

The Coming Day.

JANUARY, 1894.

JOHN TYNDALL.

ANOTHER of our strong men has taken the great step into the mysterious unseen, Professor Tyndall, a truth-seeking, painstaking, luminous thinker,—alert, adventurous, keen, whose resolute investigations in that fascinating wonderland of science have helped to make a new world of it, everywhere broadening the boundaries of the known, ever suggesting still broader and ever broadening boundaries beyond, a veritable prophet and seer of the living God, though he would have repudiated that. He builded wisely, in his own proper sphere, and often builded more wisely than he knew. Without knowing it, he was a preparer of paths for the coming leaders of religious thought; and, without intending it, he was a kind of religious leader himself. In science, he insisted upon the value of the inner vision as a predictive and even verifying faculty; and, in pursuit of the great realities, he led the way into the unseen.

To some he appeared to be a materialist: but he was only in arms against the pious ignorance and dogmatism of the priests. His philippics against religious belief were really philippics against clerical obscurantism. He was not a rebel against religion, but only a roused devotee of Nature, bound to defend the sanctity of her laws. Even his somewhat foolish prayer-test was only a *reductio ad absurdum*, and was, in the circumstances, a natural reaction against a still more foolish notion of the *rationale* of prayer. In fact, Tyndall's scorn was the product of the Church's irrationality, and was, in a sense, the result of his real reverence for religion,—understanding by "religion," reverence for the highest, the truest, the best.

Outside of his own field of science, however, it must be admitted that he was apt to be wilful, hasty, overbearing. He had the modern science-man's haughty "pride of reason" and overweening confidence in his few ascertained "facts." He was justly proud of his "find," and naturally inclined to make the most of it, but his knowledge failed to make him tolerant or ready to "entertain strangers." He was essentially a man of the closing half of the nineteenth century, with all the fine energy and keenness of the discoverer, but not yet serene enough to be economical of denials—not yet wise enough to win the kingdom of the little child. That is reserved for a deeper knowledge and a riper age.

THE UNIVERSAL GOD.

AN ANNIVERSARY SERMON AT CROYDON, DECEMBER 10TH, 1893.

IF the original founders of this church could be asked what was in their minds as their leading motive in calling it into existence, we might get several answers. One would say that he longed for more freedom and flexibility; another would confess to revolt against the insolence of creed and priest; a third would say that he desired the refreshment of simple religious worship in harmony with reason and grateful to the heart; another might confess that he was an aggressive Unitarian; a fifth might say: I wanted to give people the opportunity of being religiously honest. The chances are that not one would say: 'I wanted to bear my testimony to the Universal God.' And yet this probably was dormant in all their minds, as it certainly was dormant in their deed.

Any how, that is my present-day explanation of this Free Christian Church. It is not only a testimony in favour of freedom: it is not merely a protest against the tyranny of priest or creed: it is not simply a pleasant little religious home: it is not a Unitarian venture: it is not only a place where religious thinkers can be honest, but it represents that fine generalisation which is possible for those who stand outside of all the sects, and who therefore see what it is that underlies them all, and this is what I attempt to indicate by the phrase, "the Universal God."

BUT WHAT DO I MEAN BY "GOD"?

I mean that which results as the great inference from three facts:—1. That intelligence and intention are everywhere observable in Nature; 2. That such intelligence and intention give every indication of being unspeakably superior to our own; and 3. That continuity and unity appear to be dominant properties of the intelligence and intention revealed by Nature's laws and forces. I do not know what God is, or whence He came, or how He works; but, living in such an order of things, I am intellectually bound to infer Him, and, when I have inferred Him, I suddenly find boundless moral and spiritual indications of His preferences and His will, and I then see it is infinitely more easy to say what He is like and what He wishes than what He is. The main thing is the great inference. It is not necessary that you should comprehend the mode of His existence. It is only necessary that you should draw the great conclusion that He *is*. Infer Him because you cannot help it, and then pass on to discern Him where He works, and to know and do His will. And, if you ask for "facts," learn this—that the supremest fact of the universe is the forceful unity and harmony of intelligent life which makes that universe what it is.

But, starting from this foundation-conception of God, and then investigating the world's treatment of it, we are brought face to face with the fact that, though the conception is one,

THE PORTRAITS ARE MANY.

In truth, if we were not so used to it, these divergent and contradictory portraits of God would seem to be, what indeed they are, a vital fact in relation to the religions of the world. What a far cry from Juggernaut to Jesus!—from the demon-god Baal to Our Father!—from the Jehovah of the 68th Psalm to “the altogether Beautiful of the Universe” of Theodore Parker!

And even these few words bring out the fact that these great divergences exist in the Bible itself, and even within the sphere of Christendom. Names are nothing: characteristics are everything. What matters it that Calvin and Channing both talked of “God”? They did not seem to talk of the same Being. The God of Calvin seems as far removed from the God of Channing as Peter the Great of Russia was removed from our English Alfred, or as Greatheart was removed from Giant Despair. What is the inference? It is idle to talk of finality; it is grotesque to talk of an inspired disclosure. When we disengage ourselves from all these conflicting portraits and look dispassionately on, it is perfectly plain that God is still unknown,—that He is far above us all,—a great Necessity, but too far above us to be understood.

