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that of its relations with the modern State and the secularized society from which the State derives its character. This conviction has received powerful reinforcement from the course of events in the German Evangelical Church. It is this question to which the World Conference will devote its

consideration. In the latter part of his pamphlet Mr. OLDHAM sketches the kind of detailed problems that are rooted in the central issue, and the task to which, in his view, the Church must address itself. The whole pamphlet should be carefully studied.

Things most certainly Believed.

VI.

BY PROFESSOR H. R. MACKINTOSH, D.PHIL., D.D., EDINBURGH.

In the last resort, I suppose, there is only one thing I believe, namely, that God is of such and such a character. Or at all events there is only one Reality to which I can give that unique and unmitigated trust which deserves the great name of 'religious faith'—God, the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. This probably is obvious, but it is worth while repeating with the modest intention of underlining the truth, frequently overlooked, that the gospel, to believe which makes one a Christian, is not just a number of things, no one can tell how many, but a definite declaration of a single truth, and that a truth about God. Theology is the doctrine of God. No doubt it sets forth other derivative aspects of truth as well; but ultimately all it has to say about man or sin or pardon or immortality is known to be true because, above and behind all else, we are sure of God.

Once this is understood, there is no difficulty in going on to other articles in my personal creed, which, if they really are implied in what by faith I know about God, will share the certainty I have of Him. They will be things which He has made sure to me in the ways He uses to bring conviction to the human mind. What these ways are we need not pause to debate here. Suffice it to say that He who reveals Himself to me as being of a certain character, and as in that character claiming me for Himself, thereby implicitly brings home to me certain other truths about myself, my neighbour, the world that my neighbour and I inhabit, our common prospects, our reciprocal duties. The single fundamental doctrine of God—which, with all its genuine singleness, may be complex enough—rays out an absolute light on all other facts, so far as they concern my personal relationship to Him.

If He has spoken to me, if I have heard His sovereign Word of love and judgment, then by that very circumstance I have become aware in principle of what I am to believe also concerning man and the world. To become a British citizen implies for a foreigner much more than is expressly stated in his papers of naturalization; to have been brought to belief in God involves various other true beliefs in addition, all consequent upon, and inseparable from, the basic and initial certainty concerning God. No doubt I shall need time to spell out these particular implications, and even by the end I shall only be fully conscious of a few. But once I discover them, I shall have the insight that they were wrapped up in the truth about God from the start. I have not invented them; under God's teaching they have dawned upon me.

This initial or all-embracing belief about God, quite clearly, is not a belief reached by the pathway of scientific demonstration. And more, it is not enough to say, however confidently, that it is none the worse for that. The point rather is that to try for scientific proof of my faith in God would show only too clearly that I had no real understanding of what believing in God means. A Cambridge philosopher, writing to a friend about Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, observes: 'I don't think it's any good appealing, as he is rather fond of doing, to the heart on questions of truth. After all, there is only one way of getting at the truth and that is by proving it. All that talk about the heart only comes to saying, "It must be true because we want it to be." Which is both false and rather cowardly.' This has a conclusive sound until we think it over. The philosopher in question, in spite of his brave words, would have been hard put to it to prove—in

the rigid logical sense he attached to proof—that his dearest friend loved him back, or that if he did, he would still continue to love him next day. He trusted his heart, his immediate intuitions, as all loving people do in the circumstances, and did so with the consciousness that in that type of situation this is the only right way by which truth can be apprehended. To ask for scientific proof in a question of intimate personal relationships is—to adapt the figure of William Law—like appealing to the eye to smell. In like manner, we err even philosophically when we demand scientific proof that God is to be trusted and obeyed. That is a form of approach unsuited to the object of faith. In any case it would lead us nowhere; which is just one aspect of the meaning latent in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Not scientific demonstration, but only God's own power working inwardly can persuade us to cast ourselves on God.

With these preliminary remarks, I will set down one or two of the truths which to me personally are beyond doubt. I don't mean that I have never doubted them in weaker hours, but only that it subsequently became clear that the impulse to doubt sprang from something wrong in myself, not in them. Faith in us is not invariably at its best, any more than it was in the disciples; yet the foundation of the Lord standeth sure. And our real creed consists, not in what we follow others in saying we believe, but in what in the moments given us of clearest religious insight, we cannot help believing.

My first certainty is that there is an absolute difference between choosing good and choosing evil. No doubt it is true that, in this mixed world, good and evil as they present themselves to the observer shade off imperceptibly into each other. Rarely are the issues set out starkly in black and white. We may find it uncommonly hard, on occasion, to say where good ends and evil begins; were it otherwise, we should have been spared interminable discussions about the apparent conflict of duties. But that is not the point. The point is that, assuming that we know which of two alternatives is right for us, and which is wrong, there is an infinite gulf fixed between electing to do the first and electing to do the second. The one is life, the other death. Further, about this momentous choice two things impress me as utterly sure and clear. The first is that the decision has been set before me by God. He has called me to this decision, for the voice heard in enlightened conscience is His voice. The second is that my relationship to God will be gravely affected by the manner in which I deal with the choice with

which He has confronted me. It matters infinitely for my standing before Him whether or not I choose the good and refuse the evil. In the felt majesty and pressure of the moral law, God Himself is addressing me.

