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THE
CHURCHMAN

SEPTEMBER, 1891.

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GOD'S REVELATION IN NATURE.

WE cannot know the whole of nature, because it is God's work, and God seems to have worked from the beginning till now; therefore no finite creature can know all that God has done during an infinite time and within an infinite space.

This work of God is a revelation of God. God's own revelation of Himself in nature is not only infinite, because so far as we know nature is infinite, but is also manifoldly infinite. It is in this wise: every part is so related to all other parts that no one part can be fully known unless in connection with all those parts. So there are parts which, we may say, contain the whole; that is, the finite, rightly understood, is relatively infinite.

That which is manifoldly infinite, by stretching beyond itself, and not losing itself in the outside immeasurable, but becoming an infinite within an infinite, is found in God's revelation of Himself in Holy Scripture, no one fact of which can be perfectly known. It is found, also, in God's revelation of Himself to the ages, not one of which can be searched out unless every age is displayed, for no one age is complete unless the completion comprises all that led to the age, and all that led from the age. It is likewise found in God's revelation of Himself to every individual. There is such revelation, or we could not be conscious of it; and this stretches from the one to the many in its effects, and from the many, in larger effects, to all.

Every one of these revelations is true and perfect. At the same time every one is final and yet progressive. We learn it thus: Nature, at every moment, is that wonderful thing which, containing all that is, and being the garment of God,

cannot be added to, being already all, but does, nevertheless, every moment grow with manifold growth, because the Creator every moment brings new things from the infinitude by the sending forth of new creative powers from within Himself. The revelation of God's self in Scripture is also infinite, so is the revelation to the ages and to individuals; for these revelations, being of God, partake of that infinity in every part which is only possible of limitation as to meaning and effects by the illimitable wisdom and majesty of the Revealer.

If revelation of every sort is thus infinite, how can the paradox be maintained that this infinite is capable of extension? We may think thus: Our own individuality, and the distinctness and separateness of every atom, are a sort of personality which is really a world in itself. Every man, every portion of matter, is a meeting-place where all the world's forces and all the world's effects, and that for the past and not less for the future obtain by locality in the man a conscious personality, and in the above an unconscious personality. This personality, rightly considered, is a miniature of the Divine Personality, which, containing all other things transcendently, is only and ineffably self-contained in itself. This old truth becomes new in all new worlds, new times, and new individuals.

He who expects to arrive at the fulness of all this, physically, vitally, sentiently, intellectually, morally, must recast that expectation. Then taking up as rudimentary facts—eternity, as personified by the eternal; and infinitude, as concrete in the infinite; and all power, as individualised in God—he will have Trinity, which is the source of all life, all intelligence, all goodness, in one omnipresent Will whom we worship—Jehovah.

GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN CHRIST

is both full and true. In Christ was the fulness of Godhead. The revelation is full: there will not be another Christ. Out of this fulness flows that progression of energy, of light, of love, which enables the capable to use science, history, criticism, experience, so that the fulness of Christ becomes their fulness. Christ is that ever-flowing river which flows through all time both past and to come. He streams into us. Then we ourselves give of that we received, with all that is human in us, and with all the Divine aids which make that human more effective and God-like. Then we, age after age, emptying ourselves into the great onflow of heavenly and earthly truth, are co-workers with God until the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord, and heaven is replenished with the children of men.

They then see the beauty of the Lord in the land that is very far off.

To deny that the earth will be filled with glory, and that man will dwell in heavenly felicity, is that wickedness, the greatest of all indiscretions, which clothes itself in formulated atheism. This atheism asserts that the God of religion is not the God of science and philosophy. The assertion of the few is disproved by the many scientific and philosophical who are Christians, and by the many Christians who are men of science and philosophers. The assertion is also rendered ridiculous by the effort to separate the scientific domain from the religious territory, for all truth is one. When truths seem to oppose they do so because our ignorance misunderstands and our wilfulness perverts them. Remove ignorance, subdue wilfulness, and we shall soon see that science and Scripture are correlatives; that both in part are by faith, both in part are by knowledge, certainly by intelligence; that, indeed, the two are one truth with different aspects, the higher rationality belonging to religion.

Gaps in science greatly coincide with our gaps in faith. As the former are filled up by verified research, the latter are occupied by light and power in the measure that a man desiring to know God finds, by sweet confirmatory experience, that he himself is known of that same God.

People who place themselves in the gaps, not to fill, but enlarge them into a reasonable dwelling-place, are inconveniently placed when the gaps are closed. It is then they utter the absurdity: "The more we know of the universal work done by the Eternal Power, the less we know that a personal God exists." It is not less perverse than for a man to declare: The more I know of the unity in all diversity, and of a master energy in all forces, the less I perceive of an all-controlling One.

