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ORDINARY MEETING.*

THE VEN. ARCHDEACON THORNTON, D.D., V.P., IN THE
CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following Elections were announced :—

MEMBERS :—The Ven. Archdeacon Donne, M.A., Yorks ; J. P. McArthur, Esq., D.L., Surrey ; A. G. McArthur, Esq., London ; F. A. Holman, Esq., London.

ASSOCIATES :—Colonel Le Mesurier, London ; Rev. J. E. C. Welldon, M.A., Harrow ; C. King Rudge, Esq., M.R.C.S., Bristol.

HON. COR. MEMBER :—Surg.-Major W. T. Black, Esq., M.D., Edinburgh.

The following paper was then read by the Author :—

THE ALLEGED SCEPTICISM OF KANT. By W. L.
COURTNEY, M.A., LL.D.

KANT, says a French critic, has spread through the whole of Europe the spirit of doubt. This is the point from which I desire to begin, for, if such a statement as this be true, then it is also true that the thinker who, before all others, represents a definite turning-point, an epoch-making system in modern philosophy, is the chief agent for that entirely negative spirit which Professor Huxley has induced us to call agnosticism. My subject, therefore, though primarily dealing with Kant, is not by any means limited to him. I assume that he has made a revolution in the mental world, similar to that which was made in the astronomical world by the demolition of the old Ptolemaic methods, and the substitution of the Copernican system. I also assume that, in one way or other, a characteristic of the modern age is an attitude of suspense—not wholly of negation, but of suspense—towards the ultimate principles of the constitution of man's nature and the government of the world ; and the question which I wish to consider is how far it is due to the Kantian standpoint that the world has become sceptical, and that we

* 6th of 28th Session.

have tacitly agreed to drop out of consideration principles and laws which do not concern the ordinary relation of phenomena to one another.

One of my assumptions I do not think that it is necessary to justify; it is that which deals with the salient characteristic of modern thought, that it shrinks from arriving at a definite, a positive, a dogmatic conclusion, with regard to those principles which, in an older age, we used to call the ultimate verities of the world. Possibly, however, it may be necessary to say in what sense the system of Kant represents a turning-point in speculation. In order to elucidate this point, I will ask you to consider that the course of modern philosophy has in one respect run parallel with the course which was taken by the earlier philosophy of Greece. You will find, I think, that of the two main questions which human beings ask of themselves, "What am I?" and "What is the world in which I live?" the second takes precedence of the first, and that, after a certain period of more or less hypothetical speculation, the discovery is made that the second cannot be answered at all, unless we have come to some conclusion about the first. Observe, for instance, what happened in the infancy of speculation in Greece. There were a series of physical philosophers who desired to arrive at definite statements with regard to the constitution of the world in which they found themselves. Is there one primitive principle, is there one underlying element, which can explain the kosmos of things? One answer is, water; another is air; a third is fire; a fourth is all the four elements taken together. And then, when philosophy has succeeded in producing a multiplicity of inconsistent and contradictory answers, there comes a man like Socrates, who bluntly declares that all his predecessors had begun at the wrong end in the attempted solution of their problems. There is no chance of discovering the nature and constitution of the world, unless certain preliminary questions are answered:—What am I, who pretend to understand the world? How can I be sure that I can know anything? How can I be certain that my so-called processes of knowledge can be trusted? What, in point of fact, am I, who desire the solution of such terrestrial and celestial problems? And then philosophy makes a pause, because a new point of view is put before it, and for a long time its special subject is the enquiry into the conditions of knowledge, and the chief study of the thinker becomes, not physics, but logic, ethics, and psychology.

And now observe that exactly the same thing is reproduced in what we call modern philosophy. Starting from Bacon onwards, we have a series of systems which, in whatever fashion, attempt to decide what matter is, what are the qualities of matter; a great series of natural and physical philosophers, who, sometimes dogmatically, and sometimes sceptically, resolve the insistent questions always pressing upon the human spirit. And then come men like Berkeley and Hume in England, and Kant in Germany, who propose a different question. The English philosophers, in their way, started the same kind of speculation which the philosopher of Königsberg attempted to answer, but neither Hume nor Berkeley realised the importance of the standpoint they were inaugurating, nor did they see quite clearly the nature of the problem whose solution they desired. It was Kant who first laid it down in his "Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic," that what we must first determine is the conditions and limitations under which knowledge is possible at all. And this is why his own analogy with the work of the reformer of astronomy is absolutely correct. In earlier times the assumption was that the earth lay at rest in the centre of the universe, and that the sun and the stars were the satellites, the appanages, of the abode of man. Suddenly the point of view is changed; the earth is not at rest, but is revolving round the central sun. If we desire to get to the centre of our universe, we shall find it in that object in relation to which every satellite is at once attracted and repelled, held in its elliptical course by centripetal and centrifugal forces. A similar revolution occurs in philosophy. We change the point of view. Instead of attempting to determine the characteristics of the kosmos, we start with the conditions of our own human knowledge. We erect, as it were, our observatories not in the world, but within ourselves—under the assurance that it is human thought which is the measure of the universe, not the universe which is the explanation and parent of thought. Such, at least, is the standpoint of Kant; the antithesis, as you will observe, of the scientific attitude, representing a revolution which may or may not be of ultimate value, but at all events possessing a peculiar significance and importance of its own, and giving, once for all, a basis for such logic and such ethics as can be held to correspond with the powers of the human, or, perhaps, even the divine, spirit.

How does a man who inaugurated a revolution of

this kind produce scepticism? Let us first determine what we mean by the word, for, like many other of the current terms in contemporary arguments, it is used in a variety of different senses. Scepticism means, in the first place, a protest against dogmatism. A protest against dogmatism can be made from different motives; it may be that we desire to confine ourselves entirely within the range of phenomena, abjure, once and for all, any consideration of ontia, or, as Kant calls them, noumena—in which case we are adopting the principles of positivism. Or our motive may be a protest against dogmatism on the ground of the illimitable liberty of the human spirit. In illustration of the second sense observe that we are always cramping ourselves by the conceptions of an age into which we were not ourselves born. We accept our doctrines from our forefathers, and then attempt to pour into the old bottles the new wine of modern discoveries. We ought, however, to protest against any narrowing impulse of this kind; all conceptions which have upon them the stamp of human handiwork necessarily fail in corresponding to every aspect or element of the subject with which they deal. Our position is that they ought not, therefore, to be held in a rigid and immobile fashion, but should be kept, as it were, in a more or less fluid condition, capable of more than one interpretation, and with potentialities of future development. In both senses to which I have alluded, scepticism is a characteristic of our contemporary age, for, as I have already pointed out, in the first sense of the word, we become positivists and followers of Auguste Comte, while, in the second sense, as I understand the matter, we have accepted Kant as our intellectual father, although, in the spirit of his own teaching, we refuse to be bound by some of his pedantic and scholastic technicalities.

