

live on the Church and by the Church, on the truth which it teaches and the grace of which it is the depository, without suspecting what they owe it?" Such, to begin with, is the case with the heretics and schismatics, kept by age-long prejudices in the bond of dissident sects. The Christ they venerate and the Gospel they meditate, have they not taken them from the Mother Church? And the sacraments they receive, are they not always, according to the beautiful doctrine of St. Augustine, the work of Christ and of His Church? "All the baptized are, so to speak, baptized Catholics. Thus baptized, the heretic or the schismatic, so long as he has not fallen short of his light, will continue to owe to the true Church the graces

which God shall be pleased to give him on account of the teaching which he will receive."

'Thus'—again quoting Père Bainvel—"thus," he says, 'the more we go into the reality of things, the more we see attaching themselves to the Church souls who at first sight would seem to have nothing in common with it. We need only continue the induction to arrive in all truth at the conclusion that not only is the Church here below the only society of salvation, but also that, according to the providential order and manifest intentions of God, every soul that is saved belongs in some fashion to the Church and is not saved but by being connected with it.'

## A Sage among the Prophets.

BY THE REV. W. P. PATERSON, D.D., PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

'I turned about, and my heart *was set* to know, and to search out, and to seek wisdom, and the reason of *things*.'  
—Ec 7<sup>35a</sup> (R.V.).

THE Bible has not much to say about those interests and activities of the intellectual life which we comprehend under science and philosophy, and which have their modern symbol in a University. For one thing the Bible was given through a Semitic people, who were assigned a different task in the providential division of the labour of the spirit. The chief end of the Bible was to appeal to man as man, and to minister to those religious needs and moral aspirations which are the common stock both of cultured and uncultured humanity. At the same time there were those among the Biblical writers who shared and appreciated the purely intellectual impulse. As the band of the sacred writers represented every social grade, from that of the ruler of a people down to the peasant and the fisherman, so it included along with unlearned and ignorant men some who had felt that the pursuit of knowledge is one of the worthiest objects of human endeavour. And their intellectual interest was not suppressed, but only redirected and elevated, by their enlistment in the service of revelation. Among the New

Testament writers this position is illustrated by St. Paul, who had zealously mastered all that was taught in the narrow school of the synagogue, and for whom it was one of the glories of the gospel that it threw a flood of fresh light upon the deepest problems of the world and of human life. He speaks slightly, indeed, of the wisdom of this world, under which name he seems to comprehend summarily the intellectual achievements of classical antiquity; and he felt bound to pass this judgment in view of its failure in the supreme task of attaining a true and full knowledge of God and of His will. But the same Paul laid down the principle that 'all things are yours'—thereby putting in a Christian claim to everything that enriches and ennobles human life, while in mapping out the domain of the mind he bids it take possession of whatsoever things are true. The Old Testament contains a group of books known as the Wisdom Literature which is the product of criticism and reflexion working upon a comparative study of the data of revelation and experience. Among the writings thus described a special interest attaches for us to the Book of Ecclesiastes, since there is evidence that the author was a man who, at least during one phase of his career, had dugged for knowledge

as for hid treasure, and who in the quest of truth had passed through an ordeal which has been somewhat closely reproduced in the conditions of our modern world.

It is the generally accepted verdict of criticism that King Solomon cannot have been the author of Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew style is shown to be that of the later age, and the ideas with which the writer is familiar bear the stamp of a period when Israel had been saturated by cosmopolitan influences. It also seems incredible that Solomon could have painted his administration in so dark colours, and confessed that his government was little better than a reign of injustice. The author is supposed to have been a Hebrew sage who lived either in the time of Alexander the Great, or over a century later when Palestine had been wrested from Egypt by the Seleucid dynasty of Syria. Dean Plumptre, who favours the later date, has given a plausible sketch of his biography, based on the internal evidence of the book. He conceives him as a Jew of Palestine, who had been instructed in his youth in the oracles of the Old Testament, and disciplined in the rigorous customs of Hebrew piety. From hence he made his way to Alexandria—now rising into fame as a seat of learning—in which the science and philosophy of Greece were assiduously cultivated and disseminated. Into this new world of knowledge he threw himself with youthful ardour. He learned what the natural philosophers had to teach about the heavenly bodies, rivers and seas, minerals and plants; and he sat at the feet of the moral philosophers as they discoursed of the cycles in human affairs, the chief good, and the golden mean. We may further imagine him as, his mind enlightened and his powers matured, he developed independence of thought, or when, in accordance with his self-chosen title of Koheleth or Debater, he joined in the discussions in which school clashed with school, and in which as iron sharpeneth iron so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. Thereafter he may be supposed to have tried other experiences, and also to have made adventures in the sphere of action; and at the last to have written a book in which he garnered the wisdom that had been learned, reproduced the occasional moods of doubt and pessimism that had accompanied his pilgrimage, and ended where he began, by reasserting his invincible Jewish faith in a God who assuredly lives and reigns,

