

# The Fraternal.

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VOL. XVI.—No. 3.

SEPTEMBER, 1925.

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Literary and other contributions for "The Fraternal" should be addressed to the Secretary, Rev. A. J. Payne, 25, The Grove, Earisfield, Wandsworth, London, S.W. 18.

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## OUR PRESIDENT 1925-1926

REV. F. GOLDSMITH FRENCH, of Lee, S.E.

REV. F. GOLDSMITH FRENCH was born in London, on December 7th, 1867. His parents were natives of Lewes, Sussex, and his earliest years were spent in Brighton (with his grandparents) where he went to school. Whilst there he attended Queen's Square Baptist Chapel under the ministry of Rev. G. S. Geale. Afterwards he lived at Hitchin, his parental home during 1880-1886. Here he was scholar and teacher in day and Sunday Schools in the town and became a member of the Walsworth Road Baptist Chapel, having been baptized there in July 1882. He took great interest in all the work connected with the Church and was placed upon the local preachers' plan, serving with the other young men of his time, the various village Churches in the neighbourhood. In 1886 he proceeded to the University College, Nottingham, and from there entered upon his first pastoral charge at Chatteris in 1891. The call to Lee came in 1894 and from that time till now Mr. French has served this Church with an ability and devotion that have endeared him to all. It is impossible to put into cold print the value of such a long ministry. The pastoral office touches the lives of young and old alike to finer issues, inspires faith and deepens life, comforts sorrow and sustains all those gracious ministries which meet man's complex needs. Mr. French has written a handbook entitled "A Companion to Thomas à Kempis on the Imitatio Christi." which is an indication of the bent of his own mind towards

Mysticism. He is also the author of several hymns one of the most beautiful of which has found a place in the Sunday School Hymnary viz:—

“Lord of the reapers hear our lowly pleading,  
Thine are the fields that stand all harvest-white;  
Thine is the love that human souls are needing,  
Ere falls the dusk that deepens into night.”

Mention must also be made of his fine work in connection with the School at Eltham for the Sons of Missionaries, as he was Hon. Secretary for a number of years. He is also fittingly a member of the Committee of the Psalms and Hymns Trust. The members of the B.M.F.U. are grateful to him for his services on their behalf as Editor of the Fraternal for some time, as member of the Council and as President. He married in 1891 Florence, daughter of the Rev. Thomas Goadby, B.A., Principal of the Midland Baptist College. Although shunning publicity, Mr. French is deservedly beloved by all who know him and appreciate real sterling worth, fine culture and genuine piety.

A. J. PAYNE.

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*Presidential Address to the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal Union by H. J. Wicks, B.A., D.D.*

My Subject is **AUTHORITY IN RELIGION, WHERE IS IT?**

**T**HE Roman Church claims to possess this authority. Long ago the rule of faith was laid down by Ignatius Loyala in these terms: “To make sure of being right in all things, we ought always to hold by the principle that the white which I see I would believe to be black if the hierarchical Church were so to rule it.” A more complete prostration of one’s intelligence in the dust cannot be conceived, a more unworthy abdication of the rights and duties of one’s manhood cannot be imagined, yet nothing less than this is called for by the decree of the Vatican Council of 1870 which declares that Papal definitions concerning faith and morals, which are given *ex cathedra*, are “incapable of amendment inherently.” Among other interesting facts which bear upon this, Karl

