

RELIGION ON MY LIFE'S ROAD¹

I

FAITH TAKING SHAPE

IN these lectures on Religion I shall be so bold as to be autobiographical. This is not due to the illusion that you would want to know the mere incidents of my life, but because any value that my ideas may have has, as of course is in general the case, arisen out of my own experience. One need not hesitate to talk, now and then, of what has been of importance to oneself if it is likely to be of interest to others. Each of us makes his unique contribution to society, and, provided he has sought to live as a useful member of the community, he will have brought some benefit to it, just by adding to the common fund a few ideas with the stamp of his own character. In fact the deeper one goes into any personality the more valuable as a rule is the treasure that one finds, as well as the more interesting for one's fellows. Strange also though it might antecedently appear, the individual by introducing his own note, if it be a true one, into the chorus of society does not cause dissonance, but contributes his share towards a fuller and more varied harmony. It is this tolerance of varieties in human nature that makes possible both freedom and democracy. In the depths of one's soul, also, essential and unifying religion has its permanent abode.

¹ The first series of Rockwell Lectures on religious subjects, delivered at the Rice Institute, April 5, 7, and 9, 1938, by Sir Robert Alexander Falconer, K.C.M.G., LL.D., formerly President of the University of Toronto.

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It is not easy to recall and define the inner happenings of long ago; by now they have become a part of what we are. But through the haze of autumn one may live over again, even if vaguely, some scenes from blossoming springtime, from the growth of midsummer, and from ripening harvests and orchards.

The outer incidents of life, our family, our social and economic conditions, our country, our period, our environment as a whole, offer us challenges to potential personality. Each of us has become what he is by his infinite responses to urgent or silently unremitting circumstance. The religious man would call each of these given factors a prevenient grace of God; for one has had very little to do with placing oneself in front of any of these challenges, as we can easily see in retrospect. Whatever character I possess is the result of a process of responses, generally obscure, seldom resolute, to changing stimulus which I could not claim to have originated; indeed the challenge itself has often seemed to make my decision for me. It was too powerful for me to resist. Challenge after challenge has borne me overwhelmingly on a current towards well-being. The grace of God has made for me my way of life less hard than for most. But without some response to strong challenges, my intelligence, my morals, and my religion would have been rudimentary. However, on the whole, the initial challenge has been more formative than my response. I will assume also that I am speaking to persons most of whom have like me been fortunate in that their home, their country, and their age have swayed them towards what was good, and who may be thankful, not only for this, but also because their response has thrown into the scale enough weight to give a balance of blessing in life. We, therefore, shall be able to understand one another.

I came from a far-off Canadian home of Scottish origin and tradition. We were instructed in the Christian faith, partly by daily reading of the Scriptures in family worship, partly by formal teaching of the Bible and the Westminster Catechism on Sunday, or, as it was called in my circle, the Sabbath. We went regularly to church, and for years I listened to the sermons of my father, who happily for me was an unusually good preacher, well educated and thoughtful, clear and direct in speech, logical but by nature tolerant. He rarely exhibited emotion, was reserved as to his inner life, and was suspicious of over-wrought sentiment. The atmosphere of our home was reverent, anything like profanity was eschewed, but we were shy of the mystical and there were no vehement crises. It was assumed that by the gradual impartation of doctrinal truth we would be educated into religion. Consequently I do not remember periods of religious exaltation, nor any such momentous experience as some have gone through in definite conversion. I may take to myself at least these words of the apostle Paul: "I served God from my forefathers in a pure conscience" . . . being "instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers." As far as I can remember my boyhood thoughts, I was not disturbed by doubts as to the truth of what was taught me; I had not a rebellious mind. This was partly because there was no harshness in our home, nor any marked inconsistency between what my parents professed and the way they lived in the midst of their family. Our outlook on life was strongly puritan. Works were the obverse of faith. Restraint was more evident than spontaneous enthusiasm; what is now often called self-realisation, through a usurped freedom to do as one likes, to adventure whithersoever impulse or desire may lead, would have been regarded as a doctrine of Satan. Sexual instinct was to be allowed no in-

