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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VIII.

GREEK ELEMENTS IN MODERN RELIGIOUS
THOUGHT.

BY EDWIN STUTELY CARR, A. M., D. B.

"Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll lectured at the Columbia Theater yesterday afternoon to an audience practically filling the theater. The title of the lecture was 'Which Way?' There are two ways, Mr. Ingersoll said. One way for living was the generally accepted way of Christians known as God's way; the other was Mr. Ingersoll's, which was rather different. To so live in this world as to merit life in heaven was the way Mr. Ingersoll pointed out to be vain, because he was not at all certain that such a place or condition as heaven existed, and he had no intention or desire to go there. The Ingersoll way was to live for this life alone and to make this earth heaven."—*Record (Chicago), January 7, 1895.*

COLONEL INGERSOLL is perhaps not aware of it, but this last statement expresses the central idea of the Greek tendency of modern thought.

Greek philosophy, as influential in our modern life, is represented mainly by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In these men we find the sunny-hearted Greek nature,—“never sick or sorry,” on terms of glad and familiar intimacy with itself and the physical universe,—girding itself for the task of expressing the universe in terms of reason, intellect. Socrates' primary interest was moral, but his maxim “Know thyself” expresses his strongly intellectual bent, confirmed by his identification of virtue and knowledge. Plato, in his noble speculations, remains true in general to his master, Socrates, laying great stress on immortality,—an essential element in his system. With Aristotle, who gave the movement its final and permanently influential form, the intellectual interest is supreme. The heart is lost out of the universe. God is intel-

lect, "thought of thought," but with no concern for men; there is no prayer, no immortality, except for the race or species. The Aristotelian heaven is that of George Eliot in the little poem which has been so much admired:—

"O may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence:
. . . So to live is heaven."

And so Colonel Ingersoll is at one with Aristotle in advising to live for this world alone, and to make this earth heaven.

This Greek intellectualism usually finds expression in some form of the Logos doctrine. The Logos as a philosophical principle first appears with Heraclitus. Logos in Greek meant primarily a word, proposition, and secondarily the faculty of the mind which is manifested in speech,—reason. Heraclitus indicates the principle of order in the world by Logos, after the analogy of reason as the ruling faculty of the mind. His Logos, however, is not self-conscious, but is identified in a pantheistic or materialistic way with the general world-process. The Platonic School, following Anaxagoras probably, designates the principle of reason in nature as *Nous* instead of Logos. In the Stoic School we find again Heraclitus' Logos, except that providential care for the world and mankind is ascribed to it. Here are apparent points of resemblance between Greek and Hebrew conceptions, of which Philo availed himself when he sought to reconcile the two. Later Jewish teachers held to the creation of the world by the divine Word or Wisdom, and that God acted on the world through subordinate agents,—angels, demons, etc. Philo therefore asserts that this series of subordinate powers, between God and the world, called by the Jews Word, Wisdom, Angels, etc., was what the Greeks had indistinctly in mind when they spoke of the Logos. This early attempt to reconcile the Hebrew religion with Greek thought is extremely suggestive, as forecasting the result of the modern attempt to harmonize Chris-

tianity with the Greek conceptions of the Renaissance. The results in the two cases are perfectly analogous: God, instead of a personal Heavenly Father, becomes a pantheistic first principle; God administers the world, not through personal spirits, angels, etc., but through natural forces; and God reveals himself not through miracle, but immanently, in nature and in man. The problem of Philo and of Hegel is essentially the same, and the outcome is essentially the same. The movement is from the historical, definite, and personal to the vague, impersonal, and pantheistic. This is my thesis in this article: to show that the fundamental elements of modern skepticism are Greek.