Hase mentions that in the *Liber Pontificalis*, the older part of which were composed in the 6th century, it is told of Euarestos, who is looked upon as the fourth Bishop of Rome, that "he appointed seven deacons to watch over the bishop's preaching that the truth might be delivered." Some of my brethren in the ministry, now present, have had experience of deacons who have kept a watch over their orthodoxy when they have spoken from episcopal chairs and they can sympathise deeply with the old time bishop. But to-day the Roman Bishop has no need of such oversight. He is the infallible teacher of the Universal Church. Well, the Pope is the true successor of Peter, at any rate in one respect, for as Samuel Vincent once said "Infallibility was never Peter's strong point." His claim is one which we reject emphatically. It has no real warrant or foundation. We find it hard to express in words our sense of the utter absurdity of the idea! Apart from that, infallible authority puts a check upon thinking and that is a grave evil. It is true that unwise people have often erected prejudices into principles, causing unhappy divisions. Nevertheless the variety of the Reformed Churches is infinitely to be preferred to the unity of the unreformed, and it is better that men should think erroneously in religion than that they should not think at all. Significant in this connection is the perplexity of the apostolic Church concerning the baptism of uncircumcised converts. Peter, against all his ingrained prejudices, settled that problem swiftly at Cæsarea by using his intelligence and learning the lesson of experience. His fellow Christians, in their turn, came to agreement with him by consideration of God's fact. It is clear that the Lord had given no precise instructions on this great matter and in that Jesus was taking a characteristic line. The Christ we know in the Gospels seeks to stir thought in His hearers. He stimulates it by metaphor, parable, or epigram. He provokes it by statements that challenge men. The form of much of His teaching is such as to compel us to think. He is the *last* person to desire that anybody should tamely accept what another lays down as the truth. He declares that Rabbis must not be recognised by His people. We go all the way with Bishop Gore for once when he says that our Lord was certainly "not a teacher who thought that the best way for men was to have a plain

statement of truth dictated to them on authority" and that "when men cry out for an infallible voice they are generally crying out for something which, in the larger sense in which they want it, it does not appear to be the will of God we should have."

2. Yet, though it is better for man that he should have to search for truth than that it should be given to him in all its glorious fulness without effort on his part, it is nevertheless the fact that the human heart and mind can never find rest and inspiration in peradventures or guesses at truth. We need convictions, great commanding certainties. "We have but faith, we cannot know"; that is not really good enough to satisfy our spiritual hunger. For our own life and for our spiritual service to mankind, we need something more *decisive* than that is. A thing which arrests one again and again in reading the New Testament is that in that Holy Land there is no mist or fog; the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon it with healing in His wings. Its writers are agnostics as to some things, but of the holy love of God they are absolutely certain. Can we of to-day speak after their fashion? Not with the confidence of ignorance, not shutting our eyes to the hard and awful things in life which present insoluble problems for faith but open-eyed—seeing life steadily, and seeing it whole—are strong, inexpugnable convictions ours? Or would Dr. Forsyth's words apply to any of us? "There are many people prepared to speak readily of Christian work or Christian influence, for one who can or will speak freely of Christian certainty. Many can say they love or they labour for one who can say I am sure . . . We do not interrogate our pieties. We have impressions without insight. Eternity is not set in our heart and therefore our religion cracks in life's fire and snaps in life's stress. We are not on rock!" It is a significant fact that our Lord bids us, "Labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life which the Son of Man shall give you." That bread is the gift of Christ, yet it cannot be ours without toil. And His servant who wrote "Hebrews" after commending the ministry of his readers to the poor says this, I do long that every man amongst you without exception would be every whit as keen to nourish in your souls a mighty confidence in the great hopes of the Gospel as you are to render kindly service to needy fellow Christians.

3. If now in pursuance of that counsel we try, with Sir Thomas Browne, to "collect our divinity" from the book of God's "servant Nature, that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded unto the eyes of all," do we find that her book satisfies our need? Certainly we cannot express ourselves now in the style of Paley but we can say with Romanes that "wherever we tap organic Nature it seems to flow with purpose" and we can make our own the affirmation that

"The narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all  
 machinery,  
 And the cow crunching with depressed head surpasses  
 any statue,  
 And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions  
 of infidels."

We are entitled to maintain that belief in God is the most reasonable view of the universe. Yet it is doubtful whether any man ever yet believed in God because his existence had been proved to the man's mind by an irrefutable argument. The best logical demonstration ever constructed is not so cogent as to compel belief, leaving the mind no power of choice. If we had nothing else than that we might have a wistful faith but—well, I will speak for myself. I do not see how we could have a triumphant assurance concerning the Eternal Father. That comes to us because, as my revered teacher, James Culross, used to say, "Holy Love came down from heaven to save."

