

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE GIFFORD LECTURES.¹

THE MASTER OF BALLIOL ON THE EVOLUTION OF THEOLOGY.

Dr. Edward Caird, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, delivered the first of his opening series of Gifford Lectures in Glasgow University, on January 10, within the Humanity Class-Room. The Very Rev. Principal Story and the Professors in the Arts Faculty accompanied Dr. Caird to the platform, and the class-room was crowded to excess by students and the general public.

Dr. Caird, who was received with applause, began by saying that a great part of the scientific and philosophical work of last century had been the application of the idea of evolution to the organic world and to the various departments of human life. And as religion was the most comprehensive of all these interests, it was inevitable that the attempt should be made to throw light on it by means of this idea. In a set of lectures delivered in another university he dealt with certain aspects of the researches into the history of man's religious life which had been prompted and guided by this conception. There is one aspect of this development, he continued, which is worthy of attention on which he could only touch incidentally in these lectures. This is the growing importance of reflective thought; in other words, the conscious reaction of mind upon the results of its own unconscious or obscurely conscious movements in the sphere of religion. Early religion does not trouble itself about its own justification; it does not even seek to make itself intelligible. It manifests itself rather in a ritual than a creed. Nevertheless, man is from the first self-conscious, and he is continually on the way to become more clearly self-conscious of himself and of all the elements and phases of his being. The time must at last come when he turns back in thought upon himself to measure and criticise, to select and reject, to reconsider and remould by reflexion, the immediate products of his own religious life. And, even if we allow that reflexion cannot originate entirely new moral and religious movements, it is inevitable that it should become continually more powerful to disturb and to modify religious faith, and that, in consequence, man's hold of beliefs which he cannot justify to himself should become more and more relaxed. Nay, it is inevitable that the results of reflective criticism should enter more and more deeply into the very substance of religion itself, so that it becomes scarcely possible for those who hold it to avoid theorising it.

Thus, to take an obvious instance, the later religion of the Jews was no longer that simple religious sentiment which bound the race of Israel together by binding

¹From the *Glasgow Herald*, by John Sandison.

them all to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It had become enriched with wider thoughts by the chequered experiences of the national history, by the captivity and exile, which, as it were, tore it away from its natural root and forced it to seek a new spiritual principle of life; by the manifold relations of sympathy and antagonism into which the Jews were brought with other peoples. Thus it was that the most narrowly national of all races gradually became the organ of a spirit of prophecy, which looked forward to the universal reign of a God of all men, whose worshippers should be distinguished, not by race, but only by the energy and purity of their moral life. For it may fairly be said that, if the prophets still put forward a claim for the supremacy of Israel, it was rather as leaders of humanity in the path of spiritual progress—that in them all the families of the earth were to be blessed—than as a specially privileged and exclusive nationality. A religion that thus rose into the atmosphere of universality, freeing the spirits of its worshippers from the bonds of time and place, was no product of mere feeling or unconscious reason. It was so far lifted above all that was local and particular that it could encounter the speculative thought of Greece almost upon equal terms. It had become itself something like a philosophy, and could therefore in Alexandria and elsewhere make terms with any other philosophy, and blend and coalesce with it into a new product. And what is true of the religion of Judaism is still more true of Christianity. Springing out of a Judaism already deeply tinged with Greek ideas, developing itself under the constant pressure of Greek influences, Christianity was first what we may call a reflective religion,—a religion which gathered into itself many of the results of both Eastern and Western thought. Already in the New Testament it is not only a religion, but it contains, especially in the writings of St. Paul, the germs of a theology. Hence, strictly speaking, it has never been a religion of simple faith, or, if it ever relapses into such a faith, it immediately begins to lose its spiritual character, and to assimilate itself to religions that are lower in the scale. . . . It is impossible to sever action and feeling from thought, nor can thought exist without striving to systematise and justify itself as science, and a living religion must show its power in making its votaries as fearless in encountering the trials and perplexities of the intellectual as those of the moral life.

