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AN EIRENICON FROM CULTURE ¹.

DR. PERCY GARDNER writes as a representative of culture. He has won his laurels in the field more particularly of Classical Archaeology, where he is well known as a scholar of much learning, cautious, patient and judicious in his habits of mind. He therefore approaches his subject rather from the scientific and research side of letters, but still distinctly from the side of letters.

He also writes with a seriousness of tone that well befits the subject he has chosen. Although speaking as a layman and from the layman's point of view, he has evidently a deep interest in religion. We may see in his book a real *eirenicon*. He is anxious to reconcile religion with the newer views of criticism and science. And amongst the many attempts that are made in that direction his own is distinguished by the earnestness of conviction which characterises it on both its sides.

Dr. Gardner's *eirenicon* is not one of those that are really attacks in disguise. He does not offer an olive-branch with a sword underneath it. And yet I am afraid that his *eirenicon* is not quite so complete as he himself supposes. It contains, as he is aware, a great deal of criticism. His general position is that it does not matter what were the historical facts so long as the ideas of religion are preserved. And therefore, in spite of the earnestness with which these ideas are enforced, the Christian reader must be prepared to have many things that are dear to him severely questioned. And the questioning is not always quite what might have been expected from a writer of Dr. Gardner's attainments.

He is a student of theology, and has read a good deal on certain lines. He speaks sympathetically and warmly enough

¹ *A Historic View of the New Testament*. By Percy Gardner, Litt.D. (London, A. & C. Black, 1901).

of some theologians; but they are all of the same kind. Outside a particular group the theology of the present day seems to be much less familiar to him. I do not complain that his authorities are mainly German. The Germans are no doubt ahead of us both in thoroughness of criticism on many sides and, as he rightly remarks, in the whole domain of systematic thought. It is true also that he throws in as a make-weight Matthew Arnold and the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. Nor would I suggest that he has not read some at least of the newer productions of English theology. But he has strangely failed to catch its spirit. Only in that way can I explain to myself many of the assertions that meet me in his pages. Such for instance as these:

‘There is a general consensus among the mass of theologians that when Christian history and doctrine are concerned the ordinary canons of evidence lose their applicability—that the eyes must be accustomed to a non-natural light, and look at the literature and the history of the early Church as if it were something that stood quite by itself, and out of relation to all else going on in the world’ (p. 1).

‘The Reformed Churches . . . have tried to find working compromises, and usually they have succeeded. For example, they have condoned the inroads of science on the biblical account of creation; but historic science is commonly warned off the ground occupied by the New Testament’ (p. 21).

To the best of my belief there is no solid foundation for either of these statements.

‘Of course a great many Christians will strongly object to the application of any such principles as these to New Testament history. They will maintain that the inspiration of the Gospels was such as to lead the authors not only into an appreciation of the character and the teaching of the Founder, but also into an exact knowledge of His career. But, in fact, the inconsistencies which exist between the statements of the various Evangelists sufficiently prove their fallibility. “But these inconsistencies,” it will be replied, “may be reconciled.” It was in this fashion that our parents laboured to reconcile the six days of creation in Genesis with geologic fact, and Joshua’s command to sun and moon with astronomic fact, until in time they discovered that the purpose of the Scriptures was to communicate to us

not scientific fact but spiritual truth. In precisely the same way the scientific facts of history are not matters of revelation, but things which we must search out as best we are able' (p. 73).

I would not say that this description may not have been true some fifty years ago, but it seems rather superfluous and misleading now.

'Although our preachers in church are seldom willing to allow that they do not fully understand the views of Paul, yet I fear that many of them would soon fail under cross-examination. Paul is unquestionably a very difficult writer: and perhaps one of the chief reasons of his difficulty is the reality of his inspiration' (p. 217).

I do not suppose that it often comes in the way of the preacher to say that he personally either does or does not 'fully understand the views' of St. Paul. But I imagine that if our preachers were cross-examined on the point they would one and all begin by frankly confessing that there was a great deal that they did not understand.

It is not surprising that the Church of Rome comes off rather badly.

'The forgiveness of sins, which in the Roman Church is represented as the privilege of consecrated priests and a miraculous act, appears by Jesus to have been represented as one of the constant and regular phenomena of spiritual life' (p. 82).

'What is yet stranger the doctrine of the mediatorial character of Christ was for ages and ages obscured by a thousand superstitions, while saints of very doubtful lives, and human priests buried in superstition, acted in the Church the mediatorial part' (p. 238).