4. I take an illustration from the realm of music. Some stand outside that kingdom. To them it is a land unknown. Others delight in harmony and can be lifted to the seventh heaven by it though not musically educated. Others again there are whose pleasure in it is both keen and instructed. On a loftier plane are those who have creative faculty, expressing their deepest feeling in the language of melody, awakening response in other souls. But here also there are greater and lesser spirits, a hierarchy wherein the chief are such as Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven, creators of most commanding music, mightiest masters of the glorious art, men of genius, whose heavenly harmonies can never die away. So is it in the sphere of religion. There are spirits receptive and spirits initiative, those who create great songs of faith that rise out of the depths of

their own souls and those who can never do that but can drink in the sweetness of the music and reproduce it on their own lips. And, beyond all comparison, mightiest among the mighty here is Jesus, the greatest of the prophets of God. But if that were all we could say about Him, if Christ were to us simply man raised to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  degree, if He were not the Son of God come down from heaven for us men and our salvation but only the fairest flower of our humanity, then we should have in Him not the eternal rock set under our feet but only the thought of a man, our brother. How the Son of God could become man is a question no man can answer but, as one finely puts it, His coming here "is darkness to my intellect but it is sunshine to my heart" for in Jesus we have God Himself speaking to us. Nay more, in Him we see God manifesting His love in a costly redeeming act. A Christ Who is the greatest, fairest, holiest of men, is not adequate for our necessities. For a virile faith we need the Christ Who is "God manifest in the flesh."

5. *How comes that faith?* I try to answer that deep question, but it is with some diffidence. I speak to men of deep spiritual experience. I can but speak—as Bunyan would say—"what I smartingly do feel." Lord Kelvin, as Dr. Cairns tells us, once declared that "he had never reasoned his way quite up to any one of his great discoveries. He brooded over all the facts that seemed relevant to his problem until there came a moment when his mind took a life or death leap away into the unknown. He felt in the very marrow of his being the conviction that the solution lay just there." So it is with Christ. There is an impression produced upon the soul by Him. He draws out faith. He commands confidence. For myself, I cannot go with the mystic who declares that the brightest light is within ourselves. The inner light is not enough. One needs the greater Outer Light. Looking at Christ one knows that the dayspring from on high has come to those who but for Him would be sitting in the darkness and shadow of death. There is the unmistakable note of authority in His Voice and one bows down low before the Lord Who has sovereign right to command. So myriads of souls would speak of Him. And their faith confirms that of the individual. That is where the authority of the Church Catholic comes in. Yet the individual's faith

must be his own if it is to be strong. It should not be a second hand thing. He should be able to say "I have heard Him myself."

6. The ultimate seat of authority, it is often said, cannot be external because every external authority must justify itself at the tribunal of our soul. Newman acknowledged that to Gladstone when he declared that, although in theory he recognised the Papal infallibility in faith and morals, yet he would obey his own conscience should there be collision between it and the Pope. Hastings Rashdall in "Conscience and Christ" contends that it is just so with the believer and Christ, that no one submits to Him absolutely, except in so far as His injunctions commend themselves to conscience. It has to be owned in all honesty that that is so. Christ never commands anything which is against the conscience of one who understood Him, though He often calls to a more exacting ideal than our conscience of itself would conceive. But if He did give injunctions against which the moral sense of men made protest He would cease to be a moral authority for us. Only one is bound to add that the more fully Christ becomes known the more intensely do we realise that we in His presence are not the critics but the criticised, shamefacedly standing at the judgment seat, and, when it is admitted, as it must be, that the soul is the ultimate seat of authority for us that does not mean that the soul is the ultimate source of authority. Rather, God in Christ coming into contact with the soul is the authority. He remakes us. We come to know His redeeming power. The new life which is in us is not of our own creation. *Another* has forgiven and cleansed us. We come into living, personal contact with Him. We cannot prove it but we are intensely aware of it.

Let me cite to you some words of Wordsworth from "The Excursion":

"Eternal hopes are man's  
Which, when they should maintain themselves aloft,  
Want due consistence: like a pillar of smoke  
That with majestic energy from earth  
Rises, but having reached the thinner air  
Melts and dissolves and is no longer seen."

That is a most true and pathetic description of man's

state without Christ. It is *He* who gives our hopes due consistence. It is only as we continue to be in daily fellowship with Him that we can keep our best hopes. The way to strengthened faith is clear. It is deeper personal religion. It is the endeavour to understand Christ more truly, to enter into fellowship with Him, more fully in thought, in speech with Him, in service for Him. Our faith in Him will be stronger as His conquest of us becomes more complete. We must continually reacquire our faith and see to it that no man take our crown.



