

used in the symbolism of the early Church. The earliest symbol was that of the living Christ, and to this day the prevalent representation of the Greek Church is the symbol of the living Lord reigning from the tree. Several weighty testimonies to these facts appear in Archbishop Benson's "Life." The whole truth, with its proper balance and perspective, is summed up in the word of the Apocalypse: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."



Christianity and the Supernatural.—V.

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF CLOGHER.

ALL that we have been led to think as to the supernaturalness, or transcendence, which marks the Christian solution of the great theological problems applies to that supreme doctrine which has always been regarded as the essence of the catholic faith. In modern times it has been too little considered that the doctrine of the Trinity must be organically related to all that is essential in the Christian creed. For many this great doctrine is either a thesis to be proved by texts from Holy Scripture or a tradition which must be preserved at all costs. For others, more reflective, it is discerned to be essential as a safeguard of the Divinity of our Lord. With but few does it take its rightful place as the supreme principle, the highest truth, in the light of which all lower truths become clearer, being exhibited in their mutual relationship. Yet, if the doctrine be true, this must be its character; for knowledge about God must be the highest knowledge. If we could know God perfectly, we could know everything perfectly; we should be able to see, as it were, the plan of the universe lying, like a map, before us. This is the end towards which most philosophies have struggled. Believing that there must be some universal plan or system in things, men have sought for the principles which give that system its unity, and when they have convinced themselves that

they approached a solution of the problem, they have found themselves committed to a theology.

But the fact is that this struggle has never been completely successful. From the highest point of view, philosophy has been a failure. Continually striving to reduce the sum total of things to an intelligible system, it has always found itself baffled by elements which refused to take their place in the scheme of thought which seemed to be imperatively required by other elements. Philosophy is the endeavour to think out the universe—that is, it is the effort to make the principles of human thought serve for the complete explanation of all things. It is, in truth, the attempt to measure God by a human standard, to make the categories which belong to our experience embrace the whole universe. And just for this reason philosophy has been, from the highest point of view, a failure. It has not failed utterly, as some think it has, for it has obtained certain results, discovered certain methods, and overthrown many idols. But it has not succeeded in its great endeavour to reach the highest of all points of view, and from thence to behold all the realms of being spread out before it. In other words, it has not attained to a complete definition of the nature of God. The failure of philosophy simply means that God is too great for our thoughts to comprehend Him.

Are we, then, to take refuge in agnosticism? This is too easy and hasty a way of disposing of so great a question. It does not follow, because we cannot know all about God, that we can know nothing about Him. When Mr. Herbert Spencer concluded that “the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable,” he omitted to notice that in reaching that conclusion he had asserted some degree of knowledge about God, and that the very conclusion itself is a contradiction in terms. His whole argument is based on the fact that when we come to reason about God we find ourselves inevitably involved in contradiction. But, as Hegel taught us long ago, such contradictions are a proof, not of falsehood, but of incompleteness. Hegel, no doubt, imagined he had discovered the way in which

all the contradictions of our finite thinking may be shown to be resolved in the unity of higher principles, and so thought be found capable at its highest point of grasping the Infinite Reality. In this great adventure, it is not too much to say, he has not been justified by more recent investigation. The human spirit has not yet found wings by which to soar above the highest heights of heaven.

The problem which no reasoning can solve is how to reconcile in one consistent scheme of thought the freedom of the human spirit with the freedom of the Divine. It is an old problem, and one which assumes a different shape in every age and with every movement of the time spirit. Its most striking manifestations take place in the sphere of the moral consciousness and in connection with practical life; but it makes its appearance equally in the sphere of knowledge, and confounds the efforts of the epistemologist.

Metaphysical study in the nineteenth century was mainly remarkable for the emergence of the principle of personality or selfhood. The idealist criticism of experience subsumed all the forms and categories of knowledge under this one supreme principle. Not only so, but knowledge appeared as a process of creation, so that the subject, or self, seemed, in the exercise of its freedom, to produce all that it knows. The world, as I know it, is simply my experience, and my experience exists because it is *my* experience.