Christ amongst men is the all-controlling One. In Him was, and is now that He is on the throne, that unity of person with every one of us in our special individuality which constitutes Him not less the representative of all than an example of every one in particular. He bare our sins in His own Body on the tree. That Body is now on the throne. There is not a man for whom Christ died not. There is not a man whom Christ represents not before God. Is it a question of science, of work, of suffering, of righteousness, of power to save? Christ is the all-sufficient for all and every. His righteousness is a glory covering the world, and an exactly-fitting garment for every individual. He suffered the just for the unjust. Great sinners and little sinners find Him a sufficient Saviour. In work He did all that His Father gave

Him to do. He said "It is finished," and this enables Him to supply whatever lacks in us. As for science, the spirit of investigation, of perfect truth, the unrestingness till all is done, till all is revealed that God would have us know, and that the world contains or will contain, all these are from Christ, because Christ was God manifested in our flesh, the God-man of two natures, divine and human, perfect God and perfect man in one Person.

PERSONAL REVELATION.

Here is the rub. Religious men are not able to worship a mere force that does not know them, will not help them, cannot love them. Nor can unbelieving scientific men. Their talk of silent worship, reverence for the unknown, of feeling for one without feeling, of reverence for that which is incapable of receiving reverence, is like the dressing up of nothing and then deceiving ourselves with a fictitious embodiment which, though embodied, we say is no embodiment. Of course all that ends in nothing. No, alas! it ends in sin most inexcusable and in time most irreparable.

Talk of worshipping a personal God as being anthropomorphic! Well, it is less like a man to worship a power that is not person, wisdom that has not even the consistency of a vapour, and goodness that knows nothing about itself. No man can do that unless he is self-mutilated, and not self-mutilated for the kingdom of God's sake, but an emasculated poor creature who boasts of his impotence, not knowing that his manhood long ago departed.

These people are, of course, weakly sensitive, and, as a sort of concealment for their shame, make a boast of intellectuality and freedom. They fight for what they most need and least possess, as the Swiss formerly for money and the French for glory. The Swiss are not now so much in need, so prefer to dwell in peace. The French are not sure that they are gloriously sufficient, and remain unable to put away that sensitiveness which makes itself silly in feverish attempts to show that they are cleverer than all the world; as to being truly good, only those of them who are God's children think of that. Their cure will be found when all natural research shows the whole of nature to be a representation as a whole and in every part of the supernatural, that every material thing is essentially a miraculous thing, that life is fruitful and honourable in the measure it is laid out in righteous action and patient perseverance, and that faith, united to high aspirations, as it supplies the sublimest thoughts, inspires and enables to the grandest acts.

It is time for all to think that physical exertion on our

part is a proof of personality; that the purpose for which we make that exertion being always for something concrete, and referring to things and persons, makes even the purpose itself individual. Carry this to Christ. He confirms our idea of eternal duration by giving us individually eternal life. He did not give the idea; that was bestowed when we were made in the image of God. Life is with God. He is eternal life; with Him alone is immortality. Hence our sense of everlastingness, as persons, comes by gift, and to give is personal, both in the giving and receiving. The Father, having life in Himself, gave to the Son to have life in Himself, and the Holy Ghost, being of both, yet truly one, hath also life in Himself. This life, given by the Father through the Son, and wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, gives endurance to every man's individual nature, and is a personal life. This personal life is a phenomenon. All phenomena are material reflections of their substantial essences in the unseen; therefore our personality is a finite revelation of that infinite personality, who creates, redeems, and sanctifies.

Passing from thinking to living, the exercise of will is that personal action by which, as persons, we worship and serve a personal God. We catch in music and all artistic work eloquent and fitting expression. Divine ideas, set in the music of the spheres, songs without words, wrapping our weariness in rest, and weaving into harmony, that tells of will sublime, conciliates the perplexing discords of every troubled life. God's will in those ideas is more than a brilliant star glittering on the far verge of our human horizon. It is God in us.

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine, enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify His hidden residence.—Milton's "Comus."

Going from our own life to all that is in being, we find the personality of God imprinted everywhere. Whatever is, even the smallest, possesses an individuality which is a personality of its own. Atom attracts atom throughout the universe. Sphered stars, separate and distinct, move in harmony, and all the hosts of heaven are in familiar intercourse, yet every one rules as a monarch. Metals, earths, animals, plants, the infinitesimally small and the infinitely large, throughout the immensity of space and vastness of time, are all in their own beings and existences individual, and, therefore, personal; they are the eternal and infinite appearing in time and space as the great personal power, spirit, wisdom, ruling all.

JOSEPH WILLIAM REYNOLDS.