

analysis and criticism, Cicero exclaims, as the last word of the ancient philosophy: "It would take a god to tell us which of these systems is true."

All through the course of modern history we find that same stream of anxious thought running almost uninterruptedly. Amid the multitude of those whose thinking found its answers in their Faith, there have always been found some who, starting from nescience or from doubt, have sought to solve the problems of the ages by the unaided power of intellect. Mr. Lewes has given us the result in his "History of Philosophy," and considering the oft-repeated oscillation from idealism to materialism, from pantheism to positivism, he draws the conclusion that philosophy is impossible, that scepticism is the normal attitude of the reasonable mind.

His division of alternatives is incomplete, and therefore his conclusion is unwarranted. But still his review of human thought teaches us this great lesson: That the intellect of the best part of mankind has ever been engaged with the great problems which are the basis both of philosophy and of religion; that it has recognised these problems to be of so tremendous importance that an answer to them it needs must have, or man's life-journey is left without peace and without security; but also, that, as long as it has sought for their solution by the light of unaided reason, it has sought in vain, has attained to conclusions so imperfect, so varying, so uncertain, that they could give no satisfaction to eager minds and to anxious hearts.

From these facts, two conclusions follow with inexorable logic. The first is, that since the human mind so universally, so imperiously, with yearning and need beyond aught else, demands an answer to these problems, an answer there must be within its reach. The second is, that since unaided reason does not suffice for its attainment, man's Creator must have given him, for that end, some aids to reason, some additional light, some helpful information,—in a word, what is usually called Divine Revelation.

Let us look at these two conclusions, and see whether there is any reasonable escape from them.

The universality of law, the general harmony and fitness of things, forbids us to suppose that man is the one exception whose being is a contradiction. His whole nature cries out that it is not self-sufficing, and that the things around it are powerless to fill the abysses of its cravings and its aspirations. Whenever it is not consciously thoughtless or foolish, it reaches outward and upward by the very necessity of its being. Reason shows us why this is so. Herbert Spencer, among others, has demonstrated that the finite, the transient, the conditioned, not only could not exist, but is inconceivable, unless there existed the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute. His writings show that, like those of whom Cicero wrote, he knows not what manner of God to have; but he has at any rate made it perfectly clear that there must be a God. This being so, it requires no great stretch of reasoning to see that He must be both the Author and the Object of our nature's aspirations. But to suppose that He so fashioned our nature, only that it might writhe helplessly in self-torture, that our mind and our heart should forever, like Tantalus, agonise for the true and the good, and never reach it,—this would be to imagine Him the most impossible of monsters.

The leading advocate of unbelief in our country has drawn a picture of man's condition as he understands it, which is to the purpose. Man, he says, stands upon the bleak pinnacle of existence, between the two dark abysses of the past and of the future, knowing not whence he comes nor whither he goes; and if, in his agony, he asks Whence? or Whither? he is only mocked by the echo of his own cry! This is horrible. It tramples on the order and harmony of things, and throws intellect, the highest realm of nature into chaos. Nature, intellect, all things, cry out. It is not true. Human nature is not, cannot be, an illusion, a mockery, an anomaly and contradiction in the symmetry of things. Its fitnesses have their purpose; its aspirations have their object. Its questions have their answer. And if, for the attainment of this, the unaided powers of human nature do not suffice, it is because, noble though nature is, it is made for something nobler than itself, for relations with the Infinite Creator which only He can make known to it, to whose attainment only He can help it up. This is not to the disparagement of nature, but to its honour. It is no limit of hindrance put upon reason, but help and elevation bestowed upon it.

Thus the testimony of reason, of human nature, in ourselves and in all history, proves with the unimpeachable logic of facts that there must have been made, that there must exist somewhere in the world, a Revelation by the Creator, of those things which the creature essentially needs to know, a light to guide us to our destiny.

Turn we then to the domain of facts, and ask: Where is this Revelation, and what does it teach us? Where is this so greatly needed Light of the World? With the aid of historical research and criticism, the answer to this momentous question is, to any intelligent and impartial mind, not hard to discover.

The religions of the past have given up to us their sacred treasures. We are able to trace them from their origin to our times. Each of them says: "God hath spoken." Each points back to a better time when the great Father taught his children what it behooved them to know. The oldest utterance of each is a memory of that primitive teaching about God and man and the relations between them. These utterances vary in sound, and according to their variations they may be divided into two classes, the Semitic and the Gentile. The Gentile traditions are remembrances more or less faithful of that distant past. In their varieties and changes we can mark the vicissitudes of their national fortunes, can see the mould of their national character, can trace the progress, upward or downward, of their national genius in its various forms: philosophical or poetical, of wisdom or gloom, of elevation to the infinite, or of absorption in the things of sense.

In each of them there is a critical period—usually a period of lowest ebb in spiritual thought and aspiration—and in that period we behold arise some providential man to remind his people of forgotten truths, and to point out to them the neglected path of duty. Several of them are honoured with divine worship after death, and

their sayings have been preserved for the admiration of succeeding generations.

