

William Medley and Friedrich von Hügel.

WHEN a man finds himself in mid life considerably influenced by two men so widely separated ecclesiastically as William Medley and Baron von Hügel, the fact seems to call for some interpretation. It was with the idea of reviewing such a situation so as to clarify its significance, mainly for myself, that I began to make the notes which form the genesis of this article.

William Medley was for thirty-nine years the beloved tutor of men who entered Rawdon College in preparation for the Baptist ministry, and though it is over twenty years since the day when his body was carried to its resting place one autumn morning along the lanes he loved to tread, he yet remains a constant influence in the lives of many men now scattered over the world in the service of Christ. It was one of the greatest days in the writer's life when he first entered the wide-windowed room overlooking the terrace and woods where Medley taught; and it was almost as great a day when a few years later, while roaming about in a Norwich library, he came across two soberly-bound volumes entitled *The Mystical Element of Religion*, by Friedrich von Hügel. One glance at the remarkable index and it was evident that another door in the Kingdom had opened for me; and yet the vista was not wholly strange. Those paths of deductive logic, scientific method, philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, and theism, along which Medley delighted to lead his students, were clearly discernible, and they were seen to be lit up by the same central Sun in Whose light all life became transfigured. Thus without any deliberate seeking two men had quietly come into my life and have dwelt there for some years now with scarcely any conscious friction, though the churches to which they belonged are wide as the poles asunder.

Baron von Hügel, "one of the greatest religious personalities of his time—if not the greatest," was born at Florence, the son of a distinguished Austrian diplomat and a Scotswoman of noble birth. He married a daughter of Lord Lea, one of Gladstone's colleagues, became a naturalised Englishman, and lived latterly at Kensington, where he died in 1925. Oxford and St. Andrew's Universities honoured him with

degrees, and he was appointed Gifford lecturer, but failing health prevented the fulfilment of this task. By his courageous advocacy of the balanced rights of intellectual freedom and ecclesiastical authority he became an acknowledged leader of a movement which came under Papal condemnation and resulted in the excommunication of some of his friends, among them George Tyrrell. His friendships were numerous, including scholars in many countries and various churches, and one of the massive studies in the second volume of his *Essays and Addresses* was delivered to invited friends in the Presbyterian Manse of Dr. Alexander Whyte. At the back of much of his teaching was the generously-admitted influence of such virile Protestant thinkers as Eucken and Troeltsch. But von Hügel was not only a scholar of international repute, he was also a man of unusual humility and devoutness. One who knew him recalls seeing the Baron, after engaging vigorously in some keen debate, slip away into the nearest church and kneel with the simplicity and absorption of a child; and one of his daughters declares that the sight of her father with head bent in adoration before his God was enough to rekindle the dying flame in any doubting soul. More than once in his writings he refers to "a washerwoman with whom I had the honour of worshipping,"—"a sweet saint of God, whose feet I wish I could become worthy to kiss." (*Essays and Addresses*, I., 110, 289.) Men felt a similar influence in the presence of William Medley, especially at College Communion, though it was not absent from the class room. "I always have the same feeling as comes over me when I enter a cathedral," wrote one of his students (Rev. James Mursell). "I think and feel and am more deeply and intensely than ever, but I cannot talk." Both men gave the impression of "a holy marvelling delight in God," together with a certain genial leisurely expansion of mind. Medley was over sixty before he published Angus lectures on *Christ the Truth* gave us his first volume, and von Hügel was already fifty-seven when he issued his first book. Of his second volume, *Eternal Life*, he said to a niece, "I wrote the thing praying; read it as written, child." (*Letters to a Niece*, 72.) Both men had made slight appearances in print during earlier years, Medley, in a pamphlet on the organic unity of the New Testament, and von Hügel in published correspondence on the Pentateuch. Each had also received an early grounding in Hebrew, the former by Ewald at Göttingen, the latter by Gustav Bickell and a Jewish Rabbi, and in both cases something similar appears to have resulted—Hebrew and textual studies gave way to philosophical and psychological interests, and the experience of God became the ultimate reality they sought to interpret. Yet to the end each maintained a love for ancient

Greek and Roman authors, Medley's *Interpretations of Horace* appearing posthumously, and von Hügel's *Selected Letters* revealing a scholar's zeal for the classics up to a short time before his death. It is scarcely surprising that with such similar *traits* Medley and von Hügel should, despite ecclesiastical differences, reveal interesting resemblances and suggest significant comparisons.

