

THE CONCEPT OF NATURE AND SUPERNATURE

IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN OMAN.

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a thesis by G.P. GRANT.

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(see Bibliography Appendix 'B').

V. and A..... "Vision and Authority".

F. and F..... "The Problem of Faith and Freedom in the
Last Two Centuries".

C.D.O..... "The Church and the Divine Order".

W. and Its I..... "The War and Its Issues".

G. and P..... "Grace and Personality".

P. of the W..... "The Paradox of the World".

N. and S..... "The Natural and the Supernatural".

O. of the M..... "The Office of the Ministry".

H.R..... "Honest Religion".

ABSTRACT OF THESIS.

"THE CONCEPT OF NATURE AND SUPERNATURE IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN OMAN".

"Nature and Supernature" is the fundamental concept of John Oman's philosophy of religion. That philosophy, found in his book "The Natural and the Supernatural" should be read within the context of his "theologia crucis", which is given in his earlier theological writings. Oman's faith is that Our Lord on the Cross reveals the Father as Love, Who demands from men that they take up their crosses in forgiveness. The Father's Love and man's freedom to partake of it are the essence of Christianity. All else is but relative and changing.

In so embarking on a philosophy of religion that is regulated by faith, Oman is attempting to reconcile the challenge of the Gospel with its rationality. His certainty that its truth is not dependent on the approval of metaphysicians is combined with his consciousness that it is his duty to explain to the world in reasonable terms the character of that Gospel. For there to be purpose in discussing his philosophy of religion, tentative agreement must be given to the possibility of such an undertaking against those who believe in the corruption of all "unredeemed" judgment, and against those who believe that the philosophy of religion should be based not on faith but on "natural evidence". In saying this it may be regretted that Oman does not make more explicit in "The Natural and the Supernatural" its dependence upon faith. Consequently it would not be difficult to overemphasise his debt to and connections with the traditions of European secular rationalism.

As a preliminary to the account of Oman's philosophy of religion, the bare course of his life and writings between 1860-1939

is described in relation to his involvement in the traditions of modern Europe. Without suggesting determinism about a man of Oman's originality, he may be seen more clearly in the light of the contrast between the Biblical faith of his Orkney childhood and the secular philosophy current in his day. Though he scorns the scholarly reference, his immense reading in the field of post-Kantian liberal theology may be seen in his debts to Lotze's realism, Schleiermacher's theology of feeling and Ritschl's Christocentric scorn of metaphysics. Oman's reaction against Hegelian speculation may be the better understood when it is remembered that he was a practising minister till his forty-seventh year. The change in his writings from the simple Gospel, addressed to those within the Church, to the philosophy of religion addressed to the world may be partly explained by his experience in Cambridge, where he spent the last third of his life. In this atmosphere he saw how deep was the necessity for a metaphysics which would show to men dominated by their visions of the world as "things" or "life" or even "spirit" how the most real and important world was that of "persons". By his response to the European catastrophe of 1914 the practical substance of his ethics is clarified.

Oman's metaphysics is approached by describing his account of how the supernatural makes its appearance to consciousness. The fitness of this approach may be justified by Oman's belief that speculation must always necessarily proceed from an already held hierarchy of values. He does not believe it possible to assume only the self-evident. He lays down that men know the supernatural environment as meaning and that that meaning depends on the unique character of the feeling it evokes, which he calls "the sense of the holy"; and on the absolute value men find in it, which he calls "the judgment of the sacred". The immediate conviction of a special kind of objective reality inseparable from this valuation he calls "the supernatural". Oman does not analyse or describe the far reaching assumptions underlying these seemingly simple terms

which he uses in his own particular way. The advantage of this failure to analyse his terms is that he takes the reader straight into his brilliant use of them; the disadvantage is the resultant ambiguity in his groundwork, some of which is later clarified but much of which is not.

With these terms Oman embarks on a profound discussion of the relation of religious dependence to moral independence, or what he calls in his theology the problem of grace and personality. The sense of the holy, given with and through our contemplation of the natural, is the pioneer in presenting men with absolute values. Only, however, as the will responds to those insights by freely employing them in the natural, does our sense of the holy change from awe to reverence. He describes the interdependence of the two relations to the supernatural, action and contemplation. Rightness in action is described as "faithfulness", true contemplation as "sincerity of feeling". After disposing of the naturalist and Hegelian accounts of the moral judgment, the relation of the holy to the sacred is illuminated by a comparison with the Kantian account of the moral judgment. Kant's brilliant understanding of the categorical quality of ideal values does not save his ethics from legalism, consequent on his account of personality simply as an autonomy of volition and not also an autonomy of insight. Its weakness as criticism lies in its obscurity about the relation of ideal to natural values, as compared with the clarity of Kant's imperious duty.

Oman's account of the appearance of the natural to consciousness centres on his description of "awareness" and "apprehension". Through these faculties we are given nature as it is in itself, as compared with "comprehension" and "explanation" which allow us to deal with nature for our own purposes. The rationalist epistemologies of nature fail to do justice to those elements of knowing in which children and poets excel. By sensitiveness of awareness we are given the natural in its dependence upon the holy; in sincerity of apprehension there flash

up those ideal values by which we may deal with the natural. Nature is then the symbolism through which God speaks to us and by which we reply to Him. Its very mystery however must tell us that it is more than that. It is regretted that Oman's radically personalist conception of nature is not made sufficiently explicit in "The Natural and the Supernatural", but must be implied from his other work and from the writings of his pupil Professor H.H. Farmer.

Nature and supernature, so related and distinguished, cannot be conceived apart from one another. Equally they can only be conceived in relation to Oman's concept of man. With these three terms and their relationship Oman passes beyond monism and dualism to give his account of "prophetic monotheism". Monism, according to Oman, whether religious or philosophical, is motivated by the attempt to avoid the conflicts of the world by sinking back into the undifferentiated sense of the holy. Thus the natural and persons are submerged in the supernatural. No proper place is allowed for the suffering and striving of the world. Such theology must either disregard it or despair about it. On the other hand, dualist solutions, whether explicitly as in Persia or incipiently in the philosophy of Kant, conceive personality as the performance of atomic acts of freedom detached from man's insight into the supernatural and his consciousness of the natural. So the supernatural is conceived as a Judge meting out rewards or punishments. Morality becomes a legalism without ~~striving~~ trust, not the glorious liberty of the children of God. In the interplay of theory and practice the world becomes less and less conceived as all God's.

The prophets, particularly Hosea, first strove to overcome that dualism. They found that revelation through the natural and reconciliation to the natural were reciprocal. Thus they came more and more to understand that forgiveness in which the world

could all be dealt with as the Father's. Our Lord's Life and Death finally reveals that prophetic monotheism in all its fullness. Our Lord's forgiveness of those who tortured and degraded Him reveals that God's Nature cannot be less glorious than that vision. Men can in that light find joy in the world by the knowledge that all can be redeemed. Dualism remains for all men a standing problem but it need never be accepted as a solution. The conclusion of Oman's metaphysic is just the simple Gospel of the Father's Love and His children's freedom.

To understand what Oman means by the supernatural the attempt must be made to fathom what he makes of the concept "history". This question cannot be answered in terms of his classification of religions in "The Natural and the Supernatural", for that is in essence the arrangement of historical phenomena in the light of an already held metaphysics, not a theology of history. It can be answered only in terms of the Christology found elsewhere. Oman will not define the Being of Christ beyond St. Paul's phrase: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself". Simply because of the Passion, to which the Resurrection adds nothing essential, men can know the Mind of God and, therefore, trust that all history is to good purpose and will have a final glorious consummation. But no particular doctrinal statements about these matters is of the essence of the Gospel. Such a quietist trust is not ahistoric in any Greek sense, but it cannot affirm any scheme of history. Oman is here unclear about the relation between the consummation on the Cross and the doctrine of progress, acceptance of which seems often to be implied in his writings.

A practical theologian can fairly be judged by his theology of politics. Though Oman writes on no subject more voluminously than on the Church, his politics are not concrete. In his doctrine of the Church there is a practical contradiction between his assertion that the Church should be the fellowship of

the saints, leaving all issues of power with God, and the belief that the religious life should be just the ordinary life well lived. This is partly determined by his interpretation of the relation between the thought of the Reformers and the men of the Renaissance and Aufklärung. Oman seems to underestimate the value and necessity of tradition. What he means by denial and possession of the natural is also complicated by his contradictory statements about the possibility of creative politics for the Christian. In 1914 his liberalism triumphed over his quietism. Despite his criticism of Kant's failure to take account of the varieties of function, Oman gives no principles under which men can attempt to reconcile their vocations with the demands of the Kingdom of God, except his "logique du coeur". Particularly in a practical theologian who is not greatly concerned with speculative cosmology, a failure of analysis at this point is to be regretted.

Oman's philosophy of religion is not, in the late Professor Laird's phrase, open to audit by reason alone. Men do not know the Truth only by clearheadedness but also by sincerity of feeling and faithfulness in action. It is possible to say of Oman: here are failures of analysis, here exasperating silences, here opaqueness of style and a simple vocabulary covering obscurities. One must either accept or reject his central faith. From that acceptance or rejection one must consider the possibility of such a Christian philosophy of religion, dependent on faith yet appealing to the image of God in all men. Must a challenging and a rational Gospel be ever in complete contradiction? As that question is answered in the negative, Oman's philosophy of religion is judged a remarkable attempt to make visible the world of persons in Christian terms and in relation to other worlds. It meets the cry of men bewildered by their period. With a sensitivity that is strong and an individuality concerned with

essentials, he holds consistently together his faith in the Majesty of God's Love and in the dignity of man to know that Love in autonomy of action and contemplation.

CHAPTER I.

John Oman employs the concept "nature and supernature" as the main instrument by which to expound his philosophy of religion, as found in "The Natural and the Supernatural", published in 1951.¹ In analysing that concept it must be laid down from the start that Oman's philosophy of religion cannot be understood except within the context of his faith. The Augustinian and Anselmian formula of "Believe so that you may know" Oman accepted not as a justification of obscurantism or as a denial of the value of intellectual activity, but as a realisation that for the Christian there is a necessary subservience of that activity to Christian experience.

Before proceeding therefore to the analysis of Oman's concept of "nature and supernature", something must be said about the content of his faith and how it regulated his philosophy of religion. Oman's faith centres on his vision of the Cross. In taking upon Himself the agony of Gethsemane and Golgotha and turning those events into the service of His Father's Will, Our Lord Jesus Christ reveals to us that even the bitterest of life's appointments are from the Father. Thus can men find the only monotheism that does not shirk the problem of theodicy. Because of Golgotha, men are not presented with the alternative of a dualist despair or a monist failure of compassionate imagination. The sublimity of Our Lord forgiving those who tortured and degraded Him, does not allow Oman, if he is to hope at all, to believe that God's Nature could be

(1) See Bibliography, Appendix B.

less glorious than that. Belief that forgiveness is the crown of all man's activity determines all that Oman wrote. In that vision, God is revealed as an infinity of care for each person, as He Who seeks us while we are yet sinners. The simple gospel of the Cross which is Oman's theology thus reconciles hope with demand, for in revealing to men the Father, Our Lord at the same time challenges men to take up their own crosses, to follow Him in that mystery of forgiveness of which there is no end. Oman is a practical theologian who calls upon men to recognise the supremacy of charity, and declares to those of weaker heart that as they choose to be reconciled the riches of God's grace will be revealed to them. The essence of the Christian faith is simply this forgiveness. All else - doctrine, Church order and even sacraments - are not of the essence.

That Oman's 'theologia crucis' regulates his philosophy of religion must be stated unequivocally, because it is not made clear in "The Natural and the Supernatural". Because he does not do so, there is a danger of minimising his reaction against secular rationalism on this issue, and so exposing him unfairly to that criticism of rationalist pretensions that has characterised Christian thought of the Augustinian tradition. From the assumptions as to method in "The Natural and the Supernatural" and the fact that its metaphysical conclusion is just the simple Gospel put in different language, the dependence of that work on faith may be confidently asserted. How unfortunate therefore that the clear statements of that dependence are only to be found elsewhere in his work. The following is one of these affirmations.

" And when we find one whose bearing was wholly right, in utter emancipation of soul from the blindness of worldly prudence and the fetters of evil desire, who with absolute courage of faith walked ever in the

"unseen and the eternal, theology thinks it has found its right beginning, the attitude in which it can hope to have good success, the freedom and emancipation whereby it can interpret to man the higher realm of his possibility, which is essentially a world of freedom in larger truth and more far-reaching aspiration." 1.

Oman therefore in no wise affirms that human 'scientia' must be the critique of all that God can give us to know. To speculate about the philosophy of religion must never be even to hint that the authenticity of the Gospel is at the mercy of the metaphysicians. The venturing saint knows more than another of God's grace. Nor is it possible in writing a philosophy of religion to push aside the visions with which the writer has been blessed for the duration of speculation. To seem to do so is dishonest. "The Natural and the Supernatural" is not concerned with "natural theology", if that contentious phrase is defined as cosmological speculation within the present state of logical and scientific studies, claiming agreement from men of clear intellect.

Yet the fact that Oman wrote "The Natural and the Supernatural" is evidence of his belief in the value of rational speculation about religion. He did not rest in the saintly practice of good works. He did not admit the criticism of those who call religion poetic mythology or an emotive call to action, and therefore reduce all philosophies of religion to descriptive psychology. Nor did he admit criticism in the name of the regulating insight that all human judgment is utterly corrupt. Whether for good or ill,

(1) Article "Method in Theology" 1923 from the Expositor.
See Bibliography p.ii.

Oman was not willing to accept secular rationalism nor to dismiss the problems it raised because of impatience with its dogmatic intellectualism and moral caution.

At this stage it is not appropriate to justify by argument Oman's belief that the philosophy of religion was a 'useful' undertaking, either as against its critics from without or within what may be loosely called the Christian tradition. What are judged his general reasons for embarking on a philosophy of religion will be described briefly before proceeding to the description of that philosophy itself.

Reason, though not the source of revelation, must be constantly testing its claims. Though not emphasised in "The Natural and the Supernatural", in his other writings Oman sees rational speculation chiefly as the means whereby the dignity of persons in their autonomy of action and contemplation may be guarded from the encroachments of religious tradition, as incorporated in legalist organisations. In this connection it may be remarked that Oman seems to assume, almost unconsciously, that the dominant tradition of any society will take the form of a religious legalism, rather than a secular rationalism or pagan irrationalism. Also his liberalism may justly be seen in his emphasis on the imperfections of any given tradition when compared with human reason's Idea of the Good, rather than on the fact that tradition sustains and enriches men, being nobler and more varied than any single person's poor partaking of it.

In "The Natural and the Supernatural" he is more concerned with chasing the phantoms of modern psychologisms and naturalisms and monisms than with religious tradition. Whatever else that work may be it is masterly in chopping off the Hydra heads of the naturalist monster. He uses reason to dispel those myths which in the name of things, or

of life or even of spirit deny reality to the world of persons with its manifold predicates. He shows the assumptions on which these myths are based and illuminates the consequences of believing them in their manifold appearances. He considers it in the interest both of Christians and non-Christians to exorcise these demons, which particularly in an age of confused tradition bewilder the intellects and stultify the wills of good men.

Beyond this negative task, Oman affirms the value of expounding the Gospel in terms that relate it to men's condition. He does not believe that "relevance" to the problems raised by philosophy, science and all the varied activities of an advanced civilisation leads necessarily to Pelagianism or a surrender to the Zeitgeist. Because in the last centuries men absorbed in these activities had shown contempt for the Gospel, is no reason to meet contempt with contempt. To deny the capacity for revelation in all men, to believe that the "imago Dei" is destroyed in men not of the faith, are assertions impossible to Oman, because they make unanswerable the problem of theodicy. To meet that capacity for revelation it is necessary for certain Christians to understand in charity the traditions of modern scepticism and phenomenism, and out of that understanding to expound an epistemology and metaphysic in which the range and subtlety of human experience is related in some systematic manner to the glory of the Cross. To assert that no useful purpose is served by such an attempt is to Oman to weaken the content of that phrase which rings through his theology - "The redeemed who are the redeeming". Though Oman is in revolt against systems of rational philosophy in the Hegelian sense, because of his profound intuition of the involvement of the intellectual in the finitude of ordinary men, he will not allow that the distinctive challenge of the Gospel is lost by an appeal

from reason to reason. He defines religion as a practical relation to environment, and because men deal with environment by the understanding they have need of theologies.

This hope of a Christian approach to epistemology and metaphysics is important to Oman because he judges that much of the language of Christian apologetics has become so debased in the eyes of the secularist, and so accepted by the believer, as to prevent either from examining it. He therefore attempts to use, whether successfully or not, a new language to illuminate these problems.

The alternative for Oman is not between inferential arguments for the existence of God and the unargued preaching of saving faith. To describe and to discuss his alternative is the purpose of this thesis. For that to be profitable, some provisional assent must be given to the possibility of that alternative.

- II.-

Before beginning the direct discussion of Oman's concept of "nature and supernature", some attempt must be made to follow the course of his life by describing briefly the full body of his writings, and to place his thought against the background of the European tradition he inherited. Under any circumstances an historical account may degenerate into an easy historicism which turns the thinker under discussion into a slave to his inheritance. In Oman's case such a danger must be avoided at all costs. For there is in him that prophetic autonomy which transcends inheritance and moulds it by judging it. Also the extent of Oman's scholarship makes the historical appraisal of his traditions difficult. Indeed any sophisticated European living as did Oman between 1860-1939 was heir to a tradition of remarkable complexity. In Oman's case long years of

scholarship had made many areas of this field his own. The simple language and lack of scholarly reference in "The Natural and the Supernatural", published when he was seventy-one, cannot prevent the reader from recognising the intensive and selected learning that lies behind each sentence. ¹. Though the problem is too subtle for any accurate charting, some attempt at a historical introduction must be made.

John Wood Oman was born and bred in the Orkney Islands - that is at the very periphery of European society. Those islands remained geographically and spiritually far from the new industrial world which between 1860-1939 spread its mass-production and community-less cities and scientific wars over most of western Europe. The rhythm of the agricultural and fishing economy of the Orkneys was not much troubled by the new techniques. The Christian Church, particularly in its Presbyterian form, still held its sway. Men there were little touched by that drift away from Christianity, which had started in Europe as a revolt of the intellectuals but which in the mass industrial world became among the many little more than indifference. The depressing fact that in the eyes of many decent men Christianity became identified with the interests of the dominant economic class was not of importance in the Orkneys.

Oman's writings affirm how important a mediator of God was his childhood. Intimacy with his natural surroundings gave him, from his earliest days, a knowledge and love of nature which was vigorous and unsentimental. His life in a Christian farming community gave him direct knowledge of

(1) I once asked a close friend of Oman's whether Oman had read any of the work of a school of modern German philosophers, (a question for which there was no direct answer in his writings) the reply was "I do not know for certain, but have no doubt he did read them. He read everything."

the religious life of ordinary people, and the realisation that any Christian theology, must, above all else, be rooted in the possibility of salvation for all in the plain circumstances in which God has placed them. Despite his life as a scholar he never forgot this Presbyterian egalitarianism. ¹. The most evident guide of his growing mind was the Bible, read continually as the living prophetic Word of God. Such a practice was the glory of the Presbyterian tradition, both in Church and home. ². Both his writings and the testimony of his friends tell of Oman's intimate knowledge of the Bible, woven into the fabric of all his experience.

Without sentimentalising, one may marvel at Oman's good fortune in that when he went forth into a world uneasy with all manner of disturbance and impregnated with false and soft doctrine, he carried with him a secure faith in God, given to him through the sea and the fields, his family and his community, his Church and his Bible. Though flexible enough to allow him to learn, this faith provided him with a steadfast citadel of prophetic theism, from which to interpret his experience. Unlike so many men and women of the twentieth century, he did not have to find his way back

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- (1) Oman's sense of the religious genius of men in their every day callings is seen in his dedication to his Kerr Lectures in 1906, ("The Problem of Faith and Freedom in the Last Two Centuries" see bibliography p.i.) "To the memory of my father, a scholar only of life and action, but my best teacher." Like so many Presbyterians in Scotland in the nineteenth century, Oman carried this sense of egalitarianism over into the realm of secular politics, where it may not be so necessarily valid as in Christianity. See following in Chapter 6.
 - (2) Oman's family did not belong to the Church of Scotland, but to the United Presbyterian Church. This body had broken from the main part of the Church in the eighteenth century, chiefly in protest against any close connection between Church and state. This tradition of ecclesiastical independence and of individualism certainly helped to shape Oman's theology. The broad lines of doctrine in his Church were still however that Knoxian Calvinism which characterised all Scottish Presbyterianism.

to God. This Biblical inheritance was of especial importance in an age when much philosophy was indifferent to the Hebraic origins of the European tradition, and where even a Christian such as Illingworth could write as an Hegelian, with the Biblical revelation almost, as it were, tagged on at the end. Oman was interested in the philosophic speculations of the classical and modern worlds, but for him they were regulated by and not regulative of the personalist categories he found in the Scriptures.¹

Any disadvantage such a childhood may have had for a theologian of that period, resulted perhaps from that very security. For the pain that men must undergo Oman had indeed an exquisite sympathy which runs like a river through his writings, never letting him depart far from the problem of theodicy. But at the same time one doubts whether he ever comprehended the full agony of the faithless. Compared with St. Augustine for instance, whose period is not unlike Oman's in its intellectual and moral chaos, there is little in Oman of the bewilderment of having partaken of that very decadence and the joy of being released from it. This made it difficult for him to sympathise with certain forms of the Christian consciousness that increasingly characterise the twentieth century. It may also be in part responsible for his greater admiration of the values of civilisation as compared with St. Augustine. Oman ever maintained the islander's distrust of the grandeurs of civilisation, but that is a different reaction from the revolt of an Augustine born and bred within the privileges of that civilisation.

The strength of Oman's faith may be seen in the fact

(1) It is interesting to compare Oman's childhood with, for instance, the training of his contemporary A.N. Whitehead.

that at seventeen he decided to start his training as a minister of his family's Church. He took his Art's course at the University of Edinburgh and proceeded to the training college of his Church in that city. ¹. Here, for the first time, he met directly and with growing understanding the varying forms of secular and semi-secular rationalism. He was being taught philosophy in the country of David Hume. His professor was Pringle-Pattison who, though he criticised the impersonalism of the English Hegelians, was still of that speculative tradition. ². Presbyterianism was ever a firm believer in education and therefore produced men of curiosity to whom cosmological speculation was a necessity. Oman was touched by the German equivalent of these problems when in 1883 he went to Erlangen and in 1885 to Heidelberg. The influence of German liberal theology, philosophical idealism and critical history was to remain with him always.

Oman would never succumb to the judgment that his native practical Protestantism and the best in the traditions of European rationalism were irreconcilable. In the course of the following chapters it is hoped to make somewhat clearer which aspects of those diverse traditions he made his own. Here only two points will be made about his reaction to the larger world into which he moved.

First, Oman disliked the attitude which many Christians

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- (1) The chief source for the external events of Oman's life are the memoirs of him by George Alexander, M.A., and Professor H.H. Farmer, D.D., which are at the front of Oman's posthumous "Honest Religion", see bibliography p.ii. See also "John Wood Oman" by F.R. Tennant, Vol.XXV. Proceedings of the British Academy, London.
 - (2) See Oman's account of Pringle-Pattison in his review of the latter's "The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy". The Journal of Theological Studies Vol.XIX pp.278-279. See bibliography p.v.

in authority took to secular philosophy, scholarship and science in the nineteenth century. He had no sympathy for the actions of a man such as Bishop Wilberforce. The behaviour of the authorities in the Robertson Smith case appalled him. His was a liberal's faith in the open forum of truth. He had a remarkable trust in the intellects of ordinary men and therefore little sympathy for the claims of ecclesiastical conservatism. Doubt was God's judgment on the Church for hedging itself round with external guarantees.

Secondly and more important, (here must be touched the indefinable core of his personality) Oman's primary concern remained always with men's salvation so that much of the post-Descartian rationalism made little appeal to him. The question "How shall a man live?" could never end in the rationalist insistence on certainty. Oman could not summon up interest in cosmological speculation abstracted from the needs of ordinary men. Bradley and Bosanquet, confident in the privileges of their community and cushioned from the barest level of ethical decision, produced systems that faced the needs only of a contemplative élite. Therefore in the tradition of rationalist speculation it was to Ritschl and through him to Kant that Oman turned. Though their account of the moral judgment was rationalist they still recognised the primacy of conduct. This practical interest of Oman saved him from any deep worry about the results of Biblical criticism. The questions of evidence and interpretation, though a necessary activity, were not to him important as they did not substantially affect the question of how men shall find a gracious God. The Truth for Oman was essentially the Way and the Life.

In 1885 Oman was licensed by his Presbytery, and after short appointments at Makerstoun and Paisley in Scotland, he became a minister at Alnwick in Northumberland, England, remaining there from 1889-1907. In any account of Oman's life it must be remembered that he was a practising minister

till his forty seventh year. During his ministry at Alnwick he filled three theological lecturerships, one in the U.S.A., and produced three books. ¹.

The body of Oman's writing may be divided into two parts representing differing interests. The first of these are his theological writings, belonging mainly to the period up to the end of the first great war. The second are his post-1918 writings, in which his interest is fixed on the questions of Christian philosophy. In making such a distinction it must be remembered that Oman does not accept the division between natural and revealed truth, in its Thomist form, with the consequent tendency to detach secular metaphysics from theology, and that therefore in a Platonist such as Oman the above division of his work is one of emphasis not of principle. Moreover it would be quite inaccurate to say that in his early period he was unaware of the philosophic issues at stake or that in his later period his philosophy was not at the service of the simple Gospel.

This distinction can be most clearly made in considering to whom he was addressing his works. In his earlier books he assumed an audience of Christians who would share with him certain traditions and experiences and who would therefore be ready to follow him in at least certain minimal assumptions. To this audience he concentrated on expounding what he believed to be the essence of the simple Gospel. After 1918, he came to believe more and more that he had a prime responsibility to a non-Christian audience to whom,

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- (1) (i) On Religion:- "Speeches to its Cultured Despisers" by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Translated, with Introduction by John Oman, 1893.
 (ii) "Vision and Authority, or The Throne of St. Peter", 1902.
 (iii) "The Problem of Faith and Freedom in the Last Two Centuries", 1906.

See Bibliography p.i.

therefore, he must attempt to justify his assumptions with as little appeal to common traditions and experience as was possible. Only in that way could he even hope to expound to some non-Christians what the primary truths of Christianity really were and to convince men that only in terms of them could consciousness become more than a blight.

Oman's first work does not in fact fall into either of these classes. It is a translation of an introduction to the second edition of Schleiermacher's "Speeches".¹ He believed there was value in presenting this classic of "Religionsphilosophie" to the educated Anglo-Saxon public. Schleiermacher's chief value lies for Oman in his affirmation that the seat of religion ^{is} ~~was~~ in the immediate experience of the supernatural, and that men know it "by the intercourse of feeling as intuition". Such an affirmation seemed to Oman a healthy reaction against the traditional natural theology, which, when detached from revelation, had in the hands of the deists turned religion into arguments about the existence of God. Oman does not decide in his introduction whether Schleiermacher's system was really a Christian theism of persons or a cosmic pantheism.² In his introduction to Schleiermacher there appears once again that interpretation, so difficult to judge, of the thought of the Renaissance and of the Reformation as being in essence complementary.

Oman's first purely original work was "Vision and Authority or the Throne of St. Peter" which appeared in 1902.³ This work is a discussion of the seat of religious

(1) See Bibliography p.i.

(2) Oman continued to discuss Schleiermacher's thought at regular intervals for the rest of his life. He increasingly stresses his fears of the pantheist undertone in Schleiermacher's work.

(3) See Bibliography p.i.

authority, addressed to men within the Church. Negatively it is mainly concerned with the complete rejection of the Catholic approach to the Church, the sacraments, the priesthood and doctrine. It is a discussion of the failures of religious legalism. The Catholic denial of the glorious liberty of the children of God involves for Oman the denial of the true Fatherhood of God. As God is the Father ~~He~~ will only choose to achieve His mysterious purposes through free and therefore fallible persons. The life and death of Our Lord is a revelation of God's care for each person's autonomy and, therefore, the ungodliness of anything that overrides that autonomy. The influence of Ritschl is seen in the direct appeal back across the centuries to the early Church. Though Oman is chiefly concerned with the refutation of the Catholic error he includes under that error a criticism of the legalist elements in the Reformed Churches. Protestants must be willing to bear the full consequences of the original Lutheran declaration of the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In "Vision and Authority" Oman describes the essence of the Gospel as simply the call upon free men to follow the demand made upon them from the Cross. To that Gospel, which must regulate all else, Oman returns again and again. The difficulty of this work does not lie in what it says, but in what it does not say. The practical implications of the Gospel of Love are not developed. For instance from that work it would be quite impossible to tell how that regulating Gospel should be applied to the relationship of Church and State or whether the Christian had any right to take part in secular politics.

Oman's next work was "The Problem of Faith and Freedom in the Last Two Centuries", delivered as the Kerr Lectures at the Glasgow College of the United Free Church of Scotland

in 1905 and published in the following year.¹ In these lectures Oman returns again to the problem of the Gospel and rationalism. How can the Christian assert his faith in the Father and yet affirm the duty of men to follow the truth wherever it may lead them? In the first lecture he formulates that question in language that he was to use for the rest of his life. "The ultimate problem of the last two centuries I take to be the relation of Faith to Freedom, the problem of how Faith is to be absolute and Freedom absolute, yet both one."² His own vision of this problem is expounded in an analysis of the attitudes of English, French and German thinkers from Luther to Ritschl, with special emphasis on men of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His method is to take some great figure, whom he judged to have emphasised some essential aspect of Christian truth and to compare that thinker with others of his period, who failed in such a recognition. Thus he compares Pascal's Jansenism with the ecclesiasticism of Bossuet and the Jesuits, Butler's axiological theism with the natural theology of the deists, Kant's understanding of the categorical quality of the moral judgment with the optimism of Voltaire and the easy scepticism of Hume, Ritschl's theology of justification and reconciliation with the impersonal process implied in the critical history of the Tübingen scholars. In dealing with Schleiermacher and Newman he departs from this method. Schleiermacher's thought he uses to illustrate the strength and weakness of German Romanticism, in its most religious representative. Newman, whom he denounces more fiercely than anyone else in his writings, he uses to illustrate the weaknesses of

(1) See Bibliography p.i.

(2) F. and F. op.cit. p.2..

Hegelian and Roman Catholic absolutism and the close relation between them. Oman's concentration on the theology of the well known does not, however, prevent him from illustrating his thesis by an intimate knowledge of relatively obscure German and British writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Oman's approval of Pascal, Butler, Kant and Ritschl is evidence of how much he faces the problem as a practical theologian. As he wrote in an article ^{on} about Ritschl about this time - his first of many contributions to "The Journal of Theological Studies":-

" Our response to this revelation (that of Jesus Christ) lies not in accepting a body of doctrine or stirring up in ourselves a special type of feeling, but in fulfilling our calling in meekness and patience in the tasks and burdens of life, and in living in love in the Christian fellowship." 1.

Even Schleiermacher failed to recognise this. In this work Oman's debt to Ritschl is evident as nowhere else. Ritschl had understood that faith and freedom could only be reconciled if revelation was received as each person's assertion of a judgment of worth. Ritschl's denial of the value of the impersonal categories of modern and indeed of classical metaphysics, his refusal to assert any natural ontology that would destroy what Oman called "the individual frontier" and above all else his return to the documents of the early Church, were all profoundly in accord with Oman's temper.

It must be noted, however, that in the last chapter of "Faith and Freedom" Oman hesitantly questions whether Ritschl is not left with a dualism almost as unsatisfactory as he considers the Kantian system. Ritschl's acceptance

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XI p.475. Brackets the present writers.

of Kant's universalist account of the moral judgment left him with a morality pharisaical rather than victorious as in the prophets and Our Lord. Oman raises this question of dualism à propos of the vagueness with which Ritschl wrote about the Resurrection, wherein a division between God's Love and Majesty was almost implied.¹ These questions presage, though not systematically, Oman's attempt in "The Natural and the Supernatural" to seek some defined reconciliation of that overt dualism, by describing the interdependence of religious dependence and moral independence. To do so he had to give up his suspicion of metaphysics, in the stern form he had held it, and assert a natural ontology arrived at by intuition.

"Faith and Freedom" is a work of theological affirmation, rather than philosophical analysis. Oman makes little attempt to relate such religious positions as eighteenth century deism or nineteenth century monism to their background in the secular science and culture of their day. He was clearly interested in Kant's criticism of the possibility of a rational ontology, but does not discuss the question epistemologically or metaphysically. All positions are judged against his own personalist theism, but no attempt is made to justify that theism. In the seventeenth century he is interested in Pascal rather than Spinoza or Leibnitz, the great expositors of an idealism influenced by the new mathematics and physics. He is writing for Christians and the chief targets of

(1) It is interesting that this passage in "Faith and Freedom" (pp.387-392) should be the only passage where Oman questions Ritschl's stand on the Resurrection. ~~In his posthumous work "Honest Religion" he writes in an equally vague way about this subject.~~ For a further discussion see Chapter 5.

his criticism are ecclesiastical legalisms, not secular traditions. Always there is the implicit assumption that the main revolt of Christians will be against the inadequacies of organised religion. There is no sufficient realisation of how much Christian traditions had become meaningless, particularly among the educated classes, in western Europe. This may be explained by the fact that he had not passed the last years among the controlling classes of that society.

Oman's third book is "The Church and the Divine Order" published in 1911. ¹ This work is a fine blend of scholarship and immediacy, arising from Oman's ability to meet a practical question and yet refuse to answer it except on the level of profundity. In his preface he raises the contemporary debate between individualist competition and legal socialism. Neither can be accepted by the Christian as a proper basis for society, because an atomic individualism rooted in pursuit of material gain is opposed by a system that puts its trust in the coercive powers of the state to bring in the Kingdom of God. ² To answer this question the Christian must think clearly about what role the divine society - the Church - should play in the "here and now" of history. Oman presents an analysis of Church history to illustrate the problem by showing how Christians have faced it.

That analysis is strict criticism carried out in the name of the Gospel of love rather than descriptive

(1) See Bibliography p.i.

(2) All this is so much the common coin of the present day that it hardly seems worth saying. 1911 was a different day. It is also worth noting that Oman's liberalism made him stress much more vigorously the corruptions of capitalism than the dangers of statism.

scholarship. He interprets Our Lord and St. Paul's visions of the Church as consisting of those who can live the life of love and leave all issues of power with God. The divine order must be an order of free persons. Any organisation that departs from the rule of love ceases by definition to be the organisation of the Kingdom of God - the fellowship of the Cross. Love is the sole mark of the catholic Church. Its only influence on the world in general and the state in particular must be as an autonomous body which by the force of its example persuades the state to become less of an instrument of coercion. To Oman that principle is valid at all times in history. Indeed in a certain sense for the Christian there is no history, as the ethics of the Cross must always be the standard. This is as true when the Christian lives in a civilisation nominally Christian as when he lives in a society avowedly pagan. The Christian must not, because of this, fall into any stoic despair of the world, but recognise that it can only be redeemed by love.

"The Church and the Divine Order" is the high point of Oman's quietism. Indeed his position would lead one at times to believe that he is advocating a Tertullian isolationism. One might well expect the phrase "quid Athenae Hierosolymis?".¹ The difficulty in this work is, however, the same as in "Vision and Authority". A prophetic ideal of the Church is proclaimed, yet little is said about how that ideal is to be worked out in the

(1) In an article published in this period, Oman asserts that Tolstoi working on the land after his conversion is nearer the Christian ideal than the good willed Christian socialist trying to reform the abuses of civilisation by state action. See "Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels" Article by Oman on "Individualism" Vol. 1. p.818. See Bibliography p.ii. Also, I was told by Professor H.H. Farmer that in 1914 many of Oman's pupils expected him to declare himself a pacifist. In the light of the "The Church and the Divine Order" such an expectation is not to be wondered at.

imperfections of the world.

Two events had a profound effect on the course of Oman's thought in the last half of his life. The first was his move to Westminster College, Cambridge, in 1907, and the increasing influence of that university. The second was the Great War of 1914-1918. As the second of these can be more directly traced in his thought, it will be discussed first.

To a man of Oman's sensitivity the storm of the first scientific war must have been appalling. Oman had never been one of those who put their faith in civilisation. Yet to see the sores of so great a civilisation laid bare must have been an awful agony for one who had inherited much from the optimism of Victorian days. A man who owed such a profound debt to German thought must have suffered from his belief that the prime responsibility for the conflict lay with that country. To repeat, many had expected him to be a pacifist. Oman was not a man to shirk responsibility, so in March 1915 in "The War and Its Issues" he stated unequivocally his reasons for believing that the British Christian should support the British state in its conduct of the war. ¹.

What is remarkable in the effect of the war on Oman is that it brought to the surface his liberalism. This is interesting in view of the fact that the war was in no small measure responsible for many theological and philosophical criticisms of liberalism. As a prime example the theology of Dr. Barth may be cited. Oman had always a

(1) See Bibliography p.i. See also two articles by Oman in "The Elements of Pain and Conflict in Human Life, considered from a Christian Point of View". 1916. Bibliography p.ii. These articles are less directly on the war.

faith that went far beyond any mere immanentism and therefore when the war came he had to face honestly just what were the claims of civilisation on the Christian. In the case of others, hostile or indifferent to Christianity, the horror of the war made them face the emptiness of immanentism or a mere utilitarian phenomenalism. To say this is in no sense to imply that the war detracted from Oman's moral intensity - indeed to the contrary. What it did was to face him unavoidably and specifically with what he meant by love, and what he thought of the possibility of creative politics. In the moment of decision his quietism did not stand before his honest belief in the Christian's responsibility to the state. The word liberalism is here more accurate than conservatism. In "The War and Its Issues" - particularly in the second part dealing with responsibility for the peace - his optimism in politics puts him far beyond the Christian conservative such as St. Augustine or Luther.

The influence of the war may be seen clearly in "Grace and Personality", published in 1917, which is Oman's fullest exposition of his theology of persons.¹ Though the problems with which the work deals had been long in his mind, its style has a high intensity to be associated with the years of the war. Oman always cared too deeply for the autonomy of his readers to convince by simplification or false rhetoric. That work is, however, theology at its best when clear headedness is combined with a noble personal intuition of the meeting of God and man.

Here Oman attempts to explain how religious independence and moral independence - the two great facts of Christian experience - can be seen not in contradiction but as interdependent. His argument is that to deny man's

(1) See Bibliography p.i.

autonomy is to deny that God is Love, and that to deny our religious dependence is to turn action into a proud and joyless striving and to have some deist conception of God as far less than the Ruler of all history. He analyses his concept of "person" which he defines as an autonomy of volition, of insight and of consciousness. Thus the concept "person" is empty of content apart from its relation to God and His world. This is not to say that Oman's intuition into the essence of God and man are one, but that they cannot arise apart from each other.

Oman's argument in "Grace and Personality" is a simple one. He hammers home the essence of the Gospel as the meeting of the Father and His children. Though he touches on the implications of this central fact upon some of the great problems of Christianity such as revelation and the Church, there is no attempt to expound a systematic Christian theology from this insight. Neither is there any attempt to relate his personalist intuition to the problems of metaphysics and epistemology. For instance throughout the work there are repeated criticisms of Pelagian ethical systems, in which without doubt Oman has Kant in mind, yet he never brings this out into the open by discussing the Kantian system. "Grace and Personality" is the summation of all that Oman had written previously. It is the maturest and clearest of those practical theological statements in which he drives home vigorously what he considers the core of the Christian faith.

In this connection mention must be made of the book of sermons, "The Paradox of the World", which was published in 1921.¹ In sermons IX, X, XVIII and XIX the stature of Oman as a great man of God can be seen as nowhere else

(1) See Bibliography p.i.

in his work. Oman uses little of that rhetorical piety that so easily mars sermons. The way of the Cross is presented in all its hardness and actuality, yet as a great hymn of joy because men are called to so great a destiny. These sermons are the "theologia crucis" in all its sensitivity and strength. If out of all that Oman wrote in any field, one piece alone could be preserved, the present writer would choose Oman's account of St. Paul in his sermon "Strength Through Weakness".¹

The event responsible for turning Oman's attention from practical theology to the philosophy of religion was his move to Cambridge and his life there from 1907 till his death in 1939. He was first Professor of Theology at Westminster College. In 1922 he was appointed Principal, an office he held until his retirement in 1935. Oman's first obligation at Cambridge was to men training for the Presbyterian ministry and to colleagues who were ministers of that Church. He was not however a man to shut himself off from the world around him. As a member of Queens College, later as an honorary fellow of Jesus College and as a university lecturer in the philosophy of religion, he was thrown in contact with the general university community. Here he was among the intellectual and ruling 'elite of England, and that 'elite were in many ways more estranged from Christian thought and experience than any other class in the British Isles. For a wise and simple Presbyterian, it must have been parallel to an early Palestinian Christian moving to Athens. An outsider may be allowed to judge that educated nineteenth century England was one of those rare and finely flowering civilisations that history so seldom produces. Particularly before 1914, in the midst of its Edwardian success, such a

(1) P. of the W. op.cit. pp.247-261.

civilisation could scarcely doubt that it was an end in itself. Men who judged it by Jerusalem could hardly fail to be confident that the claims of Jerusalem were reconcilable to such a world of learning and beauty.