citement in story or work of art, total abstinence was a primary virtue; of course honesty in word and action was axiomatic, thrift was enjoined as well as kindness to the unfortunate and to animals; we were urged to share with others what we had, and especially to give to the upkeep of good causes of which the church was the centre. We were suspicious of wealth and luxury, wondering whether there was *not some lurking sting in the pride and display of a life of which we knew nothing*. Possibly we laid to our souls the flattering unction that we were like the Meek in the Psalms, who when they beheld the wicked flourishing as the green baytree, buoyed themselves on the faith that some day the righteous would be exalted. There was less distilled purity in our religion than I thought there was. Particles of social and even political self-esteem clouded the draft in our cup. Caste was a potent element. Each denominational circle, assembled in its church, was, especially among the women, a more or less exclusive club. Men brought together by business were not so fussy about social standing. The Anglicans, or, as you would say, Episcopalians, assumed the highest place in the scale; they included a majority of the officials, the judges and the military, and were recruited from time to time from other churches by individuals who preferred liturgical worship, and by some who had made money and found more of the social manners which money sustains among the representatives of the historic Church of England. We Presbyterians arrogated to ourselves a different kind of eminence, but, as our progenitors had been fissiparous in temper, we tended to division; we all thought, however, that there was, even in the more conforming and easygoing among us, a deeper and purer root of religion than in the Anglicans, and we prided ourselves on our intelligence and our regard for education; from our assumed social and educational emi-

nence we kept somewhat aloof from Methodists and Baptists. We suspected that in their effervescence some of their morality might evaporate. As for the Roman Catholics, they were a body apart whom we regarded with ill-defined distrust. We did not know what would happen to us if we allowed them, that was to say their priests, to have privileges; we detected sinister motives in their incessant demands for separate schools in which they could teach the tenets of their own religion.

As I have already remarked, we Presbyterians held education as a prize to be pursued at all costs. The cultivation of the mind being one of the noblest aims of man, it was assumed that if the intellect were given its rightful chance it would be an essential buttress for religion. We were not afraid of secular education, nor did we dread lest our religion and morals would be undermined in the common school. This view, however, was not to be attributed to any especially broad and tolerant conviction that Truth is great and will prevail, but rather to the fact that we then lived in small homogeneous communities in which our traditions, shared by other Protestant bodies, were dominant. Our acquiescence in secular education was influenced by our assurance that religious education not only should be, but actually was, promoted in the home, and was reinforced by the church. We gave support to a non-sectarian college or university in line with the Scottish tradition and practice. It was not feared that religious foundations so well established would be overturned by the intellectual activities of the university. The situation is changed now, for today the home does not take its religious duties so seriously, nor is attendance on the churches nearly so universal as it then was, but I still favor the policy of non-sectarian college education.

Another phase of religion was not uncommon in my boy-

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hood environment. Occasionally an evangelist visited the community. He pressed upon his hearers to accept salvation by believing on Jesus Christ. Like a recruiting officer he sought to enlist young men to join up for a great campaign. But his note of urgency was disturbing. Did it mean that by an act of will one was to accept as true the doctrines concerning Jesus Christ which he emphasised? If so, how could that assent be given unless one understood them and believed them out of a clear apprehension? The insistency of the evangelist was dangerous, because if afterwards it was found that one had been forced by emotion to build the edifice of faith on a foundation which was intellectually insecure, one's religion and morals might collapse in the ruins. There was, however, this redeeming factor in the evangelist's appeal, that it was, as a rule, a call to follow the noblest Leader, to undertake service in a worthy cause and to make a moral decision. For many that was a moment of real conversion, the most transforming in their lives. Those enthusiastic recruits caught a glimpse of the spirit of Jesus and tried to make His message more effective in their neighborhood. They were in a noble succession. In the eighteenth century John Wesley, through his like-minded followers, saved England from such a disaster as the Terror of the French Revolution. The evangelist always had the Bible in his hands. Under the conviction that every word was inspired he read it diligently, though he gravely misunderstood many of its verses and the meaning of some books. Happily there is in the Bible a moral grandeur which transcends mistakes of interpretation; its glory breaks through the veil of misunderstanding laid so often upon the outward eye; the majesty and winsomeness of Jesus cast their spell upon most readers. While I resented the evangelistic pressure to which I was now and then subjected, I felt bound to justify to myself my

negative reaction. This became a confirmatory factor for the convictions of my own inheritance.