Here, however, we meet with one of the greatest difficulties, a difficulty which more than any other embarrassed the development of religion during the last two centuries; for philosophy and reflective thought has often been regarded, and not seldom has regarded itself, not as the ally and interpreter, but as the enemy of the faith in which religion begins, not as evolving and elucidating, but as setting aside and altogether destroying, the beliefs which are the immediate expression of the religious life. And sometimes it has undertaken to provide a more or less efficient substitute for them. This was the claim put forward in behalf of the so-called natural religion by many representatives of the eighteenth century, and it has been supposed to be put forward by the adherents of some later systems of thought. On the other hand, there have been, and there are, those who hold that the teaching of reason and philosophy upon religious subjects is mainly negative. Such a view of reason as the rival or enemy of faith is naturally met on the other side by the proclamation of faith as the enemy of religion. . . .

Whatever side we take of such a controversy, the result seems to be that there is a deep and apparently incurable schism in the spiritual life of man,—a schism between man's immediate experience and the reflexion in which he is involved whenever he attempts to understand himself. Now, it seems to me that we can to some extent sympathise with the motives of both sides in this controversy. On the

one hand, a faith which is not seeking intelligence is a faith which is stunted and perverted, for, as we have seen, the very nature of religion, and especially of the Christian religion, involves and stimulates reflexion upon the great issues of life. Hence the attempt to defend Christianity by questioning the right of the intelligence to criticise it is suicidal. The bulwark which it sets up for the defence of religion is also a barrier in the way of its natural development, and a religion which does not develop must soon die. The faith that does not seek but shuns and repels knowledge is already, and must become more and more, irrational.

The exclusion of science from the sphere of religion—meaning, as it does, the exclusion of religion from the sphere of science—necessarily leads to its withdrawal from other spheres of human life, until, instead of being the key to all other interests, it becomes a concern by itself, and, we might almost say, a private concern of the individual. On the other hand, it seems difficult to admit the claim of science at all without making it absolute, so as to leave no place for faith, and that whether religion be conceived as irrational or as rational. For while, in the former case, religion is set aside and Agnosticism takes its place, in the latter case it seems as if faith must equally disappear, because reason provides a complete substitute for it,—a *religio philosophi* which is based on a definite philosophical conception of the nature of God, and a definite proof of His existence. Thus, if it be admitted that a scientific interpretation of religion is possible, it might seem that this interpretation must take the place of religion itself; that if faith can be explained by reason, reason must altogether be set aside, and become its substitute. Moreover, it is impossible that religion can be rationalised without being greatly modified and transformed; and if such change be valid, how can we regard the first form of religion as more than a temporary scaffolding which has to be removed when the building is completed. On the other hand, it is impossible to admit the right of intelligence to examine and criticise up to a certain point and no further. . . .

There cannot be a doubt that this is a real difficulty which has produced, and is now more than ever producing, a division in our life, and ranging men in opposite ranks, not on the ground of individual or class prejudice, but on the ground of what are really the highest interests of man's intellectual, moral life. . . . Much remains to be done ere such difficulties as have been raised can be solved. But I think there is already in our hands in the idea of evolution a kind of Eirenicon or means of bringing the opposing sides nearer to an understanding with each other. In particular, that idea enables us to throw new light upon the relations of the unconscious or unreflective to the conscious or reflective life as stages or factors in the development of man, and thus, as it were, to break off the horns of the dilemma. For, in the first place, the very idea that there are two factors or stages of one life involves that they are not governed by two absolutely antagonistic principles, but that there is an essential link of connexion between them. Their difference and opposition, however far it may reach, must ultimately be conceived as secondary, and capable ultimately of being explained from their unity. Their conflict, in short, must be taken as analogous to the conflict of different members or forms of vital activity in one organism, a competition which in the healthy organism is always subordinated to co-operation, or, at least, only ceases to be co-operation at a lower stage that it may become co-operation at a higher. It is thus that in organic evolution greater differentiation of function proves itself to be the means to deeper integration and more concentrated unity, and in this unity nothing that was valuable in the lower stage of life is ultimately sacrificed, however much the form may be changed.

