Our Experience of a Triune God.

By the Rev. Principal P. T. Forsyth, M.A., D.D.

As we begin life, we rejoice in the world’s harmony and rationality, its humanity and promise. The enthusiasm of humanity captures us. One man I know says, “I could take you to the field where it burst upon me at twenty.” God is revealed as so natural in His love, as a magnified Father, as the consummation of all things fine and fair.

But sooner or later we come to a rude and raw contact with the muddles, babbles, slums, bedlam, and, it may be, hells of life. The old gay harmony breaks up into collision. The fine fabric of our first world is shaken for many, shattered for some. “Die schöne Welt—sie stürzt, sie zerfällt.” And the very worst of it is that our own souls are in the collapse. Innocence is ruined there. “Woh! Woh! Da hast sie zerstört mit machtiger Faust.” Conscience is a steady guide no more. It is the accusing angel. The purist criticism of youth, by which we so freely and cruelly condemned others, we turn on ourselves.

The tender Father now becomes the solemn judge—even in the Son of His love. Christ’s words, His ideal, His character, which we hailed as so noble, rise up to condemn us more than they cheer us. To the natural and benignant Father succeeds the historic and judging Son. The gentle and genial Jesus deepens into the high and holy, the austere and exigent Christ. And what a crisis comes then! We either turn and leave Him, or else we cleave to Him and turn to rend ourselves. Either we say (or we listen to those who say), “there are other and less humiliating ways of finding the real God than by forgiveness, by His justification of us.” And we plunge for an opiate into philosophy, and find a God indeed but much more as a postulate than a certainty. Perhaps we take up with a ‘simple’ piety, sometimes to end in a silly. Perhaps we turn to art, literature, social life, and even social well-doing. We take to a humanitarian religion, which tells us we are not so desperately bad at bottom after all, and which bids us take heart, let alone theology about Redemption by an ill-used God, and go to work for the amelioration of ill-used man. And we forget all the time that such optimism has only become possible to this age by the historic work of a Church and Gospel that preached a searching and judging forgiveness in the past. Either we take such lines, I say, or else we are made of stern stuff, and we refuse those flatteringunctionsforoursoul; and our eyes are opened, and we know we are poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked, and very guilty; and it is now “God be merciful.” In the greatness of Christ, the ideals of Christ, we meet the unsparing holiness of God.

Then all our genial Christ goes up in the blaze of His Cross, so to say. We realise that the Father’s holiness was most unsparing to the Son of His love. In the suffering of Christ, in the Cross, it is a Holy God we have, who spared not Himself in His own Son. The divine holiness, of which Christ said so little, becomes by His death the one revelation of His life. (The chief thing achieved by our life, and carried away from earth with us, may be something which we said very little about, and which few realised in us.) His love is the love of the holy for the guilty, the most wonderful kind of love (when we take time to think our faith) in a world where love is the marvel of it all. The love of God as the poets taught it, and the poet preachers, and the genial saints, the mere fatherhood Christianity—that is all too short to reach us. When we have come to the worst pass, such love from God does not get to us; it does not find the bottom and the bitterness of our pardon. We are not found for ever till
we are plucked by the conscience from the fearful pit and
the miry clay; not till we hunger for holiness as once we did
for love and joy, and yet find holiness our dread; not till we
thirst for peace with a judging God more than ever we craved
for our young ideals in a splendid God.

O only source of all our light and life,
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone might reveal.

The Christ we once took in, almost gaily, as the soul's hero,
breaks out upon us as a consuming fire; "As if a man should
lean on a wall from which a serpent bit him." The Christ of
our jubilant, and even jaunty, confession rounds on us suddenly,
as He did upon Peter exalted with his revelations above
measure; "Thou Satan!" And the baptism which we
lightly thought we could be baptized with like heroes
descends to find us cowards or rebels, renegades or betrayers.
And there is no spirit left in us before that Holy One, who
burst forth as the village guest did, awful in the very
breaking of bread.

Then the Revelation of the Holy comes home in our
Redemption by the Holy and His Atonement, and by the
Holy Ghost; and we never knew what revelation was till
then. It was once an idyll for us, now it is a tragedy and a
triumph. The old lights are gone. They failed because we
were false. They ceased to be truth because we ceased to be
true. Because we fell, our stars fell—to be will-o'-the-wisps.
And there is but one way to replace them—another revelation,
which now must be Redemption, replacing us. We discover
that we must be redeemed into the power to believe to the
end even in our old revelations. We need that holy love to
enable us to believe in all love. The blood of Christ does
something else than symbolize the divine sacrifice in us; it is
the Sacrifice for us. It is not the classic case of all Sacrifice that
kindles us; it is the one Sacrifice of God that humiliates us, but
humiliates us into a new life in a new world. We are

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grounded into a new creation. Then, we believe not only
in the Father and in the Son but in the Holy Ghost and
the love He sheds abroad in our hearts. We have found not
only a truth but a certainty, a reality, a life that gives value to all
truth. We have found not only life but eternity, not only a new
world but the eternity of all worlds in Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit. Whom it is poor religion to reduce to three phases
either of God's manifestation or the soul's process. For that
would leave us with but a variable God—an adaptable God
rather than an eternal.

History and experience alike show that the destruction of
interpersonal relations within God is reflected in the loss of
personal energy and earnestness in religion, which is reduced
to a religion of evolution rather than redemption, and of
culture rather than faith.