These, I am afraid, are pure and simple crudities, after the manner of Exeter Hall. The following is rather in the manner of Victoria Park:

'There are many . . . who think that the spiritual life of man is a field which can be known only by ordained persons, or which must be mapped out by the authoritative decision of Churches' (p. 102).

For all his scholarship it must be confessed that Dr. Gardner's hand is sometimes heavy. This applies even to the criticism of individuals. It does not strike us altogether pleasantly to read

at the outset of a course of 'Jowett Lectures' that 'He (Jowett) handed on the task to a man of greater courage and greater literary skill, Matthew Arnold,' &c. (p. 2). Though we may see perhaps what is meant, and though I would be the first to welcome the praise of Matthew Arnold, every one must feel that the epithets are not the right ones. Whatever his place in the history of English theology, the Master of Balliol certainly had no want either of courage or of literary skill. And again, I do not think it right to speak of another illustrious man (Browning) without any qualification as asserting 'that evil and sin are delusive appearances, not realities' (p. 225).

The truth seems to be that Dr. Gardner's style, though it has many merits, is seen at its best in broad effects. It is less successful in catching the finer shades and distinctions. But if, as Renan used to say, 'Truth lies in a *nuance*,' the argument is sometimes rather seriously thrown out.

It would not be fair to judge of the whole book by the little *florilegium* just given. Frankly speaking, I do not think that it always hits the happiest note possible. It assumes that theologians (i. e. the majority of English theologians) are much in need of instruction, and the instruction is imparted sometimes—of course not always—in a manner that is rather *de haut en bas*.

And yet the book is of value, and of value really as an *eirenicon*. It belongs to a class that is becoming rather common at this moment. But it is distinguished from most members of the class by certain features that are, I conceive, really to its advantage, and that I would gladly embrace as points of substantial approximation.

In the first place, I welcome the language that Dr. Gardner uses in regard to doctrine.

'There can be no question as to the growing impatience felt for doctrinal discussions among the English laity. It is a feeling which has suddenly arisen, and grown with such rapidity that it were madness longer to neglect it. We hear on all sides a repudiation of the recognised formulæ, and a desire for a religion free from doctrine. Religion without doctrine would be unintelligent religion, which could not hold its own in the world of thought, but would be transient as emotions and untrustworthy

as sentiment. What is really wanted is not the expulsion of religious doctrine, but the formulation of a body of doctrine fitted to contain those ideas of religion which are vital among us, and to present them to the world in a form which shall be suited to modern ways of thought' (p. 65 f.).

'I do not agree with those Christians—very numerous in our days—who hold that doctrine in religion is out of date, and life and character the sole tests of faith. This is an exaggeration of the truth. *A priori* metaphysical constructions, such as the more elaborate creeds or the *Westminster Confession*, are out of date. But for doctrine there still remains a place, though less exalted than of old, and functions which are important though more humble than our ancestors supposed. Doctrine cannot hope to comprise eternal truth in human words, but it can summarise in intelligible speech the experiences of the religious life' (p. 265 f.).

I do not in the least ignore the amount of difference which this last passage still leaves open; but it is a real gain to have so much as this admitted. The field of debate would be considerably narrowed if it were agreed that we are to have doctrine, and if the only question were to determine what is right doctrine.

Still more important is the longer paragraph which I proceed to quote:

'There can be no question that the transfer of the theory of evolution, and of the survival of the fittest, from the domain of biological to that of social and historic science must needs not only add greatly to the dignity of history, but also make us look on the past with more appreciative and less coldly critical eyes. For if those theories be well founded it follows that no religious movement of the past can have been altogether wanting in justification; if it had not had some reason for success it could not have succeeded. And if there be any divine control of events, we are bound to regard it as at least probable that in the great majority of cases it was the good rather than the evil in the movement which won for it the victory. So doctrine accepted in the past by the Church [if accepted on grounds of experience rather than of logic] is almost sure to have in some way expressed the best mind of the Church, and tended towards progress. Instances of retrograde tendencies and of corrupting doctrines may of course be found; but we shall be justified in considering them as the

exception, not the rule—the result of disease, not of normal growth. We may put away for ever the base and degrading view that past history is but a record of the faults and follies of mankind—that the history of the Church before the Reformation was nothing but a downward course' (p. 263 f.).

I shall have a word to say presently on the subject of the clause that I have enclosed in brackets. But in the meantime it seems to me that if we may take this passage in full earnest (and all Dr. Gardner writes may I conceive be so taken) its significance is quite fundamental. I could not wish for a better corrective for much that seems to me erroneous in criticism.

