

ART. III.—ALPHONSE GRATRY.

THERE is at all events a fair basis for the opinion which would assign to Newman and Döllinger two out of the three foremost places of the Roman Catholic writers of recent times. Even omitting the practical part of their lifework which caused them to become leaders of men and often in men's mouths, the learning, thought, and literary ability of their works will always save their names from decay. But who was the third? Is there one at all? or is it true that Newman and Döllinger stand so high on the ladder that the next two or three rungs below have not been grasped? Possibly it may be so, and possibly, again, there are a score of hands clutching at the next step; but, in any case, no one need ignore the claims of Alphonse Gratry. Considered they must be, and, as many will think, accepted.

And it is remarkable that these three men seem to show us the three most prominent types of modern religious thought. Newman before all things represented the spirit of obedience to dogma and a strong belief in hereditary externals; the name of a thing was almost as much to him as the inner reality of the thing itself. He represented the minds that prefer being dictated to, if they think that the speaker can pronounce correctly.¹ But the great German, like a still greater one, represented mightily the spirit of the right of private investigation and personal satisfaction. Unless a man could satisfy his own faith and reason that what he was told was correct, he was not in a fit state to receive it. One represented Socialistic Christianity, but Socialism governed by an autocrat; the other Individualistic Christianity, but Individualism regulated by brotherliness. What does Gratry show us? The spirit of Christianity, the spirit of possession by a Saviour, the spirit of moving forward because one is impelled by an internal force, rather than because hereditary spiritual legislators direct you, or your own wideawake faith advises you. Newman was a Roman Catholic because he drifted inevitably into it; Döllinger was a Protestant, in truth if not in name, because he chose to be so; and Gratry, even if, as a voice of one crying in the wilderness of semi-heathen

¹ Even Newman, however, in 1870 (in the famous letter which found its way into the *Standard*), confessed that he looked "with anxiety at the prospect of having to defend decisions which may not be difficult to my own private judgment, but may be most difficult to maintain logically in the face of historical facts." Archbishop Manning was not so much concerned with the facts of history. He wrote (in his *Pastoral*): "It is not, therefore, by criticism on past history, but by acts of faith in the living voice of the Church at this hour that we can know the faith."

France, he cried ostensibly as one who was a Romanist, was yet a voice, and nothing else. Like St. John, he gives us the words of the Word. He breathes the very breath of the Bible, as fresh as if it had not blown during nineteen centuries, and over deserts of heresy, controversy, and schism.

There are strong minds which seem to animate weak bodies in such a way as to be independent of them—to shine through them and obliterate the grosser elements. Such was Gratry's religious mind in its religious body: the spirit was everything, the mould in which it was cast was very little, and though it happened from force of circumstances that the body wore a Roman Catholic dress, yet the mind was as uncoloured, and its tendency as free from bias, as could well be. He worshipped the Father "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem," but in spirit and in truth.

Gratry was born at Lille on March 30, 1805. His home was not a religious one. His father and mother used no religious observances, and especially despised the Roman Catholic faith; but, as is so often the case, they were not unwilling that their son should be taught to pray, and be confirmed. For themselves, they were content with a religion of nature. Later on they were saddened, almost desperate, when he became a priest. But he himself was never without some inklings of higher things, and the inattention and repression they met with at home only rendered them more absorbing. We say "never" advisedly, for even at the age of five he could recall an energetic and profound impression of God. "I recollect," he says, "in my earliest childhood, before the time which is called years of discretion, feeling one day a lively impression of Being. A great effort against a heavy mass exterior to myself, whose unyielding resistance astonished me, made me utter these words, 'I am!' I thought of it for the first time. Surprise soon passed into the deepest astonishment and the keenest wonder. I kept on repeating, 'I am! To be! to be!' Everything that lays the foundation of religion, poetry, and thought in the soul was awakened and stirred up in me at that moment. A penetrating light, that I seem to see still, enveloped me."¹

And thus he says even then he received the impression of man's mysterious life, and of the God who is at once exterior to him and yet floods his soul with light and love.