In neither of these senses, however, is scepticism used by many of those to whom it stands for all that is repellent in thought and practice. Scepticism is often taken to mean a blank denial of the possibility of knowledge, and when we contrast scepticism with philosophy, we generally mean that the second bids us hope that something can be attained of lasting and permanent value, which will throw light upon the vexed problems that have beset the mind of man, throughout the whole course of his turbid career; while scepticism erects as an absolute dogma, that, however we may strive, or whatever we may think we attain, knowledge,

in the sense of certainty, eludes our grasp—we are, in fact, the playthings of our own powers of infinite self-deception. In order still better to understand the relation in which scepticism stands to philosophy, let us put down a series of propositions which the first impugns and the second tries to establish. There is (1) the freedom of man; there is (2) the law of duty; there is (3) the distinction between good and evil; there is (4) virtue as an end in itself; there is (5) the immortality of the soul; and there is (6) the existence of a moral order of the universe, a divine providence, or, in simple language, the reality of God. These it is the business of philosophy to establish on a clear basis. Possibly not all of them may be equally clear, nor yet would a wise philosophy bind itself to lay down distinctions which should remain always and identically the same for every age of human progress, but, in some fashion or other, philosophy is concerned with their establishment, and it is interesting to observe that, with nearly all of them, we are in the domain of logic, psychology, and ethics, those sciences which Socrates asserted to be the preliminary to all further investigation, and which in the modern world are included in that region of metaphysics which pugnacious scientists are always attempting to demolish. One thing, at all events, is certain, that scepticism, in the last sense in which I have used the term, would have us disbelieve these truths, and if, from this point of view, we ask whether Kant has spread a spirit of scepticism through Europe, the answer will be a clear and emphatic negative. A sceptical attitude is one thing, a critical attitude is another. To deny the possibility of knowledge is to be as dogmatic as those dogmatists whom scepticism so much dislikes. But criticism has throughout been a friend of philosophy; an inconvenient friend, no doubt, who is always referring to uncomfortable facts, but still a friend, on whom Kant, at all events, will implicitly rely. And, as I shall hope to show, the final outcome of the Kantian system is not in reality destructive, but re-constructive, finding in another sphere the reality of those ideas which have been impugned by criticism, and suggesting the only line of proof by which we can hope to solve the supreme problems of knowledge.

The ultimate value of a man's work is not always that which it appears at first sight. To Kant's contemporaries it seemed as though he were delivering a formal attack on the office and functions of reason in man, but if, from the

purely historical view, we look at what happened to philosophy after him, we shall see that there was some doubt, some difference of opinion, as to the exact result of the system of their predecessor. On which of the two portions of the Kantian philosophy was the chief stress to be laid? Were we to begin from the standpoint of the Critique of the practical reason, or from that of the Critique of the pure reason? Are we to believe the intimations of the moral consciousness, or to accept the negative judgments of the logical understanding? As a mere matter of history, this doubt led to two absolutely different lines of philosophical thought. The culmination of the one is to be found in Hegel; an admirable treatment of the other issue is to be found in Lange's *History of Materialism*. Let us not, however, entangle ourselves to-night with the historical issues, but treat, for the sake of our own purposes, the work of Kant in relation to what I have already defined as scepticism. Observe, to begin with, two points. As you are doubtless aware, so far as morality is concerned, according to the Kantian system, we have to deal with what he called the practical reason, while in logic our business is with the pure or speculative reason. Now at one moment in the evolution of his system, Kant asks himself the question, "Which of these two is to be preferred?" It is as though he were endeavouring to determine which is to be the ultimate guide of a man in life, or which has most illuminating power, in the relations in which man stands to the universe of things. And he gives a perfectly frank and positive reply. The practical reason is allowed to have the supremacy over the speculative. The speculative is not to be allowed to carry out its destructive conclusions too far; it is, in point of fact, to adopt that attitude of suspense, or of disengagement, seeing the difficulties of the task which it has set itself, perfectly conscious of the objections which can be levelled against any and every ultimate idea, but also prepared to let the matter alone, to see whether, from any other source, greater illumination can be derived than from such intimations as it is itself able to offer. Whence is to be derived this further illumination? Here, too, the answer is plain; from the practical reason, from reason as exercised in the sphere of morals; ethics being a matter of more intimate concern to a man than logic. Let us look at the case from another point of view. In what aspect ought man to be considered? Purely as a thinking creature,

or as an acting creature? Look at him in the first light. Look at him as he allows his intellect to play round the problems presented to him on every side, and what do we find? We come across this remarkable conclusion, that the main result of the critical judgment of man is more largely destructive than constructive. There is nothing more isolating than the exercise of intelligence. On the ground of intellect man stands alone; if he uses it more or less than his fellows, in either sense, purely as a thinking being he is isolated from his fellows. Each on our strict line we move, as Matthew Arnold says. But now change the venue. Let us look at man as an acting creature, as one who has every kind of relation with his fellow beings, and whose energies are constantly altering those relations. So far as he acts, man discovers that he is a part of a great social order, and that no definition of him which refuses to consider his place in that order can possibly be satisfactory. There is no such thing as a single human unit in the world of action; it is always man, *plus* his environment, *plus* his heredity. It is man given a task of making the world better than he finds it. It is man at every step deeply pledged to those around him, bearing other people's burdens, as part of the burden which is imposed on himself. How absurd, therefore, to let our views of the world and of its government depend purely on the results of thought, instead of the results of human action. Man is, of a course, both a thinking and acting creature, but it is in his practical aspect, it is in all that sphere which is covered by ethics and morality, in which are to be found the real essence, the true definition, of his nature. It is thus that we may construe to ourselves the real lesson of Kant—a critic, if you like, but not a sceptic. Fearlessly critical so far as the work of intelligence is concerned; but also fearlessly constructive, because he feels the necessity of supplementing intelligence by the practical reason, by reason as exercised in the sphere of morals.

From this standpoint, then, let us regard what Kant has to tell us in that sphere which he calls the dialectic of the pure reason. In the short space of time allotted to me I cannot hope to cover the whole ground; I proceed at once to its most important feature, its criticism of the idea of God. How does he treat the proofs of God's existence?

Kant, as is well known, reviewed in his dialectic these proofs in order, and, one after another, showed their hollowness and insufficiency. How shall we prove God's existence?

Shall we argue *a contingentia mundi*? Shall we say that because all things in this mortal sphere are mutually dependent, we must assume in the last resource some being who is independent? Shall we say that we—looking at the fact that we can only go back from effect to a cause which is in its turn an effect of some higher cause, and so on in infinite regress,—must, for our own peace of mind, arrive at a cause which is uncaused, a First Cause, a Free Cause? Perhaps this is the most ordinary, and to most minds a satisfactory, proof of God's existence. And yet the logic of the understanding must condemn such procedure as illogical. To say that, because we only know of a ceaseless chain of causation, we must assume that somewhere or other there is a first or last link, where the chain ceases, is as though, despite our conviction that the world is round, we should yet walk to the horizon to find its extremest edge. To say that because the world is contingent, it must have an author who is absolute, is at once to deny that absoluteness we seek to prove, because at all events the world appears necessary to its author (inasmuch as it exists) and therefore sets limits to his independent and self-contained existence.

Shall we then fall back on the celebrated teleological argument, and say that because there are everywhere marks of design, there must have been a divine intelligence at work in the world's creation? Yet here again Kant tells us that our conclusion is too large for our premises. Our argument may prove the likelihood of an Intelligence, but it is merely a human one and not divine. The adaptation of means to end, in the case of a machine, proves the existence of the inventor, because with certain materials given ready to the hand—materials which possess original properties, and therefore the possibility of their own usefulness—some one must have adapted them so skilfully in their mutual relations that they work out the designed end we see. But to God, the materials with which He works are not given with certain original and unchangeable properties. He is supposed to have Himself given them, in the first instance, these natural forces and properties. Can we seriously conceive of God as having stamped certain things with qualities often contrary and conflicting, in order that afterwards He might show His skill in overcoming the difficulties of the material by skilful combination and adaptation? Or again, can this line of argumentation ever prove the existence of Absolute Goodness in the Artificer? By seeing the relation

of means to end in the wing of a bird, we may say that the skill everywhere displayed implies the existence of an Intelligence greater than ours, but not necessarily absolute. Or, once more, if I know a man to be good, I can then see how his actions are all designed to promote the triumph of goodness, but if I have only his actions to go by, shall I be likely in every case to see proofs of his goodness?

“Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieks against his creed.”

There remains, then, the last of these arguments, the argument of Anselm and Descartes, which is termed the Ontological Proof. In its simpler form it asserts with Descartes that, since I know myself to be imperfect, I must have some standard of absolute perfection to measure by; to which logic answers that a belief in something more perfect than myself, not necessarily absolutely perfect, is all that my premiss warrants. In its more philosophical form it asserts with Anselm that, because the idea of God is absolute perfection, and absolute perfection necessarily includes existence, therefore God exists. To this logic has the scornful rejoinder that an idea in the mind is one thing, and existence is another, and that because I think of three hundred dollars, it does not by any means follow that I have them in my pocket. The general conclusion is that whether I rely on the cosmological, or the teleological, or the ontological argument in seeking to prove God's existence, the verdict of the logical understanding is in each case that I am trusting to a broken reed.

Such are the arguments of the logical understanding, guided by certain intellectual laws, and finding at once its strength and its weakness in the limitation which such laws impose. Even as these arguments stand, it seems unwise to lay too much stress upon them, for they indicate more than they destroy, and they convey hints of the mind's progress towards eternal truths, which are far more valuable than the merely formal proofs which they seek to destroy. Let us phrase the matter for ourselves, without paying particular attention to the historical aspects of this philosophical question, or the various ways in which Kant's successors dealt with the special conclusions of his critique. The first thing we think of is the more or less novel science of comparative religion, a discovery of the nineteenth century, which would have saved a good deal of the scepticism of the eighteenth century. For what is the main thing which is

established without a shadow of controversy by this new science? It is that in all ages of the history of human intelligence there has been an effort, conscious or unconscious, to formulate certain theories about the unseen world and the unseen God, according to the measure and capacities of the human spirit, at different stages of its development. Thus the tendency which we call "the religious tendency" is one of the inseparable concomitants of human intelligence, present to it from the first, clinging to it even through some of the more repulsive shapes of superstition, changed and altered in various ways, and now looked at under a philosophical, now sometimes even under a scientific guise, but representing always and in all places a permanent background to all the serious thought of the age. We look, in the second place, at another great nineteenth century discovery, the discovery of the law of evolution, the last and culminating point of the successive progresses of science. And here once again, if we discard the less important considerations, we find that the central fact about the world's history is the development of successively higher forms of existence, till we reach the final stage of human, conscious, and intellectual life. Each stage grows out of the preceding stage, but each stage also puts on, as it were, fresh qualities, till, at the highest point, we find gifts and capacities which contain the promise and potency, not only of an intellectual, but of a moral and even spiritual life. And when we have sufficiently estimated the results of these two enquiries, we turn back again to Kant's proofs, and a fresh light is thrown upon them, as though they, too, indicated different stages in the mind's advance towards God. The earliest feeling is one of the transitoriness of things, with which we contrast the notion of something that has been from the beginning, and that remains permanent, however much they may change. This is not an argument at all, observe; it is a mere sentiment, a feeling, which, when we seek to formulate it in precise terms, loses its emotional value, and gains no corresponding intellectual value; it is merely the *cri du cœur*, the cry of the heart, the confession, it may be, of weakness, the language of children, "crying for the light, and with no language but a cry." And then comes the higher stage, representing initial processes in argumentation, where we attempt analogically to establish the reality of an author of existence, on grounds of human industry and effort. This argument, too, fails,

although it has the support of distinguished names, for reasons which have been sufficiently indicated in Kant's treatment of the teleological argument. The position is so entirely different between the human workman, engaged with materials which he finds ready to his hands, and the divine workman, creating the materials which may be necessary for his purposes, that the analogy becomes untrustworthy and impossible. And thus, finally, we are driven to the last of the arguments, which really contains within itself the secret of the whole matter. In treating the argument of Anselm and Descartes, Kant assumes a position which the whole of his philosophical system implicitly denies; he assumes, that is to say, the entire and absolute severance between existence and thought. If Being is one thing, and our thinking about it is another, then indeed it would seem to follow that the idea of God, however definite and clear, did not carry with it the implication that such a being as God actually exists. But, as I understand the Kantian system, there is nothing higher than thought, and even though we ordinarily make a distinction between the subjective and objective aspects of any given state, phenomenon or existence, it is Thought itself which has made the distinction, and which can therefore transcend it. If there be that within us, in our own personality, which takes us altogether above the conditions of time and space—if, as I attempted to argue in a previous paper, there is a real self, or spirit, or soul, which is no longer limited, and partial, and individual, but dependent for its proper meaning and connotation on the existence of an universal consciousness—then we have a special ground on which to assert the reality of God, without whom the individual soul could have neither being nor reality.

Will it be said that to treat in this fashion Kant's critique of pure reason is to look at him through Hegelian spectacles? But he has himself authorised us so to treat him, when he wrote the *Critique of Practical Reason*. If it were only true that, side by side with his analysis of logic, there was also a treatise on the fundamental principles of morals leading to diametrically opposite conclusions, no one could say that we were historically unjust, if we elected to take our stand on the later work, and not on the earlier. But he has actually anticipated the difficulty in which we are placed; he has estimated the respective authority of the practical reason and the theoretical reason, and told us which to trust in. It

is the speculative reason which must give way in this matter, not the reason exercised in morals, to which he unhesitatingly grants supremacy. And when thus, as it seems to me, in the spirit of his own teaching, we transfer ourselves from the sphere of logic to the sphere of ethics, what is the earliest thing which we discover? We find that no consideration of man's nature can be said to be complete which does not start from the principles (1) that there is such a thing as an independent Self, free and unconstrained; (2) that this self is a centre of force, being, in its essence, Will, the only absolute cause we can come across in existence; and (3) that the consideration of man as a moral, that is to say, an acting creature, brings us by inevitable steps to the conviction that the soul is immortal, and that God exists. And here, once again, let me discard the precise formulæ, the exact language in which Kant, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, attempts to establish verities of this kind. We can, perhaps, for our purpose, better extract what we desire by phrasing the matter in our own fashion. It can be done in several ways. We can say that the first, or rather the most important and most crucial question is not, "What is the world in which I live?" but, "What am I, who attempt to understand it?" Or else, looking at one particular aspect of the matter, we can say that natural theology is a somewhat frail and unserviceable weapon, as compared with the intimations of the moral consciousness; or perhaps, best of all, we can merely adopt for our purpose the words of Christ: "Say not, Lo here, or lo there, for the Kingdom of God is within you." Doubtless there are many indications to be gained by a purely objective investigation of natural phenomena, that the kosmos of things is incomplete without a divine intelligence running throughout the whole series from end to end. But it would be still truer to phrase the position in a slightly different manner; if, on other grounds, we have a reasonable evidence of the reality of Divine government, then we can look at nature in a different fashion, and see how the whole concatenation of causes and effects is part and parcel of a rational and intelligible idea. But it may well be doubted whether, if we began at the other end, we could ever attain to such a conclusion. If we had nothing else but nature to go by, if we confined ourselves to a purely objective examination of phenomena, there would still remain the doubt—a doubt which could not be exorcised—as to whether the results we were witnessing were due to the fortuitous

combinations of chance, or the far-seeing purposes of Divinity. That is, as it seems to me, the lesson of Kant; pure intelligence, he would say, is destructive; man does not live by logic alone. If you desire to get at the root of things, you must supplement your view of man as a thinking creature by man as a moral creature. What is destroyed, or, at all events, rendered doubtful by the first process, becomes rehabilitated by the second. The essence of man's nature is not intellect alone, but intellect *plus* feeling, *plus* practical activity.