Two influences in that university may be singled out. Hellenism, with its tradition of rational speculation and the pursuit of beauty, permeated Cambridge in ways both varied and profound.¹ The prestige of natural science was immense at Cambridge, for the university was a centre of scientific renown. Thomson, Rutherford and Eddington were making their discoveries during Oman's years there. Russell and Whitehead were producing the groundwork for a revolution in logical studies. The philosophies of Whitehead, Russell and Moore, whatever differing merits they may have, would be difficult to label as Christian. They had certainly rejected or ignored Saint Augustine's criticism of the pretensions of rationalist philosophy. Even Eddington who called himself Christian wrote philosophy with the categories of scientific idealism, and in no sense implied that those categories should be regulated by Biblical conceptions. Even several years after the first war the extent to which science and secularism were the sources of Cambridge philosophy is indicated by the remark of one of its leading thinkers in a work on ethics:-

"Still people who feel very strongly about any subject are liable to overestimate its importance in the scheme of things. A healthy appetite for righteousness kept in due control by good manners

(1) E.M. Forster's exquisite biography "Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson" (Arnold & Co., London 1934) gives a fine description of how much the ideals of the classical world were standards in Cambridge education. Christianity is there treated as the barbarian and superstitious idea that threatens the order and tolerance of the world of the civilised contemplative.

"is an excellent thing; but to 'hunger and thirst' after it is often merely a symptom of spiritual diabetes. " 1.

Even in these English theologies which attempted to buttress the faith by their Platonic philosophies, the categories used must have seemed to Oman far from the radical personalism of the Bible. Von Hügel and Father Tyrrell, Cook Wilson and C.C.J. Webb, William Temple and Edwyn Bevan use the categories of science and culture in a way that clearly implies little thought of dilemma between the interests of their civilisation and the vigour of the Christian religion.

The traditions of modern secular rationalism did not come to Oman always in ~~such~~ educated and pleasing forms. Though the naturalism of Huxley and Spencer had always been challenged in the scientific fraternity they continued to exert a powerful influence, and it often became the dogmatic system within which new "sciences" such as psychology, anthropology and comparative religion were carried on in the Anglo-Saxon world. It hardly needs saying that a work such as "The Golden Bough", though supposedly an objective account of phenomena, must have lead to certain metaphysical conclusions in the minds of young men who read it. It is strange that after Kant's account of the assumptions and limits of natural science, trained men should have remained naturalists. It is even harder to understand how educated men could accept utilitarianism or the ethics of Spencer, after what Kant had written of morality. Men were however confident and busy enough to disregard or discard the past. Had Christianity ever produced as wonderfully tangible results

(1) C.D. Broad "Five Types of Ethical Theory" Kegan Paul, London, 1930 preface p.xxiv.

as had the study of natural science? In training men to be ministers and in meeting senior and junior members of the university, Oman must have come across this naturalism in a wide variety of appearances. ¹. Even the impact of Bergson's early writings only challenged the categories of mechanism in the name of biology, not in the name of persons. As Oman remarked, Lloyd Morgan is only Spinoza turned biologist. ².

The mild mannered liberal naturalisms of the intellect made their post-war appearance as pagan irrationalisms rooted in deeper levels of the personality than the intellect. How much more humane must be considered even the thought of Spencer or of Nietzsche, than the post-war daemonisms of Celline or Rosenberg or D.H. Lawrence. It would be folly to make any comments on the long term result of God's judgment on the Christian Church in Europe's self-destruction in the first world war. Certainly one of the immediate effects of which Oman must have been conscious ~~of~~ in his years at Cambridge was the moral suspicion by young people of an institution which had seemed to stand merely as a passive confederate to national and secular adventurings. This revolt was related to and just as important as the intellectual one, the results of which are much easier to assess.

Before such influences the direction of Oman's thought could not but be modified. It was borne in on him just how closed honest minds had become to understanding the

(1) It is worth noting that Oman never mentions that strenuous naturalism of the will - Marxism. This is probably due to the fact that Marxism made its appeal more to the simple man of action than to the intellectual, addicted to naturalism in its contemplative forms.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.160.

Biblical personalist categories of thought, that had once sustained so many. The breakdown of the Christian tradition in western Europe had not in Oman's mind come from any perverse retreat from God's appointed truth but by that very mystery in man - the Imago Dei - which allows men to stand above any tradition and correct it.¹

According to Oman the old Catholic tradition had been shaken in its authority by men who were honestly endeavouring to surmount its limitations and its contradictions. But once that tradition was shaken men could no longer find in it grounds on which to live. Therefore as in the Platonic age they turned for help to their other creations - their visions of the world as a concourse of atoms or as the flow of life to higher levels of complexity - hoping to find therein some solution to their dilemma. Caught in the grip of these other productions men could no longer believe in the reality of the world of persons. Yet Oman never denied the honesty of that doubt or the reality of that dilemma. For him Christianity did not stand or fall with the Aristotelian natural metaphysics with its compromise between mechanism and teleology.

In a situation where men honestly sought grounds for their actions in worlds where they must of necessity be frustrated, there was to Oman a palpable necessity of making visible just how real the world of persons was and of relating it, as best he could, to the other worlds. From such an undertaking he expected no easy success, nor was

(1) For an example of how far the motives of these reformers of the tradition can be discredited as sheer bad intention, see Professor Maritain's account of Luther, Descartes and Rousseau in "Three Reformers" Sheed and Ward, London 1928.

he so proud as to imagine that there were no nobler and more important ways of making this world visible than by the activity of the intellectual. Nevertheless that he judged to be his function and he stuck to it.

Gone then was the time when the theologian could be most profitably occupied by holding high the ideal of the Church before his fellow Christians. There were too many men who just could not understand what it meant to believe in a personal God who rules all history. What could grace mean to those who conceived man solely as "life" at the point of highest development (so far). What could such language as "the salvation of sinners" mean to those who sought their grounds for action in harmony with "Deus sive Natura". It seemed no proper application of the Pauline determination to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, simply to present to unbelievers the old formulas (themselves inadequate descriptions of the promises of God). All systems were revealed as necessarily limited and contradictory by the judgment of the Cross, but that did not mean there was no purpose in attempting them.

Thus Oman published "The Natural and the Supernatural".¹ That remarkable book is divided into four parts. In the first of these parts, "Scope and Method", Oman defines the field of enquiry, which is religion, as a practical

(1) The length of this book and its concentration of style and content (though not the lucidity of its exposition) are evidence of how long it must have been in preparation. Further evidence is the fact that Oman published much between 1918 and 1931 which is but notes for the magnum opus. See his reviews and articles on the philosophy of religion for "The Journal of Theological Studies" between these dates. See Bibliography. His articles for "The Student Movement" in 1922 show almost an outline of the later work. Bibliography p. iv. Also his article on "The Sphere of Religion" in "Science Religion and Reality" in 1926 defines his main terms. Bibliography p. iii.

relation to environment and therefore concerned with the natural as well as the supernatural.¹ He then lays down a preliminary justification for that distinction. He discusses the appropriate method for dealing with such a problem. Finally he lays down three essential questions raised by experience, in terms of which the main problem will be discussed. Each of the three last parts of the book is concerned with one of those questions. The second part, "Knowing and Knowledge", describes how persons are given objective knowledge of nature and supernature. That is, Oman expounds a realist epistemology in which he attempts to hold the problem of "knowing" and "being" in indissoluble unity. In the third part, "Necessity and Freedom", he uses the concepts that have been so arrived at, to expound a metaphysical position that does not rest in monism and yet transcends any acceptance of a dualist solution. Here he defines by what right men may use personalist categories of the supernatural and so expounds a Christian monotheism, in terms of nature and supernature, which is but a sophisticated account of the simple Gospel.² In the fourth part, "The Evanescent and the Eternal", Oman takes the phenomena of comparative religion and interprets

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- (1) In most of "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman uses capital letters for those two terms. In this thesis that practice will not be followed except in quotations from Oman. Though nature and supernature carry personalist connotations in Oman's use of them, as the present writer will often use the word God, capitals will be reserved for that word and for His attributes.
 - (2) This is not to say that Part II of "The Natural and the Supernatural" is Oman's epistemology and Part III his metaphysics. With a position such as Oman's there can be no clear distinction between these studies.

them in terms of this prophetic monotheism. Thus he ends his work with an account of the faith of Our Lord and the prophets that clarifies and expands what he means by his tension between monism and dualism. 1.

Such a description of "The Natural and the Supernatural" may imply that Oman is mainly concerned with the systematic exposition and analysis of his own position. This is not the case. What he says positively emerges only slowly from the preliminary rejection of a multitude of errors in all fields he touches upon. Once again it is repeated that Oman recognises how deep and detailed is the confusion of his age and therefore sees that no metaphysical position can be asserted until a multitude of phantoms has been chased away. However necessary such an activity and however brilliantly undertaken by Oman, it must be admitted that it adds difficulty to the understanding of his position. Often what he himself asserts is described in a few cryptic sentences after a detailed and lucid criticism of other positions.

As this thesis will be primarily concerned with Oman's own position about the Christian's knowledge of God and His world, and only secondarily and by way of illustration with his refutation of other positions, it may be well at this point to describe what are the main metaphysical systems to which he returns again and again to criticise and so to transcend. These positions may be classified as three different types of modern rationalism: (1) naturalism, (2) spiritual monisms and (3) Kant's incipient dualism between nature and reason. Oman's criticism forms a path leading from his scorn of certain

(1) In this fourth part Oman does not discuss the problems of theological history. Such a discussion must be sought elsewhere.

positions, which seem to him so patently false as only to indicate the extent of modern confusion, up to those positions from which he learnt much, but which he still judges to fall short of the prophetic victory of Christian monotheism. As has been said, Oman is not so greatly concerned in "The Natural and the Supernatural" with his differences from other Christian metaphysics, such as Thomism, as he is elsewhere.

The beginning of Oman's critical journey is taken up with his battle against the naturalisms and psychologisms of his period. To the reader it appears as if the beast dies a thousand deaths, as Oman chops at the heads that spring from Humian atomic sensationalism, Darwinian biology, and modern species of phenomenalism. He attacks them as they appear in a multitude of places, from Leuba's psychology to Sir James Frazer's anthropology. "The Natural and the Supernatural" must be considered a classic condemnation and refutation of these fallacies.

The second level of Oman's criticism is directed against the monist cosmologies of modern idealism. Oman includes under this classification criticism of men of such differing periods and varying terminologies as Spinoza and McTaggart. The archetype of such systems is of course Hegel. He relates all these forms of modern idealism to similar religious attitudes in other periods, because of the similarity of their practical approach to environment. Thus from this point of view Neo-Platonic, Indian and Christian mysticism are closely allied with the rationalist monisms. The greatness of these monisms lies in their recognition of the primacy of spirit, their faith in the universe as wholly God's, and their earnest attempts to show how the contemplative can reach out to partake of the peace that passes all understanding. However because they fail to proceed from an adequate intuition of the essence of personality - with its autonomy

of volition and consequent sinfulness - the result ^{is} ~~was~~ that man becomes ideally a passive mirror of the universe and sin an unexplainable failure to be such a mirror. The ideal in rationalist monism as in mysticism is the aristocratic contemplative who achieves salvation by practices not open to the ordinary man. Their attitude to the world can only be, if consistent, a detachment from it or a submerging in it, not a victory through it and over it. Their God is an abstract rational process which determines the reasons of the intelligent, but not a Loving Father Who seeks all His children, while they are yet sinners.

The third and highest level of Oman's criticism of modern idealism deals with Kant. In "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman devotes more space to the theological implications of Kant than of any other thinker. For instance the last three chapters of Part III of that work, where Oman moves forward to the exposition of his own prophetic monotheism of nature and supernature, are written against a background of a discussion of Kant's metaphysic of conscience. Here for the first time Oman goes carefully behind Ritschl to Kant.

To Oman the most admirable of modern philosophers was necessarily he who had recognised that ultimate reality was fundamentally ethical in quality, and who tried to preserve, whether successfully or not, the autonomy of each person in his idealism. How sympathetic to Oman was Kant's criticism of any attempt to place the seat of religion in the assent of the intellect to propositions. Kant's denial of the possibility of natural theology had not been motivated by the sceptical denial that men can know, but by the noble faith that they ought not to know. It was an assertion that men must walk by faith not by sight. Oman never interprets Kant as in essence a phenomenalist or an Hegelian. Kant

redirected theology by insisting that all its conclusions must be implications from the facts of our consciousness. He insisted on the central importance of what Oman calls the question of ideal values, - that is how individual finite minds in the flux of the world can justifiably assert absolute standards. Above all else Oman interprets Kant's greatness in terms of his attempt to relate the natural and the supernatural by some kind of moral victory. By such an attempt is the monotheism of any philosophy ~~is~~ to be judged.

Because Oman owes so much to Kant's metaphysic of experience in setting the pattern for the exposition of his own, the points wherein he finds that philosopher unsatisfactory clarify what he is trying to expound positively in "The Natural and the Supernatural". His differences from Kant illustrate how far the theology of persons must depart from the traditions of philosophic idealism. Kant's Copernican revolution is in Oman's opinion a magnificent attempt to maintain the autonomy of the person. It springs however from an intuition of personality as the performance of atomic acts of self-determination, detached from the autonomy of insight and self-consciousness, so that it leads to an exaltation of reason and its corresponding acts and to a distrust of the given. Thus is set up a disjunction between reason and nature.¹ Because of this inadequate intuition of the essence of personality Kant can only describe man's

(1) Oman never used the phrase "a disjunction between reason and nature". The writer attempts to interpret in his own language what Oman said about Kant. He is not here suggesting that Oman's system has not as many difficulties as Kant's.

knowledge of nature as a series of appearances, and his actions as attempts to overcome the dread world of chaotic inclinations by negative commandments. Men can never know nature as their Father's house, nor can they act in it trusting it to be the means whereby the Father leads men to Himself. To use Oman's language, Kant can show men how they should deny the natural, but not how they should possess it. Because freedom is depreciated to a mere consent to be determined by the rational, Kant's conception of God can only be an abstract Judge Who metes out the exact equivalence of action and award. It can never attain Our Lord's conception of the Father Whose infinity men know as His care for each one of His children. Kant's account of freedom as self-determination leads to a Pelagianism, which gives no account of the glories of grace nor can show how the highest form of action is always permeated with joy.

Oman attempts in "The Natural and the Supernatural" a description of the meeting of man and God which surmounts these difficulties. In a detailed account and analysis of human experience, he describes how the meaning and purpose of the supernatural is given through the contemplation of the natural and how by their intuitions of that meaning men are able in action to be reconciled to the natural. Thus men need accept no monism that disregards all dealing with the natural or calls that natural by the name of God. Thus as men recognise that reconciliation and revelation are reciprocal, they need never accept dualism as a solution though it must ever remain a problem. When persons can maintain ~~in~~ a continuous relation to all the world through sincerity of feeling and faithfulness in action, morality becomes more than prohibitive rules and the peace of the Gospel more than the mystic's rest. Men know nature as that environment through which is mediated the immediacy of

God's Love. Such a description provides no system for it calls men through mystery to a finer sincerity and through demand to a nobler faithfulness. It provides them with no natural metaphysics whose conclusions must satisfy sound reasoning. Rather it is the interpretation of all experience in the light of the Cross, as a journey of the mind into God.

After "The Natural and the Supernatural", Oman produced one more work of consequence, "Honest Religion".¹ Oman here returns to the exposition of the Gospel of the Cross as the only solution to the problem of faith and freedom. He adds nothing in principle to the position he had put forth in "Grace and Personality". Certain points are however made with the exquisite emphasis of a man who knows this to be a final work. Also certain points in the Gospel of personal theism are clarified by relating them to the language of the philosophy of religion. Finally, certain specific issues of dogma are treated openly for the first time, e.g., the Virgin Birth. Oman faces, though not explicitly, the issues raised by the post-war reaction of Protestants against liberalism.

The chief difficulty in "Honest Religion" is that though it is clearly intended for a wide audience, neither its style nor its content allow it that fate. Even when Oman writes simple sentences there is behind them that

(1) See Bibliography p.ii. "Honest Religion" was published two years after Oman's death. Mention must be made of "Concerning the Ministry" published in 1936. These are his popular lectures to students for the ministry at Westminster describing his ideal of the practical minister. They are full of great charm and shrewdness. Mention must also be made of his two works on the Book of Revelation. See Bibliography p.i. These constitute an attempt at exegesis after attending a seminar of Professor Burkitt's. As will be seen in Chapter 5 of this thesis, Oman returned again and again to the problem of apocalyptic. These works, however, add nothing in principle, to what he says elsewhere. The present writer is quite incompetent to make any comment on this exegesis and merely accepts the testimony of the experts that Oman's work in this field was not highly successful.

depth of reference towards which the reader must strive. The strength of Oman's intellect never allows him to understand how difficult is his writing.

Despite this difficulty, "Honest Religion" remains a moving work of wisdom and imagination. Here at the end of his life stands a man of God. There is no cant or jargon about his theology. His characteristic openness with his readers, his appeal to them as dignified rational men never fails him. All his maturity that does not lack intensity and all his strength that never fails in compassion are here to the full. Regulating all his thought shines his vision of man^{as called} to accept in joy the way of the Cross. The last chapter in which he describes St. Paul still praising the glory of God's Love through all disappointments and agony is the right conclusion to Oman's thought. In 1939 Oman died at Cambridge.

C H A P T E R 2.

The definition of Oman's concept of 'supernature' must be begun by describing how the supernatural makes its appearance to consciousness. This is necessitated by what Oman says about method in the study of religion. It has been regretted in the previous chapter that he does not say clearly in the first part of "The Natural and the Supernatural" that his philosophy is dependent on faith. Nor does he expound the nature of that faith as the simple Gospel of the Cross. This failure of exposition, rather than of content, is indeed the chief criticism that the present writer will at any time make of Oman. However, what he does say of method implies this ~~in~~dependence. From his strictures on method it becomes clear that the exposition of his philosophy of religion must proceed from an account of the appearance to consciousness of the supernatural.

On the question of philosophical method, Oman stands with the Platonic and Kantian tradition of beginning speculation from the assumption of a hierarchy of values as the most real and asserting its right of affirming an adequate ground for the same.¹ Such a procedure, it

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- (1) In the following description of Oman's philosophy of religion the present writer often prefers to describe Oman in language very different from that found in "The Natural and the Supernatural". Oman never would have used such language as the above sentence. This procedure is believed necessary as Oman uses a vocabulary all his own which, though it often brilliantly illuminates by its individuality and its avoidance of jargon, also often obscures by its refusal to use technical terms. There is a small difficulty in saying that Oman stands in the tradition of Christian Platonism. Oman rarely writes of Plato except in criticism. Indeed would any Christian doubt that Platonism cannot stand uncriticised in the light of the prophets and the Cross? Yet Oman's philosophy of religion remains indubitably Platonist. One wishes therefore, that having written "The Natural and the Supernatural", Oman had openly admitted that his Ritschlian contempt for Greek metaphysics could no longer stand and had acknowledged his debt to Plato in somewhat the way St. Augustine did in his "Confessions" (vii, 9).

must be admitted, does assume as solved the most difficult problem in philosophy. Oman would, however, maintain that such a procedure is a necessary consequence of the way in which experience is given to finite beings. To fail to make this explicit, whether in the interests of scepticism or of faith, is to be dishonest and to court muddleheadedness. To proceed with the discussion of Oman, assent to this assumption as to method must be given - at least provisionally.

This is to say that Oman starts from the premise that the determining factor in all our experience is our knowledge of the supernatural, regardless of how we suppose that we have come by that knowledge and indeed even admitting that the attempt to analyse and to describe how we came by it must always be in terms of an imperfect inference. The recognition of this necessary irrationality from which all philosophy proceeds, whether it admit it or not, shows how far Oman departs from the dominant tradition of post-Renaissance philosophy.

As he writes:- "Theories of knowing are not first demonstrated, and then the nature of reality deduced from them: but philosophers, like other people, form their views of the world from their whole intercourse with it and according to their widest knowledge and highest knowing; and, like other people too, they only use their reasoning powers to test, and sometimes merely to maintain, what, on other grounds, they already believe. Hence their religious, or perhaps their non-religious outlook, is primary, and their philosophy, even when sincerely used for its true end, is only a touchstone of it." ¹.

In the study of religion, assumptions cannot be

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.149.

confined to the self-evident (that is where the terms are exhaustively defined through simple known relations). Religion is concerned with the supernatural environment and that environment has to do with "the as yet unrealised". Therefore it is quite vain in speculating about it, to start from the self-evident and proceed by analysis. Rather it is necessary to work from intuitions and anticipations which are quite irreducible to simple known relations.

" Religion is not greatly concerned with interpreting experience as it is. It does not think it can be so interpreted. We must go as far as we can in understanding the world, because the better we interpret things as they are, the better we may see the higher world to be realised through them. Yet philosophy is only, as it were, the grammar of experience. Even if we had an omniscient metaphysic of experience, philosophy would still not be religion because religion would still be asking what God meant to make of it all. Theology, as the study of religion ought, therefore to be of the nature of prophecy." ¹.

Also it must be emphasised that Oman proceeds from sternly realist assumptions about this hierarchy of values.² Knowledge of "environment" can only be given in the immediacy of experience. He asserts time and again that a proof of the ontological reality of any environment cannot be reached by metaphysical inference from other premises.

(1) Article "Method in Theology" op.cit. p.90.

(2) It may again be remarked that Oman would not employ a word such as realist in describing his own position,

" We cannot prove the reality of any environment while omitting the only evidence it ever gives itself, which is the way it environs us. If this counts for so little to us that we need to have its existence proved, it would not seem to matter much whether it exist or not: and in any case, no environment presents further testimonials beyond its own witness. So far is reality from feeling obliged to meet all our objections that it only dimly unveils itself to our most sympathetic and far-reaching insight. This may be highly unphilosophical on the part of environment, yet the fact remains, and even philosophy can only accept it." 1.

Much modern philosophy had accepted as given the ontological status of the natural environment, because of the predominant interest in manipulating the natural, and because of the aftermath of the scholastic enthronement of the Aristotelian epistemology. Thus "natural theology" attempted to argue from the natural as given to the inference that the supernatural existed. However, since the natural is also given to us in intuition, scepticism about its ontological status is on a plane with scepticism about the status of the supernatural.

" The awareness of the reality of the supernatural is not something added from the natural world. The fatal misrepresentation is that, at this point, religion is identified with theology and theology is hung up in the air without any world of its own to work in, so that it is expected to be its own reality instead of being like the

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.52.

"other sciences, the study of a reality already given." 1.

Though Oman never writes of those European philosophers known as phenomenologists, his argument here is almost identical with theirs. Objects and values (aesthetic and moral) appear to consciousness as if independent of consciousness. This appearance must be credited unless there are, from other sources, arguments against it. These arguments, if they are to be admitted, must in turn be able to show how the appearance of independent existence is so constituted. Thus Oman assumes that though a strict proof of the "objective reality" of environment is impossible, it is to be assumed so long as scepticism has no effective arguments against it. By what right does scientific verification assume that it is the criterion by which psychological impression is distinguishable from fantasy? When Oman uses about his work the term empiricist, he interprets the phrase quite differently from the English tradition of Locke.

It is this approach to the problem of ontology that sharply distinguishes Oman's thought from that of his contemporary and friend, F.R. Tennant. As Tennant wrote in a review of "The Natural and the Supernatural":-

" It seems a great leap from the fact that we pass value-judgments, to the alleged fact that such absolute valuations bespeak another reality." 2.

(1) S.R.R. op.cit. p.298. There is no evidence that Oman was greatly taken up with that brand of sceptical analysis associated with the Vienna school of philosophers. In his day it had not yet exerted its influence on the secular philosophy of England. For a discussion of what approach he would have made to the Vienna school see the final chapter of this thesis.

(2) "Mind" A Periodical, London, 1932 see Tennant's review pp.212-218.

Tennant sees that that alleged fact is self-evident to Oman, and as he cannot agree, he demands from Oman proof or at least reasonable grounding. Oman simply repeats his own position when he reviews the second volume of Tennant's "Philosophical Theology". He writes:-

" Is it not the essence of a really philosophical view to show that all enquiry is really only working backwards from the highest we know with all our learning and all our intuition, and that no enquiry, therefore can legitimately call this higher world in question?" 1.

This difference between the two writers is here made because their names are often classed together as "liberal theologians". Such a difference at this crucial point as to the possibilities of reason in theology makes any such coupling of their names inappropriate.

So important is Oman's stand on this matter that it will be illustrated by his criticism of Descartes. In a period of intellectual uncertainty Descartes had been motivated by the admirable intention of accepting no authority but the witness of reality to his own mind. However because of his concentration on mathematical truth he believed truth could be pursued from assumptions reduced not only to the self-evident but to the minimally self-evident. Such a method inevitably excluded the reality of the supernatural environment. By analysis all that could be deduced from such assumptions were mechanical explanations reached by alteration of the parts already given. Indeed to set the whole system going Descartes had found it necessary to make use of the Platonist ontological

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXXIII p.281. See also Oman's review of the first volume of Tennant's work, J.T.S. op.cit. pp.403-407.

argument, to show God as the ground of the existence of nature. That argument however had no valid place in his system. It assumes the reality of the principles of thought. How then can it be used to prove what it assumes? 1.

In comparison with any purely analytical method one further description may be given of what Oman considered his own.

" It is never more than pretence to start anywhere else than in the whole actual present, or with anything less than the conclusion of our experience. All we can do is to use the fullest capacity of mind which has been developed in us by the highest training of its powers, with all its knowledge and all its insight: and from the historical position in which we find ourselves, not to seek to empty ourselves of our convictions, but to be ready to revise them. That we can start from nothing and end with everything is plausible because where we are to arrive is there all the time. Thus it is an illusion that we can work with any merely analytical method. Nothing is explicable about any environment except from the highest experience of it and the fullest knowledge of it we have. The only true empirical inquiry works with all experience possible for us to have, and the other kind of empiricism, which is supposed to start with sensations, starts not from fact but from hypothesis." 2.

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- (1) Oman traces the influence of Cartesianism through the history of European secular philosophy down to Alexander, whose thought he believes to be still in the grip of the rationalist fallacy in a way that Whitehead's is not. See Review of Whitehead's "Religion in the Making" J.T.S. Vol. XXVIII 296-304.
- (2) N. and S. op.cit. p.117.

To many, such methodological assumptions will be indeed a scandal. They do however clearly indicate that the account of Oman's concept of 'supernature' must begin with a synthetic description (which in no sense can be considered necessary) of how the supernatural makes its appearance to consciousness. Those who in the name of rational certainty call Oman a "sixth sense" philosopher can but consider his thoughts mere poetic mythology. If the philosopher's task includes more than analysis then in what follows he is performing a proper function.

- II -

Oman begins his description of how the supernatural appears to men by stating:-

" We know all environment not as impact or physical influx but as meaning: and this meaning depends on (1) the unique character of the feeling it creates; (2) the unique value it has for us; (3) the immediate conviction of a special kind of objective reality which is inseparable from this valuation: and (4) the necessity of thinking it in relation to the rest of experience and the rest of experience in relation to it." ¹. The unique feeling the supernatural evokes Oman calls "the sense of the holy". The unique judgment men make of its value he calls "the judgment of the sacred". The reality immediately apprehended as standing behind the holy and the sacred he calls "the supernatural". The activity of thinking together he calls "theology".

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.58.

In this paragraph many of the main terms and nearly all the essential assumptions of "The Natural and the Supernatural" are laid down. Immediately it must be admitted that Oman makes little attempt at analysing these assumptions and terms. For instance, "we know all environment as meaning" is an ambiguous expression. What does Oman mean by it? At no point in the work is there an analysis of what this repeatedly used phrase means. It seems to mean that we know environment as objective value.¹ But it would surely have been better to have defined this in "The Natural and the Supernatural". Also in the phrase "a special kind of objective reality which is inseparable from this valuation" there is implied the enormous assumption that having value connotes objective reality. Such an assumption is necessary in Oman's system, but its central importance would be the better understood by the reader, if here it were analysed in relation to contrary positions. In the phrase "the necessity of thinking it in relation to the rest of experience" Oman assumes a hypothetical unity of aesthetic, theoretic and moral. As description proceeds it will be seen how the word "feeling" is used in a different sense from the usual sense of his day and country. Should not this be made clear from the start and a justification of such a use attempted?

Oman's assumptions at this point are in certain cases clarified later in the work. To enumerate them here is not to imply any obscurity in Oman's mind. He is here laying down the basis for a philosophical theology which avoids those positions made untenable by the attack of

(1) Oman in fact so defines it in his review of the first volume of Tennant's "Philosophical Theology" see J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXXI p.404.

modern scepticism on cosmological speculation. It is a very sophisticated paragraph. The objection is rather that Oman never makes public the private justification out of which this paragraph came. He begins his exposition almost at the point where a critical analyst such as Kant leaves off. The reason for this may be judged to be that Oman considered "The Natural and the Supernatural" as written for the educated layman who had not mastered the language of idealist analysis and who was more interested in the structure to be built on such assumptions. Oman's failure to analyse does however leave his work open to attack as leaving undefended his basic assumptions.

Leaving aside his silences, it is now necessary to describe in some detail how Oman uses his two terms "the sense of the holy" and "the judgment of the sacred". What Oman had said in simple language in his theology about the meeting of man and God he now elaborates through the use of these terms. Here the two ontological relations to reality - action and contemplation - are described in relation to each other. Oman is at his most brilliant, not as an analyst but as a descriptive theologian with remarkable insight into the subtleties of man's consciousness.

"The sense of the holy" Oman applies to the unique feeling of reverence that certain ideas and objects evoke. The sense of the holy has its own unique quality as feeling, being a direct sense of a special environment. Immediately the difficulty arises of demonstrating its uniqueness. Feeling qua feeling is opaque to intellectual description. It only can be described by the apprehension of its a priori cognitive structure. It must therefore be emphasised from the start that Oman rejects the idealist account of feeling as the subjective appearance of judgment. Oman proceeds from a realist assumption as to the subject - object relationship. That is, the sense of the holy is a relation one term of which transcends consciousness. It

is given within an assumed ontological structure. This makes it possible to describe the uniqueness of the feeling in a way that would not be possible in an idealist system. From the beginning we are given an object that makes a unique impression and so have some ground from which to proceed to mutual understanding. The sense of the holy can be isolated as unique in the hierarchy of our feelings because it is an appearance to consciousness always related to a particular form of valuing a particular environment.

This however leads to a further difficulty: the very ontological structure within which is demonstrated the uniqueness of the sense of the holy is only assumed at this stage in Oman's argument. It is neither carefully described nor substantially justified. It is necessary to proceed with the description without such a justification. The espousal of an untechnical language does not avoid the problems for which technical language was invented.

The sense of the holy can then best be described as the feeling stirred by that which we value absolutely. Because it is invariably connected with this absolute valuation the feeling can be isolated from others that may seem similar when subjectively considered. For example, qua feeling it might be difficult to differentiate between the awe associated with magic and the awe of the holy. Yet they may be distinguished because the awe attached to magic always results in a natural valuing - that is, it is attached to values which are merely the convenient. But the sense of the holy always passes into a valuation to which our convenience must be made subordinate - that is into a value that is absolute. Thus the mark of the sense of the holy is that, even at its most primitive, it is the ground of our moral reverence.

In a passage towards the end of "The Natural and the

"Supernatural" Oman illustrates the progress of the sense of the holy from awe to reverence:-

" As reverence, the sense of the holy is the humility which is the fountain-head of all right and courageous independence in seeking truth, and truth only: as awe, it is a timid and even a shuddering dread of all enlightenment. As reverence, the graciousness, the sincerity, the high responsiveness which gives us deliverance both from the mere pleasing of the senses and the artificial tastes of our time, and makes us both small and great before the austere sublimity of true beauty of form and character: as awe, it is as a cloud of blackness upon the earth and of horror upon our souls, leaving us nothing in which to rejoice, and no spontaneity of feeling by which to appreciate. As reverence, it is the regard for our neighbour and for our own souls which gives us independence of the canons of respectability and what we may call traditional divine jurisprudence, enabling us to exercise freely our own judgment of good in face of our own situation: as awe, it imprisons us in traditional rules and formal respectabilities." 1.

Thus whereas the distinguishing mark of the sense of the holy for the purpose of description is that it always regards some idea or object as absolute, the mark of its historical development is that it is always becoming less the awesome holy and more the ethical holy. Thus when the appearance of the holy among primitive men is viewed with sufficiently sympathetic and understanding eye, even what seems its crudest manifestation is found always related to the sense of something absolute in value. At the same time, even in the highest reaches of morality

1) N. and S. op.cit. p.308.

there is a quality akin to awe. For as the sense of the holy must become ethical because it is sense of an environment which is essentially ethical in character, so morality for Oman is a religious development springing from our sense of the holy.

Thus from the earliest appearance in history the sense of the holy is an incipient moral reverence. The mark of development both in individual minds and in the progress of the race is that the holy becomes less fearful as it becomes more an evaluation of the supernatural environment as sacred. The possibility of a growing power of the rational over all our feelings at the expense of the merely impulsive lies in this interaction between feeling and value. A feeling is rational when it is proportionate to and dependent on the actual value it regards. Thus the sense of the holy becomes more rational as by regarding our absolute valuations it becomes an objective reverence for the supernatural rather than uncontrollable subjective emotion, overriding the autonomy of our personalities. It becomes instead an objective sense of an environment which calls upon us to respond as persons.

It may be remarked in passing that Oman does not explicitly distinguish between primary and secondary orders of knowing - that is between the description of the appearance of the holy to his own consciousness and the inferences about its appearance among primitive men. This is matched by a failure to be explicit about the distinction between (1) the development of the holy in individuals from awe to reverence and (2) the same development in the progress of the race. As a man of his time he was naturally taken up with evolutionary and historical questions. It is perhaps picayune to ask him to make such a distinction. Yet in the light of much contemporary confusion about these matters one can but wish that he had been careful to make such distinctions openly.

Indeed the interaction of feeling as intuition and of man's valuations is in Oman's opinion, a difficult matter to define clearly.

" On the one hand, the valuation may immediately follow the feeling, or on the other, the feeling may immediately follow the valuation, though it is not, in either case, mere sequence. We value things as they appeal to our feelings, but we feel about them largely as we value them. Yet more frequently perhaps than any other feeling the sense of the holy follows and depends on its value, and, on the whole, this becomes increasingly the case as the mind develops." 1.

Thus to sum up, at this point in the analysis all that can be affirmed is: (1) the sense of the holy can be described and its uniqueness deduced by the fact that its appearance is always related to an absolute valuation of some object or idea; (2) in the progress of individual men and in the progress of the race as a whole the sense of the holy is tending to become less predominantly awe and more consciously a sense of ethical reverence; (3) these processes take place as the feeling forgets its subjectivity and becomes an objective sense of an environment.

The relation of the sense of the holy to man's capacity to make judgments of absolute value may be illustrated by

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.66. Oman never made a clear or close analysis of how man's autonomy of insight carries over into volition. Perhaps that is to ask too deep a penetration of the mystery of personality.

a discussion of Oman's criticism of Rudolph Otto.¹ For Otto the holy is subjectively the sense of the numinous evoked by the object "numen". It is the sense of a 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' before the sheer might of which the individual feels himself abased. In it the individual is given directly a sense of his creatureliness. This sense is a unique datum of consciousness, impossible to define rationally. As such, it is to be carefully distinguished from the intellectual and ethical activities of man. It is in fact related to these activities a priori; but it is given to consciousness as a continually separate experience, the individuality and independence of which must therefore be insisted upon. To use Oman's language, 'the numen' is not an environment which men can know increasingly as ethical; but one that continues to be of might and power. The source of our knowledge of God is in this intuition of His absolute Might and our utter dependence on that Might. We add only by the process of schematisation all the rational predicates that we may attribute to Him.

The essence of Oman's criticism of Otto's position is that it does not distinguish rightly, nor relate rightly, the sense of the holy and the absolute valuation associated with it. Otto, in his use of the phrase "the sense of the numinous", includes under one term a feeling and a valuation, which should be distinguished. The result of his failure to recognise that he has thus included under one phrase two distinguishable activities is that he has

(1) See Rudolph Otto "The Idea of the Holy" translated by J.W. Harvey, Oxford University Press, London 1926. For Oman's criticism of Otto see particularly Article in J.T.S. op.cit. "The Idea of the Holy" Vol.XXV pp.275-286. See also Oman's review of Otto's "Religious Essays, A Supplement to the 'Idea of the Holy'" J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXXIII, pp.286-288.

then no way of drawing the distinction between the religious and the magical. For once having included in the holy, albeit unconsciously, man's ability to judge objects as having absolute worth, the distinction between natural and absolute values cannot be used to differentiate the religious holy and the magical. In Otto's system, the value springing from the holy is as natural as that which results from the magical. Therefore there is no way of distinguishing these realms.

A cause of this identification is Otto's acceptance of the Kantian universalist account of the moral judgment. Thus he cannot properly relate value and feeling, because the rationalist account of moral judgment can only be appended to the irrational sense of dependence by schematisation. Otto is left with an inescapable disjunction between the rational and the irrational in man. By identifying the religious with the irrational the possibility of a religion of persons is forever closed. His attempt to overcome that disjunction by stating that the rational and the irrational are connected a priori is no satisfactory solution. In Oman's opinion this is only to say that they are connected historically by reflexion and that is a denial of what is true of every known form of mental development - namely, that what appears in the course of development can always be detected in germ long before it appears in separate or distinguishable form.

The central question at issue is whether the numen becomes an object to be valued absolutely through schematisation by ideas added from other spheres, or whether there is already in it a valuation that only needs to be more clearly understood to be known as ethical. Is not the consequence of accepting the first of these alternatives a denial of prophetic monotheism? For is it not to assume the existence of two supernaturals, one of which is realised through the irrational dread of the creature - whether man

or beast - and the other in the autonomy of the children of God.

Oman appeals to the Biblical tradition. What was the essence of that tradition but a growing realisation that God's Holiness was an ethical Holiness? How can that growing realisation be interpreted but as the gradual objectivisation of the sense of the holy through its valuations of an absolute character? Oman writes:-

" One has the uncomfortable feeling that, with his views, Professor Otto had he lived then might not have had his present enlightened views about sacrifice and that he would have regarded Micah as little better than a rationalist." ¹. He asks Otto how his position can be reconciled with the Gospel of Our Lord with its insistence on the infinity of God's care for freedom.

Oman illuminates his criticism of Otto's position by appealing to a particular experience of his childhood. Though this adds nothing in principle to what has already been said it is given here of an example of the force and individuality of Oman's approach to theology. He describes how as a child he had once ridden past a spot where in pre-Christian times there had been a place of worship. He had felt a strange stirring of awe and his horse had bolted. He addresses to Otto therefore the following question:-

" As the feeling had probably not arrived at being religious for my horse and had ceased to be religious for me, it would be necessary to ask what was the peculiarity which, without disrespect to his intelligence, I may assume my horse not to have attained and which, without excessive pride in my state of civilisation, I may assume I had passed.

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXV, p.284.

beyond, which made it for primitive man religious?"

In attempting to identify that experience of the primitive men and to relate it to the environment that had evoked it, Oman continues:-

" And is not the essence of it that it is an order of absolute value which when it escapes from its material form, is just the ethical sacred, the sense of the requirements of a Spirit in the world which is absolute and of a spirit in ourselves in its image which has its worth in accepting as its own these absolute requirements and refusing to bring them down to the level of our temporal convenience. It may only appear in a material taboo, but if man has said 'This is sacred and I would rather die than disregard it' he is not only religious, but by his religion, he has won a footing among the sands of changing impulse and association. My horse, we may assume, had not reached this valuation, and I was at least learning to make it by less material ways." 1.

However, although the sense of the holy can only be described in terms of the values it regards, it is not simply the sense of moral reverence that accompanies our actions - that feeling which Kant maintained must be interpreted as respect for the moral law. To interpret the sense of the holy as merely consequent to moral action, is to misinterpret the central role that feeling plays in Oman's theology. To him, feeling is the only gateway to knowledge of reality; it is the pioneer in all our experience. He writes:-

" To be obtuse in feeling is merely to be wall-eyed before every kind of reality; and to have no keen

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XXV, p.283.

(2) ~~N. and S. op.cit. p.~~

"sense of the holy would mean that, however we lived and moved and had our being in the Supernatural, we never could realise it." 1.