First approaches to these men through their writings have for some proved somewhat baffling owing to complexities of style and unfamiliar orientations of thought. "Solid, liquid, gas—are the three forms in which thought can be presented; the last for an audience, the second for a book, the first for an archangel in retreat," wrote Tyrrell complainingly to von Hügel, and he does seem at times to have had the archangels in mind rather than average human beings. (*Letters*, 13.) But it would be a mistake to conclude that either Medley or von Hügel was indifferent in matters of clear thinking and accurate statement. Medley took his students through a steady course in deductive logic and scientific method before advancing to philosophical studies, and von Hügel insisted on the value of "the purgatorial function of severe scientific methods and habits" for the full development of the religious life. (*Letters*, 192.) But they recognised that although reality presents an aspect towards the reason, yet in its fulness it transcends logical expression. "The higher you rise in the scale of values the less amenable to tabulation are its items found to be," was one of Medley's aphorisms, and von Hügel similarly declared that "the richer is any reality in the scale of being the less immediately transferable is our knowledge of the reality." (*Essays*, I., 11.) For both men reality at its highest is a personal spiritual power continually seeking to penetrate our human life. Medley speaks of "that transcendent reality which environs us, and which in the experience of us all is every now and again breaking through the narrow range of our actual sensible experience" (*Christ the Truth*, 11); and von Hügel writes of "the existence of a personal reality sufficiently like us to be able to penetrate and move us through and through, the which, by so doing, is the original and persistent cause of this our noblest dissatisfaction with anything and all things merely human." (*Essays*, I., 40-41.) Essentially at one in their conceptions of reality their ideas of ultimate truth are similar. To Medley truth was a trust culminating "in the hush of silence when we find ourselves wrapped in the closest embrace of reality." (*Christ the Truth*, 17.) To von Hügel "a centre of light losing itself gradually in utter darkness." (*Readings from F. v. H.*, Ed. by A. Thorold, xii.) It is in such a surplusage of increasing inarticulateness and

dimness that they found place for a valid mysticism. But Medley utters a warning that "the mere idle escape from the controversial pursuer into a darkness or mist where the fugitive can no longer be traced deserves all the censure, and even contemptuous denunciation, which in the lips of many is deemed the only method of dealing with mysticism." (*Christ the Truth*, 181, 182.) Von Hügel, too, insists that mysticism needs to be balanced by the scientific habit, that "man will have carefully to keep in living touch with that secondary and preliminary reality, the Thing-world, Physical Science and Determinist Law." (*Mystical Element*, II., 378.) And he practised what he preached. About the time of the completion of his great work on mysticism he wrote to Tyrrell—"I was fifty-seven yesterday, and am giving myself a set of newer geological books, a geological hammer, and a set of geological type specimens, so expect you to tramp about with me to gravel pits and quarries, please." Thus both men realized the peril of a spurious mysticism which sentimentally shrinks from hard fact and bracing thought; indeed, von Hügel's famous work is partly a protest against an unduly simplified subjective pietism which ignores those other valid human interests which go to the making of a healthy, full-orbed religious life. "Religion is not clear but vivid; not simple but rich." (*Essays*, I., 102-103.) The secret of fruitful living, they agreed, consists in a recognition of the needs of light and darkness, movement and repose, reason and faith, nature and supernature, for the soul's development. Thus Medley: "An absolute trust, abiding alone, is but a dead, inert thing, a stone built into a wall. On the other hand an ever continuous movement, cut off from repose, is a vain, empty restlessness; neither of these is life. But the two in balanced harmony give us in outline the perfected ideal of human life." (*Christ the Truth*, 197.) And so von Hügel: "The soul can live, to be fully normal in normal circumstances, only by a double process; occupation with the concrete, and then abstraction from it, and this alternately, on and on. If it has not the latter it will grow empty and hazy; if it has not the former it will grow earthly and heavy." (*Letters*, 72.) But this ideal of a balanced relationship between rest and movement, faith and reason, is difficult to actualize; in expression it involves paradox, in ethics a costly tension. And here it is interesting to note that both Medley and von Hügel use the suggestive idea of "polarity" to describe certain aspects of this dualism in experience. "A sphere," says Medley, "by virtue of its characteristic nature, is constituted by a centre and polar opposites. To one who is surveying it from without, these opposing poles can never be viewed together in the harmony of their mutual relationships.

