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religion, as the Anglican Church of to-day. This historical fact well deserves the consideration of those amongst us who seek for models of custom and precepts of dogma in the darkest, most corrupt, most immoral period of Western Christendom.

D. MORRIS.

ART. II.—"THE SPIRIT ON THE WATERS."[1]

EVERY attempt to translate eternal and abiding truth into such a form as shall render it specially helpful towards the solution of the problems and needs of the present age deserves most careful consideration; such a translation, we presume, is the real object of the book before us.

The book is not an easy one to describe adequately, or to criticise justly within moderate limits; for, though not a large one, the aphoristic style—designedly chosen—has enabled the author, within a moderate compass, to touch upon an enormous range of subjects. No one, we think, can read the book without feeling that there is very much in it which is both true and helpful. The writer is thoroughly in earnest, and his conceptions of the moral standard, moral ideal, and moral power of Christianity are exceedingly lofty. Yet, after the most careful consideration of his argument, we feel sure the position he assumes is wholly untenable, and that his theory of the "origins" of Christianity has that fatal note of weakness—it does not explain the facts, it does not account for those historical phenomena consequent upon the appearance of Christianity, for which any true theory of the origins of our religion must give an adequate explanation.

A genuine seeker after truth is quite justified in saying to himself, "I will spend my best energies in considering these origins in the colourless light of an impartial historical investigation and of the unbiassed reason. I will, as far as possible, forget any conceptions I may have formed, and any tendencies I may have inherited. I will start *ab initio*, carefully examining the history of Judaism previous to the appearance of Christianity, the conditions of the epoch which saw its birth, the original documents in which the life of the Founder is narrated, and the early history and subsequent progress of the movement."

[1] "The Spirit on the Waters: The Evolution of the Divine from the Human," by Edwin A. Abbott. Macmillan and Co., 1897.

Such a purpose claims at least our careful consideration. But we may ask ourselves, How far is its fulfilment possible? How far has it ever been accomplished? Let any reader consider the various works devoted to this purpose with which he is acquainted, and then let him ask himself how far the *original purpose* of their authors has been maintained.

The purely inductive method, especially when the evidence to be considered is so extensive, is necessarily extremely slow. The temptation to form and state a theory before the whole of the evidence has been considered is almost too strong a one for human nature to resist. And, having once fallen a victim to this temptation, another lies close at hand—to show how many of the facts we have already gathered seem to be explained by the theory we have formed. But what of the facts which do not suit the theory, and which refused to be explained by it, even when stated in its most general terms? It is here that the peril of the theorist lies. He may so easily be tempted to minimize the importance of sayings and doings which do not agree with his preconceptions. He begins to ask himself, "Are these really of primary importance? May they not be accretions due to external sources, and having no vital connection with the movement? May they not even be due to misunderstanding of the real spirit of the movement in its very earliest days?"

Dr. Abbott has a theory of the origins of Christianity. We suppose the second title of his work, "The Evolution of the Divine from the Human," may be supposed exactly to describe it. The theory is not a new one. Since the doctrine of evolution has become generally applied, a multitude of writers have put the same theory forward, in one or other of many different forms.

The idea of evolution is a tempting one. Expressed with sufficient breadth, it seems so widely applicable. Why should not the theory of evolution apply to Christianity as to morality, or politics, or social science? Do we not see the process going on in Christianity before our very eyes? Can we not trace the evolution of creeds, of worships, of Churches? Are not our ideas of God Himself, of man's true relation to God, of man's proper relation to man, constantly being developed? Can we not, historically, trace their development from age to age? These are questions which, at the present time, are constantly being asked.

But may there not here be a confusion of terms, indicating a confusion of thought? Are "evolution" and "development" necessarily identical? Do they always imply the same process? We do not accuse exact thinkers of confusing the terms. But we do say that in the minds of the multitudes who accept,

rather than arrive at theories, they are apt to imply the same thing. Merely because the term evolution has in some people's ears a more scientific ring about it, they are apt to use it when the word "development" would much more exactly describe their meaning.

No one will deny that there has been a development in Christianity. Have there not been many developments in different ways and directions? But the term "evolution," as used by Dr. Abbott, implies much more than is usually implied by "development." Scientific evolution generally implies not merely a succession of states, each differing from the preceding more or less minutely: it implies also a natural transition (by means of natural forces, acting according to natural laws) from a state very different from the one under immediate consideration. For instance, the thorough evolutionist believes not merely in the evolution (or, rather, development) of civilized man from savage man: he believes also in the natural and gradual transition of civilized man from the protoplasm. But surely we might accept the truth of the first of these articles of scientific belief without committing ourselves to the statement that we believed that every part of our complex civilized human nature had been evolved by natural forces from the lowest form of organic existence. Applying this to Judaism and Christianity, we may be quite prepared to admit that in the Old Testament, and in the Christian Church, we see wonderful developments; but when we come to consider (as far as we can learn them) the religious hopes and ideas and standards current in Palestine and Alexandria in B.C. 10, and then compare these with the ideas, hopes and standards enunciated in St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians (certainly written before A.D. 60), we may be forgiven if we say that we cannot find any satisfactory parallel in history of a like development (or evolution) in a space of seventy years.

