

freaks of Nature which make us marvel. He who would paint a Baptist—the stern and rough ascetic—must take for his background the rugged hills of Judæa and the Jordan wilderness. And especially upon our language do the surroundings of our life exert an influence. “Speak, that I may know you,” said Socrates, to one who was hiding behind the mask of silence. Go where we will our dialect will bewray us; the scenes and incidents of our life will filter through our speech. Running through the poetry of Mrs. Hemans we hear those undertones of the “ever-sounding and mysterious main;” and as we turn over those leaves, they fan us with the cool crisp sea-air. If we turn to Wordsworth we get amongst the quiet pastorals, the liquid music of the mountain stream and an air redolent of clover and of lilac. If we turn to the Psalms of David we find word-photographs of all those scenes that filled up his eventful life, from the cave of Adullam to the heights and solitudes of the hill Mizah.

(To be continued.)

MORALITY VERSUS REVELATION.

THE very air we breathe is loaded with doubt. We can hardly take up a public journal or a magazine without lighting on some reference to the scepticism of the time; we can hardly talk with our neighbours without hearing some objection raised to a point of Christian doctrine, or some bold assumption that the supernatural elements of the Faith have been for ever discredited by the discoveries of Science, or some timid foreboding that the waves of Scepticism will run higher and higher until they imperil even

the Church that is built upon the Rock, and perhaps sweep away the very Rock itself. Quiet meditation on the meaning of the Christian documents, or on the connection and harmony of the Christian truths, or their bearing on the conduct of life, has become very difficult, and a quiet enjoyment of "the comforts of religion" well nigh impossible: for the doubt in the air has got into our blood, so that we ourselves are troubled with inquiries and misgivings such as our fathers hardly knew, and can no longer, save by an effort, encounter the shock of assault with the full confidence of faith. It is no light addition to the inevitable trials of the Christian life that we should thus be compelled to a constant re-examination and defence of the truths we once most surely believed, and still believe, though now our faith in them is less tranquil, if not less assured. One longs at times to get to the rest "beyond these voices," to have done with strife, to sink—nay, to rise—into the peace of faith. But if doubt be in the very air we breathe, and if from and with the air it has passed into our blood, our wisdom is not to sit and sigh for certainty and peace, but to seek and labour for them by putting our doubts to the proof by an earnest and prayerful consideration not to be remitted till we have found an answer to the questions that trouble us, and are able to give a reason for the faith that is in us. When once war has been proclaimed between Doubt and Faith, peace is to be won only through victory.

But must this war rage at all times and in all places? must its clamour disturb even the sacred calm of worship? There are those who would turn

the pulpit into a mere arena of strife; who demand that the ministers of the Word should answer every sceptical book that issues from the press, however learned and elaborate it may be, and even every lecture that any pert light-headed lover of doubt and notoriety may deliver; who condemn them if they do not meet all comers, and are not for ever defending the Faith against its impugners and foes. Too often, it may be feared, those who take this tone are not so much moved by a single and sincere love for the truth as by that pleasure in fighting and witnessing a fight which seems native and inbred to Englishmen. But if it be the truth they love, and the victory of truth over error, they should remember that to defend the truth is not the sole, nor even the main, function of the pulpit; that it has also, and mainly, to expound and to apply the truth. They should remember that the sceptical books which give them so much concern are best answered *by books*; that, often, it is only by books that they can be adequately answered, and that these book-answers are very commonly written by those very ministers of the Word whose lack of zeal they are forward to denounce.¹ They should remember that those who engage in public controversy inevitably assume an attitude of mind in which it is hardly possible that any new truth should reach them, since they are not

¹ With its usual candour Scepticism has formulated an awkward dilemma for ministers of the Word. If they do not reply to the attacks it makes on the Christian Faith, *that*, we are told, is because they know it to be incapable of defence; if they do reply to them, we are told that they are paid and dishonest advocates whose prejudices and interests render their arguments worthless! If they do not speak, that is because they have nothing to say: if they do speak, they had better have held their peace!

weighing the force of what their opponent may say with a sincere desire to yield to it, but are on the watch to find joints in his armour, to detect the weaker links of his argument, and to snatch a victory by means not always nor scrupulously fair. Above all they should remember that, at least in the modern forms of attack and defence, many of the main arguments are necessarily above the level of a general audience; that they involve logical and metaphysical subtleties, as, for instance, when an attempt is made to prove the *a priori* impossibility of miracles; or that they require learning and patient study, as when the dates, authorship, and authenticity of the Scriptures are in dispute: and that it is a monstrous and cruel farce to persuade the simple and illiterate that they understand such questions as these, and are capable of pronouncing a decisive verdict upon them after listening to a few dashing one-sided sentences. We do not submit the subtlest and deepest problems of law, or science, or history, or philosophy, to a chance gathering of unlettered persons, who are naturally impatient of arguments they cannot grasp at the moment: why then should it be thought wise or fair to submit to them religious problems and difficulties which only those who are trained in logic and history, in dead languages and literatures, are competent to handle?

