

Shadow and Substance.

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IN two previous contributions to *The Expository Times*¹ the writer endeavoured to set forth some of the wealth of Christian truth contained in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. As the fruits of his study and meditation have not been fully offered, he ventures to return to the subject in order to present it from the standpoint suggested by the title of this article, bringing, as it does, the thought of the Epistle into relation to modern intellectual interests. For convenience, the four aspects of the theme to be dealt with may be described in the terms *idealism*, *evolutionism*, *meliorism*, and *universalism*.

I.

(1) The *idealism* of the Epistle is stated most explicitly in 11⁸: 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear.'

This is not merely an affirmation of the fact of creation; there is an indication of its mode. There is a philosophy implied in this article of faith; and it is a philosophy that underlies the thought of the whole of the Epistle. Of the author, Dr. Dods writes: 'Trained in Alexandrian thought, he cherished the Platonic conception of the relation of the seen to the unseen. It was his inalienable conviction that the visible world is merely phenomenal, the temporary form or manifestation of the invisible, archetypal world which alone is real and eternal. In the Epistle these two worlds are continually related by contrast. The unseen world (*πράγματα οὐ βλεπόμενα*, 11¹) is the eternal counterpart of this present order of things (*αὕτη ἡ κτίσις*, 9¹¹); the reality, of which earthly things are but the shadow (*σκία*, 8⁵). The visible heaven and earth are one day to pass away "as things that have been made" (*ὡς πεποιημένων*, 12²⁷), but this only in order that the eternal things which cannot be removed may remain alone existent' (*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. iv. pp. 238-9). Certain modifications of the Platonic idealism must, however, be noted. (a) It

is not with an impersonal system of ideas that the writer is concerned; but the unseen source of the seen is the mind of God, in which the seen world archetypally exists for ever. (b) It is not a static idealism, but a dynamic; it recognizes deed as well as thought; it is the Word of God which actualises the ideas of the unseen world in the things of the seen; and the Word of God is no abstract conception, but personal reality, the Son of God (1², 'through whom also he made the worlds'). Here the writer is in agreement both with John's Gospel (1⁹) and with Paul (Col 1¹⁶, 17). (c) The world seen thus produced out of the world unseen has a unity and order (*κατηρτίσθαι*); there is no suggestion that the divine intention is thwarted by an alien matter, so that ideas get only imperfectly expressed in things. (d) Most interesting of all, however, in this statement is the conjunction of faith and understanding, *πίστει νοοῦμεν*; the two are not mutually exclusive, but mutually complementary. Faith accepts the testimony of revelation to the act of creation; the understanding makes that act intelligible by the conception of the process which it forms. To the other thoughts we shall have occasion to return in connexion with other passages, but this thought is one over which we may now linger.

(2) A much-debated question is this: Can God's existence be proved from the world as reason interprets it? Must we not always put into the conclusion more than we can draw out of the premises? The writer's words, *πίστει νοοῦμεν*, seem to give the answer. It is the religious consciousness receptive of, and responsive to, the divine reality itself that gives the datum that God is, and what God is. It is the philosophical reason that fits that datum into the framework of human knowledge; reason confirms, and is itself completed in faith. (a) It would carry us far beyond the necessary limits of the present discussion to deal with the theistic evidences. Only this brief summary may be given. The modern counterpart of the ontological argument is this: if intelligence can and does make the world intelligible, there is intelligence in the source of the world; the world expresses mind. If the world is to be

¹ Vol. XXVI.—(1) In Praise of Faith, pp. 199, 278, 328; (2) The Pioneer of Faith and Salvation, pp. 502, 546.

conceived as a system of forces manifold and yet one, it is only on the analogy of the human will that force itself can be conceived; in the world will is exercised; this is how the cosmological argument may be restated. But the combination of mind and will yields us the idea of purpose: and the world as a whole in its intelligible evolution does show the fulfilment of purpose; the teleological argument, based not on single isolated instances of assumed design, but on the whole world as an intelligible system of force, can still claim validity. (b) About the next step there may be difference of opinion. It may be held that reason itself moves by necessity from the finite to the Infinite as its explanation, since it cannot find rest in the finite. If this be so, then reason itself can pass from finite world to infinite mind, will, purpose, and call it God. If we are not sure of this necessary movement of reason, we may fall back on the thought that is now engaging our attention. Faith has the idea of God; faith and reason can join hands in identifying the mind, will, purpose, reason finds in the world with God. Reason justifies faith in its movement from the seen to the unseen, for reason must explain the seen by the unseen. Faith completes reason in offering it the assurance of a reality in the unseen adequate to explain the seen. Here and there the speculative intellect may perhaps, apart from the religious consciousness, reach some sort of conception of God; but for most men it is faith that gives the datum, which reason can then confirm.

II.