Whatever inadequacies he finds in the thought of Schleiermacher at other points, he is decisive in supporting him in this insistence on the central importance of feeling. The sense of the holy only becomes moral reverence because of the moral nature of the supernatural environment that evokes it. It is however the feeling which gives original experience of that environment. It is the root from which the value arises. "The root lives and grows by the foliage, even while the foliage is wholly dependent on the root." 2.

Because feeling plays so important a part in Oman's thought it is a pity that he does not analyse what he means by that word. He rightly rejects the rationalist accounts of the beautiful and the sublime as only allowing to "feeling" what can be justified by the understanding. Perhaps it is then an impossibility to go farther than Oman does in his accounts of the norms of feeling. (see following). But he uses the word to convey a cognitive activity that is not far from that "intellectual intuition" which lies at the basis of all Platonic theologies and the possession of which Kant was at such pains to deny to men. One wishes that if this were so Oman had admitted that relationship and had attempted some discussion of the a priori nature of that faculty. As his thought stands, the term "feeling" bears a heavy weight without sufficient discussion to support it.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p. 79 .

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.66.

The sense of the holy arises spontaneously in consciousness from the unity of awareness which underlies all perception of nature. 1. Oman uses the term "awareness" to describe that state in which all the senses are active, but in which no particular object in the natural world has been singled out for apprehension. It is a state of pure undifferentiated feeling. Because men only analyse their consciousness when they are adults and as adults all consciousness is permeated by the activities of the intellect, they can never return to this state of awareness directly. Nor can they ever reach back to that stage of consciousness, for recollection is only possible after the apprehension of some particular object. However, in the analysis of adult consciousness it can be recognised that such a state is a necessary foundation for the later, more intellectual forms of knowledge. Also by an analysis of the ways of knowing of the artist and of the child, both of which class of persons are more intuitive than philosophers or scientists, we can begin to understand the character of such a state. With this awareness there arises spontaneously the sense of the holy. ^{Men} They are carried beyond the senses to a holy environment on which all the world of the senses depends. Thus all environment is felt as supernatural as well as natural. It is not a perceiving of the supernatural in the natural, but rather a perceiving of the natural as all in the supernatural. Men are given immediate contact with an environment on which they feel the totality of nature (themselves included) to depend.

In a long and beautiful analysis of his own childhood in the Orkneys Oman describes how the sense of the holy

In expounding a monotheistic system such as Oman's which seeks at all costs to avoid any dualism between nature and supernature repetition is difficult to avoid. Oman's conceptions of "awareness" and "apprehension" are the very basis of his account of how the natural is given to consciousness and will therefore be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3. Here there will only be given what is necessary to the description of the sense of the holy.

became active in him, just as his unity of awareness was first broken by individual apprehensions.

" I had been to church. I think the preacher had been expressing the absolute difference between good and evil under the material forms of heaven and hell. I went down to the edge of the water alone, and stood, a very small child, with the full tide at my feet. Along the smooth waters of the sound a path of sunshine carried the eye out to the open sea. It flashed on me that, if I dropped in and floated out, with endless sea around, I should be alone for ever and ever.

" The result was a consciousness of myself which set me thinking, yet not about myself. Instead it caused doubt about whether the world I saw was in the least like the world other people saw. I tried hard to find out, but words were like the measuring rods of the relativist - their use was regular, but this might conceal any difference of meaning.

" Theoretically no very small boy should have any such notions: nor would he, if they were problems of comprehending and explaining. But the contention here is that they rise up spontaneously from the form of awareness. This is what gives them their extraordinary intense character, quite different from our later days when, by understanding and explaining, we have reduced time and space from fascination to formulas, and ourselves, in the midst of them, as bearers of the same strange impressive quality, to an argument about the existence of the soul." 1.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.136-137. Though Oman asserts (and it is judged correctly) that Wordsworth's poetry is more deeply tinged with theory than the poet admits, he uses passages from "The Excursion" and "Tintern Abbey" to illustrate what he means by the sense of the holy.

The fact that the sense of the holy is never primarily applied as ethical feeling indicates its independence from judgment. It first appears in two ways: (1) as the undifferentiated holy and (2) as the particularising holy. The undifferentiated holy is the feeling of the supernatural as one absolute reality. Oman describes it in the following ways: "It is like seeing the sun and not what it illuminates." 1. It is "having a general sense of infinite force." 2. It is the feeling of a bare empty form of unity so that all that exists is given as one universe. In it we are given immediately three unities: (i) a unity of the mind as one awareness, (ii) a unity of all environment as one and (iii) a unity of feeling connecting that one mind with the one environment. These unities are not to be confused with the ideas of reason reached by the intellect as necessary inferences of our scientific knowledge. The ideas of the reason are reached by speculation. These unities are given immediately in feeling and underlie all our activities. These unities are an example of the difficulty that reason must find in discussing Oman's philosophy. Here two metaphysical unities and a unity of relation between them are reached from the experience of a pervasive and unvarying feeling of reverence. That this may be so is clearly possible. Yet no account is given of how they are arrived at. They can in no sense be considered necessary.

The particularising holy is the feeling of holiness concentrated on one object. Oman describes this feeling in the following simile:

" It is like running your head so hard against a brick wall that the wall seems to embody the

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.61.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.64.

" whole power of the universe." 1.

The sense of the supernatural is concentrated on one object of the world of the senses. So intense is the feeling of holiness about that object that men know it to be dependent on an environment of absolute holiness. To use language other than Oman's the particularising holy, at its best, is a concentration of the sense of holiness on one object of the natural world so that we intuit it to be a 'vestigia Dei'.

Thus as the undifferentiated sense of the holy gives men the sense of the unity of all their natural environment as belonging to one supernatural, the particularising holy gives them the sense of the individuality of all objects of the natural world - a particularity which can result in the valuing each object as having its own importance under its dependence on an environment of absolute holiness. The sense of the holy can therefore be either overwhelmingly exclusive in its concentration on one object or it can be the most diffuse of emotions in that it gives the bare empty form of unity which gives men the world as a universe. Though to a practical theologian such as Oman the problems of cosmology are not a matter of central interest, here answers to them are found in terms of the sense of the holy. The Aristotelian natural theology of sense having gone down before the attacks of the sceptics, it is replaced by an intuitive theology of nature.

As Oman bases his philosophy on an intuition of man as autonomous (not yet defined) the misuse of any faculty by men is always possible. The misuse of the sense of the holy may therefore change that sense from the gateway to reality to an obstacle holding men back from it. The chief misuse of any activity arises when men concentrate on it to the exclusion of other necessary activities. Therefore

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.64.

however disastrous for the misuser, for the philosopher attempting to understand man and his world, the analysis of these abortive misuses is helpful, for in them he can see certain activities both concentrated and isolated. Thus Oman attempts to understand the undifferentiated and particularising holy by analysing their misuse.

The undifferentiated holy is misused when men are content to abide in the very form of unity it gives and do not proceed to give content to that form from the challenging world of the senses and the duties of the world of action. Men so wrap themselves in the enjoyment of this bare form of unity that they fall into the illusion that by a denial of the importance of their senses and their moral intuitions, - that is, by emptying themselves of all that makes them persons - they will come to know God. In denying their own personality and the value of the natural they deny the Personality of God; in denying the Personality of God they deny their own personalities and the reality of the natural. They seek the impossible, to know God above the categories of nature and history. This is Oman's definition of mysticism: "There is a direct revelation of God which is not through experience of the world - the presupposition of this type of belief being that experience is not a manifestation but a veil which for moments waves aside and gives glimpses of reality."¹.

(1) "The Hibbert Journal" Vol. XXVI pp. 445-458 Article "Mysticism and Its Expositors" see p. 450. Bibliography p. iii.

An account of Oman's attitude to mysticism will be found in Appendix 'A' of this thesis, under his classification of religions. It may be remarked here that so ineffable is the experience of the mystic that though one may sympathise with Oman's dislike of its esoteric quality, his certainty about the nature of mysticism is difficult to follow.

Nevertheless, though the mystic's experience of resting in this form of unity reveals no reality, it is useful to the epistemologist in illuminating the form of feeling that underlies all our activities. It suggests the fact that the feeling of unity is the motive that drives us to seek harmony and peace in all our experience and the strength that sustains us in that search even when harmony and peace appear to our intellects to be absent. By an analysis of the mystic's activity we are able to isolate the central question about the undifferentiated holy - namely, what kind of unity should it challenge us to seek. "We can sink back into its mere undifferentiated unity, or we can find it a challenge to seek an ideal which does not suffer us to rest anywhere in the effort to harmonise all our experience." ¹.

The particularising holy is misused when the concentration on one object remains fixed simply on that object and does not pass over into an ethical judgment. The feeling fails to be related both to the undifferentiated holy and to our general moral duties. Thus the particularising holy is the source of idolatry, whether that idolatry be the central factor or a more peripheral part in advanced religions. ². As a general rule it

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- (1) N. and S. op.cit. p.65. Oman distinguishes between those who shirk the challenge of the natural and of autonomy by a flight to the transcendent unity of the holy, and those who rest in its undifferentiated immanence. The former he calls acosmic pantheists, the latter cosmic pantheists. See further Appendix 'A'.
 - (2) In "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman generally takes his examples from ancient religions and therefore avoids those openly controversial criticisms of certain Christian traditions which characterise his theological writings.

may be laid down that the particularising holy is misused among ordinary men fulfilling the simpler functions of society; whereas the misuse of the undifferentiated holy is the vice of the esoteric aristocrat, freed from the particularity of manual work. Both abuses concentrate on the subjective quality of the emotion rather than on the objective environment given therein. The mystic basks in his own contentment with the given unity; the idolator stirs up his own emotions and those of the crowd. Psychological statements add nothing to a discussion of truth or falsehood, but it may be remarked in passing that Oman's deepest contempt is for the religious aristocrat who attempts to know God by ways not easily open to ordinary men; therein may be seen the abiding influence of Oman's origins with the strong sense of moral egalitarianism which characterises the Presbyterian congregation, so intricately and strangely related to its doctrine of election.

In the light of the misuse of the holy the norms of right feeling may be better described. Oman returns again and again to the attempt to capture just what he means by right feeling. Some of these attempts are as interesting as anything he ever wrote.¹ He would in the end admit that only the lover of the beautiful can truly grasp his meaning. Clear definition of the norms of feeling is an impossibility. First, feeling is an ultimate in experience and as such its uniqueness cannot be captured by the categories of the intellect. Secondly and more important, feeling "is the pioneer in all experience, and therefore the higher appreciation of its values is more continuously in the making."² Oman

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.140-143 and 209-212.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.212.

believes that God leads men to Himself through this mystery of intuition and therefore its norms could only be accurately described if that journey of the mind into God were conceived as finite. ¹.

The two words that Oman uses to describe the qualities of right feeling are 'sensitiveness' and 'sincerity'. They apply to the sense of the holy which gives men the supernatural environment. 'Sensitiveness' is the right functioning of our senses as keen and active when our whole being is alert to appreciate all our environment. The joyful awareness of all that comes through the physical senses leads us to that upon which the natural depends. Here Oman is insistent that it be remembered that feeling is an activity and therefore must never be thought of as passive.

" The activity of the will proper, directed to possessions to be gained and evils to be escaped, is generally recognised, but responding to impressions justly and completely is as truly an activity as altering the world for our benefit." ².
Thus sensitiveness is just the reaching out in sympathy to environment so that it can tell us of itself. Wordsworth had defined that quality of feeling as love. Oman accepts such a definition, if by love is meant the willingness to accept all that may be known and not the mere appreciation of any select part of our environment.

Of much greater importance for the right sense of the holy, indeed a concept of central importance in Oman's thought, is 'sincerity of feeling'. Sincerity is the

(1) In the description of the norms of feeling that follows, once again the reader must be referred ahead to the next chapter, where the importance of feeling in giving us the natural will be discussed.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.204.

right interpretation of what we are given by our sensitiveness. The regulating fact about sincerity is that the less aware of the feeling by which we know any environment, the more objective our knowledge of that environment will be. The same law holds good both of our sense impressions of the natural world and the sense of the holy that gives us the supernatural. The more the impression is objective witness the less it is the subjective feeling. Sincerity is, then, the ability by which the subjective feeling is kept in proportion to the objective environment that evokes the feeling. Oman describes insincerity of feeling in the following terms:-

" It is not a question of having inordinate affection, but of schoolmastering feeling to make it say what is desired or turning it into sentimentality, divorced from all objective significance. True sincerity means having neither hard Stoicism, especially towards others, nor false sentimentality, especially towards ourselves. Lack of it is not concerned merely with ourselves and with other persons. It goes to the roots of our whole perception of what is true and great in all our environment, natural and supernatural, being the essential and creative sincerity by which our knowing is wholly concerned with knowledge."¹

Sincerity of feeling, as applied in the sense of the holy, is the proper use of our autonomy of insight into the valuable, in which men are given that hierarchy of values crowned by the Cross of Christ. It is Oman's description of that illumination of the soul by the Good, the miracle of which all Platonists have been at such pains

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.211-212

to describe. To fall completely into Platonic language, if men possess that faculty they are given that system of subordination and superordination, by which they know that the Will of God creates both the principles of finite things and the finite things themselves. To use language at this point so utterly foreign to Oman is simply to remark how much a concept such as "sincerity of feeling" belongs to the Platonist tradition of St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure. The vision of the Cross takes men beyond the Platonic belief that knowledge of the Good is found particularly among the intellectual few, and opens to them a new joy in the created world. It is not however essentially at variance with that incipient idea of conversion, found in Plato, in which a doctrine of autonomy makes its hesitant appearance. Thus sincerity of feeling is that faculty whereby the supernatural, given to us as feeling intrinsically tinged with value, is rightly graded into a scale proportionate to the actual values of the environment that has evoked the feeling. Thus in Oman's system persons are essentially mediators of value. Sincerity of feeling is the norm of that autonomy of insight by which we reach out for the objective values of the given; our wills are the activity by which we freely choose between that given.

It is now possible to see more clearly what the sense of the holy should ideally be. "It is not to be cultivated as overwhelming emotion till all things merge in dazzling glow, but to be objective reverence, the witness to an environment of this absolute quality." ¹. It does not give men as philosophers a theoretical system so complete that it frees them from intellectual and moral struggles; it must not be supposed to give religious men that sense of peace that frees them from striving both in the natural and in the supernatural. "The peace and harmony it gives is not emptiness, but a world of infinite variety, harmonious to the feelings like the poet's; a world

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.308.

challenging to understanding and in relation to one mind, like the philosophers; a world to be explained on one consistent principle like the scientists; of one sphere of active victory, like the moralists; of one reverence, like the religious thinkers." 1. But before it can be seen how the above is possible, a description must be given of the way the judgment of the sacred arises in consciousness. 2.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.146.

(2) Before leaving the sense of the holy, mention must be made of Oman's debt to Schleiermacher and Windelband in his use of this concept. In the first chapter has been quoted Oman's recognition of the importance of Schleiermacher in re-emphasising the central place of feeling for theology. In the same article on Schleiermacher, Oman defends him against the criticisms of those theologians who declare that in Schleiermacher's system "The Word of God" is replaced by the relativity of subjective emotion. Much of the criticism of Schleiermacher is based on false interpretation of what he had written. "One might gather that there is nothing objective about Schleiermacher's theology and that by feeling he meant sentiment and by absolute dependence mere mystical self-surrender, none of which goes with his persistent and well-grounded claim to be empiricist throughout." (J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXX p. 401). However Oman believes that Schleiermacher fails to relate properly intuition to man's autonomy of volition. Oman also mentions his debt to the writings of Wilhelm Windelband. (See Präludien, W. Windelband, Tübingen, 1921 Vol.II. Essay, 'Das Heilige'; for Oman's comments see N. and S. op.cit. Appendix 'A'). However the present writer is unable to see any real difference between Schleiermacher's and Windelband's positions except in (i) the use of the specific term 'the holy' in the latter's thought and (ii) Windelband's development of the implications of that intuition within idealist assumptions. He is therefore unable to understand just what Oman's debt to Windelband is. The fact that Oman had been thinking in terms of the sense of the holy, so related to the judgment of the sacred, for at least twenty years before the publication of 'The Natural and the Supernatural' is illustrated by a long note in his book 'The Church and the Divine Order'. Here he approves the view of Kattenbusch that the difference between Apostolic and Catholic Christianity lay in the belief of the former that to be of God and to be morally holy are one, while the latter had taken over from pagan thought the idea of the holy as being in essence awesome rather than ethical. See 'C. and D.O.' op.cit. pp.121-123.

The supernatural is given immediately to consciousness in the judgments men make of absolute or unconditional value. These absolute valuations Oman calls "the judgments of the sacred". It is the valuation of some idea or object as being of a worth that transcends comparison with what men judge convenient. "The sacred means just that which is of incomparable worth, and incomparable is not merely super-excellent, but what may not be brought down and compared with other goods. The moment we ask how this sacred value compares with pleasure or ease or prosperity it ceases to be sacred." 1. The fact that men are capable of such valuations is the primary intuition which regulates Oman's epistemology. To repeat, Oman also assumes the immediacy of the supernatural in that valuation. He does not, as Kant in "The Critique of Practical Reason", proceed by inference from the appearance of absolute valuations among men to the inference of the existence of God. 2.

The appearance of the judgment of the sacred to consciousness stems from the sense of absolute dependence of the world upon the supernatural. As the sense of the holy arises spontaneously in men from the general sense of awareness, so the judgment of the sacred also arises spontaneously as men begin "to apprehend" particular objects of nature within that general field of awareness.

"Apprehension" is that activity by which we isolate individual objects, but have not yet attempted to comprehend or explain them by the categories of the intellect. Thus in apprehension men contemplate the object as it is in itself. They do not distort the object as when they attempt to use it for their own purposes by comprehensions and

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.65-66.

(2) It cannot here be discussed whether Kant departs from this position in his last work, the "Opus Postumum" see for a discussion of this John Baillie's "Our Knowledge of God", Oxford University Press 1939, the concluding chapter.

explanations. Thus as men isolate some individual object of the natural world within the general sense of awareness, with that apprehension there flashes up in consciousness a value, which we judge as absolute. Initially, among children or among primitive men, that valuation is associated with the particular object in the apprehension of which it appeared to them. But gradually it is detached from that fixed association, and becomes a general judgment best described as the absolute value of the true, the beautiful and the good. Just as the sense of the holy changes from an occasional stirring of awe associated with some particular setting into an attitude of reverence underlying all experience, so the judgment of the sacred ceases to be a valuation associated with a fixed material embodiment and becomes a judgment of those sacred ideals by which men can determine their dealing with all environment. In converse with the natural world, felt already as dependent on that which is holy, men become increasingly capable of a general application of ideal values. Thus as in the sense of the holy a distinction is made between the awesome and the ethical holy, so in the judgment of the sacred the distinction is between the material and the ideal sacred. It is never possible to free the sacred completely from its material embodiment, but continuously in individuals and in the progress of the race, men are becoming capable of associating the sacred less and less with such objects as beasts and birds, rivers and forests, and able to recognise that it is a general judgment of absolute value. The supernatural is always calling men to recognise it for what it is.

Oman does not accept what he considers the usual explanation of why stocks and stones have been judged of absolute value. This explanation insists that primitive men's scales of value were so different from ours that we cannot hope to understand them. But according to Oman,

in even the crudest and most repugnant judgments of the sacredness of some object, it is possible to recognise, if we are sympathetic, three forces that relate them to our more general judgment of absolute value: (i) the affirmation of a reality of absolute value; (ii) the subordination of all else to it; (iii) a tendency to regard its nature less and less materially.

Oman accounts for this embodiment of the sacred in material form by distinguishing between what he calls "free" and "fixed" ideas. Fixed ideas are those fixed in one context, that is, they can only appear to consciousness with their whole experiential setting. On the other hand, free ideas are those that we can apply to any experiential context. But, as in Oman's system it is the sacred that determines our ability to transcend the flux of the natural and therefore gives us our ability to formulate free ideas, clearly men can make judgments of the sacred before they are capable of formulating free ideas. Therefore it is understandable why in primitive men and children the sacred is lodged in a material embodiment. "Primitive man could no more conceive sharpness apart from a cutting instrument than sacredness apart from a material embodiment. Yet as he knew, in spite of that, what sharpness meant so he knew also what sacredness was." 1. The material sacred is then "just an idea in the particular material condition which stirred the sense of the holy and gave occasion for the valuation as sacred." 2.

In his discussion of free and fixed ideas one wishes that Oman had been more specific in his vocabulary. The phrase 'in the context' could mean either the particular context when the idea is not yet grasped as such, or the specific context when the idea is grasped in a particular

(1) S.R.R. op.cit. p.292.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.90.

manifestation of it. Presumably he means that both 'sacredness' and 'sharpness' may be grasped not as ideas. But Oman is not clear whether here their similarity ends. For 'sharpness' has no meaning beyond its manifestations in a specific context. 'Sacredness' on the other hand - that is as an idea of the class a priori - has an extension beyond objects in space and time. At least it must here be affirmed, that despite arguments to the contrary, ideas such as "sacredness" have extension beyond space and time. Clearly such an assertion is of the essence of Oman's position.

Oman's problem seems to be that there was a common historical difficulty in reaching both empirical and a priori ideas. But was not there a further difficulty in isolating a priori ideas from material embodiment? He does not seem to make clear in his discussion the difference between ideas having extension beyond space and time and those that have no such extension. The result is that ideas like 'sacredness' and 'sharpness' seem almost to be identified as of the same level. But would not such an identification be disastrous for his whole position? The obscurity is once again judged to arise from his fear of traditional metaphysical language i.e., his failure to clarify his use of the word "idea" and his fear of such a term as a priori.

Oman illustrates from the religion of Israel the development of the material into the ethical sacred.

" The prophets, just because their higher truths were sacred and required all their devotion, emancipated religion from material associations, in a way unparalleled elsewhere. These associations, which were sacred in the popular mind and were defended as such, the prophets denounced as idolatry, and found it the chief hindrance to the discernment of spiritual progress and what they regarded as the true sacred: but nevertheless even the prophetic

"religion had itself travelled through a stage at which the judgment of a sacredness about life had been embodied in material objects like the ark." 1. The tendency of the material sacred to become a general judgment of ideals by which we deal with the natural is, then, that in which the progress of the race consists. 2.

By the appearance to consciousness of the judgment of the sacred we become in a true sense persons, that is, we are able to exercise our wills and our intellects. Only by the impact of the absolute value are we able to resist the determining impact of desire and association. Our wills awake to its incomparable demand so that we find ourselves autonomous beings. We find that consciousness of determining issues, that knowledge of our responsibility, those feelings of remorse which are the appearance to us of "that deep and permanent essence of the soul", our free wills. 3. We discover that we belong to an environment

(1) S.R.R. op.cit. p.293.

(2) Oman does not in this passage seem to distinguish between the fixity of ideas among primitive men and their lack of clarity as to the content of the valuable. Also, Oman may be criticised, as he has been in the case of the holy, for failing to distinguish between the two orders of Knowing (i) Knowledge of our own consciousness (ii) inferential Knowledge about primitive man. It is perhaps pedantic to make this criticism once again, but he often writes of primitive men with just that certainty that he rightly found so repugnant in Sir James Frazer.

(3) "The Elements of Pain and Conflict", op.cit. see Oman's first article "Human Freedom" p.70. For a further discussion of Oman's concept of personality see Chapter 4.

of absolute value and that we can only find our true selves by freely given loyalty to it. What has been given to us in feeling our wills must choose to accept or to reject.

Through this absolute demand, intellectual activity becomes possible for us. For it alone has the force to free us from the dictates of passing association, without which freedom it would not be possible to order the impressions of our senses in a systematic way. Also, once it has arisen to consciousness, the judgment of the sacred is determinative of all our feelings. No longer is it possible to have merely natural or instinctive feelings, for they are transfused with the valuable and the rational.

Oman applies his intuition of the primacy of the sacred to the questions of theological history. He asserts that it was by making the judgment of the sacred that man became man. He examines four definitions of man, (i) man as a rational animal, (ii) man as a tool-using animal, (iii) man as a laughing animal, (iv) man as a religious animal. He clarifies the difference between the first and the fourth by defining rational as the ability to seek the true order of and relation between events, and the religious as the ability to make judgments of absolute worth. The common root of these definitions is in man's refusal to accept his environment as other animals do. But one of them must have been the stem from which the others arose. Oman judges that only the appearance of absolute values in consciousness was capable of giving that faith by which man arose above the flux of circumstances.

" He (man) obtained firm footing to deal with his environment the moment he regarded anything as sacred, because he could say 'No' and was no longer its mere creature. Without this foothold, no extension of his associations, no adjusting himself to his surroundings, no resolve to grin and bear it would

"have set him free: and without this freedom reason would not have gone beyond mere association, or working changes in his environment taken the place of mere adjustment to it, or laughter lightened grim endurance. But the moment he said 'this is sacred, this is not in the realm of ordinary values', granting that it was said of what to us is the insanest of taboos, he had said to his world as well as to himself, 'Thou shalt not'. Forthwith he began to be master of himself, and, thereby master in his world. Then in some true sense of the word he began to be free. Thus by the judgment of the sacred, man was set free from the leading strings of nature, the nurse which, with the immediate values of the visible world, had hitherto nurtured all living creatures." 1.

This application of the primacy of the sacred to the problems of theological history raises in acute form the question of Oman's refusal to use traditional theological language in "The Natural and the Supernatural". What kind of an answer is to be expected from such a question as "What caused men to be men?" Because this passage is introduced quite without the traditional conception of "Creation", it could be interpreted as a circular argument. The assumed primacy of the sacred is used to prove itself the cause of our origin and then evolutionary theory is used to buttress the primacy of the sacred. Of course Oman is guilty of no such absurdity. What seems fair to say of him, however, is that in an attempt to touch the men of his age, who were so often intoxicated with evolutionary theory, he introduces an obscure passage unrelated to the theological dogma on which it depends.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.85.

In his theological writings Oman avoids such difficulties as the doctrine of creation and confines himself to questions of practical import. It is therefore difficult to understand what he would have made of that mysterious doctrine. It seems likely that he would have accepted it. Here the dogma needs to be brought out into the open - that is if this passage is to be meaningful. It may be remarked once again that the avoidance of traditional Christian language, in order to help non-Christians, often leads Oman into obscurity.

In the description of the judgment of the sacred Oman insists on the absoluteness of ideal values and on the fact that they are given to men with the contemplation of the natural, and that the consequent judgment is always a dealing with the natural. Oman's position is that in converse with the world in sincerity of feeling one is given values both natural and ideal. ¹.

Oman's position on the relationship of ideal to natural values will be approached by a discussion of what he made of Kant's account of ethics. As has been remarked in the previous chapter, Oman had a profound admiration for that account. In attempting to understand the problem of how finite minds are capable of making absolute judgments, Kant had never reduced the categorical quality of morality in the name of naturalism, nor had he attempted to preserve their absoluteness by defining the individual as a mere appearance in the process of cosmic reason, as

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- (1) Oman's terminology may be criticised on a small point. In defining the sacred as that of incomparable worth he seems to be suggesting a lack of relationship between the naturally desirable and the valuable in general, which can only be defined as subordinate - superordinate. Would it not have been wiser to use some other noun than "value" after the adjective "natural"? This may still be said even though in Oman's position natural and ideal values never appear to consciousness in clear distinction.

the Hegelians. On the one hand he had refused to reduce duty to passion, on the other to reduce it to metaphysics.

As preliminary to what Oman does say, the remarkable similarity between his criticism of Kant and that of Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann may be mentioned. ¹ Oman only mentions Scheler once and merely in passing and never mentions Hartmann. ² Their relationship seems to have been the understandable one of differing men arriving at the same historical period at the same form of criticism. Hartmann develops in more technical language the ontological and epistemological implications of that realist criticism. He makes clear, for instance, as Oman does not, that quite a new meaning must be given to the term "a priori" than in the Kantian system. Oman however took much farther the theological implications of that criticism. Despite Hartmann's wide account of the phenomena of morality, Oman has a much deeper intuition into the moral predicaments of all sorts and conditions of men. Hartmann's technical use of language does sometimes clarify the implications of what Oman says.

Kant's belief that if the moral judgment is to be absolute, it has to be derived from the form of the individual will, means that he defines the moral judgment in a general form that is empty of content. Defined as the necessary form of the wills of all rational beings, it can only lay down universal laws which cannot be related to the individuality of each person. The duties of the prince and the slave cannot be distinguished. The moral judgment, because of its universalist form is negative

(1) See M. Scheler "Der Formalismus in Der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik." Halle Wiemeyer 1916, and N. Hartmann "Ethics" translated by Stanton Coit, Allen and Unwin, London, 1932, particularly Vol. I chapters XI, XII and XIII.

(2) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XXXV p.200.

in quality.

" The essentials of the practical reason or conscience, which he so derives from the form of the individual as of sacred worth, may be thus summed up (i) An absolute end: Treat every individual as end in himself and never as a means to other ends. (ii) An absolute rule: What fulfils this end is an absolute or categorical imperative. (iii) An absolute test: Test each judgment by its fitness to be a law universal, that is, for all individuals so valued. (iv) Absolute independence: Our absolute worth confers as a right and demands as an obligation responsibility for our own beliefs and actions. (v) Absolute motive: Act only from reverence for this sacredness alone. "

" ----- Its rules are surely negative in spite of the positive form. They are: Do not treat man merely as a means; do not make your rule of life convenience; do not look at things selfishly; do not be merely an echo of other people; do not obey mere impulse and self-interest." 1.

Such an ethic is based on the fear that the given is an infringement of our autonomy and that therefore the supernatural environment is only inferentially given. In fact our intuition of belonging to it, through the sense of the holy, is a condition of the moral judgment.

Kant speaks:-

" As though we could simply say, 'Reverence man as an end in himself', and then conclude this to be the order of the universe; whereas man has only right to this reverence, if already, by the order of the universe, he has a value in some form absolute

"in a world of quality.

Though there is a sense in which we can because we ought, it is, therefore, obviously not in the sense that we can by mere fiat of will, it matters not what kind of persons we are or in what kind of world we act, do what we see to be right, or even put ourselves in the way of seeing what right truly is." 1.

Because in Kant's system moral action does not spring from our reverent sense of the holy, it can never become the glorious liberty of the children of God, joyfully striving after Their Father's Will. It can only be the attempt to impose order by law in a world of chaotic inclinations. Oman quotes the example of St. Paul as a man who recognised the impossibility of the Law as a means of achieving righteousness. He writes: "Victory over ourselves herein is not possible by resolution, however courageous, but only by finding a better environment waiting to be possessed. Only as we seek a better country can we leave a worse, even though we must also be ready to go out, not knowing whither we go, as the way of seeking it." 2.

The sacred is not then the bare form of the categorical imperative. Rather all our experience, all our striving and all our inclinations are intrinsically judged as ^{of} absolute and natural value. In as much as we are sincere in our feeling of the holy, absolute values appear to consciousness along with other values and the will is the arbitor between them. Sacred values arise from the sense of the holy just as colour arises as quality from the act of seeing. Thus Kant's conception of a

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.302.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.304. For a discussion of how the Kantian account of morality affects the conception of nature and supernature see Chapter 4.

chaos of inclinations that the will subordinates to its own order is quite denied. In Oman's ethic of intuition the will must constantly be active, responding in manifold individual situations that arise from this vast hierarchy of values.

Before leaving what Oman says about Kant's account of morality, several difficulties must be mentioned. The accounts of Oman and Kant have one essential difference - namely, Oman's assertion and Kant's denial that man is capable of intuition into the content of the valuable. This difference is of such importance as to make their systems difficult to compare. However several comparisons will be made. Oman's system is clearer how moral concern comes into experience and also clearer how differing men fulfil the moral demands of their differing functions. It must be admitted however that in Kant's account it is clearer how the high universal ethical demands of the Cross are to be expected from each Christian. Oman in his Gospel proclaims the universal demand of love by the possession and denial of the natural. To use that language; though Kant is not clear how the natural is to be possessed, he is extremely clear about how it is to be denied. Oman's position, which as a "theologia crucis" must insist on denial, never makes clear how men are to judge when to deny and when to possess the natural.¹ His intuition of the supernatural in sincerity of feeling is less capable of definition than Kant's categorical imperative. As in most cases with Oman, it is a question of what he does not say, rather than what he does. If two points were more clearly described it would be easier to understand what he means. A closer analysis of how

(1) For a discussion of this point in terms of the practical questions of the Church and the State see Chapter 6 of this thesis.

intuition passes over into judgment and a fuller description of what he means by the terms ideal and natural values would clarify his position.¹

To proceed with the description: once it has been granted that feeling is the pioneer and that absolute values are given in the sense of the holy, we must recognise the importance of the will and even the importance of the negative criterion of the categorical imperative. Though our will can only become operative as an absolute value is presented to consciousness, we only become free as our wills freely choose to follow that absolute claim against the claim of some natural value. This may take the form of a decision between right and wrong in an overt action, and may be largely a refusal to follow the desirable. Thus the categorical imperative is a valid negative test whereby we set up our freedom as absolute, even though it cannot help us to live ever-increasingly in the supernatural.

Faithfulness in action is at least as important as sincerity of feeling for man's knowledge of the supernatural. They are both dependent on each other.

To sum up: through his use of the terms "the sense of the holy" and "the judgment of the sacred", Oman has described the relationship between religious dependence and moral independence, which he had defined as the crucial question of the Christian life in "Grace and Personality". For the purposes of description the sense of the holy can only be described by its relation to our sacred valuations and the reality that evokes them. Yet it is only possible to make such judgments because we have already entered the realm of the supernatural through the sense of the holy. Feeling, it must be repeated once again, is

(1) See Oman's section on "Natural and Ideal Values" N. and S. op.cit. pp.204-207.

the pioneer in all experience. Yet it is only the pioneer. It depends for its continuance on the faithfulness of our wills. The vision of the Cross must mean that we take up our crosses and follow Him. In the final analysis, Oman makes faithfulness in action more the mark of the religious man than sincerity of feeling.

" Everything that is sacred is in the sphere of religion, and everything in the sphere of religion is sacred. Unless dogmas express beliefs valued as sacred, they are mere intellectual formulas; unless rites are the worship of a power valued as sacred, they are mere social ceremonies; unless God Himself embody all we value as sacred, he is a mere metaphysical hypothesis. Only when the valuation as sacred accompanies the sense of awe and reverence have we the religious holy; and only a reality having this absolute value is the religious Supernatural. Therefore if there be any one mark of the sphere of religion, it is this valuation of everything in it as sacred." ¹.

"The supernatural" may therefore be defined as the environment that stirs our sense of the holy and demands to be valued as sacred. From the point of view of epistemology the sense and the judgment come first, as the reality of the environment is felt and valued in them. From the point of view of ontology the supernatural is primary for it is the reality in which those activities are grounded. Thus though the mark of religion is the sacred, the sphere of religion is the supernatural. In our daily lives we are concerned with what is and not with the analysis of how we know what is. Yet for the purpose of analysis and speculation the problems of Knowing and Being are inseparable in a system such as Oman's.

Thus, because we enter the supernatural environment

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.69.

as we exert our personalities by faithfulness in action and sincerity of feeling, we know in what sense we can call it personal. 1.

" Absolute values of truth and beauty and goodness are not dependent on our acceptance of them, yet they are not a mere divine ether, in suffusion in the universe, and breathed into individual spirits as a sort of breath of life. They are true and beautiful and good only as they are chosen by persons; and their value is in the worth of the persons who in freedom choose them and are themselves thereby made true and beautiful and good. An order which is thus a realm of the free children of God, and not a theatre of even the most admirable puppets, and has its value in even the imperfect accord of their freedom, and not in the most perfectly correct opinions and gracious sentiment and impeccable behaviour imposed on them, is at least not better expressed by anything less than the mind of a person." 2.

Thus so far we have a distinction in consciousness between the sense of the holy and the feelings of the senses, and between natural and ideal values. With this goes a distinction in reality between nature and supernature. At the same time we have a relation between the natural and the supernatural, because the sense of the

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- (1) Oman's use of the term "environment" with its impersonalist associations is to be regretted, since neither the natural nor the supernatural is conceived impersonally in his work. Its use is another example of his appeal to men trained in the impersonalist categories of post-Renaissance philosophy and science.
 - (2) N. and S. op.cit. p.341. The Personality of God is the faith on which "The Natural and the Supernatural" is founded and for the demonstration and justification of which it was written. This demonstration must be delayed till further preliminaries have been described. See Chapter 4.

holy is never given apart from the natural and the judgment of the sacred always results in a dealing with the natural.

" As the Supernatural is one thing if it is manifested through the Natural, and another if it is wholly apart and the Natural a mere temporal illusion, so the Natural is one thing if it manifests the Supernatural, and another if it is merely physical." 1.

We cannot rightly speak of the supernatural and exclude the natural; we cannot ^{rightly} speak of the natural except as God's world. Thus the central problem of Oman's philosophy of religion is this proper relating and distinguishing of the natural and the supernatural. This calls for speculation.

In Oman's insistence that religion must not be identified with theological speculation, he does not deny the value - indeed the necessity - of such speculation. The very character of the supernatural means that we can only live in it as free persons. Man, as he is free and therefore rational, cannot regard as real any environment that is not diaphanous to reason. Thus once we have achieved the use of free ideas, all our perceptions of the natural world and all our intuitions of the supernatural are increasingly transfused with those ideas. To this extent, all experience is determined by our theories and therefore, if we do not make a conscious effort to bring our theories continuously before the bar of our experience, the possibility of new experience will be more and more limited by the bounds of our theory. Though we can only reap in theology as we have sown in sincerity of feeling and loyalty of will, in the long run as we have sown in theology, we and others influenced by us will reap in

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.205.

sincerity and loyalty. We must pursue theology even though we know that its conclusions can never be stated in any final propositions. 1.

Once having so isolated the sphere of religion as the supernatural and having entered the pure air of theology, is not the enquiry at last free from the grossness and crudeness that have marked the holy and the sacred throughout history? However, as idolatry and sacrifice have marred the sacred and the holy, a confusion of dogmatic voices have marked the history of men's speculation. If we seek the depressing we find here the Tower of Babel and the Inquisition. Oman describes the way in which the supernatural has been conceived:

" To one it is an almost material force; to another a purely spiritual influence. To one it is indivisible unity; to another it is gods many, and lords many. To one it is the most personal of all that is conceivable and the source and goal of all freedom; to another it is a fixed cosmic process of which the individual is merely the vehicle, and freedom is only compulsion from within and not from without. To one it is the meaning, goal, completion of the natural world; to another the natural world is a mere veil to hide it. To one it is a world to be entered by 'building up the pyramid of our individuality'; to another we enter it as we loose even our identity. To one it has depths which we cannot, by any searching, find out and where our wisdom is faltering humility; another it makes omniscient enough to know that those who differ from him should be burned for the good of their soul.

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- (1) A discussion of the relationship between Oman's view of theology and his doctrine of the Church will be found in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

"To one it is the immovable pillar of an unchanging world, secure in recognised authority and venerable custom; to another it is wholly concerned with worlds unrealised as yet, requiring heroic venture and the challenging of the obsolete and effete. For one it concentrates its fierce light on a single purpose and a few austere demands; for another, like the morning sun, it seems to turn muddy pools and common window-glass into flaming diamond." ¹.

These confusions must in no way make us doubt the need of clear thinking about the relation of the natural to the supernatural, any more than shuddering dread and crude valuations should make us hesitate in our search for a nobler reverence and a better will. Before proceeding to the discussion of Oman's account of that relationship, some description must be attempted of how he believes the natural to make its appearance to consciousness. With that description the next chapter will be concerned.

- III -

To conclude this chapter, Oman's dislike of the closed rational system must once again be repeated. Bergson might well have been thinking of Oman as a practical theologian and a great man of God when he made his last work an appeal for the open as opposed to the closed approach to religion and morality. ². For Oman finality in theology is the chief heresy as it denies the liberty of the children of God. Yet in attempting to expound Oman in reasonably consecutive terms his sense of mystery

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.70.

(2) H. Bergson, "Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion", Editions Skira Geneva 1945.

may easily be turned into a new finality. To do so, would be to loose his partaking in the tradition of Christian agnosticism which recognises the unfathomable mystery of God.

" If we realise that absolute value is in our environment of the Supernatural, and that this is the realm of freedom, and that we are not free but only becoming free, with freedom as our goal and not our present achievement, we should not be discouraged from seeking a higher response to it in truer reverence, and a higher judgment of it in a truer sacred, or a nobler more adequate conception of the Supernatural, because what was once holy for men has become the ordinary, once sacred the commonplace and profane, once the Supernatural the merely rational or even the irrational..... Progress means that what once required high and sacred endeavour has become the ordinary and accepted both in the world and in human relations, while the holy and sacred have moved on to a higher plane, with the still higher as both promise and power of attainment. The Supernatural thus creates ever greater freedom and is fuller environment for it: and, were we capable of fixing it at any point as universal determined laws, and so lose sight of the challenge to set up and pursue the infinite and eternal, we should no longer be in it. Wherefore the call is neither to faint nor grow weary, even were it certain that we were only a little farther on our way than the most primitive savage." 1.

