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PREVAILING TENDENCIES IN MODERN THEOLOGY.

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Coleridge was once asked by a lady if he was afraid of ghosts. "No, madame," was his reply, "I have seen too many of them." The thoughtful observer of the signs of the times may be pardoned if, in the existing clash and conflict of theological opinion, he sometimes feels like that philosopher. He has seen too many theories, had to do with too many novelties of speculation, each one claiming to be the last word on the subject it was dealing with, each, too plausible in its own way, to be unduly carried away by the cry that criticism "demands" this, or science has "finally established" that, till at least a little time has been given to test results. The present writer, speaking for himself, is far from thinking that there is in the present situation any reason for discouragement—much less for panic. For the moment there is perplexity, as there has often been in the history of the church before, but he can see no cause for being shaken, or troubled in mind, as to the ultimate outcome. What is needed at the present moment is not excitement, or the loud beating of "the drum ecclesiastic," but an endeavor to approach these modern movements sympathetically, and with the fullest desire to do justice to whatever soul of good is in them—above all, a cool head, strong faith, a little patience, action like that of the mariners with Paul, who, when they feared lest they should have fallen among rocks, and when for many days neither sea nor stars appeared, sensibly dropped four anchors, and waited for the day.

At first sight the theological world in which we move seems a scene of confusion—all kinds of currents are melting and commingling in it. When, however, we begin to know it better, it is not quite so incomprehensible. Those whose business it is to work and study in this world

soon forget to feel that, amidst the multifarious side eddies, there are certain main currents which give its set and direction to the stream of thought, and that even these are not unconnected, but are more or less the expressions of a common spirit of the age. Among these main currents—these influences and tendencies which at present dominate theology and stamp a character upon it—one may specially distinguish five, on which it will be the object of this paper to offer a few remarks.

1. A first powerful current flowing through a large section of existing theology is that derived from *the modern idealistic philosophy*, with which may be associated the later *Monism*. Of the former we have a well-known German example in Professor Pfeiderer, but much more influential in moulding the thoughts of the high-minded and intelligent youth of Britain and America has been the Neo-Hegelian influence proceeding from the school of the late T. H. Green, of Oxford, and from Dr. Edward Caird, now master of Baliol in the same university. Only a shallow-minded person will speak lightly of the philosophy of Hegel, but time has shown that it is hopeless to look to it as an ally of Christian faith. Discarding the blind evolution of the naturalists to be afterwards commented on, this philosophy substitutes the more rational conception of an idea immanent in nature, and gradually realizing itself through ascending kingdoms and stages, till it culminates in the self-conscious activities of man. The effect of this in theology is, under the name of a doctrine of the divine immanence, to lead to an identification of God—or of the divine life—with the process of the world. Even where a certain self-consciousness is attributed to God, He is still regarded as nothing more than the rational principles which binds together the various stages or movements of the world-process. A good deal of Christian terminology can be employed in this theory, and it is supposed by many that by means of it a new and profounder meaning may be put into such doctrines as the Incarnation. But, in reality, the Scrip-

tural meaning of these doctrines is altogether lost, and the character of Christianity essentially transformed. The point at which the theory needs fundamentally to be dealt with from the theologian's point of view is that just noted—the merging of the divine life in the process of the world. Any view which, under the name of exalting the divine immanence, identifies God with the process of nature and history—makes the world as necessary to God as God is to the world—is fundamentally irreconcilable with a Scriptural theology. A God in process is of necessity an incomplete God—can never be a true personal God. His being is merged in that of the universe; sin, even, is an element of His life. It is indubitable that God, in order truly to be God, must possess Himself in the eternal fulness and completeness of His own personal life; must possess Himself for Himself and be raised entirely above the transitoriness, the incompleteness, and the contingency of the world-process. Only where this is recognized are we on Christian ground. We are then enabled to think of the world and history, not as the necessary unfolding of a logical process, but as the realization of a free and holy purpose; and inconsistency is no longer felt in the idea of an action of God along supernatural lines—above the plane of mere nature—as wisdom and love may dictate, for the benefit of His creature man.

