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Nearly one half of the whole number of clergymen, five hundred and forty-eight, were born in New England, and nearly one third in the single state of Massachusetts. Of the seven hundred and fifty who received a college education nearly one half also, three hundred and sixty, were educated in the two oldest and most famous colleges of New England. It is not, further, to be forgotten that the two denominations whose ministers have both directly and indirectly exerted the greatest influence upon American letters have ever claimed New England as the place not only of their origin but also of their greatest activity and success. Whatever may be the future of these six states, their past, of influence and of noble fame, is secure.

ARTICLE IV.

POSITIVISM AS A WORKING SYSTEM.

BY REV. F. H. JOHNSON, ANDOVER, MASS.

No. III.

“It is only to the mind that goes out beyond and above its own circle that what lies within that circle is clearly revealed.” — *A. P. Peabody.*

THE most marked characteristic of China to occidental observers is the *apparent absence of the principle of growth.* Here is a vast civilization that has sustained itself through thousands of years with a continuity that makes its history seem almost an exception to the law of human mutability. It is not to be wondered at that such a spectacle should impress profoundly the Western mind, accustomed as it has been to regard change as a necessary condition of vitality. Nor is it strange that thus impressed the imagination should overshoot the mark, exaggerate actual features, and form for itself a total conception wide of the truth. We are frequently confronted with statements of Chinese immobility which distinctly convey the idea that this immense organism which we call the Chinese nation was somehow, at a remote period

in the past, struck out as by a blow with all its parts ready made and adjusted; that though the nations of the West have had to fight their way upward through persecution and revolution, emerging slowly and painfully from the darkness of barbarism, the Chinese have through all the ages remained peacefully the same, repeating themselves generation after generation and century after century.

The mere statement of this conception is its contradiction. Were it even approximately true it would furnish a strange commentary on the doctrine of evolution. Like all other civilizations this one has had its gradual and progressive development, which is distinctly marked on the page of history. In politics, for instance, China has passed through phases which are closely analogous to those with which the history of Europe has made us familiar. Its one great revolution marks the transition from a feudal system to imperialism; and this transition, though finally consummated by the violence of a conqueror, was none the less one for which the people of diverse states had been gradually prepared by many converging influences. In the succeeding centuries history again permits us to follow a long struggle between two great classes; the military class, which at the time of the conquest was the only one possessed of power, and the literary class, which, after many struggles against the bitter opposition of its rival, finally dispossessed it and usurped its place. The conquest which established imperialism took place in the year 221 B.C. But it was not till the dynasty of Tang (A.D. 618-905) that the system of competitive examination was adopted, and the final consolidation of the literary power reached. As further illustrations of development in China will appear in the course of this article, I will add here only the summing up of the subject made by Dr. Martin in his essay on the "Renaissance in China." "Though not," he says, "so much given to change as their more mercurial antipodes, it is still true that the constant factors of their civilization have been few, and the variable ones many. Bold innovations and radical

revolutions rise to view all along in the retrospect of their far-reaching past, and prepare them to anticipate the same for the future.”¹

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT.

What then shall we say is the fact corresponding to the impression that the spirit of progress, or the principle of growth, is wanting in China? I believe it to be this: There has been growth in China in every department up to a certain limit; but when that limit has been reached, growth has ceased. As contrasted with the modern civilization of the West we express its distinctive characteristic when we say “arrested development” rather than “absence of development.” “You may,” says Mr. Johnson, “draw a line horizontally over a Chinese city, at the height of a single story, with scarce an interference save from a flagstaff or a Buddhist pagoda.” We could have no better illustration than this of the achievements of the Chinese mind as contrasted with those of Christian civilization. There has been no lack of growth. Mental activity has spread over a enormously wide surface. But while its lateral growth has been luxuriant, its upward growth has been stopped at a given line.

The legitimate cause of surprise, then, for a European is that China should have accomplished *so much*, should have advanced *so far*, and yet that this vigorous growth and splendid promise of achievement should at every point be arrested as by some unaccountable blight. It is as if some captivating story, all the elements of which point to an denouement of surpassing interest, or some song with the air of which we are familiar, were suddenly arrested, and the narrator or the singer should solemnly assure us that there never was and never would be any more of it. Were we in such a position with regard to China that only its principles and early achievements were known to us, what, on the ground of positivism, should we not be justified in confidently predicting as the reward of further research? With such en-

¹ *The Chinese*, p. 236.

thusiasm and organization for learning, such a true conception of the breadth and thoroughness that should characterize culture, such an appreciation of the superiority of thought to mere acquisition, and such purity in ethical ideals, we might, it would seem, be certain of finding, as the fruit of two thousand years of development, achievements in every department of literature that would be a revelation. That such expectations did float before the imaginations of some of the earlier students of the Chinese language, is matter of history. Rémusat in the early part of this century tantalized the world of letters by his announcements of an untold wealth of poetry and eloquence which the treasury of Chinese thought was soon to pour out before it. What are the facts?

In every department our expectations are fully met as regards quantity, but so far as the treasures of the language have been explored, they offer nothing from which the Western mind can derive a new impulse or a genuine inspiration. *Poetry* from the earliest ages has been held in the highest esteem. "We must beware," Mr. Johnson observes, "of inferring from the utilitarian reputation of the Chinese an absence of sentiment or emotional aspiration. The poet is for them the ideal of genius. . . . His gift has always been the passport to high office, and prince and people alike bend before the lines of his pencil."¹ "In odes, idyls, epigrams, ethical and didactic poems, proverbs, effusions of all moods, their fertility has equalled, if it has not greatly surpassed, that of any nation in the world."² But with all this encouragement, and all this wide-spread development it can hardly be said that Chinese poetry has so much as entered the higher realms of thought. If we except a few of the ancient religious poems, that suggest the Hebrew prophets, there is nothing of sublimity or elevation in the whole range of its prolific versification. It is like a vast expanse of poetic shrubbery, nowhere rising into majestic forms, never producing an epic, never leading the soul upward to regions of higher contemplation.

¹ China, p. 517.

² China, p. 513.

In *dramatic literature* we might expect if anywhere to find an exception to this rule; for here the national mind has had remarkably free scope for independent development. From its very beginning the drama in China has had to fight its way against the bitter opposition of the mandarins; and not only has it not been dominated by their pedantry, but this characteristic of Chinese culture has been one of its favorite and frequent subjects of ridicule. Besides this, the fact that it has, speaking generally, appealed to the better side of human nature, that in a large proportion of its productions its inspiring motive has been distinctly ethical, would naturally rouse our expectation. This expectation is not altogether disappointed. Some of the plays rise to the highest level of the Confucian ethics. Self-sacrifice, loyalty to trusts under difficulties, personal purity, are illustrated and honored; while oppression, vice, the degradation of women, and unfaithfulness in the family relations are held up to opprobrium, and punished with poetic justice. Higher than this, however, it does not rise. There is no appreciation of that virtue which must be regarded as the necessary condition of all ethical greatness, the love, that is, of *truth for its own sake*. "It is surprising," says Mr. Johnson, "to find the defence of innocence so dependent, in an empire of laws, on personal wits and sharp practice. The result is a lenient treatment of petty falsehood and trickery, when resorted to in self-defence or for good ends, while offences against the great social relations are severely dealt with."¹ Speaking in general of the Chinese drama, the same author says: "The tracks are mainly prescribed. Certain prominent traits and classes in real life are constantly repeated, and the ruts in which meditations run seem to be their title to respect. Even the soliloquy seldom leads to subtle springs of motive, or rises above the interests and facts in hand. Individuality, the fulness and flavor of the Western novel or play, is wanting; and the scene is a level steppe, not mountain, valley, and indented shore."²

¹ China, p. 458.

² China, p. 445.

Again, in the different departments of *the fine arts*, in architecture, painting, sculpture, and music, what triumphs should we not be prepared to find among this people of fine esthetic feeling, of marvellously delicate touch, and high moral perception? There is no want of material, there is no want of earnestness, there is no want of mechanical dexterity. The arch was known to the Chinese earlier than to the builders of Europe. But no grand architecture, no monuments, speaking of inspirations on the part of the people or of genius in individuals are here. As regards painting, we are told, it "has embodied the national history quite as earnestly as writing. There are descriptive accounts of celebrated painters, one of which enumerates fifteen hundred names; and full treatises on painting as an art. They understand the secrets of color; they are marvellously skilful also in the management of materials, and in fineness of touch they surpass all other nations. In sculpture, they have labored as assiduously, and with almost equal enthusiasm. The cutting of many a jade vase is said to have cost the labor of a lifetime. They work in bronze, in marble, in ivory, in mother of pearl, in horn, in stucco, in ebony and rosewood, and in the precious metals. The amount and elaboration of their products is almost endless. Some of their great pagodas are covered with innumerable images. The pre-eminence of China in the ceramic art is one that has associated her name with the world's finest productions in this sphere. "China," it has been said, "has thrown her whole soul into paste and enamel. Her porcelain is another Shi and Shu."

Now what is there to show for all this? An immense addition to the luxury of the world, a wonderful development of beauty in purely decorative art, and a refining influence that has made itself felt through every civilized nation. Exquisite forms, delicate fabrics, products which in their manufacture have required the extreme of skill and patience, and which to the Western mind have been a revelation of human possibilities, have for centuries flowed from China,

educating the nations, and contributing to their happiness. But in all this we look in vain for anything that can truly be called elevated. In all its painting and sculpture there is nothing that moves the intellect, nothing that invites to contemplation, nothing that takes the mind out of itself to fix it on types that transcend the actual. No dreams of an ideal strength and beauty here seek embodiment in forms like those of Greek art. No visions of a purified and exalted humanity floating before the minds of their painters have produced a Fra Angelico. No conceptions of a God-like power and dignity have given them a Michael Angelo. The whole region which we denominate *high art* is to them as if it were not. There is nothing that even suggests the unattained, the realm of higher possibilities and hopes.

I have not spoken of music in connection with the other fine arts, because its development, or want of development, is worthy of special consideration. Its connection with morality and religion has in China been most intimate and significant. Thus Confucius says, "It is music, which completes the edifice"; and again, "When affairs cannot be carried on successfully, proprieties and music will not flourish, when proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded." In the older poetry music was celebrated as "the echo of wisdom and mother of virtue, the way of divine knowledge; not for charming of the ear, but to expel discord from the heart." With such a high appreciation of its office, as the attendant and counterpart of the Confucian ethics, what heights of development ought not to have been possible to it? But in this department the failure of the Chinese is more conspicuous than in any other. Through all the ages, in which it has held the place of greatest honor among the arts, it has never found its way into the sphere of higher expression. "The combination of religious and moral ardor with crude performance, makes Chinese musical art almost a burlesque."¹

It has tasked the inventive powers of all sinologues to

¹ China, p. 84.

account for the non-development of *science* in China. Every condition would, at first sight, seem to have been favorable to it. The "inquiring into the nature of things" is the starting point of Chinese ethics. A passion for the accumulation and careful preservation of facts of all kinds has furnished the means for its growth. While the recognition of law, and a belief in the harmony of the material universe with the constitution of man, ought to have opened the way for an enthusiastic investigation of their manifold relations. Mr. Johnson, indeed, regards the fundamental characteristics of Chinese thought as far more favorable in certain directions to the development of science than those of most other races, Semitic and even Aryan. "That direful theological chasm, as hostile to physical and social science as to religious liberty, does not exist for the Chinese. The world is neither man's prison nor his curse. The actual is his home. Everything his faculties can recognize is rational and true knowledge, and its truth is made for him to use; nor does he doubt the reality and value of things, nor the certitude of his own perceptions. As little does he permit himself to forget what rules he has discerned; he institutes them as binding methods of research and production."¹ But the same author after passing in review the achievements of the Chinese in botany, medicine, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, history, criticism, chronology, geography, and politics, makes the following comment. "Her over-speed from head to hand, her absorption in the concrete, her plodding conformity to fixed ideals, bid us pause to observe *what moral and spiritual secret hides in an earnestness so effective on a ground so confined*. Confined it surely is. In all this wealth and orderly construction there is defect of inner relation; of that power of combining phenomena to large results, which is requisite to science."²

Further illustration of this peculiarity of *arrested development* can hardly be necessary. It only remains to be said, that its existence has been recognized by almost every writer

¹ China, p. 94.