C H A P T E R I I I .

In approaching Oman's concept of nature it is once again insisted how much in his philosophy of religion he remains a practical theologian. Religion is always, whether admitted or not, concerned with a practical attitude to environment. Therefore the discussion of it can never consist in detached speculations about the cosmos. ~~With "nature"~~ Therefore, Oman is not concerned, as was a contemporary such as Dean Inge, with a cosmological idealism that reconciles Christianity with the second law of thermodynamics. He is interested in justifying by an epistemology what he already knows in faith--namely, that nature is a realm through which God speaks to His children and through which they do His Will. That is, he is interested in demonstrating in modern language his own dim partaking of that vision of nature which received the glory of each lily of the field, and understood the meaning of each sparrow that fell, and yet was able to pass beyond that love of nature to die upon the Cross.

Thus though Oman is not primarily concerned with cosmological speculations but in demonstrating a right attitude to the world, he cannot accept a monotheism that is not cosmological. Pascal's theology, tinged always with the fear that faith could only be maintained in despite of all that his intellect told him of the impersonality of the cosmos, is not possible for Oman. This position is not however rejected primarily because of the intellect, but because it must fail in that act of joy which to Oman is of the very essence of the Christian faith. Such dualism, even though Christian, must end in a morality that is not far from the Stoic. Thus though not concerned with cosmology as bringing

Christianity "up to date" with Minsteinian physics, he is interested in a demonstration to modern men of the personalist categories that must regulate the Christian's conception of nature.

So to present a conception of nature to modern men Oman had to understand all those a priori insights-from nature as geometrical and mechanical system in Spinoza to nature as a great work of art in Goethe - which had imposed themselves so deeply on the thought of his time. He had clearly drunk deeply of a manifold of such visions as they had appeared in the art, the science and the philosophy of modern Europe. Oman's glory is that he never surrenders to such partial visions and yet humbly tries to understand their real basis, so that they are not neglected or merely abused but shown in a scale of subordination under his prophetic monotheism. He does this by describing the visions of the saint, the artist and the scientist and arranging them into a hierarchy.

- II -

Oman begins his analysis of how nature makes its appearance to consciousness by dividing our knowing into four distinct types:- (1) Awareness (2) Apprehension (3) Comprehension (4) Explanation. As unique data of consciousness these cannot be accurately defined, but only illustrated. He illustrates them in the following passage:-

" While walking in a dreamy mood along a country road, we may have a vivid sense of all that is about us, without attending to anything in particular. Our knowing is then a general field of 'awareness', including scent and sound as well as sight. The more we are entirely in this pure state of awareness,

"the more all our senses are active, so that we may even have vague realisation of the taste of the apples in the orchards and the coolness of the waters in the streams.

" Something in this field arouses particular attention, say an object moving towards us on the road. If it especially interests us, as, for example, by being unfamiliar, we concentrate attention on it to see exactly what it is, seeking to 'apprehend' it as one object by what appears to be its more relevant and important details. Let us say we apprehend it to be a man riding a bicycle.

" Then, supposing we have none of the information we afterwards learn to include under the name bicycle, but have everything to learn about it, we try, as it approaches, to 'comprehend' it. This we may do by considering the machine to the man as a means of locomotion; and, we think we comprehend it when we understand how it is the means for gaining this end.

" Finally, as it passes, we are faced with the problem that it seems to have no support from its breadth, yet keeps upright while travelling along a line. This singularity we must try to 'explain': and we do it with such general principles as the scientific knowledge we happen to possess." 1.

Several conclusions about our knowledge of nature, implicit in this division, point the proper way of reaching a valid concept of nature. First as we proceed in our knowing from awareness to explanation our interest is more and more concentrated and what is known increasingly

(1) H. and S. op.cit. 120-121.

limited. Secondly as we proceed from awareness to explanation our activity becomes less one of feeling and more of the understanding. The given element in knowledge becomes less important and our interpretation of that given by the categories of the intellect increasingly so. In the two former types the mind is mainly engaged in the contemplation by feeling of the objects as they are in themselves; in the latter types our interest is in manipulating the objects for our own free purposes. In awareness and apprehension we are perceiving nature; in comprehension and explanation we are using it. Thirdly it must be born in mind that all our comprehensions and explanations about objects of the world would not be possible if we had not previously apprehended objects within a general field of awareness. This fact may be forgotten by the practical adult living in a world he has to comprehend and explain, but it still remains a fact with which the philosopher must deal. From this data Oman arrives at the conclusion that if we are to know what nature is, we must start our analysis from an attempt to understand how it makes its appearance to us in awareness and apprehension. At the very least we must avoid the error of reaching our conception of nature only from what we know of it in our comprehensions and explanations.

To the criticism of this tendency Oman returns again and again. Those called to the activities of the scientist and the speculative philosopher are often the least suited to understand perception. Because they live constantly on the plane of the intellect they forget just how perception operates through feeling and is received as particularity. Their theories of perception reduce it to a purely rational activity, with disastrous effects on the whole system involved. This tendency, operative in all periods, has been particularly evident in post-Renaissance philosophy.

Men proud of their ability to control nature, equated knowledge of nature with control of it. Philosophers of this period conceived nature from inference based on the ability to control it by explanations. The result was that during this period such strange conceptions of nature arose as "a mere dead abstraction called matter, then a kind of Divine speech, regular, but with no continuous reality; then a mere succession of impressions, with no link save custom". 1. Men so taken up became blinded to the witness of nature in feeling which is the foundation of all other relations to nature.

Through all his work Oman is objecting to that lack of humility among the intellectually gifted, in the name of the Christian understanding of God's revelation to all men. This pride is vouchsafed in the exaltation above all others of the truths of the laboratory and the study. Oman vindicates as against this the experience of the majority, the importance of which has been denigrated by rationalist philosophy. His egalitarianism is not as in Kant's case confined to an egalitarianism of action. It includes contemplation, whereby simple men in their practical callings may be given in and through nature the vision of God. It is the fear that the city will take from men the vision of nature in any terms save that of the tourist resort that makes Oman so fearful of industrialism. 2.

Therefore in his own attempt to expound an adequate Christian account of nature Oman proceeds from an analysis

(1) "Method in Theology" op.cit. p.88.

(2) Because of this fear, it is disappointing that Oman never develops the practical implications of his criticism of the scientific industrial civilisation, see Chapter 6.

of awareness and apprehension. ¹. For that purpose he attempts to isolate and to examine the experience of apprehending individual objects in a general field of awareness. He recognises that we cannot reach back to a state of pure awareness, because recollection does not become operative until there is some individual apprehension to recall and a context by which to recall it. Therefore, its priority must be recognised from the fact that our earliest remembered apprehensions are always given within such a general field. Even the task of isolating apprehension requires no mean feat of imagination for mature men who have long since lost the direct flame of their apprehensions, because of the immediate and continual calls to comprehend and explain their environment. If apprehension of the world is to be understood, the task is to transport oneself by imagination back to the world of childhood, when the light of pure feeling was untarnished and unbroken by the intellectual necessities of later life.

" We can recall a time when we lived in a continuous, lively awareness with apprehension only as a brighter light always moving across its field, without ever keeping one object long in the foreground, and when comprehending did not trouble us.

" The rapidity, sureness, completeness and

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- (1) Oman has been criticised by Tennant for not giving adequate space to the analysis of scientific knowledge and devoting too much to knowledge of nature given in awareness and apprehension. See *Mind* 1932 op.cit. To say this is to infer that Oman is attempting in "The Natural and the Supernatural" to expound a balanced and well-rounded position. It is judged that this was never his intention. Rather that work concentrates on knocking the props under certain false emphases of modern thought and of reemphasising certain positive intuitions of Christian truth. He is not concerned with a balanced synthesis as for instance one finds in St. Thomas.

"penetration of apprehension at this stage are for us, in later years, almost inconceivable. The objects stand out uniquely in our memories, and what we now apprehend is vague in comparison, and, even so, largely dependent on this youthful experience." 1.

The nature of awareness and apprehension is also illuminated by the study of those masters of perception - the poets. In any great poet we find a remarkable ability for perceiving concrete reality as it is. Oman chooses Shakespeare for his analysis. "The difference between using Shakespeare in this connexion and, let us say, Hegel, is that, while both are thinking about experience, Shakespeare's thinking springs spontaneously out of perceiving and is more likely to illuminate the process than Hegel's thoughts which are dialectically introduced." 2.

In beginning his analysis of perception by examining the work of a supreme artist, Oman conforms with all that he has said about the appropriate method for theology. Only by starting from the fullest and richest that the philosopher knows and working back from that to its elements can we hope to understand perception at its more ordinary. To Oman the Cartesian method of starting with the minimally self-evident is nowhere more unsuitable than in the question of perception. The application of the Cartesian method to perception resulted in atomic sensationalism, the foundation stone of modern scepticism.

Thus in one of the truly brilliant passages in "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman analyses the art of Shakespeare and his own childhood consciousness. 3. Though

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.123.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. pp.132 -133.

(3) N. and S. op.cit. pp.128-143.

it is necessary to draw out in the following pages the epistemological conclusions of this passage, it must be admitted that in such a synopsis the flavour and originality of Oman's mind is lost.

The perception of the poet and that of the child are interfused by dominant intuitions of infinity. In both cases this intuition - because it is not grasped intellectually but is a baffled sense of infinity - is embodied in a symbol. With the child this embodiment took the form of an intuition of the endlessness of space. In the previous chapter the passage has been quoted at length in which Oman describes his childhood experience at the water's edge. Then as awareness was first breaking into acute apprehensions, there came to him a feeling of the infinity of space. In Shakespeare's perception the sense of infinity is embodied in an obsession with time, dominant throughout his imagery.

" With Shakespeare this burden of the sense of time has little to do with any idea of quantity, but it is a quality which comes very near to what we have called the undifferentiated holy. He does not speak of ages. Ancient and modern seem to have little meaning for him. Three hours suffice to express it, as when the fool says very wisely "it is ten o'clock, and but one hour ago it was nine and one hour hence it will be eleven". It is this tale of our ripening and our rotting, the tale of our terrible aloneness, which has in it the qualitative difference of the finite and infinite." 1.

Oman maintains that all ^{great} poets have some such dominant intuition of either space or time. Dante and Milton were obsessed with the idea of space.

This intuition of infinity interwoven in all true

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.131-132.

perception arises from the fact that in and with all our awareness there comes to us the sense of the holy. It is quite false then to talk of purely natural perception: from the first our perceptions are touched by the sense of something more than natural. We do not perceive the natural world as an independent entity which exists in its own right, but as a world dependent on and transfused with the supernatural. As in general awareness we reach out in appreciation to nature there arises a feeling of reverence for that upon which nature depends. ¹. Thus the child's and the poet's baffled intuitions of infinity are but attempts to embody and thereby begin to understand that sense of an infinitely holy environment, which has come to them in the clarity of their awareness.

" It is not a perceiving of the Supernatural in the Natural, but it is a perceiving of the Natural in the Supernatural, in the sense of a value which could have no lower origin." ².

It is in this childhood state then that persons are given those three unities which have already been described in the second chapter. ³. It is within these unities that all perception operates so that sense data are given rather as a language than as uncoordinated atomic sensations. ⁴. The sense of the holy through these unities in effect solves for Oman all the main problems of what Professor Laird has called cosmological theism as opposed

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- (1) Later in his work Oman identifies reverence more explicitly with the power to appreciate, see N. and S. op.cit. p.211.
 - (2) N. and S. op.cit. p.212.
 - (3) (1) a unity of environment as all one, (2) a unity of our individual minds as a unique system and (3) a unity of pure feeling relating our minds with environment.
 - (4) For Oman's discussion of this point see later in this chapter.

to axiological theism.¹ At the risk of repetition it must be regretted that Oman does not make clear just how imperfect is the inference by which these unities are derived from childhood consciousness. He makes no attempt to draw out his meaning at this point by comparing his position with any of the well-known idealisms. As has been insisted upon again and again, cosmological doubts do not seem to have plagued Oman's faith and therefore he is not greatly concerned with cosmological questioning in "The Natural and the Supernatural". There is something almost cavalier, however, about the way these unities are introduced in relation to our knowledge of nature and used to solve quickly problems of the first magnitude. As imperfect inferences their validity could only be demonstrated in terms of the whole position of which they are a part. It can certainly be admitted that that whole position is a remarkable and convincing one. Yet for the slow witted Oman could, at least, have included with the introduction of these unities a passage showing what a vast role they perform in his account of experience.

Thus despite all the individuality and concreteness of Shakespeare's perception we know that all he perceives is held together as belonging to one environment seen by the unique system that is his own mind, which has reached out to the world in one unified feeling of awareness.

So with the child:

"While my apprehensions of the countryside continually varied with sunshine and shadow, day and night, summer and winter, my general awareness of it was neither of a changing scene, nor of the aspect I preferred, nor was it of an average impression or of a composite picture, but of something one in all

(1) See J. Laird "Mind and Deity" Allen and Unwin London 1941, final chapter particularly.

"its moods and aspects, much like awareness of a friend. This general sustained aesthetic impulse, and not a series of individual impulses which had to be changed as attention moved from one object to another, caused the restlessly inquiring nature of attention." 1.

In the very intensity of his reverent awareness the child first reached some sense of himself as distinct from the world.

It must be repeated that these unities lying at the base of perception are fixed unities of feeling and as such distinct from the free unities we reach by reflexion. As we become free persons our intellects reach transcendental ideas or as Onan would call them, free unities of reflexion. However, it is by the fixed unities of feeling that we first know the world to be a sphere responsive to our activity.

Within this general field of awareness, "apprehension" lights up the concrete individuality of the world. So Shakespeare perceived a world in which each thing and each person was its own unique self. His mind was untroubled by the abstractions and generalisations that dim the glass of vision. Everything and every person had 'a local habitation and a name'. His particular genius lay in apprehension.

" This interest in the vast variety of human nature sprang from the clearness with which he saw everyone as an individual and his value just as a man. Working mainly with awareness and apprehension, he does not group men together by general conceptions and relations. His whole idea of tragedy depends on the sense that everyone is alone in the depths of his soul, with his own responsibility

" and destiny." 1.

So also with Oman as a child:

" The most noticeable feature of my earliest view of the world is of how minutely, definitely, decisively everything in it was individual. My language being an advanced Aryan tongue, I had abstract terms, and no doubt made some use of them. But they were luxuries and not necessities. That to their owner a flock was only sheep, which he did not know one from another, seemed to show an incredible blindness. The birds were too rapid and changing for personal acquaintance, but a flock of them was an object by itself, with its qualities of flight and grouping; and when birds were nearer and few enough for separate attention, they were always particular living creatures, each with some singularity of colour or form or behaviour. Life of every kind fascinated: and there was a different quality of apprehension of it which is lost when interests are in another direction and classification has to be used to save the trouble of individual apprehension."2.

As we feel for individual objects we come to value them rightly, and to value them rightly is to know them

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.130.
 Oman does not discuss here the difference between Shakespeare's knowledge of objects of nature and of other persons. Oman does not in fact in "The Natural and the Supernatural" concentrate on that difference between knowledge of natural objects and persons which has occupied much British philosophy since Cook Wilson, and which on the Continent has been more ably and imaginatively discussed by Professor Buber than by anyone else. This is probably because he had always assumed that difference in a way that those trained in and surrounded by the primacy of natural science did not. Presumably in his system we are given in sincere apprehension of other persons their proper value, so that if we follow that intuition in faithfulness in action we will come to know other persons as they truly are. For a brilliant mention of the subject see N. and S. op.cit. p.340.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. pp.133-134.

for what they are. Thus whereas in awareness the essence of right feeling is sensitiveness in which we reach out in reverent appreciation to all our environment, the prerequisite of right apprehension is sincerity, that ability to feel each particular object of nature for what it is. 1.

The chief quality of Shakespeare's art is sincerity. All else is subordinated to the overriding interest of seeing the world just as it is, of placing the appropriate value upon everything. This sincerity saves him from cultivating the merely pleasurable. Easy enjoyment or superficial beauty of form - the traps of the less sincere artist - do not tempt him from his essential task of seeing 'life steadily and seeing it whole'. His sincerity of feeling creates objectively true works of art.

So equally with the child:

" I cannot recall any memory of attending to anything because I liked it or turning away from it because I disliked it. On the contrary, in particular apprehensions, the conscious purpose of gaining pleasure or shunning pain was conspicuously absent, or at least it was over-ridden by something of general import which was much more powerful.

" It may, of course, be argued that the only possible motives are subjective pleasure and pain, whether we recognise them or not; and that when we say they are not, we ought only to say that youth has not reached the time of reflexion. But this is to settle a question of experience by a general

(1) See previous chapter.

"conclusion of comprehension, which is precisely what is here being challenged." 1.

Oman agrees with Goethe that we should ask the boys and the birds, rather than the philosophers or the scientists, how the cherries taste. And he adds that in their subjective apprehension of cherries would be found a truer objective description of cherries and their value in the whole scheme of nature than would be found in the categories of the plant biologist. Thus by apprehension we come to know nature as it is in itself. We know it as a hierarchy of beings whose varied comparative values we can make some attempt to gauge.

With the development of apprehension our attitude to nature is changed, for it is with apprehension that sacred values first make their appearance to consciousness, and as our wills respond to them we become free persons. From that moment, nature becomes less and less a realm that we contemplate in feeling and which gives us its varied comparative values, and becomes a realm which by free ideas we can manipulate for our own purposes - be they of the sacred or of our own convenience.

As we begin to apprehend objects, there flashes up into consciousness a vast hierarchy of values - the

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- (1) E. and S. op.cit. p.135. These descriptions of Oman's childhood cannot be passed by without once again comparing them to St. Augustine's description of his childhood. To refer ahead to Chapter 6, it does not seem inappropriate to remark that Oman remains agnostic about the dogma of original sin. The sincere and passionate decency that rings throughout his account of childhood cannot however be accepted as a universal phenomenon among men. In "The Office of the Ministry" (see Bibliography p.i.) Oman remarked that man should keep his guilts and sins to himself. Perhaps it is just this motive that keeps him silent about the terrible side of childhood. This may be doubted, however, for in his accounts of adult life there remains this fine straight faith. In writing about forgiveness, as the crown of all human activities, his examples are of the need to forgive rather than of the need to be forgiven.

comparative values of the natural given in feeling through the senses, and the ideal values of the supernatural given from the sense of the holy. By these we deal with the natural. It cannot be considered that in Oman's system there is any discontinuity between ideal and natural values as they are given in sincere feeling. He explicitly affirms that the higher values of the natural manifest the ideal. The discontinuity between them (on which he has based his most important distinction 'natural-supernatural') lies in the response that the will makes to them. The ideal values are of a categorical obligation which demands allegiance from our wills at all costs and above all bargains; the natural values are merely matters of expediency or convenience for our wills. ¹.

In his account of awareness and apprehension Oman is laying the epistemological basis for that tension between duality and unity which is the fundamental philosophic characteristic of his theology of persons. "The unities of perception" he writes, "explain both the breaking up of the Supernatural and the impulse never set aside of thinking it as one." ². To Oman the unity of relation between mind and environment is the abiding force that never lets us set aside the impulse to think all our experience together as belonging to one holy universe - even at the moments when the results of our misused freedom make that universe appear a chaos. Yet in the very awareness in which we are given that relation we are first given a dim

(1) In the discussion here of how apprehension gives us values by which we deal with the natural, what has been said about Oman's elusiveness on this subject in the last chapter must be repeated.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. Appendix 'C', p.477.

sense of ourselves as persons, felt over against That upon Which we depend. As our wills become operative in apprehension so we truly discover our own essence as autonomy and at the same time realise That upon Which we depend to be truly He upon Whom we depend. Thus through awareness and apprehension we are given both the feeling that binds us to dependence upon God and the unavoidable distinction in reality between our wills and God's. Once given both the unifying feeling of dependence and the discovery of moral autonomy, straight is the gate, according to Oman, between two dangers. We may fall back into the safety of the pure feeling of dependence, in disregard of our autonomy, so that the particularities of our natural appointments appear as illusion, or on the other hand, we may so concentrate on our independence as to interpret it as successive acts of atomic self-determination, so that we loose the sense of religious dependence and nature becomes something to be proudly denied, not a realm in which we can live in joyful service of Our Father's Will. It is between this Scylla and Charybdis that Onan sails to bring home his prophetic monotheism.

With the appearance of sacred values, free persons are no longer in the position merely of receiving values from nature, but must impose ~~our~~ values on it. Two questions as to the character of nature arise from this new relationship. First, what can we learn about it from the fact that we can manipulate it by comprehensions and explanations? Secondly, what do we learn about it from the fact that all our attempts at living by the sacred take the form of some dealing with the natural? Indeed, what must nature be if we only receive the highest revelation of it when we use it under the power of the sacred?

Comprehension and explanation can give us little information about the character of nature, as compared

with awareness and apprehension. As has been said, this is because we are imposing our meaning on nature not trying to receive its own. To live at all we must do this. Yet nature appears to us as an endless variety of concrete phenomena. Therefore, we have to learn to select, omit, arrange, arrest the given, so that we can control it. The most important device of the understanding is the scientific law, because the ideas of quantity are both the simplest and most useful way of managing our environment. In the most abstract of all abstractions, number, in which all qualities of an object are excluded other than the bare fact that it is a unit, it must be remembered that we are isolating the object in our intellects in a way that it is never isolated in our experience. Therefore, as scientific law is determined by our finitude and its own purposes and not by what is given, it is of little use in providing us with the information on which to conceive nature aright.

" Science serves its purpose precisely by its limitation. Its justification is that it extends a process of arresting and stereotyping which has already begun in perception; that it enlarges man's practical management of his world by isolating quantity from all else, both the mind that knows and the varied meaning by which it knows; and that it goes behind all meaning the world manifests to find the means whereby we can make the world speak our meaning. Thus it is an effective instrument precisely because it is not fitted to provide a cosmology." 1.

" Comprehension reduces an object to a skeleton of its purpose, and explanation reduces this to a formula of its forces. Only by recovering from

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.257.

"awareness and apprehension what has been dropped by the way is there any return to the whole object in its whole setting, which alone manifests its meaning and value. Science being simply judgment and reasoning applied to the natural world, the result is the same reduction by the understanding of everything to a diagram and the explanation of it to a formula: and from this there is no way back to a concrete world." 1.

Oman is extraordinarily vigorous in his indictments of those who seek in science the basis for their cosmologies. He traces out the influence of that tendency not only in the sophisticated rationalist philosophies but in the cosmologies of the popular mind. The way in which nineteenth century men took a useful practical instrument - the Newtonian law of inertia - and turned it into a determining cosmological principle, he compares brilliantly with the way the men of the ~~fifth~~^{sixth} century B.C. isolated self-determination from all else and so reached a rigid cosmological principle of "the exact equivalence between action and award". To Oman these are examples of how speculation runs riot by fixing itself on one aspect of experience. 2.

" Like the notion of interpreting the order of the world by the idea of a perfectly equal bargain, this notion of interpreting it by the experience of exerting effort in proportion to the weight to be moved was so level to the common understanding that it penetrated to multitudes of persons whose knowledge of science never went beyond the encyclopaedia and the popular text-book, and,

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.251.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. Chapter XIII. for a further discussion of this comparison see Chapter 4.

"through them to many more who knew nothing about science. As third-hand information is the '*fides implicita*' by which the atmosphere of an age is created, the verdicts of scientists came to be regarded as infallible; and the scientist, in spite of himself, was affected by this diffused influence of his own ideas and came to regard them as much more clear-cut than his science showed them to be. But as what is infallible must be clear-cut, what is clear-cut is apt to appear infallible. So the most modest scientist fell into the habit of speaking '*ex cathedra*'. " 1.

In these days when so many have been awakened by the strident voice of atomic energy, such indictments appear from all sorts and conditions of men. It seems fair to Oman to remember that his attack on the pretensions of natural science was made twenty years ago and by a man who had been educated in the nineteenth century.

The fact of nature's transparency to the categories of the understanding does, however, teach us something of what it is in itself. The scientist omits and selects and arrests, but he does not do this at random but in respect of a given reality. As the categories are effective instruments for manipulating nature they must correspond with something in the order of reality. Oman's belief is that the rigid quantitative scheme with which the scientist deals belongs to the symbols behind meaning about which we can have knowledge. 2. If nature had not this fixed symbolic structure about which we can have knowledge it would not be possible for free persons to impose their meaning upon nature.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.232.)

(2) For a clarification of what Oman means by the symbols behind meaning see later in this chapter.

Thus as soon as we become persons we find that nature is no longer to be conceived as simply that realm through which we are given our intuitions of the true, the beautiful and the good, but as a sphere to be redeemed by our faithfulness in action under those ideals. Faithfulness in action is as much a prerequisite of our knowledge of nature as it is of our knowledge of supernature. Our knowledge of the supernatural takes the form of dealing with some given situation in the natural, as for instance our families and our work. Thus a true conception of the natural is only to be reached as under ideal values we can possess it in joy yet deny its control in the name of the Cross. The final words of "The Natural and the Supernatural" are: "Denying the world does not mean that we do not possess it in courageous use of all its possibilities, but only that we do not allow it to possess us." 1.

In faithfulness to the values of the supernatural we are able to reach the highest vision of the natural - as a sphere which God has given to His free children for their redeeming work. Such a conception of the natural cannot, of course, be static, for it is a view of nature ever-deepening as we make our journey into the mind of God. Also its corollary must be that as the natural is all dependent on God and also a sphere for our activity, when we try to manipulate it for ends contrary to the true, the beautiful and the good, it will be turned into a sphere of calamity. Yet that capacity to be calamitous makes more evident than ever God's care for man, in using nature to draw us back to Himself.

Oman in the optimism of "The Natural and the Supernatural" does not lay much stress on this corollary. One passage may however be quoted:

" With this independence, we do not return from

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.471.

"the possibility of choosing the higher merely to the lower. If we renounce its victory, we fall back, not to the wise instincts, the unconcern and fitting action of the lower creatures, but to positive falsehood, and gross delights, and doings that are vicious, and the deliberate sacrifice of others to our passions and our greeds. In short, we return to the unnatural, not the natural. We only abide in the Supernatural as we choose it, but this shows that the Natural is one thing as steps upward, and another, even at the same point, as a glissade downward." 1.

Here two practical difficulties arise, Oman neither discusses the principles governing the tension between man's possession and denial of the natural, nor does he discuss the relation between the natural as a glissade downwards and the fact that men are given the natural as an environment already manipulated by other men. 2. Oman's criticism of the use of scientific knowledge for cosmological purposes is valid as far as it goes, but it does not touch the more difficult question of when the scientist's activity (or for that matter the artist's) of possessing the natural must be given up in the name of the Cross. As Oman does not espouse a Kantian position with its universalist rigorous morality, presumably the Christian must use his intuition as to when to deny and when to

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.291. see also a short remark about this on p.450.

(2) The second point is only mentioned here, as Oman's failure of understanding of man's corporate dependence will be discussed in Chapter six. The first point will also be discussed there in the larger context of what may be called functional and personalist ethics.

possess. Is this related to our judgments of given historical circumstances? If so, Oman gives no account of how that judgment operates in and towards those varying circumstances. It may be wrong to ask of a philosophy of religion principles governing such practical issues, but as Oman insists that religion is concerned with a right attitude to environment, his philosophy of religion does depend on just such a discussion of the operation of the practical judgment towards the natural. This lack is felt here because such a discussion is not found elsewhere in his writings.

- III- -

Oman's concept of nature may be further defined in terms of the analogy between language and perception to which he returns often throughout "The Natural and the Supernatural". This analogy does not add anything in principle to what has been given in the four types of knowing. He uses it however not only to illustrate his own position but as the basis for his criticism of a wide variety of false theories of perception. It is clearly a useful analogy for one who is attempting to demonstrate through an analysis of experience why the Christian is justified in using personalist categories about the natural.

Before discussing this analogy, it must be remarked that in his main use of it Oman is more guilty than usual both of a failure to make explicit the dependence of his thought on faith, and of an elusiveness in exposition.¹ He introduces this analogy without

(1) N. and S. op.cit. particularly Chapter X.

making clear that it is dependent on a theology of persons; he concludes the analogy without clarifying how it in turn can enlighten such a theology. Indeed in "The Natural and the Supernatural" as a whole, only in the last chapters of the third and fourth parts does he properly use personalist phraseology about the natural. As these two chapters are at the end of two discussions, the introduction of personalist phraseology in them alone could easily lead to the implication that Oman is deducing the personalist character of nature from his account of experience, rather than showing what such a faith means. It is almost as if he ~~is~~ ^{were} falling into that very Cartesianism which he so deplores. There seems an almost unconscious lack of frankness in these chapters, which is so foreign to the general spirit of Oman's writings. It also leads to much greater difficulty in the reader following his argument than can be considered a necessity of the subject. The reading of "The Natural and the Supernatural" may be compared to a journey in a boat down a river. At certain points the boat ambles past well-known and rather obvious country; then it dashes past exciting new territory so that the traveller gets only hints of what the country is about. 1.

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- (1) It is not necessary here to repeat again Oman's motives for refraining from the use of personalist categories. His work at this point may be compared to Professor Farmer's "The World and God". Nisbet and Co., London 1935. In that work the relationship between this analogy and a theology of persons is carefully worked out. As Professor Farmer was a pupil, a friend and a colleague of Oman's, the connection between the work of the two men is evident. It is perhaps not impudent to remark that Professor Farmer belongs to a generation more free than Oman from the great weight of awe about the language of the scientist that held men even when unrecognised. Certainly "The Natural and the Supernatural" would have been an even greater book if the categories of the Biblical tradition had been used more openly.

Oman approaches the analogy between language and perception by way of a criticism of the thought of Berkeley. He judges that in Berkeley's work nature is considered solely as the language of God to His children. Oman writes of Berkeley's 'divine visual language'. 1. Therefore, in his criticism of Berkeley is seen the extent to which Oman believes that this analogy is valid. As far as agreement with Berkeley goes he writes:

" Berkeley has not been shown to be wrong in thinking, as one of his critics expresses it, that 'sense experience has the intelligibility of a language whose conventions are one and all determined by a spirit akin to our own'; and his argument against a reality that is matter without meaning is valid to this day. " 2.

Oman divides his criticism of Berkeley into three points. (1) The symbolism of speech may be entirely arbitrary, whereas the symbolism of perception is entirely fixed by the nature of things. As this is so, Oman asserts, but does not argue, that Berkeley has no right to assume that in God's mind the symbols may be as arbitrary as speech is in ours. (2) Berkeley overlooks the difference between the context of speech and ~~that~~ ~~context~~ of perception. The context of speech has only to do with the context of thought, while the context of perception has to do with the consistency of our whole environment. Oman uses the words 'illusion' and 'thoughts imposed from moment to moment' as descriptions of what is implied in Berkeley's description of God's activity. He then asserts that God cannot be considered to act in this way. (3) Berkeley overlooks the fact that nature must

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.170.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.170.

be considered to have significance for itself apart from its meaning for us.

To criticise Oman once again, his remarks about Berkeley illustrate well the difficulties that arise from keeping the language of Christian theology so well hidden. For it is only in terms of the theological implications of his position that Berkeley's epistemology is exposed as inadequate. For example, Oman asserts that nature has significance in and for itself and that Berkeley's position does not take account of that fact. Yet in saying that, Oman makes no mention of the problem of theodicy. Is there any reason, however, apart from theodicy, why nature must be considered as having meaning in and for itself? In the same way Oman's use of the word "illusion" about Berkeley's conception of nature has the ring of a naive realist, because it does not discuss the questions of error and sin against which such idealism must be criticised. This is not in the least to imply that Oman did not recognise the foregoing remarkably clearly. It is to criticise him once again for his silence. It is particularly disappointing in that Berkeley could have been used as the opportunity of bringing out into the open the irreconcilability of modern idealism with Christian theism, which is assumed throughout the work. It could at the same time have made clear what is slurred over in Oman's thought, namely that nature can only be given to men mysteriously, indeed arbitrarily, because God's purposes in creation are not confined merely to man. Oman could thus have related the necessity of nature being given to us in this arbitrary manner, and faith's concern with moral victory over nature, rather than speculations about it. ¹.

(1) Oman brings out this more clearly than anywhere else in a review of "Experience and its Modes", Michael Oakeshott, see J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XXXV pp.314-316.

Oman proceeds to the positive use of his analogy between language and perception. He asserts that because language and the senses (except for touch and its dependent taste) are similar in that they are both employed to give us knowledge at a distance, we may consider it likely that our power of interpreting symbols was developed first in perception. That is, speaking and writing developed from this ability. Therefore as we know something of the primitive development of language we can infer certain conclusions about perception. Such an indirect approach to explaining the character of perception is necessary, because the sheer "givenness" of pure perception makes it a mystery. 1.

The central theory which Oman uses about primitive language is that primitive men had difficulty in using symbols freely. Symbols at this stage expressed a whole context of meaning. Primitive men found it difficult to isolate one aspect of that context from the rest. • Men's use of symbols was determined by the fact that they could only operate within a fixed unity of feeling. So strong was this determination by the context of meaning that we find among primitive people that memories and imaginings are confused with perceptions, and even words with conceptual significance confused with percepts. Only

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- (1) At the risk of carping too often over small points, Oman does not make nearly clear enough that even if his major premise be granted (that language developed from perception) in his minor premise (that the development of language among primitive men followed such and such a course) he is on extremely tentative ground. Oman speaks about primitive language with an authority that for all his scholarship must be judged unwise. He switches quickly in his argument from direct knowledge to inference, seemingly without making any distinction. This justification of the unities given in the sense of the holy from the facts of anthropology indeed clarifies what Oman means by those unities. But the limitations of such a justification are not made clear. See particularly N. and S. op.cit. pp.172-176.

as men developed free unities of reflexion by the use of free ideas could situations be analysed and parts of speech developed to express the results of that analysis. Only then was any sophisticated use of symbolism possible.

Assuming then that primitive speech is a gradual development from perception, from this analysis of primitive language we can tell something about how we perceive nature. Perception takes place in the same fixed (context of meaning as does primitive language. It takes place within a context of fixed ideas. By fixed ideas Oman means ideas that cannot be taken out of the context in which they are given. That is to say, they are at once called up by a particular situation and in turn call up the whole setting in which they were first experienced, as well as other ideas associated with similar situations. As ideas they are fixed because it is impossible to perceive outside them. Man attains to free ideas when in action he explains his environment. With free ideas he can analyse his perceptions so that, for instance, he can isolate individual sensations from the general field in which they are given. It must be remembered, however, that when doing that he is no longer perceiving nature, but manipulating it by the intellect. Perception has ceased to exist. As soon then as we are manipulating nature by free ideas we are no longer receiving from it in contemplation the values it has for us.

Oman illustrates what he means by fixed ideas by the two most important of them - space and time. Space and time are the most fixed of all ideas because no experience outside them is possible. We cannot escape them, as we can other fixed ideas by dealing with our whole environment and thereby achieving free ideas. They arise from our perceiving as pure qualities of consciousness. They are forms of our awareness of nature. Only later as we achieve free ideas can we conceive them as quantities

which we manipulate. Oman is particularly positive in criticising that theory of space wherein it is conceived as an abstract idea reached by generalising from the fact that each individual sensation is extended. Space is a fixed idea within which all perception and, therefore, all individual sensations are given. ¹.

In dealing with the role of fixed ideas in perception Oman is obscure about one point. What is the ontological status of either space or time? He writes:

"The enormous impressiveness of space, both for sense and imagination, must represent a quality which belongs to the meaning of the universe." ².

Twice he uses the phrase that fixed ideas are determined by the order of environment. ³. In discussing Kant's epistemology of nature he is always sternly realist in contradicting him. To Oman it is a necessity of his theology that we know nature as it is in itself and not as appearance. ⁴. He makes the comment, necessary for any theism, that space and time are not the matrix of reality, but that does not go far in dispelling agnosticism about their ontological status. ⁵.

To sum up, Oman uses the analogy between perception

- (1) Oman returns to this point again and again in opposition to William James' and James Ward's psychologies.
- (2) N. and S. op.cit. p.183.
- (3) N. and S. op.cit. p.155 and p.183. It is difficult to see what he means by this phrase.
- (4) See particularly N. and S. op.cit. pp.152-155.
- (5) To refer ahead once again to Chapter 5, it may be said that Oman is never much taken up with the idea of Christian history and therefore has none of that obsession with time that is found for instance in St. Augustine. This is true, despite all that he alleges about Shakespeare's obsession with time.

and language to clarify the way in which our perception of nature is given within the fixed unities of feeling in the holy. We do not perceive nature as isolated psychological events determined by we know not what, but as one coordinated stream of meaning coming from one ordered environment. All the vast and varied individuality of nature comes to us within a context of fixed ideas which are determined by the fact that nature is itself ordered. Perception can then best be compared to a dialogue into which we can always join, by good-will on both sides, though we have not known the beginning of that dialogue nor the end. Thus perception fits into Oman's personalist account of experience. It is the ordered way we are given nature, itself the mediator to us of the immediacy of the Father's Will.

In his account of the appearance of nature to consciousness Oman devotes much space to the discussion of sensation, not because what he says positively about it adds greatly to his epistemology but because he wishes to present an alternative to atomic sensationalism. The Humian account of sensation he believes to be the sheet anchor of most modern agnosticism. From atomic sensation, as a supposedly clear and distinct premise, is deduced mechanist cosmologies which deny even the biologist's teleology. Because sensation must be ever a mystery there is no refutation of such a position except by indirect means. To repeat, what Oman particularly dislikes about the metaphysical premise of atomic sensationalism is its pride in denying validity to other visions of nature, such as the artist's or the saint's. Its claim to be empirical he considers nonsense, for how can we tell anything of the character of sensations without assumptions.

In reaching his own position on sensation, Oman begins from two assumptions that must be reconciled. On

the one hand he maintains that from what he has already said about perception it may be assumed that sensation is "A particular aspect of the whole unified feeling responding to a particular aspect of a whole unified environment."¹

On the other hand it cannot be doubted that between the mind and its object there are both physiological and physical phenomena. Oman judges that from the present state of science both the physical phenomena of our environment and the physiological phenomena of our brain and nerves take the form of systems of vibration. The question immediately arises, what is the relationship between these two assumptions. What is the relationship between this double system of vibrations and the fact that we perceive nature as one continuous meaning? What is the relation between sensations and these systems of vibration?

Oman contends that sensations are not direct effects of these physical vibrations but are interpretations of them within a system of meaning. Thus the physiological vibrations of our body are determined by this system of meaning and the physical system of vibrations in nature is determined by the meaning of nature as a whole. It must be repeated that Oman does not hope to prove such a contention - clearly an impossible task. He could give up believing that nature is a unified whole and fall back into a realism such as Bertrand Russell's; he could deny the reality of the system of vibrations and take up an idealist position - something like Kant's. But since, for theological reasons, quite outside the question of perception, he cannot accept either of these positions, he maintains both these assumptions. in his position.

Oman's uncompromising realism is seen here in his attitude to the state of modern science. What is given

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.185.

by science he accepts as telling us of things as they are in themselves. Yet with that acceptance goes little discussion of the status of these physical vibrations in reality. Here Oman's practical attitude is once more evident. A discussion of the status of such things is not a deep concern of faith. Such vibrations are a necessity if the world is to be given to us as a reasonable environment, and that is all that concerns us.

Oman brings forward evidence which he considers can only be understood in the light of some such position as this. He first asserts as a fact that man develops sensations only in response to some interest. They are not automatically given. A particular sensation appears when man, interested in some aspect of his environment, develops the sense through which that aspect can manifest itself. For example, primitive man was so engaged in making a living that he had little interest in nature as beautiful and, therefore, had little appreciation of the colour blue, which has small practical utility. Evidence of this fact is that primitive people had no distinct word for that colour. 1. The second point is that sensations are not given to us as quantitatively measurable intensities of pleasure and pain, but as qualitatively distinguishable feelings. Indeed by means of the understanding, that is by importing into them standards of measurement from the object that evokes them, it is possible to consider them quantitatively. But in so isolating them, they cease to be sensations as given in experience. Oman says this is a fact, but it is clearly as much theory as the Humean position. Moreover this abstraction of sensations from their context interferes arbitrarily with the unbroken flow of time

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- (1) Since weather is presumably of importance in the lives of primitive men, it is surprising that the colours of sea and sky should not have been of great practical interest.

in which all sensations come to us. Oman does not labour this point that had been made so brilliantly by his contemporary Bergson. The third point is that the less sensations are considered as subjective emotions, the more they give us objective information. In pure perception we are not conscious of the sensation "white" but rather that we are looking at a piece of paper. When we isolate the sensation white, we cease to apprehend the piece of paper.