The day of Hegelian idealism, however, has now somewhat declined, and attraction is felt rather in one or other of the imposing systems which display the flag of Monism. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss monistic systems in detail, but only to weigh the value of the general idea for theology. Numerous books have recently appeared on both sides of the Atlantic which have for their immediate object to rescue this idea of Monism, as that of a Single Power manifesting itself continuously and progressively in the universe, from the false uses made of it by such naturalistic writers as Haeckel, and to turn it to account in the service of a true theology. Will

the present writer be pardoned if he says that the effect of the study of these works has been to make him feel increasingly that the term is an unclear and ambiguous one, and that a Christian theology, while recognizing the truth that underlies its various uses, will do well to discard it for formulas better adapted to its own purposes. In a sense, indeed, every truly theistic system is monistic. It denies dualism, or the co-existence of eternally distinct principles, say, of good or evil, mind or matter, and recognizes but one ultimate and eternal Being, Power, and Will, from which all else that is in the universe proceeds. Christian theology has never invested the world with a being apart from God, or independently of Him. It has taught that the world is God's creation—that it derives its being and its powers from Him—that He is present and active in all its forces—that it continues to exist by His sustaining energy constantly imparted to it, and sustaining it in existence. But it contends at the same time that the world is not God, but the creation of something other than God; not simply an aspect or manifestation of God, but a constituted system of beings and forces which God distinguishes from Himself and uses as the means for the revelation of His glory. But it is precisely this fact of a distinction between God and the world which "Monism," as ordinarily understood, rejects. For the idea of a creation of the world by God, and of a world distinct from God, yet dependent on Him, it substitutes the notion of a Power, or "Substance," or unknown Somewhat, of which the worlds of matter and mind are a two-sided "manifestation"—two aspects of the same "Reality"—identical in their origin, in their essential nature, in the Power that operates in them. Not only is this the common acceptance of the term; it is one also into which those who seek to give to Monism a spiritual and Christian interpretation are involuntarily compelled to fall. Thus, in a recent able work (Walker's *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*): "It cannot be doubted that Life and Mind are but different forms in which the

one all-working Power is manifested, * * * Matter, Ether and Energy, Motion, Life and Mind; if we follow out the conception of these, as far as they are known, we shall find ourselves always carried back to the working of a Single Power." Plato of old had difficulty in making clear his thought of the "participation" of things in the "idea;" it is hardly less difficult for the Monist to make clear his idea of the relation of God to the world. For this reason many may think it is better to discard the name "Monism" altogether in theology, as prolific of misleading, if not of positively false, associations.

2. A second powerful current flowing through our theology in the immediate present is that that *especially associated with the name of Ritschl*. This has been so often discussed that it is not necessary to dwell on it at great length. In one respect the Ritschlian influence is the direct antithesis of the speculative tendency just described. It is throughout of the nature of a reaction—a reaction against scholasticism in dogmatics, against the intrusion of philosophy into theology, against the overstraining of mystical feeling to the neglect of the historic in Christianity. It has for its avowed aim to free Christianity from extraneous supports, and in the immediate appeal of the image of Christ to the heart to find a ground of certainty which shall be independent of science and criticism, and of the changing moods of philosophy. The watchwords of this influential school, so far as it has affected theology in English-speaking countries, will be readily recognized—*theology without metaphysics, a return to the historic Christ, and the idea of the Kingdom of God*. It need not be pointed out how powerfully these ideas, coalescing with a certain weariness of dogma, and with the social spirit of the age, have taken hold on many—not, be it granted, without a certain rejuvenating effect upon theology. The Ritschlian movement is not without its wholesome side; but, like every other reaction, it tends to pass over to an opposite extreme—an extreme in which it seems to deny its own first principles, and