Again, it is indubitable to me that God speaks directly to our heart in the Bible. As we read it, it is with a sense that the Bible is not as other books, and that to treat it as if it belonged to a class of writings in which it was merely the most conspicuous member is definitely impious. Jesus' recorded words of promise or command bring with them the certainty that He is saying these things to us now, and ultimately that God is saying them to us through Him. The witness of prophets and apostles to God's judgment and mercy is directed straight to us to-day, and when it invades our life as an urgent reality we have to exert force to thrust it aside. The voice that calls us, as the Bible lies open, is not one that rises up within, as native to the human soul, as the supposedly objective but really subjectively projected guarantee of wish-fulfilments; it is much too stern and much too full of an unimaginable grace for that. Something tells me that if I am humble enough to listen, I shall learn God's will, that He has a message for me, and that my response thereto touches the ultimate issues of life and death. What He is saying I cannot take in of myself, any more than a colour-blind man can appreciate the beauty of a Rembrandt; but from His Word, as it lays hold upon my inmost being, I gather assurance that He Himself will aid me to understand. The experimental proof that this wonderful thing does occur—that, blind as I am, a higher agency enables me to see—is afforded by the plain fact, familiar to all believers, that by submission of heart and mind to His Word addressed to them they are actually brought into fellowship with God. There is no doctrine more firmly or more deeply embedded in the soil of Christian experience than the doctrine of 'the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit.'

Once more, when God speaks to us in His Word, and we are made capable of so listening as to understand, the result is a new and dreadful view of ourselves as radically evil. To stand before the Holy One is to be convinced of sin in a manner that places our condition beyond the possibility of dispute. If people tell me that they can think of God and of themselves at the same time without any painful sense of incongruity, or without the suspicion stealing over them that they badly need to be changed, I cannot show them they are wrong, or prevent their further indulgence in self-satis-

faction ; but I can add my witness to that of all those who have met Christ that to see Him clearly is to be filled with penitential shame. In short, one thing which in God's realized presence becomes as sure as the sun in the firmament is that we are sinners. How sinful we are may be debated, and actually has been debated at great length ; the simple truth, as it forces itself on my own mind, is that apart from God we men are wholly evil ; though, in His infinite compassion, He is never wholly apart from us. Not only does this sense of immeasurable unworthiness register itself unmistakably in the mind, but it carries along with it the utterly clear-eyed conviction that I need to be forgiven, that forgiveness, if it be imparted, will be the bestowal of pure Divine grace, and that I cannot even of my own good impulse turn from my sin to God. The flash of revelation which lights up the soul on whom the Holiness of God has broken, discloses the fact that man's state is one of ruin, and that no change can be hoped for except as the Holy One acts in sovereign mercy. I am inclined to think that all Christians really believe this in their secret heart. They may use Pelagian language freely enough when they are talking about other people, or to them ; but the words they employ in their own agonizing penitential prayers are very different. What is more, they know themselves much better than they know any of their neighbours. As Barth with a trumpet voice has reminded this generation, all real religious thinking applies truth to oneself, and beliefs which are not given this intensely personal reference are apt to be the beliefs merely of the spectator, that is the outsider. The true doctrine of sin, accordingly, is what we are obliged to affirm concerning ourselves, not our more or less external opinions about our neighbours. It was a great saint who uttered the words : 'Sinners, of whom I am chief.' If true of him, these words all the more are true of the rest of us. If certainty is possible for man, then, I am certain of my own deep and inexcusable sinfulness, luminously disclosed by the holiness manifest in Christ.

Further, I cannot doubt that God is personally present in Christ, or that this specific Divine presence, to redeeming issues, is confined uniquely to Him. Here we are concerned neither with the avenues of experience or reflection by which this certitude is approached, or with the particular formulations of a doctrinal character in which it has to be registered. We are concerned only with the certitude itself. I cannot divest myself of the complete and awe-inspiring assurance that when I

encounter Christ I am in the presence of the Eternal. Unless we deny every trace of veracity to the Gospels, it is definitely and truly affirmed there that during Jesus' earthly life—as when Peter fell down at His knees in penitence—He so affected some of His neighbours that they felt Him to be the Representative of God. They knew, without reasoning, that His condemnation and His pardon were the condemnation and pardon of the Father. Doubtless their recognition of Him in this character was faltering at the outset ; for a brief interval it was overthrown by the shock of the Crucifixion ; but the Resurrection established it for ever. So far as I can judge from observation, and from their own most credible testimony, Christ is affecting men in similar fashion to this very hour and bringing men to respond to Him with the same unreserved self-abandonment as the disciples showed. He is dealing with them in ways which they have no choice but to acknowledge as God's ways. For me it is clear, as clear as any truth capable of statement, that to distrust Christ's word of promise is to distrust God's own promise, and that to be disobedient to Christ is to disobey God Himself. I am no longer at liberty to think otherwise.