And yet I am not sure that Dr. Gardner always remembers his own counsels. If he had, would he not have written rather differently, e. g. about miracles? The belief in miracles is surely one that God has permitted—we might even say, encouraged—on a very large scale. It must have a place in His eternal purposes. So that the problem is rather to find out what that place is than simply to discard it. If we were to grant all the critic says, should we be nearer to the divine plan? I am afraid we should be further from it.

Another set of fundamental passages that I would very cordially welcome are those which have reference to divine revelation and inspiration. These passages also appear to me to contain very much the root of the matter. It is true that Dr. Gardner is feeling his way, as others of us may be feeling our way; and I willingly confess that we have not yet reached the ultimate and wholly satisfactory expression. But I believe that Dr. Gardner is well on the way towards it.

Take for instance the following:

'The history of religion is the history of the gradual revelation to man of the divine will. This revelation I have elsewhere called the gradual penetration of societies by the divine ideas. And though the phrase *divine ideas* is in some degree misleading, as every such phrase must be, it is very useful. Only we must steadily bear in mind that these ideas are not intellectual concepts. They are manifestations of force, acting primarily on will and emotion, and only by degrees taking intellectual form, and embodying themselves in custom and art and organisation' (p. 44).

There may be some question between us as to how far these 'divine ideas' took shape in intellectual concepts; but that I regard as secondary. I understand Dr. Gardner to allow that at least 'by degrees' they take intellectual form. I should have thought that they did so almost from the first moment at which we can historically trace them. But that is a detail; and for the rest I should be content to accept Dr. Gardner's language as it stands.

Another mode of statement, perhaps slightly more explicit, occurs later.

'The history of a religion, we have maintained, is the history of the gradual translation of divine impulses or ideas into human forms. First into ways of life and behaviour; then, on the intellectual side, into history and prophecy and doctrine; then into organisation and ceremony and art' (p. 70).

Perhaps I ought again to reserve the question of sequence, but in the main I should be agreed.

And my agreement perhaps goes further than Dr. Gardner would expect. For instance, it would I think quite include the following:

'As regards the Christian history in particular, it is to be observed that divine impulse and inspiration in those who wrote it by no means lifts them above error. This indeed is made obvious enough when we observe that various inspired writers sometimes give inconsistent accounts of the same events. Inspiration acts primarily on the will, but it also has a wonderfully illuminating power on the intellect. This illumination, however, does not extend to the revelation of fact. No inspiration of which any trace is to be found in history communicates to the inspired man an infallible knowledge either of physical law or of historic event. The search for what is matter of physical science has to be pursued by our ordinary faculties according to rigid method, and is not made easy by religious illumination. The same principle holds in regard to historic fact. Inspiration does lead men frequently to brilliant insight into the character and the motives of great religious teachers of past times, but it can never furnish us with trustworthy details as to particular events of their lives. For these we must go to testimony and document and the canons of historic probability' (p. 72).

It is, I suppose, very much a discovery of the last generation that inspiration does not involve infallibility in the record of fact, and that it is quite compatible with evolution in the growth of doctrine. But these are truths that most theological students have succeeded in assimilating.

I have no wish to contest the ground with Dr. Gardner here. Neither should I be careful to argue with him on the subject of the Canon. I too do not believe in an absolutely hard and fast line surrounding a certain group of books and isolating it completely from all others. The metaphor Dr. Gardner is fond of using, of a mountain-chain with high and highest peaks, seems to me to describe the facts very well.

Among the corollaries which Dr. Gardner draws from his view of revelation is one that I believe has a great deal of truth.

‘Instead of dwelling on nice metaphysical distinctions of substance and personality, which have to us lost their meaning and attraction, the modern theologian will try to ascertain through observation aided by history what is the actual nature of divine revelation to man, and how it uses the medium of humanity. In my opinion investigations of this kind are quite as likely to be destructive of the less as of the more orthodox systems of Christology which have prevailed in the past—as likely to put out of court many rationalist and theistic views as the Athanasian Creed itself’ (p. 269).

Another line of tendency on which many of us will be glad to see in Dr. Gardner an ally is in his insistence upon the social side of Christianity.

