

PERSONALITY AND GRACE.

II. GRACE.

THE theologian who in this way rids himself of the perplexity of the moral personality is working with the idea of two direct forces. God's grace is one direct force, and human will is another. The conclusion at once follows that as grace is infinite and will finite, grace can suffer no deflection, but is always a simple direct force, infallible and irresistible.

If a system could rest on abstract argument, this result would be secure. Surely, whatsoever issues from omniscience and omnipotence must be absolutely true and absolutely irresistible. How can a thing so plainly proved admit of argument? What but wilful blindness and a sophisticating impiety could question it?

Unfortunately life does not rest on abstract arguments, and systems, to be of value, must face a different test of reality. The question is not what we are prepared to demonstrate God ought to do, but what we are prepared to learn God does. That only history and experience can tell, and they are concerned with investigations, not presuppositions. But when so tested the abstract argument turns out to be a presupposition without a single fact of history or experience as its foundation.

History is no longer terrified by the fear that to question the abstract argument would be impiety. It now knows that it is not piety at all which lays down rules for God and refuses to inquire reverently what God actually does. It has, therefore, no fear in asking where these infallibilities are to be found. The result is that they have vanished, one after another, into the region, not only of unproved, but of disproved assumptions. A legally infallible orthodoxy has followed a legally infallible vicar of God, a legally in-

fallible Scripture a legally infallible orthodoxy, a legally infallible Christ, a legally infallible Scripture. Nor is it merely in some details that the position has been affected. The plain facts of history go to show that God does not operate as the direct force of omniscience and omnipotence with infallibilities and irresistibilities at all.

And the plain facts of life agree with the plain facts of history. God manifestly does not pour His truth into us like empty vessels, nor does His power control our wills as if He took us by the throat. The most perplexing question about life is, why God illumines men's minds so imperfectly and renovates their wills so inadequately. If, therefore, the way of omnipotence with man could be direct and overwhelming, we could only conclude from what we see that God is either not good or not omnipotent. Dr. McTaggart's argument would be unanswerable. It is that this being an evil world, either God will not or He cannot make it better. If God need be limited in no way by the moral personality of another, how can that dilemma be avoided? Why, if God can help Himself, does He tolerate evil for a moment; and why is He so sparing of His goodness? Moreover, faith, as well as logic, feels the difficulty. When it works with this direct sense of God's omnipotence, it is continually locked in a death struggle with the fear that either God cannot help or does not care.

In that practical difficulty we have the final reason why the infallibilities have fallen. They did not in this world of mixed good and evil succour but burden faith. The criticism neither of history nor of life would have overthrown them, had they not first shown their inability to succour practical religion. They were based on ignoring the moral personality, and all really spiritual interests are wholly concerned with safeguarding it. The moral personality cannot be excluded and then spiritual victory be won by another, stronger force. Till this became evident, the

criticism of the infallibilities did not arise. Only when they had proved themselves not a home but a prison-house for the moral personality, were men forced to ask on what facts they rested. Catholic orthodoxy and Protestant orthodoxy alike had become religiously ineffective before they were intellectually assailed.

Protestantism for the most part has accepted this result, and seems to have suffered grave loss of power in consequence. Yet after criticism has done its worst, the real danger of organised Protestantism is not the loss of its infallibilities. It does not suffer because it has lost its infallibilities, but because it has retained the negative ideals they were used to maintain. It still works with the old idea of grace, upon which these infallibilities rested. It still thinks of grace as a direct irresistible force. From that idea of grace it is necessarily concerned mainly with repressive control. There is no power or inspiration in it to widen men's thoughts, exalt their ideals, or ennoble their consecration. Consequently the real danger of organised Protestantism is its narrow vision of truth, its negative ideals of duty, its lack of inspiration and initiative.

All the infallibilities go back to the conception of grace as direct, irresistible force, and the loss of them is a danger, because that conception of grace still abides. Because God's grace and man's will are conceived as mere direct forces, the theological mind has age after age been busy coming to terms with Augustinianism and Pelagianism. The history of theology is mainly a history of an attempt to patch up truces with them. The strange thing is how in practice the religious mind has no failure in dealing with their problems, and how in theory the theologian has no success. May it not be that the theologian has not asked himself whether he is working with a religious conception of grace at all ?

Hodge blunders upon the real issue. Everything on the Arminian side, he says, at once loses its value, if it be admitted that regeneration or effectual calling is the work of omnipotence. What he means is of omnipotence exclusively. The essence of the contention is that nothing else in God need be taken into account. God is the Absolute, which, as with the scientist and the metaphysician, is unconditioned force. Being infinite and direct, no finite force can obstruct it or deflect it, and, therefore, man's will, being a finite force, need not be taken into account.

Augustinianism, thus occupied in ascribing everything to God, is, we must not forget, acting from a religious motive. It is seeking to conserve faith's supreme interest, which is that we may certainly and utterly rely upon God. Pelagianism never can be a satisfactory religious basis. If we must begin before God will act, or if we must continue fulfilling certain conditions before He will continue acting, we are not driven back upon God but upon ourselves. The weakness of that position all religious insight tends to disclose, and the miserable uncertainty and painful anxiety of it all experience proves. The religious soul has always ascribed, and rejoiced to ascribe, everything to God. He does not dream of saying that two forces have made his life, and of proceeding to distinguish how much was his own and how much was God's. He speaks of the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! That has been a note of all religious men in all ages, even though, like Wesley, they might hold a theory which runs counter to it.

Moreover, practically, Pelagianism, even with the religious sense of dependence upon God, does not work a calm religious trust, but drives men to seek security in their emotions or in their doings, in exciting their souls in public or imposing upon themselves disciplines in private.

