spirit; in short, they accept with fulness, in parts perhaps with crude exaggerations, what are termed the doctrines of grace. It is evident that we have here the very heart of the great Christian tradition, even if that heart be not encased in the well-knit skeleton of a dogmatic and ecclesiastical system, such as is maintained in principle by the ancient Churches. It is also surely evident to the unprejudiced mind that we have before us a true incorporation of Christian belief to some extent in institutions, and to a far larger extent in life and character. And this scheme may claim without doubt, not

less truly than those which have gone before, to be a tree bearing fruit. It has framed large communities. It has formed Christian nations; or at least, has not un-formed them. It has sustained an experience of ten generations of men. It may be that it does not generate largely the most refined forms of religion, or much of the very highest spirituality; but he would be a bold man, who should attempt to fasten on it any clearly marked and palpable inferiority of moral results, as compared with those of other Christian schemes.

29. I do not enter on the controvertible question of the claim it would probably advance to a marked superiority. My object is to record, on its behalf, that it has to a great extent made good its ground in the world of Christian fact: that it cannot be put out of the way by any expedient or figure of controversy, such as that it is a branch torn from the stem, with a life only derivative and provisional. Open to criticism it is, as may easily be shown: but it is one great factor of the Christian system, as that system now exists in the world. It is eminently outspoken, and tells of its own weaknesses as freely as of its victories or merits: it rallies millions, nay, scores of millions, to its standard: and while it entirely harmonises with the movement of modern civilisation, it exhibits its seal in the work of all works, namely, in uniting the human soul to Christ.

30. The phrase I have employed would at the period of the Reformation have correctly described, with insignificant exceptions, the Reformed communities of the Continent. Now, in the nineteenth century, I apprehend it can only be considered to represent a party, larger or smaller, in each of those communions: a party, of which the numerical strength is hard to esti-

mate even by conjecture. But it may be numerically very large. In the United Kingdom, assuredly, it may claim nearly the entire body of Presbyterians and Non-conformists under their various denominations. Moreover, that section of the Church of England which is termed the Evangelical or Low Church, not now very large, but still active and zealous, seems in great measure to belong to it. Of the English-speaking population in the New World, that is to say, in the United States and the British Colonies, which may be roughly taken at fifty millions, it may claim perhaps as many as thirty for its own; nor does any portion of the entire group seem to be endowed with greater vigour than this, which has grown up in new soil, and far from the possibly chilling shadow of National Establishments of religion.

31. On its popular and working side, in its pastoral and missionary energy, in the almost unrestrained freedom of its movements, the group is strong. Nor need it suffer greatly from the reproach of severances in outward communion, when it is considered that the particular forms of religious organisation are, in its view, matters of comparative indifference, and that the intermixture of ministerial offices, so incongruous and unseemly where enjoined principles draw the line of demarcation, is, for its respective sections, nothing else than a fostering and cheering sign of brotherly good-will. Its weakness is on the side of thought. This is the form of the Christian idea, which, and which alone, accepts the responsibility of upholding the main part of the dogmatic system of the first ages, yet renounces, for fear of ulterior consequences, the immense assistance which the argument on the text and *corpus* of the sacred books derives from the living development, through so many ages, of the Christian

system, and the continuous assent of the Church to one and the same faith.

32. It is burdened with the necessities of an exclusive scheme; for it not only denounces, as desertion from the faith, the abandonment of the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, but likewise, in some of its sections, it interpolates new essentials of its own, such as personal assurance, particular election, final perseverance, and peculiar conceptions respecting the atonement of Christ and the doctrine of justification. In respect of this last, it has often ascribed to faith the character and efficacy of a moral work; seemingly not even aware that it was thereby cutting from beneath its feet the famous *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesie*. It has a logical difficulty in, ridding itself of such excrescences; seeing that the excrescence and that to which it clings grow out of one and the same soil, as they are received upon one and the same warrant, whether it be that of a favourite religious teacher, or of a personal illumination.