practically to come round in its results to the very rationalism which it condemns. Disclaiming dependence on philosophy, it is governed at bottom by a peculiarly subtle and dangerous philosophical theory of the agnostic type. Under pretext of extruding metaphysics from theology, and of expressing religious truth in the form of "value-judgments," it expels from Christianity most of its profounder and characteristic doctrines, e. g., the Trinity, the pre-existence of Christ, the Incarnation of the divine Son, His heavenly reign, etc., and gets rid of the Divinity of Christ in any but an ethical sense; boasting of a return to the historical, it really sacrifices the historical at the shrine of theory, giving up, e. g., the miraculous birth at the one end of Christ's life, and His bodily resurrection at the other, as non-essential elements of Christianity; professing to go back to the pure evangel, etc., to free it from later adulterations, it excludes from it vital and essential elements of the apostolic Gospel, e. g., the whole doctrine of the propitiatory character of Christ's death. These are worse than mere defects in a system of theology—they involve, under color of stripping off metaphysical accretions, a transformation of the whole substance of Christianity—a reduction of it to a humanitarian and non-miraculous level. It was inevitable therefore, that a disintegration should take place in Ritschl's school, some going more to the right, in a return to many of the conceptions he had discarded, others more to the left, in the direction of "historical-criticism" and naturalism. Prof. A. E. Garvie, a sympathetic expounder of Ritschl, tells in a recent paper how this reaction is emphasized by the late Prof. Reischle, of Halle, in his *Theologie und Religionsgeschichte*. Although a disciple of Ritschl, Reischle "expressly mentions" as one of the reasons for a changed attitude to Christianity "a reaction among the younger disciples from some of his one-sided views." Ritschl raised, but did not solve, the historical problems of the Person of Christ and the Kingdom of God. By violent exegesis he forced

his system on the New Testament teaching. He ignored the history of religions, tried to impose what he regarded as a normal type of piety in opposition to mysticism, and expressed himself too arbitrarily in regard to the relation of Christian faith to science and philosophy." This is pretty much what some critics of Ritschl have been saying from the beginning.

3. A third powerful current which all must recognize as flowing into theology at the present moment is that which has its source in *Old Testament—now also New Testament—Criticism*. This, despite all quietives, is occasioning perplexity to many, and surely not without good reason. The time is past for urging that the case is one only for experts. There are portions of the field which only experts can deal with, but the critics themselves have ceased to speak or write only for experts. They have come out into the open, and address themselves to all. The subject has reached a phase in which it is no longer a matter of option with the non-expert whether he will occupy himself with it or not. The conclusions of the critics are forced on him with a persistence, and with a confidence and authority, which compel him, whatever his inclinations, to take up some attitude to them. If it were, indeed, merely a matter of "doubtful disputation" about secondary and unessential points, he might be content to leave them to the discussion and decision of those more learned than himself, but this is not its character. There is, no doubt, a *per contra* side of the account. The critical movement is not, as some would have it, evil and only evil continually. It was inevitable that such a criticism should come, and even already certain compensating advantages have resulted from it, which should do something to mitigate the alarm with which many are disposed to regard it. It is much of itself to have had a new breath of life infused into Old Testament studies. But this is not the aspect in which the ordinary man commonly regards it. He sees that what he is asked to do is practically to surrender the view

of the Bible to which he has been accustomed all his life, and at the bidding of the critics to adopt another which seems to him at the first blush to reduce it to a *caput mortuum* of traditions, legends, fictions, inventions of men, not without a considerable admixture of fraud, in which he finds it difficult to see how he is to retain anything which can be to him a sure word of God. The critics ought frankly to face this difficulty. The question is not one of mere dates of books—of whether there is a first and second Isaiah—or of the compatibility of trifling inaccuracies with inspiration. It is a question whether many of the historical books of the Bible are books of history at all—whether, e. g., the books of the Pentateuch are any more historical than the opening chapters of Livy, or Buchanan's narratives of the Early Scottish Kings. Much is said of critical "settled results," but one cannot go far into this subject without perceiving that the forces which engender much of the criticism, both of the Old and of the New Testaments, lie a good way below the criticism itself. That was conspicuously illustrated in the Tübingen theories of the New Testament of sixty years ago—now everywhere discarded—and it is just as true of the critical theories of to-day of the Old Testament. This, one may be excused for thinking, is a defect of our critics of the more believing school, that they do not sufficiently recognize the solidarity which exists between the theory of religious development which they reject, and the critical opinions which they retain, and in consequence do not do justice to the logic of their own positions.

