

and third—'The Beliefs of the Greeks and Romans concerning a Life after Death,' and 'The Supernatural in Ancient Poetry and Story.' Nor is the religious interest even in these very keen. Professor Hardie is a literary rather than a religious critic. Extremely pleasant to read is his volume throughout, and that is all that Professor Hardie sets out to do for us. Besides the two essays named there is another which comes close up to the religious sentiment, and contains perhaps the deepest thinking in the book. It is the essay on 'The Feeling for Nature.' Mr. Hardie sees and shows that, to the Greek, Nature rather more than 'half revealed the Soul within.'

Now end with two useful schoolbooks, both handling the Mythology rather than the Religion.

Mr. Berens<sup>1</sup> describes the myths separately and simply. No ætiology is obtruded. There are some useful little woodcuts scattered throughout the text.

Two American writers have published a cheap and unbound volume in 'The Students' Series of Latin Classics,' on Greek and Roman mythology.<sup>2</sup> The little volume is based on Steuding, and is written with considerable grace. One useful feature is the quotation of the most important passages in the classics which describe the gods and goddesses and heroes.

<sup>1</sup> *The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome.* By E. M. Berens. Blackie. 2s. 6d.

<sup>2</sup> *Greek and Roman Mythology.* By K. P. Harrington and H. C. Tolman. Amer. School and College Text-Book Agency.

## Christ's 'Yea.'

BY THE LATE REV. W. A. GRAY, ELGIN.

'But in Him was yea.'—2 Cor. i. 19.

ST. PAUL is here vindicating himself from a charge of inconstancy. He had promised a visit to Corinth, but had changed his mind. And he feared lest his enemies might avail themselves of the fact to lower his character and depreciate his apostolic authority. 'He is a trifler,' they might say. 'He is a trimmer.' 'He is a shuffler.' 'He is a man who does not know his own mind, saying Yea in one breath, Nay in another.' 'Impossible,' says St. Paul, 'impossible that fickleness like that should account for my change of plan. In doing as I did, I took my orders from Christ, following the leading He afforded, the path He revealed. And with Him there is no instability, with Him there is no double-mindedness, with Him there is no hesitation. He knows neither variableness nor shadow of turning.' With men, in the execution of their own plans and the achievements of their own ends, it may often be 'yea, nay'—'yea' first, and 'nay' afterwards. But in Him, that is Christ, through all His actions and through all His dealings it is absolute, uniform, and perspicuous, 'yea.'

'In Him is yea,'—the phrase finds an echo in modern literature. In that powerful and suggestive book in which Carlyle depicts the history of a human soul, there is a chapter of peculiar impres-

siveness which he terms the 'Everlasting yea.' In that chapter he brings the life he delineates through the stages of negation and doubt to the secret and centre of ultimate certainty and of ultimate calm. What was that secret? What was that centre? In what, after searching, did he reach and lay hold of the 'Everlasting yea'? In contempt of pleasure, in annihilation of self, in submission to circumstances, and in earnest, strenuous, and useful work. True so far as it goes! Stimulating so far as it goes! I believe the teaching of Carlyle at this point has awakened not a few who have read it to a deeper conception of duty, a higher ideal of life. But the fault of Carlyle's message lies in this, that he places the ground of the certainty and calm inside a man himself, his views and his efforts; whereas that certainty and that calm find their basis outside of man—on an external foundation, in an external source. For perfect certainty and for perfect calm we need a something or a some one beyond us as our standard, our security, our rule. And He whom we need is revealed to us, He whom we need is commended. It is Christ. Get hold of Christ, and along with Christ, you get hold of what? All that enables you to brave life, all that enables you to face death,—the reconcilia-

tion of human contradictions,—the solution of human problems, and the foundation of human peace. Elsewhere we have 'nay,' the nay of negation, or at best but 'yea-nay,'—the yea-nay of doubt, hesitation, inconsistency, or change. In Christ, and in Christ alone, we have simple, steadfast, and immutable 'yea.'

## I.

Now we shall take the thought widely. And in taking it widely, we begin by reminding you that, in order to be 'yea' to us, Christ in the first place was 'yea' to God. What I mean is, that with Him is the 'yea' of *mediatorial compliance*. We take Him in relation to the law and will of God. And we say that in Him was the 'yea' of redeeming obedience—absolute, perfect, and sincere. And where but in Him do we find it,—this yea of compliance, this yea of obedience?

Not in the world. The attitude of the world to the law and the will of God is a 'nay,'—bold, uncompromising, defiant,—'Nay, but there is no God.' Or, if God be granted, it is 'nay' still. 'Nay, but we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' 'Nay, but our lips and our lives are our own, who is Lord over us?' 'Nay, but it is vain to serve God.' 'Nay, but we shall not surely die.' The characteristic attitude of the world to the law and the will of God is an attitude of negation. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Through all its threefold manifestation, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, it sounds its plain and emphatic 'nay.'