And yet there is a hidden link uniting all, for every vision of God, however distorted and blurred, has had for its quickening the same longing of the spirit. As, then, we emerge from the brutalities of the God-idea to its sanctities and elevations, we perceive a meaning in all, and even perceive the human link which unites them: so that, in a sense, we can dismiss the divergent pictures and yet retain the universal God behind them all. And this is all the more easy to do because, not only does every vision of God proceed from the same spiritual longing, but because, behind the varying visions, some central thoughts appear. Thus, every thought of God supposes that He is above us in power, that we depend upon Him, and that, in some way, He can do us good. These three central universal thoughts may be mixed with baser matter, but there they are, from Juggernaut to Jesus, from Baal to Father, from Jehovah to “the Altogether Beautiful of the Universe:” and here we find the thought of the universal God.

But, amid all these clashing and confusing notions of God, there is one prominent fact which shines out more and more:

AN IDEAL GOD IS EVER EMERGING,

just as there is always a human ideal emerging; and, as the consciousness of God clears, the God-idea resolves itself into the highest conception of wisdom, power, and goodness; and this can only keep pace with the general development and emancipation of the believer. All these names, then, which we apply to the gods—Jove, Jehovah, Father, Baal, Zeus, Apollo—are only the address on the envelope. The writing within varies beyond all telling, but the underlying emotion and motive are the same. The Ideal still waits for its perfect unveiling, and we achieve it in proportion as we attain to our own ideal, and

as we penetrate to the ideal of perfect wisdom, power and goodness. He, then, who longs for the vision of perfect wisdom, power, and goodness, longs for God; he who believes in them believes in God; he who trusts them trusts God; he who is true to them is true to God.

Of course, the human imagination at every stage will paint its varying pictures, and the tongue will tell the story in different ways,—just as the little toddler will say “Daddy,” while the youth will say “Father” (unless he disguises his feelings in Latin), but both mean the same thing. So with the gods, who, though seeming so different, are but one.

A late traveller gives an excellent illustration of how even some of the heathen grasp this truth as to the universal God.

While in California I visited a joss-house, or, rather, a heathen church. In it were several ugly idols. These idols were all gaudily painted. They were made of paper puffed out with wire. Some of them had many eyes, several hands, and now and then one had a double head. They had eyes in their knees, eyes in their stomachs, and eyes in the tops of their heads. Some had hands all around them, and all had long fierce looking beards. A little child in our party was too frightened to look at these idols. She kept saying—

“Oh, mamma, it is so ugly! Take it away!”

The heathen priest was a very clever man. I found afterward that he had been a great reader. In this joss-house he stood in front of the gods with his people, and they all worshiped and prayed together. They were thoroughly in earnest, and I believe every Chinaman believed his eternal salvation depended on his worship.

I found the priest to be a man of great learning. After the service I went in behind the gods with a young interpreter—a young Chinese graduate from Yale, and had a long talk with him.

“I see you have many gods?” I commenced.

“No,” he replied, through the interpreter, “we only worship one God.”

“Then these are idols,” I remarked.

“No; the Chinese do not worship idols. These are images to represent God—one God. We have many images, so that all the people can see at once, but each image represents the same God.”

“Then you do not worship the images.”

“Oh, no. They are only to remind us of God. You Christians pray before the crucifix, and the Catholics even have an image of Christ and the Virgin Mary, just as we have these images. We do not worship the images.”

“Why do you have such ugly, deformed images?” I asked. “Why do they have double heads, many ears, and many eyes?”

“Well, God, you know, is omniscient, potential, and omnipresent. We represent these attributes by the images. The many hands denote that God is omnipresent. The many eyes denote that He is omniscient—that he sees everything.”

“But why do you make such ugly-looking images?” I asked.

“Oh! that is the Chinese antique. They are not ugly to us. They made them so in the time of Confucius, and our people don't like to change. It is our religious form. I see you Christians preserve religious forms, too. You have religious architecture—the Gothic. You have stiff angels after Fra Angelico, and angels quite deformed, after Sassafereito and the old religious artists. Why can't we Chinamen preserve our antique religious art, even if it is ugly, as well as you?”

I found the Chinese priest very radical. He defended himself and his faith splendidly.

“Yes,” he said, “we are all alike. We all have the same God. We all pray to Him the same—the Chinaman, Turk, Englishman, and South American. He is the same God all over the world, only each nation spells His name differently. We call him Joss; the

Hindoo call him Bramola; the Greeks call him Theos; the Italian, Deus; the American Indian, Great Spirit; the Frenchman, Dieu; the German, Gott; the American, God; and so on. Every nation has the same God, only they spell it different. The same God in twenty-six different nations has the same

attributes—omniscience, omnipresence, potentiality. Every nation prays to Him the same. You and I, though you call me a heathen, worship the same God. We believe precisely alike, except when we come to the prophets, and then all the nations disagree."

What a profound truth is here, and what fine unconscious humour there is in the suggestion that the prophets divide us! It reminds us of the unsophisticated peasant's remark, "How plain the Bible is till people begin to explain it!" or as I might say to-day,—How easy it is to believe in God till people begin to paint portraits of Him.