33. Most of all, it has very severely suffered from the recent assaults on the *corpus* of Scripture, which it had received simply as a self-attested volume; and on its verbal inspiration, a question which has never offered so serious a dilemma to such as are content to take their stand on the ancient constitution of the Church, and to allow its witnessing and teaching office. Grounding itself with rather rigid exclusiveness upon the canon of the Bible, it is obliged to protest against the government, and many of the doctrines, that subsisted in the Church at the very epoch when that canon was made up. Its repudiations are so considerable, and so far-reaching, that there remains hardly any adequate standing ground for the defence of that which it is not less decidedly set

upon retaining. It is therefore, as might be expected, a school poor as yet in the literature of Church history, of dogmatic theology, and of philosophic thought.

34. Its own annals, from the sixteenth century downwards, supply abundant proof of its lying open, at many points, to the largest disintegration. This disintegration is not, as in the last case, personal and atomic. It is not the mere occasional departure of individual deserters: it is decrepitude and decadence under organic laws. Even now, amidst a profusion of excellences, there are signs that danger is at hand. Indeed, were it not for the ground of hope ever furnished by true piety and zeal, it seems hard to assign any limit to the future range of the destructive principle. Even the evanescence of Calvinistic crudities, once required as the very quintessence of the Gospel, may excite misgiving in the minds of friendly though extraneous observers, when they reflect that no higher or other authority, than that which these crudities have enjoyed, is allowed to the highest and most central verities of the ancient creeds.

35. We now pass away, by a great stride, into the region of Theism. We have quitted the zone in which all alike adore the name and person of the Messiah; in which Scripture is supreme; in which is recognised a supernatural, as well as a providential order; in which religion is authoritative and obligatory, and based on an objective standard. We have entered a zone in which the subjective instinct, the need or appetite of man for religion, is regarded as its title and as its measure; in which, as far as religion is concerned (not, I presume, in other matters), truth is mainly that which a man troweth; and in which the individual, growing towards maturity, instead of accepting and using the tradition of his fathers, until

his adult faculties see ground to question it, is rather warned against such acceptance, as enhancing the difficulties of impartial choice. We are here commonly introduced, at least in theory, to a new mode of training. In things touching his bodily and his intelligent life, the youth is indeed allowed to profit by the vast capital, which has been accumulated by the labour and experience of his race. But, in respect to the world unseen, and to its Author, he must not be imbued with prejudice; there is no such thing as established or presumptive truth, of which he can avail himself; he is doomed, or counselled, to begin anew. What he attains, as it began with his infancy, so it will die with his death. He inherited from no one, and no one will inherit from him.

In making this transition, I confess to feeling a great change of climate. It is not simply that certain tenets have been dropped. The mental attitude, the method of knowledge, have been changed. Under the three former systems that method was traditional and continuous: it is here independent, and simply renewable upon a lease to each man for his life.

36. Such a sketch is, I think, conformable to the theory of modern Theism, and such is its goal or final standing point in practice. But this is not the whole picture. It is time to show its positive side. It recognises one Almighty Governor of the world; and, if it has scruples about calling Him a Person, yet conscious of Him as one who will deal with us, and with whom we have to deal, as persons deal with one another, this Almighty Being has placed us under discipline in the world; and will in some real and effective manner bring it about that the good shall be happy, and that those who do evil shall surely suffer for it. These are truths of the utmost value

in themselves. Nay, who shall say that, were the great disease of the moral world less virulent than it is, they would not, of themselves, supply it with a sufficient medicine? But further, most of the Theists have come to be such, not by a rejection of Christianity, but by a declension from it. Hence, in quitting their ancient home, they have carried away with them a portion, sometimes a large portion, of the furniture; a deep personal reverence for the person of the Saviour, and a warm adhesion to the greater part at least of His moral teaching; nay, even, as for example in the writings of Mr. Martineau, a devout recognition of its higher spiritual aims.