‘As the growth of historic knowledge and the acceptance of evolution in religion is setting aside the shallow rationalism which marked the eighteenth century, so social feeling among men is laying the axe to the root of the mere individualism which has in recent times been a constantly increasing danger among us. Socialism, alike in thought and in action, has gained much ground. It has become impossible to think of a man as an isolated being, without relation to the stock from which he springs and the human beings to whom on every side he is closely related. The community no less than the individual has to be considered as an unity, with history, with purposes, with ideals.

‘It is not strange, in view of this trend of feeling, to find that

the most prominent place in the Ritschlian theology is taken not by the conception of the spiritual life in individuals, but by that of the Kingdom of God. It is not the individual so much as the society or community which is the recipient of divine inspiration. The object of God's love is not men taken one by one, but humanity as organised in the Kingdom of God through love. It may be that in this matter Ritschl goes too far, for after all it is only in the consciousness of individuals that divine inspiration can be realised; religious utterance must come from individuals; and the will of individuals must lead society in the right way' (p. 270 f.).

I am really almost ashamed to have quoted from Dr. Gardner so freely; but I much prefer to use his language rather than my own. I desire to appeal to him as a wholly independent witness. On all the points on which I have hitherto touched I can truly say that we are both travelling the same road. I value such affirmations as these not only for their own sake but also for the quarter from which they come. I should be in hopes that they would meet with a wider acceptance than I could myself gain for them.

But our agreement is still far from being exhausted. I have quoted instances in which Dr. Gardner comes out more than half-way to meet me; and he will naturally expect that I should show some willingness to meet him. This I am glad to be able to do. The question in my mind is to which of several passages I should turn in order to show this willingness.

Towards the end of his lectures Dr. Gardner draws together three suggestions which he submits 'to the judgement of those who are responsible for our religious teaching.' The suggestions are these:

'First: Belief in the continuity and inspiration of history must needs clear and exalt our views of the history of the Christian Church, which must be taken as a whole.

'Second: Proper appreciation of the function of the will in active and religious life must have a direct effect on doctrine.

'Third: The growing habit of regarding society as an organism rather than a mere congeries of individuals must tend to revive the Founder's teaching as to the Kingdom of Heaven' (p. 262).

It costs me nothing at all to endorse all these suggestions. I am sure that there are many besides myself who would feel that they expressed—and neatly and concisely expressed—conclusions towards which they were themselves working. If the adoption of these suggestions is calculated to bring us any nearer together, their end has been already attained.

Nor again would it cost me much to state in a form that I could accept the four propositions singled out by Mr. Wilfrid Ward as common to the teaching of Cardinal Newman and the late Professor Auguste Sabatier (see p. 267). The article in the *Fortnightly Review* for May 1901, to which Dr. Gardner refers, is extremely interesting and instructive, and I would join in commending it to my readers.

But it may perhaps be most profitable for me to say a word on what Dr. Gardner describes as,

‘The two great teachings of modern liberal theology: the relative or practical character of doctrine, and its gradual evolution in the history of the Church—two views of which the former stands at the basis of doctrinal construction, the second at the basis of religious history as understood in our times. No claim of absolute truth can be made on these lines for any doctrinal statements: they are the outcome of the observation of religious feeling, and must not be confounded with mere statements of the speculative intelligence’ (p. 254).

Here too there is a great deal in which I can agree. I agree that doctrine is relative, and that it is practical; I agree that it has been gradually evolved in the history of the Church. I should, however, perhaps differ a little in the statement of what I meant by each of these propositions; and I should differ rather more in the inferences which I drew from them.

It may be well to take the points one by one.

I certainly believe that doctrine is relative. It is relative in two ways, at once to the age in which the doctrine itself is formulated and to the truths which it aims at expressing.

All human knowledge is relative. In this respect Christian doctrine is no exception, neither is it in any way peculiar. All human knowledge is conditioned by the faculties of man by which it is apprehended; and most human knowledge, outside mathematics and some forms of physical science,

varies more or less from age to age in the terms in which it is stated.

It is also quite true that in the successive statements of doctrine, as of other kinds of knowledge, there is a gradual evolution. It took several centuries before the leading points of doctrine could be stated in a way that was in any sense final ; and even that degree of finality was relative. The beliefs of a Christian as such must needs from age to age be adjusted to the whole body of his beliefs. I am aware that Dr. Gardner himself is aiming at such a readjustment. I suppose that I too, and those who think more with me, are aiming at the same thing. The main difference between us would be as to the amount of stress that we should be prepared to lay upon 'continuity.' I am glad to see that Dr. Gardner recognises continuity as far as he does. I am only not quite sure whether he gives full effect to it. In some respects his teaching seems to me to be rather discontinuous. At the same time I allow that readjustments of doctrine must be made by means of experiments. I take Dr. Gardner's book as an experiment ; and I must not quarrel with it because it goes further than I should be prepared to go myself.