But let the spectator be admitted to the interior and take up a position at the centre, then these polar opposites, with no change of place, lose their recalcitrant antagonism and melt into the satisfying harmony of perfect form." (*Christ the Truth*, 25.) Von Hügel's use of the idea is different but more fundamental. "Religious experience," he repeats, "possesses a double polarity—of Otherworldliness and detachment, and of This-worldliness and attachment." (*Eternal Life*, 199.) But whereas Medley saw this double polarity mainly as a strain to one outside the sphere of Christianity, von Hügel perceived it to be a characteristic tension of life within the Kingdom. "The movement of the specifically Christian life and conviction," he declares, "is not a circle round a single centre—detachment; but an ellipse round two centres—detachment and attachment. And precisely in this difficult but immensely fruitful oscillation and rhythm between, as it were, the two poles of the spiritual life . . . consists the completion and culmination of the Christian life." (*Mystical Element*, II., 127.)

Medley conceived the trained Christian mind as a wheel with its spokes radiating from a common centre, or as a Jacob's ladder up which his student "angels of the churches" were taught to ascend to Christian truth and descend with its transfiguring light, the rungs of that ladder being the various categories of knowledge. He began with the logic of deduction as a necessary first step towards valid reasoning, but pointed out that its chief value lies in the sphere of the abstract; it can give us no "access to the concrete." When we advance to scientific method we are in touch with the facts of nature and its uniformities of operation. But the discovery and application of these so-called "laws" of nature impel the awakened mind to seek some unifying idea which shall explain their origin and purpose. This is the concern of philosophy. Aesthetics come in here as attempts at creative embodiments of ideas expressive of the beautiful. However, man's soul cannot live by ideas alone; he requires also ideals to regulate conduct, hence ethics finds its place as helping him to achieve "a completely fashioned will" and attain to "the beauty of holiness." But in this further search the mystery of conscience meets us and we ask what can be the significance of that "categorical imperative" which speaks within saying "thou shalt," or "thou shalt not." It is merely a personal consciousness of corporate custom, or may it be the utterance of a divine will? With this problem we are led on to theism and the direct search for God. But when we are convinced of His existence we yearn, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." To meet this ultimate desire Christianity comes with the great word of Jesus—"He that hath seen Me hath seen

the Father." Thus the secret of life is found in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Trained to organize his thinking thus, The Christian, said Medley, "may pass easily from one to another, from lower to higher, with no sense of jolt or jar; while from the highest, where beyond dispute his own best life is lived, there will be shed down a kindling and interpreting light even upon subjects which are most remote, and to common apprehension perhaps out of all connection with what is denominated the spiritual life." (*Christ the Truth*, 246-247.)