Still further, the consciousness of sin makes plain and urgent the necessity for pardon ; and this I am certain is assured to us only in Christ, and distinctively in His death. To employ a word which happily is being brought back into religion and theology, Christ is the one Mediator between God and man. He alone can take the sinful by the hand and lead them in with Himself to the presence of utter Holiness. It is not merely that apart from Him we should not dare to enter there with confidence ; we could not so enter. As moral beings we are so made that, once we perceive and bow before Christ's perfect goodness, recognizing that in Him God is drawing near us, we are unable to present ourselves to the Father except as Christ becomes responsible for us. On the other hand, the very Christ who humbles us to the ground by His holiness, by His love lifts us up and fills us with a hope that never makes ashamed. From His Cross, where He takes on Himself our iniquities, He pronounces words that the consciously sinful love to hear : 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.' They are so spoken that we are persuaded of their perfect truth. Those who ignore the Mediatorship of Christ, or relegate it to an unimportant place in the round of truth, appear to me, therefore, to do so because they antecedently ignore or minimize the acute problem of sin which Christ signalizes and then

solves. We can dispense with the Mediator only as we camouflage the hopeless load from which we have need to be delivered.

Again, in the light of Christ I cannot doubt that I am my brother's keeper. Nothing can be so clear as that the distinctive boon or bestowal offered in Christ can neither be received nor retained in isolation, and that if, to use a phrase of Luther's, we try 'to enjoy God all by ourselves in a corner,' it slips inevitably from our grasp. The certainty that we are the forgiven children of God can flourish nowhere except in an atmosphere of brotherhood, warmed by the conviction that God can have no blessing for us which is not meant for every member of the family. The brotherly impulse of itself will not generate such a certainty, but if desire for brotherhood dies, the certainty I am speaking of dies along with it. Hence we may know by immediate intuition—which is the human aspect of the Spirit's witness—that no Christianity deserves the name which is not a corporate possession, and that religion which communicates no abiding impetus towards social betterment is, not accidentally but intrinsically, hostile to the gospel. We alter the quality of God's good news when we fail to proclaim it as calling likewise for love and justice to our neighbour. For we cannot have God without having our brother also.

Finally, the character of God revealed in Jesus

makes immortality certain. Not even by making a great effort can we envisage God as One who pardons our evil and thereby takes us to be in fellowship with Him, and then combine with this the desolating suspicion that at the last He will leave us in the dust. Survival, indeed, is not by itself a religious or Christian thought at all; considered abstractly it may be no more than one element in what may be called the 'natural history' of the unseen world; it only becomes religious when it is put in relation to God in whose hand are the issues of life. All the assurance we need—all the assurance possible or conceivable—respecting a blessed life after death lies in the words: 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' and 'He is not the God of the dead but of the living.' No cumulative evidence gathered from the experiments of psychical research will silence the doubts of mortal men as they contemplate an open grave, or assure them that the kind of survival these experiments indicate is necessarily worth having. For myself I seem to hear a deeper note, and one that satisfies, in the lines of a simple old Moravian hymn:

And when I'm to die,
Receive me, I'll cry;
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why.
But this I do find,
We two are so joined,
He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind.

Literature.

H. G. WOOD'S HULSEAN LECTURES.

IN appointing Mr. H. G. Wood Hulsean Lecturer for 1933-34 the Trustees of the Lectureship made a notable innovation. While the appointment of a Free Churchman was not novel—one had previously held office—Mr. Wood is the first layman to be so trusted. Of course there are few laymen so well equipped for such a task as Mr. Wood. We have known laymen who were quite competent in some one branch of theological study; we doubt if any but Mr. Wood is so able to teach on nearly all the subjects that go to make a whole theological curriculum. If the Society of Friends had Orders, Mr. Wood, we may suppose, might be Archbishop. A wide public is already familiar with the very high standard of his published work, marked as it

is by meticulous scholarship, sound judgment, and delightfully limpid style. All those qualities are manifest in the published form of his Hulsean Lectures, *Christianity and the Nature of History* (Cambridge University Press; 6s. net).

There are five lectures, each dealing with a very important topic: the Christian emphasis on historical happenings, is it not in line with the nature of history as the modern historian conceives it?; the place played by great men in history; does not the coming of Jesus as and when He did, justify, indeed compel, our faith in Providence?; in history can we discern the operation of a moral law, *i.e.* can we reaffirm the prophetic interpretation of history?; apart from Christ, have we any reliable standard or safeguard of progress?; can any vision or hope of a good time coming on earth