And as we do not hear a 'yea' in the world, neither do we hear a 'yea,' or, at any rate, a complete 'yea,' among the saints. In them there is nothing more than a 'yea' and 'nay,' the new man and the old, grace and nature, the willing spirit and the weak flesh. We have imperfections in the most perfect, immaturities in the most mature, failures in the most faithful and reliable. The best and the most we can say of any saint in relation to the law and will of God, is that the 'yea' waxes stronger, and the 'nay' waxes feebler as the days or the years pass on. To the end, the dubiety remains. No mere man since the Fall is able perfectly to keep the commandments of God.

But turn from the world with its 'nay'; turn from the saints with their 'yea-nay,' to Him of whom the text speaks, even Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. And in Him is 'yea' and

nothing but 'yea'—the 'yea' of perfect obedience the 'yea' of perfect consent. And stage after stage, as the Father's plan was unfolded and the Father's will was announced, we find that 'yea' going up from Him, out of the inmost places of His soul. 'Behold a body have I prepared for thee.' 'Yea, and a body will I assume.' 'Behold a message will I give thee.' 'Yea, and a message will I spread abroad.' 'Behold a business will I lay on thee.' 'Yea, and I will ever be about it,—I will glorify Thee on the earth, I will finish the work Thou hast given me to do.' 'Behold a cup will I mix for thee,—a baptism will I appoint for thee, a cup of agony, and a baptism of blood.' 'Yea, I will accept them; how am I straitened till they be accomplished.' So in Him was 'yea,'—the 'yea' of mediatorial obedience. And it was uttered, not only to show us what perfect obedience is like (ah me, if that were all, the sight might move us to despair—so little could we compass it, so little could we rise to it), no, but to atone for our own non-compliance, substituting for our graceless 'I will not,' Christ's glorious 'I will'; for our rebellious 'nay,' Christ's free 'yea'; thus revealing a divine obedience, which, when received by faith, makes the disobedient sinner just.

## II.

Let us pass to another thought. In Christ is the 'yea' not only of mediatorial and substitutionary obedience, but the 'yea' of *divine assurance*. We look at Him, not merely in His relation to the law and the will of God, but also in relation to the questionings and problems of man. And we say that in Him there is the 'yea' of divine affirmation. Take two illustrations in passing.

(1) Take the beneficence of God. Where but in Christ have you any assurance of that? True, creation, to a certain extent, bears witness to its maker's kindness; creation gives testimony to its maker's joy. You go out to the sunshine of spring—health in the veins, hope in the heart. And nature around is strung to your key. You look at its pleasant sights—the banks that are starred with primroses, the hedges that are bursting with leaves. You hear its pleasant sounds—the rapture of the lark as it mounts in blue air, the murmur of the stockdove as it hides in green alcoves, the hum of the fir trees as they bend in the passing breeze. And surrounded by the brightness and music of the whole, you say, 'Well, it is a happy world

after all; of a surety God is love.' So, too, you say, in reference to society, which in its own way also has its tokens of the benevolent heart of God. You are set in a goodly heritage. You are placed in a happy home, with sufficiency in your basket and store, and children clustering round your knee. And as a sense of your comfort is borne in on you you have the selfsame belief to confess—'it is a happy world after all.'

And yet, it is a faith for fine weather. It is a creed for a summer day. When the landslip comes sweeping down from the peaks above, mingling torn meadows, shattered homesteads, and mangled human beings in one common ruin, is it so easy to say that God is love? When sickness stalks forth from its hidden ambush, enters your home, lays its hand on the little one who was the light and the joy of it, and after days and weeks of slow agony, leaves the figure still and cold in its little shroud, is it easy to say that God is love? Yes, to some, creation is bright for the time being, society is congenial and favourable. But to others this world is a dark and a terrible place, heavy with sorrow, and haunted with doubt. Think of the failure of well-meant efforts. Think of the waste of unanswered affection. Think of the sharp cries of pain and bewilderment that continually go up from a sorrow-stricken earth to an impassive and irresponsible sky. And is it so easy to say that God is love?

But we look away unto Jesus. And what we find not in creation, what we find not in society, we find in Him—a disclosure of the boundless beneficence of God. What do we see as we trace that life? Love from the first to the last of it. Love condescending in Christ's incarnation; love restoring in Christ's works of healing; love forgiving in Christ's gifts of pardon. And all on the basis of love atoning in Christ's tale of sufferings—agony and bloody sweat, cross and passion, death and burial. So, then, it is to Christ we have to look for a witness to the love of God. In Him is the explanation. With Him is the key. What says the hymn?