But, you naturally ask, is it so true that moral philosophy can yield us such results? Certainly it can, on Kantian lines, and that is throughout the point of view with which I am occupied. We need only look at three points, not confining ourselves to the terminology or even the precise doctrines of Kant, but adhering, I think, to his spirit. The first is the meaning of conscience; the second is the meaning of duty; the third is the meaning of good. What is conscience? The essence of the conception, that which gives it its peculiar character, is the combination which we find in it of emotional elements and intellectual. It is the sensitive mirror on which are breathed all the shadows of our active life. It is that which lays bare with such unflinching force the relative value of all the aims and objects to which our action is directed. It steeps the intellectual recognition of what we have done or should do in a warm atmosphere of emotion. It practically denies the severance of feeling and thought, because in itself it is both feeling and thought. You may tell me that its natural history can be traced, you may say that it has arisen out of all sorts of conditions of expediency or utility. The analysis may or may not be correct, but I must remind you that explanation does not alter the value of the conception, nor does the account of how a thing came to be alter the nature of that which it is. I take conscience, as you find it in the highest, most morally developed men and women whom you know. What is this strange judging and feeling power which has guided their path in life? What can it be, except the eternal vindication of men's position as the sons of God and the inheritors of a Divine nature?

This, perhaps, someone will say, is mere rhetoric. Let us turn, therefore, to the second of those conceptions of morality to which I have already referred. What is duty? Its essence is obligation. Man feels that in reviewing possible

courses of action, there is one path which he *must* follow, that if he refuses, he has in some fashion given up his true position in nature, and that this infraction of the law of obligation will bring him under the terrible punishment of remorse. Some of us in a modern age are fond of whittling away the meaning of obligation and remorse. Remorse, we are told, is disappointment that we have made a mistake, that we have miscalculated, misinterpreted, our main interests. Remorse has nothing to do with either disappointment or miscalculation, it is not a recognition of mistakes, it is the agonised feeling that we have committed a crime. That is the imperative sanction of all morality—not an external sanction, not legal punishment, not social ostracism, but the voice, alternately pleading and threatening, of our inner moral nature. It appears then that we live under a law of obligation, and obligation implies at least two terms, the obliged, and the obliger. We understand at once who the obliged are; it is ourselves; it is we on whom is laid the difficult burden of a duty to fulfil. But it is nonsense to speak of an obliged unless the other term is equally explicit; who or what is the obliger? Is it not the Divine Spirit who rules the universe, and holds up to man the ideal at which he is, in whatever hesitating or halting fashion, forced to aim?

Turn finally to the last conception, the meaning of good. What is good? It is the attainment of happiness, says one class of thinkers. It is the subservience to the greatest interests of mankind, says another class. But good is neither happiness nor utility. If we only avail ourselves of explanations like these, we cannot unlock the secrets of man's action in the past, or read aright the historic pages which tell of many of his noblest deeds. The martyr, the leader of the forlorn hope, the preacher of a crusade, the Man who died on the cross, ask these whether good means utility or happiness, and the answer is not difficult to anticipate. But observe what follows. If good is not happiness or utility or welfare, how are we going to define it? Is it a tautological term? Are we going to say that good is that which is good? Are we to content ourselves with so vacant, so meaningless an ideal? We shall have to content ourselves with so vacant, so meaningless an ideal, if there be no God. Once grant the existence of Divinity, once grant the reality of a moral order, which is slowly being executed in all the developing series of natural existence and all the pages of the

world's history, and good is no longer meaningless; we have got the key to unlock its meaning, it is first the fulfilment of a moral order, it is next the fulfilment of the will of God. And observe how such a conception brings back to us the necessity for enlightenment, for culture, for knowledge, for thought; it is not an intuitive conception, this good; it is something the meaning of which we have to discover. We have to study science, history, in order that we may find out how the Divine Will is being fulfilled; and instead of the old arid, dry idea of being good in order that we may be happy hereafter, we have arrived at a conception whose richness and fulness are practically inexhaustible. On us is laid at once the privilege and the burden of first discovering and then helping in the fulfilment of a world-wide moral order—of being in the truest sense fellow-workers with God.

The CHAIRMAN (the Venerable Archdeacon THORNTON, D.D.).—I am sure we are all really indebted to Dr. Courtney for his very thoughtful paper, which is now open for discussion.

Mr. W. H. ROBINSON—suggested that Kant may possibly have in part derived his philosophy from that of India; after referring to the remarkable theories of the universe current there, he observed that the great difference between the Philosophy of India and that taught by Kant was, that the one said all was thought, and ended there, and the other was intended to lead us to action.

The CHAIRMAN.—There is really nothing that I can say against the paper, and therefore what I say is not in the way of discussion, but rather to profess my allegiance to Dr. Courtney in what he has said. I think he has pointed out the position of Kantian philosophy very accurately indeed. There was a period when it was not yet time for Kant to appear. We can look back to a period when it would have been too early for him to appear, but as "after the Children of Israel were sent into the brick-fields then came Moses," so Kant was raised up at the right time. He is called the philosopher of scepticism. I think those who use this phrase confound the scepticism of Kant's philosophy with scepticism in religion. A true philosopher must be more or less a sceptic; but scepticism in

religion is quite a different thing, for religion requires an assent to certain transcendental propositions ; philosophy is not the same ; it requires no such assent. Without scepticism in natural philosophy we should never have had Bacon. If people had been content to believe that the sun turned round the earth, we should have had no true astronomy. So we must distinguish between the two. The sceptical philosopher therefore, who, like Kant, calls attention to the means whereby we have investigated philosophical questions, and rather casts a shadow over the preconceived notions of men, is a true professor of philosophy, and has brought in an epoch in philosophy which I think the paper has clearly pointed out.

The Venerable Archdeacon SINCLAIR, D.D.—I should like to say that I attribute a very high value to this paper. It is very delightful to me to recognize the old truths which we heard at Oxford so clearly set forth, particularly from this point of view,—that the argument seems to me to place the different trains of thought and reasoning, which lead us up towards the existence of the Almighty and the groundwork of our religion and faith, all in a true position, and to show them in their true light. The study of Kant's philosophy has been a great comfort to myself, and his principles are what I have always rested in with regard to my own intellectual attitude towards belief. The paper looks at the relation between belief and reason from the purely metaphysical point of view ; and we cannot, in the present day of keen intellectual activity and enquiry, present our faith to a thinking, critical, and cultivated world unless it has a proper co-ordination, as far as possible, to the current of intellectual thought. I conceive that the Kantian attitude is the soundest and best. It acknowledges and accounts for the various lines of argument by which untrained minds endeavour to verify to themselves the existence of God. It does more than that ; it suggests that finally the basis of the pure and true belief must rest upon moral grounds ; and upon those moral grounds, if I may say so, from a natural point of view. It is exceedingly important in the present day that we should not proceed on grounds that are untenable. It seems to me that a good deal of the misunderstanding that exists between men of science and culture and men of faith may be accounted for by the fact that faith is not placed before them in its proper relation. For instance, agnosticism, rightly understood, is, I think, from one point of view, the legitimate mental attitude ; we can

never know *positively* the subject matter of faith. Every one will remember that there is a distinction, that is recognised in the teaching of our Lord between faith and knowledge, which embraces even the Bible itself in its application; and it is because very often, faith, or, at any rate, the tenets of faith have been presented by men as the object of positive knowledge to their fellow men, instead of realizing the distinction between matters of faith and knowledge, that faith has been rejected by those who understood not what Kant meant. It appears to me we have suffered very much from that. The only sermon I ever preached before the University of Oxford was upon that subject—the relation of scientific knowledge to matters of faith and religion, and the true function, as I conceived it, of the mental attitude of faith.

