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describes the true meaning of life, and the way in which it is to be found. The same notes reappear at the end of the Epistle. 'Give diligence,' says the writer, 'that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight' (3<sup>14</sup>),

and he concludes with words which have found a place in the mind of the Church which nothing can shake: 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.'

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## Natural Religion or Revelation?

BY THE REVEREND JOHN MCCONNACHIE, M.A., D.D., DUNDEE.

THE conflict which has broken out with devastating force in the German Evangelical Church between the so-called 'German Christians,' on the one hand, standing for a natural religion as a second authority alongside, and even above the Bible; and their opponents, on the other, standing for the Biblical revelation as the sole authority, has brought the whole question of revelation in its relation to natural religion into the foreground with a clarity and urgency such as has not been known since the Reformation. Indeed, the question was not raised in such acuteness even by Luther and Calvin. It is also being borne in upon us that this is not a question which affects only Germany, but is one which concerns, almost equally, Britain and America.

1. *The Crisis.*—The crisis—for it is nothing less than a crisis of faith—has caught us unprepared, and the position at the moment is profoundly disturbing, for there is no general agreement, even in the Church, as to the meaning of revelation.

At the one end, we have what we might call the orthodox view, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, which regards revelation statically as a body of truth divinely communicated in the Holy Scriptures, and committed to the Church, which the Church guards and carries forward as a sacred deposit, and defends on more or less rationalistic grounds. The Christian Revelation, in this view, constitutes a sort of second storey built on a foundation of general revelation, which does not alter the basis of knowledge already there, but affirms and extends it. Revelation completes what reason has begun.

At the other end are those who believe that they have all the guidance which they can have, or need, in their own native intelligence or intuition. There are the humanists in America, for example, who rest their whole position, as Dr. William E. Hocking puts it, on 'the inalienable religious

intuition of the human soul which belongs to every man, and is the basis of every religion.' Salvation, in this view, does not repose on something 'other,' on a redemption which God works, but on itself; it is self-salvation. The idea of revelation thus dissolves into thin air, nor is any such idea necessary, since there is no qualitative difference between God and man.

In and between those extremes, there is a wide variety of views. There is, particularly, the dominant school of the theology of experience, which, following in the line of Schleiermacher, finds its point of departure in a religious *a priori* within the soul of man, a God-consciousness which belongs to man as man. It postulates a deep and abiding continuity between the Divine and the human spirit. In religion, man is in direct contact with God, and therefore he can pass from experience (the known), to God (the unknown), and, in his religious consciousness, find God. Human discovery and Divine revelation are complementary sides of the self-same fact of experience.

This school, which, in its emphasis on experience, has not a little in common with the leading theologians of the 'German Christian' Movement, such as Wobbermin and Hirsch, makes much of the general revelation of God in Nature, and in man, particularly in his human values. Revelation is always and everywhere, if only we have the eyes to see it. It is the shining through of the Divine Ground of all appearances. The world is a theatre of the Divine manifestation. Revelation completes itself, not in a break with the natural and spiritual perceptions of man, but in a continuation and perfection of them. It consists in extending, deepening, and clarifying the religious consciousness.

The whole school of religious experience assumes that we possess in our knowledge and experience something which is clear and sure. But are its presuppositions correct? What, then, is known?

What if the very point of departure be itself problematic? It professes to start from man's kinship with the Divine. But does man, standing in the crisis of his existence, feel himself to be in possession of this knowledge of God, does he not rather feel his terrible distance from God? And even if he believes that he has such a knowledge, is this voice of man, in his blood, or conscience, or reason, or genius, actually the voice of God? May not this voice of God, which he claims to hear, be only, as Feuerbach held, the echo of his own voice, of his own nature? Does he not still remain within himself?

On its philosophical side, this school has owed much of its influence to an alliance with idealistic philosophy. By an examination of religious experience, particularly but not exclusively of Christian experience, which it reckons as in continuity with religious experience in general, and by correlating all with the rest of our knowledge, it has reared an impressive philosophy of religion, to which the Christian witness makes the substantial but, of course, not entire contribution. Christian theology is thus reduced to being a branch of the general science of the spirit, and the nature of religion, as a universal phenomenon in human experience, becomes the fundamental concern of the philosophy of religion, to which all the speculative problems of the Faith are to be handed over.