² China, p. 118.

upon the subject, that it has been described more or less accurately, and accounted for in a great variety of ways. Before passing on to a consideration of its cause, however, it is important to note particularly its significance in this connection. The fact to be emphasized is not that the Chinese have failed to grasp certain desirable results of civilization. Great as are the benefits that have accrued to the West from science, poetry, and the fine arts, this is not a matter which concerns us now. The failure of development in these directions on the part of China is significant only as it is the indication of a condition of mind lying back of it; and on the other hand, the fact of development is important only as it is the evidence which Christianity has given of the spirit which dwells within it — the spirit, that is, of indefinite upward growth — the spirit which is ever struggling to express and realize itself in higher forms, which promises to the human race far more than it has ever yet accomplished, which leads men on with visions and hopes, which does not suffer them to be satisfied, but which makes them restless, daring, willing to risk all for the sake of an ideal good. It is for the presence of this spirit in Christianity, and for its absence from Confucianism, that we wish to account.

CAUSES OF ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT.

Among the many causes assigned, some are of such a nature that we can at once refer them to the category of perpetuating, rather than originating, causes. They have operated powerfully to retain the Chinese mind within certain well-defined limits, but they are themselves the result of secret causes lying farther back, and are chiefly significant as constituting the most marked embodiment and illustration of certain inherent tendencies of which they are the outgrowth. *Language*, as the vehicle of thought, cannot fail to powerfully influence and limit the operations of mind. The ability to express a thought is the power of realizing it. Now the Chinese language is distinguished for poverty of words and sounds. Having never developed an alphabet, it

does not readily lend itself to the expression of new thoughts or of new combinations. Every new idea necessitates the invention of a new or newly modified character. The language is, in fact, one of the most marked illustrations of the rule of arrested development. It has never passed the ideographic or ideo-phonetic stage—a stage which, in more highly organized languages, marks a temporary and transitional phase of development. Now, such a language must have a tendency to fetter thought. Beyond a certain limit one of two things must take place—either the language will give way, or the thought will be restricted. If the expansive force of living thought is there, if there are strong ideal attractions into a higher realm, no language, howsoever hardened into rigid forms, can long resist the pressure. Like the stream of liquid fire that pours from a volcano, if it cannot find a way within or beneath the crust of its own lava, it will burst through it or remelt it, cutting new channels or enlarging old ones.

The same is true of an unbending *educational system*. It hampers freedom, discourages genius, makes thought formal. But it is at the same time the offspring of an inherent formality either in the nation or in the class to which it owes its existence. If it be that of a class only, it cannot be permanent. The petrified methods that subserve the interests or fears of the upper stratum of society will certainly be broken through by the more energetic life underneath. We have already seen that, as regards lateral development, this has been the case in China. The drama and two great religions have made their way and established themselves in the face of the persistent opposition of the mandarins. This class would have been just as powerless to have restrained an upward movement of thought, had such a movement pressed with any intensity for expression. Behind both these causes, therefore, we must look for one of a less phenomenal nature, to which these owe their origin and permanence.

The cause assigned by the positivists is one which has a peculiar interest in this connection, and demands our first

attention. In a course of lectures on China, by M. Pierre Laffitte,¹ a distinguished follower of Comte, the close affinity which exists between positivism and Confucianism is fully recognized. He, in fact, treats the latter as an undeveloped positivism, the spirit of which is in profound sympathy with the more modern philosophy. It is undeveloped, because it is the result of fetishism, the primary religion of all mankind; out of which, for some reason, the Chinese have never moved. In other words, the reason why China lacks the spirit and the power of the higher progress, which manifests itself in science, is to be found in the fact that she has had no development through polytheism and monotheism, which are the later stages of the theological period. It is from the long discipline of the theological regime of the West that modern positivism inherits the power of abstract thought, which is, as it were, the faculty of progress.

In this explanation I find fully as much ground for agreement as for dissent. There is every reason to believe that Western progress is the result of Christian education; and it is the main object of this article to show that the failure of the Chinese mind to enter the higher regions of growth has been owing to the lack of the motive-power which Christianity supplies. The main principles, moreover, on which this explanation is grounded are reasonable. They are so, first, in that they assume no organic peculiarity in the Chinese mind, but look to the nature of the ideas that have dominated it for the production of the phenomena under consideration. They are reasonable, also, in that they regard the condition of the Chinese as one which has been largely represented in other nations. In the language of M. Laffitte, "It may be said that the *masses* under all regimes have preserved fetishism as the base of their mental state."² But, while fully concurring with these general ideas, I find the explanation built upon them impossible, because it is so thoroughly out of rapport with the facts of Chinese history.

¹ *Considerations Générales sur l'ensemble de la Civilisation Chinoise.* Paris. 1861.

² p. 18.

As to technical fetishism,—that is, fetishism as a distinct form of religion,—we have first to consider the testimony of Dr. Legge, who affirms that the religion of China cannot by any means be classed under this head; and secondly, the analysis of Professor Müller, which goes far to prove that fetishism, which has existed in some degree under all religions, has never been developed in such a pure form that it can with any truth be said to constitute the religion of a people.¹

But even should we agree to call the mental state of the Chinese fetishistic, we have still to recognize the fact that this does not represent an original disposition, but rather a habit of mind which has been superinduced in the course of their history. M. Laffitte tells us that “fetishism, systematized by the adoration of the material heavens, is the mental base of the Chinese civilization.”² But nothing in Chinese history is more certain than that the adoration of the material heavens was not the most ancient religion; but one which — if, indeed, it ever has prevailed — was subsequent to the worship of a personal God, the Ruler of the visible heavens; in short, that what is called fetishism in China grew up as the result of the fading out of the idea of a personal God, and that it stands therefore in the same relation to an antecedent theological regime that modern positivism does.

Other explanations of a markedly divergent character offer themselves for our consideration. Some of these go no farther than to define the present mental attitude of the Chinese, without attempting to account for it. Thus, Sir John Davis: “They profess to set no value on abstract science apart from some obvious and immediate end of utility.”³ So also Huc speaks of the Chinese as “absorbed in material interests, . . . their whole lives but materialism in action.” Hegel says: “A free, ideal, spiritual kingdom has here no place. What may be called scientific is of a merely empirical nature, and is made absolutely subservient to the

¹ *Origin of Religion*, p. 123.

² *Considérations Générales, etc.*, p. 14.

³ *Davis's China*, Vol. ii. p. 21.

useful on behalf of the state"; and again, of the Chinese character, "Its distinguishing feature is that everything which belongs to the spirit is alien to it."¹ A radical solution of the problem which such a condition presents is offered by Burnouf, who takes the ground that "the organ of abstract notions is wanting to the Chinese brain;"² and by Bunsen, who says, "They wholly lack the idea of conscious mentality."³

In direct opposition to all these Mr. Meadows finds the pivotal characteristic of the Chinese mind to be devotion to the ideal. "The idea of the predominance of the mental to the material has penetrated into every corner of Chinese existence."⁴ After a striking comparison between the Egyptians, who attempted to perpetuate themselves by mummifying their bodies and building stone mountains, and the Chinese, who, fixing their eyes on certain ineradicable principles of man's mind, have, in a permanent and civilized nation, given to the world its grandest and most gigantic monument of human wisdom, he concludes that the latter had to the former something of the superiority that mind has to matter.⁴ He claims that by the unconscious testimony of their language and by their ethics he can prove "that the Chinese are thorough idealists as compared with the English and French." "The chief reason," he tells us, "why the Chinese have made so little progress in the physical sciences is not a mental 'incapacity' or 'tenuity of intellect,' but a disregard or even contempt for things material as opposed to things intellectual or moral."⁵

Such absolute contradiction in the views of careful students of Chinese life and thought would seem, for the present, to baffle all attempts at trustworthy conclusions. But the opposition of ideas which at first sight appears so hopeless may be the effect of a picture of Chinese history presented to us in the Chinese way, that is, without perspective. I believe this to be the case; and that these conflicting views will

¹ Philosophy of History, Part i. sec. 1.

² Quoted in China, p. 16.

³ The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 69.

⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 71, 72.

resolve themselves into perfect order when the due relation of things past to things present has been properly ascertained. Mr. Meadows does not in general dispute the representations of the Chinese of to-day made by those who take an opposite view of the Chinese mind. But from ideas which he finds in Chinese literature and which underlie their most ancient institutions, and from the testimony of their language, he essays to prove that the Chinese are idealists. Now if we may introduce that lacking element of perspective by saying that the Chinese *have been* idealists, we shall, I believe, have found the key for which we are looking.

I will delay the reader with but one illustration of this. The claim as to the idealism of the Chinese is fully substantiated by the character of the conceptions on which their philosophy is built. The idea of two great principles in nature (the Yin and the Yang, the positive and negative, the active and the inactive forces), by which all things are produced, is of a purely metaphysical origin, and shows that at some time there must have been a considerable degree of imaginative and speculative activity. But the remarkable thing is that after this effort of abstraction had been made all speculation seems to have ceased. A theory of the universe having been reached there was no further development.¹ Now as this theory is very ancient, and comes to us out of the prehistoric period the impression produced is like that alluded to in the beginning of this article, the impression as of an intuition suddenly flashed upon the mind, and after that no further light. Thus Mr. Johnson speaks of the Chinese as carrying theories of nature "ready made" which they impose upon all facts. He also tells us that "such theories, however abstract in reality, are not held to be abstractions." But can we suppose that these ready made theories, however rigid at present, came to the Chinese mind by any other process than that through which such theories

¹ In the twelfth century A.D. the principles of Chinese philosophy were restated by Choo-fu-tsze, and pushed to conclusions not contemplated by the earlier philosophers. But no new elements of thought were added.

have been reached by other nations? Does not their existence prove that the Chinese at some stage in their development passed through a period of metaphysical activity?

This is not the view of the matter taken by Mr. Johnson; yet the explanation which he gives strongly suggests it. "The true statement," he says, "of the relation of the abstract to the concrete in the Chinese mind is not that the former is absent, but that it is inseparable from some fixed actual embodiment; and that this conjunction, *being organic*, took place at an early stage in the growth of the ideal, *or rather was one of its first conditions*, and from thenceforth determined its objects and methods; and that the result of this chronic inaptness at lifting thought out of phenomena into free speculation is to deprive even the highest instincts of their proper power to criticise their own products, so as to reconstruct them from new stand-points."¹ As being the result of a long and thoughtful study of Chinese history in all its departments, this statement deserves our careful attention; and though it may not command our assent, it can hardly fail to throw valuable light on the subject. As it stands, it seems to me most unsatisfactory. But it is so wholly because of the two qualifying clauses which I have taken the liberty to italicise. Eliminating these we have what I shall endeavor to show is the true statement of the case, "the moral and spiritual secret" which underlies the phenomena of arrested development.

The first objection to be urged against the two qualifying clauses (introduced in consequence of the author's theory of a radical peculiarity in Chinese mental structure) is that they seem to contradict and nullify the rest of the explanation. Without these clauses we are presented with an intelligible sequence. There was a time when the power of abstract thought was active, but this was succeeded by a period of inactivity. This arrest of development took place at an "early stage in the growth of the ideal"; and the effect of chronic inactivity was to deprive "the highest instincts of

¹ China, p. 17.

their proper power to criticise their own products." Now the clauses alluded to seem to introduce the idea that the mental peculiarities of the Chinese are such as to admit of their having conceptions which are abstract and concrete at the same time. The former idea is comprehensible, the latter presents difficulties.