It would not be easy to use stronger language than Cardinal Newman used as to the imperfection and inadequacy of human statements of doctrine. I am tempted to ask Dr. Gardner if, under that head, he is not satisfied. In any case I cannot think that the difference between us in this respect can be beyond the possibility of reconciliation.

Of course Cardinal Newman employed his theory of development to justify the whole fabric of Roman doctrine as it stands. But it is possible to believe in development and to believe in continuity without taking quite so optimistic a view of one particular line of development. The fact that the Roman system has evoked such strenuous protests and at the present moment stands in antagonism to so much that most of us are compelled to think true, must needs cast grave doubts on its validity. It can hardly be that any Christian body has hit upon a perfect formulation of its beliefs. All our systems are more or less 'broken lights.' We can only strive to make them approximate nearer to reality. But we are more, and not less, likely to succeed

n the attempt by using our utmost endeavour to keep in touch with that which has gone before.

But the epithet that is most important for Dr. Gardner's purpose is 'practical.' He insists that doctrine is 'relative or practical.' By the two terms together he intends to describe the most distinctive feature of his book.

If Dr. Gardner were asked what he himself regards as most characteristic and valuable in his own constructive effort I do not doubt that he would point to his attempt to harmonise Christian belief with the newer psychology, and in particular to do justice to the part played by the will in the life of man. He claims kinship with Professor A. Sabatier in France, Professor Lipsius of Jena in Germany, and Professor William James of Harvard in America. From the last-named writer he quotes two striking passages which supply the philosophical basis of the whole volume. It is worth while to give these passages in full, as more than anything else they will help to place us at the centre of the position.

'The willing department of our nature dominates both the conceiving department and the feeling department.' 'I am sure I am not wrong in stating this result as one of the fundamental conclusions to which the entire drift of modern physiological investigation sweeps us. If asked what great contribution physiology has made to psychology of late years, I am sure every competent authority will reply that her influence has in no way been so weighty as in the copious illustration, verification, and consolidation of this broad general point of view.'

Again :

'The mind is a transformer of the world of our impressions into a totally different world—the world of our conception ; and the transformation is effected in the interests of our volitional nature, and for no other purpose whatever. Destroy the volitional nature, the definite subjective purposes, preferences, fondnesses for certain effects, forms, orders, and not the slightest motive would remain for the brute order of our experience to be remodelled at all. But as we have the elaborate volitional constitution we do have, the remodelling must be effected ; there is no escape. The world's contents are given to each of us in an order so foreign to our subjective interests that we can hardly

by an effort of the imagination picture to ourselves what it is like. We have to break that order altogether, and by picking out from it the items which concern us, and connecting them with others far away, which we say "belong" with them, we are able to make out definite threads of sequence and tendency, to foresee particular liabilities and get ready for them, and to enjoy simplicity and harmony in the place of what was chaos' (p. 37 ff. : the quotations are from *The Will to Believe*, pp. 114, 117).

This vigorous statement is evidently on the direct line of descent from Kant, with his distinction between the Theoretic and the Practical Reason. It is a development of the doctrine of the Practical Reason in the form of psychological analysis. But it should not be forgotten that in the application of this doctrine to religion the theologians preceded the philosophers.

When Dr. Gardner brought out his work *Exploratio Evangelica* it was pronounced by several critics to be 'Ritschlian.' Dr. Gardner now explains (p. 258) that when it was written he had not read Ritschl. None the less it is highly probable that the influence of Ritschl, conveyed as it were underground, was really at work in it. We are familiar with the phenomenon of the same ideas appearing in different places at the same time; but Ritschl's views had been so long before the world and had taken so strong a hold in Germany that they had undoubtedly filtered through into English thought before he came to be much mentioned by name. And although Dr. Gardner speaks somewhat disparagingly of Ritschl, I am unable to see that his own position marks any real advance or improvement upon his predecessor's.

Neither in his case nor in Sabatier's does it seem to me that the real relations of the will and the emotions to thought in religion have been worked out to any degree of maturity. Dr. Gardner's language in particular seems to be uncertain and hesitating. He wants to make the processes of emotion and volition more independent of thought than it is really possible to make them. He repeatedly speaks of religious experience as though it were the *basis* of doctrine, whereas experience must surely be experience of something that can hardly take tangible shape otherwise than in the form of doctrine.