The result of this idealistic interpretation of revelation has been that the Christian revelation has greatly lost its historical uniqueness, for philosophy will only allow a relative value to history, and the very conception of revelation, as a Word of God, has been imperilled. Philosophical idealism, since it is founded on the doctrine of the continuity between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, has no real place for such ideas as the sovereignty of God, election, grace, and it is fatal to miracle. While seeming to take sin in earnest, it refuses to admit how radically human nature, including the reason itself, has been infected by sin, and it ends by treating it as a 'not-yet,' or as an inexplicable surd, or even as something necessary to the Divine Purpose.

The temptation of theologians has always been to seek the support of outside allies, in philosophy, science, or in Nature; fearful of the isolation in which theology finds itself alone with its Scriptures, in the midst of the world's many and moving voices. So we have had, since the eighteenth century, revelation *and* reason (Kant), revelation *and* the religious consciousness (Schleiermacher), revelation *and* culture (Ritschl), revelation *and* the

history of religion (Troeltsch), and now, last of all, in our day, revelation *and* the ordinances of creation (Gogarten, and the 'German Christians'). God's word is to be heard not only in his written Word, but in His ordinances as Creator, in the State, in the events of history, and particularly in the present 'historic hour.' The Book of Nature, which for the 'German Christians' can be read in the events of 1933, stands beside the book of Grace as a second source of knowledge of the will of God, and therefore as a second authority.

2. *The Age-long Problem.*—In taking up this problem of revelation afresh, we thus encounter on the threshold the old distinction of natural, and special revelation, which has occupied the mind of the Church since the time of St. Augustine. St. Augustine claimed to find the footprints of the Trinity (*vestigia trinitatis*) in the phenomena of Nature, in history, and in the spiritual life of man; a view which made a deep impression on succeeding ages. At first, these phenomena were employed as helpful and edifying finger-posts towards an understanding of the Christian Faith, but in time they came to be regarded as, in the strictest sense, foundation-proofs. The Reformers restored the doctrine of a special revelation as the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, while allowing for a remnant in man of a general revelation that was still undestroyed by sin. 'The reason knows *that* God is,' said Luther, 'but who, or what He is, who is truly called God, it does not know.' This is all the length which Luther went. But from the seventeenth century onward, Protestant theology began to give an increasingly important place to natural revelation side by side with the Christian Revelation. Butler's *Analogy* remains as a splendid witness to the interest of a past age in natural religion. In much modern theology it still occupies a position as a second source of Divine knowledge alongside revealed religion. Nature is first called in as witness, and at the point where Nature fails, the conscience of man takes up the tale, after which a place is found for a special revelation to help out, and complete, the general revelation. The underlying theology, therefore, of the 'German Christian' movement, with its emphasis on Nature, Race, People, Conscience, as natural revelations of God, and sources of knowledge of His Will, is but the last phase of a liberal theology which has throughout fostered this point of view.

In this view, the *differentia* between a general and a special revelation tends to disappear, since, if we speak of a special revelation, it can only be as a maximum, an enhancement of the general

revelation. The whole conception of a special revelation is narrowed, and we are thrown back on natural religion as the ultimate foundation of the faith. Can this be a reliable foundation? Does not A. E. Taylor come nearer the truth when he says that, 'it may fairly be doubted whether any man has been able to live and die nobly in the strength furnished by a natural religion or theology.'

Behind this whole conception of a general revelation lies the doctrine of the *analogia entis*, the assertion of a natural continuity between God and man. There is, we are told, a point of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) with God, in the very nature of man, as indeed there must be, it is held, if he can know God.

Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,  
Die Sonne könnt es nie erblicken;  
Läg nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft  
Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken?

But is there such a natural revelation of God? Does the natural man carry this light in his eye, this power in his heart, this voice in his blood, or in his conscience, so that he possesses another source of authority besides that of the Divine Word which comes to him through Scripture?

Against this whole modern theory of the *and* which has broken forth in power among the 'German Christians,' Barth, as the theological and spiritual teacher of the opposition in Germany, strongly protests. In giving one's heart to these mighty and masterful 'other gods' there lies the danger of making revelation to be a *paregon*, a mere shadow. If theology, he says, knowing its responsibility, cannot cease to speak of man, of reason, of experience, of history, of creative existence, then it must show its responsibility in this, that it interprets these others by the standard of revelation, and not revelation by the standard of these. It must endeavour, not to lighten heaven with a search-light set up on earth, but to set earth in the light of heaven. Barth's own conviction is, that theology, going beyond even Luther, should take farewell of all and every natural theology, and dare to go into that narrow pass, that dangerous isolation, which theology fears, and depend only on God who has manifested Himself in Jesus Christ; the *Deus ecclesiae*, revealed in the Scriptures. We are to put aside all trust in any natural revelation, and all search for a 'point of contact' other than that which God through His Holy Spirit, provides in the gift of faith. Even to look for revelation, or proofs of revelation, other than

that which has been given us, is an indication that we do not trust Divine Revelation, as such, to possess its own power of truth, and are falling away from it. In the whole idea of a *revelatio generalis* we are to beware of an old Trojan horse in whose belly the ancient enemy—the false continuity doctrine of St. Thomas—is allowed to enter all too unquestioningly into the theological Ilium.

