to give us the further history of that piquant character. "The Surprising Adventures of Cleg Kelly, Christian," have begun to appear in *The Sunday School.*

Professor Pfleiderer has completed his Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. And if he has not completed the annihilation of the miraculous in the Bible and out of it, as he has honestly tried to do, he certainly *has* completed the discomfiture of the University authorities who made him the invitation. What may be the ultimate effect of these able and confident but extremely one-sided lectures, it is impossible yet, at least, to say. But it was not possible to let them pass unanswered. So three of the leading theologians in Edinburgh have been engaged to lecture on the self-same subjects and let us have some glimpse of the other side. The lecturers are Principal Rainy, Professor Orr, and Professor Dods, and the lectures are proceeding now. As soon as they are finished, the volume containing them will be published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark.

Professor Pfleiderer's own lectures are about to appear in two handsome volumes published by Messrs. Blackwood.

Messrs. T. & T. Clark make several other interesting announcements. Brockelmann's *Syriac Dictionary* is well under way. Next there is a new book, the last we are likely to see, by the late Professor Milligan. It deals with that subject which Dr. Milligan made his own more than all other subjects, and on which we are most anxious to hear him speak again—the Resurrection of the Dead. Professor Salmond has almost ready two new volumes of his popular Primer series. *The Sabbath* is his own handiwork, and he may safely count upon a reception for it. The Rev. Charles A. Salmond, M.A. (whose relationship to Professor Salmond is not so close as some have supposed) has written the other Primer. Its title is—*Our Christian Passover: A Guide for Young People in the Serious Study of the Lord's Supper.*

Further, Messrs. T. & T. Clark announce a new work by Professor A. B. Davidson of the New College, Edinburgh. While men have been waiting for his Theology of the Old Testament, Dr. Davidson has been spending himself upon this volume, *A Syntax of the Hebrew Language.* For he has had the desire for a long time to write this book, that it may serve as a companion to his *Hebrew Grammar.* It is needless to say that Professor Davidson's *Syntax* will be welcome.

The Letter and the Spirit.

"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."—2 COR. iii. 6.

BY THE REV. J. H. BERNARD, D.D., TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

WHEN he wrote these words, St. Paul seems to have had in his mind the contrast between Judaism and Christianity. He rejoices that he no longer feels himself bound to preach the necessity of obeying all the minute precepts of the Mosaic law: he is a minister of *a new covenant*, which counts single-mindedness and honesty of purpose as far more pleasing to God than an unceasing routine of petty observances. Obedience to the letter of the ceremonial law of the Hebrews is not required of a Christian man: in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, he is called to that higher and more difficult form of obedience which strives to enter into and fulfil the spirit of the divine commands. Judaism had then reached a period in its history, when devotion to the letter of the principles upon which it was founded had ceased to be the spring of spiritual life. And the apostle of the Gentiles, who saw that the law in the past had done its work of preparation for the gospel, also saw that nothing short of a final rejection of its particular enactments could enable the new religion to make its way among "all sorts and conditions of men." We know how, in spite of opposition within the Church, St. Paul's view prevailed; we know how the recognition of the Christ as *the fulfiller of the law* was found to be quite consistent with the abandonment of its literal commands; and we thankfully acknowledge that the Church of Christ, in casting away the bondage

of the pentateuchal code, was able to retain for herself all that was noblest and most spiritual in the teaching of the psalmists and prophets of Israel. The rejection of the letter did not involve the loss of that spiritual inheritance to which the faithful are entitled as the true children of Abraham.

The principle asserted here by St. Paul applies with justice to many topics not, as it seems, immediately present to his mind. All the words of genius admit of manifold application far different from the intention of him who first used them; and in even a deeper sense is this true of the words of Holy Scripture. They apply with as much freshness to the circumstances of to-day as if they had been recorded and transmitted for the sole instruction of our generation. There is a catholicity, a wideness of range, in the language of the New Testament writers, which impresses us the more, the more familiar we become with their words. And we shall thus not be untrue to the teaching of St. Paul if we try to see how his principle holds good in directions other than those thought of by him. *The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* The order of religious development is from the straitness of the letter to the freedom of the spirit. There always comes a stage when blind obedience to rules will fail to satisfy, when the demand for principles becomes imperative.