Here, then, is a great proof of a personal Deity. The world exists apart from my experience of it. No sane person can deny that statement. But it is still the world that I know, and therefore essentially an experience. Whose experience? is the question which then becomes inevitable, and the answer is, God's. This mode of thinking has been presented in many ways which are all at heart the same. It has had great power over many of the best and most thoughtful minds in recent times. Yet it involves an inconsistency which makes the thinker suspect the presence of some difficulty which has not been fully dealt with. For, first, there is the rejection of

common-sense when it assures us of the independent existence of the world as we know it ; and, secondly, there is the acceptance of the testimony of common-sense as to that very independence when we wish to escape from the difficulty in which our rejection has placed us.

Strictly speaking, the idealist argument should land us in subjective idealism—the doctrine that all the world is a private possession of mine, a phantasmagoria which ceases to exist when I become unconscious. Sanity forbids the inference, and therefore we assert the existence of an Eternal Spirit other and greater than ourselves. But in making the assertion, we have, on the principles of idealism, annihilated the human spirit. The “ I ” that knows becomes a phase or aspect of the great universal “ I ” which gives being to all things. Man loses his personality. We have to choose, in fact, between an assertion of man which annihilates God and an assertion of God which annihilates man.

Every student of modern philosophical literature knows how this difficulty has played havoc with the theories of the idealists. The great problem in all theories of knowledge is to bring together the individual and the universal points of view, or, in other words, to harmonize the human and the Divine. When the individual human spirit is taken as the principle of investigation, we find ourselves enclosed in a circle from which there is no logical way of escape ; we are compelled to identify self and the world. When, on the other hand, by a *tour de force*, we endeavour to view the world from the Divine point of view, regarding the Deity as Infinite Personality, we can discover no place for human or finite personality.

In the latter case the world is regarded as a system, a great and perfectly articulated complex of relations, deriving its unity from the central personality which gives it being. If we are to think of God as just one Person, we gain a conception of the universe as a perfectly rational whole ; but we must deny the existence of all other persons, for every other person is a centre of unification (or rationality) which stands over against the

supreme centre in an independence which cannot be overcome.

The dilemma which thus comes to light is not to be regarded as pointing to a defect peculiar to the idealistic mode of approaching the great problem. It is inherent in every such endeavour of the human mind.

This fact emerges far more evidently when we turn from the theory of knowledge to the consideration of the practical side of human activity. It is here that all the great overwhelming problems which have from the earliest periods of reflective thought confounded the human intelligence make their appearance. How is human will to be harmonized with Divine will? How can fate or necessity coexist with human freedom? How can there be opposition to the will of God? If God is righteous and omnipotent, how is unrighteousness possible? Or, again, if God is omniscient, how can man's will be free? God's foreknowledge and the independence of human choice seem wholly irreconcilable.

All such questions culminate in the great problem of evil. And this problem, let it be noted, is not merely concerning the origin of evil, but rather the existence of evil. That evil should be at all is the greatest of all puzzles. Neither on rational nor on moral grounds is it capable of explanation. We can indeed see that the possibility of choosing the good necessarily implies the possibility of choosing the evil. If there is to be such a thing as goodness in finite beings, there must be freedom, for a goodness which is not freely chosen is not true goodness at all. Actions which are not due to the self-determination of the will have no moral quality; therefore, when goodness became possible in the world, evil also became possible. Looking at the question from the point of view of our Christian conception of God, we realize that the great Father seeks for the willing obedience of children, and not the mechanical service of slaves or automata; and we understand that, if there is to be a sphere in which this willing service can be yielded to God, the possibility of disobedience is inevitable. Within the region, that is,

of our moral experience, we find sufficient grounds for the permission of evil. But this in no sense disposes of the great ultimate problem, for the question at once assumes this form : How is our moral experience to be reconciled with reason ? How are our convictions about God to be harmonized with our convictions about our own life ?

This whole series of problems, which culminates in the problem of evil, arises, then, out of that final and ultimate difficulty which we have had in view all along. The freedom of the will is the assertion of personality on its practical side. Freedom is essentially self-determination. It is the action characteristic of the self or person. In will, personality asserts itself in a manner more fully expressive of its proper nature than in knowledge, and therefore it is in connection with the exercise of the will that the opposition between the human personality and the Divine becomes most apparent, and the difficulties arising from it most obviously insuperable.