But this is not the only objection to the theory of organic peculiarities. Aside from the circumstance that it is inconsistent with the idea of a natural sequence, which may or may not be proved, it is, when regarded wholly from the standpoint of its own merits, inadmissible. That is a sound principle of induction which forbids us to assign any new or hitherto unobserved cause to account for phenomena till it has been shown that all known causes are inadequate to their production. But this is just what the theory of structural peculiarities does. When Chinese human nature is separated and regarded as an isolated phenomenon, the knot is cut in place of being untied. The cause assigned, though in itself considered sufficient, cannot be allowed except as a last resort. In taking this position it is far from being the intention of the writer to deny that there is such a thing as inherent tendency in races as in individuals. But that which we call ethnic bent or ethnic temperament should always be for us that something which remains when, in accounting for national differences, the end of the analysis of known causes has been reached.

THE RESULT OF A WELL-KNOWN PROCESS.¹

Can, then, this characteristic of the Chinese race be explained by causes with the operation of which we are familiar? I am confident that it can be so explained, and that the explanation will throw a strong light on the tendencies of positivism. Let us look once more at Mr. Johnson's summing up of the case. His first position is, "*The true statement of the relation of the abstract to the concrete in Chinese*

¹ "Without religious faith man is like an oak-tree planted in a flower-pot."—G. Frederick Wright.

mind is not that the former is absent, but that it is inseparable from some fixed actual embodiment."

There is nothing in this statement that separates the Chinese constitutionally from the rest of the human race, if by a fixed actual embodiment of the abstract in the concrete we are to understand that the faculty of abstract thought exists, but that it is so profoundly asleep as to be practically inoperative. Large bodies of men in all ages of the world have been in the condition thus described. Our Saviour was deeply impressed with such a fixed actual embodiment in the men of his time. The great end of Christ's mission was a spiritual one, but notwithstanding all efforts to make those among whom he moved understand this, they persisted in associating him exclusively with material and worldly ends.

He healed their sick with a word, hoping thus to impress upon them the fact that he could restore their souls to health. He gave sight to their blind, indicating thus his ability to open the eyes of their spiritual understanding. He accompanied these marvellous acts with oral instruction, with parable and precept, with explanation and persuasion. He tried men on the side of their hopes, he tried them on the side of their fears. He startled them with exhibitions of his power. But how almost imperceptible was the result! They could understand none of these things. When after a spiritual discourse he miraculously fed the great multitude that had been listening to him, the only desire, so far as we know, awakened in the minds of his audience was a coveting of the ability to get bread without working for it.¹ In vain did he speak to them of the bread of God which cometh down from heaven. Their imaginations could not be elevated. So profoundly was our Saviour impressed with this condition of their minds that, enumerating the treasures most to be coveted by men, he put at the very head of his list the possession of a consciousness of spiritual poverty.

His account also of the process by which such a condition of mind is reached, is almost identical with that given by

¹ John vi. 28.

Mr. Johnson, though expressed in different words. In substance it is the enunciation in the realm of the spiritual world of a principle well recognized in the physical, namely, the gradual weakening and final loss of a faculty by disuse. "For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that he hath. . . . For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed." The main object of the parable of the talents is the illustration of this point. The servant who digged in the earth and hid his treasure, is the representative of all who neglect to use the faculty for spiritual things which God has given them. It is essentially the same principle, if I mistake not, which Mr. Johnson outlines when he says, "the result of this chronic inaptness at lifting thought out of phenomena into free speculation is to deprive even the highest instincts of their proper power to criticise their own products." And it will not require much reflection to convince us that the psychological condition which in the view of Isaiah and Christ constituted the most marked characteristic of a nation highly favored in point of spiritual enlightenment, and familiar with an idealistic literature of the loftiest type, has in somewhat varying degrees characterized all nations, so far as the great body of the people is concerned.

But it may be objected at this point that we have transferred the discussion from a broad ground to a narrow one—from a question as to the faculty of abstract thought to an inquiry which concerns only one development of it. To which I reply no change of base has been made, except such as is involved in turning back from the middle of a subject to the beginning of it. It is through the religious nature of man that the faculty of abstract thought is first called into activity. Until roused by the desire of the mind to arrive at some conception of an unseen power to which it can refer the origin of its own being and the voice of conscience, the faculty of abstract thought is but a slumbering potentiality. This is very clearly recognized by Comte. Speaking of the

process through which the human mind has passed in the course of its theological training he says, "This process is not only inevitable but indispensable. No other could stir the intellect from its primitive torpor."¹ At this starting-point of our discussion, therefore, we occupy common ground with the positivists; and in what follows it will be my aim to show that the growth of the faculty of abstract thought depends on a continuance of the same influences that originated it. This is not the same as to say that the religious activity of a nation will be the measure of its progress. The development of man's spiritual nature has been to a very great extent abnormal. But we shall not, I believe, be far from the truth if we say that all real progress in a nation will be measured by the sanity and clearness of its religious beliefs.

The religions, and the substitutes for religion, which have so profoundly influenced the history of mankind are so many different responses to the demands of the spiritual nature. Their original purpose has been to meet and satisfy those demands as different kinds of food satisfy the cravings of the body for nourishment. Most of them have, however, but poorly served the end for which they were called into existence. The sustenance which they have provided has been largely of an unwholesome character. Instead of strengthening the faculty to which they minister they have in many cases enfeebled it. Men have craved spiritual stimulants and narcotics, and they have had little difficulty in finding them. Under the influence of the former they have dishonored the name of religion by every kind of excess in thought and action. Under the influence of the latter they have lulled the highest part of their natures into a sleep like the sleep of death. Both these tendencies have been illustrated in the history of nearly all nations; but the latter has been by far the more powerful and continuous in its action. Spiritual activity of any kind is repugnant to the mass of men. It is an interruption and disturbance of

¹ *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. iii. p. 25.

that absorption in material interests which constitutes their present happiness ; and their blind feeling about for a religion is not generally a desire for spiritual elevation, it is not a wish to be lifted out of their present condition into a realm of higher thought and feeling, but rather the desire to be made comfortable, spiritually at ease in the life with which they are familiar.

Hence it is that the great majority of those who put themselves under the protection of a religion and accept its consolations never penetrate to its higher thoughts ; and from the continual pressure of this large element there results a tendency to the obscuring and transmuting of all that is most elevating in it. Truths which probe the wounds of human nature, which make the aims of life discouragingly high, which promise peace only as the result of overcoming, which bid men be emptied of themselves, which prescribe unselfish activities of mind and body, which, in short, subject the whole life to the dominion of the spiritual nature, are the truths which the mass of men wish their religion to take charge of for them. It is not the strengthening of the demands of their higher faculties, it is not even their satisfaction that they ask for, but their quieting. They have their desire. Almost every religion contains that within itself which, taken apart from its other truths, can be turned to such base purposes. And if no quieting potion can be wrung from the original elements of a religion, additions are sure to be made which will accomodate it to the wants of the worldly-minded mass of its followers. Fatalism, formalism, idolatry, and rationalism are the well-worn ways of escape from spirituality. No religion that has ever existed among men has altogether resisted this tendency. Christianity has repeatedly succumbed to it.

We have, then, two factors for the production of the inactivity of the spirit. One of these (the natural tendency to absorption in material interests) operates with a great degree of uniformity in all nations, and may be called the invariable factor. The other (the prevailing religious idea)

is an exceedingly variable one. To this, then, we must look for the explanation of those peculiarities of development which have distinguished different races. In some nations the religious ideas that have gained currency, notwithstanding their inadequacy or perversion, have operated, within certain limits, for the support of the spiritual nature; while in others their influence has been overpowering in the opposite direction. China is the most pronounced example of this latter class. The development of the spiritual part of man has here been reduced to a minimum; and the result has been the permanent disabling of that faculty on which the mind is dependent for all its higher achievements.

THE CHINESE WERE ONCE IDEALISTS.

In the hope of persuading the reader that this explanation harmonizes the facts of Chinese history I would, in the first place, direct his attention particularly to a point already glanced at. It is this: There was a time when the people of China were not as they now are — a time when the ideal and the spiritual had freer play within them. The concurrent testimony of almost all Chinese scholars of any note leaves little or no doubt as to the truth of this position. Dr. Legge affirms that five thousand years ago the Chinese were not only monotheists, but monotheists in the purest acceptation of that word. That is, they accorded the idea of divinity to one Supreme Being, who was regarded as a person. This Being was not at the head of a hierarchy of gods inferior and superior; he stood absolutely alone. Ministering spirits there were, who fulfilled his behests; but they were conceived of as occupying no higher place than that accorded to angels in the Hebrew Scriptures. Though not conceived of as the creator of the primal forces of the world, he was regarded as having absolute control over them, and as bringing all things to pass through their agency. He was righteous, benevolent, cognizant of the affairs of men; and in his regulation of the forces of nature he was influenced by human conduct; sending prosperity as the reward of virtue, and displaying his wrath against the wicked.

As the existence of such a conception of God among the ancient Chinese is a point of great importance in our argument, the following quotations from eminent Chinese scholars will not be out of place. Dr. Edkins gives the following as the result of his studies: "The ancient Chinese believed in God as a personal, active being, the ruler of heaven and earth, just, powerful, and merciful."¹ Dr. Douglas says: "The highest object of worship among the ancient Chinese was Shang T'ï. . . . It was by his favor that sovereigns ruled and nations prospered, and it was at his decree that thrones were upset and kingdoms were brought to nought. As an earthly sovereign rules over a kingdom, so Shang T'ï lords it over the azure heaven."² On this point Mr. Johnson speaks very strongly. After noting the number of early writers who had represented the Chinese as atheists, he says: "Nothing can be now more palpable than that the Shang T'ï, or T'ï (supreme ruler), of the ancient classics is represented as an intelligent Providence, hearing the prayers and knowing the hearts of men. . . . The Shih King gives him an almost Hebrew personality, as surveying the world, seeking out men for rulers, giving counsels to King Wan, and praising his virtues. . . . He smells the sweet savor of sacrifice; he is looked to for aid in trouble, makes and unmakes kings, is the bright and glorious God. . . . Almighty, he hates no one. He is the spirit of Tien (heaven), the source of morality, of just retribution, and of all earthly blessings. . . . He has given man a moral sense; is offended with Kwan, and chooses to reveal the 'great plan' to Yu. Tang confesses his sins to the heart of Shang T'ï."³

The elevation of this conception sets in a strong light the religious characteristics of the early Chinese. It shows us that, though given to divination, they breathed a spiritual atmosphere of comparative purity; and that, in those days at least, they were characterized by no inaptness for the lifting of thought out of phenomena.

¹ *The Religions of China*, pp. 47, 48.

² *Religion in China*, p. 94.

³ *China*, pp. 723, 724.

It is important to notice, also, with regard to this early conception of God, that it presented him to men not alone as the guardian of great interests, but also as the compassionate parent of men of low degree. He indeed watches jealously the actions of those whom he has placed in power, and holds them to a strict account for the use which they make of it; but he is also attentive to the prayers of those who are in trouble; he listens when they call for help against injustice; he is not deaf to those who implore pity; he can even be reasoned with as to his judgments. His heart is with the people. He "sees with the people's eyes." He "loves the reverent." "Everything," says Mr. Johnson, "implies his dealing with men and things in detail. In these ways the Shuh mentions him thirty-eight times."

HOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDEALISM WAS CHECKED.

Now there is nothing remarkable in the fate which in China befell this simple conception of God. The story of its obscurity and almost total eclipse is one that has repeated itself in the history of every nation of the earth. "When they knew God they worshipped him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." But the spiritual decadence of no two nations has been exactly alike, and in the case of the Chinese it was marked by features sufficiently peculiar to account for the very peculiar history of that people. To understand this we must turn to the odes themselves, in which we have found the idea of God, to discover, if possible, some indications of a mental tendency which might have ripened into the results which confront us. We do not have to look far before coming upon a cause which seems likely and sufficient. The idea of God in all these odes connects itself with the common life and every-day affairs of men. They look to him as the author and guardian of material interests. The blessings which he sends have to do with the sowing and the reaping, the early and the latter rain, freedom from oppression, the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of the earth, social felicity,

and health. There is little indication of the existence of other and higher wants. To be righteous in order that they may be prosperous in their earthly lot is the extent of their aspiration. It is not difficult to see a connection between this absence of spiritual restlessness in the earliest consciousness of a nation and the development of a utilitarian and materialistic philosophy in its later growth. For as society advances from its simple forms to those which are more highly organized and complex, the demands of material interests become more and more absorbing.