3. *A New Approach*.—A new approach to this old problem has been found, by those who follow Barth, through a fresh consideration of the relation of God and man in the light of the New Testament witness. God is there represented not as the Ground, the *causa prima* of the world, indissolubly related with it, but as the Creator, the free and sovereign Lord of the world, between Whom and the creature there is no direct and natural continuity. Our wishes and dreams, the voices of Nature and blood, our creaturely existence and human history, are without value as a revelation, since they offer no indication of the Will of the sovereign God. Between God's Will and our human wishes, which, from the highest to the lowest, belong to our world, there is no necessary agreement. Our wishes are in God's hands and He rules them, but they are and remain *our* wishes. No way leads from man to God, neither the way of knowledge, of science and philosophy, nor the way of active being. He is to be found, as Calvin insisted, neither in man, nor in the structure of the world; but is only known in that He speaks, and gives Himself to man in His Word. So, when we would ask after God's Will, we must seek after His Word. Revelation is not a mere opening of the eyes, but a giving of God; it is not an inner mystical illumination, but a real Divine Coming. It is not a human but a Divine Event, not a continuity but a discontinuity with all that is human. Therefore revelation is not something which man can see or think for himself. It is not something natural but something supernatural, beyond both reason and morals; a paradox against which Nature rebels, which to the thinker is foolishness, and to the moralist a *scandalon*. It is a word spoken from a beyond to which we have no access, and which, but for the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which the miracle without is met by miracle within, we could neither receive nor understand.

Upon this doctrine of revelation Barth meets much persistent criticism. It is claimed that he represents man as not only spiritually in the dark, but spiritually blind, in the sense of having no spiritual eyes—and equally no spiritual ears—so that the 'event' of revelation, when it happens,

must find him both blind and deaf, not only unable to apprehend it, but unaware that it is taking place. The criticism shows how far Pelagian humanism has carried us from a right understanding of St. Paul. Revelation, as he holds, *carries with it the power* by which alone man sees and hears, otherwise he remains deaf and blind. 'So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Ro 10<sup>17</sup>).

Another criticism recently expressed<sup>1</sup> that in Barth's view the good life is 'not character, or disposition, or purpose,' but only 'a series of jerks,' of 'decisions to obey those flashes of revelation' springs from the same humanistic tendency. It fails to take account of what Barth calls 'the hiddenness of faith,' and also of his doctrine of election. There is for Barth a 'light in which all men stand in Christ,' even the heathen. Behind the crying disclosed in all law, and in all religion, there lies 'a knowledge of God which, although unobservable, is none the less real.' A man may 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,' without even knowing that he has faith at all. It may be a later discovery as he looks back, and sees that he has become what he is by no act or activity of his own; that grace came to him without his own will or power, and took hold on him, and led him on. Even his freest acts of decision are seen to be something which he experienced rather than performed. While the line of growth to the goal in the Christian life, like other lines, consists of points, events, decisions of faith, there is throughout a deepening progress ever nearer to the goal in that dialectic of permanency and event which constitutes the Christian life. A view that depreciates event in revelation in the interest of permanency is as defective as a view would be which depreciated permanency in the interest of event. But this is not the view of Barth (cf. *Romans*, Hoskyn's translation, p. 365).

The Christian doctrine of Revelation can best be understood in sharpest contrast to all such humanistic and idealistic conceptions of revelation. Christianity refuses to make anything in man the organ of revelation; indeed, it may be reckoned as the distinctive feature of the Christian Revelation that it makes a positive breach with all religious *a priorism*. The first fundamental fact of which faith knows is, that there is no immanent continuity between God and man. God is God and man is man. Man's very response to God is not

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Stewart in *The Hibbert Journal*, April 1934, p. 453.

to some natural religious instinct, but a response called forth by the Creative Spirit Himself.