Nothing is farther from our thoughts than to speak with contempt of the simple and unlearned, or to deny their competence to form an opinion on the truth or the untruth of religious doctrines when those doctrines are appropriately and adequately brought before them. They are as able as the

wisest to weigh the worth of many of the arguments by which the revelation of God in Christ Jesus is proved to be true. All we contend for is that goodness is no guarantee of Greek, and no substitute for historical knowledge or literary tact. And the questions which are now being agitated, and for its remissness in handling which the pulpit is being condemned, turn upon points which can only be mastered by those who have been long trained to literature and scholarship.

For example, the book whose praise is just now in all the schools of Doubt and Unbelief—"Supernatural Religion"—deals with the two points already indicated, viz., (1) that miracles are incredible, impossible; and (2) that no one of the canonical Gospels was written till Christ had been in his grave a hundred years. Now there are not many Christian congregations which are capable of following even the leading arguments for and against miracles: but where, out of the universities, should we find a congregation competent to follow the arguments for and against the early date and (virtually) apostolic authorship of the Four Gospels, a congregation familiar with at least three ancient languages and with all the writings of the first three Christian centuries? Is it any injustice to say that no ordinary congregation, and much less any chance audience in a lecture-room, is capable of handling such points as these or of coming to a wise decision upon them? Is it not rather a grave injustice to persuade such persons that they are competent, and to lead them, by a partial statement of an infinitesimal part of the argument, to conclude either

that miracles are possible or impossible, or that the Gospels, instead of giving the testimony of eye-witnesses, are a late and inaccurate report of a questionable tradition?

It would be well, I think, if ministers of the Word, in place of taking part in such discussions as these, were to protest against them as a delusion and a snare, as an appeal on the most delicate and difficult subjects to utterly incompetent judges, as an attempt to snatch a verdict for, or against, the Christian Faith on grounds which can satisfy no thoughtful and devout mind. Let such questions be remitted to the press, their proper field; and let those in our congregations whose faith has been disturbed be referred to books in which their doubts will be wisely and fully met, or invited to that laborious course of study by which alone they can satisfy themselves that their doubts are groundless. Any slighter treatment of doubts on points so metaphysical or so scholastic is only too likely to do irreparable harm, either by leading those who believe to give a hasty and ill-considered verdict on grounds which they are sure to hear questioned by-and-by, or, by persuading those who are disposed to doubt to believe that the whole argument is before them and that they are competent to decide it, and so to lead them both to give their verdict against the Christian Faith and to close their minds against the incoming of new light.

But while we steadily refuse to submit to the simple and unlettered arguments on which only scholars and experts can form an opinion of any value, we should also be careful to bring before

them the arguments for the Faith which are well within their reach — arguments that often strike down to the very root and foundation of the Faith, and which the opponents of the Faith are most bent on bringing into doubt. The two leading contentions of "Supernatural Religion" can only be fitly dealt with by those who have the aids of culture and scholarship at their command. But the conclusion which the author of that book is most anxious to establish, and in which he lands *himself*, rather than his readers, in his final chapter, is one which, though it be of capital importance, is well within the reach of any thoughtful man ; it is one on which, as I will try to shew, we may fairly ask our Christian congregations to pronounce : and by bringing it frankly and fully before them we may do far more to counteract the pernicious influence of the book than by leading them into a maze of metaphysics or wearying them with the technicalities of scholarship.

In common with the whole school in which he is held to be a master, he expresses a boundless admiration for the ethics of Christ. He and they are never weary of telling us that Christ "carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity."¹ But they affirm both that his moral teaching was only "the perfect development of natural morality," *i. e.*, that it sprang from the brain of a man, not from the inspiration of God ; and that this morality will never take its proper place in our thoughts, or exert its due influence on the life of the world, until we give up all

¹ All the citations in this paragraph are from the last chapter of "Supernatural Religion" (vol. ii. part iii. chap. 3).

faith in the miracles attributed to Christ and resign the hope that in his words we have the very words of God. According to them, Christ did not come forth from the bosom of the Father; He did not work the wonders attributed to Him in the very documents from which we learn what were the moral truths He taught; He did not rise again from the dead, nor shall we: whatever is supernatural in the Gospels is a late and incredible addition to the true story of his life. All *that* we must give up, and shall be the better and the richer for giving up. We have all that we want in the simple and perfect morality of the Son of Joseph and Mary. "*We gain infinitely more than we lose in abandoning belief in the reality of Divine Revelation. While we retain pure and unimpaired the treasure of Christian morality, we relinquish nothing but the debasing elements added to it by human superstition.*"