Few on leaving school are at the stage of moral and intellectual independence. This is well, for stability of government depends upon the general acceptance of an intellectual framework within which the structure of society is being raised in each epoch. Life would fall into chaos if everyone were to refuse to act until he was persuaded of the fundamental consistency of all his intellectual assumptions. So we assented to the general principles of our early faith because of our respect for those who taught them to us. Theirs was in fact a moral authority.

At eighteen I entered the University of Edinburgh. This was a new world to me. Yet it was not so strange as might have been expected, because in my home Edinburgh was held to be our intellectual capital, as it was the ecclesiastical hearth of Presbyterianism. The atmosphere, while more bracing than that to which I had been accustomed, was agreeable to my moral constitution. My puritan mind was naturally disposed to react negatively to strange phases of life, and felt that its safest course was to avoid the ways of a world of which it was suspicious. Highly as I have valued my puritan heritage, it has continued ever since to create problems for me when I have had to adjust myself to new social manners and customs. But in Edinburgh I found an environment in which I was not conscious of any serious breach with my past. What its pundits of orthodoxy decreed, I had neither the desire nor the ability to challenge. Moreover my special studies lay in the field of the classics, then an ample demesne for conservatism and tradition, which suited my unoriginal and incurious mind. Though we read Plato and Aristotle they did not stir me to philosophise overmuch; nor did the Greek tragedians move me to ponder the

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problems of existence as they saw them; the irreligion of Lucretius did not affect me; Horace and especially Virgil charmed me, but I did not then penetrate beyond the melancholy beauty of Virgil's poetry to the wistful religion which it enshrined. At that stage the philosophy which I was taught in the classroom served rather to confirm my inherited beliefs than to disturb my religious convictions. During my earlier years Edinburgh was not a provocative centre of new ideas, as Glasgow was with the Hegelian philosophy expounded by that massive personality, Edward Caird, afterwards Master of Balliol College, Oxford; or like Aberdeen, where Alexander Bain was teaching physiological psychology and utilitarian ethics in sympathy with John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. I did not yet realise that a new spirit of science was seriously disturbing long-established doctrine. Though I could see storm signals swaying in the wind, I was not conscious of the violence of the gale outside. In my Arts course I was not exposed to the scientific atmosphere in its strength. Outstanding though our professor of physics, or, as it was called, natural philosophy, was both as an investigator and a teacher, he did not then envisage the subject for us as lying on the borderland of metaphysics. Of the botanical and zoological sciences we in Arts knew nothing; sociological science with its new orientation of morality was only lifting up an occasional cry outside the portals of the university. The impact of the biological theory of evolution on our thought was not direct enough to be upsetting; it was parried indeed in the class of moral philosophy, but the hypothesis which was outlined for refutation by an orthodox professor of ethics, honest though he was, could not be quite so impressive as when it faced one in a frontal attack in a scientific classroom supported by the massed retinue of observations and experiments. Psychology as it is now studied had not

risen on our horizon. I would not say, however, that we had become so philosophically immune to the germs of naturalistic evolution that we did not understand its importance and strength as a theory of existence. I had not to wait until the twentieth century to realise that biological evolution offers an hypothesis for human life which appeals very powerfully to many thinkers. Freud and the physiological psychologists do not do more than present additional information as to human motives; they do not pose a problem the essence of which was not familiar to us long ago. We also asked whether it was a slow biological process which gave rise to the scientific assumption of an intelligible universe, and whether the conviction of duty and oughtness as moral conventions appeared merely because they were useful for the preservation of society. Then as today thinkers were separated into two camps, those who are satisfied with a naturalistic explanation for all human life, and those who account for it by an idealistic solution. The Christian religion requires an idealistic philosophy. But neither then nor now do all idealistic philosophers call themselves Christian. There is a powerful idealism which can find no room for a personal God, nor for a doctrine of human personality which requires such a God to whom to pray and to worship. In my Arts course I began to discover the function of philosophy and how it differs from religion: that it is necessary for a complete religion, but is only the temple within which there must be an altar at which to worship.