WHERE, THEN, IS THIS UNIVERSAL GOD?

Everywhere, and yet nowhere; traces of Him in the Bible, in the mysterious systems of religion known to ancient India, Egypt, China, Persia, Chaldea; even in the old idolatries, which tell as truly as the old bibles, of the anxiety and hunger of the human heart. It is a human brotherhood which everywhere has groped for the Fatherhood, as the great Paul said:

God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. that they should seek the Lord, if haply they

might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

Or, as Longfellow has it:

In all ages
Every human heart is human;—
In even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings
For the good they comprehend not.

The feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened.

And the god touched by the blind groping in "heathen" darkness is just as much and as truly God as the God and Father of Jesus Christ, only the spirit-sense of the human seeker varies—a million pictures, colours, features, tones, but only one Spirit of Life behind the million forms.

And yet there are sources of knowledge which are the likeliest to lead to ideals, or even to one great universal visioning thought of God.

One of these we indicate by the wide word Nature, vaster than any bible, more enduring than any creed, more authoritative than any verbal revelation, more cumulative in value and evidence than all the religions of the world; everywhere palpitating with profound mystery, everywhere touched with the bewildering veiled hand of tragedy, everywhere hiding the mercy beneath penalty or price, and yet everywhere suggesting heights beyond heights of magnificence, depth upon depth of mercy, fold within fold of thoughtfulness; everywhere the laws of Nature the expression of the will of the universal God, and the modes of manifestation of His working. Hence man's ever-varying

vision of God, for as our knowledge of the laws of Nature is enlarged, so must our conception of the great Law-evolver be changed. If we regard the temple of Nature as the temple of God, that can never long remain the same, and it must come to pass that we shall always have the great God above us and beyond. There must always be a higher, a greater, a kinglier. A vaster universe must need a vaster vision of God. The old cosmogonies must go, and with them the old theologies, for they were hammered out together. The fall of man means one thing as to God: the rise of man another. This is why Nature is the permanent, living, progressive revealer of God, forever dwarfing and superseding all the book religions of the world, and forever tending to the clearer revelation of the universal God; and this is why belief in God will deepen and not disappear as we go on.

The same is true of Human Nature. The only really religious explanation of Human Nature is that it is a manifestation of God. Of course, what we sorrowfully admit concerning Nature is true of Human Nature,—the same profound mysteries, the same tragic inconsistencies, the same dark lines in the lovely spectrum which have forced multitudes to infer the presence of a Devil as well as of God. And yet—the same underlying unity, the same welling-up of persistent beauty, the same forcefulness of progress, the same undying prophecy of hope.

THE SPIRIT OF MAN IS THE PROGRESSIVE REVEALER OF GOD.

The divine is manifestly working through the human. As there is a common sense, so there is a common soul, and, as time goes on, the one God must plainly say the same thing to every one, but not through any final book, not through any one authoritative church, but through and in the God-moved, God-led, God-inspired inner self. Why, even now this is so, far beyond our recognitions and admissions. To-day is it true that the bright spirits of all religions throughout the world are voicing the message of the universal God; and if we could have a perfect parliament of religions, if we could realise in London the dream of Jesus, and bring together the bright spirits of all faiths from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, we should see and hear the truth of what I say, that already it is done; we should have it demonstrated that at last the universal God has come to His own, has found His instrument and voiced it, and is now manifesting Himself through the at last created and liberated human soul.

So, in like manner, the universal God is seen in Human History. It is a fatal error that God has been in Hebrew history only. No, but Paul was right, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." In the history of man everywhere the same laws of human life are unfolded, the same causes of growth and decay, the same conditions of advancement and happiness, the same revelation of a Power beyond and

behind, which works for righteousness, and there is no revelation like that; nay, but that is the revelation which, in the end, must in human history reveal more clearly than anything else the universal God. No matter what Moses said or what Mohammed wrote; no matter what Paul taught or the early Church decreed, the supreme law of righteousness, revealed in the unfolding and working-out of human history, must knit the nations of the world in one, and shew one law, one bond, one hope, one brotherhood,

And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

So, then, the history of the world is

THE TRUEST BIBLE OF THE WORLD,

and the experiences of man are the educating forces of the universal God. Civilisation, good government, morality based upon natural laws, are all modes of manifestation of God. The true Incarnation was not accomplished once and in only one, but is ever the working in and working out of the divine in the human. Revelation is discovery, and inspiration is the coming of the universal God to the use and possession of His own. What a consolation it ought to be to us to have such thoughts as these! How far they remove us above the poor provincialisms of the still dominant sects! How they emancipate us from the old depressing uncharities and fears! How full they are of hope for days to come! And though the claim may seem presumptuous when we remember that we are but few, I must not shrink from the declaration that there is hardly a church in Christendom which delivers this message with as much freedom and frankness as this church can do and does to-day, for in doing it we are able to separate ourselves for the moment even from the Bible and from Jesus Christ as authorities, and take our stand on pure humanity and natural religion, that we may testify to the universal God.

And if, after that testimony, we return to keep Advent-time with the rest, and welcome Jesus as the leader of Christendom, we do so with our record clear, and only as seeing in him one among many brethren. Come then!