Now there is much in all this with which von Hügel would agree, however he might suspect the system as a whole. "Ethics, philosophy, science, and all other special strivings of man," he writes, "have indeed their right and duty persistently to contribute their share in awakening, widening, sweetening, man's imagination, mind, emotions, will; and thus to aid him also in his preparation for, and his interpretation of, the visitations of God's spirit." (*Essays*, I., 47, 48.) And he assesses the values of these various realms of knowledge much as Medley does. He, too, is careful to point out that deductive logic can guarantee validity of inference but not truth of fact. "It is all absolutely clear, yes; but just because here we have nowhere affirmed the *existence* or *reality* of anything whatsoever." (*Essays*, I., 101.) He is at one with Medley on certain aspects of the scientific quest. "What is every scientific discovery, when we penetrate to its centre, but the vital contact of two minds, the individual mind and the universal mind," suggests Medley (*Christ the Truth*, 79, 80); and similarly von Hügel says, concerning the fundamental correspondence between the human reason and the rationality of nature, that "the immensity of this success is an unanswerable proof that this rationality is not imposed but found there by man. Thus faith in science is faith in God." (*Essays*, I., 71.) But he was careful to claim for the sciences the right to pursue their own methods of research independent of theological procedures and prepossessions. And as clearly as Medley he perceives the extent and limitations of philosophy. "Philosophy ends, surely, with certain desiderata and possibilities which religion meets, traverses, restates. . . . And yet how can philosophy, and such philosophy (*i.e.*, Hegel's) be man's ultimate faith, an outlook that ignores or minimizes temptation, doubt, sin?" (*Eternal Life*, 222.) In their theories of aesthetics there are again helpful mutual reinforcements, and it is significant that Medley, Baptist though he was, found himself led by his theories to admit the validity and value of symbolism and ritual for some souls. (*Christ the Truth*, 269.) Alluding to the

joy of poet and artist in their allegiance to truth and beauty, Medley finds "a certain implication that there must be found, existing above and behind them all, a Supreme Personality with whom they themselves are in some undiscovered yet assuredly vital relation." (*Christ the Truth*, 279.) And von Hügel, commenting on the emotion that runs through Plato's deepest writings, concludes it to be more than merely personal. "No, the emotion which permeates those deepest passages is stirred by, and given to, a reality . . . which has thus itself found and then holds him." (*Essays*, II., 176.) Coming to the realm of ethics Medley believes that the transfiguration of duty consists in realizing that "it is not only the Will Supreme that in every duty is in vital contact with the will of man, but also that it is the will of Him who loves us with an infinite love." (*Christ the Truth*, 287.) So also von Hügel sees that "the religious soul, in proportion to the strength of its religion, always reaches beyond all abstract law, all mere sense of duty and obligation . . . to this unique personalist Reality, to God as beatitude and Beatifier." (*Essays*, II., 221.) "God is in duty," he reminds his niece. As regards theism, a fundamental conception, common to both men, of a transcendent personal reality seeking to penetrate this soiled and sinning life of ours has already been indicated, but it might be noted here that both men insisted that this reality is not to be discovered as one fact among other facts to be scientifically demonstrated. "God can never be discovered as one object among many," said Medley, (*Notes on Theism*), and "God is certainly not just one object among other objects," sounds like an echo in one of von Hügel's essays. (*Essays*, I., 50.) And they were equally insistent that "that which consummates the process exhibits the true bearing and function of all that has preceded it," (*Christ the Truth*, 263), and were a little scornful of "the obsession of origins." (*Christ the Truth*, 125; *Essays*, I., 141.)

In the preface to the second edition of his *Mystical Element of Religion* (1923) von Hügel confessed to a gradual change of mind in one matter since its first publication (1908), declaring his matured conviction that "religion has no subtler, and yet no deadlier enemy in the region of the mind, than every and all Monism," expressing agreement with Troeltsch's judgement when, in reviewing Edward Caird's *Evolution of Religion*, he pointed out "how slender was the religious power and fruitfulness of all Hegelian interpretations of religion." Von Hügel overstrains language in his endeavour to press home the truth that "the Christian life begins, proceeds, and ends with the Given. . . . The otherness, the prevenience of God, the one-sided relation between God and man, these constitute the deepest measure and