#### TENNYSON'S TEACHING ON SIN AND SORROW.

*(concluded).*

**N**OW we come to the second phase of Sin and Sorrow, which is dealt with in the poem called "The Palace of Art" and in it you have the tragic story of the isolation of another side of human nature. We have seen the downward pathway of the sensual man, now we are to behold the descent and sorrow of the merely intellectual man, who has almost unconsciously become selfish to the very core of his being. The sin is of another order and the sorrow of another kind, but none the less painful. The sin Tennyson pictures is not only found and read about in books, but seen around us in everyday life, A form of sin more selfish than any other. It is often labelled—culture—and wears an air of great respectability, patronises even religion, something that God does not thank men for and won't have. It is interested in Art and Music, and Literature. Cultivates all these, but for selfish enjoyment. It is the sin which so often besets the leisured classes, and eventually embitters their lives; for though "the great Master" has said—no man liveth to himself—yet they are determined to try. Having had good, plain, hard working fathers, they are now in a position to keep their hands unsoiled and unspotted from the busy bustling world. They are now but sleeping partners in those concerns, where much of the real struggle



of life goes on. Where keen brains work and grow weary, and strong hands toil for bread, for now they have joined the ranks of those "who toil not, neither do they spin." The fountain of sympathy has been sealed, the interests of life have become changed, the problems and movements which concern the uplifting of the masses, slowly cease to interest. The interests now are not in men, but pictures and books, changes of fashion, antique shops, little dogs for which they pay big prices. They meet together and talk of the vulgar crowd, and their discontent, and wonder why they cannot be content in that station of life in which God has placed them—forgetting their father and grandfather.

It is this side of life Tennyson deals with in this poem. The poem is one upon which Tennyson bestowed much labour, casting and recasting it many times. The subject grew upon him. It awoke his own mind and soul to his great life's work. The question was one affecting himself and his mission, was he to become a lover of "art for arts sake," was he going to live alone and apart, merely for selfish enjoyment, was he going to be one of those who retired to some sheltered solitude, where the deep sad undertones of life could not be heard, and where the cry of human sorrow found no response of human love? Those who act thus are very soon left without responsive love, for when men and women have nothing to take them out of themselves, the richest treasures of the heart waste away or turn to corruption.

"And he that shuts out love, shall be shut out from love, and on her threshold lie howling in outer darkness."

This subject so gripped Tennyson that when he came to write the poem he filled it with deep and holy passion, and so made it throb with life. In a masterly manner he shows that even though you live in a palace of art, and seek but your own selfish pleasure, you are heading to the rocks of misery and desolation. Those who narrow their sympathies to some little circle, whether of music, or art, or literature, and despise the great mass of their fellow men, will in the end share the same sad fate.

The pictures in this poem are among the most marvellous of Tennyson's creations, all the architectural details of the palace are sharply and minutely defined, and

the effect would be spoiled if any of these details were left out. It has been said by no mean authority "It affords the best illustration of the descriptive imagination of the poet." High there on a lordly pile of rocks, that laughs at the storm, rises this palace; looking down in regal splendour, at the little hills that nestle at his feet, the poet builds his stately palace.

Within the palace, art has lavished beauty with a prodigal hand. The artistic rooms are filled with selected pictures to fit the fancy of the changing mood. The subjects are delineated with great care. We look on faces and forms of classic loveliness. Ceilings are made celestial with angelic forms. In the towers great bells swing out their silver sounds. Such a sense of reality is with you as you read the poem, that you feel as though you are looking round this palace, dedicated to loveliness. Outwardly there is every conceivable beauty of architecture, the poet might have been a great architect, and all this outward beauty is matched by the beauty within, while the world and the centuries are ransacked for adornments.

I built my soul a lordly pleasure house,  
Wherein, at ease for aye to dwell.  
I said, "O soul make merry and carouse,  
Dear soul, for all is well."

And "while the world runs round and round" I said  
"Reign thou apart, a quiet King.  
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade  
Sleeps on his luminous ring!"

This palace is built to be the home of a human soul—but a soul withdrawn from all the stern realities of life, whose only ambition is to live for sensuous pleasure in its purest forms; but living in selfish solitude she becomes self-centred. From the isolated height looks down with the disdain of fancied superiority, upon the masses who are dealing with life's stern realities. Thus she loses touch with human life and the great questions that move the world.