Oman asserts that none of these facts can be reconciled with an account of sensation as atomic events. They can, however, be fitted into his realism of the holy. Therefore he asserts the following account of sensation:

" Sensations have meaning because they are in a context. Thus, even if the individual sensations have a more direct relation to their object than we know, the deeper reason why they have meaning is that they are in a system of meaning, somewhat in the same way as words are, and so are determined, not by pleasure or pain in themselves, but by an interest that governs their whole activity and makes them effective as response and not as subjective feeling." 1.

" If all perceiving be of this nature, at the frontier of the individual there is a system of symbols of vibration without and a corresponding system of sensations interpreting them within, and the significance of the individual frontier is that knowledge can pass it only as our meaning. Thus knowing is not knowledge of an unknown external cause, but is knowledge as we so interpret that all our meaning is the actual meaning of our environment." 2.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.199.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.175.

- IV -

To sum up it cannot be said that in "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman embarks on that detailed epistemological analysis in terms of an incisive technical vocabulary, which marks the classical epistemologists of the rationalist school. His greatness is not in a deduction of the categories of our knowledge of nature, as they are given to us in the varying forms of consciousness, nor in relating that deduction to a unified metaphysical system. Even his denial that traditional idealism cannot be reconciled to a Christian theism only appears as a subsidiary conclusion of his main purpose. That purpose is to hammer home the right attitude of the Christian to nature - namely, that joy in the world that can praise God in His creation and yet is not so taken up with the world that it cannot recognise a purpose that transcends that natural. Only in such an attitude can nature be seen as it is and only by seeing nature as it is can such an attitude be possible. Oman is concerned with demonstrating how the vision of nature as a "school for immortal spirits" is given, and how with any less glorious vision our hope must be vain. ¹.

As he puts it in the last chapter:

" The Natural need not all be personal. But only if it all have personal meaning and personal purpose, responding to us as we attain personal insight, personal values, personal independence of action, has the idea of God or of man any content that would enable us to speak of God as a father who cannot be separated from his children, or of man as having his hope in the love from which death cannot separate because life cannot." ².

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.460.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. pp.465-466.

Indeed often that purpose is not made clear and its implications are not drawn out, but by and large the account of this vision is remarkable. 1.

To show how reconciliation and revelation are reciprocal and how our knowledge of God and the world are inseparably bound together, Oman concentrates on reiterating the centrality of sincerity of feeling and faithfulness in action. Here Oman must be praised for the description of essentials, that had been so often forgotten in the philosophy of his day. He does not consider "The Natural and the Supernatural" a subtle grammar of experience wherein details are worked out, but rather a prophetic reminder that these are indeed the essentials of the Christian life. To illustrate them in an age dominated by the visions of the scientist, he holds high the vision of the artist as an archetype of what is open to all conditions of men. He shows how the vision of the scientist and indeed of the artist must finally be subordinated to that of the saint. It must be insisted once more, however, he is not clear about the principles by which that subordination of insights in possession and denial of the natural is to take place. In achieving his purposes Oman sweeps away much theory about nature that might corrupt men's vision of it.

Thus through his account of these insights and through his criticism of theory Oman moves forward to his own conception of nature. He expresses this better in ^a passage from "Honest Religion" than anywhere else in his works.

" Faith in the Father is our Lord's view of Nature.

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- (1) Oman for instance never makes the important point of the necessity of such an independent sphere if there is to be personal intercourse between God's Will and ours. Neither does he make enough of how a Christian theism can explain the arbitrary quality of nature in a way that idealist accounts cannot.

" The uniformity of Nature is often taken to be the uniformity of indifference, behind which lies the assumption that God should be a moral governor determining everything by exact material award according to merit and demerit. But to Jesus it is the uniformity of the wise goodness of a Father who sends His rain equally upon the just and the unjust, the evil and the good, and whose highest perfection it is to be kind to the unthankful and evil.

" This is not difficult to accept, either as fine sentiment or as the hard idea that whatever happens is good for us, nature having a very large family and no leisure to coddle them. But our Lord's view is far nearer the poet's seeing, in the silent face of Nature, unutterable love. And when it is granted us to look for moments into her face with something of the poet's eyes, who then sees merely the dead processes of the laboratory? But, while one who saw the lilies of the field clothed more gloriously than Solomon did not lack the poet's eye; for him the way in which this faith can truly come home to us is by being perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect, not in an austere and faultless morality, but in knowing no limit to the forgiveness of wrong, or prayer for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. When this is accepted, that the uniformity of Nature is a wise love, can hardly be doubted. Anyhow, it is a matter of attitude not inference or argument." 1.

CHAPTER IV.

The attempt must now be made to understand how Oman conceives the supernatural - call it if you will God - in personal categories, and his justification of such categories. 1. This is the crown which all Oman's epistemological description is intended to bejewel. He holds before men the Biblical "philosophical theology" as a more adequate account of experience than the impersonalism which always seems to arise from thought detached from the Scriptures. As a preliminary to this attempt, an exposition of how Oman conceives personality in man must first be given. As should have been clear from the foregoing chapters, Oman's concept "nature and supernature" is inextricably linked to his concept "man". For the purposes of exposition it was necessary to proceed from an undefined concept of "the person" to whom all environment is related, even though in the exposition of those environments the character of that concept must have tentatively appeared. To reverse the process, Oman's doctrine of personality will now be discussed directly, and nature and supernature only in relation to it.

To do this ^{is} in fact to relate the vocabulary of "The Natural and the Supernatural" to that of "Grace and

- (1) On page 342 of "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman writes: "We can speak of God as a person who, if he is not the Supernatural, is manifest through it." This is, however, the only place in his work where he employs this language of intermediaries or demiurges. At all other points it is implied that the supernatural is a synonym for God. Therefore the implication of the above quotation will not be discussed. Even though Oman's attempt to rescue the Darwinian term "environment" from the clutches of the naturalist and make it serve a Christian purpose may not be considered worth while, the phrase supernatural will be used in this chapter.

Personality". This is necessary because in "The Natural and the Supernatural" personality is not directly defined. "Grace and Personality" is, on the other hand, a careful discussion of his a priori intuition of man's essence and God's - distinct but inseparable as the ground of each other. So to bring in this new vocabulary must inevitably lead to yet more repetition, as the questions of personality and its environments are closely related. As has been said, Oman's writings as a whole do not cover a wide area but are the vigorous repetition of what he considers the simple basis of the Christian faith.

Here at the question "What is man?" we are at the centre of Oman's thought. He stands in that great line of Christian philosophers - the greatest of whom is St. Augustine - who, in periods in which rationalism has broken down an ancient tradition, criticise the claims of sceptical reason in the name of an intuition of man's essence, which shows the place of reason within a rounded account of man. St. Augustine demanded from classical "scientia" a justification of the claims of reason, and attempted to show how those claims could only find their right place within the acceptance of Christian "sapientia"; so Oman asserts that the rationalists of modern Europe have detached reason from its proper role as a function of human personality, and therefore he attempts to reinstate in philosophy a more adequate account of man as a whole.¹ Nothing is indeed more attractive in Oman than the fact that all questions of philosophy are judged

(1) In comparing Oman to St. Augustine there is no intention to convey that their intuitions of personality were similar. They do not see the tragic in the same light. In mentioning St. Augustine the present writer may be allowed to express a debt to his compatriot and teacher C.W. Cochrane. Anything that is said is but a poor echo of the latter's "Christianity and Classical Culture" Oxford University Press, N.Y. 1944.

in relation to his imaginative and shrewd intuition of man's predicament. This may sometimes hold his thought back from certain detailed problems, but it means that his philosophy is always truly Christian in the sense that the problem of faith is primary.

This refusal on the one hand to reduce anthropology to an empirical science and on the other hand to detach theology from anthropology and so take "a flying leap to the Word of God" is always typical of Oman. ¹. Such a method has always been criticised for falling into contradiction. Indeed before this contradiction all traditions of thought (e.g., the medieval) seem to fall. The Christian philosopher must assert a knowledge of principles despite the evidently necessary incompleteness of our knowledge. Yet for the purposes of practice has the Christian any alternative? Must he not resort both to the method of clarifying his idea of God by holding it against an idea of his own limitations ~~and~~ ^{and} understanding his limitations by holding them against the idea of God? At least it should be repeated that Oman does neither accept the "anthropocentric" position that denies the possibility of the transcendental application of logic, nor the "theocentric" position that succumbs to the judgment that human reason is utterly corrupt. Therefore the account of personality that follows may be considered a proper philosophic activity.

One caveat, however obvious, must be added. Since Oman uses the word personality so much, and since it is so popular in much theology today, care must be taken that it does not become an Aladdin's lamp, magically producing what is wanted. There is nothing necessary in Oman's terminology.

(1) Article on Schleiermacher. J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXX p.402.

For whereas in his later work the term 'individual' is used to express an inadequate view of man failing to express his relation to nature and supernature, in an early work the terms are reversed, 'personality' being considered empty and inadequate, 'individual' appropriate and full. In an article published in 1906 Oman wrote that Ritschl contends "not only against a catholicism which bears down the individual by the weight of the institution, but also against a mysticism which reduces all individuals to mere personality, upon which a Spirit, Himself mere personality, operates not as individual with individual, but as abstract spiritual force upon abstract spiritual substance." 1.

- II -

Oman maintains that man's essence is his autonomy.

" This autonomy appears in the essential quality of our experience, that it is self-conscious; in the essential quality of our aims, that they are self-directed; in the essential quality of our acts, that they are self-determined. Yet, we must beware of regarding these as separate autonomies, because much futile and misleading discussion arises from thus isolating the problems of mind. They are merely aspects of the one independence of a moral person." 2.

(1) Article "Individual" Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, op.cit. p.816. It would be interesting to know what caused Oman to reverse the meaning of these words. No evidence as to this point has been found.

(2) G. and P. op.cit. pp.42 -43..

Oman would not stand with Kant in the belief that self-determination is to be inferred from "the only fact" of ethics, the moral law. Consciousness of determining issues is the most immediate of all experiences. With it go two other experiences which can only be explained in relation to it; (1) our consciousness of responsibility for our actions and (2) our remorse for our actions. Responsibility is the more fundamental of these two, for how apart from it can we explain any continuous consciousness of self?

" We stand with our faces toward our world and our backs towards ourselves, and only catch fleeting glimpses of ourselves over our shoulders; and the continuous personal memory which gives continuity to our experience, is not due to an unbroken vision of ourselves, but to uninterrupted ascription of our doings to our own responsibility." 1.

Oman divides into three types those speculations which have denied our self-determination: (1) the claim of the scientist that all reality is explainable in causal terms; (2) the secular philosopher's reduction of will to determination by motive and character; (3) the theologian's denial of freedom in the name of the omniscience and omnipotence of God. Though Oman throughout his works tries to bring out the consequences of such positions, in fact the basis of his refutation is as simple as Dr. Johnson's. What right has proud speculation, in its desire to explain the world consistently, to deny what is evident from the actions of all men (the speculators' included) and which Oman himself finds immediately given? Here Oman's position may be once more compared to that of the modern phenomenologist.

Thus personality must primarily be considered autonomous will. The mystery of that autonomy, the difficulties that it raises for speculation must not lead us to doubt its reality. Oman stands with the central Christian tradition

(1) G. and P. op.cit. p.46.

in affirming: "Quid nisi voluntates?" "Will is one with ourselves as no other possession can be identified with the possessor, and there can be no personal relation with us except through it." 1. In another connection he writes:

" Through all those changes, (life's vicissitudes) responsibility continues springing from a deep and permanent essence of the soul which the acts of freedom alone can alter. " 2.

In insisting upon that responsibility, the mystery of which may be described in the traditional phrase "the freedom of the will", it is necessary to insist that our autonomy is not confined to mere self-determination.

"Freedom is not a succession of independent acts of freedom, but is a clearer, surer, more steadfast choice of the world in which we are free, in feeling as well as will." 3.

In stating that Oman conceives personality in terms of an autonomy of insight as well as an autonomy of volition, there is no need to repeat here what has been said earlier about the interdependence of the sense of the holy and the judgment of the sacred. According to Oman's firm realism, our sense of reverence gives us immediate insight into the mind of God.

Whereas in "The Natural and the Supernatural" the relationship between morality and religion is discussed in the cool air of epistemological language, in "Grace and Personality" the reconciliation of the two terms of its title is attempted by an exhortation to persons to find their proper end in the Christian life. It would not be true to say that Oman considered the Christian understanding

(1) G. and P. op.cit. p.46.

(2) Article "Freedom" in "The Elements of Pain and Conflict" op.cit.p.70.

(3) H. and S. op.cit. p.309.

of grace and personality as essentially paradoxical. For to use the language of paradox about Christianity must never imply that there are not graver antinomies about man in the secular account of pure morality. Though leaving men with mystery the interdependence of grace and personality allows them to understand facts about man of which secular morality gives no account. If the secular moralist denies these facts, Oman would simply appeal to those phenomena, and ask how apart from them man's destiny can be anything but despair. Oman's concept of man, like all others is not only an exhortation to action but an appeal to what man has been.

The first fact is that human action is not only concerned with doing what is known already to be right but with an expansion of vision as to what is the right. The second fact is that the noblest reaches of moral action are always penetrated with the sense of joy.

" While rules may determine actions, and this, in certain circumstances, may be important, mere negative rules of 'touch not, taste not, handle not', are not, as much experience beside the Apostle's shows, of any value against the disturbing clamour even of carnal appetite, and still less of what he calls 'coveting', which is the real insubordination of ourselves to ourselves. And with these lusts of the eye and pride of life, we must take the fear of reprobation and the desire for approval, and all that dominates us as individuals who are members of a herd. Victory over ourselves herein is not possible by resolution, however courageous, but only by finding a better environment waiting to be possessed. Only as we seek a better country can we leave a worse, even though we must also be ready to go out, not knowing whither we go, as the way of seeking it." 1.

(1) H. and S. op.cit. pp.303-304.

Man can only understand these facts of his experience in terms of a doctrine of grace. Our actions are not concerned with creating a world but possessing the Mind of God. Oman compares this relationship with God to our friendship with other persons.

" We know them (other persons) solely as they manifest themselves through our physical environment, but through it, they manifest more than the physical, and this again we discern to be not so much a manifestation as the key to all the manifestations. All friendship is reaching out to the person, who is himself both the revelation and the prophecy of fuller manifestation. Is it not by something similar - something known by experience, but discerned as a revelation and a prophecy beyond it, which is yet the interpreter of all that is in it - that man sets up his ideals? And, however inadequate the description may be, have we any better name for what this manifests than a person?" 1.

As we try to understand man's nature we find it is of his very essence to be gripped by Something Other than himself. The essence of that Other we find to be Love. In the consciousness of being enfolded by Love is man's peace. Yet in no sense is that enfolding something that destroys our autonomy. Freely, in our contemplation, we must reach out to that embrace. The appalling difficulty of describing that meeting is seen from Plato to St. Augustine, from St. Bonaventure to Bunyan. All that can be said here of Oman's attempt in "Grace and Personality" is that through

(1) H. and S. op.cit. p.340. Though Oman devotes much space to the criticism of the Kantian morality, he never openly discusses Kant's criticism of a position such as his, namely, that it must lead to hypothetical imperatives. Kant is answered indirectly in what Oman says positively about grace, but it would have added strength to his work to face it openly in its Kantian form.

three hundred pages he ponders upon the implication of the experience.

Thus, it having been said previously that Oman's concept of supernature cannot be detached from his concept of man, the reverse must now be said. Speculation proceeds from an intuition of man's autonomy as morally responsible to pursue his dependence upon God. In saying this is but to repeat what has been said about the necessary procedure of Christian philosophy. 1.

Freedom cannot, however, be understood simply as self-determination in action according to the self-direction of our insight, for it must be remembered that freedom's only sphere of operation is the world of our self-consciousness. In using such language Oman is not intending merely to convey that every person is self-conscious, or that the possibility of knowledge implies a distinction between subject and object. He is insisting that all our acts and all our insights are in relation to the natural world, that that world can only be the sphere for our freedom in so far as

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- (1) Oman never mentions Cook Wilson who is saying the same thing to his students at Oxford evidently had a profound influence on such men as Professors Webb and Kemp Smith. See "Statement and Inference" J.C. Wilson Oxford University Press, 1926, Vol. II pp. 835 et. seq. Neither do the above mentioned philosophic theologians refer to Oman in their work. Though there is this similarity between Oman and Professor Webb's approach to Christian philosophy, the difference in their works is profound, because of their differing ethical tone. Oman has a much more vivid intuition of the gulf that lies between the demands of the Cross and the ethics of civilisation. Professor Webb is the gentle reconciler of Christianity with the best of the European tradition. Though it will be remarked in Chapter VI that Oman seemed to change his position as to civilisation, he never would have written about the presentation of Christianity to the modern world as did Professor Webb. As an example, see "Religious Thought in England since 1850", C.C.J. Webb, Oxford University Press, 1933, pp. 186 et. seq.

it is brought into our consciousness and that this bringing of it into our consciousness is as much an autonomous activity as is any act of self-determination.

" Instead of finding a hostile or merely dead response (from nature), the more he is able to confer, the more abundantly he receives. Seeming chaos is turned to order, seeming menace to a smile to laugh with, seeming obstacles to a challenge to make them the means of victory. Then an environment, which was only pleasure and pain for the advancement of animal life, becomes a joy, and it may be an agony, for the advancement of the spirit, both alike being seen to be good, if, with Ruskin, we do not wonder at what men suffer, but at what they lose." 1.

Again there is no necessity to repeat what has been said in the previous chapter about our knowledge of nature. Oman's account of personality as autonomy does not allow him to conceive nature given to us, as it were, automatically. We must reach out to that environment in an autonomy of self consciousness. Therefore man cannot be conceived apart from his partaking of nature.

Thus Oman's metaphysic is always concerned with a triadic relationship between nature, supernature and persons. If we attempt to understand the relationship between persons and supernature, we find that that relationship is always dependent on the intermediary, nature. On the other hand, the right attitude of persons to the natural can only be understood in terms of their joint dependence on the supernatural. Finally the true end of persons is only achievable as they rightly relate the natural to the supernatural. Inadequate theory about any of these terms must lead to inadequate theory about the others.

(1) H. and S. op.cit. p.341.

- III -

Oman's metaphysical position with its three terms nature, supernature and persons must be seen in relation to his concentration on the question of theodicy. The conclusion of "The Natural and the Supernatural" is that only in the knowledge of God as Love can free men find that joy in the world without which they must rest either in despair or in a failure of compassionate imagination. 1. In "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman's journey to that position is by way of his criticism of monism and of outright dualism.

In emphasising Oman's concentration on the problem of theodicy ~~Oman's~~^{his} account of the predicament of modern Europeans must again be considered. 2. Modern man's failures of faith cannot be considered as springing sheerly from revolt. All men strive, as the very image of God, for some abiding faith by which to face life's vicissitudes. The medieval framework within which men had found courage had broken because it could not face the implications of freedom. The medieval Church had lost the vision of the Father and His children by which the Apostolic Church had found its victory and joy. The revolt against Catholicism

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- (1) What Oman means by the word "love" must here be left. It is hoped that in the rest of this chapter and in the two following what he means by that difficult word will become clearer in quotations. One definition of that word may be given here: "Love is fundamentally an estimate of man as an individual spiritual being whose own choice determines his destiny and whose eternal destiny is so great that no present affliction can be weighed for a moment against its attainment, and for whom death, however terrible in its pains and dread of unknown possibilities, is only the greatest of those purifying troubles." W. and Its I. op.cit. p.51.
- (2) For an interesting account of this predicament see "An Outline of Christianity" Vol.III Introduction: "Christianity in a New Age", by John Oman, see Bibliography p.ii.

was a noble reaction, however barren that reaction became. Men can only rediscover the Word of God in the freedom to seek truth over the whole reach of experience. To a theologian who places sincerity of feeling and faithfulness in action at the centre of his thought, cannot be said to eliminate the transcendent mystery from the Word of God. Oman always deplores that rationalist tendency in his teacher Ritschl which tends to eliminate the mystery from the act of faith. But on the other hand to put faith, in order that it shall challenge, beyond the bounds of rational reflection is to cloud it with the sense that its trust is an illusion. To ask openly how men can in all honesty and all imagination accept a theodicy is no Promethean revolt, but rather the assertion of the dignity of the children of God.

Without a firm willingness to accept the implications of our autonomy throughout all our experience, a theodicy is impossible. To Oman that fact is inescapable. His writing is at its most passionate in that assertion.

" Were it the first consideration that there should be no divergence from what God knows to be true, and correct belief more essential than the right way of believing, or were action as God judges proper, anyhow done, better than truly conscientious behaviour which comes short of it, man's long groping amid error and evil would be a mere scandal of God's inefficiency. But if seeing truth is essential to its worth as truth, and deciding right to its worth as righteousness; if all spiritual possession, to be true possession, must be won by the soul that learns to be in accord with it; if this freedom is an essential relation to the Supernatural as well as the supreme possession of the Natural, not only religious history, but all history may manifest meaning and purpose, and its course be so confused because a large part of it tells how men

"weary of the long and strenuous endeavour, and how the power who rules over men and societies never suffers for long any resting-place on this road. On this view of its goal, man's devious way has moral if not rational justification; while, if it is to be measured by the extent to which he is guarded from error and evil, it has neither." 1.

"The way of freedom, though its final justification can only be its goal, at least saves life from being a dull as well as a ghastly nightmare, because, with it, there is a universe of living interests while, without it, there would be no more than a Punch and Judy show with conscious and sensitive puppets. And supposing an infinite mind contemplating it, could we expect him to be eternally interested in making it pirouette around him, however graceful and intricate he could make the performance? Calvin's predestinarianism, Leibnitz's monads, McTaggart's planetary system of souls are nothing more: and it is all as ghastly as it is dull. Nor does Hegel's process of Reason add anything to its cheerfulness: and his buoyant optimism naturally ended with Schopenhauer's pessimism." 2.

Though in the above quotation Oman identifies the Christian predestinarianism of Calvin with the rationalist monism of modern Europe, it is with the latter and its associate Indian religions rather than with the former that

(1) W. and S. op.cit. p.357.

(2) W. and S. op.cit. pp.290-291.

Oman is concerned in "The Natural and the Supernatural". 1. All monisms, according to Oman, spring from one root. In the desire to find a faith that unifies all experience, men sink back into the bare form of unity which has been given them in the sense of the holy. So intense is the original feeling of unity in all men that it drives them to seek coherence. The monist is he who achieves coherence by turning his back on the responsibilities of the adult, which are so hard to reconcile with unity. Thus in this great urge towards unity men use their reasons to develop speculative systems in which all reality is ironed out into a monism. Only Indian religion, according to Oman, is really consistent in using its intellect in the service of this desire for unity, and it alone denies everything except the All-one. In Hegel's writings there is much about a doctrine of the will and of duties. These are, however, denied in his system. As Oman writes:

" The charges are not made against Hegel. They are against the Hegelian categories, the scheme into

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- (1) Oman's identification in "Grace and Personality" of Kant with Pelagianism and Arminianism, and of Hegel with Augustinianism and Calvinism, cannot be considered a comparison of much value. Particularly in a book such as "Grace and Personality" in which he appeals to a popular audience, that kind of comparison, quickly made and not carefully defended, could so easily lead to false conclusions. Surely even the identification of St. Augustine's and Calvin's thought needs qualification. Though the present writer must admit his difficulty in understanding Hegel, and deplores easy attacks on him, an identification of him with the greatest exponent of the Christian doctrine of the will seems hardly appropriate. Also, St. Augustine's criticism of classical rationalism is more radical than that of Hegel. Finally, those influences that St. Augustine did admit from the classical world were from Plato; while Hegel clearly learned more from Aristotle than any other thinker. See G. and P. op.cit. Chapter 3, pp.18-26.

"which he fits everything, and his view of the relation of the individual reason as mere pattern of the Absolute Reason." 1.

Or again he is willing to write of both Hegel and Schleiermacher:

" The weakness of both is that they had no real place for the individual and therefore failed to give due place to the etnical nature of religion and though both laboured hard to give a right place to the world, they did not really escape a pantheism which was acosmic mystical." 2.

In a desire to escape the duties of adult men in the natural, monism in the name of unity swallows up into the supernatural both nature and the person. The Supernatural, as abstracted from our duties, is described in categories which express its bare unity and so is conceived ever less in terms of personality. By the interdependence of theory and practice, as the theory gets more impersonal so the practice gets less concerned with our responsibilities, in the world. Thus we arrive at the extraordinary passive phenomena of eastern religion.

Such a position cannot long remain optimistic when dominant in a society, but must degenerate into pessimism. Even if all awareness of other men has been destroyed, and however much we may deny the reality of ourselves, our own pain is so omnipresent as to lead us to that pessimism. Thus monism is either an optimism that fails to look out at the world or a general despair that corrupts all that it touches. It must be insisted that Oman's criticism of monism cannot in any sense be considered necessary. Indeed he will himself admit that within his account it ever remains a strong speculative position, for it begins with the

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXXII p.211.

(2) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXXII p.214.

overwhelming motive of achieving unity and therefore its systems are rationally coherent. What Oman objects to is its tendency to a passive morality and the way it is forced to choose between failure of compassion and despair. Clearly it is not in the name of reason that he condemns the attitude of despair or the lack of sympathy. It is in the name of his faith which has responded to the vision of the Cross.

An important difficulty arises over Oman's attitude to Buddhism. In his classification of religions he interprets all Indian religion in the way described above. Though the clarity of that classification is marred by his lack of examples, it is implied that Buddhism is included under the general heading of Indian religion.¹ Yet in Chapter XIII of "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman places the origin of Buddhism in the isolation of our self-determination from our autonomy of insight into the supernatural, and our autonomy of self-consciousness towards the natural.² Buddhism is shown as the archetype of those positions that consider the final order of reality as an exact equivalence of action and award. Thus Buddhism is related to those religions that have dualist elements. Admittedly Buddhism under this account tends towards a rational monism by disregarding nature and supernature in its reduction of the world "to sporadic acts of self-assertion."³ Yet it may be judged that in his dislike of the spirit of Buddhism, Oman gives it the worst of both possible worlds. In one, Buddhism originates from

- (1) See for instance p.396 where he remarks that Buddha is consistent with mystic theory in forbidding his monks agriculture. See Appendix 'A' of this thesis for an account of his classification.
- (2) For a fuller account of this analysis see later in this Chapter. See N. and S. op.cit. pp.218-240.
- (3) N. and S. op.cit. p.229.

speculation motivated by the desire to return to the pure unity of awareness; in the other, it arises from speculation on our self-determination isolated from all else. Oman in his desire to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Christian Gospel and ethic, which alone maintain the right tension between dualism and monism, seems here to fall into contradiction. It may be that he does not mean Buddhism to be included under his general class of Indian religions, but if this is so his chapter on "The Mystical" would need drastic cuts. ¹ Some account of the relationship between popular Indian religions and Buddhism would also seem a necessity.

The difficulty in respect to Buddhism is matched by what he says about Plato and Platonism. Plato and indeed any of the Greek thinkers are but rarely mentioned in "The Natural and the Supernatural". In his attempt to show the uniqueness of the categories of a Biblical natural theology, Greek metaphysics are avoided rather than criticised. He does say that Plato cannot be considered an acosmic mystic like Plotinus because of his active virtues and his interest in the world. ² Would Oman have called the Platonic asceticism a dualism or an acosmic mysticism?

To return to the problem of theodicy: on one side of Oman's Christian metaphysic there is the attempt to demonstrate that faith is only possible as men recognise the distinction in reality between our wills and God's and so reject all monisms. On the other there is the insistence that only in Our Lord's revelation of the Fatherhood of God we find a monotheism which allows us to exercise our freedom in the world, without being desolated by the threat of dualism. Here in Oman's opinion the

(1) N. and S. op.cit. Chapter XXIV pp.405-426.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.496.

important step is the transcendence of legalism, whether it makes its appearance in priestly Judaism, certain forms of the Christian Church, or the Kantian account of morality.

Oman sees the historic origin of legalism in what he calls "the cosmological law of action and award."

The central hypothesis of this cosmology was that all acts are acts of freedom up to the moment when actually performed, then they are awarded the exact equivalence of their merit. The origin of this view lay in the recognition of the fact of responsibility. From that fact it had seemed to follow that if there were to be rational consequences of action the ultimate reality of the universe must be a justice to award the good and punish the bad. Thus was exalted to the throne of the universe an exact equivalence between action and award.

Since the recognition of our self-determination is a sine qua non of civilised life, some such understanding of the universe must have been in men's minds at a time before recorded history. It was, however, in the sixth century B.C. that this intuition of our self-determination was turned into a cosmological principle. It appears in this century as such a principle in India, Persia, Palestine and Greece. Oman has too subtle an intelligence to oversimplify the manifold and indeed contradictory elements that make up the religious positions of men and communities. Much may be believed in theory that is not practised; just as there may be practices that transcend or fall short of theory. Therefore, this principle cannot be said to dominate entirely the religious life of the period. However, its effect on men's thought and actions was immense.

As has been seen, Oman is always insistent that useful explanations have a tendency to solidify into formulas that restrict experience.

" A formulation is like the conception of the lever.

Once we have found it, though the objects we use may have all kinds of other qualities, the more we regard

"it simply as a rigid bar, the more effectively we can use it; and, for practical purposes, we can ignore everything but rigidity and length. So any formulation which has been abstracted from our experience of reality, if it provide a specially successful lever for dealing with our world, by embodying some general manifestation of it, may be justified by its utility. But this does not justify reversing the process so that, instead of the principle being formulated out of experience, experience is formulated out of it, till it becomes like the interpretation of the forest by a sawyer in terms of planks." 1.

This tendency to limit experience by theory is operative in individual men and especially among the servants of an established order, the interests of which are served by conservatism. It was this tendency that hardened the intuition of our self-determination into a cosmological law of action and award.

Oman writes of the effects of that cosmology: "~~The~~ ^{the} later Judaism the one God came to be conceived as law working as action and award, in face of which devout souls had great difficulty in cherishing the freer, more gracious conception of the prophets. Among the thinkers of Greece one abstract rule of action and award tended to become an abstract destiny, and the common people, with increasing difficulty, gave it humanity from their more human pantheon. The sixth century sees Xenophanes clearly expressing faith in one God, greatest of gods and mortals. But how far does the belief go beyond the scheme of justice conceived as the fixed apportioning of action and award? All the dramatists express the tragedy of this fated destiny. What more is even Plato's theory of the Good, and what are his eternal ideas but the pure pattern of it, of which the visible world is the changing, moving shadows?

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.220.

"But even these shadows had some reality for Plato as a means of interpreting the real world: and, as in our day, much could be maintained in theory which was obviously not believed in practice.

" Buddhism alone made the principle a complete cosmology and accepted it so entirely that it became a rule of life as well as a theory. Not only was it for Buddhism the measure of the universe, but, in the last resort it was the sole reality. Nothing exists but 'karma' and karma is just the exact equivalence of action and award." 1.

The varying manifestations of dualism all spring from men's false attitude towards the natural. As the simple unity of feeling is broken up by apprehensions, men find that they are called upon to deal with the varying and bewildering situations in the natural. In this concentration on the form of freedom, the unity of feeling, which gives men the

(1) H. and S. op.cit. p.226.

As has been said in the previous chapter, Oman makes a comparison between Karma and positivism. Both are the exaltation of useful hypotheses into determining principles by which all experience is judged. One particularly brilliant paragraph of that comparison is here quoted: "Many fine ethical precepts are derived from the reference of all action to thought and of the quality of thought to desire, yet it is wholly a question of award: and, in the end, the sole measure of award is pleasure and pain. Nor is there anything else it could be, for life is just the pleasure and pain of individual karma. Experience, being from it, means nothing except award in pleasure or pain. Nor can experience be ever more than a shadow in any universe reduced to a mere principle of sequence, whether moral or material. In Naturalism this principle has made us; and in Buddhism we have made it: but, in spite of the form of freedom in Buddhism, the world is left as meaningless, and all intercourse with it is made as much an oppressive unreality as by Naturalism. Just as a universe without freedom has no meaning, and without meaning no reality, so freedom, without a universe which is not its mere creation, has no meaning, and, without meaning, no reality. As the one reduces the world to a continuity of persistent motion, the other reduces it to sporadic acts of self assertion."

H. and S. op.cit.p229.

natural as all dependent on the supernatural, is broken up and nature becomes a detached environment that men must bring into subjection to the law. To repeat, the ability to determine issues is isolated from our insight into the supernatural and our consciousness of the natural.

In this account of freedom as a series of atomic acts, morality comes to be considered as the obeying of laws that the supernatural lays down rather than the joyful service of the Father's Will. Nature is conceived as added to the supernatural, not transformed by its dependence. Thus it cannot be considered a realm through which the supernatural is revealed to us and which we are called to transform into a higher environment. Supernature is conceived as an order apart from us which rewards and punishes our actions, as a Judge, but does not succour us as a Father.

"Laws are laws as they are impersonal, and a judge administers them as he is an incarnation of them in an individual and not a person. - the least adequate form of it (applying personal categories to God) is that he is one individual, standing over against each of us as other individuals; and the least adequate form of the relation is that we impose laws and he sees to their consequences." 1.

The reward and punishment consequent on our actions can only be thought of in terms of the natural. In early dualism these rewards and punishments are expected in this life. As that expectation is soon proved illusory, heaven and hell become material conceptions - heaven's blessedness and hell's misery being imagined in as absolute terms as the material embodiment will allow. Thus nature is ever more conceived as an environment for award and ever less as a realm the transformation of which into a higher environment is itself its own reward. Morality becomes the fulfilling

(1) K. and S. op.cit. p.335.

of laws. The natural is thus more and more divided into two spheres - the secular and the sacred. The sacred becomes the sphere of religion while the secular is detached from the possibility of transformation by our activity. 1.

In the triadic relationship of nature, supernature and persons, inadequate theory about any of these terms leads to less adequate theory about the others. Failure in practice leads to failure in theory and the theory in turn affects practice. Thus though dualism must be a problem of all men's lives - out of which they must win victory into a prophetic monotheism - dualism as a solution (e.g., Zoroastrianism) is a disaster, as it stultifies morality into legalism and religion into the observance of rights to maintain purity.

Oman shows much more sympathy for the dualist systems than for monism. However inadequately it faces the problems raised by freedom, it at least does not attempt to escape them. The Kantian position at least gives an account of morality which must incite men to striving; Hegel's account if taken seriously would eliminate all striving from morality. 2. Once again it must be stated that Oman's criticism of dualism is not based on evidence that all men must necessarily accept. It is rather that the various positions, openly or incipiently dualist, cannot affirm a confident faith in God and joy in the world and therefore cannot attain the reaches of morality possible to the Christian. Whether that joy is a great good and victory over despair a worthwhile attainment is clearly an assumption the truth of falsehood of which reason cannot decide.

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- (1) See Chapter VI for a fuller account of what Oman means by this.
 - (2) In including Kant with the dualist systems Oman interprets his thought as making a clear distinction between our wills and God's.

The Hebrew prophets were the first to transcend the view of supernature as a Judge. In their struggle to attain a righteousness that could find meaning and purpose in all the world, they were vouchsafed a vision of God as actively at work with men in history. It is only by understanding that struggle as we pass through it ourselves that we can begin to grasp what is meant by the Personality of God and achieve a true monotheism.

" Earlier and more vividly than others, the prophets saw the magnitude of the calamity of the fall of their civilization. They bore their own fullest share and realised with the deepest sympathy the agony awaiting others. They never sought to shelter their spirits from the horror: they never comforted themselves with the thought that particular evil is universal good; they never took the individual personal sting out of their distress by generalising it into 'all life is misery'.

" But the more clearly they saw that the Natural, by itself and as man uses it for his appetites and desires, is all evanescent, and as he abuses it for his pride and ambition, all bad, the more they were taught to look for a deeper meaning and a more enduring purpose in it, which could make its defeats victory, its misery blessedness, its evanescence an eternal possession. Pleasantness and unpleasantness of sensation were thereby changed into perception of a higher world, manifest in the Natural yet above it, which provides values which make another kind of appeal and give another kind of joy in possession. Thus they were able to face physical evil as real and terrible, and moral evil as calamitous and perverse, and yet say that, by his own meaning in them, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. This confidence that no evil could hinder life from

"being one moral sphere, and experience from being one triumph of faith, was the essential victory of the prophetic monotheism, and is the sole ground still of any real confidence of one God being in all and above all." 1.

In that prophetic line Oman singles out Hosea more often and with greater sympathy than any other. 2. Hosea is always discussed as a preliminary to the account of Our Lord's ministry. Oman's passionate intensity is seen in his partaking of the life of Hosea.

Hosea had recognised, in the tragedy of his most intimate history and in the less immediate but equally terrible fate of his people, that although he could not wish that others should not face the consequences of their sin, he could not desire to mete out to them the reward or punishment of what they had done. He found he could only make his own life meaningful as he took upon himself the burden and agony of that sin. So he came to an intuition of the Fatherhood of God. How could that Majestic Holiness upon which he depended be more limited in love than he, its creature. How could the supernatural be less than an infinity of care for each person?

Oman writes of Hosea:

"By his tenacious affection he interpreted the heart of God: and forthwith the idea of legal equivalent seemed wholly inadequate to God's rule, seeing that the last thing he desired for his

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.448-449.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. pp.445-457. See also H.R. op.cit. pp.58-62, 97-98. To say this is not to imply that Oman disregards any of the prophets. For some of his finest writing about the subject see his book of sermons "The Paradox of the World" op.cit. see especially his sermon about Ezechiel, pp.236-246.

"erring wife was the just reward of her evil life. How could a forensic righteousness, which would have been a poverty in his own spirit, be the righteousness of God? In seeing the calamity which follows sin to be for the deliverance of the soul, he found another key to the mystery of this sorrowful and perplexing world than legal equivalent. He made the discovery that it was in order to realise in his children their true worth that God has set life as the Valley of Troubling for a door of hope; and in this he found that reconciliation to the whole rule of God which is, in the full sense, monotheism." 1.

Oman illustrates through Hosea what he means by that mediated immediacy in which the revelation of the transcendent God is given to men with and through their apprehension of other persons.

" Hosea did not say of his¹⁵ erring wife - this is a worthless woman in time, but I must think of eternit^y, and be gentle and loving and pitiful towards her and try to make her realise her situation as an immortal soul. He saw in her, just as she was, what made it impossible for him to be anything other than gentle, loving and pitiful, and, as he dealt with her situation in sincerity, he realised that no situation could ever take her out of his heart and his life. Then he knew also that the same must be true of sinful man and the mind of God. So, by the sense of the abiding worth of every person in the sight of God, he laid the foundation for the faith to which Jesus gave the final expression, that God

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.456.

"is not the God of the dead but of the living, that in his heaven there is joy over one sinner who repents, and that his supreme purpose is to seek and to save." 1.

The faith of prophetic monotheism is only possible in its completeness through the revelation of the Cross. In Our Lord's meeting of all His natural appointments, his dealing with all persons and things and particularly in His bearing of the Cross so that it is triumph rather than defeat, we understand that it is to believe in the Fatherhood of God. 2. Oman's interpretation of the Cross is better epitomised in words from "Honest Religion" than anywhere else:

" It has been said that Jesus was so great that His followers broke up the idea of God to put Him in. But the reason why He had followers at all was that their idea of God was broken up and He brought it into one. Even the prophets had left unreconciled the bitter contrast between what they experienced in their own lives and saw in the lives of the godly and what they felt of God's mind and purpose in their own higher aspirations and their most spiritual fellowship. And for how many still is the great unsolved enigma why God's outward dealings should conflict so bitterly with his inward promptings. But the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by victory over the darkest, saddest, most conflicting experiences through which men can pass sets them in

(1) H. and S. op.cit. p.463.

(2) As the next chapter is concerned with Oman's Christology, no attempt will be made here to justify Oman's attitude to Our Lord, particularly against those who would find him guilty of the Socratic approach.

"the light of God's infinite purpose of love and provides for us a spiritual fellowship, both divine and human. Thereby it shows the world of our outward and inward experience to be alike from God and for ends for which in everything we can give thanks. Therefore, if man's world is to be renounced God's world is to be possessed, which alone is the full recognition of one God in all and over all, of which mere abstract oneness of the Deity is not even the shadow." 1.

Thus it must be once more repeated that "The Natural and the Supernatural" is the justification of Oman's faith that the Cross regulates all experience. The epistemological description of the artist and the scientist, the examination of various modern metaphysics and ancient religions, is intended just to lay bare to other men that only in terms of the "theologia crucis" is any adequate theodicy possible. Only in the contemplation of the Cross in sincerity of feeling and the following of it in faithfulness in action can men affirm that God is Love, and make that affirmation without denying their own capacity for sin, or closing down their imaginations upon the suffering of the world.