If we may apply this idea to the case before us, we can, as I have indicated, admit no fatal opposition between the unconscious and unreflective movement of man's mind and that which is conscious and reflective. We must maintain that, though reason may accidentally be opposed to faith, its ultimate and healthy action must preserve for us or restore to us all that is valuable in faith. Or, at least, if it necessarily comes into collision with faith in certain lower stages of development, yet as it advances this antagonism must disappear, or be reduced within ever narrower limits, till in the highest it altogether vanishes. We are too often disposed to say, *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum*, and to forget that justice sustains the universe and cannot be the cause of its ruin. And so we are too apt to think the division of faith and reason to be incurable, and to suppose that we must choose the one and reject the other, forgetting that a faith that really springs out of our rational or spiritual nature or commends itself to it cannot be fundamentally irrational or incapable of being in its essence rationally explained and defended, and that a reason which is unable to find an intelligible meaning in some of the deepest experiences of human souls must be one-sided and imperfectly developed.

Hence, while we cannot deny the relative opposition of the two forms of spiritual life, and are indeed obliged to recognise it as one of the most potent factors in development, on the other hand we cannot admit that it is an absolute opposition. Nor is it even possible to be satisfied with a conception of progress that has often been advocated in the last century, by no one more forcibly than Thomas Carlyle, the conception of an alternation of two different eras of human history—an era of intuition, faith, and unconsciousness, in which the minds of men are at one with themselves and work joyfully and successfully in the service of some idea which inspires them, but which they never seek to question or analyse, and an era of reflexion in which the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought, in which faith grows weak, and the symbols which formerly satisfied their souls and united them with each other are dissected and torn to pieces by scepticism. Apparently Carlyle has little consolation for those who are born in such an unhappy age of transition, except to bid them wait for a new inspiration, a new imaginative synthesis, to set up another symbol in place of that which has disappeared. Least of all has he any trust in the reflective intelligence, in the work of thought, as capable of bringing about such a synthesis or substantially contributing towards it.

But a deeper consideration of the process in question may show, as I have already indicated, that the two great movements which constitute it, the movement of unconscious construction, faith, and intuition, and the movement of reflective analysis and critical reconstruction, are not essentially opposed, but rather the necessary complements of each other in the development of man's spiritual life; and that, as it is essential to faith that it should develop into reason, so the criticism of reason, as it is a criticism of its own unconscious products, cannot be ultimately destructive or merely negative in its effect. Its searching fires may, indeed, burn up much of the wood, hay, stubble—the perishable adjuncts that attach themselves to the edifice of human faith—but it cannot touch the stones of the building, still less the eternal foundation on which it is built. I will not conceal my conviction that its dissolving power must be fatal to many things which men have thought, and still think, to be bound up with their religious life, but I do not believe that it will destroy anything that is really necessary to it. Christianity is not like some earlier religions essentially connected with imaginative symbols, which must lose their hold upon man's life and mind so soon as he is able to distinguish

poetry from prose. It had its origin, as we have seen, in an age of reflexion, and the first movement of its life was to break away from the local and national influences of the region in which it was born. It lived and moved from the beginning in an atmosphere of universality, and in spite of the reactionary influences to which in its further history it was exposed, and which gradually affected its life and doctrine, it never quite lost its essentially universal character. Hence when its official representatives have turned it into a system of superstition and obstruction, its own influences have often inspired the reformers and revolutionists, who attacked and overthrew that system. It has thus, we might say, brought "not peace but a sword" into the life of men, because it would not let them rest in any partial or inadequate solution of their difficulties, or in anything short of the ideal of humanity which is set before them.

Such a universal religion, built upon the idea of the unity of man with God, and therefore on the conviction that the universe in which man lives is in its ultimate meaning and reality a spiritual world, cannot be justly regarded as a transitory phase of human development, or as a creation of feeling and imagination which science and philosophy are bound ultimately to displace. Whatever may become of the special doctrines in which it has found its first reflective expression, it contains a kernel which is essentially rational, and which cannot but gain greater and greater importance the more man's spiritual life is developed. It has in it a seed of ideal truth which is one with man's mind—the *anima naturaliter Christiana* of which Tertullian speaks—and which, therefore, must grow with its growth and strengthen with its strength. And philosophy, in spite, or rather because, of its critical reaction upon all the products of Christian thought and life, must in the long run supply one of the most important of all the agencies by which that seed is brought to maturity. It must show itself neither as the enemy nor as the substitute for religion, but rather the essential form of its consciousness both of itself and of its relations to all the other interests of man.