After the description of this glorious palace where the soul is yet dissatisfied, the description of punishment begins for selfish isolation. In this palace of art the sweet flower of pity has withered. Is it possible that love of the beautiful can spoil the soul? It is evident that art, flooding

the palace with beauty, was not the cause of her loss of pity. Her degeneracy lies in the fact that she did not use beauty to refine and make glad the lives of others less fortunate; and so in the poem there is a sharp transition; the soul passes swiftly from heights of rapture to depths of remorse. The world will not be shut out from this palace home, some of its sad music comes stealing to this palace on the heights. Three years go by, but with the fourth comes the failure of the original purpose

“Deep dread and loathing of her solitude  
Fell on her, from which mood was born  
Scorn of herself.”

The place became haunted; misery, confusion, and despair lay hold of her, the silence becomes unbearable, and at last the soul awakens and cries—

“I am on fire within,  
There comes no murmur or reply,  
What is it that will take away my sin,  
And save me lest I die?  
So when four years were wholly finished,  
She threw her royal robes away,  
'Make me a cottage in the vale' she said,  
Where I may mourn and pray.  
Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are  
So lightly, beautifully built:  
Perchance I may return with others there  
When I have purged my guilt.”

Tennyson was too sane and practical a man to think of pulling down his “palace towers.” He knew too well that the trouble was not there, but in the wrong spirit of the inhabitants. Get the inhabitants right, right with God, cleansed of the sin which had shrivelled the soul, then all the treasures of that palace of art would be shared, and become a source of true blessing. This soul learns to pray! She comes now to God and duty; and giving the right place to religion, she may go back to her palace with others, to make art and culture aids to religion and humanity. The hatefulness of human pride and the impossibility of human independence, are both enforced in the poem. Intellectual selfishness in death, without a love sharing her treasures, the soul dies; but all the beauty

of this palace, which turned to corruption when pride and selfishness ruled, will live again in glory when love and her loved ones come trooping in.

The third phase of sin in which we see the abuse of the monastic life, is one which does not beset this age of ours to any very great extent—the sin of living as though man were all spirit and abusing the body which may be the temple of the Holy Ghost. The material bulks too largely before our eyes to-day, and the asceticism of the early days is a complete puzzle to the practical Englishman of to-day. One is bound to admit much of it was folly, growing out of a wrong conception of the material. These people imagined that the seat of sin was in the flesh, and not the will, and the persecution of the flesh sprang out of that intense spiritual longing to be free from sin, which was the cause of their many sorrows. Every motion of the flesh was looked upon as a temptation of the devil, and must be suppressed. These early saints looked round at the crime and lawlessness and the profligacy of their day: saw men swept by base passions. Physical might seemed to be the ruling force in the world, and questions of right were settled by the strength of a man's right arm. The soldier ruled the world. Then came the reaction and these ascetics arose; and in effect they said—"the soul has to be the master of the body, all the lower appetites can be subdued to nobler ends and the body which is in the way of the soul's progress, shall be made to stand aside, and men shall learn of the solitary supremacy of the soul."

These old ascetics had more zeal than wisdom, and in their desire for the perfecting and saving of their own souls, they forgot the needs around them: and the world's sin and sorrow, which Christ called upon them to help Him remove, and also abused the body which might become the instrument of holy service.

Tennyson dealt with all this in his poem *St. Simeon Stylites*. By his wonderful imagination the poet lifts himself into the ascetic age, and seizes the truth enshrined in the habits of the saintly ascetics. *St. Simeon* was a prince of these ascetics and after mortifying his body by hunger, and dwelling anywhere or nowhere, and still feeling himself, or professing to, the very embodiment of sin, finally lives out many years of his life, on the top of a pillar, exposed to sunshine and shower.

“Although I be the basest of mankind,  
 From scalp to sole, one slough and crust of sin,  
 Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet  
 For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,  
 I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold  
 Of saintdom.

The story of that strange life upon the pillar is so well known that there is no need of repetition. This man did not realise that his efforts to get rid of the sins, which were to him such a source of sorrow, but led him into spiritual selfishness, and this so soon degenerates into spiritual conceit, and seldom fruitful in works of justice and love. This form of the religious life Tennyson came to hate with a strong and healthy hatred. This old saint calls himself a great sinner, but the sense of sin in its moral repulsion, never flashes in flame through his soul. Sometimes one feels that his humiliation is the cant of selfconsciousness, and his religious aspirations are veiled forms of selfishness. His body might have been kept in subjection without destruction.