It is clear that we are here face to face with the ultimate problem which springs from the endeavour to think of God in the terms supplied by our human experience. We have been landed in this dilemma simply because we have attempted to measure God by a human standard. The standard is the best we have got for the purpose, and we are therefore bound to make the attempt ; but when we reflect on its nature, we must not be surprised at its failure. Our duty is neither to despair nor to presume, but patiently to endeavour to discover the precise point at which our measurement fails, and then draw the necessary conclusion.

If there has been any degree of soundness in the line of thought which we have pursued, it has brought us to this— that the principle of personality, as we are aware of it in ourselves, is not good enough, not high enough in the scale of principles, to represent the ultimate nature of God. It is the best we have got, yet it is not good enough. Are we, then, to deny the personality of God ? Certainly not, for our own personality is revealed to us as the self-conscious subject in

relation to a world of experience, an experience which can have no existence apart from such a relation ; and if we are to believe in the reality of the world revealed in our experience, we must believe in an infinite subject which embraces both us and our experience. What we are led to is that God is personal—that is, self-conscious and self-determined ; but that this description, great and true as it must be, is not great enough nor true enough to express the final truth of His being.

Here again is presented to our minds the thought which we found so useful when considering the problems of atonement and of the future life—the conception of *degrees of reality*. God is the most real of all beings. He stands at the summit of reality. The conceptions to which we attain are those which belong to our own position in the scale, and the reality which we ourselves possess is inferior—below the highest. For us personality expresses the furthest point of our own attainment as real beings ; it is therefore the best that we have and the most worthy of all our notions as a description of the highest. But it is not adequate ; it is true, but not complete.

We must, then, say that God is personal, but that He is more than personal. There is in Him some principle higher than the highest known to us.

When we have reached this conclusion it may seem that we have said all that can be said, if the argument here set forth be sound. But further thought will show that there is a great deal more which must be considered. There are principles of our thinking which we must obey, even when we are dealing with questions which pass out of the range of our intelligence. The most important of these is the principle of unity. No matter what view we may take of the ultimate reality, we must hold it to be one. It is impossible to end in a disconnected multiplicity. Every advance in our conscious life is towards unification. All our thoughts rest upon the belief in a final unity. Philosophy in all its forms is the effort to reach that great end. Science in its dealing with the infinite variety of the world moves at every step of its progress towards the same goal. In our practical life

we find the same principle at work. The difference between sanity and madness is the difference between a life which is in harmony with itself and one which is disorganized. The single eye and the pure heart are those which are unwavering in their devotion to the good. The double-minded man, who tries to serve God and mammon, or God and self, is in the way towards every evil. Even the sinner who has some fixity of purpose acquires strength. The dominance of the principle of unity may be shown by reference to every department of activity.

It is therefore plain that when we have concluded that the final truth of the Divine nature is superpersonal, we are compelled by those faculties which have conducted us to that conclusion to go at least one step further, and declare that in His ultimate nature God is one. He is not one person, for if that were so He would be but one among many—one limited by us as we limit one another. He is, rather, personal, and at the same time a unity which transcends personality.

And here we touch on another aspect of personality as it is known to us. If, in his relation to the world of his experience, each human person, as knowing and willing subject, occupies a position of universal significance, in his relation to other minds, his position is one of strict limitation. All human beings limit one another and together form a social universe. Each is but one among many. And there is no principle in personality which can so transcend the multitude of persons as to bring all into harmony. No one human spirit can attain either a point of view from which all minds can be seen as united in a single rational system or a position from which all wills can be subordinated to one supreme end. We can neither see other minds from within nor control other wills by any direct agency. Neither reason nor will as they exist in us possesses such transcendent power. Nor, again, can we even imagine reason or will to possess power of that kind in any other being. If there be power of that kind it must be superrational and supervolitional; it must be, in one word, superpersonal.

Now, we cannot believe that the Infinite Spirit is one among

a multitude of beings so limited. He must be the all-inclusive One. In Him all that, for us, hangs disconnected and incomplete must reach an ultimate unification and completion. And if this be so, He must be the most concrete of all.