This does not mean that we are to lay aside all idea of any *a priori* in the religious consciousness—as an aspect of human existence it calls for serious study—but that we are not to rely upon it as revelation. God the Creator has set the stamp of His Creatorhood upon the world, He has made man in His image, and for His glory. So far we can go with the German Christians. A God who left no trace of Himself within the human consciousness would not be God. But this origin in God is hidden and lost through man's sin, and has become the problem of his life, and not its solution. The *imago Dei* has been so defaced by sin that the very potentiality for God which man once had is completely destroyed, and must first be restored by grace. The only point of contact between man and God, that which distinguishes him from the animal, is the distress of his existence, his divided life, his questing and questioning regarding God, which he can in no wise answer, or even understand. To this natural discontinuity between God and man the Bible bears universal witness, and man knows it in his own heart. He does not feel in the depths of his nature that he has God, but rather that he has no God, and that he has nothing to bring but a negative, an emptiness, over against God. His only real *a priori* is a consciousness of perplexity, of mystery and darkness of mind, and even this perplexity comes fully to expression only through revelation. It follows, therefore, that all natural religion must be broken and unreliable, without understanding of itself, until God meets man in grace; all confidence in those 'ordinances of creation,' on which the German Christians build their edifice of faith, is a confidence only in the flesh, so long as God does not speak His enlightening Word.

But, if the first and fundamental fact which faith knows is that God is God and man is man, and there is no natural continuity between them, the second is the fact that God has spoken His Word to man through prophets and apostles, and finally through His own Son, Jesus Christ, by whom alone the knowledge of God the Father is mediated to us. This is not natural but revealed religion and comes to us only by way of crisis and decision of faith (Mt 11<sup>27</sup>). A new continuity, not natural but spiritual, is now established with the Father. For while there is no immanent or natural continuity between man and God, there is a continuity which lies in the will of the transcendent God, the continuity of His own Creative Spirit, which is estab-

lished by faith. To work this miracle of faith is the first work of the Holy Spirit, Who, as the spiritual nexus between God and man, gives light and meaning to revelation. The nature and character of the Christian Revelation, as Word of God, begins now to open out before us.

4. *Revelation as Word of God.*—Revelation, in the New Testament sense, is first and foremost, the word of an *Other*. It is not an emanation from the sphere in which we find ourselves, nor from some subliminal region within, but is a word from above, or beyond, the word of One who is other than the world, other than the content of the soul, and which cuts across our wills and preferences, that lie so much nearer to ourselves, with commanding power. To quote A. E. Taylor, it is 'an intrusion of the other and supra-historical into the ordinary historical routine of becoming.' It is not something which we can possess, but is something which possesses us. Instead of being occupied with the thought of his moral values, which puts man himself at the centre of things, he has to listen to the Word of One Who puts Himself at the centre, and claims to be his Lord. It is the word of a 'Thou' to an 'I'; a word which remains free, independent, sovereign, absolute. Revelation is not, and never can become, a general or impersonal idea. It is this character of revelation as personal Word of God which sets the Christian revelation in an irreconcilable contrast to the idealist conception that rules most modern theology.

As Word of God, revelation is a *dynamic* Word. It is never static. There is no such thing as revelation *per se*. By revelation the New Testament always means an event; the opening of a curtain, or the removal of a covering by which something hidden is brought to light (1 Co 2<sup>9</sup>, Eph 1<sup>9</sup>). The confusion of revelation as an event revealed to faith, with an objective reality which we can examine dispassionately, as a spectator, has led to disastrous consequences.

There is no revelation of God which resides, as such, in Nature, or in the ordinances of creation, as German Christians maintain. The 'heavens declare the glory of God' only to the ear of faith.

There is no revelation of God which resides, as such, in man; either in his blood, or reason, or conscience, or human values, or in his association, as a People, or State. The 'German Christian' heresy has no footing in the New Testament. To seek a basis for faith otherwise than in the Divine Word, to base it on reason, or experience, or the so-called ordinances of creation, is to base it in the empirical world which we know, to make it

a bit of our world, not qualitatively different from it, in place of in the world of God.

There is no revelation which resides, as such, even in the human historical Jesus, whether we regard Him with the 'German Christians' as a great Nordic hero, or more sanely, as Jesus of Nazareth. That which the historian sees is not the saving revelation of God. Only faith is in a position to know even the historical actuality of Jesus, not to speak of the transcendent aspects of His life.