When I say this, however, I am conscious that I am anticipating a conclusion which cannot be proved by any such general considerations as those that have been set forth in this lecture. The place of philosophy in relation to religion can hardly be appreciated by any other method than that of tracing out the main lines of their connexion in the past and up to the present day, showing how theology has evolved itself out of religion, and how it has reacted upon it, how it has attacked and criticised it, and how finally it has sought ideally to reconstruct it. In this sense the history of the evolution of theology and theological thought has a very practical interest for us.

This subject, however, covers an immense field, and I can only attempt to deal with a small part of it in such a course of lectures as the present. I propose to say something about the movement of theological thought in the Greek philosophers. This part of the subject may seem at first to have less immediate interest for us, as it is prior for the most part to the rise of Christianity, and therefore seems to be remote from those theological interests which are kindred with our own. This, however, is not more than an appearance. On the contrary, these speculations have great importance for us for two reasons.

In the first place, because of their influence upon Christian theology, for it was from Greece that the early fathers of the Christian Church borrowed the forms and processes of thought, the general conceptions of nature and of human life, of, in short, the general points of view or mental presuppositions which they brought to the interpretation of the facts of Christianity. A very large portion of what we

call Christian theology is really Greek philosophy in a new application. One of the most important problems, therefore, is to inquire how far Christianity was developed, and how far it was transformed or modified by the medium into which it was brought.

And, in the second place, Greek philosophy was itself one of the greatest efforts of the human mind to reason freely on the highest subjects; in fact, we might say that it was the first effort made by men armed with all the weapons of speculative thought, and freed from all those outward and inward hindrances that prevent philosophical thought from being thorough and faithful to itself. And though we may have much greater knowledge of the world than the Greeks, and in some directions better methods of thinking, yet I do not think we can ever afford to neglect what has been done by Plato and Aristotle, by the Stoics, and by the Neo-Platonists. To study Greek philosophy is still a first essential for him who would trace the evolution of theology.

THE HUGO GROTIUS CELEBRATION AT DELFT, JULY 4, 1899.

The appearance of the report of the Peace Conference at The Hague in 1899 by its Secretary Mr. Frederick W. Holls,¹ Member of the Conference from the United States of America, recalls vividly to mind a notable festive ceremony which took place during the meeting of the Conference and which lent a graceful historic sanction and significance to its proceedings. This was the festival in honor of the great Dutch jurist, scholar, poet, and statesman Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), given on the day of our greatest and most sacred national holiday, the Fourth of July, in the historic church at Delft, as a tribute from the American people to the Dutch, in recognition of the many elements of our national greatness which we have derived from them and of the many reasons for which we owe them gratitude.

The Dutch are closely connected with America by historical traditions. It was Hollanders that first settled on the banks of the Hudson (1609) and that founded the city of New Amsterdam (1614), now New York, and it was they who formed the backbone of our Revolutionary resistance in the Hudson river region. From Delft-Haven sailed the *Mayflower* bearing the Pilgrim Fathers who brought to America the principles of toleration which had grown up in them during their stay in the Netherlands and of which Grotius was an apostle. From Leyden through Delft-Haven and Plymouth Rock, and again through New Amsterdam, came the free public school. The Province of Friesland gave to our independence its first formal recognition, and it was a Dutch captain that first saluted the stars and stripes. Moreover, the United States of America took their name from the United States of the Netherlands. Said the Honorable Seth Low, the American Commissioner upon whom devolved the task of thanking the city of Delft for the hospitality accorded to the assembled guests: "We have learned from you not only that 'In Union there is Strength,'—that is an old lesson,—but also, in large measure, how to make 'One out of many.' From you we have learned, what we, at least, value,

¹ *The Peace Conference at The Hague, and Its Bearings on International Law and Policy.* By Frederick W. Holls, D. C. L., a Member of the Conference from the United States of America. New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1900. (Pages, 572. Price, \$3.00.) The addresses referred to in the present sketch are also to be found in a memorial pamphlet entitled: *Proceedings at the Laying of a Wreath on the Tomb of Hugo Grotius in the Nieuwe Kerk, in the City of Delft, July 4th, 1899, by the Commission of the United States of America to the International Peace Conference of The Hague.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. 1899.