Owing to the abstract terms in which metaphysical conceptions are expressed, we have fallen too much into the misleading habit of identifying the spiritual with the abstract. The mistake is a serious one. It has greatly hindered the real value of philosophical studies being appreciated. The truth is, that the spiritual is both more real and more concrete than the material. The best way to present this to our minds is to consider that every material thing that we know is but an element in our experience, and that our experience, when taken as a whole, is essentially spiritual. It is as possessing experience that man knows himself as a spiritual being. Now, the step from the material to the spiritual, as a step from the less real and the less concrete to the more real and the more concrete, helps us to realize the possibility of another step to something more real and more concrete still. In us the spiritual learns to know itself as the personal, and it is as personal that we find ourselves to be more real and more concrete than the material things which we know as elements in our experience. But when we have thus understood our position as personal beings, we make the discovery that we are but units in a multitude, and that there is in us no power to unify this multiplicity in which we ourselves exist as elements. To effect this final unification there is need of some ultimate principle more real and more concrete than we are, by means of which the whole universe may be brought into harmony. And where is this superpersonal and ultimate unity to be found but in God? "In Him we live and move and have our being."

This final step to which we are thus led as the inevitable result of following fearlessly the path indicated by the failure of the idealistic philosophy sets us face to face with a supernatural principle in the strictest sense of the term. We learn that we must encounter the supernatural whenever we come at all into close contact with any problem which concerns the ways in which

God overcomes the opposition of human souls to Himself. We can see at once why such truths as the Incarnation and the Atonement cannot be fully rationalized. We can also see reason for suspecting, in spite of the prejudices of our own time, that revelation, in the strict sense of the term, may have need of miracles.

But the greatest gain that we derive from our conclusion is that it enables us to see in the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity the very central principle of Christian theology and of supernatural religion. The doctrine of the Trinity is the necessary outcome of reflection upon the revelation of God in Christ. In manifesting Himself our Lord revealed both the Father and the Son. By His appeal to the inner witness in the heart to the truth He revealed the Spirit. Apart from this great revelation the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity could never have come to light. It is vain indeed for anyone to endeavour to prove it by purely metaphysical reasonings. Nowadays such reasonings by themselves leave us with little more than a vague sense of mystery.

But when, with the Christian doctrine in our minds, we turn round upon the conclusions to which we were led, we find them filled with meaning. The essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is that God is not just one Person. In Him personality is a subordinate principle. In His ultimate nature His unity is superpersonal. It is useless to attempt to conjure with the word *person*, and to seek to give it, in its application to the Persons of the Godhead, a meaning less clear and definite than it possesses when applied to man. For here we are dealing, not with abstract conceptions, but with facts. When we study the life of Christ we find ourselves face to face with the most strongly defined Personality in history, One in whom personal distinctness is as clearly marked as it could possibly be, One who distinguishes Himself, as a Person, from the Father, and yet declares His unity with the Father.

To sum up such teachings we need precisely such a form as that which we have seen to be supplied by the conclusions which

we were able to derive from the failure of philosophy and the tendencies of modern thought. Certainly, if modern thought has taught us anything on this subject, it is that there is no place for the old Unitarian conception. A solitary Person, enthroned above the universe, a lonely Sovereign in the skies, is now an impossible conception. Most of the arguments on which philosophical agnosticism relies are aimed at this doctrine and not at the Christian conception. There is, indeed, a place for agnosticism in the Christian creed, for agnosticism is just the assertion that the highest truths are superrational. When the agnostic movement of thought has been purged of its extravagance, we may find that it has for man a message of the utmost importance. For is it not the recognition by a whole school of scientific minds that there is a realm, and that the highest of all, which, relatively to the world of physical causes, is essentially supernatural?



Recreation and Religion in East and West.

BY THE VEN. ARCHDEACON MOULE, B.D.

THE thoughts and reflections contained in the following paper have been suggested to my mind by a special work in which I have been engaged during the intervals of my other missionary duties. I am translating into Chinese Dean Goulburn's "Thoughts on Personal Religion," the chapters appearing month by month in the pages of the *Chinese Christian Review*. I have reached, after two years' work, the close of Part III., and the chapter which is at present occupying my attention is on the subject of recreation.

Goulburn's original Preface is dated October, 1861, just two months after my wife and I reached China on our first missionary commission—the year when the Taiping rebellion was at the zenith of its power and success; the dark time of the continued struggle in the American States; the year of the