This, however, is a matter which will right itself—so far as it needs righting—in time. A believing theory of the Bible will not fail in the end to work out critical results in harmony with its own—that is, the Bible's own—presuppositions, and it may be expected that these will differ very materially from theories which start from a naturalistic basis. It is too early to predict, but it may be affirmed with great certainty, that the last word is

still very far from having been spoken on Old Testament questions, and, when it is spoken, it may be found that we are not so remote as many people imagine from what the church has always believed about the Bible. Meanwhile, notwithstanding the complacency with which the critics move along in their assurance about "settled results," there are not wanting indications that, through developments in their own circles, and the new perspective created by archaeology, the ground is cracking in all directions beneath their feet in a way that portends great changes. To take but one example—the J and E distinction in the Pentateuch. Those who harp on this as a "settled result" appear to have little conception of the extraordinary changes which have taken place on this part of the theory in later years—the multiplication of sources (J¹, J², J³, E¹, E², E³, etc.), the lowered dating, the conversion into "schools" of writers—which really nullify a simple J and E distinction. It is comparatively easy to postulate two writers, one, say, in the South Kingdom, using the name "Jehovah;" another in the North Kingdom, using the name "Elohim" (God); but how are we to conceive of two "schools" going on for long years side by side, even after the Northern Kingdom is broken up—both, therefore, now Judean—yet one persistently clinging to the use of E, and perpetuating its style, the other as pertinaciously adhering to the use of J. The thing is incomprehensible. A yet greater blow, one may anticipate, will be given to the certainty of Old Testament methods when it is seen what havoc these make when fearlessly applied to the New Testament, as they are now beginning to be applied. On this a few words will be said below.

4. A fourth powerful current affecting theology at the present time is that flowing in from *the sciences*—especially from *the general acceptance of the idea of evolution*. There is no mistaking this current either. Evolution is an idea which has laid hold upon our age with a fascination which is fast in danger of becoming a super-

stitution. Carried out as the thorough-going naturalistic school would have it carried, the evolution theory admits of no breaks, or supernatural interpositions, and so excludes miracles all along the line. On the other hand, if a supernatural new beginning is admitted at any point—as in the Incarnation or Resurrection of our Lord—a thorough-going evolution theory is *ipso facto* discredited, at least is proclaimed inadequate to embrace all the facts. The point where the modern theory of evolution seems specially to strike into Christian theology is in the article of sin. The more carefully the present writer reflects on this subject, the less does he feel it possible even to obtain the true Scriptural idea of sin out of the hypothesis of man's gradual development from the bestial condition, and his start off in existence from a point only a degree removed from unrelieved brutishness. Where, on this hypothesis, is there any room for the awful tragedy of moral evil, for which the work of Jesus Christ affords the only and divinely-appointed remedy? Sin is not sin in the old sense, when it can be shown to flow unavoidably from man's constitution, and from the environment in which his Creator placed him. Instead of exhibiting the character of a fall, history takes the new aspect of a rise. Instead of the world lying under condemnation, as the Bible says it does, it is rather to be congratulated that it has done so remarkably well—has advanced so far from primitive barbarism or worse. Jesus it apt to appear in this scene simply as the apex of the evolutionary movement, and redemption only as aid rendered to the race in its upward march of progress by a great and good personality. One is familiar with the line of argument taken by W. F. R. Tennant and others in reply to this difficulty. But what no one has ever been able to show is how, under the conditions supposed, a sinless development was possible to man, or how his moral condition, when he came to understand it, could be regarded by him as aught but *ab initio* wrong. It is easy to speak, as one writer does, of man, emerging from ani-