The additions that Dr. Courtney has made to the Kantian position are, I conceive, very important; and the light he has thrown on the subject from the history of religion, as well as from the theory of evolution, must help men, I think, in the direction of belief in God and in preparing the way for that moral ground which must be the ultimate source of our confidence and our hope. I sincerely trust that this paper will be widely noticed and that it will form the basis of, perhaps, more popular and simple teaching on this subject, such as shall induce men to rest their attitude on what we certainly conceive to be the true basis of faith when properly understood in its relation to other faculties of our complex mental nature.

Professor H. LANGHORNE ORCHARD, M.A., B. Sc.—I think it has been shown that the position of Kant is not that of a sceptic, but that of a critic. His great merit, to my mind, is this—that he showed man to be not merely a psychological being, but also a moral being—that he treated man as a whole, instead of in the peculiar way in which many philosophers are accustomed to look at him. Kant assigned to the moral faculty in man the supreme department in man's nature; that, I think, is the greatest benefit he rendered to philosophy. He did that not apparently on the mere ground that the moral faculty ought to be the highest, but because the judgments of the moral faculty rest on a surer basis than those of the logical faculty. Logic depends, for its conclusions, on its premises. If the premises are false, or even one of them be false, no amount of logical reasoning will lead to a true conclusion. The truths which the moral faculties give us rest on intuitions,

hence the absolute certainty of the Kantian teaching. As to the remarks at page 178 in regard to a ceaseless chain of causation, is he prepared to defend the statements in regard thereto? The conclusion of Dr. Courtney's paper is the part which I particularly enjoyed, if he will allow me to say so. The reasoning to ultimate good was most admirable,—but is not the ultimate good merely the fulfilling of God's Will? The actual attainment of a will in complete harmony with the Supreme Law—that is, likeness to God. That, I apprehend, is the ultimate good.

Rev. A. K. CHERBILL, M.A.—I was very pleased to hear the remarks of the Chairman as to the difference between scepticism in philosophy and scepticism in religion. It seems to me that a good deal hangs upon that—in fact that interesting book, *A Defence of Scientific Doubt*, is one of the soundest outworks in defence of religion when properly considered. But with regard to the argument mainly insisted on this evening, as to our knowledge of God, it seems to me that this comparison with philosophical scepticism leads us to very important considerations in the following way:—Philosophical scepticism shows us what is the nature of the argument or proof as to the real existence of matter; for Kant shows us that we only know the phenomena, but we are obliged to believe that there lies behind the phenomena a real existence, a thing in itself of the nature of which we cannot form any opinion, because it is not given to us in our senses. This seems to my mind to present a most instructive analogy to the nature of our knowledge of God. The author of the paper referred to the fact that the belief in the existence of God has, as it were, of necessity, existed in almost every nation, and Professor Max Müller in his Lectures on Physical Religion, as he calls it, shows how the idea of God necessarily arises in the mind of man from the contemplation of the phenomena of nature, because when man sees effects he, of necessity, is led to infer an agent.* Thus it appears that our beliefs in a material and spiritual reality underlying the phenomena of nature have the same origin; we realize the effect which is produced on us. For example, in the case of the sun—we first of all see a moving thing up in the

* As another member, the Rev. R. Collins, M.A., expresses it: "Kant taught that though the Being of God cannot be scientifically proved, yet faith possesses a *subjective* certainty which demands the obedience of mankind."—Ed.

sky, and man interprets it according to his own view. In the early times he interpreted it as a small thing moving round the earth. Then he learnt to interpret it in other ways, but we do not suppose that we have yet got to the final interpretation of what the sun is in itself. All we perceive, to begin with, is the effect which it has upon us, and we gradually learn to interpret that effect, or rather to interpret our idea as to the cause of that effect, in a manner more and more approximating towards the truth. Sometimes scientific men even use the word "revelation" in regard to the things that they discover. They say this or that substance reveals to us its properties. That of course is metaphor, because the substance they conceive is not regarded as possessing intelligence. But when we use the term revelation with regard to God, as we regard Him as a personal and intelligent Being, the expression is not metaphorical—*i.e.*, we believe that God wishes us to discover Him and adapts and arranges things so that we may discover Him. But leaving that out of the question, the facts seem to be of the same order. The thing-in-itself has a certain effect, from which we argue as to the nature of the thing, and so we approximate towards an idea of it. God effects the whole universe and us as parts of it, and being influenced by those effects ourselves, we reason up to the idea of God.

There is one other point I would say a word upon and that is the chain of causes. It is a difficult question, but it seems to me that a little light is thrown upon it by this consideration, that if we regard phenomenal causation in time, we find that causes may be looked upon in two different ways, or in a certain sense we may say that things have two causes. There is the cause of a thing happening at a particular time, but besides the cause of its happening at a particular time, there is also a permanent cause. To take an illustration—suppose a stone drops, there are two causes—something or other dislodged it—that is the cause which causes the event to happen at that moment; but, besides that, there is a permanent cause, which conforms to the law of gravity and is always acting. The immediate cause which causes the thing to happen at a certain time no doubt may be brought into a chain of causes and so you may say it is not free. If something dislodged a stone from a hill-top then that event had a previous cause, and that again had a previous cause, and so on; but I do not admit that we can trace back such a thing as gravity to a

previous cause. That is, in a sense, it is free in its action—it acts according to its own nature, and not according to any external circumstance. When the stone is set free it does not move according to the cause which set it free, but according to the eternal law of motion. Of course the cause which set it free, if it were an impulsive force, would, to a certain extent, modify its motion, but only in accordance with those laws. And so with human will. I admit we act from motive—man does not act unless he has some motive, but when he is started into action he acts according to his own nature. So motive alone does not determine a man's action, but motive combined with the nature of the man who acts.

The CHAIRMAN.—We shall be glad to hear any other speakers. If not I will ask Dr. Courtney to make his reply to his critics.

The AUTHOR.—I thank you very much for the courtesy with which you have received my remarks on a subject which is extremely difficult, and on which various opinions can be held.