Sing the Love divine whose offspring is the Christ-child
Born in human hearts to show the image of the God,
Merciful and Mighty, whose eternal presence
Blesses all the paths of life that man has ever trod.
Broad as earth's great circle stretch those arms of mercy,
Bearing flowers of peace and hope, and scattering them abroad.

SPINOZA AND THE BIBLE.

THE teaching of the Reformers, had it been consistently and boldly carried out, should at once have inaugurated that more liberal, more sympathetic method of Biblical criticism which has at length begun to prevail. But new modes of thought spread slowly: the fetters of prejudice that had for so many centuries been lightening upon men's minds could not be shaken off in a moment; reason was forbidden to trespass upon the province of faith, or, if the semblance of it was attained, it was only when trammelled with foregone conclusions. Men who only carried to their logical consequences principles accepted by the Church were disowned by her, and under her frown they and their doctrines perished together. Losing sight of their own doctrine of the freedom and equality of men in matters of faith, the Protestant theologians soon began to lay down the law concerning the interpretation of Scripture: but since, while holding fast to the inspiration of the Book, they denied the inspiration of the Church which hitherto had been its interpreter, fierce differences of opinion necessarily arose. The Lutheran Church looked around sorrowfully upon the conflicts of multiplying sects, and sometimes dealt harshly with the sectaries. Freedom and unity seemed incompatible, but the true meaning of both words was apprehended by very few until many generations had passed away. It is interesting to see how opinions held now with impunity by scholars within the pale of the most orthodox church, obliged Spinoza, in 1670, to publish his *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* anonymously, and his printer to shelter himself behind a pseudonym.

The *Tractatus*, primarily a plea for tolerance, contains principles of Biblical exegesis almost as congenial with those now accepted as they were contrary to those of the age in which it was produced. Wondering and lamenting over the quarrels and controversies of religious sects, and the unjust invocation of Scripture by those whose "belief in the Bible is a formal assent rather than a living faith," Spinoza tells us that he "determined to examine the Bible afresh in a careful, impartial, and unfettered spirit, making no assumptions concerning it, and attributing to it no doctrines which I do not find clearly therein set down." In this spirit he proceeds to discuss the nature of prophecy and of revelation generally; the right interpretation of Scripture: the meaning of the divine, as differing from the ceremonial law; the special blessedness of the Hebrews and their vocation; the relation between Faith and Philosophy, and between Church and State: and he deals with these questions from a standpoint at least a century in advance of the theological thought of his time.

Spinoza has been called the "father of Biblical exegesis;" and in his qualifications for this branch of theology, he probably stood almost alone. In one of the best Jewish schools he had gained such a mastery of Hebrew literature as few but the sons of Israel could acquire: yet his mind was as free

rom Jewish prejudice as from Gentile superstition, and few students of the Bible have more justly claimed to approach it in a careful, impartial, and unfettered spirit.

Beginning with an exposition of the nature of prophecy and of the prophetic gift, he notes the difference in style between one prophet and another, and the prevalence of the human over the superhuman element in their writings: the manifest traces of ignorance and of primitive theological conceptions shared by them with the rest of mankind. He admits that, to Moses, Jehovah was only a national God, and one—the most powerful of a number of gods: he suggests natural explanations of Old Testament miracles quite in the manner of the later rationalists, and maintains that the revelations of God in the Old Testament and the arguments of Christ in the New were alike adapted to the capacity of those who received them.

Spinoza denied that the Israelites were at any time favoured by God above the rest of the nations, except in so far as God is to be regarded as the cause of all good, their long persistence as a nation being explicable by their peculiar social organisation: "the individual Jew, taken apart from his social organisation and government, possessed no gift of God above other men." He, indeed, in orthodox phrase, attributes their success to "the help of God:" but what does he mean by this? "By the help of God," he says, "I mean the fixed and unchangeable order of nature or the chain of natural events . . . for the universal laws of nature, according to which all things exist and are determined, are only another name for the eternal decrees of God, which always involve eternal truth and necessity. . . . Whatever human nature can furnish itself with by its own efforts to preserve its existence may be fitly called the *inward aid of God*: whereas whatever else accrues to man's profit from outward causes may be called the external aid of God. Mr. Pollock has justly said that the *divine election* of the Hebrews means, to Spinoza, neither more nor less than *natural selection*.

He cannot think of the law of God as committed to one nation only, for he holds that it is written more or less clearly in human nature everywhere: that it is independent of any historical narrative, as well as of ceremonial performance and of reward. "The highest reward of the Divine law is the law itself, viz., to know God and to love him of our free choice, and with an undivided and fruitful spirit: while its penalty is the absence of these things, and being in bondage to the flesh, *i.e.*, having an inconstant and wavering spirit."

In a world of inherent necessity and eternal law, Spinoza can find no room for the conception of a miracle. "A miracle," he says, "is an event of which the causes cannot be explained by the natural reason through a reference to ascertained workings of nature," hence, to the ancients, and to the unlearned, anything exciting wonder. Moreover, in reading the stories of miracles in the

Bible, we have to make allowances for the religious idiom of the East, and for unintentional prejudice. We are reminded that it is Lessing's master who speaks when we read, "It is very rare for men to narrate an event simply as it happened, without adding any element of their own judgment. When they see or hear anything new, they are, unless strictly on their guard, so occupied with their preconceived opinions, that they perceive something quite different from the plain facts seen or heard, especially if such facts surpass the comprehension of the beholders or hearers, and most of all, if they are interested in their happening in a given way.