Perhaps it was this and other similar incidents which gave Gratry his peculiar reverence and tenderness in speaking of the religious impressions of children. He ascribes to their new young minds, as yet unspotted by the world, an almost

¹ "Connaissance de Dieu," vol. ii., p. 168.

intimate connection with God. "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven;" and not only, he thinks, did God call prophets with an internal voice, but He thus speaks to all children. Every child born into the world is a focus of light and glory. He writes with a certain bitterness that those who forget to say to any child what the high-priest said to Samuel, "Go, and if He call thee again, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," act like those savage tribes who flatten physically the heads of their new-born. No doubt he thought of his own youth, when cravings after God's truth were stifled, both at home and at school, and were for a time, at all events, completely put to rest. For he passed his early youth, not in any vice or sin, but in religious apathy, and in that indifference which is more numbing than dislike. His chief delight was in his school class-work, to take a good place, to compose good Latin exercises, and to go every Sunday with his father to dine at a friend's house where they sang Béranger's songs at dessert. As for his school, "they lived in a sewer!" he cries. And like so many French boys, he was almost used up before life's race really began. Not quite, however, for he was never altogether without religious impressions. When the only decent master at his school urged him to communicate—"I don't say I don't believe in it; I only say that I won't," he answered. So he passed his life; his brain busily employed, his heart bitter and empty, and his soul asleep. He became fond of solitude, and passed whole days alone. All priests inspired him with scorn, all religious expressions with disgust. But one day, he writes, there came to the school a new master. And he happened to tell his pupil in conversation that his stay at the school was only temporary, that he had consecrated his life to the service of Jesus Christ. This, says Gratry, was the first time in his life (he was then fifteen years old) in which he had heard our Lord's name pronounced with firmness, intelligence, and faith. What does it mean? he asked himself. Full of an uneasy excitement, he sought out his strange master and asked him what he meant by those words, "to consecrate his life to Christ's service." And then followed a conversation which was the beginning of life to the poor morbid youth, longing for he knew not what, and walking in the dark. It is wonderful to notice in what a state of heathenism the boy was. Bit by bit his master showed him the plainest and most manifest Christian truths, received as if they were unheard-of revelations. We translate some of the conversation:¹

Master. We should show men the truth, and make them better.

Gratry. Yes, yes! but where is the truth?

¹ "Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse," p. 67.

M. In our Lord Jesus Christ.

G. Yes, it is a noble name—a fine name ; but I haven't a trace of faith in it.

M. You have more than you think ; go on, the rest will come.

G. No ; I can do nothing but from the conviction of truth. Impossible to make a single step without seeing it. I live by light, or, at least, I wish to, and cannot go by chance.

M. You wish for light ? Well, we will talk of it. You see the masses which load the earth, those ant-heaps of men who live without knowing why—are they in darkness or in light ?

G. In the deepest darkness.

M. And if you separate yourself from them to live face to face with God, to seek only truth, and to do good to them, will you be in darkness or in light ?

G. In light, most certainly.

M. To love God above all things, and men as one's self for the love of God, to consecrate one's life to that alone, is that to go by chance and follow a religion of doubt ?

G. No, no ; it is to enter an infallible religion, necessarily and absolutely infallible—as certain as Euclid.

M. It is. Well, Jesus Christ is the Head, the Master, the Model of men who have thus lived, or will live.

And in such a strain the conversation proceeded, with remarks on one side of an almost commonplace type of Christianity, on the other of a yearning quest after satisfaction. But when it was ended, and the master had gone, Gratry fell on his knees and cried towards God. And, as he says :

“God speaks. He always speaks. And when we pray “sincerely and anxiously, we must be an atheist or a fool to “think that He does not answer. He does not speak with “words, but He works in you what He wills.”¹

From that time his days of deadness were over, and he had passed into life. Struggles and temptations he still had, but with them there was always faith. As a wound will generally smart more when it is healing, so he, in getting rid of his scepticism, was often liable to keen depression.