This we all recognise in the teaching of children. We give children simple rules of conduct for guidance, and, as long as they are children, their consciences will approve them if they obey, will reprove them if they disobey, the commands imposed. But when they grow a little older, they begin to ask for reasons. They want to know why the rule is laid down at all, what is really gained by enforcing it, what ill effects to themselves or to any one else would follow from disobedience. And then we have to give them principles; we explain to them that, as they are approaching an age of responsibility, they must not think so much of the letter of the rules which guided them when children, as of the spirit which they were intended to express. They may now *put away childish things.* And, as we all know very well, the attempt to enforce rigid rules upon those who have arrived at an age to understand and appreciate principles not infrequently ends in disaster. There is a certain stage at which we must pass from the narrowness of the letter to the freedom of the spirit.

And, among children of a larger growth, we think far more highly of a man who uses the reason that God has given him to determine the right course at a perplexing crisis, than of one who governs his life by rules of casuistry. The slavery of logic is a real bondage; the cruel, the unrighteous, the foolish course is sometimes taken by a man just because he is afraid to trust his own judgment, and prefers to shift the responsibility of decision from himself to his principles. Often indeed does it happen that the letter kills, while the spirit quickeneth.

This is not only true of individual life: it is true of national life. In the beginnings of the Constitution, the law enacted by Parliament was the only safeguard that was deemed necessary for the well-being of society; and, at first, the administration of the Court of King's Bench was sufficient for the needs of the nation. But as time went on, and as the fabric of society grew more complex, it was seen that injustice was often done through a too strict adherence to the letter of the law. *Summum jus, summa injuria* has passed into a proverb. It at last became manifest that it would not be possible to lay down rules which should cover every contingency that might arise; and provision was gradually made for legal tribunals which should be guided by the principles of the Constitution rather than by stereotyped formulæ. The existence of our Courts of Equity is a standing witness to the recognition by the nation of the truth that *the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* Edmund Burke is reported to have said that "no man understands less of the majesty of the English Constitution than the *nisi prius* lawyer who is always dealing with the technicalities of precedence." We may or may not accept this severe judgment of a great statesman; but, at all events, it is abundantly plain that as the Courts of Equity have grown, the majesty of the law has been in no way impaired: rather have its declarations been received with a larger confidence. Thus as the stream of the national life has grown deeper and wider, its direction has been from the iron-bound fastness of literal enactment towards the free ocean of righteousness and charity. The tendency in the discipline of a nation, as in the discipline of a child, is to advance from the letter to the spirit.

We may trace something of the same law in the history of religion. In the period preceding that great religious revival which we call the Reforma-

tion, there were not wanting indications that punctilious obedience to the rules laid down by the Church was failing to promote true spiritual life. The traffic in indulgences and the abuse of penance were but the outcome of that spirit which would measure the morality of conduct by its conformity to certain prescribed maxims of casuistry. To many of these maxims in themselves there is no serious objection; they were the result of the multiplied experience of men meditating upon the perplexities of life and wishing to determine, once for all, what the right course was in all possible cases. But once it was rediscovered that true religion does not consist so much in a man's outward acts as in the spirit in which he does them, a natural reaction set in; and the whole edifice of casuistry with its superstructure of penances and indulgences received a shock from which it has not yet recovered. The great importance attached by the Reformers to faith as contrasted with works is only fully explicable when we consider it in this light. Men saw that *the letter killeth*.

In a speculative point of view the problem assumed a somewhat different aspect, and the whole question seemed to turn on the authority of the Church. If the Church was indeed the abode of the Spirit of Christ, it was asked, How could she have been mistaken in her dealing with souls in the past—nay, how could she ever be mistaken at all? We can hardly understand in our altered circumstances how terrible must have been the shock to devout men and women to find that the teaching of the Church was no longer considered infallible by those to whom they looked as their spiritual masters. "General Councils," say the Thirty-nine Articles, "may err, and sometimes have erred, in things pertaining unto God." Why, if that be so, what is the guarantee of religious truth? Is not the Church's authority absolutely bound up with her infallibility? We can readily see *now* that authority and infallibility are two very different things, and we thankfully recognise and gladly defer to the authority of the Catholic Church on the main issues of the Catholic faith without feeling ourselves disloyal to the Twenty-first Article. The Church may err in particular decisions, but we see that the whole drift of her teaching has been towards righteousness, that she is, despite failure and sin, the custodian of the truth as she is the home of grace. We recognise the presence of the Divine Spirit in her life, while we do not consider ourselves bound by the letter of all her occasional enactments. The alarm, then, that was felt at the time of the Reformation was unreasonable; it was based on a misapprehension; the authority of the Church is not destroyed, though we now understand better what it means. The drift has been again from the letter to the spirit. Such a lesson as this could not be learnt without much heart-searching; nay, is it certain that we have learnt the true lesson of the Reformation yet? What is the most prominent religious question of our own day? It will probably be said that it is the question as to the authority of Holy Scripture. Let us see how St. Paul's words apply to it.

