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THE DIVINE ASPECT OF HISTORY

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME II

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THE DIVINE ASPECT OF HISTORY

by
JOHN RICKARDS MOZLEY

Take better part, with manlier heart,
Thine adult spirit can ;
No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—
Believe it ne'er—O Man !
But turn not then to seek again
What first the ill began ;
No God, it saith ; ah, wait in faith
God's selfcompleting plan ;
Receive it not, but leave it not,
And wait it out, O Man !

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

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JESUS CHRIST: A GENERAL SURVEY

The possibility of error in the Christian creeds must not be denied. The question asked, whether there is an infinite difference, as to origin and character, between Jesus Christ and ourselves. The belief in this infinite difference is capable of being very attractively put, and has been attractively put, both in the New Testament and by Christian poets. But the question is, on what the belief rests? In the fourth gospel it is distinctly made to rest on miracles; and thus the question of the truth of miracles is brought to the front. The miracles of healing however must be put on one side, for it is clear in the gospels that these are not regarded as constituting an infinite difference between Jesus Christ and ourselves. The question of the resurrection is crucial in the matter. The numerous and important inconsistencies between the gospels in their accounts of the resurrection show that the evidence for it was really visionary (though the gospels of course do not admit this); and from the epistles of the New Testament it is very manifest that the resurrection was not a fact discerned by the senses; the accounts of the conversion of Paul given in the Acts corroborate this. Further, the inconsistencies between the synoptic gospels on the one hand, and the fourth gospel on the other hand, are so great as to show that our authorities are very liable to be misled; and all things being considered, the conclusion is that the resurrection was an event taking place in a supersensuous region. This is a belief really consolatory, but it is consolatory because we may hope to enter that region ourselves; and hence the essential character of the resurrection is one that assimilates us to Jesus Christ, not one that differentiates us from him. Other considerations confirm this . . . pages 1-38

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The Synoptic Gospels are declared to be drawn from a great number of shorter documents (and some oral utterances) which were repeatedly transcribed and circulated through the Christian world; some truth thus became part of the general knowledge, but some error as well 38-45

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That great development, by which the Christian Church ceased to be Jewish and became Gentile, and finally overcame and absorbed into itself that great heathen institution, the Roman empire, is the theme of this chapter. The persons here described are: (1) That eminent teacher, James, who is called “the Lord’s brother”; (2) the converted apostle Paul, his extraordinary strength and his occasional weakness; (3) the apostle John, imperfect in the balance of his mind but ardently spiritual;

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(4) Clement of Rome, and Ignatius of Antioch, their vehement insistence on discipline in view of the trials which Christianity had to meet; (5) the Gnostics; (6) the Neoplatonists, with Plotinus at their head; (7) Origen. Others are just touched on, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian. The persecutions by the heathen empire are not ignored; when these had reached their acme, the heathen weapons seemed suddenly to fall, and Christianity had won the day 155–202

CHAPTER XXI

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIANITY AND A FALLING EMPIRE

The difficulties which victory brought with it to the Christian Church. The Church desirous of training men in goodness and exaltation of the inner character, but inexperienced as to the methods of accomplishing such a purpose; suddenly becoming possessed of the weapons which heathen rulers had previously wielded, and using those weapons against heathenism and against heresy; whence endless disorder ensued. In connexion with the great council of Nicæa, and with subsequent controversies, six names are specially mentioned: (1) Athanasius, the victor, finally, in the great contest as to the creed of the Church; (2) Arius, his defeated opponent, a better and more Christian man than he is usually held to be; (3) Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, a friend of Arius, but not a wise friend—an unjust and injudicious opponent of Athanasius; (4) Constantine, the first Christian emperor, with all his faults, deserving of our esteem; (5) Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, a friend of Constantine, a learned man and eminent writer, but rather out of place in these bitter controversies; (6) Julius, bishop of Rome, a prudent man. Civil affairs did not prosper while religious conflicts were going on. The Roman fibre had become weak; the Christian Church did not strengthen this weakness; barbarians invaded the empire; and the empire of the west first tottered, and at last fell before them. Some comments at the end of this chapter are made on some eminent theologians; particularly on Augustine, the most famous of all the Fathers of the ancient Church 203–244

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CHAPTER XXII

CHRISTIANITY FINDS A RIVAL IN ISLAM

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THE WORLD-STRUGGLE IN EUROPE AND ASIA

This chapter describes the extraordinary struggles which took place between Christianity and Islam during the seven centuries which elapsed between the death of Charlemagne and the Reformation. The intervention of the great Mongol invasion, under the grandsons of Jingsis Khan, is referred to, and the damage done by it, partly to Christendom, but still more to Islam, is described. During the seven centuries referred to, the gains of Islam in Asia Minor, Constantinople and the countries around that capital, and finally in India, have to be balanced against the recovery of Spain by Christendom and the conversion of northern Europe to Christianity (half of Russia having been lost to Christendom and recovered again during this period). The progress of Islam in the arts and sciences (preceding the progress of Christendom in these matters) is described; the weakness of Islam lies in its defect in determining the relations of man to man. Instances of this defect are given. In Christendom, the gradual but real progress of human relations, through the operation of the Church and also by the institution of chivalry, is described. Yet the Church did in many ways oppress the intellect. The breach between the eastern and the western churches was a calamity, and the crusades are not to be justified, though some good is ascribed to them. Hildebrand is carefully estimated; so also is Baber, the Mohammedan conqueror of India
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CHAPTER XXIV