But we are again confronted by the fact that the Chinese are not peculiar in these early characteristics. Mr. Johnson has drawn attention to the circumstance that the oldest monuments of Egyptian thought are marked by similar traits. And we have only to call to mind the blessings and curses of the Hebrew Scriptures to be convinced that, so far as the wants and aspirations of that people were concerned, they occupied in the early stages of their growth, the same spiritual plane. We must therefore look for something more distinctive in the Chinese conception if we would discover why they did not, like the Egyptians, develop a priesthood, a mythology, and a system recognizing many gods, or, like the mass of the Hebrews, fall away into idol-worship.

I believe we shall find this distinctive feature of Chinese thought in the predominance which is everywhere given to the idea of *God as one who reflects the mind of the people*. It was the welfare of the people as distinguished from that of rulers that specially occupied the mind of Shang Tí. He selected and upheld rulers not for their own advantage, but for the work which they were to do. He looked upon them with favor only as they brought prosperity and happiness to the people who were their charge. It might, at first sight, seem that this circumstance ought to have proved the surest guarantee for the preservation of the idea of God in the hearts and daily thoughts of the masses. It in fact produced just the opposite result. For as society became organized the idea of God as the God of individuals receded before that

which regarded him as the God of the whole people as a unit.

And at this point, even at the expense of a digression, we must note the freedom with which the Chinese of those earlier days entered the realm of abstract thought, and worked out the results which have moulded their civilization. The idea of the *state*, which underlies and dominates every other idea in China, is purely an abstraction; and from beginning to end its rites and symbolism appeal to the imagination for their comprehension. It is, indeed, because of their highly idealistic character that so many observers have failed to connect one part with another, and detect the unity of the system which is at the same time the source and end of all things in China.

Out of the conception that the material prosperity of the people occupied the highest place in the mind of God, that Shang Tî saw with the people's eyes, that the wants of the people were the revelation of his will, grew as naturally as a wide-spreading tree may grow from a tender shoot, the system that makes the central idea of existence, the supreme object of devotion to be the "*collective good of the collective life.*" The very same idea, in fact, that at the epoch of the French Revolution was made prominent in Europe, and subsequently flowered into the elaborate social system of Comte, in China more than four thousand years ago developed into that idea of the state which, so far as its leading characteristics and motives are concerned, is its exact counterpart. And as the elevation of this idea to the supreme importance usurps the place of God in the modern system, so in China it quietly and gradually pushed the thought of God further and further into the distance. As the emperor existed for the good of the collective life, or state, so also Shang Tî, one step higher in the grade of being, existed for the same purpose. And if the physical and social well-being of the human race was the one idea that absorbed the mind of God, it should be the absorbing idea of every individual man who would be in harmony with the ways of heaven.

It is not difficult to see how the conception of God as the

compassionate protector of individuals and the object of appeal in personal troubles would fade out before this overshadowing idea of the averaged and balanced well-being of the race. For as the gratification of individual desires and the righting of private wrongs is to a great extent inconsistent with the collective good, an appeal to Shang Tí for the attainment of personal ends would be of the nature of rebellion against his highest and most sacred intent. To be in harmony with his will the collective good must have a collective representation. Thus the worship of God by the emperor for all took the place of that scattered and personal worship which was the earlier and simpler form of Chinese religion ; and, access to God being cut off, men were forced to transfer the activities of their religious nature elsewhere, either to the idea that had supplanted God in their minds or to some other person or idea. But the mass of men cannot worship an idea as distinct from a person. This difficulty was met for the Chinese by the symbolizing of the idea of the state. The emperor, though in one aspect only the servant of the people, became in another aspect the sacred emblem of the sacred idea. But the emperor, like Shang Tí, was remote. The religious instincts of the people craved something nearer and more closely connected with individual life to take the place of personal relations to a God of persons. This they found in the worship of ancestors. As the emperor, the head of the nation, was the representative of its collective humanity, so the house-father, as the head of the family, was, in a more limited sphere, the representative of its collective life. The personal devotion and service of every man must display itself primarily within this limited sphere. In the right adjustment of his family relations he first of all and mainly could contribute to the attainment of the great ideal. Within this same sphere, therefore, he might discharge his religious obligations. Thus the worship of ancestors, a primitive and natural form of religion with most, if not all, nations, became in China consecrated by its symbolic connection with the more comprehensive idea of the state, and firmly estab-

lished as the one necessary form of religious expression for all the people.

But it may be said as an objection to this account of Chinese development that it cannot be verified, because we cannot trace its successive stages. The history of China begins with the odes; and in the odes we are confronted with all the above-mentioned phases of thought and life existing contemporaneously. The personal and private worship of Shang Ti, the vicarious worship of him by the emperor, and the worship of ancestors, all emerge together out of the darkness of the pre-historic period. This is true. But the subsequent fate of these elements indicates clearly which were the old and decaying ones, and which, on the other hand, were the comparatively young and growing ones. These odes, we must remember, are the most ancient literature of a people in whom the conservative instinct is peculiarly strong; and we should naturally expect, therefore, to find in them the expression of some ideas that embodied the consciousness of antecedent generations, together with those which were the transcript of the living thought of their age. When we come as far down in history as the time of Confucius we know that the conception of God, as a God of persons, has lost its vitality; and we have seen that Confucius himself, while he grounded his teaching upon the odes and made a carefully annotated collection of them for the use of his followers, ignored this element in them; and by the constant use of the impersonal word signifying heaven in place of the word meaning God confirmed his countrymen in the habit of living and thinking without God. On the other hand, the idea of the state as the central object of all thought and all activity has gone on developing and maturing strength through the centuries.

It must be said, moreover, in answer to the above objection that the odes do not mark the extreme limit of approach to the sources of Chinese history. The study of the Chinese characters carries us back to a much earlier period. "The results of analysis," says Dr. Legge, "put us *en rapport* with

the Chinese fathers fully five thousand years ago.”¹ At that time they were monotheists.² From this earliest formative period to the twenty-third century B.C. history is almost a blank ; but not quite. “One very important step,” the same author tells us, “had certainly been taken during this long and unreported interval. Methods of worship, as the complement of the religious ideas on which I have tried to throw light from the primitive Chinese characters, had been instituted ; a worship of God for all, but in which the ruler of the state should be the only officiator ; and a worship of ancestors by all, or at least by the heads of families, for themselves and all the members in their relative circles.”³

¹ The Religions of China, p. 8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³ The Religions of China, p. 23. I am aware that some students of Chinese literature have taken a different view from the one here presented. The vexed question as to the propriety of using the name of Shang Ti as a synonyme for God has developed two markedly opposed tendencies in the interpretation of Chinese thought ; and the heat of controversy has unquestionably led scholars on both sides to take extreme positions. Those who favor this use of the word Shang Ti are probably inclined to exaggerate the extent to which the idea of a personal God is recognized at the present day ; while some who oppose its use are led into disputing the position that the odes give evidence of the existence of a purer form of belief in ancient times. The justification of this denial is grounded not so much on a critical study of the ancient classics as on the assumption that it is necessary for Western scholars to follow the interpretation of the classics agreed to by the educated Chinese of to-day, or, to put it more correctly, the interpretation given by the great philosopher of the twelfth century, A.D., Choo-fu-tsze. But it would certainly seem as if our scholars were infected with the Chinese spirit, if they could agree to hamper the investigation of Chinese literature in accordance with any such view. Our knowledge of this people, if it has taught us anything aright, has made it clear that they are most inapt at analyzing their own ideas, and that self-criticism is a branch of discipline much neglected by them. But if the study of the classics is conducted in an independent spirit, no one who reads the odes sufficiently to apprehend the conception with which they are instinct, of Shang Ti as a personal God, and from them turns to the Commentary of Choo-fu-tsze, written more than two thousand years later, can avoid the conviction that this philosopher stands in the same relation to these ancient writings that Mr. Matthew Arnold occupies in relation to the Hebrew Scriptures. When Choo-fu-tsze says “*Shang Ti is law*,” he certainly seems to present a literary parallel to Mr. Arnold when he says Jehovah is “*a stream of tendency*.” Mr. Meadows, who has written more appreciatively of the Chinese philosopher perhaps, than any one else, feels it necessary to make an elaborate apology for him. He says, “at first sight it would seem to us that he must have been guilty of deliberate dishonesty in understanding anything but

In the growth of two institutions, then, the worship of God by the emperor *for* all, and the worship of ancestors *by* all, I believe we find the embodiment of those ideas which have moulded the Chinese to the practical, unimaginative, unambitious type of mind which distinguishes them among the nations. In the removal from their consciousness of the idea of personal relations to God we recognize the withdrawal of that power which under the Christian religion exerts a perpetual attraction into a higher realm. And in the worship of ancestors we have a well worn channel for the continual drawing off of that religious energy which, in default of such an escape, would overflow and carry disorder into this balanced and immovable system. Ancestor worship has been uniformly represented by those who have made a study of the underlying motives of the Chinese as the immovable thing at the bottom of all their immobility. As one has said, it is like "the iron particles in their blood." It is the one thing that characterizes all the Chinese. A visitor among them is often sorely puzzled by the appearance of great diversity of religious development. Temples, convents, priests, and ceremonies having nothing in common with the severe ideals of

an intelligent personal being, the ruler of the world, by the terms *Shang Ti, Tien,*" etc. But while exonerating the commentator from any intention to misrepresent, he none the less sees in him a perverter of the simple and clear meaning of the odes. But this is not all. The theory that the Chinese have always occupied the same religious plane that they do to-day, makes it almost impossible to account in any reasonable way for the glaring inconsistency that confronts us in Chinese religious conceptions. In the state worship, performed three times a year by the emperor, we have still a recognition of a Supreme conscious God, who like the *Shang Ti* of the odes rules all things by his own will in accordance with the dictates of righteousness. Many of the prayers offered in this worship have, in passages, a startling resemblance to the prayers offered in Christian churches. Now, contrasted with this, we have in the whole educated class of China a nation, as it were, of theoretical atheists. Mr. Meadows speaks of the state worship as "a mere ceremonial," in which the people have no share, which is associated with no theological doctrines, and which exercises no influence on the national principles of morality and legislation. Whence came this higher religion, preserved as it were in ice, at the summit of Chinese national life? Has it been always the same? or is this state religion the dead body of a once national faith from which human life and thought have through the ages slowly ebbed away?

Confucianism arrest his attention on every side. Two other religions he is told divide with it the activities of this great people. But Taöism and a debased form of Buddhism are only the side developments of the religious instinct checked in its upward growth, but not satisfied. These religions are living witnesses to the indestructibility of the spiritual part of man, the evidence of a life that has been forced into abnormal forms. There is no power in them to revolutionize character. A man may call himself a Buddhist, a Taöist, but underneath, and before all else, he is a worshipper of his ancestors, and a worshipper of the idea of the collective good of the collective life. We cannot justly estimate the formative power of such an earth-bound worship if we think simply of the influence of it upon the mind of an individual or of a generation. For ages the Chinese have had their eyes fixed upon the earth. Every thought, every aspiration, every imagination, has been bent and made to grow in this one direction. The result is cumulative. What was at first a matter of intention and training becomes at last an ingrained tendency; and the soul of man is borne down and held down by the density of a moral atmosphere that lies upon it "with a weight heavy as frost, and deep almost as life."

A COMPARISON OF IDEALS.