I thought in fact that I was rejected by God, lost, damned. I experienced something of the sufferings of hell. I said to myself, No child of God has ever experienced that. It must be a certain sign, or rather it is the very beginning, of eternal reprobation. But the fact that every idea of heaven was taken away from me, was, perhaps, even more frightful. I could not conceive such a place. Heaven did not appear to me worth the trouble of going there. It was like a void, a mythological Elysium, a sojourn of shadows, less real than the earth. I could attribute to it no joy, no happiness. Happiness, joy, light, perfection, and love, all these words were now without meaning. A painted sky over a naked rock, such were my eternal and my present resting-places !²

This is a terrible description. But must not such minds, in their inquiry after the infinite truth, feel from the mere labour

¹ “Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse,” p. 75.

² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

of the spiritual search as much fatigue as men's bodies undergo in a toilsome and long walk, each according to their degree? They have felt the fatigue-pangs of their wanderings, but where despair and vacancy have been unknown, it is because no true search has been made, and the soul could not miss what it had not learnt to miss. What finally solved (as far as finally can be applied to human weaknesses) Gratry's distresses was a deep appreciation that was borne to him of the marvellous third chapter of the Lamentations. Here he seemed to see his own state and his own hope. God, he says, restored life to him, and he breaks out into a pæan of mystical joy that rings through one's head as an anthem sounds at the far end of a cathedral nave. Henceforth his own words may be applied to himself, "Blessed is the man of good-will who knows his mission, who knows his God, and walks in His true way with an invincible perseverance, breaking down the barrier of vice which arrests most men in the wonderful development of which all might be capable!"

He left the Polytechnic, winning many prizes, and after spending some years at Strasburg and Bischenberg, became a priest. But his life-work was mainly of an educational type. From 1835 to 1847 he was Director of the "College Stanislas"; from 1847 to 1851 Almoner of the Normal School. In 1851 the Oratory was founded, he himself taking a large share in its establishment, and becoming attached to it. He was a Professor in the Sorbonne, and a member of the Academy.

A man's influence consists of his thoughts projected through his actions, or by his words. Gratry's lifework was threefold. He acted sympathetically and devotedly upon the young men with whom his educational duties placed him in contact; he was a marvellous preacher; and a writer of a literary style that is akin to Newman's in its excellence, though in most things else widely asunder. Both, however, developed slowly their literary skill; Gratry published nothing till forty-two years old. He might to a certain extent be more nearly compared with Edmund Burke, in the manner in which he treated his subject, even although their subject-matter was different. Burke was a philosopher-politician, Gratry a philosopher-preacher. In each there is the same striving to find out the broad causes of the things on which they write; the same comprehensive view; the same keen desire to sweep away the sand of isolated facts and reach the bottom of hard truth. Burke tried to explore the natural history of political phases, Gratry of religious emotions and experiences. Thus his works form a striking mixture of personal piety and quasi-professorial apologetics. They are like an encyclopedia of philosophic and moral science, interleaved with prayers and

hymns, or like an arsenal of religious weapons in which also Divine Service is conducted. It is not as if he took up the attack, and for the time being feigned to lay aside his friendship for his faith, but as if his personal piety whirled him through a sea of opponents, surrounding him continually with its protecting airs. You never lose the impression that it is a matter of life and death with him; his breath is coming and going through his vivid and impassioned sentences, so that the reality of the conflict is contagious.

His most important books are "La Connaissance de Dieu" and "La Connaissance de l'Âme." These sufficiently explain their scope by their titles. The former, which was published in 1853, is a theological treatise, in which the author recounts the strongest arguments for God's existence, and examines the problem of the relations between reason and faith. The latter is of necessity somewhat psychological; the author, first studying the soul in itself, portrays it in its relations to God. It is a physiology of the soul, treated with as much originality as thoroughness. Other works are—"La Logique," a treatise on the laws of thought, containing also an attack on the philosophy of Hegel; "Les Sources," "Lettres sur la Religion," "Étude sur la Sophistique Contemporaine," "La Morale et la Loi de l'Histoire," "La Philosophie du Credo," "Commentaire sur l'Évangile selon St. Matthieu," and others, including two which have been translated into English, "Henri Perreyve" and "Méditations Inédites." We should not forget to mention a very characteristic little work, published posthumously, "Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse."