The idea of evolution is paramount in Dr. Abbott's work, as the following analysis will show. The volume is divided into five books, the first of which is entitled "Natural Christianity," the name, of course, indicating the writer's standpoint. This first book is largely preliminary, and deals with certain philosophical principles, such as "Faith in a Supreme Will, or God," "How to avoid a Wrong Conception of God," "The Highest Conception of God." Under the first of these subsections the author contests the principle enunciated by the late Professor Huxley in his Romanes Lecture ("Evolution and Ethics"), "that the cosmic process has no sort of relation to moral ends." Dr. Abbott is, in one sense, a more thorough evolutionist than Huxley. If we have read

Huxley's lecture correctly, he saw two processes at work, each antagonistic to the other, the first being the cosmic, or natural, the second the ethical. Dr. Abbott, on the other hand, sees but one set of forces; to quote his own words, "Cosmic nature, taken in its fullest sense, shows signs not only of ethical and non-ethical, Divine and diabolical *results*, but also of an ethical or Divine *purpose* subordinating the non-ethical to the ethical, the diabolical to the Divine" (p. 19). This purpose, according to the writer, is evolved as the result of the action of cosmical forces only—that is, of forces acting solely through cosmical means and by cosmical processes. The theory of the "natural evolution" of Christianity seems to demand this condition. To admit the action of any other force in the production of the Christian life is simply to grant the interference of what most people imply when they speak of the supernatural.

In the second and succeeding books the author proceeds to apply his theory—rather, perhaps, to justify and illustrate it by his reading of anthropology and sacred history. The second book, entitled simply "Evolution," strikes us as the most important in the volume. Here we have traced for us the evolution (1) of man, (2) of Israel, (3) of the Old Testament, (4) of the Jews, (5) of the Deliverer. It is in this last section that imagination seems fairly to take the place of history. Its very first words are ominous.

"Presupposing that the new Deliverer of the Jews is the result of evolution, Divine but natural, what may we expect Him to be, regarding Him as at once the highest representative and the ideal redeemer of His nation?" (p. 145).

Following this, largely imaginary, chapter comes Book III., entitled "Records of the Life of Christ." It was because we find the examination of these "records" following the imaginary picture, that we spoke of the danger of the theoretical method—the danger, that is, of first describing an imaginary result, and then of showing by a selection from a body of "records" that the imaginary is borne out by the actual, or perhaps, rather, that what might have been expected to take place actually did happen.

The opening paragraph of this third Book runs: "We proceed to consider the principal acts of Jesus in their order; as they appear, apart from the miraculous element in the records, but not apart from our frank recognition of a unique Person prompted by the Holy Spirit to come forward as the Deliverer of Israel" (p. 169).

In connection with these words we would ask our readers to notice carefully the following extracts, bearing in mind the phrases "*apart from the miraculous*" and "*a unique Person.*"

[Is it not curious, though, to find these two expressions side by side?]

"Jesus had a power of instantaneously curing certain diseases, especially paralysis, and that form of mental and moral disorder which was attributed to an indwelling 'demon' or 'spirit.' This power He could exercise in an extraordinary degree, and could even transmit, to some extent, to His disciples, so that the very enemies of the early Christians admitted it" (p. 175). But if Jesus could instantaneously cure paralysis, why not deafness or dumbness? Is not the principle of selection at work here?

Once more. On p. 179 we read, in a description of our Lord's healing of the paralytic, the following: "The multitudes saw a paralyzed body swinging from the roof in a hammock. The Son saw a paralyzed soul lying before God's throne, and crushed down with the chains of Satan. A moment more, and He beheld the Spirit breathing health into it, and the Father lifting and breaking its chains. What the Father was doing above, that the Son was bound to do below."

Reading these extracts together, we wonder what Dr. Abbott means by "apart from the miraculous," and a "recognition of a unique Person" and "a power of instantaneously curing . . . paralysis." And, in the second extract, we would ask whether the bodily healing by the Father was in any sense accomplished through the agency of the Son. Does not the author constantly give away and then take back again? Did he first determine to treat the life of Jesus "apart from the miraculous," and then did he find, when he came to examine the conditions more minutely, that his theory was insufficient —that it required modifying by the inclusion of "a unique Person," and the "power of instantaneously curing certain diseases"?