The relation of such a mental habit to *progress* is evident enough the moment we recognize the prime condition of progress, namely, the existence of some powerful attraction into an ideal realm. Men are induced to enter upon and endure the labors involved in progress only by a vivid conception of a condition of things better than that in which they are. It is equally evident that the *quality* of progress is determined by the quality of the ideal of which it is the offspring. We strive for great or for little things accordingly as the visions which paint themselves on the cloud-land of a possible future are of a noble or of an ignoble type. If a man's highest dreams reach only to a condition one step removed above that in which he is, the height of that step

will be the measure of his progress. In communities, again, we have to distinguish between relative and absolute progress. If the highest ideal of a community is the attainment for all or for the many of a condition that is continually realized by some of its members, there can be in that community no progress except within the lines of this fulfilled ideal. There may be extension, there may be a filling out of the ideal, and a continually increased realization of it so far as *amount* is concerned; but there can be no rising above it. In other words a stationary ideal makes a stationary people. The reverse of this is equally true. An advancing ideal makes an advancing people. If something better and higher is continually unfolding itself to the vision of those who are in the front ranks of progress there will be absolute and real movement upward. Old grounds will be abandoned, new positions will be occupied. Human life and thought will not be a repetition of the things that have been; they will be a continual unfolding and becoming. Nor can such progress be confined to those who are its leaders. The attitude of expectancy, the habit of peering into the future for a coming good, the feeling of unrest, and of the inconclusiveness of all that is, will extend from those who lead through the whole intelligence of a nation.

Now, the supreme ideal of every nation is involved in its conception of the being and will of God. I say, the being and the will of God, because the mere conception of a supreme existence, if it be out of relation to the life of man, cannot determine the ideal of that life. The possibility of approach to the higher state is a necessary element in that conception which shall shape an ideal.

The reader will have already divined the conclusion to which this argument tends; and if the positions thus far taken commend themselves to his judgment, he will be prepared to trace in the characteristics which distinguish the Chinese from the Christian conception of God the counterpart of those characteristics which distinguish Chinese from Christian development. We have already seen how the con-

ception of God in China was supplanted in the mind of the nation by the idea of the state — an idea of purely mundane origin, corresponding to the idea of humanity as announced by Comte. In the opening chapter of the Great Learning Confucius lays down the supreme object of life which should occupy the attention and constitute the goal of highest aspiration for all. “Things,” he says, “have their root and their completion. Affairs have their end and their beginning.” The root or beginning is the “inquiring into the nature of things”; the end or completion is the “tranquillity and happiness of the whole empire.” It is true that the first object of the Great Learning is elsewhere said to be “the making of one’s self more and more illustrious in virtue.” But to what end is this cultivation of self? It is no other than that indicated above — the securing the “tranquillity and happiness of the whole empire” — the collective good of the collective whole.

There is here no recognition whatever of God, for the simple reason that something of higher importance than God is conceived of as the end of life. We have already seen with what boldness Mencius laid down the doctrine that the people are the most important element in the state, the spirits of the land and grain the next, the emperor the least. The same course of reasoning was unconsciously carried out to include the Ruler of heaven also, as one who in the highest capacity of all served, and was therefore subordinate to, the idea of the state. The highest thought of God had been fully compassed by man. In other words, the highest desire of God is no other than the highest desire of man. “Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear.” The Divine Spirit is conceived of not as *becoming* conscious of himself through the finite spirit, as in the philosophy of Hegel. The process is completed. The future presents nothing in the way of *becoming*, save the filling out of a fully comprehended plan — the extension of that which in a limited way has been already realized.

Let us now compare this with the Christian conception of God. Nothing can be clearer than that the one God of the Bible is not the same God to the apprehension of the men of all times. As we have already noticed, the early Hebrew Scriptures, like the early Chinese poetry, dwell upon the thought of Him as the guardian of material interests. He visits men, according to their deserts, with the blessings of health, fertile lands, timely rains, abundant harvests, fruitful flocks and herds, peace, and long life for the individual and the nation. But from the very beginning there is also another and a higher strain. There are intimations of a mysterious something, yet to be revealed, which will bring man into a higher state of blessedness than he is as yet able to conceive. Abraham lives not alone in the thought and enjoyment of the material prosperity with which God has surrounded him. His eye is fixed on a distant and undefined future; and it is his unshaken faith in a blessing to be realized only when he, and countless generations after him, shall have passed away, that constitutes the great bond of friendship, the ground of intimate communion between himself and God. He knows not the meaning of that promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"; but he recognizes in its Author one who has great and unsearchable things to unfold, and in himself the medium through which some part of that unfolding is to take place.

The revelation moves on; but men are never permitted to feel that they have fathomed the thought of God. He, on the contrary, becomes to them more and more the representative of a sphere of thought and feeling infinitely raised above that in which his earth-born creatures habitually dwell. The language of the prophets is: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." We have here a progressive revelation and an advancing ideal. Though it is God's purpose to manifest himself to men, though he encourages them individually and

collectively to draw near to him, they are never permitted to forget that he is an infinite being. And when Christ, the great revealer, brings men into still closer relations to the Almighty Father he at the same time raises immeasurably their conception of the Divine character — the ideal toward which they are to strive. Houses and lands and the tranquil enjoyment of worldly treasures are no longer the promised rewards. Ideal blessings, the dim outlines of which some few only can begin to discern, are to be the objects of striving henceforth. And to those who see farthest into these new heavens, the prospect is the most bewildering in its immensity. “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” is their language; “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

But corresponding to this advancing idea of God, and keeping pace with it in Christianity, is the continually advancing conception of the destiny of man. What he is, at any moment of the world's history, is but the suggestion of that which it is possible for him to become. His earthly career is only the initial chapter in a life that may have a continuous development throughout the ages. And though the ideal toward which he labors is one which constantly eludes him, receding as he advances, yet no impossibility divides him from it. No natural barriers limit his development, or separate him from the source of infinite perfection, out of which he sprung and toward which he may forever make progress. Although finite he takes hold of infinity because the *possibilities* of his nature are infinite.

But Christianity does something more than present man with ideals. Its greatest power as a religion of progress can be appreciated only in the light of the relations which man is made to sustain to these. There are two streams of tendency in human nature — the egoistic and the altruistic. Let us examine briefly how Christianity engages, develops, and unites these seemingly antagonistic forces. First, as to the egoistic side of man's nature, — what is the power of Christianity to take possession of and intensify man's pas-

sion for self-satisfaction and self-development? The most marked peculiarity, from this point of view, which distinguishes Christianity from positivism is *its individualizing of man*. There is no loss of power, as in the worship of the ideal of the state, by the conception of divided opportunity and divided responsibility. Christianity points out a goal to be labored for not by the human race in its corporate capacity, but one which is to be gained or lost by individuals. The destiny of each man, in one view, stands by itself. The opportunities of life cannot be taken from me by the failure of my neighbor to appreciate them. They cannot be made fruitful to me by the combined earnestness of all the other members of the community in which I live. My will is the arbiter of my destiny. The prospect of infinite blessedness and never-ending development thus appeals to each individual, not as to a fractional part of the human race, but as if he stood alone with God in the universe. The Almighty has encompassed him behind and before, and laid his hand upon him.

Again, the opportunities open to each individual connect themselves directly with his moral nature and with his personal sense of duty. The destiny set before a man is not one which he is at liberty to accept or reject, as the balance may seem to lie on the side of pain involved in striving, or on that of happiness, the fruit of overcoming. A necessity lies upon him. The "categorical imperative" of duty as related to the Almighty and Omniscient God impels him. The unutterable woe of not realizing the plan of his life lies over against the heavenly vision that beckons him onward. The training of his imagination that has made possible the thought of an ever increasing happiness, has at the same time given him a vivid presentiment of that wretchedness without soundings that is its necessary alternative. Conceptions such as these penetrate to the very depths of the individual life, and affect profoundly the quality of man's self-consciousness. The thought of unmeasured possibilities lays upon him the grasp of a tyrant to force him into ways

not of his own choosing, but at the same time it ennobles him with the consciousness of unlimited power. A man who has clearly conceived the relations in which he stands to God and to the human lives that touch his, each one with infinite possibilities like his own, cannot think meanly of his inheritance or of his standing in the universe. Like the God who has made him, he is a free agent. He can look upward into ever-widening heavens and trace the path of an unlimited progress, he can also look downward into unlimited degradation.

ALTRUISM.

But there is a deeper place in human nature even than that where the sense of duty takes its rise. Love is the power that underlies all true living. The power of powers, it alone co-ordinates and unites all the faculties in an harmonious and vigorous development. Without it man never forgets himself and passes beyond, into that nobler and higher creature, his better self. The positivists, as we have seen, fully recognize this. With them as with us, the subjection of the intellect to the heart is the mainspring of all power for the attainment of unselfish ends.

This accord brings all the more fully into view the second great characteristic which distinguishes Christianity from positivism; namely, the immeasurably *greater elevation of the source* from which it draws its power for the development of love, or altruism. Under Comte's system the subjection of the intellect to the heart is to be secured by the force of innate altruism stimulated by an ever increasing enlightenment. The object which is to awaken and continually augment our unselfish devotion is the conception which each one may form for himself of a society on earth in which those outward, but very uncertain, sources of happiness which the few, who are reckoned the more fortunate, now possess shall be supplied to the great multitude of men. Science is to be prosecuted with a new energy for the bringing about of this desirable end. The sight of all the misery that now exists,

because of the anarchical condition of society, will act as an ever present stimulus in this direction; and the alleviations wrought by every new discovery, the sense of nearing that which is the object of pursuit, will unite the whole human race in a fervor of altruistic enthusiasm.

The attractiveness of this picture is enhanced by a comparison with Christianity, in which the latter appears as a religion that has specially cultivated and encouraged selfishness, a religion that has isolated the individual, and centered all his energies on securing salvation for himself. Comte indeed admits that the doctrine of the subjection of the intellect to the heart was instinctively accepted by theological systems, but "it was coupled," he tells us, "with an error which after a time destroyed all its value."¹ "There is," he says, "a natural connection between egoism and the absolute. . . . So natural is this tendency that when the fictitious synthesis becomes fully systematized in monotheism it is necessarily led to deny the existence of all true altruistic sentiment."² But whatever the historic development of Christianity may have been, its very soul, as it came from Christ and his apostles, was altruism of the most exalted character. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Paul and John enlarged upon this theme in words which, beyond all their other utterances, bear the unmistakable marks of divine inspiration. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." "Every one that loveth is born of God." According to Christianity, there is no personal salvation, there is no heaven to be attained, there is no God to be found, without love.

The transcendent elevation of the object thus presented for the drawing out of man's love by Christianity sets it in a world-wide contrast to that given by positivism. It is nothing less than the embodiment of the highest thought that it is possible for the human mind to conceive — the thought of a being of un-

¹ *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. I. p. 13.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. iii. p. 27.

limited perfections, infinite in purity and power and majesty, the great and glorious God, the Father of our spirits, the source and end of all things that have been or shall be. But love cannot be called forth in any great degree by the presentation of a cold ideal, no matter how elevated and worthy of adoration. Pre-eminently, we might almost say exclusively, Christianity depends for the development of altruism upon the fact that "He first loved us." This is the central truth of the Christian revelation; that notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, all the dreary sights and sounds of earth, the universe is ruled by a God of love, a God who desires the happiness of our race, and of every individual in it, and who in all things is working toward that end, guiding those who earnestly desire the truth, and supplementing their feeble efforts by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But, it will be replied, this is pure mysticism. It is a figment of the imagination, and instead of strengthening men for action in real life, it carries them away into an ideal realm and squanders that force which positivism directs to alleviating the substantial ills of the world. This might seem reasonable if Christ had comprehended the whole law in the first half of it. But he who said "Love the Lord thy God" said also "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Love must have activities, or it fades away into sentimentality. By the second half of the great law, therefore, a way is provided for the expression and growth of love on the part of the creature by active service for the Creator; and this prescribed way is identical with that which Comte recommends to us. The believer in Christ has, therefore, all the power that positivism has to offer, in the way of innate altruism, with the incentive of love and gratitude and loyalty to a Father of infinite attributes superadded. Enthusiasm for humanity is love to God. It is not only the great channel specially prescribed for the activity of love to God to flow in, but it is the sole test of love to him. "If a man say I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar. . . . He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. . . . I was naked, and ye clothed

me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. . . . For inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these ye did it not to me."