One must hesitate at this point to remark how impossible it is to plumb the content that Oman gives to his concept supernature. For only as one dimly penetrates what he means by forgiveness can one dare to claim any understanding. What Oman does is to hold high the Gospels and say: "This is what I mean". He declares to men that as they start to scale that mountain of Love, strength will be given them for the scaling. Oman was a humble man and therefore through his writings he does not describe from his own life what

(1) H.R. op.cit. p.102.

forgiveness is. There is however in his work that note of reality - indefinable by the intellect - which gives the conviction that he is calling one to a territory into which he has indeed entered. This must be said, for when theology reaches this point it must shade off into poetry or preaching, where the tone is inextricably linked with the substance. To define Oman's concept of supernature must be simply to say "Follow the Cross and you will understand what he means". No boast of understanding can then be made.

Thus to Oman the uniqueness of Christianity is that it alone can make a victory out of suffering and so is able to find purpose in all of life.

" The distinctive element in the Christian religion is not any difference from other religions respecting the need of redemption from the world, except in so far as deeper moral insight may show more clearly the moral nature of the need, and so derive evil from sin and not directly from desire. What does distinguish it from all other religions is the kind of redemption it offers. In contrast to all ways of renunciation, its way of being redeemed from the world is reconciliation.

" This antithesis, thus baldly stated, might, however, mislead. Other religions, with the possible exception of Buddhism, also aim at reconciliation; and the religion which requires its followers to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow One whose obedience led to a death of shame and lingering agony, in a very high degree requires renunciation. But renunciation, in other religions, is first and for reconciliation; in Christianity, reconciliation is first and

"renunciation of value only as it is from reconciliation." 1.

It is by the Cross that men can understand the right relation between nature, supernature and persons. As has been seen in Oman's relating of the sense of the holy to the judgment of the sacred, all men are given that revelation of the supernatural by some reconciliation to the natural, which is made possible by realising in that natural the meaning and purpose of the supernatural. But over that reciprocity of revelation and reconciliation may so easily be cast the shadow of doubt which dims our intuitions and softens our wills. As we face the nature responsibilities of freedom, the primitive unities of dependence are broken up, and in the resultant demands upon them men ask if all the pain and suffering of the world can really come from that Holiness. So they can turn to doubt, or to the unity which disregards pain, or to the frustrations of dualism. But in Jesus Christ there is revealed to us One Who at the naturest and most painful level of responsibility is able at Gethsemane to decide to fulfil the Will of God on the Cross. Thus indeed all may be seen to be from the Father. Nothing is identified with Him, yet nothing excluded from His meaning and purpose.

In that vision the gulf between religious dependence and moral independence is bridged. Men find there a redemption from despair which calls upon them to become themselves the redeeming. There is made possible for men an objective, outward-turning morality, which seeks not reward nor self-fulfilment but which knows that all reward and all self-fulfilment are to be found in the love of other men. Oman recognises that any morality may be accused of eudaemonism, but he declares to any accusers

(1) G. and P. op.cit. p.118. For a difficulty in Oman's use of the word "redemption" see Chapter V.

that here the vision and the reward are one. Oman's supreme faith in God, and indeed in man, is shown in his lack of fear that the conception of God as a Loving Father will make men soft, for the vision and the demand are one. 1.

In the victory of the Cross it is possible to understand how persons need not be seen in opposition to nature, which opposition had led to so much of the despair of the classical world. It is not necessary to conceive nature anthropomorphically as standing opposite to man, as machine or soul. Man may live in the natural as a world he knows to be His Father's creation.

It is by the Cross that we can understand the full riches of the conception of God the Father. It hardly needs saying here that Oman is entirely aware of the limitations of personalist symbolism about God. In "The Natural and the Supernatural", written for non-Christians, when using that symbolism he nearly always breaks in with the word "inadequate". 2. In his works

(1) It must be said here in defence of Oman's position that certain theologies seem to keep the doctrine of the Divine Judgment as a means of making ordinary men good, rather than as a doctrine of how God in His Mercy will lead men to the Kingdom. See for instance, a recent publication by those in the Church of England who belong to the Catholic persuasion. "Catholicity" Dacre Press, London 1947. There, in an historical analysis of the traditions of Christian Europe, a sharp disjunction is made by which "Orthodox Protestantism" is opposed to "Liberalism". Ritschl is placed firmly in the second of these two classes and his insistence on the Love of God cut off from the Divine Judgment interpreted as a surrender to a soft and easy ethic. See particularly p.31.

(2) See particularly N. and S. op.cit. pp.330-343, Chapter XIX.

appealing to those within the Christian tradition he cannot be expected to qualify Our Lord's use of the "Our Father", by arid little notes explaining that Jesus recognised the difference between creaturely fatherhood and the Fatherhood of the Creator. As has been said, Oman does not fail in that Christian humility that declares its agnosticism before the Holiness of God. As he puts it:

"Mystery is not nescience. It is the half-lifted veil of the sanctuary, through which all life's higher meaning shines, and which is the challenge to all our inquiries." 1.

He sums up the inadequacy of personalist categories in the following words:

"The idea of God as a person may be inadequate at best, an assertion only that he cannot be less than our highest way of dealing with him, and not that he is no more than we can conceive as the highest." 2.

The alternative cannot be, however, to close our mouths and dry our pens. It is of supreme importance that we should write and speak about the supernatural. Men's understandings are in relation to God as much as their intuitions and their judgments, and the conceptions of their understanding influence their feeling and valuing. Personalist categories must be inadequate; when they become the formulas of corporations they are bound to become empty. But as we cannot know God above the categories of nature and history we must be careful to conceive Him in terms of the highest, or we will cease to believe that forgiveness is the highest. In "The Natural and the Supernatural" Oman is less concerned with the

(1) K. and S. op.cit. p.213.

(2) K. and S. op.cit. p.335.

ideas of legalist corporations than with the suprapersonalism of the English Hegelians. Such speculation empties the idea of God of all content, and helps us to escape the awful responsibilities of the Cross.

Thus it is in terms of forgiveness that we best know the Fatherhood of God. A quotation from "Honest Religion" says this better than anything in "The Natural and the Supernatural".

" It is God's dealing with the sorrow and sin of the world that gives the essential quality to the meaning of God as Father; and it is the place of His lost children which marks the essential quality of His dealing with all His children. The supreme revelation of His mind is in seeking and saving the lost; and the end of all reasoning with Him is the discovery of a patient pardoning love which makes sin that may be as scarlet, white as snow. This restoration to our Father and His family alone gives reality to pardon, which otherwise is mere condonation. It is reconciliation to the Father's mind and restoration to His peace, with an assurance that can face our whole experience, however distressful it may be. Its test is that, in everything, we are enabled to give thanks and that from every failure we can rise in hope, and from every transgression return to peace. It is not even a question of the pure in heart seeing God, but of the impure seeing the Father, wherein the unique significance of the life and death of Jesus while we were yet sinners most appears." 1.

(1) H.R. op.cit. p.83.

- IV -

A theology such as Oman's, that empties the idea of God of all elements of Justice and concentrates entirely on Forgiveness, must raise in the reader's mind the question of universalism ~~and freedom~~. An antinomy must arise at this point in a theology the main categories of which are "love" and "freedom". Oman meets this antinomy by leaving it open, indeed only hinting at the question. In his silence may be seen much that is typical of his theology.

In "The Natural and the Supernatural", he is not interested in the details of theology, but rather in writing a prologomena to the whole subject.

" This inquiry is not even a theology in this very general sense: but it is an attempt to lay a foundation for theology, by considering its methods and its problems. It does not aim at defending the theology of any religion, but its purpose is to discover what should be settled, before any particular question is raised." 1.

He does not however discuss the question in any of his writings.

Oman's reason seems to have been what may be called negatively his fear of system, and positively his sense of mystery. In a review of a work by Hastings Rashdall he writes:

" When one compares him with St. Paul or even Luther, one realises how little he cares to live in the half-lights and how all really creative souls have to live there all the time." 2.

Men must be concerned just with the Mind of God as given

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.98.

(2) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXI p.271.

them for facing their appointments in the natural, and must recognise the mountain of His Holiness that will not allow them to fathom His purposes.

Allied with this sense of mystery goes Oman's belief that doctrinal systems tend to deny the freedom of all men to find in Christianity the way and the life. To nothing in his theological writings does Oman return so often as the simplicity of the Gospel. Nothing must be allowed to mar that simplicity. Speculation about universalism not only takes men beyond the bounds of responsibility, but it complicates that simplicity.

Nevertheless Oman's silence on this matter must be judged unsatisfactory. To the relation of God's Love and man's freedom he returns for chapter upon chapter. As is so often felt in reading Kant, to say less is not always to achieve clarity. Even if the issue had been left an antinomy, one wishes that it had been faced.

It is a deeper level than any desire for clarity, however, that one asks Oman for an answer to this question. A man who affirms his faith with such a note of joy must shirk no issue. Oman so constantly returns to those hymns of faith in which the agony, the defeat and the chaos of human life - all men being corporately involved - are seen as manifesting the Divine Providence. Such hymns, if they are to be saved from the note of pietistic complacency, need to be balanced by a ruthless discussion of the difficulties of faith. In none of Oman's writings is there that note of despair of himself and the world out of which the incipient dualism of a Pascal arises, and which makes men parade unflinchingly the doubts that hold back from faith. Oman is always able to believe that the Love of God rules all space and time, and to find in men the capacity to follow the destiny of the Cross. The vigour of that faith has indeed little note of ease. Coming to the faithless, however,

it must come open to all questions.

That is Oman's position on this question in his later work. 1. In "The Natural and the Supernatural" the root of sin is made to lie in our self-direction more than in our self-determination. It is interpreted as hypocrisy rather than as individual acts of transgression. Oman writes:

" Sin, therefore, is used for anything which comes short of seeking the perfect order in absolute conscientiousness, or in other words the whole mind of God known or unknown. From it is distinguished conscious transgression. Yet it is sin, not transgression, which should determine our whole view of the question, because it places the emphasis, not on failing to do what our conscience demands, but on failing to respond to the whole call of aspiration and opportunity to be conscientious towards our whole environment and what may be realised in it." 2.

Or again:

" Thus sin can be used, as it is in the New Testament, for everything which comes short of the

(1) Once in an early work he mentions the problem:-

" If as Ritschl maintains, the personality of God and man is individual and pantheism is wholly an abandonment of the religious problem which is how to maintain the spiritual personality against the whole material universe, through belief in the exalted Power that rules over it, it remains a problem whether evil can ever attain such power as to be able to blot out for God an individual." See Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, op.cit. "The Individual" p.816. Having stated the problem he does not attempt to answer it, except to say: "There is a strange aloneness of the individual who has gone his own way, into which God Himself cannot intrude."

(2) K. and S. op.cit. p.329.

"only blessed order, which is the whole mind of God; and what makes it really sinful be the insincerity which turns away from seeking it, called in the Gospels hypocrisy. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit, which is another name for every appeal of the sacred. 'It hath never forgiveness', not because there is any sin that cannot be forgiven, but because it calls good evil and evil good, and so turns its back upon the manifestation of truth and the claim of duty, and not merely because it is radical evil, in Kant's sense of the breach of an absolute imperative. Such a breach, once committed, is really for Kant irreparable. Here nothing is irreparable except self-banishment of insincerity from the environment in which the spirit may recover purity and peace." 1.

It may be granted that such a view of sin by definition makes understandable the pardon of God's grace in a way that Kant's stern call to duty does not. But there is still something irreparable - self-banishment by insincerity. Presumably since Oman calls sincerity of feeling an autonomous activity, we can fail in it to the end. The annihilation of the insincere, the hypocrite, seems as difficult to reconcile with God's Love as the annihilation of anybody else.

The nearest Oman gets to any clear statement of the issue in his later work is the following passage:

" If the essence of sin is estrangement from our true environment, there is at least the possibility of forgiveness, in the sense of what we mean by it in our human relations, which is neither overlooking or condoning wrong, but the restoration, in spite of it, to the fellowship it has wronged. Then we

(1) K. and S. op.cit. p.328.

"can at least go forward to consider men's thoughts about it with hope: and if we find forgiveness a real and transforming experience, we shall be able to speak of God as a person with the certainty that we are not merely seeing the reflexion of our own faces, but know that our own forgiveness of others is a reflexion of the highest perfection which is kind to the unthankful and evil." ¹.

As against Christian irrationalism, which denies man's right and ability to probe the questions of theodicy, Oman has affirmed the right and the responsibility of the Christian so to do. Openly, as against the secular rationalist he has insisted on the finitude of men and the necessity of humility before the Word of God. His failure here, however, to make clear how Love and freedom must end in a mystery beyond our knowing is an example of a tendency in "The Natural and the Supernatural" to come too close, in the name of persuasion, to that rationalism which cannot understand the mystery and the leap of faith.

(1) H. and S. op.cit. p.342. It is pertinent to the whole tone of Oman's theology to notice that his appeal is to our forgiveness of others, not to other's forgiveness of ourselves. This may well be compared to St. Augustine's relations with Monica.

C H A P T E R V.

The personal supernatural, Who reveals Himself as an infinity of succour and pardon to all men and women, has revealed this nature in the course of time. Oman affirms what surely may be accepted by believer and unbeliever alike - that the belief that God is Love was not always self-evident even to those men with the keenest sense of religious dependence. Whether as truth or illusion, that belief appeared among men during the course of history. Believers assert, whatever differences there may be among them as to the definition of revelation, that God has revealed this to us at a certain period in time. To Oman it is indubitable that our knowledge that He upon Whom we depend is Our Saviour and not Our Judge 'dates from the day of His going in Galilee'. From such a belief must follow the questions of Christology and those of theological history, inescapably bound together. To understand what meaning Oman gives to the concept 'supernature' we must understand what his prophetic theism made of the term "history". How for the Christian can that fail to involve the intellectual questions that surround Our Lord Jesus Christ? ¹. In fact, only in relation to each other can any content be given to the words 'God', 'Christ' and 'History'. As we have already seen, the question of personality cannot be abstracted from the question of God. Equally as men are not solitary it cannot be abstracted from the question of history. And all are illuminated in Our Lord.

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- (1) Though this thesis is concerned with Oman's use of the concept 'supernature', in the next two chapters the term God will be more generally used. Not only is it the term that Oman uses in discussing these matters in his theological writings, but to state the most blatant of truisms it is a word that springs more easily to the mind.

Whether or not Oman likes such traditional language as the relation of Creation and Redemption, he is faced, as all thinkers, with the same problems as arise from that formula.

The attempt to understand what Oman means by "history" must involve turning away from "The Natural and the Supernatural" to his theological works. Indeed the last of the four parts of "The Natural and the Supernatural" is called "The Evanescent and the Eternal", and deals with the questions of history by classifying the great religions of the world in terms of his natural-supernatural principle.¹ It must be granted that this part is of positive interest as an illustration of his metaphysics and especially as it shows the relation between modern metaphysical systems and the ancient religious beliefs. It is negatively brilliant in dispelling the many phantoms of naturalist comparative religion that so often confused men's intellects. He does not however give any remarkable account of the nature of historical knowledge, nor does he tackle in detail the problems of God's rule over history. For example, throughout that classification something very close to a Schleiermachiian doctrine of the progressive moralisation of the race is assumed, yet the relation of such a doctrine to the consummation of the Cross is not discussed. No attempt is made to define what is meant by history since the Cross. The repeated insistence that Christianity is prophetic, in the sense of looking forward is not related to the fact that it looks back to the moment when the Redeemer came.

The coupling in all Oman's work of "grace and personality" and of "faith and freedom" necessitate in the field of history that he hold in unity the two terms "discovery" and "revelation". In his classification,

(1) See Appendix 'A' of this thesis.

however, he seems concentrated on the problem of "discovery" and does not relate it carefully to his concept "revelation". It has already been said about other sections of "The Natural and the Supernatural" that his meaning would be clearer if his philosophy of religion were placed more clearly in its theological framework. In the early sections the relation is sufficiently evident, so that as his own position emerges its dependence on faith is indubitable. Here in the question of history the absence of a theological context is felt more strongly than anywhere else. The rationalist alternatives to Christianity have always faced their most trying problem in finding some place for that sense of the particularities of history which has been the glory of the Christian tradition. When the scientific tradition seeks a philosophy of history it is likely to succumb to the proud irrationalism of Marx. Is it not often the very problems of history that force intellectuals back to respect Christian theology, when previously they have seen it as a myth to keep the crowd in order? Therefore the absence of theological categories is more keenly felt in Oman's philosophy of religion when he deals with history than in other subjects.

To understand what Oman means by the term history attention must be focussed on his other writings in which appear his Christology and his doctrine of the Church. It is hoped by discussing those works not only to clarify this term but to see his theology in greater detail. In a man as deeply Christocentric as Oman no account of his life from any point of view can be detached from his writings on Our Lord.

Again it must be insisted that by leaving the figure of Jesus Christ so much in the background till this moment, a grave scandal may be unwittingly imputed to Oman both as a thinker and a Christian. Is not this the imputation that

Dr. Barth brings against the theologians of 'liberalism' - namely that Our Lord does not in the proper sense regulate their thought, but arises by implication as a secondary consideration? It would be, however, to misinterpret Oman utterly to suggest directly or indirectly that his thought is not Christocentric. The concretely real and suffering Jesus Christ is the fountainhead of all his thought, in a way that could not indeed satisfy Dr. Barth, and which may not satisfy others intellectually, but so authentically that it is arrogant to deny it. Oman's thought, whatever difficulties it may contain, is above all else a 'theologia crucis'. Even when Oman distills his words to a fine simplicity, he has an accurate recognition of their implications. He is able to write:- "Christ is regulative of all revelation." 1.

It must not be implied that Oman stands with those theologians who maintain that human science is the critique of all that God can give us to know. He must not be identified with his fellow Cambridge theologian, F.R. Tennant, whose writings give the impression of revivifying the "antiquated" doctrine of the Incarnation by the precision of the Kantian philosophy. This thesis treats Oman primarily as a philosopher of religion and only secondarily as a practical theologian and a great man of God. In so doing nothing must be implied that would deny what is true for the Christian, that the practical theologian and indeed the preacher are nobler functions than that of the philosopher of religion. And whatever his function, the great man of God knows more than the intelligent of Love. Oman always returns with insistence to his doctrine of revelation to babes, and to the assertion that wisdom and understanding do not give

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XI, p.471.

men revelation but only test its claims and give us freedom over against tradition. All that is assumed in discussing Oman primarily as a philosopher of religion is that there is some value in what Christians of another era called "spoiling the Egyptians".

The insistence that Oman's thought is Christocentric is not a question of protesting too much, but of recognising a tendency in the present climate of Protestant theological opinion. Oman must be judged against the background of what may be called "dialectical Protestantism" which still exerts its influence on ministers of the Churches. There seems to be a tendency in that school to pass over from criticism of theologians such as Oman for their failure to understand the immeasurability of the gulf between saving faith and all else - a criticism which, even if one disagrees with it, one may still judge to be fair - to an imputation of a lack of moral seriousness in such writers. It is this passing over from intellectual criticism to the pride of incipient moral condemnation that makes Oman use the adjective "abusive" to describe some of the writing of this school. ¹ It is in this vein that a writer of this school falls into the naive half truth, the simplified historical judgment, of classifying Oman as a member of a school named 'bourgeois liberal'. ² The philosopher of religion is a function associated so closely with what this school calls nineteenth century liberal theology, that in discussing Oman under this function the elements in his thought that are common with that liberalism may be too

(1) The influence of Dr. Barth only became marked after Oman had written his chief theological works. Therefore Oman only once dealt openly with this influence. Also quite naturally as he grew older Oman became less interested in what may be called controversial theology. For that once see J.T.S. Vol. XXX. pp.401-405. An article by Oman entitled "Schleiermacher".

(2) The Gift of the Ministry, D.T. Jenkins, Faber and Faber, London 1947, p.105.

greatly emphasised. It is for this reason that the subservience of his philosophy to his theology of the Cross must be emphasised.

It would be wrong indeed to discuss the Christology of a man as deeply influenced by Ritschl as is Oman, without bearing in mind Dr. Barth's repeated criticisms of the Ritschlians. Such a necessity presents however a dilemma to the present writer that must be made explicit. Dr. Barth's emphasis on the discontinuity between man and God, and the glorious Love of God which overcomes that discontinuity, may be praised as a valuable reaction from the immanentism of an earlier generation. Christians may indeed glory in conversion. However, the present writer finds it quite impossible to believe that this experience is the only archetype of the Christian life, or to understand what it is to succumb to the position that all human judgment is utterly corrupt. Therefore he is excluded from understanding just what dialectical Protestantism means by "saving faith". Such a failure must according to this school prevent one from saying anything cogent about Christology, and indeed as Oman does not follow them in this doctrine, there is nothing cogent to be said. To count Oman out of the Protestant tradition is an impossibility, and indeed haltingly one must refuse to count oneself out. To be polemical, it may be said that a theology which by attacking the powers of reason excludes "ab initio" all criticism of itself, while maintaining the right to criticise violently the theology of others, may be intellectually forceful but hardly Christocentric. To say this is not to deny that such theologians have a knowledge of God of a character that one will never share, but rather to deplore the way in which humbler and perhaps less rich knowledge is excluded from the Christian tradition. Is it wrong to say that Dr. Barth has little recognition of his meeting with Ritschl at the foot of the Cross?

Another milder caveat must be made about the following discussion of Oman's Christology. In viewing his writings chiefly in order to understand what he means by history there is a danger that his Christology may become a counter in an intellectual game, a dead body upon the laboratory table. This danger is increased when Oman's views are seen in terms of the history of theology. His debt to Ritschl or Harnack is mentioned and his faith is imperceptibly denigrated to the acceptance of an intellectual tradition, rather than a hope wrought out in fear and trembling. Though it is not the purpose of this thesis to explore the beauty and sincerity of Oman's faith, it may be insisted that any of the last three sermons of "The Paradox of the World" or the last chapter of "Honest Religion" could not have been written by a man of superficial faith. These later works are singled out because in them Oman transcends his particular tradition and speaks with his own authentic voice. In 'The Problem of Faith and Freedom', for instance, the Christological position advocated is not in broad outline different from his later work. But in that earlier book, that which he inherited as a scholar and that upon which he staked his life do not seem to be integrated. He had not yet digested his debt to tradition and transcended it by using it. His later Christological writing has that quality that allows it to be compared without too great exaggeration to an art such as Bach's, where the benefits of a tradition are consummated in a unique personal statement.

- II -

Christology for Oman proceeds from the intuition that all our existence must be judged in terms of the Cross. We cannot question that fact, we simply know it. Faith for Oman is that which we intuit in sincerity of feeling, and

make our own by following in faithfulness in action. Indeed blessed by that vision, we have the duty to explain to others why it commands our loyalty, even though we know we cannot do so adequately. Some have the function to interpret all other experience in the light of that loyalty, for the sake of their own and others' clarity. But to question that vision as the highest is impossible, and to understand why we have been blessed by it equally so.

To repeat what has been said in the last chapter, Jesus on the Cross, making the agony and pain of it into the triumph of the Son who does his Father's Will unto the uttermost, reveals to us God as does no other. Jesus on the Cross, able as he dies to commend His Spirit to His Father and to seek even then God's Love for those who torture and degrade Him, reveals to us in a way that is simply self-authenticating that Love such as this is the final order of the universe. For only Love such as this which faces reality at its most dreadful and uses it to good purpose can allow us to believe that the world is all God's.

As Oman writes:-

" No one was ever so sure as Jesus of the Father's unlimited and unconditional forgiveness, with no one excluded unless by hypocrisy he shut his mind to God's mercy. Yet the faith which knows God's forgiveness to be real and transforming rests on Jesus because He lived and died setting this forgiveness in the heart of human experience and not merely proclaiming it." ¹.

To repeat yet once again, the argument against Oman could be taken up by reason at many levels. At a level more superficial than the Spinozist, the optimist could simply assert that suffering and defeat are not self-evident phenomena about human existence, on the first level of

(1) H.R. op.cit. p.122.

consciousness, and therefore the Cross is not needed to make us pleasantly content with life. Presumably such a position is rationally possible if not likely in these days. In answer, Oman simply would say "Look". It would be also quite possible within the Christian tradition to deny the triumph of the Cross. Then despair may be affirmed, unless we look to the Resurrection. Oman never writes in any detail about Our Lord's cry of despair on the Cross, which clearly, with his opinions, should be of cardinal importance. As will be seen in the following pages, the triumph of the Cross is not for him dependent on the Resurrection. Presumably what he would say is that the cry of despair was consummated in the cry of fulfilment, and that even in the cry of despair the fact of Our Father is affirmed.

The foregoing places Oman in the position which was described by Kierkegaard as adopting a Socratic attitude to Our Lord - the view of Jesus as a moral hero. ¹. It also shows how deeply Oman would reject that tendency in certain modern theology which seems to imply that the Cross would not have been much of an achievement if we did not assume that it was the very God upon it. Such a position glories in pointing out the large rate of crucifixions in the Roman occupation of Palestine. Oman rejects any substantial agnosticism about the Jesus of history. ². He never deals with this subject except in short enigmatic sentences. Presumably it is a position so alien to him that he can see little reason to discuss it. His answer here would again be simply:- "Look". Perhaps he would have felt as the present writer, that with every admission of the

(1) For ridicule of this position see 'By Faith Alone', H.F. Lovell Cocks, Clarke & Co., London 1943, p.94 et seq.

(2) For a gathering together of the evidence about this position see D.M. Baillie's recent "God Was in Christ", Faber and Faber, 1948 London, see pp.39-59.

difficulties of evidence at many levels, when one turns from the three dialogues about the last days of Socrates to the accounts of Gethsemane and Golgotha, the moral gulf is as immeasurable as that between the ethics of 'the Republic' and those of the Sermon on the Mount.

Thus all legalisms are nailed to the Cross. Our Lord reveals to us the inadequacy of any conception of the final order of the universe as a just equivalence between action and award. He reveals that God is Love, Who seeks us while we are yet sinners.

In this way Jesus Christ 'comes home to our business and bosoms' across the centuries. As He was reconciled to the Father, so is the Father revealed in Him and through that revelation the possibility of reconciliation is opened to us in a new way. As in our autonomy we are in some small way reconciled, so in contemplation of Him we may receive more deeply the revelation of the Father. The Cross, then, meets us here and now in our appointments. It demands from us more than any easy subjectivist reconciliation of feeling. It demands that we face God in all the grandeur and mystery of His Love. Onan is not afraid that in his insistence that the Gospel be 'relevant' he is falling into any submission to the Zeitgeist. For loyalty to the Cross takes us into the objective world of action where we can rest in no achievement. Onan once summed this up in expressing the central point of his agreement with Ritschl:-

"-----our response to this revelation (that of Jesus Christ) lies not in accepting a body of doctrine or stirring up in ourselves a particular feeling, but in fulfilling our calling in meekness and patience in the tasks and burdens of life and in living in love in

"the Christian fellowship." 1.

In a noble sermon about St. Paul, Oman illustrates best the relentlessness of his ethical literalism. 2. What had happened to St. Paul on the road to Damascus was indeed a cataclysmic revelation of God - or call it if you will, an intuition of the holy given in a moment of crisis. It was, however, a perfecting rather than a break with his previous nature. Oman's central theme in this sermon is that this first conversion was only a beginning of his understanding of the Gospel. Only after his stoning at Lystra and his reconciliation to that agony as all within God's purpose did he come to realise that the Gospel was in its fullest sense "strength through weakness". And despite all that Oman writes on other matters, he uses phrases in his account of that strength through weakness that are a most literal acceptance of the Sermon on the Mount. 3. What Oman writes

- (1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XI p.475. The brackets are the writer's. In understanding the historical background of Oman's ethical fundamentalism and his fear of dogma and mysticism, it is worth remarking that this is not only addressed to the 'Catholic' wing of the Christian Church. It must be remembered that he was brought up in a world where evangelical conversion and legalism were much more prevalent phenomena of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism than is the case in the present day. For an honest yet tragic example of the type of religion Oman feared, see the account of Pierpont Morgan's religion in F.B. Allen's "The Great Morgan", Gollancz, London 1949.
- (2) "The Paradox of the World", op.cit. sermon XIX "Strength Through Weakness". As in the following pages Oman will be shown as calling on St. Paul for support of his opinions, it seems best to remark that the present writer is unqualified to judge the accuracy of Oman's Biblical scholarship and, therefore, does not discuss it. Two points in this connection may be made. (i) Oman was not of a character to make any scholarly assertions lightly. (ii) His interpretation of the scriptures is prophetic rather than scholarly. He stands in the line of Kant, Kierkegaard and Ritschl, in his fear of the pretension of the professors of exegesis. However, he never properly defines what scope he would allow to that vocation. As in most cases, it may be said that Oman errs on the side of distrust rather than over confidence in the intellectual.
- (3) See Chapter VI.

of the Apostle so illustrates what he means by the Gospel that it is worth quoting 'in extenso':--

" Even in his most argumentative speeches Paul aimed at true faith and never at mere intellectual refutation. But his earlier speeches could at most have produced intellectual conviction. They tended towards the danger of Christianity becoming merely one of the many movements of thought, which, at that time, were causing great commotion, but effecting little spiritual change.

" Even when Paul spoke of the Crucifixion, men would not necessarily discern that it was a new view of God and of life and of the true uses of the world. They could have thought of it as a mere momentary triumph of wickedness in the midst of a revelation of might and glory, with its meaning the assurance that such moments do not last forever.

" But, in his suffering and weakness, Paul struck a deeper note. The faith in which his disciples were exhorted to continue could no longer be mistaken for faith in a glorious triumph of Divine power, but was now, beyond all possibility of misunderstanding, faith in a Kingdom only to be entered through much tribulation!"¹

As a corollary of this ethical fundamentalism Oman is always insistent that men should make no boast in the reconciliation they find in loyalty to the Cross. It makes possible no pride, it confers no privileges except to take up the Cross and follow Him. The redeemed are simply the redeeming and must bear with Jesus the cost of that redemption. If those who know that faith can call themselves

(1) "The Paradox of the World", op.cit. pp.257-258.

in any sense 'elect', it is only as being elected to sacrifice. 1.

Oman's Christology is illuminated by what he says of the titles applied to Jesus in the New Testament, - the Christ, the Lord, the Son. He is the Christ, the Anointed of the Kingdom of God, because by His Life and Death He has revealed to men the nature of that Kingdom, as the fellowship of those who find such joy and freedom in doing Their Father's Will on earth as there is in heaven. As it is through the sacrifice of Jesus that the Gospel of God's Love is made known to men, Jesus is the Anointed of that Kingdom. But as that kingdom is made known through the Cross, it is a Kingdom of men called to the same redeeming work. Therefore though Jesus is the Christ, our task is no different from His. 2.

Indeed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God of which He is the Christ cannot be detached from the ethic of which He is the Lord. Here again we return to Oman's perfectionism. Jesus is the Lord in the sense that His way must be our way. Oman would clearly have disliked the distinction that Edwin Bevan made at the end of his little book 'Christianity' between Gospel and Ethic. 3. It also hardly seems worth noting in 1950 that Oman in dealing with Jesus as our ethical Lord makes short shift of ideas such as Lawrence's and Nietzsche's that poverty of spirit means the morality of the

(1) As is so often the case in Oman's theology, the importance of this point in his thought is weakened by not saying it clearly and in not drawing out its implications. For a clear modern statement of what seems the crux of this matter, see Prof. L. Hodgson's "The Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy", Oxford 1936, particularly p.97. It is perhaps their meeting on issues such as this which allowed Prof. Hodgson to write such high praise of Oman in his review of 'Honest Religion' when they disagreed so deeply on other matters, see J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XLIV, pp.416-417. For the relation of this point to the possibility of rational theology, see the last chapter of this thesis.

(2) See H.R. pp.97-102.

(3) H.U.L. Oxford - reissued 1949.

slave. Presumably such ideas were more current among European intellectuals in his day than this.

Finally and most important for Oman, Jesus is the Son. "It is as the Son that He is both Christ and Lord." 1. Jesus shows us the Father by being perfectly the Son, not by being Himself the Father. He is the Son because in Him we see reconciled the highest aspirations of the Holy Spirit in us with all the antinomies of the world around us. Here again we may return to Oman's assertion that his theology is truly Pauline by quoting his description of the Apostle's views on the question of Sonship.

"The humanity of Jesus was as real for him as for Mark. On the physical side Jesus was of the seed of David, and shared the likeness of sinful man under the law; on the spiritual, He was God's Son by a spirit of holiness, and was exalted by way of loyalty, most conspicuously manifested on the Cross. Though undergoing the stern discipline which sin brings on His brethren He Himself knew no sin. Yet it was only because He knew no separation from the Father, not because He could not know temptation." 2.

Oman is never much concerned with the schools of contemporary theology, but several times he criticises the loss of the full humanity of Our Lord in the Anglo-Catholicism

(1) 'Honest Religion' op.cit. p.100.

(2) 'Honest Religion' op.cit. p.105. Oman maintains this thesis by considering the famous passage in Colossians (1,16,17) as an interpolation introduced to meet a later heresy. Now, on Oman's presuppositions as to the historical Jesus, he is able to make any certain statement that Jesus had no experience of sin, is difficult to understand. All that surely he should be able to say is that our intuition of Him is as uncorrupted by sin. In this connection see his account of the fig tree incident in "The Paradox of the World" sermon.

of his day. He writes of Bishop Gore:-

"What human reality, for example, can be left in Christ's sufferings which could enable us to say, "My God, My God" even when we felt forsaken, and commend our spirits to our Father as the floods go over our souls, if, as Dr. Gore supposes, He had the night before observed the eucharist proleptically in His glorified body?" 1.

Thus Oman affirms explicitly that it is in Gethsemane and Golgotha and not in the Resurrection that men must put their trust. Indeed he does not deny that the early Church was founded on the Headship of the Risen Lord, but asserts that to Paul the Resurrection was God's mark of approval on the humility of the Cross. 2. As such it adds nothing to the Cross, in which is the victory. How distasteful to Oman would be certain phraseology about the gloom of Good Friday.

On this point there is a small degree of uncertainty in Oman's thought because of a wavering in his position. In 1906 he affirmed that Ritschl's concentration on the Love of God at the expense of His Majesty leaves a grave uncertainty about the Resurrection. Though Oman does not expand the point he seems to be disagreeing with Ritschl. 3. But in an article, published four years later, though he still admits the vagueness of Ritschl on this point, he seems to have been in agreement with him. The fear of belief through miracle and the fear of any idea of exaltation that takes men away from the humility of forgiveness combine as reasons for this agreement. 4. In his last work he stands openly

(1) G. and P. op.cit. p.152. See also his review of Essays in Orthodoxy by C.C. Quick. J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XVIII, p.246.

(2) C.D.O. op.cit. p.55-56.

(3) F. and F. op.cit. Lecture IX.

(4) See J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XI pp.474-475.

and squarely with Ritschl. ¹.

This is, of course, by no means to say about Oman, any more than it could be said of Ritschl, that he did not believe in the reality of the Resurrection. It must be remembered that Oman accepted the Moderatorship of his Church - a Church which affirms that Jesus rose from the dead. It seems difficult to believe that a man of Oman's honesty and one who was as little interested in place as he, would have accepted such a position if there had been anything in the Confession of his Church that he could not have repeated in good faith. Such a deduction from character in interpreting a man's thought may be weak and even dangerous evidence. In Oman's case, however, many wise men who knew him well admired him, particularly for his honesty. Therefore, such evidence may be allowed. Also in his work he says nothing that possibly could be interpreted as a denial of the Resurrection. Indeed he always stresses the sheer weight of testimony that must be overcome if it is to be denied. There is none of the clever iconoclast in Oman - he who finds a purpose in undermining the faith of the good and the simple. He has his own particular form of the Roman Catholic instrument of "the economy", with little of the pride often associated with that instrument.

What is important to Oman in the discussion of the Resurrection ^{is} ~~was~~ to affirm that it is not a question of standing or falling faith. Leaving aside the question whether he is right or wrong in this affirmation, with his position and his intuition of how many good men are held back from faith in Jesus Christ by just this problem, is he not right to affirm his "theologia crucis" in this way? He is always careful to say that a belief so central to Christian tradition and so dear to many minds must be treated with careful humility.

(1) See 'Honest Religion', op.cit. pp.151-152.

Indeed in Oman's hesitations over the Resurrection, the central problem of faith and freedom can be seen better than in the more generalised problem of religious dependence and moral independence. He attempts to walk through the straight gate that lies between the cavils of Pelagian philosophers and the irrationalism that can say nothing to the faithless. Oman's view that God in revealing Himself never chooses to infringe our autonomy can only with the greatest care be reconciled with the Resurrection. He writes of Jesus Christ:-

" Liberty of the children of God forbids authority. Yet in practice it is impossible to come in touch with the spirit of Christ at all without realising something absolute, something which is precisely the rock on which we can stand in the flux of things and have the spiritual outlook which has a right to judge all things and be judged by no man." 1.

It is to maintain this liberty while insisting on the personal quality of the authority that, to preempt Luther's great phrases, Oman emphasises the "theologia crucis" while insisting on the dangers of the "theologia gloriae".

Throughout his work he is fearful of that view of Our Lord that sees in the Crucifixion the king in rags who will soon tear off his disguise and show himself in triumph.

- III -

Before attempting to see what Oman's Christology means for his concept "supernature", and for the concept "history", two illustrations will be given of how he faces two Christian doctrines specifically dealing with history, - his doctrine

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XXIX p.296.

of Providence and his doctrine of the apocalypse. 1.
 To write of his doctrine on these matters will not add anything in principle to what has already been said. Especially in describing his doctrine of Providence, there must be some repetition of what has already been said about his theodicy. But to repeat, Onan's writings do not cover a wide area, but return rather to a few problems which to him are the very essence of the faith. So often and at such length does Onan write about Providence, that it must be mentioned as an example of how he conceives God's Rule over history.

First its importance: "There is only one religious discovery of value. It is not that God is behind all events, for that may only make them more terrible and strange. It is that God is in all events, even when they are not of His causing but of our sins, and that, by His purpose and succour, they may all be turned to good." 2.

Yet such a doctrine cannot be knowledge if the word be interpreted as that upon which sensible men must agree. Onan is often pre-occupied with the idea of Providence as held by men too easily. He returns therefore often to the attack on any such case as vacuous and blasphemous. It is vacuous because it never faces the question of efficient cause, blasphemous because it can only be affirmed by men content with their lot and unimaginative about the lot of others. It is of the essence of the true doctrine of Providence to be the triumph of faith over difficulty.

It seems germane to the issue to remark that despite Onan's dislike of any belief in Providence not founded on

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- (1) In "The Natural and the Supernatural" Onan uses the term "apocalyptic" as a term of classification. See Appendix 'A'. There the word is used in its most general sense of unveiling; here in its more specific sense referring to the glorious consummation.
- (2) P. of the W. cit. p.147.

Jesus Christ, in some parts of the 'The Natural and the Supernatural' the Cross seems so much in the background that there is an ease of faith that is almost natural religion. 1. Such a judgment is based on the tone of the work, not on specific words. In a theology of experience such as Oman's the atmosphere of writing is of the greatest importance, as in poetry. Also nothing surely can so harm the faith of others as writing on the doctrine of Providence, that does not make perfectly explicit the difficulties of that doctrine. Any such imputation to Oman is swept away by his theology. The title of his sermon on Providence is 'The Paradox of the World', and therein the pain, the doubt and the dilemma are well expressed. 2. There is no false piety in his theological writings. The Cross dominates all else. Indeed the last chapter of his last work is a poem about Providence. Always halting, lest he should override his readers with rhetoric, always careful, lest lack of qualification should distort or simplify a doctrine so implicitly dangerous, that last chapter is the nearest thing to a hymn to God's Love as a style such as his could produce.

Thus it is Jesus Christ who alone can make possible for us faith in Providence. "Even death, with every conceivable accompaniment of shame and agony and visible defeat, is turned into the doing of God's will and the revelation of His pardoning love and the manifestation and victory of His righteousness and peace. Having found there the good which alone is of incomparable value, we learn also that the worst as well as the best must serve it." 3.

Providence is comprehensible only through that reciprocity of revelation and reconciliation that 'Grace and Personality' describes. It is as men take up their crosses that they can dimly see how the evil will can serve God's

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- (1) H. and S. op.cit. See for instance parts of Chapter XXVI.
 (2) P. of the W. op.cit. pp.110-125.
 (3) P. of the W. op.cit. p.115.

end. 1. Even at the dreadful moments in a declining civilisation, men can know that calamity is the manifestation of the Rule of God. They can know that as God pulls down and uproots, it is only the better to build and to plant.

By bearing his own cross St. Paul could affirm his trust in Providence. Oman's interpretation of the Apostle is worth quoting again as an example of his writing at its best.

"----- no doctrine of Providence is self-evident: and as a mere pillar of Natural Religion it is little support, while just in loss and failure and distress Paul finds the greatest significance of Jesus Christ's revelation of the Father. The apostle had been so ill as to seem to have the sentence of death in himself, he was still in suffering and weakness, his plans had broken down and misrepresentation had followed, and he had to admit a change of mind leading to a change of purpose. But, he says, if my sole purpose is God's service, I am not changing if I alter my plans when I find they are not His. The Son of God Jesus Christ is never Yea and Nay, but always Yea, meaning that if we continue in His spirit, change itself may be consistency. Then come the somewhat enigmatic but far-reaching words: 'For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the Yea. Therefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.' " 2.