even though clouds and thick darkness envelop His throne.

If, now, it was in such a situation—at the meeting-place of Hebrew piety and Hellenic culture—that this strange Book of Ecclesiastes had its origin, the author is a figure who had much in common with the youth of our own country who gather within the walls of a University. There is a correspondence in at least two particulars. In the first place our Scottish youth, like the Palestinian Jew, are the heirs of a past in which religion was a brightly shining light and a compelling power. They are sprung from a people which believed with all its mind in the same God who spake by the prophets of Israel, whose history was moulded and coloured by the same faith in His laws and promises, and whose heroic ages were times when men contended, at the cost of suffering and death, for ideal causes of truth and righteousness in the name of the same God. It may also be thought that like the Preacher we live in a period when the golden age of our religion lies in the past, when the voices of the prophets have for some time fallen silent, and when we do not yet see the clear and convincing signs of the approach of the next great spiritual period which may be expected from the use and wont of the working of God in history. But at least we have, like Koheleth, the great religious inheritance; and there are few of us who have not started with it in the spiritual equipment conveyed to us through the teaching of parents, or through the ministry of the Christian Church. The second point of the parallel is that the University career recalls the pilgrimage supposed to have been made by the Preacher to the Hellenic centre of Alexandria. The intellectual significance of the academic training is that those who are British by birth, and Christian by upbringing, are ushered into a world whose spirit, whose ideals and whose strivings are characteristically Greek rather than Hebraic. They may occupy themselves with the literature in which the classical spirit is enshrined, or they may pass on to other edifices of which the Greeks laid the foundations and on which the moderns have built—history which tries to see things as they were without concession to our prejudices and wishes, science which seeks to know the causes of things and the manner of their becoming, philosophy which explores the mechanism of the human mind, investigates the nature of the good

and the beautiful, and tries its unaided strength upon the ultimate problems of the universe. And for us, as for the Preacher, the supreme problem of our culture is to combine without loss into a grander whole the diverse elements that come to us with the hall-mark of Greece and of Palestine.

It would appear, then, that the Preacher was in a position to speak with good credentials to those who combine a religious inheritance with an intellectual vocation; and we shall proceed to set forth the chief heads of his intellectual and his religious message.

## I.

## THE INTELLECTUAL MESSAGE.

This may be summarized by saying that learning is an invaluable possession, but that the pursuit of it is attended by serious drawbacks and dangers. His estimate, in fact, takes the form of a profit-and-loss account.

1. That wisdom is a priceless boon he affirms in emphatic terms. He observes that it excelleth folly—which, no doubt, includes ignorance, as far as light excelleth darkness. He gives two reasons in support of this judgment. One is that knowledge is power. 'Wisdom is a strength to the wise more than ten rulers which are in a city.'<sup>1</sup> It is a power which can sometimes accomplish as much even as money. 'Wisdom is a defence, even as money is a defence.'<sup>2</sup> And sometimes it brings safety when all other resources fail. 'There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it; and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.'<sup>3</sup> What he had chiefly in view in these sayings was doubtless the knowledge of the properties of things which gives man dominion over nature, with skill and ingenuity in applying this knowledge for protection against danger and the promotion of material well-being. He gives another reason for affirming the excellence of knowledge which shows that he had also other kinds of wisdom in view than that which, as in the case of the wise man who delivered a city, produced palpable material results. In at least two of his reflexions he may rather have in mind those intellectual pursuits which are of little practical utility—such as the lore of the grammarian, the visions of the poets, the meditations of the philo-