In view of the whole experience of mankind, the vision of a world redeemed by innate altruism is the product of a more daring flight of the imagination than any of the so-called dreams of Christianity. If the mind is made to dwell exclusively on the strength of that natural benevolence, which works by sympathy, the amount and potency of it may be made to appear considerable. But it can appear so only when viewed out of relation to other tendencies. Our own experience and the history of the world remind us that, when crossed by the demands of egoism, the force of altruism, unsupported by powerful incentives, is a thing too feeble to affect in any appreciable degree the great streams of social tendency. China has, through thousands of years of continuous and comparatively undisturbed development, made a thorough trial of the power of innate altruism stimulated by the conception of the greatest good of the collective whole. Humanity has been its God. With what result we have seen in a former article. The humanity developed has been of a low type. The good of the individual is swallowed up in the idea of the collective life. And of a progressive humanity — a humanity, that is, which seeks by radical changes to right great wrongs — there is no trace.

SCIENCE.

But the claim of the positivists with regard to the development of altruism is not one whit more preposterous than their assumption that science, under their system, will receive a new impulse. In speaking of the necessity of the subjection of the intellect to the heart, Comte tells us that without this limitation of the intellect "experience has shown too clearly that it would almost always follow its natural bent for *useless* or insoluble questions."¹ But if the intellect is to be subjected to the heart it is of the utmost

¹ *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. I. p. 15.

importance that the object on which the heart is fixed should be so high as to include every possible sphere of intellectual activity. The God of Christianity presents man with such an object. The supreme object of positivism, on the contrary, is of such a nature that a subjection of the intellect to the heart under its sway would necessarily forbid the entrance of thought into those realms of speculation where all great scientific truths are found. "When it is said that the intellect should be subordinate to the heart, what is meant is, that the intellect should devote itself exclusively to the problems which the heart suggests, the ultimate object being to find proper satisfaction for our various wants."¹ Now under Christianity a further knowledge of the great central mind of the universe is a human want. Under positivism, on the contrary, no such want exists. How, for instance, could the heart intent on the satisfaction of human wants ever suggest to a positivist an investigation of the problems of astronomy? Would not all effort for the discovery of natural laws, not connected with some foreseen useful end, be an example of the intellect following "its natural bent for useless or insoluble questions?"

Nothing can be more certain than that, thus far in the history of the world, the greatest achievements of science have been reached without a thought of any advantage, other than a spiritual one. They have, it is true, brought in their train innumerable practical benefits to mankind, but these have come by the way, and after the manner of things added to those who seek first the kingdom of God. The idea of the dignity and the sacredness of pursuits which have for their end the discovery of the laws of nature is so familiar to us that men hardly think of asking whence it has arisen; and when those who have forgotten the end in the means claim for science the right, as it were, of eminent domain in the field of thought, they fail to recognize the fact that this claim rests upon a purely religious foundation. It is nevertheless true that all the sacredness of scientific pursuits is a sacred-

¹ System of Positive Polity, Vol. i. p. 15.

ness which they derive from the fact that they are the great agencies of humanity, prosecuting for it the quest of the thought of God. With the thought of God taken away, science falls to the level of other useful occupations. It is no exaggeration to say that the irrepressible impulse toward the cultivation of science that has characterized modern thought has been the direct and natural outcome of an absorbing desire to reach a fuller comprehension of God, a desire bred in the mind by the Christian conception of man's relations to him. So much of the knowledge of God as is necessary for the first step toward him is within the reach of every responsible creature in the universe. It has been made immeasurably clearer by the revelation of God in Christ. But beyond this first step the knowledge of God, whom to know aright is life eternal, is the reward of those only who seek him with all the heart and with all the mind and with all the strength. God has revealed himself to the world by hints, by glimpses, in fragmentary and enigmatical disclosures, to the end that men should seek for him, and in seeking develop all those higher qualities which are the result of striving and overcoming. Even the utterances of Christ, abounding as they do in figures, in paradoxes, in formal contradictions, no less than the revelation of God in nature, stimulate far more than they satisfy. From all this provocation and drawing out of the mind of man has resulted theology, of which the natural sciences are, properly speaking, a branch.

At this point the history of China throws a particularly strong light on the assumptions of positivism. If the elimination of the idea of God and the concentration of the mind on humanity can act as an inspiration to the pursuit of science, this great civilization ought to afford substantial proof of it. All through the centuries the earnest prosecution of science ("the inquiring into the nature of things") has been declared the chief instrumentality for attaining the good of mankind. There has been no theology and no church to set itself against it. Those who have made useful discoveries

have always been rewarded with honors amounting almost to worship. The result has been, as we have seen, not only the non-development of science, but the non-existence of that conception, which is a commonplace to us, that there is a distinct nobleness and greatness attaching to scientific pursuits apart from any practical advantage that may flow from them.

But it is not alone for its inspiration that science is indebted to the ideals of Christianity. The very power by which it works, and without which its results could never have been achieved, is a direct inheritance from the discipline through which the human mind has passed in its attempts to grasp spiritual ideas. The ability of the Western mind to soar aloft and sustain itself in the region of abstract thought is the result of training, just as the inability of the Chinese mind to lift itself from the ground is the result of an opposite training. The Chinese are in this respect like birds that by long ages of domestication have lost the power of using their wings, though these, with all the muscles required for their movement, still remain to them. Christianity has, on the other hand, by dint of powerful attractions and the goadings of dire necessity, forced its subjects to lofty flights into the realms of abstract thought. The requirements of a great scientific mind are indeed many and varied, but there can be no discovery of the laws of nature without the possession to an extraordinary degree, of the hypothesis-framing power; the power, that is, of combining many ideas into a possible system, of holding this system in suspense for criticism, of dissolving and recombining, and of producing continually new forms from the imagination till the true one has been found. In one view the discoverer of a great law creates it anew. The operations of mind involved in such a discovery may at least be said to be the nearest approach that the human mind can make to creation.

Attention has already been called to the circumstance that Comte in his system of evolution lays great stress not only on the inevitableness, but on the necessity, of the theological

stage of development, which he calls the "fictitious synthesis," for the growth of the human spirit into the final religion of positivism. But the transition from theology is not direct. There is an intermediate stage — the metaphysical ; which, after a brief development, will entirely disappear. "All the metaphysical spirit can really affect is to dissolve the theological spirit without in any way filling its place, being impotent for construction. It next tries to corrupt the positive spirit, in order to set up its entities above wills and laws alike. But here its attacks are harmless, for as there is no affinity between the two there can be no true admixture of them."¹ Thus another great realm of activity for the intellect is sealed up. But if all occupation of the mind with metaphysics is to cease, how are we to climb to the higher regions of thought? To affirm that the triumph of positivism will be the end of metaphysics, is equivalent to saying that it will be the end of science in all its higher departments. "The metaphysical process," says Whewell, "has always gone on most actively in the most prosperous periods of each science. . . . It would be easy to adduce from the works of all great discoverers passages more profoundly metaphysical than any which are to be found in the pages of barren *a priori* reasoners."²

The following quotation from the late Professor Benjamin Pierce is of the character of exhortation rather than argument; but no excuse is needed for exhortation from such a source. "Men of science! do not forget the lessons of piety and reverence taught to youth. Your logic of induction may be as pellucid as ice; but beware lest you be bound in its frigid and rigid bonds, till you become as immovable and incapable of progress as those who were seen by the Florentine prophet, condemned to the lowest depths of Tartarus. Retrace your steps upwards, through the narrow avenue of ideality, out of this threatened darkness, to the grateful warmth and light of the surface, where you can see the stars

¹ System of Positive Polity, Vol. iii. p. 32.

² Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Part ii. Book xiii. chap. 4.

again. Your science will recover the perception of the central luminary, which is the unfailing fountain of pure knowledge, and will be restored to the praise and worship of the almighty, omniscient, and all-loving God.”¹ In view of this warning, it is not a little interesting to turn once more to Mr. Johnson, and find him tracing a remarkable resemblance between what he calls the Chinese “concrete habit” of thought and “modern evolutionism.” After speaking of the purely ideal character of the conceptions which, at an early period of their development, the Chinese imposed on nature and mind, he calls attention to the influence which the “concrete habit” has had “in causing them to slip those questions which have occupied the speculative faculty of other races; such as origin, analysis of the consciousness, and the logic of ontology. . . . This transference of such themes from the sphere of discussion and suspense into that of finished operation and ultimate fact, gives to Chinese philosophy the appearance of a serene assumption of solutions where nothing is really solved. It is curious that modern evolutionism produces a similar impression in its explanation of the origin of faculties and forces, by what are really mere variations in the defining phraseology; mere restatements of the facts and processes, which still await a deeper ground.”²

The dependence of the higher forms of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture upon the existence of ideals that have been called into being for the satisfaction of man's religious wants is too evident to need more than a bare statement. In every country where a high degree of excellence has been realized in any of these branches, in India and Greece as in Modern Europe, that excellence has been in close connection with, and often the direct expression of religious ideas and aspirations. They all in their full growth present a secular as well as a religious side. But in so far as the secular predominates over the religious in their produc-

¹ *Ideality in the Physical Sciences.* By Benjamin Pierce, p. 36.

² *China*, p. 945.

tion they show decline. The spirit of a higher inspiration takes its flight, to be succeeded by mannerism, imitation, and the reproduction of conventional and artificial modes of feeling, or by that lower inspiration that seeks intensity in sensuality or a morbid love of horrors. Originality and inventive power of a high order are inseparable from the continuance of motives that are primarily traceable to religion.

CHRISTIANITY IN HISTORY.

But, it may be said, Christianity has failed historically to demonstrate the efficiency of its motives. It has through centuries of its development manifested a profound indifference to the temporal well-being of mankind, has turned a deaf ear to their cry for deliverance from oppression, has helped to rivet the chains that have bound them in slavery, has, meanwhile, cajoled them into the acceptance of present injustice and wretchedness by the promise of a future great reward, has persistently and bitterly opposed itself to science, has discouraged every kind of free intellectual activity. To which it must be replied, Christianity has done none of these things; but individuals and associations of men, who in their human weakness and short-sightedness have assumed to represent the spirit of Christ, have been guilty of every form of intolerance and selfishness. The character of Christianity was clearly announced by its founder to be a revolutionary power in the world. It was destined to encounter obstacles at every step, many of which would be of an insidious character. Its triumph was not to be a sudden one. Its millennium was not, as that of modern schemes has been said always to be, "just round the corner." It was to grow like a seed, it was to work like leaven.

From the days of its early triumphs, Christianity has been like a fire, well kindled, but repeatedly overwhelmed and smothered by the heaping on of great masses of unseasoned fuel. And like such a fire it has emitted for long periods great volumes of smoke with a disproportionate amount of light and heat. The flood of worldliness and heathenism

that diluted Christianity, when it became the religion of the empire, and of barbarism that flowed into it in subsequent centuries, changed at times its most vital characteristics; and, in addition to this, the excessive conservatism which the presence of such dangers developed, even more perhaps than the foreign elements themselves, almost shut out from the eyes of Christendom the knowledge of true Christianity. Two capital errors distinguished this period of wandering in the desert. The first was the removal of God to a distance where he could be reached only through the ministrations of the church or the intercessions of the saints. The second was the declaration of a radical and irreconcilable hostility between the world of matter and the world of spirit. By the former, the essential error of Confucianism, man lost in great measure his sense of personal communion with God; and by the latter, the fundamental principle of Buddhism, he was led to see in the cultivation of natural science the service of the devil, and in the philanthropy which sought the temporal well-being of men a snare for the capture of souls.

But this is not the whole truth. There is another side to those centuries to which has been given the dismal name of the Dark Ages. With all its mistakes, Mediaeval Christianity did not make the mistake of quenching the Spirit. It nourished the ideal. Though it lived in the land of dreams and illusions, though it displayed itself in action only fitfully and with impracticable aims; its fervors, its devotion, its willing self-surrender to the calls of the higher life fostered and developed within it that power of working for ideal ends that has laid the foundation for all that is highest and best in the modern world.