It has become the commonplace of our time to represent Jesus as the crown of history and humanity, and as such to be the revelation of God. But if Jesus be no more than the crown of history and humanity, then He belongs to our world on its religious side. The 'German Christians' are right. He is one of us, a great heroic personality, an Arnold von Winkelried gathering into his bosom as many pikes as he can reach, but only quantitatively different from the rest, and therefore with no distinctive Divine Word to speak. We are simply thrown back on the religious consciousness of mankind, as our only foundation, and Jesus becomes submerged with Nordic and other heroes, in the religious history of the race.

But this quantitative difference has nothing to do with revelation as the New Testament understands it. Revelation arises out of the qualitative difference between man on the one hand, and God on the other, and it is in relation to that difference that Jesus has His significance in the New Testament. The New Testament witness is that Jesus stands related to religious history, not as the crown of humanity, but as the all-commanding crisis of humanity, revealed, however, only to faith. In the Christ according to the flesh must be discovered by faith the Christ according to the Spirit, before He can *become* revelation.

As Word of God, revelation is an *historical* Word, and meets us as actual event in history. But not in the sense in which the 'German Christians' employ the phrase when speaking of 'God in history,' or of their 'historic hour.' They propose to derive the word of God for to-day from two different sources, from Holy Scripture as the one source, and from the German revolution as the other, out of which the Church, with the one eye on 'the historic hour,' and the other on Scripture, is to read with equal earnestness, what God's Word is. This is to place a second God beside God the Lord, and with that, to make God cease to be God. 'We must say No! to the beginning of this whole way of thinking,' says Barth, 'and No! to all that

follows from it.' It is a destructive error which has invaded the Church, and not in Germany alone.

We are all inclined to speak only too easily of some particular movement in history as being of God, and therefore to be welcomed and accepted without question. But the movements of history, even the greatest, are not to be identified, without more ado, with the Divine Spirit. The Divine and the historical are not one and the same. That God reveals Himself in history does not mean that history, as such, is the revelation of God. Revelation is history, but history, as such, is not revelation. History is the story of the evolution of a sinful race, which God over-rules as Lord, even as He sat at the flood as King. But no bit of history is, as such, revelation, since revelation is supra-historical. While the Divine action always takes the character of an historic event, as something which belongs to this world, it yet has meaning and message from beyond this world. In the course of history, God reveals Himself in special places, special events, special persons, and in His own incarnate Word, through which the darkness of history becomes lighted up, as the flash which illumines the night reveals also how dark it is. The historical is the *incognito* of the Divine. That does not mean that history is itself Divine, but only that God reveals Himself historically. There is no depreciation here of history, which, with its aims, and goals, and values, must retain its full relative right. Indeed, the Christian Revelation has given new meaning to history; since, by setting Jesus Christ in the middle, it has given to it both a beginning and an end. But in the light of revelation, history is seen to march toward a crisis, not simply in history, but of history, in which it is brought to judgment. Crisis, indeed, is shown by revelation to be the very meaning of history.

As Word of God, revelation is a *last* Word. Not in the sense that it is the last word in an historical sequence, but in the eschatological sense that it is the 'once for all' event (Heb. 10<sup>10</sup>), the breaking in of the new world of God into time, the event which brings all history into crisis. And not only history. Revelation, as Word of God, is the crisis of all religion, and of all the religions. It is the crisis of all religious history, including the '*Glau-bensbewegung Deutsche Christen*,' which has prompted my paper. This is the teaching of the Scriptures—'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' It is the central thought of Luther and the Reformers, who set the *religio dei*—the Word of God—over against the *religio hominis*, the *idola*, and *figmenta* of man's construction, which reflect the unsatisfied

wishes of his heart in his attempt to answer the great question concerning God. And the same truth needs to be re-asserted to-day.

Every religion claims to rest upon a revelation, to be the disclosure of some truth of the supra-historical order which we should not have known but for that disclosure. But no religion knows the concept 'Word of God,' as Christianity does. In all other religions, revelation relates itself to singulars; and is therefore a collection of many single, repeatable revelations. But Christianity is the once-for-all, non-repeatable, coming of Reality to man. This 'once-for-all-ness' declares the fundamental distinction between the Christian revelation and the religions. It is not a movement of the world, but a movement to the world, it is not man seeking Reality, but Reality seeking man; and it cannot be placed inside any general framework of world religions. The Christian revelation stands over against all the religions, not as an individual among other individuals, not even as a perfect among imperfects, nor as a final among preparatory religions, but as another *genus*, as the truth of God stands over against the search for truth by man, of which the religions are the expression; or as the answer stands over against the question. The difference is more than a difference of degree. There is a newness, an otherness, a difference in kind, which makes Christianity the *last* word, and disqualifies all other religions from any claim to be *the* religion. For only a religion which brings all other religions to a crisis can have universal validity, and constitute *the* religion. It is true that Christianity is the fulfilment of all the religions, but this aspect of the truth ceases to be true unless it be at once corrected by the second assertion that Christianity is the crisis of all the religions, and of their history. The motive in Christianity which has determined its whole labour of thought, its consciousness of its world-mission, its sense of otherness in relation to the world religions, has sprung from the conviction that God has come, that something final and all-determining has occurred, on which the salvation of the whole world depends.