God's thoughts are love, and Jesus is

The loving voice they find.

His love lights up the vast abyss

Of the Eternal mind.

Is God a father? Has life a purpose? Has heaven a being? The answer of Christ is 'yea.'

(2) Or take the resurrection of the dead. Where,

save in Christ, His person and His teaching, have you a certainty for that? Not in self or in nature. The message of self and of nature is at best but a 'yea' and a 'nay.' Our longings and our instincts breathe a timid and a tremulous 'yea.' So, too, do certain signs and presages in creation around. They whisper an expectant 'yea.' 'Yea,' says the snowdrop, as it springs from the bulb. 'Yea,' says the cornstalk, as it shoots from the seed. 'Yea,' says the butterfly, as it bursts from the husk, to soar and to circle like a winged flower among the sunbeams and the scents of the summer air.

But then comes sense, to disturb and to darken all with its dull and bewildered 'nay.' 'Nay,' but it cannot be. 'Nay,' for the grave keeps all. 'Nay,' for dust unto dust and ashes unto ashes is the final wind up of the whole. But we turn to Christ, and in Him is 'yea.' And what a 'yea' it is. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, that the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.' 'And this is the Father's will that hath sent Me, that of all He hath given Me I shall lose nothing, but shall raise it up at the last day.' 'I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live again; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never see death.' That is a 'yea' indeed, reinforcing and certifying all men have hoped or dreamed with the weight of eternal omnipotence and eternal truth. In Christ's great affirmative our timid, tremulous 'yea' becomes loud and triumphant. The 'nay' of gross sense is overborne and beaten down. And faith can sing, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

So in Christ is the 'yea' of a divine assurance, in relation to the questions and perplexities of man. To whom shall we go but unto Him? Oh the certainty that is in Christ! And, after all, what men crave in religious teaching is certainty—clearness, definiteness, decision. Especially do they crave it as life goes on; and in the lessening area of time, they are alive to the vastness and nearness of eternity, when matters such as these shall be all in all. What will serve us in the view of *that*, is neither pleasant probabilities, nor is it interesting speculation, nor is it clever tournaments of

theological argument; but something direct, imperative, final. And is not this to be found in the teaching of Christ? Is it not there in His matter—so definite, distinct, uncompromising, with the lines of division He lays down between friends and foes, between sin and holiness, between hell and heaven? Is it not there in His very manner,—so calm, so serene, so authoritative,—never arguing, but always declaring, never apologising, but always commanding. Brethren, if the Lord Jesus Christ were a man, this would be the most intolerable presumption. We could not understand it. We could not put up with it. But if Christ be more than mere man, if He be the very Son of the very Father, sent down from the cleft heaven to tell us of the heart of God, then all becomes clear. It is only right. It is only fitting. In Him is 'yea'—the yea of certainty in Himself, the yea of divine assurance to men.

### III.

But again, in Christ there is the *yea of willing welcome*. Here we take Christ, not in His relation to the law of God, nor in His relation to the questions of man, but in His relation to the applications of seeking and anxious sinners. And we say that in Him is the yea of a gracious welcome without by-ends and without recall. Without by-ends—that means a sincere welcome. Without recall—that means a lasting welcome.

(1) The 'yea,' in the first place, of a sincere welcome. Are there not welcomes that are insincere? Are there not welcomes that partake of the nature of a 'yea-nay.' There is the 'yea' of the lips combined with the 'nay' of the heart—that is the welcome of hypocrisy. There is the 'yea' of the lips combined with the 'nay' of the manner—that is the greeting of churlishness. There is the 'yea' which is joined with the 'nay' of some hard or unkindly condition—that is the welcome of reserve, austerity, constraint. How different with Christ! In Him is a 'yea' that is 'yea' indeed—absolutely genuine, absolutely gratuitous, absolutely free. Well speaks St. Paul of the simplicity that is in Christ, without partiality and without disguise.

When will some people learn this? When will some people learn that Christ really means what He says, and seeks to be dealt with by men in the self-same frank and ingenuous way He seeks to employ Himself? I speak of the timid. I speak of the

scrupulous. I speak of the morbidly diffident. How they often doubt Christ! How they often suspect Christ! As if, back of the 'yea' He so constantly addresses to them, there were a lurking and a grudging 'nay'! Have you never met with those who, from natural despondency, or from physical ill-health, will not take the Saviour at His simple word, and believe that the great salvation is for them? Why, it almost seems as if they regarded Christ, not as a gracious, willing friend, but as a cautious and grudging official, full of promises and formulas, slow to commit Himself, and always leaving loopholes of escape.