As to the interpretation and literal inspiration of Scripture, Spinoza boldly points out the inevitable uncertainty which must attend any reading—even that of the most learned—owing to the doubt of authorship, and of faithful copying, and to the multiple meaning of words, confusions of tense and absence of vowels. He raises the long-vexed question of the authorship of the Pentateuch, and maintains that the only writings of Moses known to us are the Song and the Book of the Covenant: the five books bearing his name, together with the seven following, being probably a compilation by Ezra.

It may be admitted that very little of Spinoza's criticism was absolutely new, even in his own time; and, in ours, what was then newest has almost lost even the interest of heterodoxy. Where he strayed, his footprints have become overgrown and forgotten: where he struck out the right path, his track has been lost among the multitude of those that followed him. The remembrance of him soon faded, and his doctrines slumbered until they were revived in a more congenial age. But the peculiar merit of Spinoza lies less in his philosophy or exegesis, in themselves, than in the motive and spirit of both—in his pure love of truth, for truth's sake, his high thought of the nature and function of reason, and his consistent practice of the principles he had laid down. Singularly free from the manifold prejudice that hampered nearly all the theological thinkers of his time, Spinoza insisted that men should "admit no principles for interpreting Scripture, and discussing its contents, save such as they find in Scripture itself." The universal rule in interpreting Scripture is to accept nothing as an authoritative scriptural statement which we do not perceive very clearly when we examine it in the light of its history."

K. M. W.

TEACHER OR PRIEST ?

DURING the past few years, there has been, in the so-called National Church, a very strong tendency in favour of the priest. Even in small villages and old-fashioned country towns, one may find, all over England, signs of Rome's re-conquest of the State Church. At the late Church Congress the word *priest* was insisted upon, and ostentatiously used as a kind of watchword and battle-cry, and the enterprising "High Church" journals lose no opportunity of executing the flourish. This, be it remembered, is always in connection with the celebration of a more or less bastard mass, which, with passionate reiteration, at the Congress, was set forth as of the very essence of worship.

Now, what is a priest? The derivation of the word is now useless. We have got beyond the root, and are now fully occupied with the fruit. Webster's Dictionary thus defines a priest:—"One who is authorised to consecrate the host and to say mass." "One who officiates at the altar, or performs the rite of sacrifice: hence, one who acts as a mediator between men and the Divinity or the gods." And, as an illustration, it quotes Dr. Arnold, who wrote: "The essential point in the notion of a priest is that he is a person made necessary to our intercourse with God."

If we turn from the definition to the documents, we shall find that the definition is absolutely correct. The Book of Common Prayer completely justifies Dr. Arnold, the Dictionary, the Church Congress, and the "High Church" journals. The Office of "the form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons," is perfectly frank and simple—there is no mistaking its meaning. The bishop and the priests present are instructed to lay their hands upon the head of the candidate, while the bishop says:—"Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of His holy Sacraments; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." After which, he adds:—"Take thou

Authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the Holy Sacraments in the Congregation where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto." Now here we have the kernel of the whole system. One man actually professes to impart to another "The Holy Ghost," as though the spirit of God could trickle from the fingers of a man. For that, monstrous as it appears, is the theory. An appointed functionary, coming, as is supposed, in the order of apostolic succession, is actually represented as the channel of this supreme gift: for the words are plain;—"by the Imposition of our hands" "receive the Holy Ghost."

It is to be noted that to no one but a priest is given this tremendous right to forgive and retain sins, and, if we turn to the services at which he has to officiate, we see that it is no formal commission that is given to him. After the General Confession, in "the order for morning prayer," "the priest alone, standing," while the people kneel, pronounces "the absolution or remission of sins." The deacon, who may read the lessons, assist at the sacrament, and even baptise and preach, is not allowed to utter the absolution. To the priest alone that divine power is given. The full effect of that is manifested in the order for the visitation of the sick, in which the priest unequivocally says that Christ has "left power to his Church to absolve all sinners," and therefore, he says, "by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

But this is not the only superstition in this "order for the visitation of the sick." The priest endorses the old error that God sends disease. "Whatsoever your sickness is," he says, "know you certainly it is God's visitation,"—when all the while the poor fellow may be suffering from the carelessness of a driver, or the rascally negligence or cupidity of the maker of a sewer. The priest also endorses the superstition that sickness may be caused by the devil as well as by God, for he prays,—"Renew in him, most loving Father, whatsoever hath been decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil."

If we turn to the other offices of the Church (which follow us from the cradle to the grave), we find that at every step the priest is the

supernatural person, the magic-man, the channel of the grace of God, the mediator between God and man, between earth and heaven.

Nor is this theory only. It has borne and is bearing its appropriate fruit, so much so that *priestly*, *priest-ridden* and *priestcraft* have become necessary common words. There are, thank God! multitudes of gracious, gentle, and human priests, who have not been spoiled by their magical vocation and perverted by their awful power, but the tendency is too often the other way.