Religion cannot rest securely on man's insight or initia-

tive or on man's fidelity and continuance. Nothing clamours more loudly for Divine succour than our failure to make right beginnings, except our failure to continue "in any stay." Till our own weak and wavering resolve is helped, peace can be no more than a name, because the power of the world in ourselves will be continually taking our peace away. The faith which does not rely wholly on God, but partly on exciting and disciplining its own soul, can only be perpetually feeling its own pulse in a valetudinarian anxiety about its spiritual health, and, therefore, cannot be in spiritual health at all, or at least could not profit by possessing it.

Its morals, moreover, are in no better position than its religion. Its eye being directed to having merit with God, it cannot be moral, but only moralistic. Even the sense of responsibility is not succoured by this mixture of dependence and independence, for, as we shall see, morals require not partial but absolute independence. Nothing, not even the idea of dependence on God, must enter to question that, what we ought to do, we can do.

Nevertheless, the inevitable reaction from Augustinianism to Pelagianism, from Calvinism to Arminianism speaks of more than a defect in argument. Manifestly, some spiritual need has gone unsatisfied. The moral personality, being convinced that the very business of religion is to succour it, cannot rest on a view of grace which rides over it. So long, then, as grace is regarded as a direct force, only one way of escape presents itself. The personality must be kept apart from God. As a moral entity it must be set over against God. The interests of religion and morality may be both imperilled, but how is the personality, with which both are concerned, to be saved, except by thus setting our religious dependence and our moral independence in antagonism ?

One way of escape may be attempted. It is the compromise of the Roman Church. Augustinianism is its religious basis. All its infallibilities of creed and organization are expressions of the direct, irresistible force of Divine operation. Their basis is the abstract argument that only infallibilities can issue from omniscience and omnipotence. To conserve the moral interest, it then grafted on this system the Pelagian, moralistic idea of merit. But neither object was really attained. Men found in it neither religious security, nor moral freedom, neither true dependence upon God in their hearts nor moral independence in their actions.

This failure drove Calvinism to take up the religious task of Augustinianism once more. Though Calvin had a far profounder sense both of the religious and the moral problem than Augustine, he still wrought with the old idea of grace as direct, irresistible force. Hence his followers were driven again along the old pathway. If God unconditionally elects, unconditionally enlightens, and unconditionally controls, every Christian must hold the one infallible truth, belong to the one undivided society, and be guaranteed in the one unvarying salvation. In that way Calvinism returned again to the old infallibilities, and with them to the old perplexities and failures, and also to the old intolerance of human nature.

Besides the fact that God manifestly does not in that way secure men in truth and unity, theology found no deliverance in it. As in Catholicism, justification had to be appended arbitrarily to faith, and sanctification arbitrarily to justification, and the work of Christ arbitrarily to all three.

Nor was practical religion any more delivered than theology. Men were not set free by the assurance that God wrought in them in that overwhelming way. Between the

hard pride of being elect and the broken fear of being non-elect, a humble trust in God was hard to win.

Then the way of escape was again sought through the idea of grace and will as direct forces. Once more this involved the idea of isolating man as a moral personality from God. The result was Arminianism and Socinianism. Even more manifestly than Pelagianism, they had no religious succour, and religion could only save itself from a hard and negative moralism by an unreal and unconvincing sacramentarianism born out of due time.

Though a long dreary history, full of hard and unedifying names, it is a pathetic story of a search for something which would both put the whole religious trust on God and not on man and prove itself the succour not the annihilation of the moral personality. It is the more pathetic that it is pursued by the haunting sense of seeking something the heart already possessed, but which would never consent to be expressed in any formula either about the might of God or the free-will of man.

Both sides were making the same mistake. When they spoke of grace, they meant not a Father but a force. Even when they called it love, they imagined the influx of some new dominating force, what Augustine calls a change in the substance of the soul.

Augustinianism and Calvinism thus conceived everything to proceed as impersonally as if we were clay which God crushed as He would into new shapes in His hand. As effectively as Deism, it deprived history of religious significance. Nothing was really done by any event in it. All being done directly by God, everything might as well have arrived at one point of history as another. Means became merely signs. Church, Word, Sacrament, life's discipline and life's duty, Jesus Christ Himself had no necessary relation to salvation, no relation at all except the arbitrary will of God.

Arminianism, nevertheless, wrought no deliverance any more than Pelagianism. It had no basis for religion. Religion is entire, not partial dependence upon God. We do not do something first and depend on Him for the rest, but He is the strength of all our doing. To make His doing depend on ours, introduces the self-regarding considerations which it is the business of all faith to set aside. Religion does not rely upon God and man, but upon God alone.

And, on the other hand, Arminianism does not succour morality. Morality, as a doing to win God's alliance or as an effort to win God's backing, is not morality. It has a corrupt personal motive of selfish good, and a corrupt personal hesitation through considering other things than duty. Morality is not partly dependent and partly independent. To be morality at all it must be independent—our own immediate, unhesitating obedience to our own discernment of what is right.

JOHN OMAN.

THE PROLOGUE OF ECCLESIASTES

It is generally recognised that the treatise called by the Greek translator "Ecclesiastes" is one of several attempts at introducing Greek philosophy to Hebrew readers in such a form as would give it a chance of obtaining popularity. The author of this treatise is bolder than the others in some respects; the propositions which he takes over from Greece were specially calculated to give offence. On the other hand he is specially careful to conceal his traces from the uninitiated.

Like many ancient texts, this was probably intended to be taught rather than to be published, whence it abounds in enigmas of which the solution was intended for private ears. Those who have come across authoritative solutions to such puzzles will not be over-confident as to the possibility of