I was interested in what Mr. Robinson said in reference to his opinion that Kant derived some of his views from the Philosophy of India. My own knowledge of that is extremely small and is derived solely from the books of Professor Max Müller, Sir Monier Williams and others. I am aware that there is a parallel between Indian Philosophy and the early Greek Philosophy—so much so that several learned Germans have traced or thought that they have traced the origin of the early Greek Philosophy, both in India, Egypt and the East generally—for instance, Heraclitus fixed on fire as the origin of all matter from which the Parsees are supposed to have derived their belief. There is one thing that Mr. Robinson feels as much as I do. He stated in effect, that the great difference between a philosophy which says all is thought, and ends there, and a philosophy like Kant's, is, that one is intended to lead us to action and the other not. It is obvious that a mere contemplative theory of the universe leads to the theory that all action is indifferent, and a philosophy of quietism, in consequence, ends much as Mr. Robinson has stated. The value of the doctrine of Kant is that, having told us how far thought should go, he then proceeds in another treatise to refer us to the whole sphere of moral action and effort, to save us from the effect of mere contemplation. There are one or two things that occur to me. If I may be allowed to refer to Professor Orchard's remarks, he seems to assume that the argument I have referred

to in my paper is one that I should be prepared to defend. I mean as to the endless series of causation. I was merely putting in my own fashion the form in which Kant has treated that particular argument in the *Dialectic of Reason*, which comes at the end of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The whole point turns obviously on whether you speak of phenomenal causes or not. But the question is complicated by this further point—that many people only use *cause* in the sense of *phenomenal cause*. There, I think, Mr. Cherrill is quite right. You cannot explain cause at all, unless there be something more than mere phenomenal cause. Phenomenal causes, such as they are, do not end the whole business, but they are for ever pointing to things that are not phenomenal but real—the ultimate laws by which the universe is governed.

I am deeply grateful for the kind way in which you have referred to what I have said, and with your leave, Mr. Chairman, I will add no more on this occasion.

The meeting was then adjourned.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING PAPER.

Professor J. H. BERNARD, D.D., writes:—

Trinity College, Dublin.

I have read Dr. Courtney's paper on *The Alleged Scepticism of Kant* with interest. As to the general drift of Kant's teaching, when studied as a whole, I am quite in agreement with him. The reason why Kant is always set down as a "sceptic" is that people, as a rule, read nothing of his save a few chapters of the *Kritik of Pure Reason*. As Dr. Courtney points out, the teaching of the *Practical Reason* is, that the practical necessities of life inevitably drive us into a recognition of the existence of God and a belief in the eternal future of the human soul, even though we may not be able to give a completely satisfactory justification to intellect of these great assumptions. And this positive side of the Critical Philosophy also appears in the *Kritik of Judgment*, a work which Kant regarded as the coping stone of his critical structure. That God exists, Kant seems to say to us, we cannot doubt, though

the manner of His existence must remain in large measure unknown.

T. CHAPLIN, Esq., M.D., writes:—

Standing, some months ago, in the memorial building erected to Kant at Königsberg, and musing on the line from one of his own works which serves for him as an epitaph—“*The starry heaven above me; the moral law within me*”—I naturally found myself asking (not by any means for the first time), What has been the practical outcome of the great philosopher's studies, thoughts, and teaching? Did he put already known truth upon a wider, firmer basis? Did he discover any truth not before known to mankind? Did he point out any new method of research by which the scope of man's knowledge may be widened, his conceptions of things unseen be made clearer, his power over the forces of Nature be increased? Or, did he lead men's minds away from the pursuit of truths which are demonstrable, into devious and obscure paths of metaphysical subtlety? It has seemed to me that the revolution in philosophy which Kant is said to have inaugurated, influences the thoughts of a few philosophical and (if I may so say) speculative minds, rather than serving as a guiding power to the army of scientific enquirers who have made this century which is now drawing to its close so remarkable—that it is in the barren waste of metaphysical speculation, and not in the fruitful field of experimental science, that its results are to be found.

We are greatly indebted to the author for putting before us so clearly and with so few technicalities the general drift of Kant's enquiries and doctrines, and I think all will recognise how ably and convincingly he has defended the sage of Königsberg from the imputation of any kind or degree of scepticism beyond that which is the normal habit of mind of every sincere searcher after truth. Yet, I confess that I cannot easily bring myself to believe that the arguments upon which great thinkers of former days were content to rest their belief in the existence of God are but “*a broken reed.*” To trace causes backwards until, with our limited knowledge, we can go no further, and then to take refuge in a great *First Cause*, still seems to my mind *not* unphilosophical: the *teleological argument*, now so brusquely thrust aside, seems to me *not* weakened by the consideration that the Almighty Himself gave to the materials with which He works their “*natural forces and properties*” (p. 178.) Would anyone be prepared to assert that a brass

lamp could not have been made by the hand of man, *because* the ingenuity of man had contrived to produce the compound metal which possesses the properties requisite for the same?

Whilst then we should be grateful for those philosophical considerations set before us, which afford "*a special ground on which to assert the reality of God,*" I cannot but think that these should be regarded as supplementary to older, and perhaps more easily comprehensible arguments, drawn from *cause and design*, and not as destructive or subversive of them. I may not, in an enquiry of this kind, quote the Apostle Paul *as an inspired writer*—philosophical investigations do not take cognizance of inspired writings—but we shall all agree that that great man had a powerful and highly cultivated intellect, and no inconsiderable knowledge of philosophy; and we find him affirming that "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made*, even His eternal power and Godhead." St. Paul then did not reject "the teleological argument." And so also our great English philosopher: "God never wrought a miracle to convince Atheism, *because His ordinary works convince it.*" We shall not therefore err in bad company if we still keep to the old paths, whilst appreciating any new light that may be thrown upon them by the more modern thinker; and it may be well to give due weight to another saying of Bacon, namely, that "a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."

Professor DUNS, D.D., F.R.S.E., writes:—

I have read Dr. Courtney's paper with much interest. It is an able review and criticism of several important aspects of Kantian philosophy, held by thinkers to beget and favour scepticism. A philosophic spirit, wide, yet acute and accurate, thinking, crisp "phrasing," and firm grasp of the leading lines of Kantian thought characterize the paper throughout. It is very suggestive. A worthy and full criticism would be longer than the essay itself. I limit my remarks to one feature mainly. That Dr. Courtney's standpoint is that of Kant, and that he sympathetically identifies himself with the philosopher's own attitude to, and estimate of, the subjects dealt with, will be held by some to add weight to his paper. Others will think that he thereby lays himself open to hostile criticism. What they wish to know is not

Kant's view of the bent and bearing of his own positions, but what were the views of his contemporaries regarding them? In a word, most will attach more importance to the opinions of a philosophic critic, touching the questions handled here, than to those of a sympathetic expositor and apologist. When Kant relegated belief in God, Immortality, and human Freedom to the sphere of the transcendental—the intuitional, incomprehensible, insoluble—he, no doubt, thought he was conferring a great boon not only on philosophy but on religion itself.* But his followers refused to see this, and even hastened to employ his transcendental conceptions to buttress the fabric reared by Hume,—“Whatever lies beyond experience is incapable of proof.” The question which Hume faced was “Have we any ideas independent of Experience?” And his answer was “Experience itself is incompetent to determine absolute truth.” All, then, that Experience itself could do, was to beget scepticism. Kant asked what is the nature of the Experience which thus landed thinkers in scepticism? This led him to subject Reason to critical investigation. Discarding the views of the prevailing sensational school, he harked back on *à priori* elements of knowledge, and, sifting them, he concluded that there are two sources of knowledge, experience and understanding. All our knowledge begins with the former, but there is a knowledge independent of it—ideas that are universal and certain, not absolutely, but only subjectively true. Thus perfect knowledge, that is, knowledge of things in themselves, is impossible. Was not Lewes right when he affirmed,—“We regard the result of Kant's investigation of the elements of thought as nothing less than a scientific basis for Scepticism?” I think he was, and, if so, then the chief contention of this paper will at least be doubtful. Even throughout it, point after point occurs suggestive of the influence of Hume on Kant, and most interpreters of the Kantian philosophy to other than metaphysical experts, have directed special attention to the fact that “it was chiefly the scepticism of Hume which incited Kant to the construction of his critical philosophy” (*Ueberweg*). Indeed, Kant himself puts his indebtedness to Hume in a very graphic way. Thus, as to the conception of causality, he says,—“I confess freely that it was the exception