What Oman believed of the relation between God and persons in history is further illustrated by what he wrote of

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- (1) Oman never takes up the problem with Voltaire at the level of natural event. Presumably that calls on the same risk of faith.
 - (2) 'Honest Religion' op.cit. pp.189-190.

Apocalyptic. 1. Here the same difficulty is raised as with the question of Providence. How can we maintain with certainty that history will witness the consummation of God's purposes, without denying man's autonomy?

Oman's position may best be approached by way of his criticism of Dr. Schweitzer's famous writings on this subject. To this criticism Oman returned for thirty years. 2.

Dr. Schweitzer's belief that Our Lord and St. Paul were only concerned with an interim ethic because they expected an early end of the present order leads him to an arbitrary and material account of Apocalyptic. To Oman, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is of a Kingdom, essentially ethical in character, which men can enter voluntarily here and now by the worship of the Father. If all that Our Lord taught and did emphasises above all else the infinite care of the Father for man's freedom, is it possible to believe in a judge-like entry of God into history in disregard of that autonomy? Oman states categorically that if there is anything in the records of Our Lord's life and death that leads to a contradiction between the spiritual and apocalyptic ideas, then it cannot be the former that must be sacrificed. For with any material Apocalyptic must not the Gospel of the Father be sacrificed?

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- (1) See particularly "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics" op.cit. Article on the Church. Also see "In Spirit and in Truth, Aspects of Judaism and Christianity", see Oman's article "The Abiding Significance of Apocalyptic", pp.276-293. Bibliography p. iv. His interest in this subject is also illustrated by his already mentioned works on the book of Revelation.
 - (2) It sometimes takes the form of criticism of Dr. Schweitzer's sins of omission and commission in Biblical exegesis. I must again state my lack of qualification to judge at this point. The issue at stake is, however, not in essence one of exegesis but of epistemology. Therefore, exegesis may safely be avoided. It may be remarked, however, that a man of Lord Eustace Percy's moral sensitivity and scholarship recently interpreted St. Paul as does Oman. See "The Christian Congregation", a lecture, Longmans, London 1945.

" The prophets and Jesus and Paul may have cherished the idea of a near historical fulfilment, but this is a small matter compared with what is much more certain - that they were religious men of the deepest spiritual insight and the highest consecration, and not puppets pulled by the strings of an obsession. While the very intensity of their faith in God's working in the world may have foreshortened their perspective of its full manifestation, they lived in a world of eternal realities which for them was already present and it was this that made them abiding moral and spiritual inspirations." 1.

In 'Honest Religion', written after his epistemological and metaphysical studies of 'The Natural and the Supernatural', Oman clarifies further his disagreement with Dr. Schweitzer.² Looked at in terms of the history of thought, Dr. Schweitzer, though in reaction against Ritschl's interpretation of the Gospel in terms of a rational ethic, has in that reaction accepted with Ritschl the Kantian account of the moral judgment.³ Thus in Dr. Schweitzer's position the religious and moral judgments are detached from each other. So he is able to write:-

" Jesus accepts as true the late Jewish Messianic expectation in all its externality. In no way does he attempt to spiritualise it. But He fills it with His powerful ethical spirit." 4.

Oman writes of this quotation:

" If, however, there is anything certain about what Jesus did, it was to work a moral regeneration by a religious one, and that His ethical spirit was not of

(1) Article on the Apocalypse, op.cit. p.278.

(2) 'Honest Religion' op.cit. pp.xxiv-xxvi. This passage may be taken as an example of how his contemplation on the philosophy of religion illuminates for Oman the significance of Jesus Christ.

(3) See Chapter II of this thesis.

(4) Quoted by Oman from 'Mein Leben und Denken', see 'Honest Religion', op.cit. p.xxv.

"the Kantian order to be poured into anything." 1.
 Materialist apocalyptic hopes were understandable among Our Lord's followers but at variance with Our Lord's teaching. To believe in them, ~~however~~, is wrong, for they deny both the Patience of God and the autonomy of persons. One practical manifestation of Dr. Schweitzer's position is that he interprets Our Lord's life as too much a matter of alarms and excursions. Once in maintaining to some fellow ministers the necessity of contemplation in a busy life, Oman remarks that Dr. Schweitzer misses the peace and confidence of Our Lord's ministry. 2.

Yet in criticising Dr. Schweitzer's position, Oman never denies the apocalyptical element in Our Lord's Life and Death. His insistence on the Patience of God is not a denial that history will culminate in the achievements of God's purposes for His creation. His stress on our autonomy of action and contemplation is not achieved by disregarding the urgency of man's moral predicament. He quotes several times with approval Bunyan's great phrase about his fear that the houses were going to fall about his head. Oman calls his own theology prophetic theism, and as such his criticism of Dr. Schweitzer is not made in the name of a rationalist metaphysics. He criticises a leading contemporary rationalist, A.N. Whitehead:-

" Religion is concerned with reality, but its reality is not what the world is, but what God is to make of it: and that which is the ground of the possibility of the achievement of what ought to be is as real as what is. This is the actuality of the Kingdom of God. The importance of history for

(1) 'Honest Religion' op.cit. p.xxxv.

(2) Office of the Ministry op.cit. p.12.

"religion is connected with this, and what interprets it is not metaphysics but prophetic insight." 1.

Oman affirms:

"The Gospel is not only the restoration of the individual soul to the love of the Father, it is also the assurance that this love will one day have its perfect manifestation." 2.

Indeed some such doctrine is necessary for a thinker whose main antipathy is to those who attempt to commune with God above the categories of nature and history. 3. Yet it must remain fully a mystery of trust.

Oman believes that Our Lord has illuminated what the prophets had already dimly perceived - the necessary reconciliation of two facts. These facts were that the Kingdom of God is here and now to be realised by the free repentance and consecration of men and yet that only through the Finger of God can It come in Its fullness. This reconciliation comes by the understanding that man's evil lies in disloyalty to God and that his regeneration is achieved by true worship. Sin to Our Lord was a moral state, but determined by religious sincerity. In the act of living the life of love it is revealed to us that God's purposes will be fulfilled. Oman goes so far as to say that if we partake of that faith we can think that a change of rule might come at any moment by a change of worship. Thus he is able to agree on the rigour of the ethical standards that Our Lord preached without assuming that they were determined by His belief in a near eruption of God into history at the expense of men's freedom.

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXVIII p.301.

(2) Article on the Church op.cit.p.518. In using this quotation it must be pointed out that this statement of a belief in a mystical consummation is only given once, while there are many quotations illustrative of the "here and now" of the eternal Gospel.

(3) See Appendix 'A'. Oman's main division among what he calls the higher religions is between the mystical and apocalyptic.

"There is a sense" Oman writes, "in which all true morality is an interim ethic. It is not being in accord with any order that exists, but for one that ought to be. All increasing vision of what is required and all sacred obligation to follow it in reverence for the highest and in regard for one another assumes in one sense, the active presence of what should be now, and in another, has merely to do with what is an immediate call, leaving the manifestation of it wholly to God. This is the essence of Apocalyptic. It is that by the redeeming as well as the redeemed, God will in his own time and way manifest that the rule we live in is His Rule." 1.

Apocalyptic expectation is then the trust of those who already realise the blessings of the Kingdom of God in their hearts and are thereby assured that eventually it will come in its fullness. Those in the Kingdom will consider it blasphemy to urge haste upon God. Such insistence on haste belongs in Oman's opinion among the stunts of theology. Those in the Kingdom can "disregard the whole question of visible power, organise themselves wholly on the basis of love, and leave all issues with God." 2.

In this last sentence is the heart of the matter for Oman - indeed the heart of his Christology and what it tells us of the meeting of man and God in history. It is the declaration to persons in all conditions that despite our finitude, at the moment of decision in contemplation of the Cross we are able to transcend our particular civilisation and live now in the Kingdom of God, and in so doing it is revealed to us that history will have its glorious consummation. Nothing is made easy. The Cross is ever before our poor freedom but in that freedom all men can find a gracious God.

(1) Article on Apocalypse op.cit. pp.292-293.

(2) Church Article op.cit. pp.619-620.

Such an approach to the question of Apocalyptic lays Oman open to the charge mentioned in the last chapter of Ritschlian sentimentalism. God is brought under our puny notions of love and all hold is lost on the Biblical category of judgment. Oman never recognises such criticism by argument about it. He admits often that there is a tendency in men, particularly in easy circumstances, to turn love into a sentimental category. The stern agony of the Cross militates however against this tendency. Is there any solution in a doctrine of Judgment which is just as easily brought under our puny notions as is Love, and which facile men can use to bring the Majesty of God's care for each person down to their own level. Oman is surely shrewder about the proclivities of mortals when he believes that they can better understand the idea of justice than the idea of love. The theology of the Judge is as anthropomorphic as the theodicy of the Father.

Before leaving this subject, a difficulty must be raised about Oman's close association of apocalyptic hopes with the fall of any given civilisation. He asserts (surely a general Christian position) that no civilisation can be an end in itself. He also judges that the highest in any civilisation never emancipates itself from its corruptions except by material calamity. In saying this it must be remembered that Oman understood the pretensions of civilisation before 1914. Events since then have made such understanding the current coin (often debased) of modern theology. One admires criticisms of civilisation made among the immanentism of 1900 more than its modern equivalents.

It may be granted as a psychological phenomenon that in these periods of catastrophe men's thoughts are turned to the glorious consummation. It may also be granted that in so far as the breakdown of civilisations are indubitable

historical events (leaving aside the appropriateness of such absolutist terms as "breakdown" and "fall") and so clearly fraught with grief and frustration for even the least guilty that, unless with Oman and Professor Toynbee men hold that God is revealing his Love through these calamities, there can be no escape from the cyclical pessimism of Thucydides or Spengler. The difficulty arises in trying to understand what relation Oman believes exists between these calamities and the coming of the Kingdom. Oman seems to make out that through the series of rising and dying civilisations God is bringing about His consummation. ¹. Yet he is unclear about the relation between our knowledge of secular history and the theological dogma. He is indeed not clear what role civilisations play in the life of the Christian. ².

- IV -

"At the centre of my faith is the conviction that God was in Christ (in a way I do not care to attempt to define) reconciling the world to Himself." ³. *Oman's*

How does that agnosticism affect ~~his~~ concept of supernature?

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- (1) Article on the Apocalypse, op.cit. pp.287-289.
 - (2) See Chapter VI.
 - (3) This sentence comes from Professor H.H. Farmer. Oman wrote it for a leaflet preparatory to some services he and his students arranged at the end of the 1914-1918 war. No copies of the leaflet are now available. However, Professor Farmer made a mental note of this sentence as typical of Oman. It is used here because it expresses in clear cut form that agnosticism about the ontological status of Our Lord that is always present in varying degree throughout his writings.

In a recent book on Christology Professor D.H. Baillie maintains that those thinkers whom he characterises as content with the eternal God and the Jesus of history cannot give adequate Christian answers as to the character of God and the nature of history. 1. Professor Baillie states (to paraphrase in a few words this section of an exquisitely wrought argument) that without the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation men are led to a view of God as He who waits to be discovered, and a vague and uncertain view of history. What would Oman have made of these questions? To answer this some attempt must first be made to understand the grounds of his refusal to commit himself to a traditional Christology.

Oman's agnosticism at this point is determined by the question of faith and freedom. That problem is very much the problem of relevance. Oman's attempt to maintain the balance between a reasonable and a challenging Gospel must always leave him on the razor's edge between the rationalist and the irrationalist. As the use of the word "relevance" offends the irrationalist, it is necessary here once again to emphasise that Oman never forgets the "mysterium Christi". Indeed any relating of his thought to that of Ritschl must make the qualification that Oman understands the mysterious givenness of faith in a way that Ritschl does not.

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- (1) See "God was in Christ", op.cit. pp.63-84. It is disappointing that Professor Baillie does not mention Oman or his pupils, Professors Manson and Farmer. Presumably he judges Oman's work to be subsumed under his short treatment of Ritschl, Harnack and Herrmann. Despite this fact, it seems worth while to hold Oman before the court of Professor Baillie's questions, for it is a court that really attempts to understand in charity positions close to Oman's. Though in disagreement, Professor Baillie's work shows a profound sympathy for the morality and imagination of those thinkers who raise the question of 'relevance', and a charity in criticism of their answers. Questions raised in this spirit command attention in a way that a less charitable approach does not.

Oman puts this beautifully in "Honest Religion":-

" Yet granting that the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ thus unites the love of the Father over all with the fellowship of the Spirit as inspiration and guidance through all, and so makes God one for us in the unity of all experience without and within, does this not, you may ask, still go beyond honest recognition of the limits of our knowledge?

" And knowledge in the strict sense it is not. It is still mystery, in the proper meaning of mystery, as that which beckons us onward to know more by following what we see. It is a mystery of godliness, a mountain of God that rises on our vision as we fare forward climbing upwards, not a cloud in the skies of Church authority." 1.

Simply, however, to state - as I believe Oman would have been quite willing to state - the sheer mystery of the Cross, that they alone can know it whose eyes have been opened by means they know not of, that there is a cataclysmic division made for men by the belief that a crucified peasant of Galilee reveals to us the very nature of God, and that to persuade men to that belief as the surest truth is indeed beyond all human rhetoric and logic, is all very well. But it does not face adequately the stern duty of the redeemed.

It is not that Oman wishes to bring "Das Wort Gottes" under the control of rational reflexion, but in the name of compassion to attempt to reach out to men wherever they may be. Granting the inadequacy of argument as compared with other forms of love, certain of those who have been to some degree reconciled by Christ must through argument reach out to the world. As in the modern world the devil uses

for some men the guise of "what is the difference?", charity cannot rest in the simple proclamation of the immeasurability of that difference. The dangers of anthropomorphism and debasing the Gospel are always present, but can they stop one from attempting to describe the 'beneficia Christi' in rational and everyday language? The proclamation of an abstract theory of the Majesty of God and a general theory of the corruption of human reason can easily itself fall into the hubris of subjectivism. Men may achieve thereby an outward certainty to face the chaos of their age, but that certainty is not strength, for it is only achieved by cutting off the Church from the world, not in the proper sense of an isolation made necessary by the demands of the Cross, but in the sense of a cult proudly proclaiming the uniqueness of its esoteric experiences. 1.

Particularly does Oman stress the necessity of a relevant Gospel for he is deeply held by his historical intuition of the Church's guilt for the faithlessness of the world. Its deflection from the Gospel in the pursuit of other interests demands from it humility about the questions of evangelism. It must rejoice rather than despair in the fact that God in His Love has swept away all external guarantees of the Gospel, thereby leading men back to the self-authenticating Cross. The Church must glory in the fact that it is now back in a period similar to apostolic times, with nothing to preach but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To turn one's face from that fact in the name of some certain Gospel is for Oman to fall back upon stunts in theology that pass away leaving no spiritual impact.

It is typical of Oman that his sympathy for the

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- (1) The above description of Oman's position must be highly inferential for as has been said, he only once deals openly with the theology of Dr. Barth.

predicament of the pagan is matched with little sympathy, indeed ruthless criticism, of what he calls ceremonial legalism in religion. Rational reflection on the relevance of the Gospel is not only the duty of Christians to the world, but the weapon of liberation by which simple men can proclaim the simplicity of the Gospel against the pretensions of any priestly caste. Oman returns again and again to the fact that it was a priestly sacramental organisation and not the secular might of 'Romanitas' that was chiefly responsible for the Crucifixion (at the level of efficient cause).

Oman's agnosticism about the Being of Our Lord springs from his fear that doctrines about it may so easily distract men from the essence of the Gospel. They may be used by men in their pride to deny the sheer egalitarianism which the Cross reveals. The tremendous joy of the Cross to Oman is that it reveals the Father Who seeks men in all their differing individuality; yet at the same time it reveals a salvation the attainment of which is open to all men whatever their circumstances. Oman always holds high that egalitarian revelation of the Cross against the aristocratic mysticism of the Brahmin, the pride of the rationalist contemplative and the subtleties of theologians.

Oman's radical interpretation of this doctrine of the simplicity of the Gospel, or of what he called elsewhere the doctrine of "revelation to babes", may be seen in the following quotation:-

" To rediscover its simplicity, we must banish from our minds every thought about it except that it is just good news of God and nothing else. For Paul a ministry of reconciliation was the sun-kissed slopes of Olivet, near and friendly in the pure air; for his interpreters it has too often been the precipices of Sinai, wrapped in a thick cloud of dogma which echoes

"with the heavy rumbling of controversy. The words which to the apostle were plain every day speech have become remote and elaborate and technical. 'God was in Christ' to him meant simply the felt presence of the Father in One who was perfectly His Son; to his interpreters it is a complex and mysterious doctrine of Christ's person. 'Reconciling the world', which was simply turning men from enemies into friends, is expounded by perplexing doctrines about prevenient grace. 'Not imputing their trespasses', which was simply the pardon which restores to fellowship in spite of offences, is turned into difficult and forbidding theories of justification. The result has been to change the simple gospel that God is a Father just because there is no limit to His love's endeavour to restore us to our place as His children, into a plan of salvation, which stands like a frowning precipice between us and God." 1.

Yet despite this concentration on the simplicity of the Gospel, this reconciliation of the paradox of faith and freedom in the stern ethical demands of the Cross, Oman is not ruthless about symbolism not his own. It must again be pointed out that he served the Presbyterian Church all his life and openly asserts that membership in any branch of the Christian Church is better than membership in none. 2. His tolerance of symbolism may be illustrated by his review of Hastings Rashdall's book on the Atonement. 3. After agreeing with Rashdall's criticism of substitutionary theories made in the name of the Kantian metaphysic, he still maintains that Rashdall is unable to express the sacrificial character of forgiveness as found in the Cross because of

(1) 'P. of the W.' op.cit. pp.127-128.

(2) 'O. of the M.' op.cit. p.19.

(3) 'J.T.S.' op.cit. Vol.XXI pp.267-275.

the limitations of his purely rationalist view of man. On the other hand, a theologian such as P.T. Forsythe, with whose intellectual formulations Oman disagrees profoundly, plumbs deeply the sacrificial nature of the Cross.

Oman once writes of nineteenth century European Christology that the strength of the German writers lies in their insistence on first principles, while the strength of the British writers lies in their moderation, their understanding of every day life and their willingness to live in the half lights of truth. ¹. Oman tries to combine these two qualities. The refusal to say anything that would deny either man's freedom or God's Love, held closely together in unity, is combined with a humility about his own formulations and a consciousness of the difficulties with which tradition has been forced to grapple. Unfortunately Oman never analyses the problems of theological symbolism in any systematic sense. Probably he would not have considered such an analysis of any great value. The result is however that behind his apparent simplicity there is a great subtlety and sometimes obscurity, both of which make it difficult to follow him.

A passage on Athanasian theology illustrates what Oman means by the simplicity of the gospel, and his agnosticism about dogma:-

"When we forget how much, to the ancient mind, the ideal was a sort of material reality, yet was not material, we take it to mean more than was intended. The Logos, Athanasius says, was at once in the bosom of the Father, ruling the world and in Jesus Christ. Obviously he has no idea of a Divine which is absent from heaven when present on earth: and some in our day have found in this Logos an interpretation of

(1) F. and T. op.cit. p.338.

"science as well as faith. But, if it seems to you a materialising for materially-minded people, a useful simplification in face of fears of demonic powers and gods many and lords many, though honesty requires you to treat it with reverence, it also requires you not to carry it as a mere load upon your freedom." ¹.

In the light of this doctrine of the simplicity of the Gospel, what would Chan's answer have been to Professor Baillie's first question - namely, that without the doctrine of the Incarnation in all its paradox men reach the belief in an aloof or non-condescending God? As the Cross is given to men through their particular tradition, but accepted by individuals in a continuing reciprocity between action and contemplation in which one moment may or may not be decisive, they grow in the understanding that forgiveness is the final power in the universe. It is with the kind of God that faith is concerned and only by inference with His Might and Majesty. Otherwise faith would be no venture and no triumph. Though creeds and confessions are useful and necessary, and the best of them hold more truth than any single man will be vouchsafed, no doctrine must be allowed to stand between the individual and the Cross. And such doctrines always tend to do so - for example, the doctrine of the Resurrection or even of the Incarnation. Trinitarianism may be a noble attempt to explain the world, it may help certain men to find the Cross, but it is not of the essence of a standing or falling faith. We do not need it in order to know from the Cross that He Upon Whom we depend cannot be less than forgiveness, and so haltingly and stumblingly to take up our crosses.

(1) H.R. op.cit. p.106.

Sometimes it is said that God reveals Himself

in grace and also in power. But grace is nothing if it is not the final power; and power is mere force if it is not grace. Therefore, Jesus would say

that all power was given Him of the Father; but it is in His own sense of all being for the sake of God as manifested by Him, and not in the sense of being Himself omnipotent. Though the fullness of the

Godhead which dwelt in Him in bodily form is a

revelation of the nature and, therefore, of the true might of omnipotence, to turn what thus revealed the

rule of love into mere might and then transfer it to Jesus, is the same type of arguing from abstractions

sent into the void as we have seen employed in other spheres. As in other spheres, it was a helpful

almost a necessary simplification for a time." 1.

It would have been interesting if Omen had related

theological passages such as this to his concept of the

sense of the holy. From this quotation emerges more clearly

what he means by the sense of the holy and its relation to

the sacred. The sense of the holy gives us directly in

feeling our sense of dependence. However, only as it

passes from awe to reverence does it give us intuitions of

the mind of God. Though the sense of the holy gives us a

cosmology of intuition, it cannot be complete. It is

always a demand upon us.

That Omen means by faith being primarily concerned with

the mind of God is illustrated by a passage in which he

compares St. Paul with Calvin. 2. It must first be

remembered that Omen repeatedly affirms his great admiration

for Calvin as a thinker and as a man of God. St. Paul and

(1) H.R. op.cit. p. 94.

(2) H.R. op.cit. pp. 39-40.

Calvin may be compared because of the intensity of their concentration on the Glory of God. But because Calvin found mystery in life but not in God's ordinances, his map of God's scheme of salvation tended to become a law and to cease to be a Gospel. He therefore missed St. Paul's understanding of the mystery of God's purposes for men, even after Jesus Christ, which makes all faith a half-seen vision. As Oman writes of St. Paul:-

" Out of this comes the difference from Calvin in his conception of election as touching the gospel, there may for reasons of human perversity and reasons beyond our knowing, be present failure; but as touching election, we can be assured of a love which does not accept failure. Thus the Apostle has no finalities of creed or conduct or organisation, any more than His Master, but those who live in the fellowship of the Spirit are led by him, while Calvin's are all finalities." 1.

More important and difficult is Professor Baillie's assertion that a position such as Oman's cannot give any adequate answer to the question "what is history?". It is more difficult, because Oman in connection with Christology never deals with such questions directly but only by inference. In answering that question it becomes clear that Oman denies the validity of formulas about God's actions in history in the name of freedom. In Jesus Christ men can find reconciliation for the paradox of Providence - so knowing that all history serves the purposes of God - but they cannot assert any definite scheme of God's Rule over history. What Oman vouches for to the faithless is that if men face their appointments in the spirit of the Cross they will understand more and more of what God's care for all men means. ~~Oman~~

(1) H.R. op.cit. p.40.

~~would say that he at least cannot attempt to define why at that particular moment in history God revealed the true nature of His Mind.~~ He cannot stand by any formulation of Creation and Redemption or say that the essence of the Gospel is a Covenant theology of the Old and New Israel. Indeed his agnosticism at this point asserts that we do not need to understand why that revelation of God's Mind is vouchsafed to us at that moment in history, or attempt to relate that fact to the rest of history. Simply we must make the act of faith that it is so, and take up the Cross and follow Him. Any more certain interpretation of history - that is, any Christian philosophy of history - if it go beyond that call to leave all issues with God, will soon become a law that infringes the glorious liberty of God's children. To sum up, it is therefore not necessary to define how God was in Christ or to relate that fact to the enigmas of the historical process.

This is not to say that to Oman there is no history, for we must trust in the infinite wisdom of God's plan. It is, however, to affirm a scheme something like the following. Hosea stood before God. Oman stands before God. In the intervening time Our Lord has lived and died and so changed utterly the given situation in which men exercise their autonomy. But because the Cross has changed the given situation we do not have to stand or fall by any particular attempt to conceptualise what the Cross means in the whole of the Divine plan for men. Oman uses such phrases as:-

"My concern is with the eternally religious." 1.
and Christ "challenges us in life and not merely in history".²

The changing particularities of the historical process in which men meet their God hold little interest for Oman compared to men's ability to transcend these particularities and so face the eternal.

In Oman's concentration on the 'hic et nunc', he does

(1) Apocalypse Article op.cit. p.277.

(2) Honest Religion, op.cit. p.75.

not, however, return to any cyclical view of history. Indeed it is quite impossible to read the European secular philosophers of the last three centuries and not realise how deeply the Christian idea of history stood explicitly or implicitly between them and any return to an ahistoric metaphysics. How much more deeply this influence must have played on Oman, whose chief inspiration was the criticism of rationalist thought in the name of the Cross. What must be maintained is that in his agnosticism about the ontological status of Jesus Christ there is an ahistoric element akin to Kierkegaard's reaction against Hegel.

A difficulty arises however when it is asked whether Oman is equally agnostic about other theories of history. What for instance does he make of the doctrine of the progressive moralisation of the race? Particularly in his classification of religions in which he discusses the development from primitive religion to prophetic monotheism, he comes near, by implication, to a doctrine of progress. On the other hand he makes clear that the categories of development are not easy to reconcile with the autonomy of persons. To the criticism of history conceived in Hegelian categories he continues to return. In his political theology however he often assumes a doctrine of progress. In "The Natural and the Supernatural" there is no attempt to relate ~~what~~ the development of religion to the consummation on the Cross. The present writer believes that if Oman had been openly asked about a doctrine of progress he would have affirmed his agnosticism, saying only that trust in God must involve the belief that God is making something of good purpose out of all the manifold we are given in the study of comparative religion. The difficulty is that he never makes this agnosticism clear, and often moreover seems to accept the idea of progress. Oman embarks on the study of the philosophy of religion to dispel the phantoms in

metaphysics and epistemology which stand between men and a clear vision of the world of persons. Should he not have carried on that dispelling in a far more fundamental way among the metaphysical questions raised by history? To do so would have necessitated the introduction of many more theological concepts into "The Natural and the Supernatural". 1.

With Oman's agnosticism about "history", a difficulty must be raised about his use of the word "redemption", particularly as it relates to his conception of the "Fall". Oman's position is that the open criticism of certain traditional doctrines that he does not believe to be of the essence of the Gospel can only result in purposeless argument that generates more heat than light, and in hurt to sincere men who find joy in such doctrines. Though one may sympathise one can still believe that he carries this principle too far in practice. His sophisticated simplicity about the Gospel which avoids problems can be very confusing for the simple. This lack of clarity appears particularly at the level of vocabulary.

It may be useful and unavoidable to preserve traditional language and there is pride and even ridiculousness in inventing new vocabularies unless one is a theological genius of the very first rank. 2. However, to continue to

- (1) In making this criticism of Oman in relation to Professor Baillie, I must admit that the weakness of Professor Baillie's defence of the doctrine of the Incarnation lies in the last pages of the book, where he draws out the Christian conception of history. In so doing he does not justify such a conception by relating it to the facts of the "civitas terrena". It is easier to condemn the doctrine of progress than to elucidate a Christian conception of history that does not remove the Christian out of the hurly burly of the secular world. Oman's indefiniteness must be judged in the light of the difficulty inherent in all accounts of history.
- (2) Oman is at his most biting in his review of A.N. Whitehead's 'Process and Reality' - see J.T.S. Vol. XXVIII pp. 48-52. He castigates Whitehead for his unnecessary invention of a new vocabulary.

use traditional language, when it is not used traditionally, may disguise ambiguities that were better uncovered. This question arises over his use of the word 'redemption' which he uses in all his works. All religions are religions of redemption.

Can it not be granted that at least since St. Augustine the word redemption has been for the Western Christian inextricably linked with a conception of the Fall? It has been used as part of the phraseology to describe the Divine plan - a plan whose mystery has indeed been ever granted by those who affirmed it - but which in some sense involves "a buying back" of man by God.

The question then arises whether it is wise for Oman to use such a word when he remains agnostic about that scheme of history. For Oman would use the word in a rather different sense. By seeing Jesus on the Cross men may be won back from the sins in which they have been involved. At this point care must be taken not to imply that Oman would cheaply fail to see that the agony and the sweat of the Cross was in the most sacrificial sense "a buying back". Neither must it be implied that he fails to see the cosmic significance of the Cross, in the light of which we cannot say of any person that ~~they~~ will not be saved. Again neither must it be implied that he whose trust is in God as the Ruler of history would not say with traditional Christianity that the free acts of Jesus and the action of God are mysteriously combined in the Cross. Nevertheless, what meaning has a word such as redemption for the Christian disassociated from an idea of the Fall?

What does Oman make of the doctrine of the Fall? He here maintains that sophisticated position of not denying the truth of that myth, yet of denying that it is of the essence of the Gospel. He writes in connection with a work of Otto's - a theologian whom he thinks too deeply tinged by the enthusiastic guilt that characterised some German

theology after 1918, that:-

"We inherit evil as well as good, and we have responsibility for both, but have we any more right to call the one guilt than to call the other merit?" 1.

The fact that men are corporately involved in guilt is no reason to conceptualise the Divine Plan in the scheme "Creation, Fall, Redemption". We can if we so choose, but it is not of the essence of the Gospel. If this is his stand, is Oman wise to use such a word as redemption, without care over definitions? For all his attempt to penetrate the paradox of religious dependence and moral independence, is it wise for a theologian of freedom to make such cardinal use of the word redemption with its passive implications? For all the simplicity of the Gospel, has not the intellectual a duty to be careful over language in his discussion of mysteries?

It remains always a difficulty in Oman's thought how he conceives the relationship between "supernature" and "history". This may however be further clarified by what he writes about the Church and the world.

(1) J.T.S. cop.cit. Vol. XXXIII p.287.

CHAPTER VI.

Without affirming any narrowly pragmatic or even Marxian dogma, it may be admitted that a theology or philosophy is clarified by the attempt to understand what action is advocated therein. As action must always be political, (using that term in its broadest sense) so must all theologies. It may be granted indeed that intelligent political action by the Christian demands a theology, though not necessarily in the concrete form upon which the Catholic would insist. Yet the terms of a theology can only become clear in the exigencies of a political decision. "This primacy of the practical reason" may be seen even in the English Hegelians, the tone of whose writings sounds often as if speculative men are blessed by transcendence over the awful responsibilities of time. The interdependence between their desire that men should act to preserve that society with which they were well content, and their non-personal theology, has already been remarked upon. Greater men, such as St. Augustine within the Christian fabric, or Plato without it, have been more aware of the dependence of speculation on decision and, therefore, more honest about it.

The judgment of Onan as a political theologian is clearly of crucial importance. As the Cross is in its essence a demand upon us to follow Jesus, the question must arise as to how we are to follow Him. A theology with a term such as 'the redeemed who are the redeeming' must have some account of how that redemption is to be carried out in the world. Onan's concept of God is based on the subordination of all analogies to that of forgiveness, therefore it must be seen how forgiveness can regulate all

of man's other activities. Oman's theology is a description of the meeting of man and God. Yet as he believes that that meeting is a 'mediated immediacy' and scorns the mysticism that attempts to know God above the categories of nature and history, the concept "supernature" cannot be understood apart from our involvement in mankind. A practical theology must be judged practically.

Oman's account of conduct must be taken out of the cool air of the judgment of the sacred. It must be seen what such necessary abstractions as the true, the beautiful and the good can mean in a world of bodies and families, churches and civilisations. They must be defined in relation to a world in which (may it not be assumed as the starting point of argument) the claims of art and sainthood, of personal and functional ethics, of justice and love, of tradition and freedom, conflict. The dilemmas and antinomies which arise point the true emphasis of what he is saying about man and God, nature and supernature. The reconciliations of speculation appear less conclusive in the world of action. In this concrete field, moreover, how can men be tempted to treat the world of persons and its manifold predicates as unreal?

To repeat what has been said in an earlier chapter, Oman's concept of supernature is inextricably linked to his concept of nature. The natural is both the means whereby men are given revelation of the supernatural and the environment with which they must deal when reconciled by that revelation. Reconciled to the natural in contemplation and in action, men find a purpose in it by which they may possess it and a purpose beyond it by which they may deny it. Nothing in the natural is identified with God, yet nothing must be separated from His meaning and purpose. To use other language, it is in reconciliation to life's appointments that men begin to fathom the paradox of God.

Immanent and Transcendent.

A position such as this demands some answer as to how the Christian achieves this possession and denial of the natural. What kind of Christian fellowship best reconciles this contradiction? How do Christians take part in secular history so as to possess it and yet not be possessed by it?

In what Oman says about the Church as a visible continuing organisation, it is possible to understand his refusal to make doctrine of the essence of the Gospel and to judge the adequacy of that refusal. At the same point, namely in his insistence on man's freedom over against tradition, his concept of man may be better understood. It is where his political liberalism-- his assertion of the possibility of creative politics (the word used here in its narrower sense) - meets with the quietist elements in his thought, that the respective influences on him of Reformed and of liberal theology may better be estimated. The difficulties in his attempted reconciliation between a Kantian universalist ethic of reason and an Aristotelian ethic of function arises most clearly when he emphasises both that the religious life is just the ordinary life well lived, and also asserts that the Cross must mean for men literally strength through weakness. To put the same issue in a different way, he insists that the saints must inhere in the world and not escape their responsibilities for the law, and yet at the same time proclaims that the Church must leave all issues of power with God. What then does he mean by ethical reconciliation of monism and dualism and by a faith in the supernatural which allows possession of all the natural and which is not possession by it? To ask these broad questions is not to be so absurd as to believe that they can be answered. Nor is it to deny what is surely a paradox of the Christian life - namely that to express Christianity in majoritarian terms has often meant that it

is scarcely Christianity that is so expressed.

Before proceeding to seek Oman's answers to these unanswerable questions one limitation of his thought must be mentioned. This concerns the lack of concreteness in his positive political theology. On no subject does he write so voluminously as on the Church, but what he writes is almost entirely the reiteration of certain general principles about the relation of the visible to the invisible Church, and the negative implications of those principles. His negative statements are incisive enough for any man, but when it comes to positive political theory (that is the clarification of what is meant by the Kingdom of God by defining its relation to concrete historical institutions) he has very little to say and that often vague. There is a strange dichotomy between his insistence on the practical nature of theology and his inability to be specific. This vagueness goes far beyond the understandable fear of being so concrete that his theology might become a programme to save others from thinking.

"Vision and Authority" may be cited as an example of his vagueness. This work, which examines the question of religious authority, is written to face the situation of his day. Admittedly immediate problems can only be properly judged in the light of general principles. Yet the general principles once expounded are never in that work applied to the world in which he lived. For instance there is a discussion of the temptations of Our Lord and what they teach men about conduct. Oman asserts that they teach men to shun both materialism and other-worldliness. But what he means by these terms is left uncertain. From that discussion it is quite impossible to tell whether he believes the Christian may be a ruler or not. 'A fortiori' what Oman conceives to be the proper relation between his Church and the twentieth century British state is quite undetermined.

Onan's indefiniteness is no doubt partly due to the very nature of the questions. It is also due to the extraordinarily conflicting elements in the tradition of political theory that he inherited. It does not necessarily lead to the acceptance of what may be shortly called Thomist politics, if some truth is seen in the standard Thomist criticism that since Luther an important element in Protestant theology has been a tendency to contract out of history. It is also possible to understand that liberal theology has its liberal politics, with optimism about political man, often not easily related to the Cross. Onan inherits much from both these traditions. The quietist influence leads him away from interest in the subtlety and intricacy of secular history in the name of the simple Christian. His liberalism, though necessarily more dependent on the appraisal of the facts of secular history than quietism, leads him to look for such appraisal in Macauley and Gladstone rather than in de Tocqueville or Marx.¹ Such oracles must have been increasingly hard to square with the realities of his day. Both his liberalism and his quietism and the conflict between them may be judged to have produced that characteristic note of vagueness and lack of interest in the particularities of the historical process.

Onan's keen intuition of the breakdown of the intellectual traditions of western Europe is not matched by much understanding of the related social, political and economic difficulties. For instance, when before 1914 he upbraids the Protestant Churches for the growing gulf between them and ~~the~~ working men, he writes almost as if the industrial proletariat of the twentieth century were

(1) See "Concerning the Ministry". Throughout these lectures Onan gives examples of his reading outside theology.

not much different from the fishermen of the Ordneys or the Palestinians of Our Lord's day. Such an ahistorical attitude is possible for the Tertullian isolationist or for a Kantian whose ethics are universalist, but difficult in a thinker who is concerned with man's dealing with the natural.

In the light of this obscurity about political issues, it will be the purpose of this chapter to maintain that the essential difficulties in Oman's theology do not arise at the speculative level, but in his discussion of man's corporate life and dependence on continuing traditions and institutions. To go farther, it will be maintained that his criticism of other theological positions - for example those of Calvin and St. Augustine - is weakened by the fact that he does not choose to discuss these very problems in the interests of which such men were often forced to be paradoxical. ¹. Is it not better to risk the contradictions of being specific, than to avoid them by being vague?

- II -

The description of Oman's political theology must start from his conception of the Church as the ideal fellowship of the Kingdom of God. As he believes man's essence to be his autonomy, and that the natural self must be viewed as subordinate to that essence, so his membership in secular organisations such as the state must be regulated by his freely chosen membership in the Church. Our membership in

(1) In no way must the above be taken to imply that Oman's weakness in this direction was caused by the fact that he did not have to face the exigencies of responsibility in a way that Calvin did. After all St. Thomas faced no graver responsibilities than Oman and must be judged an able political theologian.

natural organisations is prior in time, but the Church is first ideally. Also, in order to be specific about the conduct that Oman advocates, it is easier to start from the ideal where difficulties are less obviously present. And as has been said before, Oman writes more voluminously about that ideal than about any other subject. 1.

Oman's doctrine of the Church is determined by his radical interpretation of man's autonomy, and the New

- (1) For Oman's writings about the Church see all his books except "The Natural and the Supernatural". Also see articles included in the bibliography. "The Church and the Divine Order" must be singled out for mention for in that work there is an examination of the doctrine of the Church in Christian history. As was said of that book in an able contemporary review, it is not "Dogmengeschichte", but prophetic history. (See J.E.S. op.cit. Vol. XIV p. 301, review by A.S. Duncan Jones). All sacerdotal elements in the Church are ruled out 'a priori' and sacramentalism made subordinate. However, even in prophecy fairness about facts is of some importance. What can be said of Oman as a scholar in this work? The present writer must admit his inability to judge of certain subjects, e.g., the Greek Church or the thought of Hooker. In connection with the Greek Church, however, even the amateur may wonder how Oman could expatiate on the completeness of its modern decadence without mention of Dostoevsky or Soloviev. In the case of St. Augustine, moreover, where the present writer is on more familiar ground, it must be judged that Oman's criticism goes beyond disagreement to the point of misinterpretation. From Oman's work it might seem as if St. Augustine had learnt almost nothing from the antinomies of the Constantinian experiment. Oman never comes to grips with the immediate cynicism and ultimate hope that led St. Augustine to his view of the relationship of the two commonwealths. In criticising St. Augustine's view of Church order, none of the wonderful passages are quoted about the episcopate as an office of service. For the above criticism of Oman, the writer must again refer to the interpretation of St. Augustine in "Christianity and Classical Culture", op.cit. the last three chapters.

Testament conception of Love as excluding all other Biblical categories. Repeatedly he pours scorn on what he calls prudence in theology - that is, the attempt to reach a moderate position by balancing conflicting claims. As he writes:-

" I knew a little the late Baron Frederick von Hügel and I shared with many a deep esteem for him. Yet I am quite unable to follow him in his view of Catholicity as a sort of Peter's sheet in which is let down from heaven and kept from spilling separately into the void, something of authority and freedom, of the institution and individual piety, of mysticism and of rites, of morality and spirituality."¹

Truth is not reached by eclecticism, but by following our highest insights to their final conclusion, even if that means discarding much that would seem to be of the essence of the Biblical tradition.

Oran repeatedly affirms the obvious necessity that if there is to be clear thought about the Church there must be clear thought about our use of the terms God and salvation. As Our Lord's view of God is ~~of~~ the Father's infinity of care for each person's autonomy, our doctrine of the Church must be determined by the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Church is the society of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom can only be entered freely. Love is an attitude only possible for the free person. As the Cross has allowed men once and for all to repudiate the idea that the relation between man and God is either that of slave and Master, or the judged and Judge, those conceptions have no part to play in the Christian Church. The chief quality of the Father's Love is Patience and by that Divine Patience must the doctrine of the Church be regulated. The idea that any particular identifiable organisation is the uniquely inspired vehicle of Divine Truth gives man a false means of

(1) 'O. of the H! op.cit. p.35.

escape from the cross of freedom. And why if God put His trust in anything less than each man's poor bewildered freedom did He not go all the way and make His creation less fraught with sin and suffering? Over all Oman's writing on the Church, brood the events that had taken place in Rome in 1870.