It was more by my fellow students than in the classroom that I was made to think for myself. Discussion was a very influential factor in my education. We were constantly arguing; we baulked at nothing. Acute companions challenged the value of my beliefs and practices. As a rule I defended my puritan heritage which was strong within me; but after

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discussion I was not the same as before, as over and over I had to ask myself, What is the essential value of this faith of mine and of my way of life? New books came regularly into our hands, and their suggestions were powerful agitators. The old process of education, ever the same through the ages, was going on; we were getting saturated with ideas and kept throwing off, after reflection or discussion, such of them as did not on repeated trial enter into the substance of our mental and moral tissue. This sifting clarified my religion and morals. Investigation helped me to remove loose deposits and to get further down to bedrock. The more intellectually secure I became the more consistent was my inner life. One who cannot find some basis in reason for his religious intuitions will be a double-minded man unstable in his ways. It is to be remembered that Jesus taught that the first and greatest commandment was to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy *mind* and with all thy strength. He taught that intellectual love is a primary quality in religion. It is true that most people are very tenacious of their religious opinions and their moral practice; their sentiment endures like the fragrance that lingers in rose leaves long after they have been shredded from the flower on the living stem; but in time it will die away; there must be flow of sap from healthy roots if it is to endure. One of these roots must be embedded in the pure soil of reasonable knowledge.

During all my winters in Edinburgh the religious life of the University was powerfully influenced by addresses which Henry Drummond gave on Sunday evenings to some five or six hundred men from all faculties. He was accompanied by groups of professors, and often by the Principal of the University. Drummond was a most attractive figure; he had the bearing of a distinguished gentleman; his style of delivery

and his language were unusually good; his manner was restrained, though he was intensely in earnest. By training and profession he was a scientist, though he had gone through and was a professor in a theological college. But he spoke in non-theological terms as an educated layman. He was not a professed apologist who set out to meet theological difficulties; his interest lay in presenting the Christian life as he found it in the Gospels, and he illuminated the teaching of Jesus in a positive and most winsome manner. He was widely known in Britain and America both in person and by his books, one of which, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, that is, Christian Love, has had widespread acceptance in religious circles. In time one asked for more than the simple and reiterated talks of Drummond, but I must always revere his memory because he did not a little, at a stage when I needed it, to clarify my conception of essential Christianity and to inspire me with purer ideals of religion.

In due course I passed from the Faculty of Arts into Theology. Usually the atmosphere of the Divinity college is not so stirring as that of a university classroom, as might be expected in what tends to be a seminarian and cloistered environment. A confessional college is, in the nature of the case, committed to less freedom than where, as in an Arts faculty, it is at least professed that a subject is to receive quite impartial treatment. There was, however, in the college a strong body of independently-minded students who revolted against the traditionalism of some of the professors; and with them I sympathised. We listened to a dry analysis of "the body of divinity," doctrines which were assumed to be all intellectually true. They were expounded as a deposit of Divine revelation in the Old and New Testaments; they were defended with philosophical arguments; proofs were marshalled for the existence and Being of God, and as to the

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nature of man. Theology was a philosophy of the Christian faith deduced from the Scriptures in accordance with Christian tradition. Exposition and defence were the dominant notes, not free and untrammelled enquiry. As doctrines were derived from Scripture, the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments was the handmaid of dogmatics, and was a process of discovering a system adumbrated or fully laid down. Resort was often had to allegory in order to detect some hidden import beneath the plain meaning of the words; and by "the analogy of the faith" passages in different books were made to agree. It was a character in, I think, Barrie's *Little Minister* who said that "he could hock any mortal thing out of the original Hebrew." This method of dealing with the Bible was very old and was bound up with a definite view of authority and of verbal inspiration. Protestants took it over when they had to discover a new source for doctrines which no longer were to be promulgated by Church councils and hierarchy. And the same view still prevails strongly in both Roman and some Protestant churches. In my student days the theory was breaking down fast. Axiomatic though the method of seeking the plain meaning of the writers of Scripture is today in educated circles, it was regarded with great suspicion fifty years ago. Not the least of the titles of Erasmus to greatness was his aim, in issuing four hundred years ago for the first time a printed edition of the New Testament in Greek, that educated persons might have the words just as they came from their authors and that their meaning might be better understood. Though his text was not as pure as he thought it was, and though the plain meaning is often not so obvious as he assumed, his ideal was a noble one. In this he was far ahead of his time, and he met much opposition from ecclesiastics who clung to the dogma that it was dangerous even for the educated man to peer for

himself into the depths of Scripture. The Catholic theologians, for the most part, kept to the authorised Vulgate as a basis of dogma; the Protestants, while putting the open Bible into the hands of all, both in the original languages and in the vernaculars at the same time, supplied even the educated laymen with indoctrinated spectacles.