Christianity first appeared as a matter essentially of the heart and moral life. Its early teachers had small respect for the intellectual speculations of worldly men. But the impulse was natural and inevitable to endeavor to bring Christian doctrines into harmony with themselves and the prevailing Greek culture; and here appeared the danger of running out into a one-sided intellectualism. An early apologist, Aristides, seeks to commend Christianity to the learned world by comparing Christ to Socrates; Socrates was led by reason (Logos), Christ was incarnate Logos. The ideal Christian with the first school of theology, the Alexandrian, was the "wise man," Gnostic, as with the purest Greek schools. Clement, teacher of Origen, says, "It is the greatest of all lessons to know one's self. For if one know himself he will know God." Religion is essentially a matter of knowledge. Origen's system, the classical example of this type, "is essentially a philosophy" (Harnack), and thoroughly Platonic. Souls are eternal, they fall in a pre-natal state, as with Plato in the "Phædrus," and are to be restored by transmigration through various grades of being until led by the Logos to the highest plane of truth and the vision of God, corresponding to Plato's vision of the world of ideas. In this work of salvation the Logos is active, Christ is the Word or Wisdom through participation in whom

creatures become rational; and his work in salvation is like that of a Greek philosopher who leads his disciples out of the disturbing cares of the world to serene heights of philosophic contemplation. Origen discusses the incarnation, life, and death of Christ not with spiritual earnestness of a conscious sinner, but as a student who finds here a magnificent and fascinating problem, historical and philosophical. He is somewhat at a loss to account for the Holy Spirit; but accepts the existence of the Spirit as taught in Scripture, and dismisses the subject with the vague suggestion that as the Son makes men rational, the Spirit makes them holy.

The will of man is free, his nature is essentially good, though he is the victim of ignorance and moral weakness. He might possibly work his way back to blessedness unaided, but God has graciously sent the Son to hasten the process. Origen holds that all men will finally be restored to goodness. Pharaoh may be lost in the Red Sea, but the loss is not permanently serious, for Origen is a thoroughgoing probationist.

Origen's system stands as the early and classical representative of one of the two great types of theology. Wherever intellectual speculation, based on a non-Christian philosophy and unrestrained by a deep religious feeling, gains the ascendancy in Christian thought, the result is practically the same: a strong emphasis of the dignity and freedom of man, endangering the scriptural doctrine of salvation by faith; and there is difficulty in accounting for Christ and the Spirit,—Christ usually becoming merely a teacher who brings quicker and easier truth men could have gained for themselves, and the Spirit a vague influence for inciting to moral resolution. This is in general true of this type of thought, whether appearing in a Pelagius or an Arminius, a Lessing, Kant, or Hegel.

The man who brought Christian theology back from the Greek extremes of Origen to genuinely Christian ground, and who represents the contrasting type of theological thought, is Augustine. The doctrines of Pelagius were a combination of

the teachings of Origen with the popular Aristotelian-Stoic philosophy of the time, and as such were opposed by Augustine. Like Paul and Luther, Augustine had passed through a deep religious struggle, and sought a Saviour rather than a teacher. Man is under the power of sin and cannot free himself; Christ has paid his ransom, and the Spirit frees his will from the dominion of sin and of evil habit, and guides and guards him in the way of life. Here is the center of the Augustinian system, and it is the core of the Christian religion,—essential, and eternally true. Augustine's emphasis of these cardinal points of Christian doctrine is his great service to the church,—in which he is at one with the Protestant Reformers. His errors and extremes in doctrine are patent enough, and he has been sufficiently punished for them in these last generations; but we should note, in justice to this great man, that these errors and extremes flow largely from his very loyalty to the fundamental principle of salvation through Christ. Men cannot save themselves, for all fell in Adam and lost the power of moral choice. This fall is so deep,—so irreparable without Christ,—that an unbaptized infant, dying at the moment of birth, must go down to perdition. Far from being able to convert himself, conversion is wholly a divine work, a new creation; God has chosen some for life and left the rest of mankind to the pains of hell. And so you perceive how, for Augustine, the bondage of the will, total depravity and infant damnation, election and reprobation, all cluster about and flow out from this central Christian doctrine of salvation through Christ.

It is evident, however, that many of the extreme and contradictory elements in Augustine's system are due to the influence of the Greek philosophical spirit, from which it was impossible that any thinker in that age should totally free himself. The Greek demands that all shall be made clear, for his inquisitive science the darkness of mystery must be driven from every most minute crevice of the universe,—a plausible

guess is much better than a confession of ignorance. Augustine's harsh and contradictory doctrines flow for the most part from the attempt to make clear to the intellect those fundamental moral antinomies which can be apprehended only in religious feeling. He is largely successful in clearing the atmosphere of the lower theological region, but it is by the hazardous method of gathering all the clouds of mystery into the sphere of the divine. As interpreted by the average mind, the Heavenly Father becomes the remote, cloud-enthroned despot, of resistless power and superior to the laws of reason and morality; directing all things to the spectacular display of his glory, supremely indifferent to the weal or woe of human life; the counsels of his will, terrible and relentless, smiting men out of the darkness like the secret decrees of the English Star Chamber or the Venetian Council of Ten,—a situation ominous for the succeeding theological development.