Through all these runs the thread of a mystic apologeticism. He defends the Christian faith, not to ward off the blows of inveterate railers, but to make plain the infinite perfection and love it enshrines. His ardent convictions are united to a still more ardent affection; he wishes to use no violence; he seems to try to show in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, not only absolute truth, but also, and especially, absolute love. With this object are welded together metaphysics, moral philosophy, morals connected very wonderfully with politics and history, polemics against materialism and atheism, most original expositions of Scripture, and pious effusions of a chastened soul. It is not too much to say that "ce penseur éminent, cet écrivain original, exprimait ses pensées dans un langage digne des Platon et des Malebranche."¹

For it is his style that is so attractive. After all, it is the manner, and not the matter, that tells; and Gratry's style makes his thought like the clear brook under the sunshine,

¹ Bishop of Autun.

whose course you can trace from meadow to meadow with undoubting eye. Pure, connected, and plain, it is as different as possible from the, unhappily, too common style in which the obscurity tries to hide in a mist the raggedness of the thought. No padding, no verbiage, but original and brilliant ideas clothed in felicitous and harmonious language. And so humble, too, for as he says himself: "He who has received inspiration is humble, because he has few efforts to make. He who is not inspired is sensible of the extreme efforts that he makes to appear so, and estimates his work according to the trouble it gives him."¹

If he does labour under a technical fault it is that there is a tendency to repeat ideas, and even phrases; but this is often due to the hurry and heat of his writings, and he always remains original, trying to express great things simply.

He died in 1872, at Montreux, in circumstances of much pain and affliction, from a tumour in the neck.

What can be said as to the nature of Grättry's life-religion? If it could be labelled in one word—which perhaps is impossible—the word would be "Mystic." That is to say, that people have agreed to call by that name, for want of a better, those opinions which are concerned as little as possible with the details, applications, and dogmas of religion. We say of a person in consumption, often, that his mind or his soul can be seen through his body. There is such a case in religious belief, where the animating principle is supremely manifest, while the accompanying sequences are almost exanimate. This may not perhaps be a truly healthy form of Christianity, even as consumption is not a sound state of the body, but it has its uses. To take another simile: the form of Christianity professed by most men is somewhat dependent upon their nationality and their training; but Grättry's might be termed *cosmopolitan*. His writings are a kind of Christian "volapük;" he is a spiritual dragoman. True, he was professedly a Roman Catholic priest, but he was born in France. Every man's belief must to some extent be dependent upon its surroundings for its exterior colouring. His was thus influenced as little as possible. Of the order, the system, the autocracy, the network of dogma, that attracted Newman so greatly and Döllinger so little, he seems to have made small account. Nay further, even if his mind were Roman in its colouring, there is no reason to think it was not the reverse in its essence. His opposition to the Papal Infallibility decree is well known.² He only yielded unwillingly, and then, by

¹ "Meditations," p. 33.

The first letter of the famous Oratorian was a pungent criticism on the Archbishop of Mechlin's brochure in favour of Infallibility, and on

drugging his convictions. We learn from himself that in his youth, before the priest-master attracted him, he thought that "pure Christianity must be found in Protestantism."¹ But whether or no, and it is bootless to fight over his label, for you cannot label a voice, it is something for France to have seen in a man of high talents, of eminent learning, oratorical power, and literary skill—supremely a man of *soul*.