When I was a student the first rays of a new dawn were illuminating the theological world of Scotland. A few fine scholars had begun to apply to the Old Testament the same methods of historical enquiry as were used on the records and literature of Greece and Rome. The reasonableness of these methods was heightened by the fact that excavations were bringing to light a buried world which had preceded, or been contemporary with, the age of the Hebrews; and from these light had been shed on Semitic history. Questions began to be asked as to whether some of the religious ideas could be paralleled among other Semitic peoples: for example, What underlay the practice of sacrifice? What was the real nature of prophecy? Was it a forthtelling of Jehovah's will rather than chiefly prediction? What were the original contributions made to religion by the Hebrew prophets? The Old Testament began to be studied much more for its own sake than as primarily a storehouse of anticipations of what was to come in the Gospel of the New Testament. Along with this went searching investigation into the structure and dates of the books of the Old Testament. They were seen to be composed of strata of different authorship, as a country's soil is sometimes made up of layers of deposits brought down by streams age after age. It was soon evident that the first five books could not have been written by Moses, and that the early history of Israel was recorded by much later schools of varying outlook; further, that the greatest book of prophecies, Isaiah, came from different authors; also, that these

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prophecies, instead of being predictions of distant events, were religious comment upon the contemporary political life of Israel and an announcement of the will of Jehovah. One result of this transformed view was that it greatly lessened the difficulties which arose from the contrast between the Jehovah of large portions of the Old Testament and the Divine Father of mankind whom Jesus proclaimed. If each word was not inspired and all scripture was not equally valid for Christian doctrine, the inhuman practices sanctioned by the Jehovah of early Hebrew religion, and the rigorous statutes of the Mosaic law could not be adduced to support views of life in the present which seemed harsh to the human spirit as it was being fashioned by the teaching of Jesus. When the Old Testament was read according to its evident meaning, the religion of Israel was seen to be a gradual development from the rudimentary conceptions of early Hebrew tribes into the magnificent revelation of Jehovah as a moral Person, which still moves our imagination and rouses our idealism in the Second Isaiah and in many of the Psalms. As the product of different ages and different types of life, its literary beauty was greatly enhanced. Besides the rich outpourings from the inspired soul of the prophets, there was the superb poetry of Job and the Psalms, the lyric story of Ruth, the praise of pure love in the Song of Songs, the shrewd and usually elevated wisdom of the Proverbs. Thus the Old Testament was given its rightful place as a supreme literature of the world. Its choice portions are a delight to those who possess a religious spirit; as one ponders them they illumine one's heart, and enable one to understand better the greater riches of the New Testament. In the fascinating story of the Hebrew people one sees how, by divers portions and in divers manners, their prophets, poets and wise men instilled into a dull and resisting people the purest

and most potent ideas of religion known until the advent of Christianity.

These results of scholarship were an accomplishment for which all educated Christians should have been grateful. But this was far from being the case. The pioneers who opened up this new realm met much hostility from ecclesiastical leaders, men often of deep sincerity, who could not easily adjust themselves to a method which was bound to undermine the traditional seat of authority in religion. In Britain and America this opposition was strengthened by the fact that the most eminent of the scholars who adopted the new view were Germans; and half a century ago Germany was as suspect for its intellectual innovations as it is today for its political aberrations and designs. The most widely known, if not the most original, of German Semitic scholars at that time was Julius Wellhausen. When I was a student at Marburg in 1892 he was still under fifty; I often saw him walk past in meditation and my landlady would call my attention to "the heretic." I heard him lecture once on Hosea, but I did not take his course because my interests lay at that time in another field. Wellhausen created excitement in Scotland chiefly through his friend, Professor Robertson Smith of the Free Church Theological College in Aberdeen, who had espoused similar views. Smith had no superior in Britain, perhaps anywhere, in Semitic scholarship. But a majority of the ministers of his Church were so disturbed by his writings that he was deposed from his chair. From Aberdeen he went to Cambridge where he was welcomed; there he was soon appointed to the chair of Arabic and later to the librarianship of the University, and shortly became editor of the famous ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It is to be observed that Smith lost his Scottish chair not as a theological heretic, for he was never out of sympathy with