We arrive, therefore, at a judgment of the uniqueness of the Biblical revelation as the one source of the knowledge of God which can be relied upon, and the one authority which ought to be decisive in the present crisis in Germany, and in the world.

This, it must be added, however, is a judgment of faith, the knowledge of which is not open to the historian as such. Outwardly viewed, Christianity

appears as one of the world religions; the Bible appears as a document of the history of a primitive Asiatic tribe; Jesus Christ appears as the Rabbi of Nazareth. The Revelation of God remains a mystery open only to faith, and does not reach us other than in this hidden fashion. But this faith-

knowledge is the deeper and truer knowledge. What the historian sees is always only the outside of revelation; at the heart of the event is the decision, the mystery revealed only to faith, which no man can betray, because no man knows it save him to whom it is revealed.

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## Literature.

### THE IDEA OF PERFECTION IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

REVIEWERS are often criticised because they do not tell readers when to 'sell their beds' and buy a particular book. The reviewers have their defence. Nevertheless, there are times when they feel it right to respond to the invitation. Dr. R. Newton Flew's *Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (Milford; 15s. net) is unquestionably a book to get, if the reader is looking for a living study of a great religious and theological idea in a book which it is a liberal education to read, and which, at the same time, is rich in devotional profit and in suggestiveness for teaching and preaching.

Dr. Flew is not satisfied with the view that the doctrine of Perfection is a 'by-path in Christian theological systems'; on the contrary, he expresses the hope that he has shown that 'when it is not simply identified with sinlessness, it is veritably the King's highway.' In this hope there can be no doubt that he has succeeded in his full and intensely interesting survey which includes New Testament teaching and the ideas of outstanding leaders of Christian thought from the Post-Apostolic period to the present day. It is impossible here to linger on the riches of this theological panorama, and we can only mention in passing Dr. Flew's penetrating study of Monasticism and, amongst other discussions, his brilliant presentation of the ideas of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. His account of Methodist teaching lacks any note of complacency or adulation. On the contrary, we have not hitherto seen such an admirable combination of appreciation and criticism from the pen of a Methodist scholar. Dr. Flew, for example, thinks that Methodism's invaluable contribution to the doctrine of Christian Perfection has defects which include an inadequate analysis of the nature of sin, a wrong use of the idea of 'assurance,' and

the tendency to divide life into sacred and secular domains. Of Wesley himself he finely says: 'He resolved to be a man of one book—*homo unius libri*—and, to his credit be it said, never kept his rule.' After illuminating studies of the contributions of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, Dr. Flew gives an all too short chapter in which he states his conclusions. 'We reach, then, this broad conclusion, that the seeking of an ideal that is realizable in this world is essential to Christianity. It is essential to the corporate life of the Church that this principle should be enshrined at the heart of its doctrines, its hymns, its confessions of faith, its institutions. . . . Christianity is not Christianity unless it is aiming at Perfection.' The eight principles which Dr. Flew formulates as 'constructive conclusions for any positive doctrine of the ideal' we must leave the reader to discover for himself from this learned, inspiring, and well-balanced work.

Our most serious criticism is a compliment. Like *Oliver Twist* the discerning reader will ask for more, especially in relation to the Old Testament background and the treatment of the idea of Perfection in non-Christian religions. But Dr. Flew has his defence in the title of his book, and in the iron necessities of compression which even four hundred and twenty-two pages have sternly imposed. His present volume is a masterly achievement; it is likely to be the standard work on the subject of Christian Perfection, and it gives the promise of other theological and exegetical works which, we hope, are yet to appear.

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### INDIAN RELIGION.

Here comes a group of books on Indian religion. Dr. P. S. Deshmukh, the Minister of Education in the Central Provinces, leads off with a scholarly study of *The Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature* (Milford; 22s. 6d. net). The work is designed on a large plan, begins far back, with an