malism, "when the germ of moral consciousness first appeared," being "in a position to choose deliberately in any given instance whether he would strive upward, or obey the animal nature which pulled him in an opposite direction," and to add, "If, for an instant, he chose the lower, and refused the higher, sin would for the first time exist in the world." "The stress and strain caused by his animal tendencies he must feel; but it was not necessary even to yield to them where they conflicted with his upward progress." But reduce this to the concrete, and what does it amount to. Has any such creature a freedom fitted to cope with the whole force of unrestrained animal impulse? Is not the whole conception of freedom, as existing in such a nature, abstract and unreal? Not to say that even moral failure has only the character of *sin* when it is brought into relation with *God*, the idea of Whom is here absent.

There seems little question, therefore, that, if this hypothesis is to rule the Christian system, our theology must be recast from top to bottom, if, indeed, theology remains to us at all. But is there need for this? If we go strictly by what is proved, there surely is not. Certain it is that the production of a first human pair by gradual transformation from the animal is an assertion which yet lacks all scientific evidence—towards the proof of which, as time goes on, science even does not seem to get any nearer. And if that is not proved, the essential point in the Biblical account of man's origin and primitive state is left untouched. Science itself is beginning to distinguish between evolution and Darwinism, and to recognize that evolution may admit of new starting-points, and does not invariably proceed by slow and insensible gradations.* The savage has been thought to be the intermediate stage between developed man and the animal, but the work of missions, to speak of nothing else, by discovering the

* See the writer's book on the *Image of God in Man and its Defacement in the Light of Modern Denials.*

depth of divine possibilities latent in the breast of the lowest savage, effectually knocks this on the head. The lowest barbarian is yet in every essential respect a man. Here also, as in the region of criticism, it is necessary to receive with caution the assertions even of experts. The strongest case of a "middle link" between man and the ape family is the *Pithecanthropus erectus* of Java, a few remains of which (top of a skull, teeth, a femur) were found by Dr. Dubois in 1891-2. Yet Virchow, to the end of his life, refused to admit that it was anything else than a large Gibbon. To convince the writer of the contrary a scientific friend—a Professor—put into his hands a text-book of repute, W. L. H. Duckworth's *Morphology and Anthropology*, in which elaborate calculations are given, based on "cephalisation" (ratio of brain-weight to body-weight) to show that demonstrably the *Pithecanthropus* was a form intermediate between man and ape. Unfortunately the learned author had neglected to work his own sums, and, when an obvious discrepancy led the present writer to test them, they were found to be hopelessly—even ludicrously—astray. It is right to add that the error, on being pointed out, was frankly admitted. In brief, what is true and proved in evolution is not incompatible with anything in Christianity. To quote what has been said elsewhere: "With man, from the point of view of the Bible, we have the rise of a new Kingdom, just as when life first entered, the entrance on the stage of nature of a being self-conscious, rational, and moral, a being made in the image of God, and it is arbitrary to assume that this new beginning will not be marked by differences which distinguish it from the introduction of purely animal races."

5. The last important current affecting theology which need be noticed is that entering from *the new "historical-critical" school*, and from the *science of comparative religion*. There are signs that this is the dominant influence with which Biblical learning and theology will have for some time to do, and against which the older methods,