touchstone of all religion." (*Mystical Element*, I., xvi.) It was this emphasis in von Hügel which helped me to correct a somewhat unbalanced application of Medley's teaching. I had begun to realize how much one is compelled to ignore in the New Testament when unduly dominated by the attempt to arrive at an intellectually unified system of belief, and found myself asking the question von Hügel asks when summarizing Hegel's philosophy—"Gethsemane and Calvary, are they truly, fully here?" (*Eternal Life*, 223.) But when Medley published *Christ the Truth*, he added as a sub-title—"An essay towards the organization of Christian thinking," and it is perhaps a needful reminder that in his work as a tutor he was not attempting to lead men to Christ, but rather helping them to bring every thought into captivity to Him by whom they had already been redeemed. But unless a man had a very vital and enduring redemptive experience as a convert he might find a too devoted and limited absorption of Medley's teaching weakening a Pauline interpretation of the Gospel. However, if there are three doctrinal strands in the New Testament—the Pauline, the Petrine and the Johannine—this might only mean that Medley emphasized the Johannine strand without denying the necessity of the other two. In his pamphlet *The New Testament an Organic Unity* (which Dr. Dale characterized as opening "an argument of great interest, depth, and power"), he notes three strands running through the Book, relates them to the three great types of humanity, the Jew, the Greek, and the Roman, and finds them expressed in the delineation of the Person and teaching of Jesus and the presentation of the Gospel. And here again von Hügel comes to reinforce and develop the teaching of Medley, for his famous chapter on "The Three Elements of Religion" is a massive expansion of much that is explicit and implicit in Medley's early essay, and indeed in his teaching as a whole. (*Mystical Element*, I., 3-82.) But von Hügel goes further back than Medley to discover the sources of the three elements of religion, and advances further in his application of them. He traces their unfoldings through childhood, youth, and manhood, giving us respectively the three factors of tradition, reason and experience, factors which are found in varying order and degree sublimated in every mature Christian life. In organised religion they help to determine our main ecclesiastical divisions, the traditional or authoritative element finding its expression in various forms of Catholicism; the intellectual or speculative in Modernism and other liberal theological movements; the experimental or mystical in certain phases of Pietism and Evangelism. Each element has some essential value, and wherever one wholly cancels out another the religious life,

whether individual or corporate, suffers loss. "The forward advance of religion should be made on the whole front, and not upon any one section." (*Letters*, 30.) Von Hügel is thus led to recognize the validity of vital Nonconformist movements as tonic reminders to the church of the experimental element, instancing, among others, John Newton and John Bunyan as typical English representatives of this element. (*Mystical Element*, I., 63.) Yet it would be a mistake to regard von Hügel as an eclectic; he remained to the end a convinced worshipper within the Roman communion, though he was a courageous and penetrating critic of some of its sins and weaknesses. But it was a fundamental principle with him that Christians should remain within their own churches unless convinced that it would be a sin not to leave them, and thus he never set out to win converts to his own church; "that would be an odious presumption," he once said. (*Letters*, 312.) "God makes lovely little flowers grow everywhere, but someone always comes and sits on them," he complained, and was careful himself not to do it, but he had little sympathy with people "who water broomsticks to grow roses." (*Letters to a Niece*, x. xi.) How reminiscent of William Medley is all this in its charity and humour. In an address to ministers on "Ideals," Medley spoke of three types of ministry as expressing the great principles of Truth, Righteousness and Love. The function of the ministry is to commend Christianity to the minds, consciences, and hearts of men; but ministers will find themselves by grace, nature and training more fitted to exercise one type than another. "It is of the utmost consequence," he concludes, "that acknowledging this we should cherish no invidious affection for our own type, but cultivate an ever-deepening and enlarging sympathy with that which is not ours." And von Hügel strikes the same note in an address on the Church. "We can have conflict of priests with prophets and professors," he knows, "but man is a complex creature; he will do well not to mutilate himself, but instead to check, supplement, purify, ever anew, each constituent and range of his religion by the others." (*Essays*, II., 68.)