* This would suggest that there were causes operating at the time which tended to errors which Kant wrote his critiques to combat.—ED.

taken by David Hume which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber, and gave to my enquiries in the field of speculative philosophy an altogether new direction." "He brought no light into this species of knowledge, but he struck, nevertheless, a spark from which a light might well have been kindled, if it had fallen on susceptible tinder." I give prominence to this because of its bearing on the allegation against which Dr. Courtney argues, and because it raises the crucial question:—Did Kant's criticism of Hume eliminate from the Scotsman's philosophy the sceptical element with which, as all admit, it is charged? Now the answer to this was not,—“the conception of the connection between cause and effect is not necessarily (as Hume believed) of empirical derivation.” It was “the understanding conceives *à priori* connections among things.” The metaphysicians may make something of this, but outsiders will express their want of satisfaction by asking other questions: What was its outcome? What kind of fruit did it bear? What was its influence on German religious thought? Kantian philosophy is more than pure metaphysics. The leading intuitions of the speculative Reason are religious. A satisfactory refutation of the assertion of “the French critic that Kant has spread through the whole of Europe the spirit of doubt,” must take into account that scepticism is more than “a protest against dogmatism and the illimitable liberty of the human spirit.” It must deal with it as the denial of dogma in religion and ethics, a denial which soon became the *zeit geist*, the very temper of the time, when the Kantian metaphysics was fresh and influential. And, doubtless, we are warranted to trace that phase of universal scepticism which, even before Kant's death, began to prevail among the Lutheran clergy, to the influence of Kant's writings. Can we apart from them, account for the heresies of the Tübingen school—the pure and historical myths of Strauss, or the Hegelianism of Baur, who held the miraculous to be impossible, the supernatural non-existent, or only an illusion of the natural, and Christianity to be no more than the ultimate natural outcome of rational thought?

I had marked some passages in connection with which a good deal might be said as to Kant's views of the theistic argument from Final Causes, the fruits of the cosmological idea, and chiefly, the immense service to psychology and religion itself which his virtual acceptance of the Aristotelian dictum—“Intuition must be the beginning of science”—might have rendered, had he not pressed the intuitional into the shifting sphere of the Practical Reason

where it might become operative, and, as a dictate of the moral nature, supersede the teaching of Revelation, thus making an *historical* theology impossible. But even to make good any call to discuss these topics in remarks on Dr. Courtney's paper would lead us too far afield. Having in view Hume's influence on Kant, my object in these remarks was to suggest, that the sceptical outcome of the writings of both might be identical, and that a good deal might be said on the side of the French critic's sweeping statement, "Kant has spread through the whole of Europe the spirit of doubt." I think the history of religious thought both in Europe and America is strongly in his favour.

The Rev. J. J. LIAS, M.A., writes :—

The paper on the whole is a useful and a helpful one, but there are some points in it which appear to me open to criticism. I am afraid my acquaintance with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is not exhaustive, but one is not disabled thereby from endeavouring to exercise pure reason upon the questions treated therein.

First of all, the statement in the second page that before we can arrive at any conclusion on phenomena, it is necessary to investigate the conditions of being and knowledge, and to study logic, ethics, and psychology, seems at least questionable. That some study of the conditions of *knowledge* preceded progress in physical science is undoubtedly the case; but it was simply a question of method, as Dr. Whewell shows in his *History of the Inductive Sciences*. The barrenness of the physical science of the ancients was almost entirely due to the fact that they used the deductive instead of the inductive method, and based their philosophy on dogma instead of on observation. But no very considerable progress had been made in psychology when Bacon laid the foundation of the inductive method, nor does he appear to have depended much upon the scientific teaching of logic or of ethics: nor, on the other hand, is physical science usually supposed to have owed much to Kant. It is a question whether its advance would not have been as rapid if Kant had never written a line.

Dr. Courtney's distinction between criticism and scepticism as applied to Kant's method is striking, and it appears to me conclusive. But I must venture to question the soundness of that method as applied to the Being of God. The necessity which an ordinary mind feels to be imposed upon it of finding some ultimate cause of things is in no sense disposed of by the illustration

of a man walking to the horizon to find the extremest edge of the world, which, after all, is admitted to be round. Illustrations are proverbially dangerous; they are almost sure to fail you at the critical point: they serve to point Bishop Butler's moral that the imagination is the source of every error that has led mankind astray. The argument should be turned just the other way. If we came to the edge of the world, we should know that it was *not* round. The very essence of the argument from design is that on all practical principles it is the evidence that a *mind* has been at work, not that a series which may go on to infinity must of necessity stop somewhere, "which," to use Euclid's words, "is absurd." But if a mind has been at work, it must have been a Mind of extraordinary grasp, depth, penetration and power. The argument from design moreover does not stand alone. It points to a Great Being, but it does not solve the problem of His Nature. Then the assumption that the argument from design assumes an author who is "absolute" (p. 178), is, I may venture to contend, disposed of in my paper ("Considerations on the Unknowable of Modern Thought") read before the Institute in 1883. (Vol. xvii, p. 98.) I have there contended that if by "absolute" we mean that which has no connection with anything else, the word is inapplicable to a Creator of the world, and if we mean that which has no *necessary* connection with anything else, it involves at least an assumption which we have no right to make, and which is at least in direct conflict with the words "God is Love." Then we are told that if there *be* an intelligence at work in the creation of the world "it is merely a human one, and not divine." This, it must be presumed, means analogous rather to a human than a Divine Mind. For a human mind most certainly could neither have conceived nor have carried out the plan of creation. And the objection moreover begs the question, for, except from phenomena, we have no means of arriving at any conclusions as to the nature of the Divine Mind. There appears to me no reason whatever why I should not "seriously conceive of God as having stamped certain things with qualities often contrary and conflicting," and as having nevertheless been pleased to "overcome the difficulties of the material by skilful combination and adaptation." That He did the one *in order that* He might do the other is an assumption of Dr. Courtney's. It is equally possible that He did so in order that He might thereby stimulate His reasoning creatures to inquiry, and provide them with material for the exercise of their reasoning powers. Dr. Courtney then further makes a rather startling

statement, namely, that the "Ontological" argument is the "last" argument in favour of the Being of God. I had thought that a powerful additional argument had been drawn from the character and constitution of man. I was under the impression that the moral character of man, his sense of justice, honesty, duty, truth, tended to imply the existence of a Being in Whom these qualities were inherent, and in Whose Image man was made. I moreover imagined that the spiritual character of man, his disposition to awe, reverence, worship, tended to indicate the existence of a Being in Whom those qualities might find a fit sphere of exercise. And lastly, I had supposed that the evidence of history appeared to point to a wise Disposer of events, who was engaged in educating man on a large scale, and apparently with a view of fitting him ultimately for existence in an order of things in which he would be able to make a fitting use of the education he had received.