37. There may be observed, however, on the part of this school of teachers, not exclusively but specially, a disposition to recommend their system by associating it with what is called universalism; or, the doctrine that all human, or more properly all created being, however averse and remote it may now be from God, shall at some future time be brought into conformity, and consequent felicity. There can be no doubt of the predisposition of very many to fall in with a notion of this kind. It gives the sort of pleasure, which we may conceive to attend the removal of a strongly-constructed bit from the mouth of a restive horse. But it propounds a belief; and an affirmative proposition must have for its foundation something more solid than a mere sense of relief. In order that a scheme of this kind may attain to weight and authority, as distinguished from mere popularity, it seems requisite that some effort should be made, I will not say to support it from Scripture or tradition, but to establish for it a place among the recognised principles of natural religion; to sustain it by analogies and presumptions from human experience, and from the observation of

life, character, and the scheme of things under which we live. When, by a solid use of the methods of Butler, it shall have been shown that a scheme of this kind takes hold of and fits into the moral government of the world, and the natural workings of the human conscience, then indeed some progress will have been made towards obtaining a hearing for its claim to be accounted an article of religion. But till that time comes, it will not perhaps be a source to its advocates of great intellectual or moral strength.

38. Now, we have no right whatever to impute bad faith to the profession of the Unitarians and others, that they cannot and will not part with the name of Christians; that they are the true professors of a reformed Christianity; and that they have effected with thoroughness and consistency that reduction of it to the form of its original promulgation by its illustrious Teacher, which, in the sixteenth century, others were either too timid, or not enough enlightened, to effect.

Since the time of Bels'ham, considerable changes seem to have taken place in the scheme of Unitarianism. At the present day, it probably includes much variety of religious thought. But I am not aware that it has abandoned the claim to be the best representative of the primitive Gospel as it was delivered by Christ Himself.

39. The Jews, who, taken together, form a rather large community, have hitherto commonly believed themselves to be the stewards of an unfulfilled Redemption. But it seems that a portion at least of them are now disposed to resolve their expected Messiah into a typical personage, prefiguring the blessings of civilisation. It may be doubted whether such a modification, as is thus indicated, would greatly add to the moral force of Judaism, or make

its alliance more valuable to the group which I am endeavouring to sketch.

40. Inasmuch as it was the doctrine of the Incarnation which gave to Love, as a practical power, its place in religion, so we might suppose that, upon the denial of that doctrine, that seraph would unfold its wings, and quit the shrine it had so long warmed and blessed. But it is not so. Whatever be the cause, devotion and fervour still reside, possibly it should be said still linger, within this precinct of somewhat chill abstractions. There are within it many men not only irreproachable in life, but excellent; and many who have written, both in this country and on the Continent, with no less power than earnestness, in defence of the foundations of the belief which they retain. Such are, for example, Professor Frohschammer in Germany and M. Laveleye in Belgium: while in this country, without pretending to exhaust the list, I would pay a debt of honour and respect to Mr. Martineau, Mr. Greg, Dr. Carpenter, and Mr. Jevons. See, for example, Mr. Greg's 1st edition of the 'Creed of Christendom'; Dr. Carpenter's address to the British Association at Bristol, the remarkable chapter with which Mr. Jevons has closed his work on Scientific Method; and, most recent of all, the powerful productions contributed to this REVIEW, in which Mr. Martineau has exhibited the "theologic conception" of the great Causal Will, as the "inmost nucleus of dynamic thought."*

41. The truth is, that the school consists not of a nation or tribe, with its promiscuous and often coarse materials, but of select individuals, scattered here and

* March No., pp. 531, 546.

there, and connected by little more than coincident opinion. They are generally men exempt from such temptations as distress entails, and fortified with such restraints as culture can supply. It is not extravagantly charitable to suppose that a portion of them at least may be such as, from a happy moral, as well as mental constitution, have never felt in themselves the need of the severer and more efficacious controul, supplied by the doctrines of the Christian Church. In this sense, under the conditions of our human state, goodness itself may in one sense be a snare. In any attempt, however, to estimate the system as a system, it must be recollected that the moral standard of individuals is fixed not alone, and sometimes not principally, by their personal convictions, but by the principles, the traditions, and the habits of the society in which they live, and below which it is a point of honour, as well as of duty, not to sink. A religious system is only then truly tested, when it is set to reform and to train, on a territory of its own, great masses of mankind.