Medley died in 1903; von Hügel in 1925. The years are significant, for between them occurred that world-war which not only overthrew empires and shook the social order, but also unsettled Christian institutions and disturbed religious thought. Medley knew nothing of all this; von Hügel lived through it and found himself compelled to face many of its resultant problems. This may have hastened the change in his thinking already mentioned, and may partly account for differences of emphasis in Medley and von Hügel on certain matters. Medley had little room in his thinking for dualisms, complexes and

cataclysms; von Hügel, on the other hand, saw spiritual value in distressing antagonisms, and "costly, complex, but consoling" tensions. He became one of the greatest modern apologists for organized religion, though he sometimes spoke of it as being "his hairshirt!" (*Letters to a Niece*, xxxviii.), and he was almost a voice crying in the wilderness in his plea for a patient and enlightened consideration of the doctrine of an imminent, sudden, personal return of Christ.¹ Here is a characteristic sentence occurring in an exposition of Christ's teaching regarding war—"The time is short, eternity is long, God is the great Reality, before Him we are about to stand. Our Lord's heart and will are *there*." (*The German Soul*, 41.) These dualistic, ecclesiastic, and apocalyptic accents were rarely detected in Medley's teaching: whether they would have developed had he lived through the war years it is, of course, impossible to say, but it may be said with certainty that nothing would have shaken his belief that Christianity is essentially fellowship, just as nothing weakened von Hügel's conviction that religion is adoration.

Limitations of space prevent much further use of material accumulated slowly for some years from the teachings of these two Christian thinkers; the comparisons, if fully noted and worked out, would require a volume. They are remarkable and significant; nearly all the characteristic elements of Medley's teaching are found elaborated in von Hügel's writings, but they will not be apparent to a desultory or hasty reader. These two men were separated ecclesiastically by a great gulf, yet no Papal anathemas or Protestant antagonisms could deprive either of the realization of abiding joy in God. "I feel I am slipping away, but I have had such a complete life," Medley said to his minister, the Rev. C. E. Shipley. "With me, during the last few years, praise has sadly encroached on prayer, but the two best Psalms are the 23rd and the 103rd, and there is not a word of prayer in them, they are all praise." And a few days before von Hügel passed away he said—"I wait for the breath of God, God's breath. Perhaps He will call me to-day—to-night. Don't let us be niggardly towards God. He is never niggardly towards us. . . . I would like to finish my book²—but if not I shall live it out in the Beyond." (*Letters to a Niece*, xlii.) Recently there came into my possession some of Medley's note books. In one of them, on a page by itself, he had written the words—"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." And those words were included upon von Hügel's Memorial Card.

¹ For review of von Hügel's teaching on the Second Coming, see article in "The Student Movement," December 1928, by the present writer.

² *The Reality of God*. The book was unfinished and unpublished.

In an unpublished letter Lady von Hügel wrote—"Dante's 'Thy Will is my Peace' is another I should have liked to have added"; and many of Medley's students will remember how he cherished that sentence of the great Florentine, quoting its more usual rendering—"His will is our peace." On his memorial tablet in Shipley Baptist Church are the words—"A great scholar, and a revered teacher of the divine mysteries, he dwelt in the secret place of the Most High."—"God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

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MARTEN OF SUSSEX. John Marten, yeoman of Cuckfield, in 1608 married Elizabeth Tiltman, was churchwarden 1617, died December, 1621. His third son, Michael, settled at Ardingly and married Katherine Jenner of Cuckfield in 1622; he too was a yeoman, and died in 1663. His sixth child was born in 1637, and settled at Franklands in Keymer; he married Elizabeth Marchant of Ditchling. He it was who became Baptist, and was reported as the head and teacher at the conventicle held at the house of his son-in-law, James Wood, in Twineham. The influence he wielded is shown in his being chosen, nevertheless, as churchwarden of Ditchling in 1677. His fellow-churchwarden, John Chatfield, soon yielded Baptist recruits, and Robert became another son-in-law. Marten died in 1706, and was succeeded by a younger son, Peter. The eldest son, Thomas, was already a freeholder of Fragbarrow in Ditchling. He was followed by his eldest son Michael, who lived till 1753; he was one of the first trustees for the Baptist Meeting at Ditchling, built by Robert Chatfield of Lewes. The family ramified in many directions; a pedigree was published in 1926, but it does not cover a number of Baptists:—Benjamin of Chichester in 1737, Benjamin of Sevenoaks in 1768, Peter of Bessels Green till 1833, Benjamin of Headcorn and Dover, 1797-1819, Joseph of Ditchling 1798, Joseph of Saffron Walden 1843, John of Peckham 1874.