The Renaissance is commonly recognized as a revival of Greek learning and of Greek ideals of life. The ascetic type of the Middle Ages was possible only in a semi-barbarous age, where for the masses of men appetite and brute impulse were much more potent than abstract theory. Science was disparaged as relating to a world soon to melt in the flames of the final conflagration; philosophy was vain as the product of a corrupt and perverted reason; the monk was exalted as the ideal—participation in the business and struggle of worldly living and in the family life was a concession to human weakness, admissible only for persons unable to rise to the nobler and holier state of the cloister. This conception of life was quickly tested and found wanting by the expanding mind of Renaissance Italy, stimulated by the newly recovered knowledge of ancient culture. In Greek and Roman literature, art, and architecture the Italians found suggestions of a life, an earthly life, serene and sunny, unclouded by fears of an angry God or an endless hell; a virtue which meant manhood, self-respect, and noble endeavor, instead of the contemptible

weakness and self-abasement of the starveling monk; they found an ideal of free and harmonious activity, of enjoyment of all earthly good and beauty, which to the thought of the Renaissance had produced a golden age in the past, and need only be studied and reproduced to make old earth bloom again with the flowers and fruits of Paradise.

The result was a most extraordinary enthusiasm for the learning and art of antiquity. Ancient ideals were exalted in every sphere of life. The passive virtues of Christianity were despised; virtue took on the Roman sense,—manhood, self-assertion, conquest. The men of the age did not aim to be honest, upright, and chivalrous, but clever and successful; not vice and crime, but simplicity and failure were to be avoided. Politics was the game of most men of spirit; and politics was the art of intrigue, deception, and murder,—reduced to a system in Machiavelli's Prince. It is instructive to observe that Machiavelli finds his ideal prince at the papal court, bestowing the infamy of his praise on Pope Alexander VI. and his son, Cæsar Borgia.

At the threshold of the modern age, as at the beginning of the ancient world, we find our ancestors eating, somewhat willfully and intemperately, of the fruit of the tree of knowledge,—in neither case with entirely satisfactory results. The watchword of the eager students of the Renaissance was *Litteræ Humaniores*; but the general outcome of the movement, in society, church, and state, was that men were not so much humanized as brutalized. The revival of heathenism culminated in the papacy of Alexander VI.,—the seating of Antichrist in the most holy place.

The disorders in church and state, the fearful moral corruption everywhere prevalent, called forth the prophet of the age. Savonarola opposed the dominant type of life in principle and in practice. Preaching in Florence, where Lorenzo the Magnificent was at the height of his power, and the philosophic sensualism of the Medici was the universal ideal, he declared

that the philosophers were in hell, and that an old woman knew more of saving faith than Plato; and he died with the prophecy on his lips, "The church will be scourged, then regenerated, and this quickly." Nineteen years later the theses were nailed to the door of the Wittenberg church, the storm burst out of the north, and the church was scourged, then regenerated; and this quickly, compared with the slow progress of most world-movements in the long life of humanity.

It is common to class the German Reformation as one of the beneficent results of the general Renaissance movement,—the protest of the expanding powers of humanity against the intellectual and spiritual tyranny of Rome. This is in a sense true; yet Luther's word of protest was primarily moral rather than intellectual. As Augustine resisted the previous tendency and purified Christian thought against the adverse influence of Greek philosophy, so Luther resisted the tendency of his time and purified the Christian life, endangered by the revival of Greek ethics. The Reformation, viewed from the developed standpoint of our day, was the first battle of purified Christianity with the essentially Greek spirit which is the controlling influence in modern culture. In this struggle modern Christianity came to understand the enemy which must be conquered or somehow reconciled to itself,—the religious problem of the modern church. Yet to say that the purpose of Luther was originally moral rather than doctrinal, "to say that the Reformation began in a protest against abuses of administration, is simply to say that Protestantism was not full-grown at the start. In its mature form, as all the world knows, it was a rejection of papal and priestly authority" (Fisher). In the broad stream of the Renaissance development, however, upon whose bosom our whole modern age is drifting, is room for many eddies and counter-currents, and for local movements, some swift, some sluggish. In Italy, the Humanist movement was rapid and impetuous, and soon its immoral extremes and its glaring contrast with the tradi-