<sup>1</sup> 7<sup>19</sup>.<sup>2</sup> 7<sup>12</sup>.<sup>3</sup> 9<sup>14, 15</sup>.

sophers on the ultimate nature of things and the meaning of human life. He knows of a wisdom which, if it do no more, at least yields a large inward profit to those who possess it. It is the sovereign virtue of wisdom] that 'it giveth life to them that have it.'<sup>4</sup> It effects an enrichment and refinement of soul which is even mirrored in the face. This is in fact the substance of what is urged in modern controversies in justification of those literary and philosophical studies which seem to have no practical value for society, and are not very obviously useful as an aid to success in life. When the Preacher said that 'wisdom maketh the face to shine,'<sup>5</sup> he said the same thing, only that he said it more picturesquely, which Mr. Matthew Arnold expressed in his famous proposition that 'culture augments the excellence of our nature, and renders our intelligent being still more intelligent.' It is the same doctrine which Sir William Hamilton inculcated in his eloquent introductory lecture to Metaphysics in which he claimed for the discipline of philosophy 'the function of cultivating the mind by supplying to its higher faculties the occasion of their most vigorous and therefore most improving exercise.' To the same effect Cardinal Newman writes of the inward change which impressed the Preacher in its effect of the transfigured countenance. 'It is well to be a gentleman,' he says in his defence of the higher learning, 'it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life, and those, the collateral qualities of a large knowledge, are the primary objects of a University.'

2. On the other hand we find scattered throughout the book a number of reflexions on the disadvantages and disappointments which attend the pursuit of wisdom. One is the painfulness of the student's life. 'In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'<sup>6</sup> Was the Preacher thinking of the new burdens that had been laid on his spirit as with widening knowledge he realized the prevalence of suffering in the world, and the vanity of human ambitions? Was he recalling the inward peace which he enjoyed in the sheltered conditions of his early life, and which he imperilled when he exposed himself to the chaotic influences of the wider world? Or was he only thinking of the brain-weariness, the laborious days, the unrestful

<sup>4</sup> 7<sup>12</sup>.<sup>5</sup> 8<sup>1</sup>.<sup>6</sup> 1<sup>18</sup>.

nights, to which he elsewhere makes reference, and doubting whether the gains had been proportionate to the sacrifice? Again, he is sure that much of the labour is wasted effort, since all is a rediscovery of what was known before—'there is no new thing under the sun.'<sup>1</sup> Further, he complains that the wise do not receive their due recompense. 'I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill.'<sup>2</sup> Nor do they receive their meed of honour. The poor, wise man who delivered the city was spoken of, for a day, but afterward no one remembered that same poor man. And finally, to omit lesser considerations, death appears upon the scene, scatters to the winds the hard-earned gains, and reduces the sage to the same level as the fool. 'As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise?' 'How doth the wise man die even as the fool!'<sup>3</sup> Was the labour worth while?

It is true that the debit side of his account has to be revised in the circumstances and with the outlook of our later age. One of the privileges and glories of these later days is that there is so much which is new under the sun and in the regions beyond the sun. To-day the poor wise man who does anything so considerable as save a city can depend on substantial rewards both in wealth and honour. And as for the crushing argument from the inevitable spoliation by death, the situation has been changed by the gospel which brought life and immortality to light, and the scholar's unceasing toil seems more reasonable in the prospect of the possibilities of eternity.

'Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes  
Live now or never!"

He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!  
Man has for ever."<sup>4</sup>

While, however, corrections have to be made for latter-day conditions, there are two of the reflexions which are of permanent relevancy and weight. One is that it behoves those who devote themselves to the learned life to take full stock of the tremendous obligations, and to count the cost. The other is that the intellectual life is not of itself sufficient to satisfy the deepest needs of the human soul. But with this last observation we

<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> 9<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> 2<sup>15, 16</sup>.

make the transition to the religious aspect of the teaching of Ecclesiastes.