A very good example of his controversial writings is to be found in his "Lettres sur la Religion." It is a series of letters (some of which originally appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*) written in refutation of a book by M. Vacherot, called "La Religion." This was conceived in a positivist vein to show that all revealed religion would eventually disappear before science. Naturally the good father is at a white heat the whole way through his arguments, finishing up by an appeal to the stars, and a question as to what their inhabitants would think when they saw lies crawling about on the earth!² The book shows all his powers of style, imagination, and learning, as well as his defects of occasional tautology and repetition. The main idea running through the defence is the very true one that it is arrogant for natural science to assume to itself alone the name and nature of science. Of course Auguste Comte denied that title to psychology even, let alone religion, and Gratry shows very plainly that he and his followers, in relying on nothing but the evidence of the senses, must first abolish Reason. This is the chief task that he sets himself to prove in his "Lettres." Before quoting some pages from his opponent's work, he writes :

Comme ces pages sont assurément parmi les plus curieuses, les plus instructives, et les plus extraordinaires qui existent dans la littérature française, j'espère que le lecteur, s'il consent à les étudier, se trouvera dédommagé par le spectacle inattendu d'un aussi prodigieux phénomène dans l'ordre intellectuel, savoir l'entreprise positive et directe à abolir la raison et la logique humaine, par la suppression des axiomes.

He then proceeds on that hypothesis, combining very

his gross misrepresentations of the history of Pope Honorius. Gratry also exposed the Roman falsifications introduced into the Breviary. See "Quirinus" on the Council, 1870, pp. 164, 249.

¹ "Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse," p. 71.

² Compare the following anecdote: "Un jour, pendant le Concile, l'abbé Martin de Noirliu avait invité à dîner le P. Gratry, le P. Hyacinthe et l'abbé Michaud. Tout à coup, au beau milieu des discussions sur le dogme de l'infaillibilité, le P. Gratry se leva et dit: 'La science vient d'établir une loi d'après laquelle les planètes comme la nôtre ne peuvent être habitables moins d'un milliard d'années. Nous ne sommes donc que dans la première enfance de l'humanité.' Il se consolait du dogme avec cette découverte."—Séché, "Les Derniers Jansénistes," vol. ii., p. 379.

skilfully attacks on contemporary positivism with a refutation of the philosophy of Hegel, which he accuses M. Vacherot of using.

We may also refer to Gratry's method of defining the Church. Naturally, in his opinion, its visible expression to mankind's sight is Roman Catholic. But it is not at all necessary for the men who compose the true Church which he knows of to be Romans.¹ It is broader and truer than that. The universal Church is the light-giving part of humankind. It is the assembly of men, known or unknown, who are united together with God; men united on earth in His name, to whom nothing will be refused. Not only priests and learned men, but all souls dedicated to justice and truth, all inspired saints, and even all those truly wise men who have created sciences by their genius and industry. All that light, Divine and human together, constitutes true Christian science; all that assembly is the Catholic Church. And again: "All such are in God; God is in them and lives in them. They are joined in that Divine life which is higher than man's, and is his true life. That assembly is universal, eternal, of all times and all places. Many are in the visible Church who are not in the real Church. Many are out of the visible Church who make a part of the real Church."²

All who love justice and truth as revealed in God form part of this society; were it not that some men abuse their liberty, this universal assembly would be as wide as humanity itself. "The universal assembly is humanity, but not all men. Some men are outside humanity. There are heretics to humankind."³ But Gratry can hardly limit the spiritual fellowship and unanimity of "holy and humble men of heart." To him the communion of saints is a very present help. "I unhesitatingly reaffirm that it is time for science to give heed to phenomena which are so numerous and so well established, however strange. I mean the direct spiritual communication which exists between souls; an order of facts as common as marvellous, which the rude carelessness of false science and the trivialities of life succeed in forcing men to disregard."⁴

In fact his conception of the Church is as mystic as himself. But, at the same time, it is nothing if not practical. He places, as indeed we all do, the true remedy for the social evils of to-day in Christian fellowship and the working together of men knit in Christ's love. It is difficult to reform society in a lump—easier to reform it through individuals. Christ alone

¹ "Lettres sur la Religion," p. 227. ² *Ibid.*, p. 298.