Now here a clear and simple issue is raised. When we are told that we need no Revelation from God, and no Mediator between God and man, so that we have a pure and high morality like that taught by Jesus, even the most unlearned of us can, to a certain extent, judge whether or not the affirmation be true. If we and all men are so made that we need nothing more than such a morality as the wisdom of man has been able to develop, and are the better and happier when, undisturbed by miraculous evidence and supernatural claims, we embrace that morality "for its own excellence alone"—if we *are* so made, we surely ought to know it. At least when the fact is pointed out to us, we ought to be able to recognize it as a fact, and, throwing off the burden of supersti-

tion which oppressed our fathers, go on our way more lightly, and freely, and boldly. But do we? In our more thoughtful and religious moments, when darkness gathers round us, when we are bereaved and sorrowful, when we draw near to death, do we feel that, since we have been taught by human voices to love God and man, we no longer need to hear a Divine Voice, or to grasp a Divine Hand, or to possess a sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality beyond the grave? Through all ages the instinctive cry of the human heart has been for God, for the living God. And one's first thought on hearing these modern sceptics declare that we need no Revelation, no manifestation of God, and no Mediator between God and man, is a wondering inquiry whether they have ever felt the burden of mortal weakness or the oppressions of human sorrow. For our purest emotions and affections are not developed in their strength and beauty until they are called forth by appropriate experiences, until we drift into the due "environment." A daughter does not know what a mother's love is like, nor what a daughter's devotion should be, till she herself has a daughter. A son only enters fully into his father's anxieties and affection when he himself has a son to love and train. And so men do not seem to feel their need of God keenly until they have fallen into the clutch of fears and sorrows from which only God can deliver them. And it may be that even the hardest sceptics have experiences of pain and sorrow before them in which the mere knowledge of even the purest moral rules will prove to be utterly insufficient, and they will be constrained to crave some manifestation of the

Divine Presence, some revelation of the Divine will and purpose, some acknowledged Mediator who can speak to them of God and speak to God for them.

On the other hand, as they will retort, this craving for a visible and apprehensible manifestation of God of which we are conscious *may* be only the evil result of the superstitions in which we have been trained. They may say to us, "You have been bred to believe that Christ was God manifest in the flesh, that He now lives to intercede for you with God the Father, and to make known the will and love of God to you: and therefore it is very natural that *you* should feel the craving of which you speak. But, none the less, the craving is a purely artificial one, as you will find if you reject the very thought of supernatural revelation as a superstition and aim to practise the pure morality Jesus taught. The craving will soon die out of your heart, and then you will begin to live the true life of man."

Well, it *may be* that we, who have so long held the revelation of God in Christ Jesus as our most precious spiritual possession, are not impartial witnesses in this contention. But are there no witnesses to be had whose testimony is beyond suspicion?

We might call the whole pre-Christian world—excepting only the Hebrew race—into court, and learn from them how, when no clear and authentic revelation of the will of God was to be had, the heart of man so longed for Him that it everywhere made gods in its own likeness and listened to what they had to say, deceiving itself with a mere semblance of revelation, since no genuine revelation

was within its reach. We might call Plato, the wisest of the heathen, into court, and hear him confess that we shall never know what the Divine Will is unless some God or Spirit should come to earth in order to reveal it. But to these witnesses it might be objected either that they had not that pure and high morality which is better than any revelation, or that, having it, they too were the children of a dark age and were inevitably affected by the superstitions amid which they were bred.

Yet, in passing, it surely is rather hard upon us that, when we would learn what it is the heart of man really needs and craves, we are not only forbidden to listen to what our own hearts say, but are also forbidden to listen to what the hearts of men throughout the Christian centuries have said, if at least they were believers in Christ, and even to what the hearts of men in the pre-Christian centuries have said; and so are all but shut up for testimony to what modern sceptics tell us their hearts say. *That* hardly strikes one as a fair and reasonable mode of framing an induction. But, for the sake of argument, let us submit to it, and still see whether we cannot call at least one witness before us who shall be beyond suspicion.

What we want, then, is a man who has no supernatural revelation, but who has a pure and noble morality; and, should we be so happy as to find him, the point we have to determine is whether he finds this morality sufficient for his needs. Is such a witness to be had?