## II.

### THE RELIGIOUS MESSAGE.

On a superficial view it might appear that the Preacher has no religious message—that he is a seeker after truth, not the apostle of an assured creed, that he is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, but who so far has had little success in his quest. Yet we may be sure that there was some good reason why the author of Ecclesiastes, though he sometimes uses the language of a sceptic, and oftener that of a worldling, was associated with the goodly fellowship of believers and saints in the sacred library of the Old Testament. Part of the explanation is that he rendered a service to religion, on the negative side by setting aside the claims of any earthly object to be accepted as the chief end of man. He mentions the chief blessings which are coveted by the mass of mankind—pleasure, wealth, power; and he declares that it is not in them, even if our hold on them were permanent—as it is not—to fill the soul with an enduring satisfaction and tranquillity. Nor again is the chief good for man to be found, where it may be sought by nobler spirits, in the achievements and possessions of the intellectual life: this also, notwithstanding its greater dignity and its higher utility, must leave a man, if he have nothing more, with a sense of emptiness and at discord with himself. 'Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh.'<sup>4</sup> Human life needs to be filled up and rounded off with a higher and more comprehensive good.

To this discovery of the Preacher there is an interesting parallel in one of the frankest of modern autobiographies. To those of the last generation the man who stood out as the most prominent representative of sheer mental power and mental avidity was perhaps John Stuart Mill. It had been his father's ambition to develop the precocious mind into a magnificent intellectual machine, and he succeeded in this part of the task. But the son, when he became a man, and his initial curiosity had been partially satisfied, was conscious that something vital had been omitted from his training and experience. 'I put the question to myself,'

<sup>4</sup> 12<sup>13</sup>.

he says, 'suppose that all your objects in life were realized, would this be a great joy and happiness to you? And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, "No." At this my heart sank: All my happiness was to have been sought in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means. I seemed to have nothing left to live for.' When we encounter him thirty years later, we find a presence with him which has created for him a different world. 'Since my wife's death,' he says, 'I have sought for such alleviation as my state permitted of, by the mode of life which enabled me to feel her still near me. I bought a cottage as close as possible to the place where she was buried, and there I lived during a great portion of the year. My objects in life are solely those which were hers, my pursuits those in which she shared; or with which she sympathized. The memory is to me a religion, and her approbation the standard by which, summing up as it does all worthiness, I endeavour to regulate my life.' The need being thus conceded of a religion—of a personal relationship that will enrich the life with guidance and protection, and fill the heart with settled peace—it may well be thought that a better religion is available than that of the modern philosopher who pitched his tent beside his dead wife's grave, and tried evermore to see her gracious face limned upon the encompassing darkness.

To return to the Preacher, he not only felt the need of a religion, but possessed one which had elements of truth, of purity, and even of moral grandeur. He ever writes as if all serious thinking about human life must take God for one of its axioms. He also profoundly believes in God as the power manifested in the world, the author of the constitution and course of nature, the being upon whom all creatures depend for their existence and preservation, and for the diverse conditions and appointments of their lot: His attitude toward God is marked by the deepest reverence. In presence of the supreme reality he feels that speech is presumption. 'God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.'<sup>1</sup> He despises the superstition of the readers of dreams; he warns against the offering of the sacrifices of fools, and he feels that the true service of God is the fear of the Lord which

constrains man to depart from evil. He has been charged with scepticism, but his scepticism chiefly meant that he did not profess to know the Almighty as fully as others professed to know Him; and especially that he did not pretend to understand the doings of God in the detailed arrangements of this strange and confused world. He could not undertake to justify the ways of God to man. But he was clear that God and duty are the assured realities on which we must build our lives, and that we may make a confident venture of faith that 'it shall be well with them that fear God, but it shall not be well with the wicked.'<sup>2</sup> And so his book ends with words which I feel sure are no interpolation, but the instinctive reiteration of the fundamental article of the creed of his fathers—'Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'<sup>3</sup>