42. Still, we should not hastily be led, by antagonism of opinion, to estimate lightly the influence which a school, limited like this in numbers, may exercise on the future. For, if they are not rulers, they rule those who are. They belong to the class of thinkers and teachers; and it is from within this circle, always, and even in the largest organisations, a narrow one, that there go forth the influences which one by one form the minds of men, and in their aggregate determine the course of affairs, the fate of institutions, and the happiness of the human race. What I am disposed to apprehend is that, contrary to their own intentions, while the aggregate result of the destructive part of their operations may be large, in their

positive and constructive teaching, tried on a large scale, they will greatly fail.

43. It is not their numerical weakness alone which impresses me with the fear that, if once belief were reduced to the dimensions allowed by this class of teachers, its attenuated residue would fall an easy prey to the destroyer. It is partly because the scheme has never been able to endure the test of practice in great communities. The only analogous case of a large monotheism, known to historic times, is that of Mahomet; and, without wishing to judge that system harshly, I presume that none regard it as competent to fill the vacuum which would be left by the crumbling away of historical Christianity. The general monotheism, which many inquirers, and most Christians, trace in the most primitive times, did not live long enough to stamp even so much as a clear footprint on the ground of history. The monotheism of the Hebrews lived, upon a narrow and secluded area, a fluctuating chequered life, and apparently owed that life to aids altogether exceptional. The monotheism of the philosophic schools was little more than a declamation and a dream. Let us listen for a moment to Macaulay on the old philosophers:—

“God the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.”*

* Essay on Milton. Essays, i. 22.

44. This system then is dry, abstract, unattractive, without a way to the general heart. And surely there are yet graver and more conclusive reasons why it should, in its sickly revival, add another failure to those which have hitherto marked, and indeed formed, its annals. It is intellectually charged with burdens, which it cannot bear. We live, as men, in a labyrinth of problems, and of moral problems, from which there is no escape permitted us. The prevalence of pain and sin, the limitations of free will, approximating sometimes to its virtual extinction, the mysterious laws of our independence, the indeterminateness for most or many men of the discipline of life, the cross purposes that seem at so many points to traverse the dispensations of an Almighty benevolence, can only be encountered by a large, an almost immeasurable, suspense of judgment. Solution for them we have none.

45. But a scheme came eighteen hundred years ago into the world, which is an earnest and harbinger of solution: which has banished from the earth, or frightened into the darkness, many of the foulest monsters that laid waste humanity; which has restored woman to her place in the natural order; which has set up the law of right against the rule of force; which has proclaimed, and in many great particulars enforced, the canon of mutual love; which has opened from within sources of strength for poverty and weakness, and put a bit in the mouth, and a bridle on the neck, of pride. In a word, this scheme, by mitigating the present pressure of one and all of these tremendous problems, has entitled itself to be heard when it boldly assures us that a day will come, in which we shall know as we are known, and when their pressure shall no longer baffle the strong intellects and

characters among us, nor drive the weaker even to despair. Meantime no man, save by his own wilful fault, is the worse for the Advent of Christ, while at least many are the better. Then, in shedding upon us the substance of so many gifts, and the earnest of so many more, it has done nothing to aggravate such burdens of the soul as it did not remove. For adventitious, forced, and artificial theories of particular men, times, and places, it cannot be held responsible. Judged by its own authentic and universal documents, I take it to be in its very heart, a remedial, an alleviating scheme.