Let us summon *Job* into court, consider his conditions, and weigh his testimony. Now many dates

have been assigned to Job, from the time of Abraham down to that of the Captivity; but he has never been placed *after* Christ, and could not be, since the Hebrew poem which bears his name was translated into Greek more than two centuries before Christ was born. No critic has ever found it possible to doubt that this poem was given to the world in some age in which what is now called "the Christian *superstition*" had no effect, because it had no existence. And from the poem itself it is very evident that the hero of it had no supernatural and miraculous revelation of the will of God. That Job cannot see God, nor hear his voice, that he cannot get at the Divine meaning and intention of his terrible afflictions, is the burden of his complaint—a complaint which grows ever more piercing and importunate as the story sweeps on to its close. It is free throughout from a single reference to any scripture or to any form of worship which obtained among the Jews. All that Job knew of God and his will he had learned from tradition, from the developed and inherited conceptions of the human mind. He answers one condition of our problem, then; he has no revelation.

Has he also a pure and noble morality? In the whole range of literature there is no more beautiful and impressive description of human goodness than we have in the Chapters in which Job describes his manner of life before all the winds of heaven conspired to shatter his fortunes and to strip him of whatever he held honourable and dear.

"When the ear heard me then it blessed me,
And the eye that saw me bore me witness,

Because I delivered the distressed who cried
 And the fatherless who had no helper :
 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me,
 And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy :
 I put on righteousness and it clothed me,
 My integrity was my robe and my turban :
 I was eyes to the blind,
 And feet was I to the lame ;
 To the poor I was a father,
 And I searched into the cause of the stranger."

But why continue the quotation? God Himself is represented as pronouncing Job "upright and perfect;" and throughout the poem we see the afflicted patriarch rising into ever new beauty of character until he attains heroic proportions of nobility and goodness.

Here, then, was a man without a supernatural revelation, yet possessed of a morality as pure and large as any the world had seen—loving God and loving man with all his mind and heart and strength. *Did* his pure morality content him? Did he feel that it met and satisfied every craving of his spirit, so that he lacked nothing? Why, the whole poem is a piercing outcry for that very Revelation which modern Scepticism pronounces superfluous, and reaches its only natural close in an immediate manifestation of God to the soul of the afflicted patriarch. The one pain of which even patient Job was impatient, which he could not bear, was that he could not see God, nor hear his voice, nor discover the meaning and the equity of the calamities which God was inflicting upon him.

"O that I knew where I might find Him!"

is the constant cry, and outcry, of his heart; "O that

I could constrain him to go into judgment with me, and listen to my pleas, and disclose the end of the miseries with which I am oppressed !”

Nay, more : as he iterates and reiterates this cry for intercourse with God, for a visible manifestation of the Divine Presence, he rises—explain it how we may—into a prophetic strain, and forecasts the very Revelation which centuries after his flesh had seen corruption was vouchsafed to men in the Man Christ Jesus. For, though he yearned to behold God, yet, conscious of his own weakness, he feared that, should he behold Him, he might be so astounded and oppressed by the Divine Majesty as that he would not be able to open his lips before Him. And so, again and again, he breaks out into the cry, “ O that there were a Daysman, an arbiter, an umpire, to stand between us, One who could lay his hand on us both,” who could not only pronounce but enforce his decision, and compel both parties to the suit to submit to it. So profound, so well-understood, was his sense of the need of a Mediator, as well as of a Revelation, that when Elihu intervenes he begins by assuring Job that such a mediator has been sent *in him*. “ The Spirit of God quickened me,” he says, “ the inspiration of the Almighty giveth me understanding,”—so that he can speak for God : and yet he goes on, “ I am a man like unto you, I also am moulded of clay ; dread of *me* need not affright thee, nor *my* dignity weigh heavily upon thee,”—so that he could also both listen to man and speak for him.

Here, then, the conclusion of modern Scepticism is brought to a decisive test, and utterly disproved ;

and that by a witness beyond suspicion. Job had no revelation; he had a pure and noble morality: yet so far from being content with that which he had, and, having which, we are told, he could want nothing more, his single and constant prayer was for a Divine revelation, a supernatural revelation, nay, for a Mediator through whom God should disclose his will to men and men draw near to the Majesty of Heaven unafraid. The craving which gave him no rest was precisely that which we are assured it was impossible for him to experience, a craving to see God for himself, and even for the advent of a Mediator who should be the Brother of man while he was also the Fellow of the Lord of hosts. In fine, what he complained of was that he was being judged and condemned by an unseen, invisible, incomprehensible God, whose will was a dark and terrible mystery to him—the one only kind of God which Scepticism will permit us to retain, grudging even this concession to human weakness: and what he longed for, what he all but demanded was precisely that which St. John assures has been granted to us now that “the Father hath committed all judgment unto *the Son*,” “and hath given him authority to execute judgment also because he is *Son of man*.”

CARPUS.