A short time ago, attention was drawn to a "Short and simple Catechism" by a Lincolnshire "parish priest," which is very much to the point. It is only one of many of the same kind, and is but one link in a cleverly contrived chain which may end, for instance, in pulling the London Board schools into the priestly net. This catechism is perfectly simple and logical. Taking the Church as the circumference and the priest as the centre, or the priest as the circumference and the Church as the centre, every word of it is becoming and true. The little English child is thus taught by question and answer:—"What is one great part of thy duty to thy neighbour?" "To submit myself to all my spiritual pastors and masters." A very pretty answer, but what follows? "Who is the spiritual pastor to thee and thy parish?" "My Parish Priest who has the cure of my soul." An answer which leads acutely on to the critical question and answer: "But is

the Church Minister the only lawful minister in every Parish?" to which the following answer is set down for the little devotee: "Undoubtedly." Then comes the earthquake; "Is it then a sin to neglect thine own Minister and thine own Parish Church?" "Undoubtedly. Because it is an open defiance of God's commandment, 'Honour thy Father and thy Mother; thy Father in God, thy Mother the Church.'"

Now, granting the premisses, all this is perfectly honest, consistent. The only question is,—Are the premisses false? If so, what is the alternative? If the priest is to go, what remains? Surely the teacher. The one aim of the religious leaders of mankind should be the promotion of virtue and the discovery of the truth. Is that a lowering of a great vocation? Surely not: but the reverse. Does that point to a decay in religious belief and devotion? Again, surely not. At first, the putting aside of the priest, the substitution of a teacher's platform for the altar, the quiet taking away of vestments and candles and incense and the body and blood of God, might look like loss, but in time the gain would be seen to be immense. Belief would then be based upon insight and knowledge, and devotion would be entirely an act of reasonable surrender to the best and highest. "Where there is no vision the people perish," said an old Hebrew philosopher; yes, and where there is the open vision the people live.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

"Jesus and modern life." By M. J. Savage. With an introduction by Professor C. H. Joy. Boston (U.S.): G. H. Ellis. One of Mr. Savage's crisp and enlightening books. In it he sets out to do three things;—to find out, so far as is to-day possible, the actual beliefs and teachings of Jesus; to see how these are related to the preceding thought of the world, and specially of his own people; and to find out how much of them is vital to-day, and how they bear on the problems, religious and other, with which we have to deal. The book, in fact, consists of thirteen sermons, but are not much the worse for that.

"Sixty years of an agitator's life." By George Jacob Holyoake. In two vols. Cheap edition. London: T. Fisher Unwin. It is perfectly conceivable that in one or two hundred years the name and story of George Jacob Holyoake may be better understood and more taken to heart than they are to-day. Thank God and Heaven for many who have believed in neither! But that is by the way. Mr. Holyoake's real life-work has not been done on theological lines. He has been, first of all, a social seer, and he has, in truth, a story to tell. His book is full of instruction and vivid interest.

"The life of Robert Rudolph Suffield." London: Williams and Norgate. A book that cannot but be interesting to many. "Father Suffield," once a valued instrument in the Roman Catholic Church, then a Unitarian minister of a Theistic type, was for a time the object of much speculation and not a little wonder. His failing health did not enable him to solve the problem as to what might come of a keen and fervent spirit who changed the gorgeous ritual of Rome for the thin and bare cult of a Dissenter of Dissent. It is pleasant to note that his old friends never vilified him, and that his new friends never ceased to love him. The story of his pilgrimage from Rome to Reason is temperately and simply told, and, apart from the man, is valuable. The book contains a portrait which is a good likeness.

"Spring flowers and autumn leaves. By Thomas Brevior. London: Allman & Son. A very pleasant book of simple verse unaffected, thoughtful, wholesome—telling the thoughts and expressing the feelings of multitudes who, blessed be God! still delight in homely things, and find Nature a perpetual joy.

"The religion of a literary man. By R. Le Gallienne. London: Mathews and Lane. Of course interesting, but one is just a little puzzled to know how much of it is simple and how much is affected. We are truly sorry if there is any unconscious injustice in that last word, but there are certain passages in this book which look like affectations—as, for instance, when its writer sits on his rail and, after discussing immortality or no immortality, ends with a yawn and says; "Whichever theory be true, it does not really much matter," which is sheer nonsense, and mere cigarette smoking. Mr. Le Gallienne is, however, far too clever a man to write much nonsense, and far too original a man to dawdle over what we may call the Pall Mall or Piccadilly state of mind, and no one will deny the vivid presence of both cleverness and originality in this book. It is a sharp sign of the times; not much more and yet not any less. At first, we hardly saw the significance of "The Religion of a Literary Man," but, as we ponder it, we somehow distinguish between a workman and an anxious soul—an artist daintily handling his pen and a man crying, "What must I do to be saved?" But, anyhow, we are grateful for Mr. Le Gallienne's window, looking due East.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