Experience does not originate but must needs be originated. Emotion does not generate itself, or project itself vaguely into

space. It must have an object. In other words it must set before itself the conception of an object. And that conception must be capable of analysis. It may be described as right or wrong. And it must be possible to test and correct it, so as to make it more right and less wrong. If it is to be the ground of experience and emotion, it must be such as to excite wholesome experience and worthy emotion. It must harmonise with the best conceptions man can frame as to his own place in the world and the duties that flow therefrom.

I gladly allow that experience plays a most important part in verifying the processes of the mind. I am quite ready to believe that will and emotion enter in at a very early stage in those processes and exercise a formative influence upon them. Bacon was right in saying that the human mind does not give a 'dry light'; at least the departments in which it does are extremely few.

The ultimate beginnings of religious belief are indeed matter for speculation, and for very delicate and subtle speculation. To assign the exact place in them to will and mind and feeling is difficult enough. It is a question if we can account for the processes merely by such creative activities as man possesses in himself. I am far more inclined to agree with Dr. Gardner in postulating a divine energy as at work from the first, dominating and shaping the whole process at every stage.

But whatever may be the case as to the beginnings of religion, Christianity at least is definitely historical. The Christian emotions all have their roots in certain historical events; and as without those events they would never have come into existence, so also it is not at all likely that they can be maintained without reference to them. From the days of the primitive Church onwards we can see that the minds of Christians have been full of one great presupposition. Remove that presupposition and the rest falls to the ground.

Christian doctrine is really the working out in detail of what is contained implicitly in that presupposition. Ritschl I believe did an excellent work in vindicating for Christian experience its pre-eminent share in determining the character of Christian doctrine. But the experience must have a ground; the emotions must have an exciting cause; and if that cause is to move

effectively the heart and mind, it must do so through the medium of concepts framed as other concepts are framed, i. e. in words expressive of ideas which the mind does all it can to make conformable to their object.

The weakness of Dr. Gardner's position comes out when he has to speak of the conception of the Person of Christ (pp. 99-102). He professes himself unable to reach any adequate view of this by the method of historical and critical inquiry, and he rests, so far as we can see, contentedly in his ignorance. He notes on p. 100 a number of facts that appear to have a strong claim to consideration, and yet he treats them as if they did not exist. He has no theory, and he is satisfied to be without one. He simply, as the French would say, 'passes on to the order of the day,' leaving the problem unsolved behind him.

It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast to the way in which the early Church approached this subject. Dr. Gardner admits that to Christians of all ages the conception of Christ Himself has been the centre of their beliefs. 'The person of the Master is to His followers, to the Church, of incomparably greater interest than His teaching. Christianity is at bottom not the perpetuation of a school, but the continuation of a life. It is what Jesus was, not what He taught, that has been the salvation of the world' (p. 99). In one breath we are told this, and in the next we are told that the historical data are insufficient to determine what Jesus was. This is the impotent conclusion of the whole matter.

Surely the ordinary Christian of to-day is far nearer to the mind of those who held actual converse with the Lord. Yet if we are to lay stress on religious experience, where could we find a religious experience more valuable, nay more crucial, than theirs?

I would say, By all means let us revise our analysis of that experience. Let us try to define more exactly in what it consists and what it implies. But do not let us suppose that we can have the fruits of Christianity without having its root. It was historical Christianity, as we know it, that conquered the world. But what sort of guarantee have we that the vague Agnosticism which it is proposed to substitute would ever have conquered it? It seems to me that Dr. Gardner has equally failed to explain

the triumphs of Christianity in the past and to plant it on a firm foundation for the future.

I do not feel it incumbent upon me to follow all through his treatment of the different parts of the New Testament. It is very much what we might expect. I see many summary verdicts to which I should demur; but they have been made before, and are sure to be made again.

There are however just two points on which it may be worth while to make some comment: what is said about the Fourth Gospel, and the place in Christian history assigned to St. Paul.

Dr. Gardner adopts the more moderate view as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, much as it is stated by Harnack (p. 182). He believes that the author may have been a disciple of John, the son of Zebedee, and that it contains a tradition which may have come from him (pp. 183 f., 195).

I have been struck by more than one reference to the narrative of the Fourth Gospel with the view expressed in which I should cordially concur. Indeed these references seem to imply a more healthy historical sense than we often find.