The religious life that separates men from doing the work of justice and love in the open world, soon degenerates into spiritual conceit, which is sin in one of its most subtle and deceptive forms, but always brings forth finally, bitter disappointment and a harvest of tears.

The closing words of this old saint are the sanest he ever uttered, and suggest an insight into the mistake of his life. He prays for the superstitious crowd around the base of the pillar.

“But Thou, O Lord,  
 Aid all this foolish people ; let them take  
 Example, pattern, lead them to Thy Light.”

With Alfred Tennyson, whether the sin be of a gross sensual type, or of a subtle intellectual or spiritual nature, the end is never joy but sorrow. Sin and Sorrow are linked by eternal bonds, and being thus linked, no efforts of men can put them asunder. Realising this, it is good to remember there is one—who “delighteth in Mercy,” and who has flushed the darkness with “an awful rose of dawn.”

MORTON GLEDHILL.

## THE NATURE OF MAN.

**I**N approaching this subject I feel in the position of an Ancient Briton whom I imagine making an adventurous voyage in his flimsy coracle as far as the Straits of Gibraltar and finding himself with the whole Mediterranean before him and four great civilisations inviting exploration.

The nature of man may be considered historically, philosophically, psychologically or theologically. We realise when we have decided on one of these lines of study that our real difficulty is then beginning. If, for instance I express my desire to consider man Christianly viewed I feel much like my Ancient Briton landing at Alexandria and finding himself confronted with the mystery of Egypt.

But I am encouraged in the reflection that this paper is only an introduction to the subject, and if I succeed only in laying bare my own vasty ignorance I trust that enlightenment will come to me in the contributions of my brethren to the discussion.

Let it be said that the confinement of thought in the strict sense within any of the spheres indicated is impossible. You cannot specialise with man and retain a true view of him; he is far too complex. You say you will consider him in relation to Christian Theology; you find yourself at every point laid under obligation to history, philosophy, and especially psychology.

One further word of introduction may be added. I take it that our object is something practical rather than speculative. As Christian Ministers we want to gain views of man which will be of value to us as preachers and pastors.

On a hasty view man appears infinitesimal and unutterably insignificant in the Universe. Astronomy, for instance is a most humbling science. The thought of the incomprehensible vastness of interstellar spaces, of countless myriads of other suns and planetary systems, of the unrealisable infinitude of this great universe of which our earth is but a lesser planet of a minor sun sets one exclaiming with the Psalmist, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him!"

On deeper reflection, however, a new conception comes, as it came to the Psalmist; one is impressed less by the apparent insignificance of man than by the wonder of his inherent qualities. In the order of created beings he is by no means first in strength, vitality or longevity, yet he has established a superiority which is unchallenged. It is man alone who is able to utilise the forces of Nature, and make them serve his end, not instinctively but intelligently and scientifically. It is man alone who has given life an ethical interpretation. If we say that this superiority originates in the power of the mind we state a truth, but not a sufficient truth, for there is such a thing as animal psychology. Man is something more than the physical and the mental, there is still a plus. Our concern is with that plus.

We may state it historically in a consideration of origins. The creation of the physical man may have been cataclysmic or evolutionary. Here, of course, we meet the first great problem of our subject. Parenthetically may I suggest that a great deal of the mental energy expended in arguments concerning method could be more profitably employed in working from an acceptance of the fact. We ought to make a clearer distinction between what is merely a vehicle of the truth and truth itself. It is one of the tendencies of the mind, especially the untrained mind, to leap at what is purely incidental and to miss what is fundamental, which fact is demonstrated in every conference that is thrown open for discussion of a subject introduced. No ex cathedra denunciation of Copernicus and Galileo can possibly restore the Ptolemaic astronomy, and it may well be that the time has come for us to recognise frankly that there is nothing in the first chapters of Genesis inconsistent with the physical evolution of man.

We are faced, however, with the equally insistent fact that of all things in the world man is least to be interpreted on the physical side. Biology and psychology alike are inadequate fully to explain man; there is that in him which goes utterly beyond their range. In simple dignified terms we are told that having created man out of the dust of the earth the Lord God breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living soul. However you may regard that passage it is obviously intensely vital, and explains a critical advance in man's creation. Indeed we may justly say it is a description of man's real birth.