(1) In the explanation of the world, modern thought has been guided by the conception of evolution; and it must often appear to the thinker to-day a wonder and surprise why this conception has not been dominant in human thinking before. He who thinks deeply on the deepest things is most likely to rise above the modes of thinking of his own time. Paul had a glimpse of the truth of evolution when he, in contrasting Adam and Christ, declared 'that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual' (1 Co 15⁴⁶). The writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* has it in the opening statement of his argument, 'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these

days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high' (1¹⁻³). It is not putting an undue strain on the meaning of the words to suggest that the writer had some sense of the progressiveness of revelation. This idea is implied in the whole of his argument. If he held, as it is probable he did, that the law was given by the mediation of angels (cf. Gal 3¹⁹), then in subordinating angels to the Son (1⁴⁻¹⁴ 2⁵⁻¹⁸) he is placing law as well as prophets at a lower stage of revelation than the final and perfect stage in the Son. So also is Moses inferior to Christ (3⁹), Joshua too (4^{8, 9}), Aaron and his priesthood (7 ff.). To the comparison of Christ's priesthood, sacrifice, intercession, we must return in the last section: the thought that now must hold our attention is this, that in Christ, and Christ alone, revelation is final, and redemption complete.

(2) Recognizing a progress to Christ, he does not recognize a progress beyond Him. His evolutionism is not that of Hindu thought with its endless cycles, nor that of Herbert Spencer with his alternative evolution and devolution; and the reason is plain. In Christ the eternal has entered into the temporal, the divine into the human, the substance into the shadow. This truth he expresses in the language of his philosophy. Not only is the Son the heir of all things, through whom also God made the worlds, but He is also described as ἀπάνυσμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτῆρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. In Christ the seen ceases to be a shadow (σκία) of the unseen, but the very image (ἀληθινὴν τὴν εἰκόνα, 10¹), not an imperfect, partial reproduction, but a manifestation adequate to the reality itself. The glory is really in the effulgence, and the substance in the impress (R.V.m., a better rendering of χαρακτῆρ than 'image'). The figurative language is drawn from the physical realm, but the reality expressed is personal, ethical, spiritual, as we shall afterwards show. Nor do we need to linger on the metaphysics of the statement, for the philosophy in this Epistle is quite subordinate to the moral and religious experience. While the physical universe is a manifestation inferior to the world of ideas in the mind of God, while in previous history even of the divine revela-

tion and of human religion there had often been only shadow, and not yet substance, in Christ at last perfectly the substance had expressed itself in the very image adequate to it. It need hardly be pointed out that here the writer goes beyond his Platonic idealism, for in Plato the seen remains, and must always remain, only the shadow of the unseen, and never its very image.

(3) It is this adequacy of the image to the substance that explains the claim of finality ('at the end of these days,' 1²) and permanence for the revelation and redemption in Christ. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever' (13⁸), because while fulfilling God's purpose in time, He Himself belongs to God's eternity. As is his wont, the writer blends practical exhortation and doctrinal exposition; and so the context of this declaration of the sameness of Jesus teaches that the truth has a twofold consequence for life. The Christian generations can all live by the same faith, because of its unchanging object (v.⁷). The fashions of thought of the passing hour cannot claim the believers' acceptance, because the content of their thought must remain unchanged (v.⁹). But it may be objected that such permanence involves stagnation, and excludes progress for the Christian Church. Some minds to-day are so obsessed by the idea of evolution, that they cannot allow the possibility even of rest, but insist on the necessity of move-

ment in religion and morals. The writer's view does certainly exclude the setting aside of Christ as the object of faith, or the thinking of Him in altogether new and strange ways; but it does not exclude all progress, for on the one hand the object of faith is not a past creed, code, or ritual, but a present living person, and on the other, the subject of faith is a developing mind. Because Christ 'is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them' (7²⁵), the believing community as well as the individual believers have ever fresh experiences of His grace; and the history of the Church, in so far as it proves itself really His body, is the biography of Christ as Saviour and Lord. If we may seek light on one portion of Scripture from another, we may recall Christ's own words about the greater works of the believer because of His ascent to the Father (Jn 14¹²); and conclude that Christ's permanence in includes progress for His Church. Again, if we recall the writer's striking combination, already discussed, *πίστει νοοῦμεν* (11⁸), we may admit progress with permanence no less on the subjective than on the objective side. The *πίστει* is the permanent relation, the *νοοῦμεν* is the progressive understanding of that relation. As the writer used the philosophy of his own age, so has the Christian Church used changed thought to express and explain abiding truth.

Literature.

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WHEN Professor James Strahan undertook to write a biography of *Andrew Bruce Davidson* (Hodder & Stoughton; 6s. net), Professor of Hebrew in the New College, Edinburgh, he knew very well that he was undertaking a task of extreme difficulty. Time was slipping past (he died in 1902), materials were scanty (he was neither diarist nor letter-writer), and above all every student of his was ready to criticize, not believing that justice could be done by any biographer to the exquisite combination of gifts and experience which made up his personality. Dr. Strahan undertook the work out of love, love as unquenchable as woman's. In the light of that unquench-

able love for a teacher to whom so much was due that had made life good, the book is to be estimated.

No relative could have written more affectionately. And a relative would have had to discover weaknesses in order to avoid the charge of adulation. When Tennyson's memoir was published, Meredith said it was not a biography, it was an idolatry. One can say that of Dr. Strahan's life of Davidson without offence. For if a student, after four years of that daily attitude towards Professors which so easily passes from criticism to condemnation, still finds his Professor adorable, we accept it without resentment. Besides, in this case those who were never students of Davidson's, but knew him, invariably