The next section of the work, Book IV., and which is by far the longest, deals with "The Doctrine of St. Paul, or the Evolution of the Christian Faith." Would it not be much more correct to speak of the doctrine of St. Paul as *a development* of the Christian Faith? Surely Pauline Christianity is not the only direction in which, or line upon which, the faith has developed. What place, we ask, is to be assigned to the First Epistle of St. John? Was this evolved later from Paulinism? Or is the line of development apparent in this latter to be ignored?

But to return to Book IV. The first two sections are upon "The Divine Sonship" and upon "The Father, the Son and the Spirit." What Dr. Abbott means by "the Divine Sonship" is perhaps best explained by his words in the preface,

where he asserts that the purpose of his book is to state his reasons "independently of miracles . . . for accepting in the fullest spiritual sense the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Atonement and the Divinity of Christ."

In these days the term "spiritual resurrection," or "the resurrection in a spiritual sense," is a favourite expression with some teachers. Are such teachers equally prepared to speak of a "spiritual Incarnation," a "spiritual Atonement," or a "spiritual Divinity"? What, under an examination conducted upon the Socratic method, these terms might be shown to mean we should be curious to learn. And we cannot help wondering how, "apart from the miraculous," Dr. Abbott explains St. Paul's statement, "Who, being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man." This, surely the most stupendous of all miracles, is not an evolution of the Divine from the human.

In speaking of the Trinity, Dr. Abbott, while carefully guarding himself against Sabellianism ("when speaking of 'characters' or 'persons,' we mean something more than different aspects of one being," p. 267), at the same time constantly speaks of the Spirit as "it," giving as his excuse for doing so the following reason, "because thus we imperceptibly receive the lesson that what we call impersonal in the ubiquitous law of things may be really personal—if 'bearing witness' and 'making intercession' are personal acts" (p. 268). Is there not, we ask, something here very closely akin to pantheism? And surely it is somewhat difficult to identify the Spirit whose influence Dr. Abbott seems to define as "the ubiquitous law of things" with the Spirit whose personal influence and action is defined in St. John xv. and xvi.

We have left ourselves but little space to speak of the last section of the work, Book V., "Law and Spirit, or the Evolution of the Later Churches;" though in some respects this is the most interesting portion of the whole. Here, of course, the author is on firmer ground, but we must confess we should again have preferred the term "development" to that of "evolution." Dr. Abbott points out clearly how soon the Christian faith was influenced by Judaistic and pagan traditions, and how quickly there arose a reaction from the spirit to law, and from faith to dogma. His notes upon the history and true meaning of this last word are particularly useful, and his warnings as to how the advantages of dogma may be more than counterbalanced by the corresponding disadvantages (p. 390) deserve the most careful attention of all Christian teachers. The next two sections—"How the Sacraments become the Basis of a Law" and "On Priests and Sacerdotalism"—contain much useful teaching. The follow-

ing chapter, upon "The Errors and Compensations of the Reformers," is less satisfactory. Considering the system under which the earlier Reformers grew up, and considering the spirit of the time in which their work had to be done, we cannot wonder that they did not show quite the same spirit of tolerance, or quite the same spiritual grasp, which may characterize their true successors at the present time. Brought up in a Church as strongly imbued with the idea of an external law as was the Empire, of which that Church became the visible representative, we cannot wonder if the early Reformers sought for an infallible law in the Scriptures, and that they convinced themselves that they also found in them what they sought.

At the end of the volume there is an appendix upon "Modern Prayer and Worship," which is well worth reading. It contains some very beautiful thoughts and also some very useful hints.

In the author's final words, which are upon "hope," he comes back to his first thought. It is enough, he thinks, to know "that, through the mystery of sacrifice, what is mortal will be ultimately merged in that which is immortal, and what is human will pass by dying unto that which is divine" (p. 475).

In these last words, in spite of their beauty, we seem once more to detect what we feel to be the fundamental error of the book. Does it lie in a confusion of terms? Does Dr. Abbott mean by the words "human" and "divine" what we suppose those words usually imply?

Did Jesus cease to be "human" after His resurrection and ascension? Shall we one day cease also to be human? If this is the author's meaning, we cannot accept it. The Tower of Babel, an enterprise evolved from the human, and developed upwards storey by storey, did not reach heaven. Was not its building stayed through a confusion of language? But the City of God came down out of heaven. Our hope of union with the Divine is not in such a transformation into it that the human entirely ceases to exist. We believe the Divine came down from heaven and took our nature upon Himself, thereby giving to our human nature, in all its fulness, the possibility of that close and abiding *communion* with the Divine hereafter which we believe to be the true development both of the Christian soul and of the Church of Christ.

W. Edward Chadwick.