tional faith were met by the counter-current of the Reformation. The Roman Church reformed external abuses, rebuked the excesses of the Renaissance culture and art, yet in general remained true to the mediæval type. Protestantism gave men liberty in the expectation that they would freely choose the Christian law, undertook the difficult task of reconciling the right of individual judgment with the existence of a truth which is one, immutable, and universally necessary for salvation. Yet all about and beneath these conflicting currents of effort and opinion was, and is, the main stream of the Renaissance development, giving form and reality to the central problem of our modern world,—How reconcile the glorified heaven of the Christian and the glorified earth of the Greek?

Modern science and philosophy owe their origin to influences which flow from the Greek Renaissance. The earth is to be made the glorified home of humanity by making man the ruler instead of the slave of nature,—this last to be accomplished by substituting a world of unvarying law for the confused world of the Middle Ages, ruled by the capricious power of saints and devils. This scientific assumption of inflexible law is ominous for mythological tales of every sort, and for a religion based on a professed revelation. The development of modern liberal thought is simply the more and more rigorous application of this principle to Christianity, until the movement culminates in the complete excision of the supernatural elements of the traditional faith. Kant, following the drift of the dominant rationalism, denies or ignores or allegorizes the miraculous contents of Christianity, and develops a religion of simple morality,—a human affair of obedience to conscience.

With Hegel, the Greek tendency underlying the whole movement comes to clear expression. Hegel's God is Aristotle's Prime Mover (Thought of thought), supplemented by the Christian scholastic conception that the divine thought instantly realizes itself in concrete being. In this last con-

sideration is to be found the basis for Hegel's identification of thought and being,—so confusing to the average student. The content of the Absolute Idea, the thought about which God thinks, is his own inner thought-life. Since the divine thought instantly realizes itself in created existences, the necessary and eternal order of the divine thought is the necessary order of the development of being in the world. Logic, then, the law of the development of thought, will also be the law of the development of reality. It is plain how near this fundamental principle of the Hegelian system lies to the Logos doctrine of the Greeks, to whom the Logos was the universal reason immanent in the world-process. Hegelianism is Greek also in its strong emphasis of the intellectual. Hegel regards with ill-concealed contempt Schleiermacher's theory of religion as feeling. He says that a dog, on this theory, would be most religious, for his life is feeling alone, uncontrolled by reason.

Christianity is the absolute religion, the same in content with philosophy. But Hegel's Christianity would seem a thing strange and wonderful to one of the early apostles. He lays great stress on the trinity, for it gives an apparent starting-point for the dialectical movement of his system,—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. As the unfolding mind of the child comes to consciousness of itself in relation to an external world, so the divine thought, going out of itself, is realized in the creation of the world, and, knowing the world, turns back into itself in self-consciousness. Hegel finds here the essential significance of the Christian trinity. God, before creation at peace within himself, is the Father; going out in thought which actualizes itself in the world, He is the Son; returning in love, reconciled, into himself, He is the Spirit. We have here a typical illustration of the bewildering admixture of psychology, philosophy, and rationalized theology which constitutes Hegel's philosophy of religion, and which makes his philosophy in general the enigma of the modern world. Chris-

tianity is the religion of reconciliation; but this reconciliation is simply making man consciously at one with God, as he always is, and has been, in essence, and must be from Hegel's pantheistic principles. Revelation is to be found not in past history but in the advancing ideals of the individual and the race. A miracle is an historical and material event, and cannot give certainty as to a present and spiritual truth,—this certainty can come only through the witness of the Spirit. Hegel's witness of the Spirit, to which he refers so piously, when sifted down, is simply the response of a man's own mind to what appeals to him as true. An historical incarnation is unnecessary, except as an object-lesson of the unity of the divine and human, for persons on a low stage of mental life. Jesus was not one with God metaphysically, but possessed a perfect consciousness of the essential unity of the divine and human, which is true in the case of every man.