46. It is a singular puzzle of psychology to comprehend how men can reject its aids, bounteous even if limited, and thus doom themselves to face with crippled resources the whole host of the enemy. For, as Theists, they have, to make all the admissions, to do battle with all the objections, which appear to lie against the established provision for the government of the world; but they deprive themselves of the invaluable title to appeal either to the benevolent doctrines of historical Christianity, or to the noble, if only partial, results that it has wrought.

But it is now time to set out upon the last stage of our journey.

47. I need not repeat the catalogue of schemes, which appear to fall under my fifth and last head, and which have been given on a former page.

It is a social truism that to tell A he is like B in most cases offends him; and to tell B he is like A commonly has the same effect. I fear the classifications thus far attempted may have a similar consequence, and with more reason; for we are bound to think well of our beliefs, but not of our countenances. Still less acceptable may

possibly be the bracketing, in which no less than eight systems will now be presented to view. Let me as far as may be anticipate and forego displeasure by stating anew that the principle of classification is negative; and that the common tie of the systems now to be named together is that they do not acknowledge, or leave space for, a personal government and personal Governor of the world, in the sense in which these phrases have recently been defined. Religion, in its popular and usual sense, they seem by a necessity of their systems to renounce; but to say that they all renounce it in its sense of a binding tie to something which is external to themselves, is beyond my proposition, and beyond my intention.

48. Hartmann, in the work I have already referred to, gives us what he thinks a religion, to replace departing Christianity, under the name of Pantheism: Strauss offers us the worship of the *Universum* in his *Alte und Neue Glaube*: Comte claims to produce a more perfect apparatus in the Religion of Humanity. This profession is one which I may be unable to distinguish from an hallucination, but I am far from presuming to pronounce or believe it an imposture. Nay, more than this: in the individual case, it may not be an hallucination at all. To many an ancient Stoic the image of virtue, to many a Peripatetic the constitution and law of his own nature as it had been analysed and described by Aristotle, may have constituted in a greater or a less degree an object of true reverence and worship, a restraint upon tendencies to evil, an encouragement to endeavour after good, nay, even a consolation in adversity and suffering, and some resource on the approach of death. In many a moderate speculator images like these, nay, and systems far less rational than these, may at this moment live, and open, or at the

worst live without closing, the same fountains of good influence.

49. But, as in wines, it is one question what mode of composition will produce a commodity drinkable in the country of origin, and what further provision may be requisite in order that the product may bear a sea voyage without turning into vinegar, so, in the matter of belief, select individuals may subsist on a poor, thin, sodden, and attenuated diet, which would simply be death to the multitude. Schemes, then, may suffice for the moral wants of a few intellectual and cultivated men, which cannot be propagated, and cannot be transmitted; which cannot bear the wear and tear of constant re-delivery; which cannot meet the countless and ever-shifting exigencies of our nature taken at large; which cannot do the rough work of the world. The colours, that will endure through the term of a butterfly's existence, would not avail to carry the works of Titian down from generation to generation and century to century. Think of twelve agnostics, or twelve pantheists, or twelve materialists, setting out from some modern Jerusalem to do the work of the twelve Apostles!

50. But, whatever the systems in question may seem to me to threaten, in their eventual results, I desire to avoid even the appearance of charging the professors of them, as such, with mental or moral lawlessness. I am not unmindful of the saying of an eminent Presbyterian, Dr. Norman Macleod, that many an opponent of dogma is nearer to God than many an orthodox believer; or of the words of Laertes on the dead Ophelia and the priest:

"A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling."*

* 'Hamlet,' v. 1.

I shall not attempt to include in this paper, which has already perhaps exceeded its legitimate boundaries, any incisive sketch of these several systems, or to pass, indeed, greatly beyond the province of a dictionary.