When the Reformers declared that the guidance of the Church, though valuable and not to be lightly discarded, did not guarantee the infallibility of her teaching, men began to cast about for some other source of authority which might be to them what the Church had been in the past. From the principle that Holy Scripture was the supreme authority in matters of faith and morals, the transition was easy to the assumption that its language in every syllable must be infallibly exact. And this served for a time, as long as the human conscience was not allowed to judge of its moral teaching, or the human intellect to weigh its scientific or historical statements. But, first, as regards its moral teaching, men gradually began to see that to give up one's conscience to the teaching of the Bible was the same kind of mistake as to give it up to the teaching of the Church, and that the results of forbidding conscience to have a voice in matters relating to the life of the soul were likely to prove disastrous. Bishop Butler, with that profound common sense which constitutes not the least of his claims on our attention, declared that reason must be regarded as having a right to judge of revelation. He emphasised the great principle that nothing, neither Church nor Book, neither the Divine Society nor the Divine Word, must come between the individual soul and God. Butler wrote 150 years ago, and the far-reaching significance of his words has hardly as yet received full attention. But once the point had been raised, it became plain to all who allowed themselves to think upon the matter that there was a steady growth of moral ideas all through the Bible, that the morality of

the Old Testament was not the morality of the New Testament, the teaching of the law not on the same lofty level as the sublime words of the prophets. And now the rights of conscience have been vindicated, and there is a general willingness to allow that in this matter we must not look to the letter of a special saying, a special psalm, but to the spirit and tendency of the whole dispensation. Butler dwelt indeed on the morality of particular precepts recorded in the Old Testament, and was at pains to justify it; but it is in large measure due to Butler himself that we have learnt that it is by the spirit that pervades the entire literature that it is to be judged.

Once more. The question is often asked,—we are all of us asking it,—Does our acceptance of the Old Testament as a Divine First Lesson Book require us to believe that the most minute details of the history are recorded with infallible accuracy? Is it essential to our belief in the inspiration of Holy Scripture that we should hold it impossible that the writers of the various books could have made any mistakes as to scientific or historical fact? Is the authority of the Bible as a guide bound up with the belief that there can be no discrepancies between the parallel narratives of the same event to be found in its pages? Are these questions really foreclosed for a Christian man? Some tell us that they are, and prophets are not wanting who warn us that the authority of Scripture as a practical guide to life and belief in the inspiration of its authors by the Divine Spirit absolutely depend on acceptance of its verbal infallibility. They declare that we cannot preserve the spirit unless we preserve the letter.

Now, whatever be the truth as to the alleged errors as to fact in the Old Testament, it must be observed that predictions of this sort are worth very little as argument. Similar predictions were no doubt made by his friends as to the consequences that would inevitably result from St. Paul's new doctrine that the Mosaic law was not binding on Gentile converts. We can well imagine how plausibly it could have been maintained that St. Paul had renounced his allegiance to the Jewish Scriptures; and how difficult it must have been to appreciate the sincerity of his words when after asking *Do we then make void the law through faith?* he boldly answered *God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* St. Paul was a brave man. He looked facts in the face. We shall do well to follow his example.

It is alike unprofitable and unwise to dwell upon the trifling discrepancies that have been detected between various statements of the Old Testament. They are (as has been well said) but like the spots on the sun, which do not diminish its glory or its usefulness to any appreciable extent. It would be waste of opportunity to spend time upon them. But it is of the last importance to observe that we have no warrant, either in Scripture or in reason or in the declarations of the Christian Church, for declaring that they cannot exist in an inspired literature. The more completely we grasp that the substantial truth of a record is not affected by passing and petty inaccuracies, that inspiration does not necessarily involve either infallibility or verbal inerrancy, the more shall we enter into the meaning of St. Paul's profound words, *The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* Scripture—we may be sure of it—will thus lose none of its authority. The authority of our human teachers does not lose its force when we learn that they are not possessed of encyclopædic knowledge, and that they may occasionally make mistakes in matters which lie outside their proper province. Once that stage in our education has been reached, we gratefully recognise how valuable their teaching has been. So is it with the Church. So is it with Holy Scripture. The Bible is our teacher still—nay, more than ever our teacher; it has taught us, and yet teaches us, to think.