CONCERNING CROYDON.—A Happy New Year to all! That wish is so personal that I may take advantage of it to answer some questions often put to me, such as;—Do you like your new life? Is it a nice church? Is the work prospering? Are the people kind and loyal? Are you well? Many thanks for all inquiries, which I by no means regard lightly. Perhaps a few lines here may, however, save much trouble. The work of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH in London, which was so greatly prospering, received a check during and after my severe illness last winter, and though I still hope to continue it at less speed, I am falling back upon the Croydon church as sufficient for my strength, though I fully maintain relations, through the post, with members of Our Father's Church everywhere, and, by the same means, join hands with a multitude of inquirers. At Croydon the work

is most delightful, and no man ever had a more united and loving congregation, to whom it is a constant joy to minister. The church building is an ideal one—handsome, simple, serious, restful, and absolutely free from the anomalies and hindrances of nonconformist Gothic. The air of South Norwood Hill is most invigorating and yet soothing, and I am as well as I deserve to be. J. P. H.

WIND: NORTH EAST BY SOUTH WEST. N.E.—"Please discontinue my *Coming Day*. I do not approve of the introduction of politics into it." S.W. "Pray go on with the *Coming Day*. I do not see how you can change it for the better. We find your plain speaking on political and religious topics very acceptable and frequently very helpful. The *Coming Day* I regard as a wholesome tonic, and should be sorry to see it discontinued."

THE RUSSIAN EXILES AT SIBERIA — Mr. George Kennan, who has done great service in the civilised world's campaign against Russia's political barbarism, will be welcomed in London on Monday, January 8th, when he will give a lecture on "Political Exiles at Siberian Convict Mines." The lecture will be given at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly. Dr. Spencer Watson will take the chair at eight. Tickets may be procured from Miss G. L. Mallett, Hon. Sec., 132, Cromwell Road, or at the Hall, 10/6, 5/-, 2/6, 1/-. The proceeds will be given to the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom.

A WRECK. — Poor Mr. Chamberlain! He has opened a Conservative Club in a little rustic town, and he made a speech. Here it is, boiled down; there was really nothing else in it:—They tell me I am a 'moral Anarchis.' but I don't know what that is. The Government is ruling with a rod of iron, and pushes on with desperate speed; but it

wants to do nothing. The sittings of the House are discreditably long, and no business gets done; and we have succeeded in gravelling Her Majesty's ministers, so that they are unable to make way. Parliamentary life is almost unbearable, and we shall take pains to make it entirely so. The Irish members are actually daring to help in passing English measures. What business have they to interfere with us? The Liberals are political moonlighters. Mr. Gladstone is a fraud who means nothing, whatever he proposes. His Government is dishonest. It pretends to want to pass the Employer's Liability Bill, and the Local Veto Bill, and the Parish Councils Bill; but all this is pretence, it does not care a brass farthing for them. It only wants to sell the country to a parcel of Irish adventurers.

Poor Mr. Chamberlain! *The Chronicle* described him as "The most sinister feature modern politics." That would be true if we were stronger—but he is a wreck; and creaks horribly in breaking up.

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH - We have been slightly misunderstood as to the desirability of meetings. All we urged was that meetings are not essential, and we felt bound to strongly resist the idea that meetings brought the Church "from the realm of paper and theory to that of realisation and fact." It was that which seemed to us to be a distressing view of The Ideal. No one can deny the great value and delightsomeness of meetings; but they are not necessary; and, in these days of churchy and sectarian emphasis, the example of a church without a box and its machinery may be specially useful.

We shall be glad to hear from any one who can use copies of *The Ideal* in German or French. Copies will be sent free.

HELL.—Yes, there must be a Hell, though not necessarily for ever. Here is one evidence of it:—A Dalziel telegram says: "Providence (Rhode Island).—Dick O'Brien and Jack Magee fought at the Metropole Club last night. Four savage rounds were fought, the battle being the fiercest which has ever

occurred in this State. In the fifth round, O'Brien upper-cut Magee, lifting him clean off the floor, and knocking him out so completely that it took him an hour to recover." What can such devils do, or what can be done at first with such devils, on the other side? If they get the chance, they will easily make a Hell.

ATMOSPHERES.—The following passage from the lately-published juvenile papers of John Ruskin is extremely interesting:—"I have often wondered, in listening to what are called "practical" discourses from the pulpit, to hear a preacher dividing the duty of *love* into the various minor virtues which affect the present state of men—into gentleness, meekness, sympathy, compassion, almsgiving, and such like, without ever insisting on the certain and most important truth, that as long as we are doubtful of the state of *one* human soul among those among whom we dwell, the duty of *love* claims that every effort of our existence should be directed to save that soul, and that *in the*

present circumstances of humanity, under which we have every reason for supposing that the far greater part of those who die daily in our sight depart into eternal torment, any direction of our energies to any one end or object whatsoever except the saving of souls is a merciless and execrable crime."

In writing that, Ruskin only wrote in and from his thought-atmosphere. "He says we have every reason for supposing," but that only meant; I have never heard any-

thing else! Thinking as he did, he was right in his conclusion. If "the far greater part of those who die daily in our sight depart into eternal torment," the sub-division of love into such mild feelings as gentleness, meekness and the like is a mere frivolity. Love ought to be concentrated in one supreme desire to save the soul. But what a change has come over the spirit of his dream! What has produced that change? Emergence from one thought-atmosphere to another.