That is what we need in a revelation, and have in Christ's
—not fresh and startling light, but sure, final, and eternal
reality; not truth but power; not something to see and know,
but something that knows us and carries us. That is where real
religion begins—when we cease to know anything except that
we are known of God, and loved more than known. We try
other ways. We pore, and brood, and ask egotistic ques-
tions about the meaning of life. There are thousands of
the half-awake, the half-born, the soul-hungry, craving or
fumbling for the meaning of life to-day, and peering to find
it in life's interior, in flashes of genius, in spiritual arcana, in
psychisms, occultisms, in profundities, among the wizards
that peep and mutter, or the sages who search or soar. Or
they turn to a mysticism which is either divorced from history
or which forces a protestant history into its crystal moulds.
Others think that work will be a narcotic, and from amid
the luxuries of life they turn to seek Christian service. All
these things may enrich us in their place. But the eternal
meaning and last stay of life is not in its energies, and not
in its interior. Genius, with its insight, has not what the
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The saint has with his outlook of faith. We are never redeemed, however we are chastened, by sinking into ourselves. We do not receive our great revelation with closed eyes and introverted strain. Christ is not to be had by descending into subliminal deeps to bring Him up. Revelation is not in a process but in a crisis. And the crisis of all human life is at a point in human history. The meaning of life is only to be known from life's goal, not its career; and the goal of life is known but to God. Who achieved it in Christ, Who made us for Himself, in Christ and Who in Him sees the end from the beginning. It is known for certain but to God, and to those to whom He reveals it by His Son, His Cross, His Spirit. That is the meaning and truth of history. The truth of man is found not in his own recesses nor in historic currents, but in the destiny for which God made him and saved him. It is in His Cross God has not only revealed our destiny, but ensured it, brought it to pass, in the Holy Christ crucified, whose salvation is the source of our last moral certainty, and who is our Eternal Amen. God died for us in a sense which only a Trinitarian doctrine can convey. Certainty, finality for eternity, a Rock of Ages—that is what we want in the Revelation that secures all other revelations; that is the reality of which they are but metaphors. And that is what the Church finds by the Spirit in Jesus Christ and His Cross where God was present reconciling. The one Revelation that gives any revelation real meaning is the threefold revelation of the sure mercy of the Holy Father to our worst need in the Cross of His Son made certain and final in the Spirit.

The number is great at present of cultivated women who feel a heart hunger gnawing in the midst of every comfort. And, because life has been for them so sheltered and pure, they do not find themselves so readily when we speak of a Redemption from the tragic sin and guilt of the world. Their regards are perhaps more individual than general, more of the heart than the conscience, and their problems are more
absolute victor and centre of the moral world for the whole Church, some of its members may be more directly called for the finer ministries and intuitions of tender sympathy, and others for the moral commands and committals of holy faith. If only we take the holy in an ethical sense and not merely in an aesthetic, if it be the white heat of righteousness and not the mere good form of piety, if it be moral worship, however rapt, and not mere reverence however fair. If only too the service in the name of sympathy be not a mere narcotic to ease the gnawings of an egoism still unbroken at the core; if only it be not taken up to dull the ache of souls that read Thomas Hardy (or, short of that great genius, his imitators) till they can trace behind all things but a sombre Fate instead of a loving God—a God most patient because Almighty, and slow because secure in a conclusive bliss.

As I have named Mr. Hardy I will close with an expression of my surprise at the narrow culture of the later writers who now hold the reading public for the hour, who do not rise to discuss the moral destiny of a Humanity which is yet their working capital as litteratrices, and who absolutely ignore the existence of the deepest passion and concern of human nature, its religion, which makes man man. It is neither his problem or their atmosphere; and is often their contempt. And contempt here is the trade mark and index of the dilettantist.

OBITUARY.

April 26.—Reed, G. (Christ's, 1875), Vicar of Killingworth, Northumberland.
April 28.—Brookes, F. D. (Christ's, 1881, Class. Trips.), Vicar of Birley, Durham.
May 5.—Davey, H. M. (Emm. 1869), Chancellor Chichester Cathedral.
May 12.—Geldart, J. W. (Trinity Hall, 1859), Canon of Ripon, Vicar of Kirk Deighton, Yorks.
May 12.—Smith, R. C. (C.C.C. 1874), formerly Curate of St. Bart's, Islington.
May 13.—Patterson, W. G. (Trinity, 1877), Rector of West Lydford, Somerset.
May 14.—Bell, C. E. B. (St. John's, 1884), Vicar of Chelford, Cheshire.

Cambridge in My Time. V.
By the Rev. Canon J. Battersby-Harford.

I went up to Trinity in the October Term of 1876, took my degree in January, 1880, and finally went down at the end of 1881. My reminiscences of Cambridge therefore cover a period of five years.
Cambridge in that period was in many respects different from the Cambridge of to-day.

(i). Its personnel was different. The Professional chairs were occupied by such men as Caley, Cowell, J. E. B. Mayor, Clerk Maxwell, and, above all, the three Professors of Theology, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort. Of these three Lightfoot was perhaps the most popular, Westcott had a large and reverential body of disciples, while Hort was to my mind the most stimulating and interesting lecturer of them all. Westcott, by the way, always took 1—2 p.m. as the hour for his lectures. What would be thought of such an hour now! Many of my contemporaries are now in their turn occupying Professional Chairs. The two names at the top of the Mathematical Tripos in my year (January 1880) were Larmor and J. J. Thomson, while Sir W. J. Arnold was Senior Classic in 1879. Weldon and Ryle were at King's; one became Metropolitan of India, and is now Dean of Manchester, the other became Bishop of Winchester and is now Dean of Westminster. G. A. Lefroy was a year or two senior to me, while F. B. Westcott and J. O. F. Murray and J. Armitage Robinson were in the year below me. The first is now Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, the second is Archdeacon