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his early faith, but as being the teacher of a dangerous method. When I entered the University of Edinburgh the echoes of the conflict were dying out. But similar views were taught in the Free Church college by Smith's teacher and friend, Professor A. B. Davidson, a man of not only the highest scholarship but of great literary appreciation and religious insight. By the time that I had become one of his students the worst of the storm that centred on the Old Testament was over in Scotland. Undisturbed by controversy we listened calmly to interpretations which were confined to a few scholars, but which have ever since seemed to me to be so reasonable that I have often wondered why they were not always held. While I was still in college, a similar commotion to that in the Scottish Church arose in the Church of England, on the publication by a group of rising young high churchmen of *Lux Mundi*, to which the editor, Charles Gore, had contributed an essay on inspiration adopting the newer historical attitude towards the Old Testament. Eminent theologians like Canon Liddon were shocked. They saw in it disastrous liberalism, but that essay meant that in Oxford the new view of the Old Testament would thenceforth prevail. It did not, however, imply that the same freedom would be used in the interpretation of the New Testament. Gore seems to have taken his step without having asked himself whither it would lead him. He wished to confine its use to the Old Testament. In later years when he became a bishop and an influential radical in social Christianity, with strange intellectual inconsistency he was never able to face unreservedly the application of the historical method to the New Testament and to Christian doctrine. In Scotland, fortunately for me, there were men, under one of whom I studied, who were courageous enough to follow whithersoever the new method might compel them to go. The way lay through

a darksome wood, but they took it in the belief that it would lead them into the light. As I look back upon the teaching of Dr. Marcus Dods, a professor with whom I spent two years, I do not think of his lectures as having contained startling critical opinions as to the authorship and dates of the Gospels and Epistles; I think of him as a tolerant, devout, and courageous scholar up to the limit of the knowledge at his disposal. I owe him a debt of gratitude for having put me on the right track. The problems which the New Testament scholars had to face were more delicate than those of the Old Testament. These Scriptures are the very shrine of the Christian religion, the innermost sanctuary of the Faith. They were dominated by one majestic Figure central in worship and belief. More than the Old Testament, the New had been regarded by theologians as containing a consistent Rule of Faith which could be traced back to apostolic authorship. The dating of the Gospels and the Epistles by historical criticism might affect the authenticity of doctrine because, if they were put late, there would be time for the story of the Jesus of history to have been sublimated by devotional imagination into the Christ of the Church's dogma. On the other hand, there was widespread suspicion that, under mere historical scrutiny, the human element in Jesus might be magnified to the detriment of the Divine. Such an original book as *Ecce Homo*, which now is thought of as presenting the human Jesus in a moderate spirit, was received seventy years ago with serious apprehension. It was thus from the results of historical criticism that, in my Edinburgh days, our chief intellectual difficulties arose. These were exceedingly hard to adjust to fixed theological doctrines. What did inspiration mean? Was the transmitted body of doctrine based upon a sure foundation?

This questioning frame of mind was satisfied for us some-

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what by a change of emphasis in regard to religious belief. Instead of reiteration of the demand for the assent to correct doctrine, as, for example, some theory of the atonement, religious experience came to be insisted upon as fundamental to all intellectual expression of faith. It was assumed, undoubtedly, that if the religious experience of the educated theologian was genuinely Christian, he would formulate its spiritual content in terms similar to traditional doctrine. This was a transitory position. But its importance consisted in this, that it softened the cold intellectualism that had been so often evident in theology. It renewed the demand, which had always been made in times of religious revival, that the person must respond with his whole being—mind, affection and will—to Jesus Christ. Those who thirst for religion will find in the Great Soul of the New Testament the One who leads them to God, and they will not regard questions as to authorship and dates as being so important as at first sight they appeared.