Unlike the asceticism of Buddhism that of Christianity had before it the conception of a positive and very real life. It struggled to free itself not from existence, but only from a lower condition that it might embrace a higher. Thus through all these ages there was progress. The spirit of man grew and matured strength for the undertaking of a

great work when the fulness of the time had come. Since the advent of the modern era, Christianity, no longer standing aloof from the world, has cast itself fearlessly into it with faith that its leaven is powerful enough to leaven the whole lump. It has been said that the Renaissance in Europe was signalized by the discovery of *man* and of the *world*. It may with equal truth be said that this discovery was contemporaneous with, and made fruitful by, the discovery on the part of Christianity, of the spirit that dwells within it and of the work it has to do. The farther removed we are from the epoch of the rediscovery of Greek literature and art, the more clearly do we see what those who were exposed to the sudden outburst of its brilliancy could not see. To them the discovery of a new world of thought was so absorbing and so dazzling as to make it appear the source of that great awakening to which it lent its assistance. But the true Renaissance, in the midst of which we are living, must be dated further back than the introduction of Greek influence. In that influence we may recognize one of the forces that has disciplined, and to some extent has moulded the forms of modern thought, but we must seek elsewhere for its vital principle.

The strange vigor which pulsated everywhere in the life of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is the energy of the same spirit that through the preceding ages poured itself with such marvellous devotion through narrower channels. Then it sent men over land and sea, and through desert wastes in search of the Holy Grail. It roused whole nations, the high and the low together, with a vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem brought down to earth. The great abandoned their ambitions, the rich their worldly opportunities, the man in humble life his family and his occupation, for the achieving of an ideal end; a purely spiritual advantage. All Europe for a time forgot its lower aims. It was the same spirit also that concentrated the expression of itself in the forms of Gothic architecture,—an embodiment of Christian devotion which can be traced to the influence of no leading

mind, and which has rendered the name of no man famous; the same spirit that in chivalry tempered the worship of bravery with the pursuit of unselfish aims, and transformed violence into loyalty to the idea of purity and gentleness.

Students of the fifteenth century in Italy are profoundly impressed with the presence of a mysterious influence pervading it, — the energising, as it were, of an occult power striving to realize itself in new and living forms. Mr. J. A. Symonds speaking of the age of Lionardo da Vinci, says, "Not without reason are we forced to personify the Renaissance as something external to its greatest characters. There is an intellectual strength outside them in the century, a heritage of power prepared for them at birth. The atmosphere in which they breathe is so charged with mental vitality that the least stirring of their special energy brings them into relation with forces mightier than are the property of single natures."¹ Whence comes this mysterious power? Let us turn back two centuries and in this same Italy we are confronted with a life as replete with mysterious energy and to the full as remarkable in its developments. The century of St. Francis, of Giotto, and of Dante, not less than the age of Lionardo, impresses those who study it with a kind of awe in view of the strange energy that struggles underneath it for expression. The following quotation is from Taine's "Italy." "I have just re-read the 'Vita Nuova' and a few cantos of the 'Paradiso'; the sentiment is so intense that it fills one with fear; these men live in the burning realm where reason melts away. . . . How did they support the anguish and constant excesses of such a condition, the nightmare visions of Hell and Paradise, the tears, the tremors, the swoons, and other alternations of such a tempest? What were the nerves that resisted all this? What fecundity of soul and of imagination fed it?"²

A passage from the same writer gives the answer which I believe embodies the largest part of the truth: "A sentiment

¹ Renaissance in Italy. The Revival of Learning, p. 11.

² Florence and Venice, pp. 22, 23.

which previously was only forming, Love, then burst forth with extraordinary power, and St. Francis was its herald. He called water, fire, the moon, and the sun brothers; he preached to birds, and ransomed lambs on their way to market with his own mantle. It is stated that hares and pheasants sought refuge under the folds of his robe. His heart overflowed toward all living creatures. His first disciples dwelt like himself in a sort of rapture, so that oftentimes for twenty and even thirty days they lived alone on the tops of mountains, contemplating all celestial objects.' Their writings are effusions. 'Let no one rebuke me if love forces me to go like a madman! No heart can resist, none can escape from such love. . . . For heaven and earth declare aloud and repeat to me, and all those whom it is my duty to love address me: 'cherish the love which hath made us in order to bring us near to him.'"¹

M. Taine calls this period "the term and flower of living Christianity." The *flower* it was indeed. The *term* it was not. The thirteenth century is the spring-time of modern life. The measure of the Middle Age was full. The infolding calyx could no longer contain the forces that worked beneath it; and the power of a great passion, now become self-conscious, displayed itself in new and striking forms. But these forms bear the same relation to the age which follows that the passing flower bears to the growing fruit. In the comprehensiveness and expansiveness of St. Francis, or, to speak in more modern phrase, in his altruism, we can see clearly the moving of that spirit which was the inspiration of Dante's fervid patriotism, of all that was best in the humanists of the two succeeding centuries, and which is the soul of modern Christianity.

"From out that slope, there where it breaketh most
Its steepness, rose upon the world a sun,
As this one does sometimes from out the Ganges;
Therefore let him who speaketh of that place,
Say not Asceti, for he would say little,
But Orient, if he properly would speak.

¹ Florence and Venice, chap. iii.

He was not yet far distant from his rising
Before he had begun to make the earth
Some comfort from his mighty virtue feel."¹

It is easy to overestimate the greatness of men who stand very near us in history. But the figure of St. Francis of Assisi has not grown less with time. In view of all that has transpired since his day the significance of that "rising" is far more clearly apprehended by us than it was by Dante. "No man," it has been said of him, "could less be to himself the centre of his own thoughts. . . . He was a pan-Christian." In the forms of activity through which his love sought expression we can see distinctly foreshadowed the great lines of progress on which Europe has ever since been moving. As with Dante, the clothing is that of the Middle Age, but the life underneath it is that of our own era. While making self-denial and the crucifixion of the lower passions a capital article in his creed, he, at the same time, recognized the goodness of the creation, and regarded all the visible works of God as a "ladder" by which to climb to an ever increasing knowledge and love of their Author.

Still more in the *humanity* of St. Francis, in his absorbing desire for the blessing of mankind, we may discern a new outbursting of those ideas that have been the soul of all our modern philanthropies and missions. While other religious orders hid themselves away from the world he sent his followers into it, to preach to all nations. A vision of a great blessing about to fall upon the whole human race floated continually before his eyes. "I have seen," he said to his disciples, "all the roads crowded with men travelling with eager haste toward us. The French are coming. The Spaniards are hastening. The English and Germans are running. All nations are mingling together. I hear the tread of the numbers who go and come to execute the commands of holy obedience." His was the gospel of a new crusade, not against the rich and powerful,— "God who is our master is theirs also" he said, but a crusade in the in-

¹ Paradise, Canto xi. (Longfellow's translation).

terests of the poor and heavy laden of all the earth. Yet, with all his humility and love, St. Francis had no lack of masculine qualities; and in some of his instructions we seem to hear a declaration of those rights of man that have been made so prominent in these latter days. "His brethren were to labor with their hands, and were to be maintained by alms. But they were to solicit alms, not as suitors for a gratuitous favor, but as asserters of a positive right, which Christ himself had bestowed on the poor. A code of higher than any human laws, had imposed on the rich the office and the obligations of stewards for such as had need of sustenance. The indigent were the proprietors of all earthly treasures."¹

In all this there is no break with the past. It is not a revolution, but a transformation that we are looking upon. The devotion of St. Francis is the devotion of St. Bernard. And the overflowing vitality of the fifteenth century has proceeded from the same root and has worked its way along the same channels as that which flowered with such exuberance in the thirteenth. There is something deeper in Ficino and Pico della Mirandola than Platonism. Nor was it simply an intellectual quickening that made Luther and Melancthon, Colet, Tyndale, and Sir Thomas More the great figures that they are, and will always continue to be, in the history of the world.

The worldliness, the unbridled license, and the heathenism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy are not their essential characteristics. The ploughshares of Italian scholarship, while they unearthed the treasures of pagan literature, at the same time set free a moral miasma which was fatal to the great mass of those who first devoted themselves to the new learning, and which settled down like a plague on the cities of Italy. But this malign influence, the startling effects of which are so calculated to capture the attention, is not the spirit of the age. It is rather the carnage

¹ An Essay on St. Francis of Assisi, by Sir J. Stephen, in *Edinburgh Review*, No. 52.

of its battle-fields, the riot of its drunken soldiery. Through all this the Renaissance is moving on to its great achievements ; and the energy of its loftier spirits, ideally expressed in the art of Michel Angelo, is the energy of a mediaeval devotion striving, more or less consciously, to adapt itself to a newly discovered world. In some cases the connection between the two periods is direct and palpable, in others it is to be sought beneath the surface. Some of the greatest workers of the fifteenth century preserve unchanged the ideals of the Middle Age. The motive which impels them is consciously a religious one. Columbus was not only actuated by the spirit of the crusaders. He was himself a crusader. The very same visions that inspired St. Louis inspired him. It was not an enthusiasm of discovery for its own sake that nerved his perseverance and supported him through all his disappointments. He felt himself to be specially chosen by God for the accomplishing of a great work. He believed the outcome of his labors would be the dawning of a new era of peace on earth and goodwill to men. The discovery of a new way to the Indies was only the means to an end — the recovery of Jerusalem, to be the centre of a world-wide kingdom of Christ, the source of blessing and salvation to the whole human race. He speaks of himself as “animated with a heavenly fire.” He declares his conviction that his mind has been opened by God “as with a palpable hand.”

In Palestrina, the creator of modern religious music,— that art which has accompanied the development of the new age without diminution of power,— we see the same conscious inspiration of a religious spirit, the same concentration of enthusiasm for the working out of a God-given destiny. Fra Angelico, believing that his pictures were as they were through the will of God, never taking up his brushes without first kneeling in prayer, never painting a Christ on the cross except through his tears, is the companion figure to that of Palestrina, in his hut among the vine-grounds of Monte Celio, agonizing over the *unsolved problem*, — the possi-

bility of music that should be for the human soul a fitting expression of its great thoughts of God. "O Lord, open thou mine eyes," were the words found written on his manuscript.¹ The painter, as a devotee of purely religious art, is the last of his line. The composer is the first of his — the leader into that realm of higher expression whither he has been so nobly followed through the whole era of the reformation. But the spirit is the same, the object is the same. Painting had reached its limits in this direction: it could accompany the soul of man no farther: its inspiration was therefore handed on to the art without limits, the fitting accompaniment of progress.

In turning from these illustrations of the purely religious impulse to the consideration of the more secular movements of the Renaissance we seem to come in contact with another spirit — a spirit that is working in conscious antagonism to religion. But the antagonism is on the surface. The power which underlies this secular energy has been generated by Christian ideals as truly as the power of men who consciously served those ideals. The organized religion of that era was in many respects as much at variance with the true spirit of Christianity, as the Judaism of the higher priesthood in the days of Christ was at variance with his teachings. Petrarch, the first of the humanists, the implacable enemy of authority in the realm of mind, the hater of everything that might impede the free play of the intellect, was the product of Christian forces. Uncompromising in his hostility to the narrowness of scholasticism, he recognized the true spirit in the prophets and the apostles. The passion of liberty, nourished and fanned within him to a fierce heat by the classic literature, was not alien to Christianity. On the contrary it was eminently in harmony with it. St. Paul, and a greater than Paul, stood in the same relation to their times, in this respect; and as Luther was the champion of religious freedom, so Petrarch was the apostle and defender of intellectual liberty. The ideal man of letters was to

¹ Rankes's History of the Popes, Vol. I. p. 379.

him one who confronted the world in the spirit of Sir Galahad. Purity of life, purity of thought, a soul that could not be purchased or intimidated were his necessary equipments. And this sense of the sacredness of his calling was not a sentiment caught up at second-hand. It was the genuine outcome of the spirit of mediaeval devotion that in him found a new and soul-inspiring outlet. It was the first fruits of the union of religious feeling with secular occupation. "For this one man at least," it has been said of him, "the art of letters was a priesthood."