HAWTHORNE BUDS.

*There is Hawthorne, with genius so
shrinking and rare,
That you hardly at first see the strength
that is there;
A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
So earnest, so graceful, so solid, so fleet,
Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet;
When Nature was shaping him, clay was
not granted*

*For making so full-sized a man as she
wanted,
So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
From some finer-grained stuff for a woman
prepared,
And she could not have hit a more excellent
plan
For making him fully and perfectly man.*
LOWELL.

1.—Human nature will not flourish any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil.—*The Scarlet Letter*.

2.—It contributes greatly towards a man's moral and intellectual health to be brought into habits of companionship with individuals unlike himself, who care little for his pursuits, and whose sphere and abilities he must go out of himself to appreciate.—*The Scarlet Letter*.

3.—It is a good lesson—though it may often be a hard one—for a man who has dreamed of literary fame, and of making for himself a rank among the world's dignitaries by such means, to step aside out of the narrow circle in which his claims are recognised, and to find how utterly devoid of significance, beyond that circle, is all that he achieves, and all he aims at.—*The Scarlet Letter*.

4.—LET men tremble to win the heart of woman, unless they win along with it the utmost passion of her heart.—*The Scarlet Letter*.

5.—No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true.—*The Scarlet Letter*.

6.—THE hand that renovates is always more sacrilegious than that which destroys.—*The Old Manse*.

7.—THE dominions which the spirit conquers for itself among unrealities become a thousand times more real than the earth whereon they stamp their feet, saying, "This is solid and substantial; this may be called a fact."—*A Select Party*.

8.—OUR great creative Mother, while she assumes us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results.—*The Birthmark*.

9.—THE Fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man.—*Young Goodman Brown*.

10.—I DESIRE not an earthly immortality. Were man to live longer on the earth, the spiritual would die out of him. The spark of eternal fire would be choked by the material, the sensual.—*A Virtuoso's Collection.*

11.—MAN must not disclaim his brotherhood—even with the guilty; since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the fitting phantoms of iniquity.—*Fancy's Showbox.*

12.—IN chaste and warm affections, humble wishes, and honest toil for some useful end, there is health for the mind, and quiet for the heart, the prospect of a happy life, and the fairest hope of heaven.—*The Village Uncle*

13.—WHEN we desire life for the attainment of an object, we recognise the frailty of its texture.—*The Artist of the Beautiful.*

14.—I CAN spare none of my recollections, not even those of error or sorrow. They are all alike the food of my spirit.—*A Virtuoso's Collection.*

15.—THE cold, icy memory which one generation may retain of another is but a poor recompense to barter life for. Yet if your heart is set on being known to posterity, the surest, the only method is, to live truly and wisely for your own age.—*A Select Party.*

16.—THERE is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the fingers.—*Rappacini's Daughter.*

17.—EVERY gravestone ever made is the visible symbol of a mistaken system. Our thoughts should soar upward with the butterfly—not linger with the exuvia that confined him.—*Chippings with a Chisel.*

18.—IN the depths of every heart there are a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones or prisoners whom they hide. But sometimes, and oftener at midnight, those dark receptacles are flung wide open.—*The Haunted Mind.*

19.—WHERE would be Death's triumph if none lived to weep?—*Edward Fane's Rosebud.*

20.—THE fantasias of one day are the deepest realities of a future one.—*The Hall of Fantasy.*

21.—NOT a truth is destroyed nor buried so deep among the ashes but it will be raked up at last.—*Earth's Holocaust.*

22.—How many, who have deemed themselves antagonists, will smile hereafter, when they look back upon the world's wide harvest field, and perceive that, in unconscious brotherhood, they were helping to bind the selfsame sheaf!—*The Procession of Life.*

23.—How can human law inculcate benevolence and love while it persists in setting up the gallows as its chief symbol?—*Earth's Holocaust.*

24.—SHOULD our earthly life be leaving us with the departing light, we need not doubt that another morn will find us somewhere beneath the smile of God.—*The New Adam and Eve.*

25.—WHO can doubt that the very highest state to which a human spirit can attain, in its loftiest aspirations, is its truest and most natural state.—*Droune's Wooden Image.*

26.—THIS fugitive to-morrow is a stray child of Time, and is flying from his Father into the region of the infinite. Continue your pursuit and you will doubtless come up with him; but as to the earthly gifts which you expect, he has scattered them all among a throng of yesterdays.—*The Intelligence Office.*

27.—HENCEFORTH let no man dare to show a piece of musty parchment as his warrant for lording it over his fellows.—*Earth's Holocaust*

28.—OUR faith can well afford to lose all the drapery that even the holiest men have thrown around it, and be only the more sublime in its simplicity.—*Earth's Holocaust.*

29.—MOST men seek to impose some cunning falsehood upon themselves for truth.—*The Intelligence Office.*

30.—FOR those who waste all their days in the Hall of Fantasy the solid earth has come to an untimely end. Let us be content, therefore, with merely an occasional visit, for the sake of spiritualising the grossness of this actual life.—*The Hall of Fantasy.*

31.—If we go no deeper than the intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream.—*Earth's Holocaust.*