With an awakening mind I went to Germany, but I was almost oppressed by its intellectual prestige. Its universities never stood higher than in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In 1891 Berlin had an unsurpassed array of scholars and men of science. Mommsen had recently retired; on its faculties were Virchow and Du Bois Reymond in medicine, Gierke and von Gneist in law, von Helmholtz and Planck in physics, Zeller, Dilthey, and Paulsen in philosophy, Wagner in economics, Delbrück and von Treitschke in history, Diels in classical philology, Curtius in Greek history, Fürtwängler in Greek art, Schrader in Assyriology; in the faculty of theology there were Dillmann in the Old Testament, Pfeiderer in the philosophy of religion, von Soden in the New Testament, Kaftan in dogmatics, but above them all towered Harnack in the field of Church history and the

history of dogma. No university outstripped Berlin in leading the thought of the world, and the faculty of theology, placed in the centre of it, had felt the full throb of the modern mind. Part of 1892 I spent in the beautiful old town of Marburg on the Lahn among shapely hills and dominated by its historic university. It had at that time fewer eminent scientists than Berlin, but its theological faculty was strong. I have already mentioned Wellhausen; those whose courses I attended were Herrmann, Jülicher, and von Baudissin. My experience in Berlin and in Marburg was a unity. Everywhere the nation was rising in mighty strength, and, under the teaching of Treitschke as a leader, history was being made to serve its material ambitions. Wealth was piling up; commerce was extending rapidly; German merchant ships were on every sea; German cities thrived on trade, and their streets made proud display of public buildings and private residences. This was the outcome of superb organising power and the intelligent application of science to industry. In the equipment of their laboratories the German universities set the pace, and within them a confident spirit of science brooked no caveat. It reigned over the educated mind of Germany. It penetrated into intricacies and abysses beneath the surface of visible facts, and constructed hypotheses which were verifiable in outward results. Its startling discoveries and its daring theories, as they went hand in hand, awakened the imagination to unprecedented enthusiasm. That civilisation was a marvellous display of the power of the human intellect; a new humanism was being created which has had as enduring effects as the Renaissance in Italy in the fifteenth century. It was assumed that the new scientific method could give the entry even to spiritual mysteries; that it could unlock rooms into which the educated person might glance without awe or dread, confident that those who opened them

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had in their method the master-key to all knowledge. Pride in the creative power of man inspired that civilisation. The imposing structure was rising without visible strains, and flaws had not yet disclosed its inherent weakness. Recently, the Journal of Stresemann has been published, and in it, as he reviews the cataclysm of the post-war period, he writes: "Nothing has done us more damage, nothing is more spiritually responsible for our downfall, than the over-estimation of the material after the great victory of 1870-1871. What lovely German cities were degraded in those days! . . . How appalling was the downfall of our spiritual life!" When I was in Germany it seemed to me that religion was not as important a factor in its national life as it was in the countries which I knew best. Probably, however, nowhere in the world was there much corporate acknowledgment of dependence on the Divine, and Germany, in her silence, may have been only more realistically true to the facts of her view of the world. Even today after its severe chastisement, mankind, bruised and depressed, is still groping among the ruins of the economic dwelling which science had raised, in the faint hope that in its reconstruction, and in that chiefly, it can find abundance of life.

In the midst of this scientific and aggressively confident German world, theology and religion were hard bestead. The new method of science, used by those who sat in the seats of the mighty in history and philosophy, could not be refused by professors of theology. In the lectures of the younger men the term *wissenschaftlich*, scientific, recurred constantly. I recall especially Professor Jülicher of Marburg, who, as he interpreted the New Testament, seemed to me to embody more than any other the rigor of the scientific method. He appeared sometimes to be almost ruthless in his rejection of a possible interpretation of a passage because it might have

a suspicion of dogmatic flavor. History, comparative religion, psychology were all bound to have their say before he would allow that there might be some new contribution from the Christian faith itself to account for a hallowed passage. This severe scholarship was a fine and healthy discipline for my traditional and hesitant mind. It led me right up face to face with the truth at which I had been inclined to balk; I learned slowly that I must interpret the New Testament not according to my predilections, but as openmindedly as I had been made to read Aristotle in the Arts course.