In the restrained and disciplined zeal of Copernicus there is the same spirit—the recognition of something greater even than the great secret of the universe, which he believed himself destined to unfold. He divided, we are told, his time into three portions—one for the duties of his clerical office, one for the gratuitous practice of medicine among the poor, and one for the pursuits of astronomy. Though deeply impressed with the fact that the uncertain period of one human life was scant measure for the working out of the problem which he had in hand, though holding all conversation to be useless, except with learned men upon grave subjects, yet he regarded his life as incomplete unless some portion of it were consecrated to that form of greatness illustrated by our Saviour when he washed the disciples' feet. The nature of the kingdom of heaven was surely apprehended with a marvellous breadth by one who could thus turn from his occupation with the great thoughts of God to minister in his own person to the wants of God's poor.

Unlimited illustration of this point by the history of the great minds of the Renaissance were possible did space permit; but, after all, it is not in the study of individual minds that we can trace most clearly the transformation of the mediaeval spirit into the enthusiasms of modern civilization. When at last Christianity burst the fetters in which it had so long been bound, a great impulse was imparted to the development of Christian ideals. European society was quickened through its whole frame. To men who were

at the same time educated and religious this new life was like the call of the angel of the ascension: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" From asceticism they were turned to a life of conflict and of service. The worship of God in the cell gave place to the worship of him in his works; the longing to know him in beatific visions and transporting experiences was converted into the desire to know him in the laws of the universe, and through working for him in harmony with them. A wide and inspiring field opened itself before them,—the preparation of the minds of the people for the new light that was to burst upon them, and the education of those who had been long in bondage to a right use of liberty. But a different direction was given to one great stream of Christian zeal. To restrict the light and liberty that were coming so rapidly into the world seemed the part of wisdom and of duty. By the conflict of these opposing tendencies an enormous amount of Christian energy was evolved and expended; and the day of great philanthropic undertakings for the uplifting of mankind was postponed. When, therefore, the Christian ideas of the sacredness of the individual, of the brotherhood of mankind, and of the possibility of an unlimited improvement for all men had fermented in the minds of the masses, we cannot wonder that the popular movements which resulted should have, in some cases, taken on anti-religious forms. As the anti-slavery agitation in America was forced through years of its growth into an attitude of hostility to formal Christianity, so in France the gospel of the rights of man, preached with the guillotine, was the uprising of one of the great thoughts of Christianity to overwhelm one of its great perversions.

In the various departments of science there have always been those who, conceiving themselves to have devoted their lives to the cause of human progress, have disowned Christianity, and ranged themselves on the side of its enemies. But, with all their hostility, these men have lived and worked unconsciously inspired by Christian ideals. No individual life stands by itself. Although we

are self-determining agents, we are at the same time the agents of wills that have energized in the generations that have preceded us. Little as we are inclined to acknowledge it, the views that we take of life, and still more the feelings that we have about it, are determined largely by under-currents of thought that carry us along without our knowledge. The sociologists have abundantly illustrated for us the fact that ideas become incorporated as part of our constitutions, so as to be for us almost a second nature. An individual life is not long enough, nor an individual intellect strong enough, to free itself from these transmitted tendencies that, working within and without us, mould our thoughts and color every prospect on which we look.

Without going so far as to say with a recent writer that, "Beneath the wolf's clothing of the whole pack of modern secularists, agnostics, and atheists, friction reveals (for the present generation at all events) a flock of harmless Christian sheep,"¹ we may safely say that the better side which they present to us is invariably the result of Christian ideas. The aspirations, the enthusiasms, the worship of high ideals, the devotion to truth, the earnest exhortations, the very reasons which they give for attacking Christianity, are weapons borrowed from the old religious homestead which they are seeking to destroy—Christian ploughshares, beaten into swords. And this *new* religion of positivism—not in any respect new so far as it is positive—is, in fact, the second half of the great law of Christianity uttering an energetic protest, and ready to trample down its best friends in the blind effort to assert itself.

The sole ground of existence for positivism is the slowness of our religion to realize its ideals, the chronic failure to develop the altruistic in proportion to the egoistic side of its doctrine. Great as the achievements of Christianity have been since the dawning of the Reformation, its dreams of blessing far outrun them; and the spirit of man, accustomed in these days to rapid movement and radical changes, grows

¹ Francis Power Cobbe.

impatient of delay. Our feeling for the sufferings and ~~g~~gles of mankind has been immeasurably intensified while the means for their relief mature but slowly. "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers." And Christianity now pre-occupied with the inside interests of its own household, now, in its ministrations, too exclusively zealous for the spiritual health of men, has often presented the appearance of profound indifference to the wrongs and disabilities by which great classes have been shut out from the material blessings that have gladdened our age.

But if Christianity has been slow to realize its ideals, shall we get on more rapidly when its inspirations have been banished from the world? The positivists bid us be cheerful and full of courage, even though the central luminary of the spiritual world is about to be extinguished. They invite us with glowing hospitality, and an overflow of good words, to come with them and warm ourselves at this marvellous picture of a fire that they have painted. But how can we be cheerful if what they tell us is true? How can we join them in singing the songs of Zion in a strange land? It is pleasant to be told that the world is becoming more intelligent, more active, more loving every day. We believe them because we believe in the love of God. But when the source of all love is removed, this confidence of theirs in the progress of mankind, in the righting of great wrongs, and in the final triumph of good over evil is nothing more nor less than pure superstition. The light that has been shining on the path that leads into the future gives place to a cold and dreary fog that makes it uncertain whether there be any future worth caring about. We can see only that which lies close about us. All distant things and all the lofty objects of the universe that have nourished the sense of sublimity and grandeur within us, the sun, the stars, and God's great heaven, are as if they were not. There is no longer a motive for men to climb the arduous steep of science, for there is no wider view to be had from the mountain-top than from the plain. To men thus bereft, the only

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inspiration remaining would be the tradition of things seen in happier days, when the sun was shining; some legend of a golden age of Yao and Shun, when men thought great thoughts and walked with Shang Ti.

POSITIVISM NOT A FINAL RELIGION.

Nor can the claim of positivism as a final religion be allowed. It cannot even become a transitional phase of development. All it can be it has been, — a transitional mode of thought, a fool's paradise, for those who have cast off a belief in the one true God without having cast off the earnest expectation that has been born of that belief. In its negative and destructive aspects it indeed exerts an influence; for it assures those who hesitate about giving up the thought of God that their hesitation is foolish; that there is no risk either for themselves or the world; that the giving up of old faiths is, on the contrary, the first step which it is the duty of all good men to take. But when we come to its constructive side we look into a void. Enthusiasm for humanity without the thought of God behind it has not proved contagious. There is no dearth of agnostics; men who profess themselves to be atheists are not wanting; but enthusiastic and altruistic atheists are anything but numerous. And in view of the apathy of the great mass of those who have made the first step toward positivism the apostles of that creed are constrained to take up the lament, "We have piped unto you and ye have not danced."

Already the leaders of progress in this direction have passed on to another stage of development, for which they construct a religion that with more propriety may be called final. Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann are the prophets of a creed that is far more self-consistent, more true to its assumptions, than that of Comte. Pessimism has shaken off, as positivism has not, those unsubstantial faiths and delusions, the legacy of a moribund Christianity. The belief that the world moves on to the triumph of good over evil has been seen through and abandoned. The world does indeed move on, they tell us, but

its evolution is from bad to worse. It tends to a condition of unutterable woe for the whole human race.

But even with the pessimists the idea of religion has ~~not~~ left the world. There is still room for enthusiasm and for self-sacrifice. There is a great work to be done for the deliverance of mankind from the curse above all other curses, the cause of all evil in the world, — *the desire to live*. Self-destruction is not, as we might suppose it would be, the duty enjoined on those who have compassed this truth. They are to pursue the more self-denying course of remaining in this world that they may spread abroad the light of pessimism, and secure for the generations that have as yet only a potential being the salvation of non-existence. The apostles of this creed do not fall one whit behind those of positivism in the earnestness of their exhortations and in the fervid use of scriptural language for the stimulation of the lukewarm. And if the ideals and faiths of Christianity must go, it is hard to show that they are not right. With the thought of God forever banished from the world, some few individuals might still find more pleasure than misery in life; but the aggregate of woe could not fail to outweigh immeasurably that of happiness. And while a spark of altruism, innate or cultivated, remained in our degenerate race there would be reason and urgency in the call to fan this spark into a glow of enthusiasm, that men might thereby be enabled to give the earnest labor of their lives, by example and by persuasion, to bring about the non-production of human beings.

But we come upon the same practical difficulty here as in positivism — the impossibility of generating such a force of unselfishness as in any appreciable degree to affect the situation. Could the preaching of this gospel effect anything, it would be only the discontinuance of the production of their kind by the more benevolent portion of the race. If this is the only salvation possible, the race must go unsaved. Without guide and without hope it must still pursue its melancholy way. Not without religions, but attended by a luxuriant and perennial growth of them, following hard upon each

other ; for it is the doom of man to keep on believing in something so long as life remains. But, with the thought of God blotted out, that something would be forever changing. As yet we have only seen the rays of God's love intercepted by clouds that have thrown individuals and groups into deep shadow ; but the effect which this partial darkening and chilling has had to produce strange and fantastic growths, permits us to form some idea of what would follow could the great source of spiritual life suffer a permanent eclipse.

The excess of confidence about the future of the race, which we have been accustomed to derive from an intense belief in ourselves and the wisdom of the nineteenth century, ought to be reduced every day in view of the ideas that are continually making their appearance from sources so high in point of intellectual enlightenment as to bring them under the head of startling phenomena — developments hard to be classed, except as we fall back on the belief that an overruling God makes the foolishness of men to praise Him, and that there are such things as inspired satires of great departures from the truth, to the end that men shall recognize their character and the goal to which they lead.¹

“ Europe,” we are told by a late writer, “ is inevitably hastening to become what China is. In her we may see what we shall be like when we are old.”² In the light of all our fond anticipations and faiths, as in the light of our past struggles and sufferings, this is a dreary prospect. But, if Christianity is to leave us, the prophecy must be regarded as most comforting. Happy should we be if we could decline from our high estate into anything half so peaceful and respectable as Chinese civilization, or into any form of religion so reasonable and helpful as Buddhism combined with the wor-

¹ In a book recently published, entitled “ Attempts at Faith,” we have set before us by Mr. St. George Stock, a creed in which disbelief in an overruling God is joined with certainty of a future existence for human souls (derived from the developments of spiritualism), and also with an undoubting faith in the upward tendency of all things, — the “ triumph slow but sure, over moral and physical evil.”

² Draper's Intellectual Development of Europe, p. 619.

ship of ancestors. There is much more reason to fear that agnosticism and various forms of spiritualism, resembling Taôism, would divide the field. But there is room to hope for better things. May it not be that the desponding tone of some of our modern writers has its rise in a disordered imagination? in the sickly fancy of minds that have been "mastered *by* their culture instead of mastering it"? and that the weariness which they detect in modern thought should seek its analogy not in the failing powers of old age, but in the sense of ennui often experienced by young and vigorous persons when oppressed by a surfeit of good things?

To one who looks at Christianity from the inside, signs of life are not lacking. Our religion is changing its modes; and in all change there is destruction. But there is in the Christianity of to-day an earnestness and an aggressiveness, combined with sobriety, that speak of the vigor of manhood. Yet it is difficult to estimate the strength of growing tendencies. It may be that Europe has seen its best days, and that the torch which she has carried so long and so bravely must ere long be handed on to some nation which as yet is not a nation. Nevertheless, the word of God liveth and abideth forever. If Europe permits the light of Christianity to die out, so much the worse for Europe. But the soul of her civilization is immortal. If the worst dreams of our culture-ridden minds should come true, we may still hope that the bread which she has cast upon the waters will return to her after many days; and that the missionary zeal that has characterized her happier period will be reciprocated by those nations that are now the objects of it. As Europe and even younger America are now sending teachers to proclaim the glad tidings of Christ to those ancient countries from whence they first came, so let us hope that Africa and the islands of the sea, and even China, born again by the power of the resurrection, may minister to those who shall come after us, calling them to a purer and nobler and stronger type of Christianity than that which we have known.