51. By the Sceptic, I understand one who, under the pressure either of intellectual or of moral difficulties, presented to him in the scheme of Revelation or Providence, makes universal that suspense of judgment, in regard to the unseen, which the believer in Christ, or in some form of religion, may admit as partially warrantable; and who consequently, by conviction in part, and in part by habit, allows the influence of the unseen upon his mind to sink to zero. This outline would leave a broad distinction between the sceptic proper, and the questioner who is, in good faith and with a practical aim, searching for an answer to his questions; even though the two may be agreed at the moment in their stopping short of all affirmative conclusions.

52. By the Atheist I understand the man who not only holds off, like the sceptic, from the affirmative, but who drives himself, or is driven, to the negative assertion in regard either to the whole Unseen, or to the existence of God.

53. By the Agnostic, again, is signified one who formulates into a proposition the universal doubt of the sceptic; agreeing with him, in that he declines to predicate the non-existence of the objects of religion, but agreeing with the atheist in so far that he removes them, by a dogma, from the sphere open and possible to human knowledge, either absolute or practical.

54. Then comes the Secularist. Him I understand to stop short of the three former schools, in that he does not of necessity assert anything but the positive and exclusive

claims of the purposes, the enjoyments, and the needs, presented to us in the world of sight and experience. He does not require, in principle, even the universal suspense of scepticism; but, putting the two worlds into two scales of value, he finds that the one weighs much, the other either nothing, or nothing that can be appreciated. At the utmost he is like a chemist who, in a testing analysis, after putting into percentages all that he can measure, if he finds something behind so minute as to refuse any quantitative estimate, calls it by the name of "trace."*

55. Next of kin to the secularist would be the professor of what I have described as a revived Paganism. I would rather have termed it Hellenism, were it not that there lives and breathes, in the world of fact, another Hellenism with a superior title to the name. This scheme evokes from the distant past what at any rate once was an historical reality, and held through ages the place, and presented to the eye the shell, of a religion, for communities of men who have profoundly marked the records of our race. It may perhaps be called secularism glorified. It asserted, or assumed, not only the exclusive claims of this life, but the all-sufficiency of the life on behalf of which these claims were made. It was plainly a religion for

* The following paragraph is from the prospectus of a weekly periodical:—"The *Secularist* is an exponent of that philosophy of life termed Secularism, which deprecates the old policy of sacrificing the certain welfare of humanity on earth to the merely possible and altogether unknown requirements of a life beyond the grave; which concentrates human attention on the life which now is, instead of upon a dubious life to come; which declares Science to be the only available Providence of man; which repudiates groundless faith and accepts the sole guide of reason; and makes conduciveness to human welfare the criterion of right and wrong."

Dives and not for Lazarus ; a religion, of which it was a first necessity that the mass of the community should be slaves to do the hard rough work of life, and should be excluded from its scope ; and of which it was an undoubted result to make the nominally free woman, as a rule, the virtual slave of the free man. But its great distinction was that it was a reality, and not a simple speculation. It trained men boldly, and completely, in all the organs of the flesh and of the mind, and taught them to live as statesmen, soldiers, citizens, scholars, philosophers, epicures, and sensualists. It had, too, its schisms and its heresies ; an Aristophanes with a scheme more masculine, an Alcibiades with one more effeminate. It had likewise a copious phantasmagoria of deities ; a hierarchy above, represented in the every-day world by a priesthood without force either social or moral, yet supplying a portion of the grandeur required by the splendid and elaborate art-life of the people, and perhaps still partially serving the purpose of the legislator, by imposing the restraint of terror upon the lower passions of the vulgar.