³ "Les Sources," p. 107. ⁴ "Henri Perreyve," Eng. trans., p. 95.

reforms individuals. "Ne pas voir les immenses progrès "implicites, moraux, intellectuels et sociaux qu'a déposés le "christianisme dans le monde! Ne pas voir l'opération du "Verbe qui cherche à tous éclairer, en tout temps, en tout "lieu! Ne pas voir dans l'âme, l'image de Dieu, et la capacité "de posséder Dieu! Ne pas aimer d'amour toutes les âmes! "Ne pas voir que Jésus dit et a dit à chacun: Je t'aime! Je "veux verser mon sang pour toi!"¹

Perhaps the foregoing extracts and remarks will give an idea, necessarily incomplete, of the tone of the religion of the curious Abbé who combined medieval mysticism with present-day practicalism. He is one of those who seem to see the eternal Reason so clearly themselves, that they are sadly puzzled to find It hidden from others. This wondering, yearning love colours all his apologetic writings. He tries to add up the causes of human scepticism, and cannot prove his answer. Joined to this passionate longing for the safety of others is such a bright sense of his own as makes his sorrow radiant and his attacks charitable. Of all the successors of the Liberal-Catholic theology founded by Lamennais, none is so liberal as he. Montalembert, who called him "*plus qu'un prophète*"; Lacordaire, the famous preacher; Ozanam, the literary critic; Perreyve, the gentle recluse—these perhaps may equal him in some of his mental gifts, but not in that love which thinketh no evil, nor that life which is not of this world alone. For these reasons we are perhaps justified in thinking that his life-lesson should prove of great value, if dispassionately observed, in the poor distracted country he loved so well.

It appears to be a rule that when a strong mind once wishes to uncouple itself from the siding to which it has been attached in the beginning, the degree of force which is necessary to overcome the initial dead-weight will impart an impulse which cannot at the last be withstood. The brake cannot act until what was perhaps the original mark has been overshot. In our own Church this was the case with Newman. And still more would the soul in France which was chilled with the sterile callousness of materialism probably fly for warmth to the luxury and languor of the Church of Rome. It would be like stepping from a wind-swept desert into a hothouse. But there *is* a medium, if only it could be seen; if the mind could be directed from outer things to inner things, from inner things to higher things. Surely, then, the voice which called aloud that there is something even better than a procession of spiritual directors

¹ "Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse," p. 150.

—however arithmetical—namely personal possession by a living Saviour, if it is not the voice of a prophet, is *as* the voice of one of the prophets. If it does not summon to the baptism of Paul, it does to that of Apollos.

W. A. PURTON.

ART. IV.—THE "RANSOM."—MATT. XX. 28.

(Concluded from p. 408.)

I ENDEAVOURED in my former paper to show that, in the saying, "the Son of Man came to give His life a *λύτρον* for many," the word was used in the sense of *kopher* (atonement) or *keseph kippurim* (the price of atonements); and that our Lord referred to the thirtieth chapter of Exodus, where Jehovah claimed as *kopher* the sum of half a shekel from each male Israelite on being enrolled among the congregation of Israel, that there might be no plague among them when they were numbered. Moses was directed to take the money thus raised, and called by Jehovah the price of atonements, as an offering to Jehovah Himself. It is called an offering to Jehovah in verses 13, 14, and 15, and Moses was directed to appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it might be for a memorial of the children of Israel before Jehovah, *i.e.*, before the immediate presence of Jehovah, who was pleased to dwell upon the *kapporeth* between the cherubim, to make atonement for their souls.

If, then, our Lord's hearers, who we must never forget were Israelites, perceived that He thus connected Himself and His life with the sin-offering with which atonement was made on the great Day of Atonement on the *kapporeth*, we must be careful to understand the word "ransom" in the simple Old Testament sense of *kopher*.

It was by taking *λύτρον* in its classical rather than in its Biblical sense, that Origen got the notion that the *λύτρον* was Christ's life paid to the Evil One in exchange for the souls of mankind whom he held in bondage; but if, as we have seen, Jehovah Himself claimed the *λύτρον*, it must have been paid to Him and not to the devil. Clearly it cannot have been paid to both.

Leaving the Pentateuch, can we find any hints of a bargain between the Son of Man and Satan in the New Testament?

I. Can we find in the Gospels any passage in which our Lord speaks of the devil receiving His own life in exchange for the souls which the Lord came to rescue out of his power?

It certainly seems very improbable that we should find such