Thus Dr. Gardner quotes the verses, John vii 41, 42: 'Some said, What doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was? So there arose a division in the multitude.' He adds, '*These words take us into the heart of the controversies of the first century*' (p. 123). I emphasise this remark because I believe it to be so exceedingly true. Not that it would follow even here that the author is necessarily reproducing the exact words that were spoken. It would be a strained inference to suppose that he remembered them exactly after the lapse perhaps of some fifty to sixty years. But in any case I do not hesitate to say that both these words and much of the context give us a vivid glimpse, faithfully preserved, of actual life.

To the same effect is another reference on p. 183. 'In some passages—that which records the events of the last supper, for example—his sources of information seem to be more accurate than those of the Synoptists. And the mention of people and places sometimes seems to show precise local knowledge, as when

he speaks of "Aenon near to Salim," and when he records the events by the pool of Bethesda, and the doings of Nathanael and Nicodemus' (p. 183).

I would invite Dr. Gardner seriously to consider whether touches like these—and they might be easily multiplied—are really consistent with the hypothesis of transmission, however good, at second-hand. Those who accept such a theory as Harnack's think they have done all that is required of them when they have allowed that certain details in the tradition have the appearance of truth, and when they infer that these details may have come actually from St. John.

But I would ask, Are these details on closer inspection such as would be preserved even by the best tradition that is not that of an eye-witness? I should greatly doubt whether even a modern narrator would reproduce so faithfully a scene far removed from himself both in place and time. And my doubt rises to positive scepticism when I am asked to believe this of an ancient narrator. The moderns are in the habit of transferring themselves to past times and of seeking to catch not only the salient facts but also the atmosphere, so to speak, by which they were surrounded—the little minute touches which go to complete the picture. But the ancients had not yet really begun to make the effort to do this. I infer for myself, and I am not without hope that historically-minded critics will agree with me, that the details of which I have been speaking come directly from an eye-witness, and from no one else.

I am not in the least shaken in this inference by the observations which Dr. Gardner has made as to the discourses in the Gospel. I can accept, and most English theologians would accept, the greater part of what he says in regard to these discourses. We are ready to grant that the writer of the Gospel has exercised (unconsciously) a considerable shaping influence upon them. But we should altogether deny that this shaping influence is in the least degree inconsistent with their being the work of an Apostle. Rather, we think, it is just an Apostle—and we might add, a leading Apostle—who would be most likely to exert such an influence. The Fourth Gospel is in any case the work of a great mind; it is such a Gospel as we might have had (e.g.) from St. Paul.

I hardly need stay to point out the little exaggerations¹ and illicit processes that have found their way into this, as into most parts of Dr. Gardner's book. But I must just note in passing that he has—quite naturally and pardonably—ascribed to the doctrine of the Logos, and to St. John's teaching generally, a more Hellenic and intellectual character than it really possesses.

If Plato really stands, as perhaps he does, at the head of the line which ends in the Johannean doctrine of the Logos, the line is a very long one, and there has been much modification by the way. The theologian is aware that when St. John speaks of 'knowing' and of 'truth,' the meaning that he puts into those words is more than half moral.

St. John's doctrine of the Logos is very little Hellenic; and the critics are probably right in saying that the Apologists of the second century have gone too far in identifying his doctrine with that of the philosophers. Still I would fain believe, and do believe, that what Dr. Gardner justly calls the 'remarkable passage' quoted from Justin Martyr on p. 198 f., and others like it, are really borne out by, and really breathe the fundamental spirit of, the Gospel.

The other point on which I desire to make a last comment is the construction put upon the evolution of Christian doctrine in the first century.

Dr. Gardner believes that the three main factors in this evolution are St. Paul, the author of the Fourth Gospel, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He repeatedly writes—and he is of course not alone in writing—as though the great innovator or initiator were St. Paul, and then the *Auctor ad Hebraeos* and the Fourth Evangelist developed hints thrown out by him. In this way we arrive at the more transcendent parts of the Christian creed.

It would be wrong to blame Dr. Gardner for doing what theologians and critics generally have been in the habit of doing.

¹ e. g. on p. 194, Dr. Gardner seems to have forgotten that it is St. John who writes, 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe' (iv 48); and he also seems to have forgotten that the Synoptists wrote, 'Woe unto thee Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes' (Matt. xi 21; Luke x 13).

It has long been the custom to map out the New Testament into a number of *Lehrbegriffe* or systems of doctrine, Pauline, Sub- or Deutero-Pauline, Petrine, Johannean; to give elaborate analyses of each of these, but to leave the whole of which they are the parts, the 'common Christianity' which they go to form, to take care of itself; and least of all to trouble about the Christianity of the rank and file as distinct from that of the leaders.