We have seen that even in the ordinary matters of experience, the transition from the letter to the spirit is a transition that daily comes under our observation, and, further, that it is attended by no ill results either in theory or in practice. This is true even in the commonplace routine of life, in the education of children as in the growth of a nation. And it is not unreasonable to suppose that, as He who is the Light of the world is also the Lord of the Church, a similar progress may be anticipated in the province of religion. But the truth is, that when we come to inspect the problems of revelation we see that there is even a deeper reason why the same law should hold good here. Were the principles involved in the Christian creeds, *e.g.*, like the principles, let us say, of an ordinary political party, such as can be precisely expressed in the form of a speech from the throne, then we might expect (though perhaps not

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We have seen that even in the ordinary matters of experience, the transition from the letter to the spirit is a transition that daily comes under our observation, and, further, that it is attended by no ill results either in theory or in practice. This is true even in the commonplace routine of life, in the education of children as in the growth of a nation. And it is not unreasonable to suppose that, as He who is the Light of the world is also the Lord of the Church, a similar progress may be anticipated in the province of religion. But the truth is, that when we come to inspect the problems of revelation we see that there is even a deeper reason why the same law should hold good here. Were the principles involved in the Christian creeds, *e.g.*, like the principles, let us say, of an ordinary political party, such as can be precisely expressed in the form of a speech from the throne, then we might expect (though perhaps not

with entire confidence) that they would be simple to understand and easy to apply in practice to every case that could arise. The meaning of an Act of Parliament is, we are often told, what it says. There is no appeal from the letter to the spirit in the interpretation of it. It has no conscience, it has no soul. But surely we are on different ground when we are dealing with the record of a revelation from God to man. From the nature of the case such a revelation cannot be reduced to precise formulæ, easy to apply and obvious to interpret. It is apparent at the outset that it may be expected to involve more than can ever be expressed in words. The more we reflect on the condescension implied in such a communication of the Infinite Creator with His creation, the more we feel that human language is but an imperfect vehicle for the transmission of the divine voice. And when we say that Christendom in the interpretation of Holy Scripture has learnt in part, and is still learning, how to pass from the straitness of the letter to the freedom of the spirit, what is this but to say that the Church of Christ has been enabled with fuller knowledge and larger experience to read with more clearness between the lines of her charter? We enter daily into a fuller enjoyment of our Catholic inheritance; and we thankfully and humbly acknowledge that there are countless stores of grace in this plenteous revelation upon which we have not yet drawn.

It will be said perhaps that however attractive such a theory of Christian progress may appear, yet it will be found impossible to apply it in practice without disaster. For that, in the first place, it suggests that there is no finality in any results at which we have arrived in the past or may arrive in the future; and that, in the second place, it supplies us with no plain and unmistakable guide to conduct such as men naturally desire.

It would be impossible to enter here upon so large and momentous a question as the permanence of the Christian creeds; but it is not difficult to see that the question does not necessarily arise out of what has been put forward. To hold that in the discipline of a nation, of a Church, of a soul, a larger and more gracious significance is ever being found in the moral and spiritual revelation which God has given us of Himself in no way forces us to the conclusion that our former interpretations of it were erroneous. Imperfect they may be, but not necessarily erroneous. In morals and in religion, as in science, the increase of knowledge tends rather to supplement than to overthrow the older generalisations. The adoption of wider views as to matters of detail, as to parts, does not by any means show that the general principles upon which our reasoning has been governed in the past were altogether unreliable.

To take an obvious illustration. The science of mathematics has advanced by leaps and bounds of recent years. The conceptions which guided the studies of Newton are found to be insufficient for the requirements of modern analysis. But no one supposes, therefore, that the principles of Newton's *Principia* are not true. They are quite true, as far as they go; but they are replaced by the modern mathematician by wider generalisations which involve them. And such an illustration may of itself assure us that the progress of science does not require that all former conceptions be discarded, though it does require that they become filled with a larger meaning, in correspondence with the larger intellectual needs of mankind.