From the standpoint of modern scientific precision there appears a considerable looseness in the Biblical use of psychological terms. The word soul, for instance, seems sometimes to be referring to the spiritual and sometimes to the mental, but generally it is the latter and we should to-day render both nephesh and psyche as mind. But it is clear, both in Biblical conception and in modern thought that the old Greek dualism is gone, man is tripartite either body, soul and spirit, or body, mind and spirit, which you prefer, and essentially man is Spirit. The body and the mind are but instruments of the Spirit. This may appear a dogmatic cutting of the Gordian knot of another problem, the psychological problem of the relation of brain and mind, but in a paper of this length it is impossible to argue every point, and I shall take it for granted that on priori grounds we are all prepared to believe that thought is something more than the secretion of the brain, that the physical brain is but the instrument of the mind. If we do not take this view we shall need to reconsider our views of immortality.

Man's nature, then, is essentially spiritual. From the moment that God made him a living soul he found himself confronted with problems of a moral and spiritual kind.

The most acute of all is the problem of Sin. Again there is the enigma of historical origins. Opinions are divided, some regarding the Garden story as literal, others as symbolic. But again I want to suggest that point is largely irrelevant; we are confronted with the fact.

Let us put it thus. Somehow, and somewhen, far back in human origins, something got into human nature, a corruption of the very springs of human instinct and conduct, which has through all the generations continued to be communicated from one to another, missing none, as certain of appearance in every life as any of the rudimentary instincts or involuntary reflex movements. The inevitability of conscience in every man is merely the correlative of the inevitability of sin. Problems, theological, philosophical and psychological are as thick upon this subject as blackberries in September. Perhaps this is the place for a brief personal word. I am sorry that this paper is so little constructive. My journey through this theme is like the bewildered journey of Alice. At every turn I meet mysteries I find myself unable to solve to my complete satisfaction.



The old problem of human freedom and necessity comes to its acutest point in relation to sin. It is easy enough to assert with Ezekiel the invalidity of the excuse of inherited sinfulness, the personal responsibility of the individual. The question is when does that responsibility begin? Is it culpability which is inherited, or innate tendency which at some point difficult to define develops into culpability? At what point does conscience begin to operate, and is that dawning of conscience, when conscious choice becomes possible, to be identified with the beginning of personal responsibility?

These are vital points, and the solution may lie somewhere within those last questions. At any rate we should be cautious in any off-hand assertion of inherited culpability, even if it is good old Augustinian and Calvinistic theology, for the logical conclusion of that view is the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

More vital to our theme is a point of practical rather than academic import. Sin is not of necessity final in its ascendancy in man. There is a counter process expressed in the term Redemption. We do well to lay our chief emphasis upon the redemptive meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ. That is, more emphasis ought to be placed upon the work of Christ in relation to sin itself than in relation to its consequences. Jesus does somehow provide a way of deliverance from the slavery of sin and makes it possible for a man to fulfil the will of God in his own life. Paradoxically this is by the imposition of a new slavery. Paul, who writes so heart searchingly in the 7th of Romans of the inherited power of sin and burst forth, "O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" was able to boast ability to do all things through Christ, and he found his way of deliverance in surrendered-acknowledgment of himself as the bondslave of Christ.

And this is after all not only normal Christian experience, it is psychologically true. In the New Psychology the perils of repression have been perhaps overstated, but it remains true that there is no negative way of victory. Impurity is not conquered by its repression but by the positive reception of Jesus Christ into the surrendered heart and mind.

I am aware that at first sight this leaves out of account the deeper metaphysical significance of the cross. But

everyone has surely often felt the weakness of the older theories of the Atonement on the experimental side. They interpret the meaning of the cross in relation to God and sin, but they fail to explain how the work of Christ on the cross becomes operative in the experience of the individual man. They cannot be superseded for they stress vital aspects of the truth, but they need to be supplemented possibly by a further theory of Identification. Paul expresses this in clear definite terms, Jesus who knew no sin was made to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The term is more all-embracing. It makes clear the experimental side of the Atonement. By surrender to Christ, and in the resultant incoming of Christ into the life not only does the atoning work of Christ become operative but the redeeming power of Christ is realised and sin is subordinated. From the human side the experience is not more emancipation than it is regeneration, and at that critical point life assumes an entirely new significance. A significance which may be expressed along three lines of thought.