Only of late is it beginning to be seen that this is a mistaken procedure. The consciousness of this mistake has been spreading in this country as well as in Germany; but it finds, perhaps, the clearest and most forcible expression in a monograph by one of the free lances of New Testament criticism, Professor Wrede of Breslau, *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutest. Theologie* (Göttingen, 1897).

Dr. Gardner's position is based upon the older view; but it is not difficult to show that it is really untenable. It begins by ascribing to St. Paul an extent and degree of influence that he had not and could not have.

The author of the Acts has often been accused of softening down the differences between parties in the Church, but never, I think, of overstating them. Yet this is one of his pictures: 'And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them which have believed; and they are all zealous for the law: and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it, therefore? they will certainly hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee,' &c. (Acts xxi 18-23).

This is the kind of circle which we are to suppose bowed its neck to the yoke and meekly accepted all that was most characteristic in St. Paul's teaching.

I am afraid we know too much of its real relations to St. Paul to believe that this can have been the case. We are allowed to

see too much of the sharp controversies which divided them. But if we can see where those controversies were hottest, we can also see how far they spread and what lay outside them. What lay outside them was the real 'common Christianity.' We can infer with some strictness what that common Christianity included. It certainly included the belief that 'Jesus is the Lord,' that 'Jesus is the Christ,' that 'Jesus is the Son of God,' that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures. It included the active work of the Holy Spirit.

I grant that St. Paul worked out those beliefs in ways of his own; but he added nothing to their essential content.

If we are to learn what was really the common Christianity underlying all the different schools and tendencies of the Apostolic age, we must set about the task rather differently from the way in which most critics have approached it.

It is natural enough for the critic to assume, when he sees an idea or a doctrine for the first time, that it did not exist before. He at least regards it as dating its existence from the writer in whom he first finds it. In this way many things are set down to St. Paul and St. John and writers like the *Auctor ad Hebraeos* which it is more than probable did not owe their origin to them.

The real problem which lies before criticism at the present moment is not merely to tabulate and label such points as these, but to discover what lies behind them. I suspect that we shall find that more than we suppose runs up really to the teaching of our Lord Himself. The critics are so much in the habit of taking the Synoptic Gospels as the full and sufficient measure of that teaching, that they fail to appreciate their limitations. They fail to see where the hints given in these Gospels stop short of the reality; and then they go on to refer to disciples much that probably had its roots behind or beneath them in the teaching of the Master.

For instance, in Dr. Gardner's book, it is assumed that St. John's parable of the vine and the branches is merely a variant of the Pauline parable of the body and the members (p. 193). If St. John speaks of Christ as the Way it is because the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Him as dedicating for us 'a new and living way' (*ibid.*). The ideas of Christ as Sacrifice

(p. 235) and Christ as Mediator (p. 237) are referred to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Christian baptism probably did not begin till after the Crucifixion (p. 190). The mystic doctrine of Baptism and the higher view of the Lord's Supper are due to St. Paul (p. 230).

Such assumptions as these are difficult to deal with. We cannot directly disprove them; we can only place by the side of them another alternative hypothesis, which must be tested upon a broad scale by a constructive view of the whole course of development in the Apostolic age.

It is not however upon the details of criticism that Dr. Gardner's book appeals to us. I doubt if he has added anything very substantial to the theories current among writers of his school. He for the most part assumes these as not needing proof, and rarely seems to contemplate the possibility that a passage or an incident may be interpreted in any other way. Sometimes, as conspicuously on p. 221 f. (with the phrase 'as he had already rejected the appeal to miracle' on p. 227¹), his treatment is so one-sided as to amount to special pleading. And, as I have hinted, there are a good many general statements that seem to me very imperfectly to correspond with the facts.

In all this we scarcely recognise the circumspect investigator of Hellenic antiquities. The value of the book, however, consists not in its criticism, but in the warmth and seriousness with which it is written, in the interest which it shows in religious experience, and most of all I believe in the sincerity of its acceptance of a continuous divine purpose running through the whole history of the human race. Where these conditions exist, a better understanding ought not to be far away.

W. SANDAY.

¹ Let the reader confront these pages with the very plain and direct language of 2 Cor. xii 12, Rom. xv 18; and let him remember that 'spiritual gifts' included *χαρίσματα λαμπάνων* and *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων* (1 Cor. xii 9 f.).