56. To the masses of men, this system did not absolutely prohibit religion ; a religion idolatrous in form, but not on that account wholly without value. To the educated life of the free citizen, the prohibition was as complete as it could be made ; and the spectacle of that life in the classical age of Greece can hardly be satisfactory to those, who teach that we have, in the inborn craving of the human heart for religion as a part of its necessary sustenance, a guarantee for the conservation of all that is essential to it as a power, and as an instrument of our discipline. This, then, I dismiss as the religion of "the sufficiency of life" ; with a debased worship appended to it for the ignorant, but with no relegating, no binding

power, between the educated man on the one side, and anything beyond the framework of the visible world on the other. Such a scheme as this could not but end in utter selfishness and degeneracy ; still we must not forget, how long it takes our wayward and inconsequent race to work out the last results of its principles. So long as men are only on the way to moral ruin, there has been, and there may again be, space and scope for much patriotism, much honour, and even much love.

57. Materialism finds in matter the base and source of all that is. Perhaps this is properly and strictly a doctrine of philosophy rather than one touching religion. I am too slightly possessed of the real laws and limits of the conception to speak with confidence : but I do not at present see the answer to the following proposition. In our actual world we have presented to us objects and powers simply material ; and we have also presented to us objects and powers *including* what is wholly different in fashion and operation from matter. If, then, upon a materialistic basis we can have 'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth,' the works of Aristotle, the *Divina Commedia*, the Imitation of Christ, the Gospels and Epistles, there may in the unseen world possibly be reared, on this same basis, all that theology has taught us. And thus materialism would join hands with orthodoxy. Such may be the scheme from one point of view. In common use, and in what is perhaps the most consistent use, I am afraid the phrase is appropriated by those who desire to express, in a form the most crude and crass, the exclusion of Deity from the world and the mind of man, and from the government of his life ; and the eventual descent into matter of all that now idly seems to our eyes to be above it. Such a materialism is the special danger of comfortable and money-making

times. The multiplication of the appliances of material and worldly life, and the increased command of them through the ever-mounting aggregate of wealth in the favoured sections of society, silently but steadily tend to enfeeble in our minds the sense of dependence, and to efface the kindred sense of sin. On the other hand they are as steadily increasing the avenues of desire, and enhancing the absorbing effect of enjoyment. With this comes the deadening of the higher conception of existence, and the disposition to accept the lower, nay the lowest, one.

58. A candidate in greater favour for the place, which it is supposed Christianity and Theism are about to vacate, is Pantheism. Meeting it often in its negative and polemical aspects, I am not so well aware from what source to draw an authentic statement of its positive character. It sins, perhaps, in ambiguity of definition, more than any of the other symbols adopted to designate a scheme of religion. It may be understood to conceive of God as the centre of the system, by will and might penetrating and pervading all Being to its outermost circumference, and immanent in each thing and each organism, in proportion to its constitution, capacity, and end. Or, this moral centre of all life and power may be resolved into the negative centre of the circle in mathematics, the point which hath position but not parts, and whose imagined gravitating power is but a name for the sum of forces not its own, which happen to find at that point their maximum, and which give it accordingly a conventional entity, so as to denote in concentration what exists only in diffusion.

59. In the former of these two senses, I am by no means sure that Dante is not a Pantheist. For he thus

speaks of the Divine will: and by the mouth, too, of a spirit in bliss:—

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace:
Ella è quel mare, al qual tutto si muove,
O ch' Ella cria, o che Natura face.*

In this sense Pantheism is, or may be, the highest Christianity. But in the other sense of the phrase, the conception of God is diluted, not enlarged; the visible creation, which is called His robe, is a robe laid upon a lay figure. All by which He indicates a will, all by which He governs, all by which He inspires the awe, reverence, and love that cluster round a person; all that places us in personal relation to Him, and makes personal dealings with Him possible, is disintegrated and held in solution, and can no more fulfil its proper function than the coppèr, which is dissolved in acid, can before precipitation serve the purpose of a die.†

60. There now remains of this formidable octave only the subject of Comtism or Positivism, or, as it might be called, Humanism. In a general view, it seems to improve upon Pantheism, by bringing into the account certain assets, which Pantheism does not stoop to notice, namely, the vast roll of the life and experience of the great human past, summed into an unit. In human characters, aggregate or select, it sees, or thinks it sees, a noble picture; in human achievement, a large accumulation of moral and social, as well as material capital: in the one a fit and

* Div. Comm., Parad. c. 111.