As to immortality, Hegel says, "It is a principal element of religion that the soul is immortal; as object of the interest of God it is elevated above the finite." The ambiguity of the Hegelian doctrine of immortality is cleared up somewhat in an interesting little fragment in the posthumous works of Professor T. H. Green, perhaps the most conspicuous representative of Hegelianism in England. "The immortality of the soul as = the eternity of thought = the being of God, is the absolute first and the absolute whole. As a determination of thought, everything is eternal. The extinct races of animals, the past formations of the earth, are eternal as stages in an eternal process. Relatively to the thought which, as eternal, holds past, present, and future together, they are permanent. The living agent, man, like everything else, is eternal as a determination of thought." And so the Christian doctrine of personal immortality becomes the pale abstraction that the life of the individual man is a transient incident in universal history, but known forever in the thought of God.

We find it true, therefore, of Hegel's philosophy of religion, with which the modern development culminates, that it is essentially the Logos doctrine of Origen, with the genuinely Christian elements eliminated. This fact became apparent when the later representatives of the Hegelian school of theology, Strauss and Biedermann, brought out into the light of clear statement what Hegel had prudently veiled in vague insinuation and ambiguous suggestion. As Kaftan says, "In truth, what happens here, with Biedermann as with Strauss, is not as intended a liberation of the spiritual kernel from the shell of the sensuous understanding and consequently a philosophical justification of Christianity, but the last act in the dissolution and destruction of the dogma. For this spiritual form of dogma, which Biedermann wins as the result of his dogmatic labor, is not the Christian faith, but the Logos speculation in a new manifestation, and in that which is cast aside as form of the sensuous understanding lies the Christian portion of the dogma."

Heinze states as follows Augustine's view of the Greek and the Christian Logos:—

"The connection of John's Logos doctrine with Greek philosophy was recognized in antiquity both by heathen and Christian writers. . . . Augustine himself did not refuse to acknowledge the close relationship, and in fact he yielded to heathenism the priority in respect to this doctrine. Only at the same time he properly emphasizes the fundamental difference between the heathen speculation and the Christian dogma. He admits that he has found in Platonic writings all that the Prologue of the Gospel contains, with the exception of the doctrine that the Logos has become flesh, that he has come to his own, and his own received him not. In Christianity the Logos has assumed concrete form; with the heathen philosophers it was diffused, in an entirely abstract and general way, throughout the world. Here lies the fundamental difference."¹

¹ Heinze, *Lehre vom Logos*, pp. 330-331.

The unsubstantial nature of Hegel's doctrine of the incarnation removes the element which clearly distinguishes historical Christianity from the Greek speculation.

Strauss presented to the world, in popular form, the totally destructive results of the Hegelian criticism of the Bible. In his last important work, "The Old Faith and the New," he concludes that for future generations science and literature must hold the place which religion has occupied in the past. We find Strauss at last, therefore, in substantial agreement with our own Colonel Ingersoll, who would provide a young man with a physiology and a copy of Shakespeare as a sufficient religious equipment for the battle of life. We are not usually disposed to feel proud of Colonel Ingersoll; and even his former friends and admirers, the reporters, seem to be giving him the cold shoulder of late. But does he not really reflect credit on our clear-headed and practical Yankee common-sense? In the odd moments of a single life, mainly devoted to law and politics, he has arrived at theological results reached by our German neighbors only after two or three centuries of microscopic study, and at a vast expenditure of cumbrous erudition.

Schleiermacher is regarded as the reformer of German theology. He rightly emphasizes experience as a source of religious knowledge, but yields too much to the prevalent scientific and pantheistic assumptions, and hence fails of a truly historical basis for his theological structure. The same is true in general of the Ritschlians, who hold the same subjective attitude; though they properly emphasize the truth that theology should not be dominated by an unchristian or antichristian philosophy.

Christian socialism seems allied to the Greek ideal of a kingdom of happiness for men on earth. In its refusal to preach doctrine, to apply truth to the individual, in its effort to save society *en masse* and now, instead of one by one for heaven, Christian socialism allies itself with the general Greek

tendency. It seems to be held that the police duty of closing saloons and gambling houses is more important for the church than stopping the sources of vice and crime by converting the individual. The former is important, no doubt, and has been too much neglected in the past; yet I cannot help feeling that the latter is the primary and essential business of the church. A preacher who has lived the past ten years in Iowa, with unlimited opportunities for police duty in connection with the prohibitory law, is usually willing that his more energetic and hopeful brethren should direct the movements of the Civic Federation.