This spirit of rigid enquiry, however, if taken undiluted and in too large doses, might have brought on me religious emaciation. In Harnack at Berlin and in Herrmann at Marburg I found healthful tonics. They were inspiring religious personalities of unquestioned intellectual honesty. Harnack was one of the most learned men in the University, though at that time he was still in his early forties. He was an unusually brilliant lecturer, and marshalled his learning, which he bore lightly, with much impressiveness; his style both spoken and written was clear and persuasive; a man of strong religious conviction, he dwelt with enthusiasm on men of faith like Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, and Luther. He was the genius of the then vital school of German theology which had shortly before begun to cluster around Albrecht Ritschal at Göttingen, and for another generation was very influential in Germany as well as in other lands. More than any other theologians, the Ritschlians adopted an outlook which helped them to preserve their Christian faith while doing justice to scientific truth. Harnack and Herrmann went back to the historic Jesus in whom they saw all that the human mind could know of God; and they held that what He taught as to the Kingdom of God was clear in the Gospels. They reiterated with intensity that, of immensely greater importance

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than the scientific result of New Testament scholarship was the total impression received from it, and that scholarship only makes evident how forceful was the impact on the early Christians of the Person, Jesus Christ, and that as we read the Gospels that impact of Jesus is renewed upon us. From this historical Person flowed a new compelling knowledge of God, which was apprehended by the personal activity of faith in Him and by a willing acceptance of the Kingdom of God as one's way of life. Harnack showed how through history, from time to time, the Christian religion has been revived by those spiritual geniuses who have entered with fresh personal understanding into the spirit of Jesus. The Ritschlians had no sympathy with mysticism, nor did they believe that science, art, or philosophy made a contribution to the understanding of religion. Harnack was strongly suspect in orthodox Lutheran circles and caused no little stir by his theory that Christian dogma arose from a deterioration of the real faith by the application to it of Greek philosophy. Into the sufficiency of this view I shall not enter, nor shall I enlarge upon the Ritschlian position. To these men I owe a great debt for having at that time planted my feet on solid ground on which my faith could maintain itself amidst the swirl of the movements of an all-powerful science.

No spiritual experience can ever be defined adequately in a formula. We cannot put our own personality completely into words. There is an inscrutable element in each soul. For this reason even the greatest scholars only approximate to the exact facts of history. This may be illustrated from judicial interpretations of legislative acts. Framers of acts and constitutions may have exercised the greatest care in their drafting of them, but when the judges of later times come to interpret these acts, it is often only too clear that "the Fathers" did not succeed in choosing the precise word

for their intention. Far more difficult is it to convey human thought in exact philosophical terms; therefore when the theologians of the Church sought to define the Person of Christ on whom their faith reposed, they could only approximate to what they really believed. The New Testament hardly ever approaches philosophical definition, nor did the writers of the Epistles intend to legislate for future ages. The Gospels set forth, in as simple language as they could, a supreme Person whose spirit had manifested God to believers and whom they felt to be still with them. This Man drew to Himself those who desired to enjoy eternal life under the Rule of God, which He proclaimed and embodied in Galilee and Judaea. His sovereign authority as Lord of their lives they gladly accepted.

The magnitude of the effect upon the Christian Church of the use of historic method in the interpretation of the Bible has been slowly realised. Many in fear and trembling point to it as having caused a decline of the faith. I cannot agree with this spirit of defeatism. On the contrary, I am persuaded that the Bible is read today with greater understanding and appreciation of its worth than it was in the last century. There is not, I regret to think, as much verbal knowledge of it among our children. That is a sad defect in our education, but it is only one phase of our neglect of the study of all literature as a means of creating the life of the spirit. In the circles of educated people, however, the Bible continues to be read for its own inherent truth, beauty, and hope. But it should become more and more the most familiar book in the homes of democratic peoples whose ideals are rooted in its views of God and man.

Further, the use of the new method has subtly transformed the attitudes of the Churches, especially the Protestant Churches, to one another. Scholars irrespective of their de-

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nominal affiliations reach similar results. They come to see that the views concerning Church order and the doctrines which divide them were mainly evolved to meet emerging conditions in the post-apostolic period. If so, why should not the needs of our own times be met also by a re-thinking of the doctrine and practice which have so often proved divisive, and by allowing the common spirit of Christianity to bring us together in more understanding fellowship? This may result in wider-organised unity, though perhaps also less emphasis will be put on organisation than now is the case. That such considerations are possible is due to the liberation, through faithful historical study, of a more genuine understanding of the intellectual element in the Christian faith.