We cannot go far in any contemplation of man without being brought to a realisation of what is sometimes termed the solidarity of the race. Man's life is humanly interrelated. So fundamental is this that modern psychologists assert that one of the primary instincts is the social or "herd" instinct. The whole moral conception, as distinct from the religious, has its basis in this social interrelationship. In Paul's simple but pregnant words "No man liveth to himself." No man sinneth to himself. Every sin has its social repercussions. Every sinful life is in the balance on the side of world evil. But on the other hand, every regenerate life is throwing out through society immeasurable influences for good. Aren't we very near here to the deepest significance of the Kingdom of God in the world? Isn't this what Jesus meant in the parable of the leaven? And again, whatever Jesus taught and implied concerning the Brotherhood of Man is it not summed up in this that the social instinct of man should be expressed in a great comradeship of altruistic service?

Then something deeper is seen to be involved. Regeneration is a mysterious process, defying Psycho-Analysis, described by Jesus as being born again from above. It is man being infused by Something that

descends upon him out of the Infinite, the living Spirit of God. In following out in practice and experience this new life a man finds himself inevitably living in line with the Divine purpose. In the response of his mind and soul to the leading of the Spirit the Will of God becomes the guiding principle of his conduct and service.

But the will of God is cosmic in its significance, and that man in whom the will of God is operative is in the fullest sense co-operating with God in His great world purposes and processes. The realisation of this invests man with a greater dignity than anything yet said. But an even nobler thought of man emerges in the development of this line of thought and we come to our third point.

If the regenerate man is called to be the co-partner with God in the development of the Divine purpose—which is, of course, a thoroughly Christian and Pauline idea—then the basis of that co-partnership must of necessity be something in man which is akin to the Divine.

This may be regarded philosophically in a consideration of the meaning of personality. God can have no significance for man except he is conceived in terms of personality, and to the extent that God is a reality in man's experience is there proof that God is transcendent personality. It is possible, then, for human personality to be not only the medium of the Divine will, but actually the reflection of the Divine.

But this truth may be stated with equal force theologically in the conception of Divine Sonship. To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God. Regeneration is the beginning of a new relationship between God and man, a relation of Sonship and Fatherhood. But Sonship implies the revelation of a like nature and again along this line we come to the thought that man may become the reflection of the Divine. So that Jesus who claimed to be the Light of the world; also said "Ye are the Light of the world." Here is the noblest meaning of man, and we may say further that it is the heart of the Divine purpose for man.

To sum up, then. Man is of unmeasured value to God, the greatest proof of which is the Incarnation. That value is found in man's essentially spiritual nature, the physical and the mental are but media through which the spiritual may find expression. Man's spiritual nature,

however, is sadly warped and deformed by the innate power of sin, but against this is the fact that sin is not necessarily final for the work of Christ for man and in man is redemptive and regenerative. In regeneration man discovers his true significance and destiny, becoming the instrument of the Divine will, co-partner in the Divine purpose and a reflection of the Divine nature.

It will be observed that I have left untouched the further matter of Immortality, for two good and sufficient reasons. For one thing that is a subject demanding separate treatment. And for another thing, which is an even better and more completely sufficient reason, I am most certainly not competent to add anything to the masterly address of Dr. Glover at the B.U. Assembly.

I have tried to confine myself within the limits I indicated in commencement, that is, to what is practical in value, and I want to suggest in closing that these are the thoughts of man which must underlie all powerful preaching and the effective exercise of the pastoral office.

E. E. PESKETT.

#### PRAYER UNION NOTES.

**S**INCE the last issue of the Fraternal the following new members have been enrolled.

J. R. Edwards, Brixton.

W. Rowland Jones, Lambeth.

S. J. Fursland, West Drayton.

J. Griffith Bowen, Blackfield, Southampton.

In addition we have heard from several of our old members asking for new cards of membership and bearing witness to the help they have received through our Concert of Prayer on the Lord's Day Morning.

Brethren desiring to join the Prayer Union or wishing for new cards of Membership, are requested to communicate with the Secretary—J. E. Martin, The Manse, Erith, Kent.

#### SECRETARY'S REMINDER.

AS our Members will see we are sending out the numbers of our "Fraternal" quarterly this year, and as this involves very heavy expenditure we shall be glad and grateful if our brethren will forward their subscriptions immediately.