alike of criticism and of apologetic, will not be of much avail. It is, at the same time, not easy to explain the genius and methods of this new tendency, to which the criticism of Wellhausen has already become antiquated, and which boasts of effecting a radical transformation in the literary and historical treatment of both Old and New Testaments. There is as yet little cohesion in the ranks of its adherents, or unity in its results; but Gunkel, Bousset, Winckler, Cheyne, may be named as representatives of it from different standpoints; T. G. Frazer is another type, in the general field of religion. It is a chief characteristic of the school that it refuses to look at any people or religion in isolation from general history, and aims at explaining any given religion from the circumstances of its environment, and from analogies and parallels drawn from other religions. It recognizes, ordinarily, no distinction of origin in religions; treats with bold scorn the older cautious (or incautious) methods of textual, literary, and historical criticism of books, and enters on a course of new construction from a broader basis. The religion of Israel is to be explained from ancient Semitic, Babylonian, Arabian, Persian ideas and usages: Christianity is to find a key to much in the life of Christ, and to its early institutions, in the same, or like sources. Prof. Robertson Smith gave an impulse to this way of handling the Old Testament in his studies on the religion of the Semites: an extreme newer phase is the "Pan-Babylonianism" of the Winckler school, against which Old Testament scholars themselves are setting themselves with sturdy determination. Harnack, again, paved the way for the application of the method to the New Testament in his theory of the penetration of early church dogma by Greek influences; but the movement has now assumed proportions, and yields results for the Gospels and Apostolic history, far beyond what he can approve. One feature of the method is that it desires to do away with theology as a separate discipline altogether; theology is to be merged in a historical and comparative

treatment of religions, or in a general philosophy of religion. This is not the place for an exhaustive enumeration of the tendency in question—more revolutionary, it will be seen, than any that has gone before—and the glance here taken will have reference chiefly to the New Testament.

The fountain-heads of this new stream of influence are, first, archaeology, laying bare in amazing fashion the civilizations and religions of the East, in part also, as in Crete and Greece, of the West; and, next, the comparative study of past and existing religions, higher and lower, as that has been pursued with rare indefatigableness and brilliant results during the last half century. These fascinating studies have opened up new worlds, appealed to the imagination, and naturally set new problems. Christianity, no more than the religion of Israel, can any longer be looked at by itself, but must submit to closest scrutiny in the light of all that has been discovered of other faiths. Sacred books are pitted against sacred books; moral codes against moral codes; Jesus against the founders of other religions; Gospel stories against legends of the Buddha; ideas like those of the Virgin-birth, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, against seeming parallels elsewhere; miracles in the Bible against miracles on other soils. It cannot be said that the comparison gives us nothing to think of. One discovers much that is in itself remarkable and interesting; and admiration is involuntarily awakened by the breadth and elevation of the moral teaching, the nobility of personal character, and the depth, and even spirituality of the reflection occasionally met with. The conviction is forced on us that if heathenism has sank to such depths of degradation as history shows, this has not been altogether for want of light; the world has always had a great deal more moral light than it knew how to make use of. There are sides of the religions of China, of Japan, as of Mohammedanism (its mystical schools), we are only yet beginning to know. How curious, e. g., the development of

Buddhism into the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Dharma, or in Japan the doctrine of Amida Buddha, with its repudiation of works, and inculcation of salvation by faith! The religions of the ancient Orient disclose yet stranger wonders. What marvel if all this takes hold on the imaginations of modern historical scholars, and that they are tempted to proclaim that the religions of Moses and Jesus are but two more among the rest. The Rev. C. H. Johns, e. g., has discovered apparently, that, on the whole, the prophets of Isreal must take a back seat in comparison with that of Babylonia! "They by no means everywhere attained a level of approach to what is now regarded as true, that was higher, or even as high, as the highest reached in Baylonia." It is interesting to know that so much excellent morality is found by Mr. Jones in his Babylonian tablets, but it may be predicted that the star of the Hebrew prophets is not likely to be eclipsed just yet. What are moral counsels without a living God of righteousness, as potent to save and to bless as He is to judge and to punish, behind them!