Penetrating through the mists of romance, we now are able to scan each of them in his true character and in his real measure. We can see how much honour each deserves as a moral, social, and religious reformer. We can see how far their teachings square with the principles of enlightened reason, and how far they were warped by the prevalent notions of their race. We can see how far they succeeded in lifting their people to purer truth and juster conduct, and how far their endeavours failed to attain their purpose. One thing is perfectly clear in them all, from their lives, from their utterances, from the results which they wrought or occasioned;—they were mortal men, yearning and striving for the truth concerning the great problems of human existence, imparting to their generation such rays of the light as they could catch, and mourning in the twilight gloom that they could see so poorly.

Thus each of the sages of Pagan antiquity, rising high above the low level of his generation, caught some rays of the far-off light, and gave to his fellows some utterances of the distant and all but forgotten truth. They were like the famous statue of Memnon, high uplifted on the plain of Thebes, which, when the rays of the rising sun touched its brow, gave forth a sound of music to proclaim the day. Each of them was a witness to the light—but none of them, nor all of them, could be the Light of the World, any more than the mountain peaks, gleaming in the sunbeams, could take the place of the orb of day.

Meanwhile, among the sons of Sem, the primitive truth was preserved in its purity. While the descendants of Cham and Japhet wandered away to ever more distant climes, the descendants of Sem remained near the old home and handed down the old tradition—the tradition concerning Him who was to bring redemption and light and peace and grace to a fallen and benighted world. And God, who thus had fitted them to be the custodians of the promise and the hope, renewed the memory of the sacred deposit to patriarch after patriarch, and raised up, age after age, the Providential men of Israel to be the types and figures and prophets of the Light of the World. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel proclaimed the glorious news of His nearer and nearer approach, and from the mountain height of prophetic vision foresaw and foretold ever more and more plainly the time and the manner of His coming, His life, His work, His kingdom. The minor prophets filled in the details of the great picture. And thus the aurora grew brighter and brighter as the day drew near. Tacitus tells us that, even in far-distant Rome, the pulsations of the coming light were felt, and there was a general expectation, he says, that one was about to appear in the East who should be the ruler of the world.

At last the fulness of time came, the Light of the World arose. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world shone for him upon the face of the earth amid all the myriads that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and proclaimed:—"I am the Light of the World. He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of Life."

And as we gaze on Him, we see how He is indeed the Light of the World; how all the light that had ever shone upon the earth came from Him, was only rays from His effulgence, and centres in Him as the focus of it all.

The sages of Israel cluster around Him and do Him homage, as did Moses and Elias in the Transfiguration on Tabor. Every finger points to Him, every type and prophecy is realised in Him. He indeed "fulfilled the law and the prophets." He is the key to the history of the chosen people from the beginning, and we see that all the light that ever shone in Israel beamed forth from Him alone.

To Him, also, point all the sages of the Pagan nations, as the One who answers all their questions, the One who possesses, in its fulness, that ideal truth, that spiritual beauty, that moral power, of which they dreamed so imperfectly and after which they strove so weakly. And as we glance at them and at Him, we see how all the truth they ever taught was but scattered rays from the plenitude of His light.

Buddha had taught the equality and brotherhood of men—but an equality in misery only, a brotherhood based on the common possession of an existence that is only a curse, and on the common struggle towards the extinction of self in the oblivion of Nirvana. Jesus Christ taught the equality and brotherhood of men as equally the offspring of His Father's love, and equally sharers in the hope of a blessed hereafter in our Father's Home, in which they shall find, not annihilation, but that bliss which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive."

Zoroaster had tried, with but poor success, to teach his people of the origin of evil and how to overcome it. Christ Our Lord laid His finger on the origin of evil and the means of correcting it when He said: "Deny thyself," showing all the mystery of evil to be in the perversity of the creature's free will.

Confucius has reminded his country of the usefulness and obligation of morality. Christ Our Lord called to holiness, and pointed out the pathway of perfection, which, like Jacob's ladder, leads from earth up to the very bosom of God. All the moralising of antiquity dwindles and hides its head before that sublime exhortation: "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Plato, loathing the sensuality around him, had aspired after the ideal and the infinite; but he neither recognised the value of the individual finite soul, nor the use of this transitory life, nor the means by which union with the infinite could be attained to. Jesus Christ has taught us that one human soul is worth more than the whole material universe, is worth all the wonders of the life and death of the Lucerna son of God. He has not only told us of, but has bestowed upon us, divine grace, which lifts the soul to a union with God, such as Plato never dreamed of; and he has condensed more sublimity into the Lord's Prayer than is found in all the soarings of the great philosopher.

Thus all the light of the past centres in him and radiates from Him. "From His fulness all have received." All the questions that the human soul has ever asked are answered by Him. All the pro-