THE INWARD GROWTH OF MEDIÆVAL CHRISTENDOM

Islam is just touched upon at the beginning of this chapter, mainly in regard to its merits; but the chapter as a whole is devoted to describing the various forms of progress in Christendom (chiefly in the west) and the most notable persons connected with this progress. The Christian character of Magna Charta is referred to; also the growth of parliamentary government in England; also the work of Jeanne d'Arc in liberating France. The commercial towns of Germany owed much to the Church; so did the arts in Italy—painting, sculpture, architecture. Mediæval philosophers are referred to—Abelard, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas; also that heroic missionary and thinker, Raymund Lull. The force which Christianity gave to men is shown in literature, in great voyagers and travellers, and even in science (especially is Copernicus noted). Francis of Assisi did much to reform men on the moral and spiritual side. On the other hand, the persecuting spirit of the Church is to be regretted; especially when exemplified in that vigorous teacher, Dominic de Guzman. The various reformers (before the Reformation) are noted and characterised; Albigenses, Waldenses, Apostolicals, Wycliffe and the Lollards, and (most saintly of all) John Huss **330-377**

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CHAPTER XXV

THE REFORMATION ERA

The Reformation should rather be styled a just rebellion; it liberated men, but the constructive power in it was imperfect. The question discussed, whether the Roman church had an intrinsic sacredness which rendered any rebellion against it unlawful; the negative answer to this shown to be in accordance with the gospels and with the New Testament generally; and even the Fathers of the first two centuries do not hold the apostle Peter to have been sole head of the Church (which is the view on which the church of Rome bases itself). The further question is discussed, whether the church of Rome had on other grounds an authority which, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, ought to have been accepted without challenge. As against this, the rectitude of the protest of Luther against the sale of indulgences is strongly affirmed, and is shown to have been practically accepted as just, at the council of Trent, by the Roman church itself. The protest of Luther against indulgences, considered in themselves and apart from their sale, has of course never been accepted by the Roman church; but the argument is here advanced, that the protest was also just in this respect. A general account of Luther follows; it is said of him that he combined a singular prudence in action with a singular rashness in speech. His doctrine of Justification by Faith is held to be truly vital, though capable of being expounded, and sometimes even expounded by himself, wrongly. His faults are noted, but he is treated as a true hero. Other leaders of the Reformation, on the Continent or in Great Britain, are spoken of (Zwingli and Calvin especially—in the English church, Richard Hooker is said to embody its spirit most truly). On the other hand, the courage and discipline of Ignatius Loyola, and of the Jesuits, receive praise. On the whole, the effect of the Reformation is held to have been for good, even inside the Roman church, much more in the communities which embraced it **378–418**

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE GATHERING FORCES OF SCEPTICISM

The subject of religious music, especially fostered by the German Reformation, is just touched upon. Then the whole sceptical movement of the eighteenth century is described, especially as exhibited in Voltaire and Rousseau. Voltaire is held to be the man who did more to restrain judicial and religious cruelty than any man else did; and Rousseau, the man who first pleaded successfully the rights of the poor: but both these great writers did harm by their wrong disposition in sexual questions.

The effect of the sceptical movement in Germany is noted with some detail; also the effect of it in England; France and Italy in the nineteenth century are also touched upon, but not treated with any fullness (as to their religious bearings) **421–450**

CHAPTER XXVII

THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE

The inculcation of morality, or of conduct in this visible world, ought to proceed in such a way that religion shall naturally flow from it. A statement of the kind of teaching which might be given to a child. The various difficulties of life, and the way in which religion may help in their solution, mentioned: sickness, poverty, discord in religion itself and between different Christian churches, discord between nations and the result of it in war (the war now being waged in Europe is mentioned), barrenness in many parts of the earth's surface needing remedy, difficulties occasioned by the different colours of the races of men, difficulties in the treatment of the inferior animals. It is held that these difficulties may be solved; further, it is held that there is some truth in the Christian doctrine of a Fall, though this occurred at an unimaginably distant period; the degeneration thence ensuing is now being retrieved, and we have reason to anticipate a glorious future for the earth as a whole **451–464**

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CORRIGENDA ET ADDENDA

Vol. II. p. 37, lines 22 and 23. Strike out the words "though I am not urging the use of the term" and insert "in theory; for in practice, it would be undesirable"

Vol. II. page 232. There is a letter, to be found on pages 105–107 of the *Historical Tracts of S. Athanasius* (Oxford, 1843), which though not said to be addressed to the Council of Tyre, may have been addressed to that Council, and is so set down in the *Acta Conciliorum*. It contains a mention of the retraction of Ischyras and may thus appear to contradict what is said in the note to the page above mentioned. But first, even if this letter were addressed to the Council of Tyre, it was not written till quite a late stage in the proceedings of the Council; nor is there any mention of its having been presented to that Council, or how they regarded it; secondly, Athanasius, who was in possession of the retraction of Ischyras, and who had had the opportunity (long before the letter here spoken of was written) of acquainting the Council of Tyre with that retraction, does not appear, from his own account, to have used that opportunity. All things considered, I think the statement stands, that the retraction of Ischyras was not voluntary.