If you plead with such people, Has Christ not said so? they have always a 'but' in reply. 'True He has said it; but does He not mean something else?' 'True He has said it; but does He really say it to me?' Why, brethren, is that a fair or a kind way of meeting the overtures of One whose purposes are transparent as the flawless crystal, whose motives and whose aims are as pure as the sunlight on a summer morning. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'; 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out,—how can you by any kind of perverted ingenuity put yourself outside the scope of such glorious invitations as these! Surely His 'yea' is 'yea' without any shadow or admixture of 'nay' at all. What though other voices bid you doubt—the voice of conscience, the voice of teachers, the voice of the enemy himself? Christ is greater than them all. Let Him be true, though everyone else be a liar! The welcome of Christ is a sincere welcome.

(2) And the welcome of Christ is a lasting welcome. All welcomes do not last. Some abide not because of change. The feelings alter. The relations alter. The bearing alters, and sometimes you are made plainly aware you have to do with the 'nay' of indifference, repulsion, and dismissal. Some welcomes, we say, abide not because of change. And some abide not because of death. One and another who would never have failed us, through alteration of feeling in themselves, drop off from the well-known places. They pass away from the long familiar work. And instead of the 'yea' that smiled in the light of bright eyes, and thrilled in the grasp of kind hands, there is nothing now but the 'nay' that sounds through empty

rooms and sighs upon silent graves. But in Christ and the friendship of Christ there is nothing but 'yea'—'yea' everlasting, 'yea' unchanging, 'yea' from the first, 'yea' to the last. As His welcome is exalted above all insincerity, so is it exalted above all removal and above all change.

Who then can e'er divide us more  
From Jesus and His love,  
Or break the sacred chain that binds  
The earth to heaven above?

Experience only rivets its links. Death only shortens its length, bringing us nearer and binding us faster to Him to whose person we are joined.

#### IV.

In Christ we have the 'yea' of eternal security. We speak here of the doubts of anxious and timid believers. And we say Christ is the 'yea' of everlasting security. For the question may sometimes arise, True, Christ may always be willing to abide with *me*, but shall I be willing always to abide with *Him*?—He may be always content to be my host, with a place for me in His heart and His home, but shall I be always content to be His guest, going no more out? And the answer again is 'yea.' But in whom does that answer dwell? From whom does that answer come? Is it self with its frames, self with its feelings, self with its efforts? Ah! if self at any time answers 'yea' in its moods of elation and success, it will as often answer 'nay' in its moods of depression and defeat. Look away, then, from self altogether. Look to Christ. In Him is the guarantee that you look for, the guarantee which implies a perfect security, the guarantee which should issue in a perfect peace. Your hope of salvation is as certain as Christ can make it, assured to you by a three-fold 'yea.' He is 'yea' in the *steadfastness of His covenant engagements*, He is 'yea' in the *efficiency of His atoning work*, He is 'yea' in the *provisions of His forestalling grace*. Be not afraid, only believe.

Is your question this, Shall I run the race, shall I win the crown? He at whose call you have started, He by whose grace you go on, may be trusted to see to that. 'Yea' is His answer this day. It is My Father's will. It is My

Father's appointment. In the ages bygone He foreknew thee. And whom He foreknew, them He also predestinated. And whom He predestinated, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified. There is a 'yea' indeed, unalterable as God's own character, firm as God's own throne.

Thus I have tried to bring before you the meaning of this great and significant phrase: 'In Him is yea'—the 'yea' of *mediatorial compliance* in regard to the will of God; the 'yea' of *divine assurance* in regard to the perplexities of man; the 'yea' of *willing welcome* in regard to those who seek, the 'yea' of *eternal security* in regard to those who find. What think ye of Christ? What think ye of the certainty that is in Christ? Do not we daily learn that all is uncertainty, apart and away from Christ? The age is an age of uncertainty. The atmosphere is an atmosphere of uncertainty—intellectual, religious, social. Old standing-ground crumbles. Old beliefs disappear. Everywhere around us the rising tide is soaking, searching, sapping. And no one can tell what cherished theories, what ancient institutions, will go next. Where shall we look for permanence? Where shall we turn for rest? Where but in Christ? In Him is 'yea,' and in Him too all other things worth the using and preserving are 'yea' also, exempt from dissolution, secure from change, even the love of the friends He has lent us, the love of the work He has set us, the truth and the authority of the Scriptures He has given us, and the safety and stability of the Church He has formed for us. Try Him! Trust Him! There may be many a change in store for you. There may be many a change in store for the world around you. By and by there will come the greatest change of all, when the heavens above shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works thereof shall be burned up. But among all such shaking, there are things that cannot be shaken. And among these are the work, the word, and the love of Christ, and the blessedness, spiritual and eternal, of all those who put their trust in Him.