Or let us take another illustration, which perhaps is more nearly related to the subject in hand. In the development of that moral sense which is one of God's most certain and most precious gifts, we can observe, as it seems, the operation of that law of progress which we have been considering. What does moral progress consist in, either for an individual or a nation? Not surely in the discovery of new moral principles, but in the better appreciation of the meaning of those with which we are already familiar. *Thou shalt not kill:* here is a moral precept of which the moral basis is the recognition of the sacredness of human life, and the dignity of the human person. And yet, not only in its original form as given to the Hebrews, but as expanded by the conscience of modern Christendom under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, it is believed by all but an insignificant section of *doctrinaires* to be quite consistent with the authorisation of capital punishment by the State, or with the unauthorised measures found needful in barbarous or half-civilised countries for the protection of the individual and the home. *Thou shalt not kill.* Yes, that is the letter of the law. But the more completely a man enters into the spirit of the principle on which it is based, the principle of the sacredness of human life, the

more will he feel the imperative necessity of occasional violations of the letter. And concurrently with this growing feeling that it is a righteous thing in certain obvious cases to disobey the letter, there arises a larger appreciation of the spirit. *Thou shalt not kill* comes to this, *Thou shalt not hate.* He from whom the law proceeds, He of whose moral judgments our best thoughts as to right and wrong are but a feeble reflex, He is a God whose name is Love; His laws are laws of love. When occupied with such a precept as this, it is quite unnecessary to add that in the overwhelming majority of cases the righteous course is to abide by the letter of the law; it furnishes for most of us, in ordinary life, a quite sufficient guide. But the point upon which we may lay emphasis is this: No one will deny that the world has grown more jealous of the prerogatives of the individual man as the centuries have rolled by, that his life is regarded as a more precious thing than it was in the days of the Roman Republic, or, to go farther back, in the days of the Patriarchs. The offer of Reuben to his father of his sons' lives, if he failed to restore to him his Benjamin, is an offer which would be regarded as quite unjustifiable in a modern police court. A father cannot thus with impunity barter away the lives of his innocent children. But while we recognise more fully the depth and the permanence of the moral principle underlying the commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, we find ourselves forced in the same breath to admit that occasional violations of the literal precept may in conceivable cases be demanded by a sensitive conscience. In the course of our moral education, as we pass from the letter to the spirit, we learn that it is not the old principle which was erroneous, but our imperfect interpretation of it. And the remarkable feature in the moral progress of nations, as far as it can be traced in the pages of history, is this, that no great moral principle once consciously received is ever openly repudiated. There is no retrogression in this development. Justice, truth, charity, these are principles which are never abandoned once they have been received. And thus it becomes apparent that, despite the changed aspect which, it is true, certain moral problems present from age to age, yet there is a sense in which it may be said that the solution offered at any given epoch is final. It is accurate, as far as it goes; it is imperfect, but it is true.

And in the greatest moral crisis in all history, we find this law of moral development laid down by Him whose moral insight is recognised even by those who are so unhappy as to have persuaded themselves that He is less than the eternal Son of God. The Christ Himself did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil. He has taught us, as no one else has taught us, that the true disciple of the law is he who strives to enter into and obey its spirit.

When we are told, then, by prophets of evil that the results of applying St. Paul's words to the interpretation of Scripture will be fatal to a true reverence for Scripture itself, we may point with some confidence to the results of the application of the very same principle to the laws of individual morality. Their permanence, their sanctity, is not thus affected; nay, obedience to them rests on a firmer ground than before.

But if not in theory, yet in practice, it is urged that the difficulty of distinguishing between the letter and the spirit, of extracting the kernel from the husk, is so formidable that it may well deter prudent persons from the attempt. And though it be admitted that the task is one, properly speaking, for the Christian society at large, rather than for its individual members, yet even thus we do not save ourselves from perplexity. To steer a safe course over an angry sea needs far more skill in navigation than to ride peacefully at the old moorings; the beacon lights are hard to distinguish; we are liable to be misled by the lights displayed by our comrades in this perilous venture.

And to that we need only say, "It is quite true." There is no safe and easy course over the ocean of life. Neither in matters of speculation nor in matters of practice is the Christian path an easy path; it is full of difficulty, it is full of hazard. But the broad and easy way is not always the way of safety; nay, the Pilot to whom we look for counsel and guidance tells us, even as He guides us, *Narrow is the gate, strait is the way.* The path of most difficulty is sometimes the path of least danger.