† The various possible senses of Pantheism are set out with clearness at the opening of Mr. Hunt's First Chapter in his Essay on the subject (Longmans, 1866). Of Mr. Hunt's proposition that personality involves limitation (p. 341) I have never yet seen anything approaching to a proof.

capable object to move the veneration, and thus mould the moral being of the race; in the other, the means and appliances needful for continued progress in the prospective career. When this system is viewed from the standing ground of belief, nothing can redeem it from the charge of that great initial act of destruction, in which it partakes with the seven competitors: yet there is, one would think, much of faith and of chivalry in this constructive effort; and some sympathy will be felt for a gallant endeavour to build up a working substitute for the old belief, and to efface the Ichabod written on the tablets of a deserted shrine.

61. Several of the schemes, which I have presumed to arrange in this fifth division, are, in the mouths of their more selfish and vulgar professors, mere names to cover the abandonment of all religion; sometimes, perhaps, even of much moral obligation. With regard to the rest, I think it important to dwell upon the observation that they are, from one cause or another, exceptional and not ordinary men—men so conditioned that the relation between belief and life in their case affords no indication whatever of the consequences with which a like state as to belief, becoming widely prevalent, and in a measure permanent, would be followed among the mass of men. And this on many grounds. They are, for example, *rari nantes*; for though their aggregate number, in the circle of men devoted to intellectual pursuits, may be at this moment large, the number of those whose witness agrees together, who are (so to speak) in any positive sense of the same communion, is small; and small sects of opinion, not emboldened by wide and general countenance, do not rapidly develop, even in their own consciousness, the extreme consequences that their schemes would produce in practice. From many

motives, good as well as inferior, they are content to breathe the moral atmosphere of the community around them, are governed by its traditions and its fashions, and wear its habiliments, which they oftentimes mistake for the work of their own hands. Again, they are men whose life is absorbed in intellectual pursuits, and who are saved by the high interest of their profession, or their function, from the mischiefs left to idle hands and idle minds, cursed as these so often are with unbounded means and opportunities of indulgence.

62. Once more : I lately ventured, in this REVIEW, to propound an opinion comforting to some, and not offensive, I hope, to any, that in some cases the disposition to undervalue, or retrench, or even abandon the old Christian belief, may be due to a composition happier than the average in the small amount of energy of its tendencies to evil, and in a consequent insensibility to the real need both of restraining and of renovating powers for the true work of life.* While conscious, however, of no disposition to restrict admissions of this kind, but rather willing to enlarge them, I earnestly protest against the inference, in whatever shape, that no other fruits than such as are known to be reaped from the isolated and depressed existence of these schemes would follow upon their general adoption. Let me repeat it : I should as readily admit it to be possible that the life and health of an entire community could be sustained upon a dietary framed on the scale that has sufficed in those very singular cases, occasionally to be met with, of persons who are able to live, and in a manner thrive, on an incredibly small amount of aliment, and

* *Sup.* vol. i. p. 54.

who seem already to have passed into an existence half-ethereal.

63. When dealing with the four first departments of this rude chart of religious thought, I have in each case attempted to indicate some of the special sources of weakness in the several schemes, and of their strength respectively. In regard to the fifth, I postpone any such attempt, as it would lead me into a general consideration of the causes which have recently brought about, and which are still stimulating, a great movement of disintegration in the religious domain. The patience of the reader has been too severely taxed already to allow of my entering on a new field of discussion. I therefore leave for the present as it stands this multitudinous array of dislocated, and to a great extent conflicting, force; sensible that my account may wear in some eyes the appearance of an endeavour to describe the field, and the eve, of the Battle of Armageddon.