The stream that has thus gathered to flood is now pouring its full force upon the Gospel history, and many and strange things are the results. The old mythical theory has served its day, and this new theory of mythological borrowing from other religions has come to take its place. It is Christ, as before, that is in the center, and the aim, likewise as before, is to strip Him of all supernatural and Messianic prerogatives, and reduce Him to the level of a simple religious teacher—a genius in religion, let it be owned, of the first order—but still no more. Whether there may not yet be a greater is left a moot question, for it would outstep the limits of this new mode of criticism to admit the "absoluteness" of Christianity! It has often been noted how this is the goal of so much "modern" thought about Jesus—humanitarianism. It is in part the instinct to make sure that we have true humanity in Jesus; not one foreign to us in nature, and sympathy, and experience, but veritable man. This is

well, were it not that in the heart of the movement there is the determination, not less fixed, that He shall be no more than man. For a time this tendency was veiled by so-called "Kenotic" theories; but now the superfluous appendage of a depotentiating Logos is set aside, and we have man pure and simple. This is the characteristic of the newest lives of Christ—Bousset's, e. g., or Neumann's, both translated. And the above-described "historical-critical" method comes in conveniently to remove all that fits in badly with such a construction. Yet when one looks at its operations with narrowness what fantastic tricks is it seen playing! Leaving aside Gunkel, who has written a brochure on the new lines, we take up a book like Cheyne's *Bible Problems*, or Farnell's *Evolution of Religion*, both published in what is called the "Crown Library," and get a lesson as to how the new method works. "Conservative theologians," we are told, "will have to admit that the New Testament now has to be studied from the point of view of mythology as well as from that of philological exegesis and church-history * * * For the due comprehension of the New Testament, it is essential that the help of mythology, treated of course by strictly critical methods, should be invoked. * * * And the leading factor in this is Babylonian." So, for the explanation of the story of the Virgin-Birth we are taken to "the N. Arabian myth of Dusares," and to "corroborative Assyrio-Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian illustrations," and to "the Graeco-Asiatic myth of Leto." As if there was the slightest probability that the writers of the realistic and chaste stories of the Gospels ever heard of these extravagances! The narratives directly or indirectly, of the Descent into Hades—of which the Gospels say nothing—and of the Resurrection and Ascension are similarly accounted for. Paul's allusion to Christ's death and resurrection in 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, "in reality points," we are told, "to a pre-Christian sketch of the life of Christ, partly—as we have seen—derived from widely-spread non-Jewish myths, and em-

bodied in Jewish writings." As if there was the faintest evidence of the existence of such a "sketch," or as if the historic witness to the fact of the resurrection in the streets of Jerusalem a few weeks after the event did not preclude all insubstantial concoction of the kind! More outrageous and bizarre than anything else, probably, is the extraordinary theory of Dr. J. G. Frazer in the 2d edition of his *Golden Bough*—a theory whose absurdity is mercilessly exposed at unwonted length by M. A. Lang in his *Magic and Religion*. The Babylonians and their Persian conqueror, he avers, were wont yearly, at a vernal feast, to dress a condemned criminal in the royal robes (a proxy for the divine King of Babylon, who, in an age less civilized, had been sacrificed annually—so Dr. Frazer thinks), to enthrone him, to grant him access to the ladies of the royal parlor and there, at the end of five days, to strip, whip, and hang him. The Jews are supposed to have borrowed this feast, which they called Purim, from the Babylonians and Persians, and with it the practice of crowning, stripping, flogging, and hanging a mock-King, a condemned criminal, in March. They are also conjectured to have borrowed a custom of keeping a pair of condemned criminals, one of whom was hanged, *i. e.*, died as an incarnation of the good of life; the other was set free for the year. It is this role of mock-King which was forced on Jesus, and which is the real explanation of his crucifixion. Hence the belief in His divinity, etc.; in a word, Christianity! The whole thing, as M. Lang shows, is a tissue of fables from beginning to end; but imagine this seriously put forward by a sane man as an account of the origin of the Christian faith! From it one may learn the general worth of the theorizing on religion in *The Golden Bough*.

No; the foundation of God standeth sure, so far as this whole class of theories is concerned. We end where we began—that none of the currents at this hour assailing the bulwarks of our Zion are likely to do them even temporary damage.