We who live after Christ have a richer, a deeper, a more comforting, a better-grounded creed. From the depths of the being of the Almighty and All-wise God, the region where the Preacher bowed in awe before the inscrutable, there has shined upon us the revelation of a God of love in the face of Jesus Christ. While he thought of man as doing his best out of his own resources to meet the requirements of God, and standing or falling by his independent performance, we believe in a God who draws near to us in grace, who has compassion on our weakness, who dwells in us by the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and who Himself enables us, if we trust His mercy and His power, to attain to what He would have us to be, and to do according to the law and pattern of Christ. We have also a more sure word of prophecy illuminating the world that lies behind the veil. But there are still lessons for many of us in the message of this sage of the twilight. He is an early and a very interesting witness to the truth, which many in our time need to learn anew, that art and science and letters are no substitute for religion. Moreover, those of us who are rooted in the Christian faith may also learn of him that God is greater than our widest and deepest thoughts; that though He has made known to us what it chiefly concerns us to know, there remain mysteries and enigmas enough in the

<sup>1</sup> 5<sup>2</sup>.<sup>2</sup> 8<sup>12</sup>. 13.<sup>3</sup> 12<sup>13</sup>. 14.

providential order; and that it is our duty, even when we cannot understand, to bow in humility and trust before the unsearchable will. And not least may we learn from the book and its context that if we are faithful to the light which we have

it will shine to more and more; and that he who shows the fear of God in a life consecrated to the highest that he knows may hope in the end to find deliverance from all his bewilderment of mind and travail of soul.

## Literature.

### RELIGION AND ART.

IN a handsome and outstanding volume Mr. Fisher Unwin has published an English translation of the *Religione e arte figurata* of Alessandro Della Seta, Professor of Archæology in the University of Genoa. The translation, a good one, is made by Marion C. Harrison. The English title is *Religion and Art: A Study in the Evolution of Sculpture, Painting and Architecture* (21s. net).

Professor Della Seta, as Mrs. Arthur Strong tells us in the valuable Introduction which she has contributed to the English edition, 'traces the rise of art from magical and ritual observances, and leads us on to behold its liberation from the yoke of magic, first by the influence of the Greek spirit, and later by the still more potent influence of Christianity.' And she gives it as her opinion that 'never, since the application of scientific methods to the criticism of art, have conclusions, whether as to the origins or the ultimate fate of art, been applied within so wide an area of phenomena.' The book begins with the epoch of the mammoth and the reindeer, and traverses the vast spaces that lead from the magical carvings and paintings of Bruniquel or Altamira to the Renaissance and modern times.

'Della Seta incisively sets forth and analyses the differences between the art of Egypt, of Babylon and of Assyria, and of the Kreto-Myceneans, and shows why each race in turn—even the rich Minoan civilization that contained in germ so much that went to make the greatness of Greek art—failed to throw off the tyranny of magic. Among the Eastern peoples a tendency to symbolism was to a certain extent the obstacle to development, since symbolism checks the growth of the mythopœic spirit—of that power to reflect about the relations and the acts of divine beings

which was to prove the liberator of art. The Jews alone stood from the first outside the magic circle, but a Judaic figured art was made impossible by an over-exalted monotheism which raised the divinity too far above the sphere of man and resulted in a horror of images. Thus the incomparable historical material of the Bible found no expression in art before the advent of Christianity. But Christianity, by bringing the divinity down to earth and making this divinity a subject for art, enabled monotheism to take the step which the Hebraic conception of religion had made impossible.'

The volume is eminently readable. In this respect Italian philosophical and scientific writers are a welcome relief from much reading in German, and often rival the best French expositors. But Professor Della Seta surpasses the philosopher and scientist in clearness and vigour, just as he possesses a more manageable material to work with. The volume is not only readable, it is fascinating. For to the style is added the zest of originality of view and a young man's intense earnestness of propagandism.

Among matters to which Mrs. Strong draws attention may be named as of particular interest these two: First, Della Seta's insistence on the originality of the earliest Christian art. Even for the paintings in the Catacombs—which have been treated with such contempt by students both of pagan and of later mediæval art—he claims and vindicates a vivid originality. The poverty of form, so striking to those who came to Christian art from the crowded figures of the reliefs of the later Roman Empire, is, Della Seta maintains, not necessarily a proof of artistic incapacity, but the result of conscious rejection of everything superfluous or unnecessary to ideas which seek expression in a direct and simple symbolism.

The other matter to which attention should be