Each of the main tendencies of German thought represents a partial truth which the church should more fully recognize; and the present theological problem is to harmonize these fragments in the unity of a well-rounded system. Kant, a practical morality; Hegel, the antithetical truth of a living unity with God in spirit and in purpose; Schleiermacher vindicates Christian experience as a witness of religious truth; Ritschl carries out the same idea in denying the right of an unchristian or antichristian philosophy to dominate the thought of the church. The error common to all these schools is in yielding to science the assumption of an iron inflexibility of natural law which excludes the supernatural, so that with Kant and Hegel the miraculous is abandoned, and with Schleiermacher and Ritschl the superhuman appears only at one point,—in a revealer of God. This revealer of God is prudently veiled from the eyes of the profane by the incense of worship; he is an incomprehensible *Uding* about whose real nature no questions must be asked; he is divine to faith but human to reason, so that we have a reappearance of the position which was properly regarded as the *reductio ad absurdum* of scholasticism, viz., that a proposition may be true in theology and false in philosophy.

If we combine the truths represented by the partial tendencies mentioned above, and supplement them by the necessary

religious assumption that God is not excluded by his own laws from his own world, we have the elements for constructing a system of theology which shall be rationally satisfactory, and yet consonant with Scripture, Christian experience, and the essentials of the traditional teachings of the church. It would not be necessary for an adherent of such a system to defy the authority of science and philosophy when exercised in their proper spheres; it would not be necessary to wave off criticism from the Scriptures as concerned with a fairy-land where the laws of reason are annulled. It would be entirely proper and necessary, however, to demand that science and philosophy set up no unproved assumptions which render a revealed religion impossible, and that criticism do not proceed to test miraculous Christian history by critical assumptions which deny the miraculous.

It is therefore evident that the conflict of Christianity with modern secular thought rests at bottom upon certain antagonistic principles and presuppositions which have always been operative in human history. Here is the present world, a goodly and joyous world; here is man, with noble powers of thought and reason, and a wide sphere for worthy achievement. Let us incite man to high endeavor by the loftiest conception of his powers and possibilities,—owning no limit to his possible supremacy in the physical and intellectual worlds. Let us erect a noble temple where reason shall be enthroned; let us adorn life with art and luxury; let us live a life free, sunny, and joyous, and let there be no death's-head at the feast to bring vague fears as to the unknown beyond. This is the type of thought I have designated as the Greek. The contrasting type is represented for us by mediæval Christianity. Human nature is the ruin of what should have been a noble work, the reason is perverted, the moral nature vitiated, the present world a vale of penitential tears,—a moment of probation, swiftly vanishing into an eternity of joy or pain. And however extreme this view of Christianity may be, any

true conception of it must retain the "other worldly" element; "we have here no abiding city," so that the contrasting types of the Greek and Christian remain. The history of Christian theology is the record of the struggle of these conflicting views of life. The Greek Logos (reason) religion gained a firm foothold in the early church, especially through the theology of Origen; in Augustine appeared the reaction of the genuinely Christian spirit, and the circumstances of the Middle Ages produced an extremely one-sided development of the "other worldly" type. The Italian Renaissance is a passionate protest against this extreme, and though suppressed by the Reformation and the counter-reformation in the Roman Church, it is yet prophetic of the conflict of Christianity with modern culture. The Greek type has been, perhaps, the dominant ideal in the science, philosophy, and literature of the past century, and the result has been a mingled evil and good; good, in that man is urged to esteem himself lord of this lower world, and so to attempt and to achieve great things in all lines of human endeavor; evil, in that the boasted achievements of our civilization rest alone upon the earth, the comfort and inspiration of a spiritual faith are ignored, and religion builds an altar to an Unknown God, or is rationalized into a system of ethics.

The religious problem of the modern world, as I have remarked above, is to harmonize these conflicting ideals and views of life,—to bring into proper adjustment in a higher and permanent unity the glorified heaven of the Christian and the glorified earth of the Greek.