Dr. Courtney, however, does at last shake himself free from the fetters imposed on him by his master. He eschews his "terminology" and "even" his "precise doctrines," though he claims still to be animated by "his spirit." In Dr. Courtney's contention that we find the solution of the question of the Being of God in the questions, What is conscience? What is duty? and What is good? there can be no difference between us. It is in the great facts which underlie the visible universe that the secret of God's Being is to be found. The revelation of Wisdom and Order in the phenomena brought to light by physical science, of goodness and purity in the history of the workings and progress of the human conscience, of Majesty and Vastness as discerned through the spiritual cravings of man after something higher and worthier than himself, of the profoundest depths of beneficence and Love, felt to be working themselves out in a moral order which at once permeates and transcends the natural—all these combine to point us to One Who is not only the Creator and Master of the world He has created, but Who, as the Apostle puts it, is the God and Father of all, eternally "above all, and through all, and in all."

REMARKS BY THE REV. KENNETH S. MACDONALD, M.A., D.D.

I do not think that there is any real justification of the idea that Kant himself was a sceptic, or that his works taken as a whole encourage doubt or scepticism in regard to the great verities of religion or morals. It is quite true, and in that alone lies the

plausibility of the sceptic's position, that Kant regarded the cognitive faculty or "the pure reason," as incompetent to *prove* or *demonstrate*, as the propositions of Euclid are demonstrated, the problems of religion and ethics. But those who regarded such demonstrations as possible have always been few among believers. Believers have rested their faith on the *probability*, the strong moral probability, of the truth of these great fundamental propositions. The support which the "practical reason" gives them is all that is necessary, or indeed desirable, to make them reasonable. To give to them a demonstrable certitude would have been to paralyse them as tests of moral character. He who wills to will the will of God will find in Kant abundant evidence in support of the truth of these doctrines.

It must also not be forgotten that if Kant has made it clear that the truth of these doctrines cannot be demonstrated, he has made it equally clear that their falsity cannot be demonstrated. The cognitive faculty is equally incompetent to disprove them. This uncertainty in which the pure reason leaves these problems is not to the Christian a matter of grief—except so far as it is wrested by the infidel to his own ruin. The Christian regards it as a special provision of God for the good of man that these problems should rest only on a reasonable probability. Kant so regarded it. This fact protects him on the one hand from superstitious fanaticism and on the other from religious self-abandonment, in addition to the moral tonic which it supplies to his whole nature. Hence the warm cordial language which Kant uses in regard to those very arguments which he regards, when tested by pure reason, as insufficient. Here is an illustration:—"This proof" (that founded on design) "deserves to be named always with reverence. It is the oldest, the clearest, and the most suited to our common understanding. It animates the study of nature, which gives existence to it, and acquires thereby ever new power. It shows ends and intentions where our own observation would never of itself have discovered them, and extends our knowledge of nature through guidance of a peculiar unity, the principle of which is above nature. The new knowledge acts back again, towards its cause, its originating idea, and exalts our belief in a Supreme Originator into an irresistible conviction." (WW) R., ii, p. 485.*

* As all readers may not recognise this reference, Professor Wallace, of

Then, the tone of Kant's ethics is of the very highest kind, not that limp molluscous kind which is so common now-a-days. He finds all true morals most intimately related to the existence of God, as proved by the practical reason, the reality of a moral order and the freedom of the will of man. To him the goodness of the will is the only absolute good on earth; practical reason, the revealer of moral order, is the governor of will, constituting it good; and the human will itself is essentially free in order to goodness. This last, according to Kant, is indeed the grand essential to morality.

Recognising sin as universal and the need of an atonement and a justification through Christ, and thus a conversion from evil to good, what a beautiful picture he draws of the true Church of Christ,—“a great family under a common though invisible moral Father, acting through His Son Who knows His will, and who at the same time is bound to all the other members of the Family by ties of blood.” R. x., 121.

Then in regard to the Bible, it is instructive that he accepts what he calls “*the principle of reasonable modesty* with regard to all that is called revelation,” as established by the critically enlightened reason of modern times. “For as we cannot deny the *possibility* of the divine origin of a book which in a practical point of view contains nothing but divine truth; it is best to take the book which we find generally recognised as sacred, and make it the foundation of the teaching of the Church.” R. x., 159.

I do not mean to say that Kant was an orthodox Christian. He never looked at the questions or problems of Christianity from that standpoint; but I do mean to say that looking at them from the standpoint of a mere philosopher, his words do not justify the charge brought against him by the French critic that “Kant has spread through the whole of Europe the spirit of doubt.” The author has drawn a very important distinction, and in the case of Kant one of great practical value, between the *sceptical* attitude which men of the atheistic and we may say agnostic stamp assume, and the *critical* attitude of the philosopher.

THE AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I have read, with attention, the remarks made upon my paper by various critics. My only object was to present, as faithfully as I was able, what seemed to me to be the intention of Kant, in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, in order to defend him from a special charge. I do not wholly identify myself with his doctrines, nor do I desire to maintain, in all their detail, his particular arguments on the being of God.

I observe, however, that one or two of those who have been good enough to send comments on my paper have fallen foul of Kant's treatment of the teleological argument. There is, of course, a narrower form of the design argument, as well as a wider one. That the whole universe bears the traces of intelligence is a proposition which, so far as I can see, no sane thinker attempts to attack. It must be remembered, however, that this is not the form of the design argument which Kant had in mind. I should think that historically there was no doubt that the attempt to explain the structures of creation in detail, solely on the ground of the purpose they were supposed to fulfil, led science and knowledge on the wrong track. When Aristotle made use of a similar argument, he was much embarrassed by the existence of such awkward things in creation as whirlwinds and morasses, and other matters. It is in reference to some such state of mind as this, I imagine, that Kant attacks the use of the teleological argument. It is clear that, when we admire any ordinary product of human skill—such, for instance, as a cleverly constructed watch or piece of machinery—our admiration is largely based on the fact that, in the case before us, the artist, engineer or workman has been able to conquer certain difficulties of his material in accomplishing his result. The fact that he has to deal with a form of matter which is not of itself either helpful or useful, is of the very essence of our admiration for his skill. This will, I think, explain why Kant believes the teleological argument to be based on a purely human analogy. The idea is that matter is one thing, and the artist or engineer another, and that the human agent has to accept the material in which he works as something extraneous to him, and

possessing qualities of its own. But now observe that, as applied to the Divine Artificer of the universe, this analogy is wholly inadequate. According to the hypothesis of creation, both the material and the form afterwards impressed upon that material come from one and the same source. We can hardly conceive of the Almighty first making an indifferent matter, and then showing His skill by bending that alien matter to His purposes. In such a case there can be no opposition between matter and form, except on a Manichean supposition that matter exists independently of the will of God, and is capable of interfering with His volitions. And there is still another point. In the case of the human artificer, we say that his adaptation of an alien material is very clever and ingenious. If we apply the same argument to the works of creation, we may be entitled to say that the Divine Artificer is extremely clever, or extremely ingenious, but hardly that He is omnipotent. All that the analogy will give us is an increase of intensity in the attribute, but not that universality of power, or that universality of knowledge, which we accept as the characteristics of Divinity. This, so far as I can see, is the meaning of Kant's attack on the ordinary use of the design argument in nature, but of course the point to which I am referring needs far more comment and illustration than I have at present space to bestow.

I would only add that there is nothing in Kant's argument, in my judgment, which militates against that large and comprehensive design in this world for which the scientific name is evolution, because the assumption on which it rests is by no means founded on human analogies, but begins by the supposition that matter contains within itself the promise and potency of future development.