It is impossible to overestimate the individualism of Oman's theology and in his doctrine of the Church it is best manifest. The decisive meetings between man and God are only possible in our aloneness. In his philosophy of religion it has been shown that his criticism of rationalist monism and of mysticism is directed against its loss of the concretely autonomous individual. In his political theology his chief purpose is to condemn any ecclesiastical encroachments on the individual's autonomy and ultimate aloneness which may be made by the various types of ceremonial legalism. Oman rises in wrath against the exclusive distinction made by apologists for the Church of Rome between membership in their organisation and the alternative of Human philosophic individualism. This is to confuse the false atomic individualism, impossible for the Christian who knows he is not created to serve his own selfish ends, with the true ecclesiastical individualism which is not self-regarding but knows that the Gospel can only be received as a truly personal possession.

The Church is then the only organisation whose ideal is its essence. It is the consciously created fellowship of those men who have chosen to follow the vision of the Cross, so far as they have been vouchsafed it. It is the society of the saints who live the life of love and prophesy by their actions the consummation of the Kingdom of God. All else in the society - its doctrines, its order, its sacraments - are but relative and changing, subordinate to the decisions of the fellowship as reached in love.

Legalism has been nailed to the Cross, therefore the Church is a society in which legalism is shorn to be redundant. A "fellowship" is a society in which a completely different standard of relations between persons is possible. Any ecclesiastical organisation that treats its members as subservient to the interests of visible unity, by that very act shows itself to be a secular organisation. The "saved" are not necessarily sinless, they are those who in all sincerity are trying to live the life of love - that is to live in this fellowship of free unity.

To quote again a passage that is typical of Oman:-

" It (the Church) rests on the conviction that the true Divine order is ever ready to break into the world, if men will only suffer it to break into their hearts. It is the society of those who already realise the blessings of the Kingdom of God in their hearts - pardon, grace, joy - and are so sure that it will come in fullness that they can live as if it actually were come, and so can disregard the whole question of visible power, organise themselves wholly on the basis of love, and leave all issues with God." 1.

Oman indeed affirms that the Church is of the essence of the Divine plan for history. It is not an addition to faith in the Cross. It is a divinely inspired organisation standing above nature and secular organisations. He agrees with Ritschl's criticism of Schleiermacher's famous dictum. Schleiermacher is wrong in his affirmation that Catholics come to Christ by way of the Church, while Protestants come to the Church by way of Christ. The true difference is through what kind of Church they come. The only mark of the Church of Jesus Christ is the mark of love. Only in fellowship, however small, is love possible. Moreover it is sincerely striven for among a group of persons, there is

(1) Article on the Church "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics", op.cit. p.619-620.

the apostolic Church. Neither numbers, nor doctrines, nor sacraments but the spirit of love is the mark of Catholicity.

Oman's appeal to justify the perfectionism of this doctrine of the Church is typically Hirschlian. In an act of the imagination we can sweep away the accretions of the centuries, by contemplating Our Lord's earthly life and death and the early days of the Church as found in the works of St. Paul. All the metaphysicising, the concessions to the expediences of power, the legalisms of proud priests fade away and we see the ideal Church. It is typical of Oman that in this backward look he should affirm in his articles for scholars (who he perhaps thought were too prone to the ethics of the solitary) his certainty that Our Lord intended the Gospel to be incorporated in a separate society; while in his popular books intended for fellow churchmen, his argument is always of Our Lord's denunciations of legalism.

Our Lord's view of the Church is best symbolised for Oman by His choice of St. Peter as the rock on which it will be built. St. Peter is the epitome of fallibility, simplicity and enthusiasm. His very errors and changeableness are redeemed by the strength of his love. He has the simple man's understanding that what really matters is conduct. He has the proletarian's distrust of all kinds of authority.

Two quotations illustrate how Oman attempts to partake of the mind of Our Lord about His Church.

" That He expected this idea (that of God the Father) to be embodied in an earthly society is plain, for the beginnings of it arose in His lifetime. But it was to be a very singular society, in which none was to exercise authority on the one hand, and none to call any man master on the other.

" Nothing can reconcile this with the ecclesiastical

"embodiment of all ages, wherein true succession has been placed in the officials who determined not only action but belief and who have penetrated further into the sanctuary of the individual life than any earthly government that ever existed." 1.

"The community organised on the only divine, the only permanent basis, the rule of God which is love ----- may seem a very unreal dream, but, as Loisy says, Christ's dream was his project. ----- the society that Christ founded was to be made one solely by being one with the Father through faith in Himself, whereby the power of the world to come should be so present in this life that all events in it should be found of His wise love and all demands of it the assured way of victory and peace. A society with the power of the world to come thus working in it, naturally could not be served by any bond of visible authority." 2.

Oman also invokes the authority of St. Paul. St. Paul better than any other man shared Our Lord's understanding of the true character of the Christian society. In him the apostolic Church's understanding of itself was epitomised. The Church was based entirely on the conviction that the risen Christ was its Head. But always St. Paul's view of the Resurrection was as the sign of God's blessing upon His Son Who had borne the sweat of the Cross in the spirit of forgiveness. 3. The Church was the fellowship of the Cross. It was the fellowship of those who understood

(1) Article on "Individualism", Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, op.cit. p.818.

(2) C.D.O. op.cit. pp.51-52.

(3) There is no need to repeat what has been said in the previous chapter of what Oman thought of the Resurrection and Apocalyptic, though clearly they have bearing on the present issue.

that strength lay in weakness. ¹. The scope of the Church was determined by the meeting of men in His name - that is in the spirit of forgiveness. It needed no external order for it was knit together by love. The office of elder or bishop had for St. Paul no kind of legal authority. The unity of the Church lay simply in the self-authenticating nature of the truth of the Cross. Oman rejects entirely the idea that St. Paul was led to a more externally guaranteed view of Church order, as he meditated in prison at the capital of the great worldly imperialism.

- III -

Granting the sturdiness and indeed at times the sheer nobility of Oman's exhortations to the life of the saint, it must be admitted that these general principles do not take the reader beyond negative criteria as to what the Church is not. They do not take one far towards answering the question how the Christian Fellowship lives the life of love amidst the imperfections of history. Without such definition love is an empty concept. To repeat, for that definition to be possible two types of question must be asked. The first group centres around the needs of the Christian fellowship for continuity and its relationship

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- (1) This phrase "strength through weakness" Oman uses several times about St. Paul. It can, however, be easily attacked as one of those necessarily general paradoxical phrases that convey such a variety of meanings to different people as to be of little value. If asked what it meant Oman would presumably have said "Contemplate the Cross and you will see what it means." It could easily be objected that weakness is not a happy word, as neediness is not weakness, nor is creative suffering easily achieved.

to the external religious institutions of the day. The second group deals with the relation of the Fellowship to the world of natural and historical organisations other than itself. This division is an arbitrary distinction made for the purposes of exposition, as the two types of problem are closely interrelated. These two main types of question must now be broken down into a series of smaller questions so that what is being asked of Oman may be clarified.

In the first type it must be asked, what is the relationship between the Church strictly so called and the Church generally so called. (The distinction "invisible-visible" has been such a whipping boy in the past years that it is better avoided). To express the obvious in its minimal form, some men in some parts of the globe are born into families who belong to differing organisations commonly known as Christian Churches. All men in western Europe are born into societies where organisations of this sort exist. What then are the duties of the saints to such organisations if they are brought up in them? It would be an equivocation to avoid stating that Oman considered certain of these organisations more Christian in character than others - e.g., English Congregationalism than the Church of Rome. What then is the right of the saint to leave one organisation for another or for none at all? To ask these questions is really to ask them about the situation in which Oman lived, that is about British Protestants in the early years of the twentieth century.

To pass to more fundamental questions about the Church, it must be asked what Oman makes of the necessity of continuity among Christians. To put the question in an openly conservative way, what does Oman make of the fact (surely to be assumed) that men do not exercise their freedom in any isolated sense, but are exalted and controlled by a spiritual tradition which is more rich and varied than

any individual's ~~part~~ partaking of it, and also that man's autonomy is nurtured within a pattern of biological continuity? To put the same question in its radical form, what is Owen's attitude to this tradition since it must appear but the meanest shadow when compared with our ideas of the Good or with the fact of the Cross? As to Owen the Christian life is just the ordinary life well lived, what place does sacramentalism, Church order and dogma play in such ordinary life?

The second set of questions has to do with the saints and the world. Presuming that in some dim sense it is understood what Owen means by the fellowship of the saints, what is the relation of that fellowship to men and institutions other than itself, in all the wide variety of possible situations - that is from those in which the world is mildly friendly to those in which it is actively hostile? More difficult, what should be the attitude of the saints to their common membership with others in organisations which, at least on the superficial level, must be considered necessities of history? For example, what is the relation of the saints to their membership in nations or empires which (again may it not be granted) must perforce depart from the life of love if they do not choose to commit national or imperial suicide? What must be the saints' relationship to states and rulers, in a world in which states would cease to be states, if there were not punishments, and rulers would cease to be rulers if they had no guile? Would Owen use such language as "the Christian nation" or "the Christian state"? To be quite specific, can the saint be a governor? If not, for what reasons is he excused from the terrible responsibility of government? Put in the language of another era, what responsibility for justice have those who have seen the idea of justice transcended on the Cross? What in fact does possession

and denial of the natural mean in terms of the Christian's attitude to families and states?

It must be granted again that these two sets of problems are the obvious formulations of unanswerable dilemmas. They involve those insoluble problems, the openness ^{to} which Professor Jaspers has called the noblest mark of the European spirit. ¹. The combination in Oman, however, of vagueness in political theology with rigorous criticism of men who were less vague leads one to present him with such insoluble problems. To ask is not to expect answers, but to hope that thereby Oman's concepts of 'man' and 'nature' and 'supernature' may the better appear.

- IV -

First, then, what does Oman think should be the relation between the fellowship of the saints which is the Christian Church, and the official organisations known as churches, which in his opinion are all tinged to varying degrees with legalism? For fear of misinterpreting what he says on this issue, it must again be insisted that he served his church faithfully for his lifetime. For all his despair about the organised religion of his day - and despair is the only appropriate word - Oman never says anything that would contradict the categorical statement he makes that "with all defects, there is no branch of it (the Church) to which it is not better to belong than to none." ². For all that his bitterest attacks are reserved for ceremonial legalisms and

(1) Professor Karl Jaspers "The European Spirit" S.C.M. Press London 1948 p.61.

(2) O. of the E. op.cit. p.19. From conversations with men who knew Oman in the flesh it is possible to say that his despair about the churches was stated more forcibly in conversation than in the printed word.

particularly when those legalisms attempt to become theocracies, he never doubts that the Gospel calls for visible religious institutions. However much he may indict whole periods of Christian history, he feels himself joined to that long tradition. He is not the isolated secular scholar who stands outside the Church berating it for its imperfections. Yet in saying this in praise of Oman, it is possible at the same time to wish that his repeated expositions of the failure of organised religion in his day were more often combined with words about his own involvement in that failure.

Oman's attitude to the Church "generally so called" can best be seen in his explanation of why the vision of Our Lord faded and the Church became another legalism. With his view of the apostolic Church, such a question is necessarily important. It seems best to use Oman's own words on this subject. First the description of what happened:

"The sense of the Father who is mightier than all sin and evil and who works a spiritual deliverance through relating us directly to Himself and His purpose of love in Jesus Christ, gave place to a fear of sin and evil greater than the sense of God's might to overcome them. The apocalyptic hope was no longer the sense that the meek shall inherit the earth, but became material, and finally disappeared before the hope so to serve God as to merit heaven at last. God was mainly Ruler and Judge and Jesus primarily a saviour from hell to the bliss of heaven."¹

Oman describes why this happened in the following way:-

"This result is neither mysterious nor discouraging. The same process which had been required for the few

(1) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol.III op.cit. pp.621-622. It is not the business of the present writer to change Oman's use of capitals.

"to understand Christ is required for the many. Thus there must be an ever-recurring discipline of the law, because though every believing soul is from the first under the influence of the spirit, for the perfection of His work every soul also needs a 'fulness of time'. The leaven has to disappear into the meal until the whole be leavened. The fellowship of believers founded on Christ, governed only by love and nourished by helpful interchange of spiritual gifts, did not vanish from the earth, but has remained as a leaven working in all the various legalisms that have arisen - the early Catholic, the Orthodox Eastern, the Roman, the Protestant. ----- The natural man still likes material guarantees and would rather not trust anything to God that can be managed by man. The essence of it is that an institution with official rule seems a better security than a fellowship with Divine gifts. So long as that continues man needs and introduces for himself what Paul calls the schoolmaster of the law - a thing that may be lower, but is continually necessary." 1.

Oman justifies this interpretation of history:

"The really depressing view is that Christianity kept all right for three centuries and then proceeded to the developments which led to the present confusion. Whereas the view that the long preparation of Judaism had provided a few who could receive the Gospel in its fullness, but that in the task of working out the Kingdom of God in the world, a new discipline of the law in some form or another is always necessary and that as time goes on this discipline becomes more spiritual, and the Gospel itself more powerful, is full of hope and can justify even the sad necessity of our present divisions. The real question is

(1) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics Vol.III op.cit.p.622.

"whether the Incarnation was sacramental or ethical." 1.

This understanding of the relation of law to grace must be the guiding principle governing the actions of western European Christians in their dilemma over the shattering of ancient traditions:-

"Against this veiling of the truth in flesh it is vain to be angry. Till man is wholly spiritual it will be God's necessary way with him. We may not even despise, neglect, or fail to serve the organisation. At the same time it must ever be held, like the body, as subject to the soul, something that must ever be dying, that the soul may live. Hence we have to recognise the significance of God's providential dealing in once more breaking down the discipline of the Law by division, criticism and even unbelief. Out of this ferment a new phase of the Church's life must surely issue, and a new vision of the Gospel, and then possibly a new and, we trust, a more spiritual incarnation of it in outward form, one in which there will be at once more freedom and more spiritual power." 2.

This description of the saints' relationship to the official churches is clear as far as it goes. Live quietly the life of love inside the churches. Revolt is only advisable at the greatest provocation. Oman gives no criterion of how one judges the respective merits of legalism or where to draw the line between revolt and stagnation.

It is still, however, not easy to see what Oman expects the life of the saint to be. On the one hand he describes it as just the ordinary life well lived, and on

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XI p.476.

(2) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.III op.cit.p.623.

the other he asserts that the saint must take up his cross. Is it possible for the saint to accomplish both these undertakings? Indeed in his earlier work Oman seems to be making a distinction between the spiritual and the physical, smacking almost of Manichaeism, which is completely incompatible with the religious life being the ordinary life well lived. However in all his later work he disavows this distinction, and by this later work he must be judged. 1. Yet the question remains as to what form the life of the saint is supposed to take when Oman asks from him both perfectionism and an inherence in the life of the world.

What is meant by the affirmation that the religious life is just the ordinary life well lived? As soon as this question is asked the difficulty of commenting adequately upon Oman becomes clear. For this affirmation is related to his historical judgment that both the theology of the Reformers and the thought of the men of the Renaissance and the Aufklärung asserted this fact. Oman indeed puts forward the view that the Reformers and the men of the Renaissance were thinking in complementary rather than contradictory directions. 2. He rejects the opinion that secularism was in part a reaction against the Protestant concentration on the doctrine of our Redemption. Such a significant interpretation of the history of thought takes one to the centre of Oman's theology. Does he interpret the Reformers rightly? Does he estimate properly the relation of their thought to the Renaissance and to

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- (1) "Honest Religion" op.cit.p.112:"Neither spirit nor flesh is part of his (St. Paul's) division of human nature. Man is mind in substance and body in form. But he lives in contact with two worlds - spirit and flesh: and he may draw up mind and body into the eternal - the spiritual; or sink mind and body into the corruptible - the fleshly". It is interesting that these words of Oman are almost identical with what A.S.Duncan Jones wrote in criticism of Oman's tendency towards Manichaeism thirty years before. J.T.S. Vol.XIV pp.301-305.
- (2) See particularly H. and S. op.cit. Appendix 'D' "The Origin of Modern Science".

eighteenth century rationalism?

As soon as these questions are asked - in the light of which the range and depth of Oman's thought can alone be judged - an obvious hesitancy must be expressed. How, outside many volumes of scholarship, could comment on these issues add anything to what has already been said by great men? To face but a corner of these problems would be to embark, for example, on a careful exposition of the relation of the idea of the "Beruf" to the doctrine of "sola fide" in Luther's thought. It would be to face the opaque problem of what all the various forms of Protestantism - (Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglo-Saxon Puritanism) made of the claims of secular life in general and secular philosophy in particular. To comment in a few words leads inevitably to a superficial Hegelian sergeant-majoring of history in the interests of one of the best known theological positions. Should one accept the traditional Catholic interpretation of this history that on the one hand Protestantism led to a secularising of life because it was not sufficiently sacramentalised, and on the other hand to a retreat from secular history because it read the doctrine of the Redemption out of the context of the doctrine of Creation? Should one echo Dr. Barth's indictment of the corruption of the Protestant world by liberalism? That would give one an historical criterion, but it would not make one much clearer how the Christian should face the secular world. Or should one agree with Oman that the best of rationalism and of Protestantism are easily reconciled? To judge the historical tones and quantities underlying Oman's thought is not undertaken in this thesis, except in the most superficial manner.

Within the context of this failure, it must still be asked what conduct it is that Oman wants from the saints, when the simple gospel is the following of the Cross, and

at the same time the religious life is just the ordinary life well lived. If Oman means by the ordinary life, the natural life, it is easy to grant that the saints should as a general rule live simple lives, earning their own livings and not pursuing any esoteric activities. But beyond that admission do not difficulties arise? Does not the way to the Cross have a tendency to come into conflict with certain human activities, e.g., art and metaphysics, which are difficult to exclude from the term "the natural life"? ~~Throughout history it has not been the 'natural man' who has distrusted art and metaphysics.~~

Is not a belief in the need for Church government common among 'natural men', however much the saints have transcended that need? Oman does not indeed seem to recognise the difficulties (almost one might say the contradiction) involved in one institution combining the role of an historic corporation that penetrates and uplifts all parts of society with the role of a prophetic community which openly transcends the values of that society. Can it not be assumed as a fact that the more the Church does its duty of inhering in the life of a society, the greater difficulty it has in proclaiming a unique Gospel? Most of his writings state the Churches' task to be the prophetic one of proclaiming a unique Gospel and practising a standard of conduct that quite transcends the possible norm of any society - even the high standard of nineteenth century Great Britain. Yet at other times he writes as if the prophetic remnant could be a national Church. 1.

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- (1) Oman never discusses the meaning of the concept "nation" for the Christian. He just accepts it without definition. Presumably he accepts it with the connotation it has had for Europeans since the French Revolution. The fact that it is nearly always used in a favourable context is an example of how much of nineteenth century secular liberalism was accepted by Oman as 'fides implicita'.

Nowhere in his writings is there a discussion of the contradiction between these two ideas. As a practical point, it may be granted to Oman that the saints should eschew any isolation of themselves that might turn them into a complacent coterie. But will not a certain isolation from the ordinary life of their society be 'de facto' forced upon them by the very uniqueness of their Gospel and the nobility of their ethics? How will it be easy to remain in the legalism of their day, when the Gospel they proclaim must be a transcendence of that legalism? Do not the ethics of the Cross (men having only so much energy at their disposal) exclude many forms of the ordinary life? It is not easy to understand what conduct he is asking from the saints.

To state that Oman fails to recognise these difficulties does not mean that he openly asserts any Rousseau-like expectation that the road to virtue can easily be the way to the majority. He agrees with John that the religion of the "natural man" (a phrase he evidently approves) is Catholic, whatever its name.¹ There is, however, much in his writings that has the ring of the Benthamite almost as much as the Christian hope.

The question of whether Oman recognises sufficiently how difficult it is for the saint to take part in certain forms of the ordinary life may be raised in connection with his view of the function of the artist. In "The Natural and the Supernatural" it is declared that the highest contemplative activity for the Christian is art. Such activity is a true ascension to God through the natural, while the mystic fails in that ascension because he attempts

(1) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics Vol. III op.cit.p.622. Even this statement implies an optimism about standards below which a society will not fall, that would not be as easy to assert today, as at the beginning of the century.

it by a conscious pushing aside of the natural. Oman indeed went so far about the glories of being an artist as to say of Shakespeare:

"The but the Master himself ever so loved the kindly race of men: and is not that religion?" 1. Here not only is a great artist of secular subjects placed higher than one of Christian subjects such as Bach, but, if this remark is to be taken seriously, Shakespeare is above St. Francis or St. Paul in the hierarchy of Christian function. However much the phrase is watered down, it shows at least how strongly Oman was influenced by the Schleiermachiian tradition with its glorification of the aesthetic function.

Such a judgment raises the question of the possibility of the artist being a saint (however wide is drawn the meaning of that word) and of the saint being an artist. It may be granted that Shakespeare so transformed the ordinary life by the intensity of his vision that he gave many men a truer vision of the world. But in what sense can he be said to have loved his fellow men? Can the activity of the artist be called love, if that word is generally associated in Oman's thought with forgiveness, even unto the Cross? Is there not a great gulf fixed between the aloof contemplation necessary to the artist if he is to master his craft, and the man who cares for his neighbour as himself? Oman writes as if the artist were solely engaged in the direct and simple intuition of the beautiful, and does not mention how much the artist must take the content of those intuitions and mould them in terms of form, the knowledge of which comes largely from

(1) C. of the M. op. cit. p.12. Any man must be allowed his "off days" and exaggerations in speaking, but why in cold blood commit them to print?

tradition. For the latter activity the artist must be a concentrated craftsman detached from the world. Oman's simplification of this function would make it easier to reconcile the possibility of the artist being a saint. But that simplification may be judged untrue.

Despite the above exaggeration about Shakespeare, Oman with his 'theologia crucis' could not fail to recognise that there were nobler activities than that of the artist. He would have agreed with Father Hopkins' statement of the value of beauty:-

"What do then? How meet beauty? / Merely meet it; own,
Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift, / then leave,
let that alone. Yea wish that though, with all, /
God's better beauty, grace. " *

This is implied in what he once wrote of Whitehead:-

" The ultimate importance of the personality of God concerns an order of freedom and not a mere aesthetic order". 1.

It is seen in his recognition of the inadequacy of Schleiermacher's theology, to understand the categorical quality of morality.

All the same, does Oman sufficiently understand the conflict that exists between the practice of art and of a morality of forgiveness? Let it be granted to the men of civilisation that art is the noblest possession of the natural, but does it produce men who are able to deny the natural in the name of the Cross? At the worst it may often be carried on in scandalous disregard of even the simplest duties. It is all very well to speak of Our Lord's appreciation of the lilies of the field as preceding the journey to the Cross. To admire beauty is, however, a different activity from devoting one's life to the disciplined production of it - an activity, it must be

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XXVIII p.301.

* This quotation has been typed as prose.

repeated, that excludes many others. Simply to judge historically, art of outstanding merit does not seem to have been often produced in the simple perfectionist Churches, but rather by members of those Churches which have become settled corporations living in close communion with the general life of their societies. Oman's partaking of nineteenth century liberal theology's glorification of the artist and his doctrine of the simple Church of the saints are difficult to reconcile.

This argument could be duplicated over the saint's relation to metaphysics. ¹ If the saint is to inhere in the ordinary life, surely metaphysics must be an activity of that life. At the least, it is possible to agree with the late John Laird that there is in men a natural curiosity about the universe of which they are a part. ² Yet a tension remains between metaphysics and the practice of the morality of the Cross. Metaphysicians, however useful their function, can rarely have the time for outstanding charity. Again it surely is historically true that the Churches of the saints have not been admirers of metaphysicians. The argument might be raised yet again at the topical level of the scientist and the saint. It cannot be difficult in these days to see the possibility of conflict here. In the light of all this it must either be believed that Oman does not recognise the depth of these conflicts, or that he means by the ordinary life something very different from any interpretation that the present writer can imagine, or else that he means by the saint something quite other than what he implies when writing of the Cross.

The present writer must admit his inability to

(1) See final chapter.

(2) John Laird "Mind and Deity", London, Allen & Unwin 1941, see final chapter.

understand what visible form Oman believes the Church should take. On the whole it would seem as if he expects the saints to remain inside the religious organisations of their societies, but ever bringing them nearer to the Gospel of the Cross. If this is so, what does he make of the value of tradition? After praising Oman as a theologian of freedom and mystery and courage, Professor Hodgson writes that Oman does not understand "the necessity and value of those forms and institutions which, by enduring from the past through the present into the future, preserve the element of identity." 1. If Oman believes the Church should be an historic institution penetrating all parts of the national life, then this criticism is entirely valid, as he seems to give little place to those instruments of continuity and enrichment by which that task can be accomplished. Do the saints depend on the legalism to which they belong for the continuity of tradition?

If on the other hand Oman does believe that the Church should be a separate organisation of the saints, and therefore a quietist organisation, Professor Hodgson's criticism still stands. For even a quietist Church has need of doctrine and organisation and sacraments in a manner that Oman does not seem to allow. Let Oman's negative case against Catholicism be granted; namely, that officials, doctrines and even sacraments always have a tendency to enslave men; that in some periods of history they have so distracted the Christian congregation from its primary purpose, the life of love, that the Church has become a congregation of Satan; that the Church so organised forgets its own doctrine and moves towards theocracy (the most odious form of government). Because of these phenomena Oman concludes that the interests of

(1) J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XLIV p.116.

continuity must never be allowed to make idols of any form of Church government, any intellectual phrasing of doctrine or even any particular pattern of sacramental life.

Therefore none of these activities are of the essence of the Gospel, as Catholicism affirms them to be. They must die that the Gospel may live.

Having granted this, however, it must be said that Oman does not face the question of what positive part sacraments, doctrines and order are to play in the congregation of the saints. He writes as if continuity were to be maintained only by the adult recognition of the vision of the Cross. As in his discussion of grace, Oman's concentration on autonomy is so ever present that there is little understanding of such channels of God's love as the warm life of the family nurturing the child in habit; so in his discussion of the Church he gives little place to the means whereby a spiritual tradition is incorporated and within which children develop their freedom to choose or not to choose to be Christians. He often writes as if sacraments and creeds were to be understood by spiritual insight rather than as a noble means to produce and maintain it. ¹ Are not even the saints in need of being upheld by such instruments?

At the risk of too simple an historical judgment, it may be said (to use Oman's own language) that so great is his fear of ceremonial legalism that he does not face sufficiently the dangers of paganism. In his insistence that legalism leads to an increasingly rigid distinction between the secular and the sacred and therefore to a dualism of practice if not of theory, he does not seem to have faced how easily ordinary men may be possessed by the natural if they do not employ a diversity of instruments

(1) In "Honest Religion" Oman wrote of the creative purpose of creeds in a way that he never had done elsewhere.

to prevent it. A man such as Oman, bred in a society permeated by Christian traditions, however imperfect, may almost unwittingly accept it as a minimum below which men will not fall, and therefore concentrate his attention on the imperfections of that society and its religious organisations without fully recognising its greatness. In saying this the opposite tendency may be noticed, namely, that Christians appalled by paganism are only too willing to accept the stern discipline of legalism as an alternative. Oman's early life was passed in a society still in no small part regulated by Christian traditions and where widespread paganism was not present. The imperfections rather than the ancient wisdom of the Church attracted his attention. Only in his later life did he face the growing paganism of European society, which thought it could dispense with that wisdom.

To sum up: In dealing with the question of what visible organisation will allow the Christian fellowship to maintain the proper balance between possession and denial of the natural, Oman seems to underestinate the contradiction between the saint's possession of the ordinary life and his following the Cross. Because of this failure, it is not clear what form he believes the Christian fellowship should take, and therefore it is difficult to understand in concrete terms what he means by the paradox of possession and denial of the natural. Secondly, whatever he may have thought the Church could be - a small quietist band of saints or a national corporation - he underestimates the place of sacraments and doctrines and even order as the means whereby the Church can inhere continuously in the historic and natural orders. This makes it difficult to understand what Oman means by a faith in the supernatural that is a possession of all the natural.

- V -

The dilemma of what Oman means by possession and denial of the natural is also raised in questions about the relation of the Christian fellowship to natural and historic institutions other than itself. The issue arises in its most difficult form over the relation of the members of the fellowship to the state. Therefore discussion will be limited to that institution. 1.

The question of the Church and the state will be raised in connection with the possibility of the Christian taking part in secular politics. This can best be discussed by an attempt to understand Oman's work "The War and Its Issues" which was published in March 1915. It may appear unfair to judge his opinions on politics on the basis of a work that must have been hastily written to meet an emergency. Should a serious contemplative theologian be made to stand by his polemical writings? The present writer answers in this case 'yes'. Here at the moment of decision - and for Europeans what has ever been a more crucial moment of decision than those months? - Oman declares himself on an issue of major consequence and thereby the essence of his political theology is laid bare.

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- (1) The institution of the family does not seem to have presented difficulties for Oman. Although he quotes Our Lord's remark about the subordination of the family to the Kingdom, he never defines the circumstances under which the family should be denied. The disciplined Christian family is for Oman the proper ~~form~~ form of denial and possession of the natural in this sphere. The vocation of celibacy would be to him 'prima facie' suspect as an improper denial of the natural that had not passed through a true possession. Oman's attitude is seen in his single discussion of sex: "Sex is the most obvious way in which spirit and flesh meet. Hence it may be the lowest or the loftiest manifestation of human nature. The very word 'love' may either have the grossest sensual meaning or be the poet's highest symbol of the noblest and holiest. As this depends on whether its well-spring is in the flesh or the spirit, no other human interest is so responsive to a religious valuation of one another". "Honest Religion" op.cit. p.185.

As nowhere else in his work does he face so specifically and positively the questions of Christian political ethics, much is here illuminated that elsewhere can only be guessed at.

Here was a man who had ended his previous work with a subordination of all categories - Biblical and otherwise - to the activity of forgiveness. He had asserted that trust in God meant leaving all issues of power with God. Here was a man who had never viewed his particular civilisation with a bewitched eye, but with that of a sceptical Orkney farmer who understood its imperfections and prophesied its downfall. After remarking that Our Lord never trusted in the state, he had written:-

"The usual way of avoiding this difficulty is to say that He could not be expected to look to a Pagan state as we are justified in looking to the Christian state. But is the state ever Christian?"¹. He had affirmed that Tolstoi working on the land after his conversion was nearer the Christian ideal than the good willed Christian socialist who attempted to reform the world by influencing the activity of his state.² In 1914 the saint had to face the claims of the imperfect in all its imperfection. God's demand for justice could not be avoided. To repeat, any thinker can in imagination hold, as it were aesthetically, each differing position successively, without counting the cost of contradiction. In action he is faced with a world so much more real that in committing himself the balanced alternative can no longer stand.

It does not seem redundant to remark that whatever the limitations of "The War and Its Issues", whatever

(1) Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels op.cit.Vol.I. p.818.

(2) Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels op.cit.Vol.I. p.818.

contradictions it may contain, the admirer of Oman cannot but be glad that it was written. All that he had written previously faced him with grave responsibility to commit himself in 1914 and he faced that duty in all its consequences. That this work was produced so quickly after the outbreak of war shows how deeply he felt his responsibility.

Oman states emphatically that the British Christian should support the British state in its prosecution of the war. He begins his argument with some statements about the past and the present that show him to be a political liberal:-

"Would the preparation for Christianity have been as favourable had the Greeks been defeated at Marathon? Would Christianity have developed as effectively had Charles Martel failed at Tours? Would the religious history of Scotland and Holland have been the same with smaller sacrifices for national independence?" 1.

This statement does not by itself commit Oman to political liberalism, for it could be interpreted as the statement of a Christian conservative, who sees no creative possibilities in politics but recognises their negative necessity. But with the following judgment of the war of 1914 Oman is committed to that liberalism.

"Are we not right to think that we are witnessing one of the great struggles for a freer and juster world, one of those wars for which religion has been the spring and the stay, one in which it might well seem that the sole duty

(1) W. and Its I. op.cit. p.14.

"is to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty?" 1.

Having rejected any note of Tertullian isolationism, how far does Oman go in the opposite direction? As a preliminary ~~claim~~^{he} asserts that the Christian must be in touch with the pulse of his society in its moments of great enthusiasm:-

"It would be far indeed from praise to say that we (the Christians) maintained our independence of mind, by closing it to this great and deep emotion". 2.

However guardedly that statement be interpreted, it shows how far Oman would go towards the Church being secularised in a world where corporate emotions are of the kind they are, and induced in the way they are. His description of the saint is here very different from his other pictures of the lonely prophet. To refer back, this is the type of statement that leads one to believe that Oman saw the Church of the saints as a national Church.

More important than this preliminary is the question of the Christian's duty to his state. Oman proceeds from the general principle that the Christian's membership in the society of the Kingdom of God does not mean that he is not also involved in the earthly kingdom. He states that the magistrate does not bear the sword in vain. He points out that the acceptance of the protection of the state in peacetime is closely related to the duty of supporting that

(1) W. and Its I. op.cit. p.13. Even accepting Oman's assumptions, this is no place to estimate the accuracy of such an historical judgment. Clearly in 1914 there were English liberals who agreed with Oman, as also there were those such as Morley who disagreed. Liberalism is clearly dependent in its ethics upon historical judgments of this sort. Neither here nor elsewhere did Oman discuss the nature of historical knowledge *adequately*.

(2) W. and Its I. op.cit. p.12.

state by arms when it is in need of defence. 1.

Oman affirms the doctrine of the just war:-

" Does not the right to oppose one's country in an unjust war involve the duty of supporting it in a just one?" 2.

Such an affirmation must help one to understand what action meant in calling St. Thomas the first Whig. It is interesting that Oman's Gladstonianism is forced close at this point to a Thomist position despite all his critical remarks about scholasticism in his speculative theology.

Before continuing with the description of how Oman conceived the state, it seems germane to risk an interpretation in psychological terms of his stand in regard to inherited traditions. Until 1914 he had expressed his ethical fundamentalism within the framework of certain inherent liberal assumptions. Despite his attacks on the pretensions of the state (themselves at a certain level typical of the liberal as well as of the perfectionist) he had nevertheless assumed a certain political optimism. It is permissible for an outsider to remark that such optimism about politics was particularly understandable in a member of British society.

(1) In the case of the British side of the 1914 war the question of the state and its aggressions may be considered not to arise. In "The War and Its Issues" Oman declared that he did not believe the Boer war to have been just. This is another example of his liberalism as opposed to conservatism. The conservative surely could but support his Empire in the enforcement of peace within its bounds. It also shows that trait of the liberal in trusting those secular organisations known as nations while distrusting empires.

(2) W. and Its I. op.cit. p.20. There is no need to comment on the second part of "The War and Its Issues" at any length. It deals with the political and religious sins for which those Christians not caught up in the actual conflict must strive. Here Oman's political optimism is chiefly evident. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1915 he should insist that the British state must on no account infringe the liberty of the individual by invoking compulsory military service in its fight against tyranny. Sic transit gloria mundi.

part of whose genius had been to comprehend the real basis of liberalism as religious and to develop it as a great political form. When the quietist elements in Onan's thought were challenged by the exigency of a call to defend the liberal society he admired against one he did not admire, the allegiance to his liberalism triumphed over his quietism.

At this point may be seen the complicated strands of thought that underlie Onan's tradition. What is of such interest in the main stream of Anglo-Saxon political liberalism is that it originates both from liberal theology, with its insistence on man's continuity with God, and from the Puritan variety of Calvinist theology, which views politics as the call to serve the glory of God in the world. Onan several times uses the argument, so frequent among Anglo-Saxon Calvinists, of the superiority of Calvin's political theory to Luther's. It inherits that strange blend of theological liberalism and the vigour of Calvinist determination that has done much to produce the pattern of modern democracy in Great Britain and North America. From such a union a new democratic blend of natural and revealed theology must arise. Perhaps the enthusiasm of the former Master of Balliol, Lord Lindsay, for Onan's thought may be partly based on their common sharing of this political position. 1.

At the same time Onan is deeply influenced by the quietist elements that have characterised German theology since Luther. The perfectionist tendency, seen in Kant, is even more noticeable in Ritschl, with his attempt to return to the simple apostolic Church. In some of Onan's

(1) The present writer knows no place where this mixture of Calvinism and liberalism is better exemplified than in Lord Lindsay's numerous writings on political theory. For Lord Lindsay's review of the Natural and the Supernatural" J.T.S. op.cit. Vol. XXIII, pp. 385-388.

writings there is the fear that escape from the literal interpretation of the ethical demands of the Gospel is to deny the Gospel.

Without judging of the respective merits of ethical perfectionism and of Christian liberalism must one not admit that they make strange bedfellows? Political morality must always be an insoluble problem for the Christian, but with such a contradiction of traditions it is no wonder that there seem to be deviations between the various parts of Onan's thought. "The War and Its Issues" is the triumph of his optimism.

To continue the description of what Onan says about the Christian and the state, he writes:-

" The Church as a society of the perfect order of God's Kingdom which rests on nothing except personal insight into truth and the determination of all duties by love, must no more consent to live for less than that order, because of a war, than a teacher for knowledge because a boy is whipped, or a benevolent society for the appeal of kindness, because the police have had to be called in, but that does not determine what each individual may have to do in the way of helping with the whipping or with calling in the police". 1.

Love does not exist to destroy the law but to fulfil it. Onan defines love of other persons in such a way that it does not exclude the right to coerce them in their own best interests.

" Love is fundamentally an estimate of man as an individual spiritual being whose own choice determines his destiny and whose eternal destiny is so great that no present affliction can be weighed for a moment against its attainment, and for whom death, however

(1) W. and Its I. op.cit. p.43.

"terrible in its pains and dread of unknown possibilities, is only the greatest of these purifying troubles." 1.

The activity of love must be turned towards the transformation of the state. The state is part of that natural order which in Oman's opinion cannot be set aside in any easier way than by transforming it into a spiritual order. The members of the Church must strive to make the state a spiritual organisation. The consummation of this process will be the disappearance of the Church into the state. Here one can only assume that Oman is more deeply influenced by the doctrine of progress than he chooses to admit. It is this process that the rise and decline of successive civilisations is witnessing. The Christian's duty in this development is accomplished by using his influence to modify the methods of the state and to limit its sphere of activity. Beyond these generalisations Oman does not go. He once more lays down the principle of denial and possession.

" The task of the religious man is how to be in the world yet not of it; how to live as a stranger and a pilgrim and yet with the assurance that all things the world as well as Cephias, things secular as well as sacred are his; how to have as it has been expressed, a joyous use of the present with a self-denying outlook

(1) W. and Its Issues op.cit. p.51.

"upon the future". 1.

The difficulty is that nowhere in his writing does Onan lay down any general principles of how men should judge whether at any particular moment the state is to be possessed or denied. When does the time come, and how do we know that it is come, for the material interests of a given civilisation to be denied in the interests of a "higher religion" and a "purity of morals"? Onan indeed makes the sensible practical remark that when the state leaves the Church alone then the Christian fellowship should not lay down laws about the Christian and the state, but leave it to the differing individual judgment. So pacifists and soldiers can live together in the Church. But the appeal to individual judgment surely does not save him from the elucidation of general principles on this matter. Onan seems to assume that the state will leave the Church alone. But what when it does not? It is all very well to write of modifying the state's methods and limiting its sphere, but when do we judge that the state has so declared itself to make this impossible? What does the Christian do about anti-Semitic laws, or for that matter about anti-negro laws? Onan gives no principles to serve as general guides to decision on such matters.

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- (1) W. and Its I. op.cit. p.115. See also a quotation from "The Natural and the Supernatural" where the denial of natural organisations is more clearly stated. "We are dependent on natural relations, like neighbourhood, family, tribe, for any moral relation in which we realise our freedom, yet mere natural relations may be in the sharpest antagonism to any right moral relation, and only as we deny them may we have any right relation to our fellows or any power to fill rightly our sphere and use our opportunity. ---- So also with civilisation. Throughout all history we find a constant antagonism between the material interests of civilisation and religion, and between their allurements and the purity of morals: and the antagonism is the sharper the more the civilisation is elaborate and the religion higher and the morals enlightened." W. and I. op.cit. p.305.

The issue may be carried farther by describing what Oman says about Our Lord's attitude to war. He goes so far as to say that Our Lord was not a soldier because He was a Messiah and because He was not living in a free society. He asks the question:-

" Had He, like Socrates, been a citizen of a free state which had to defend against barbarism a higher civilisation which was to bless humanity, might He not, like Socrates, have participated in the task?" 1.

As far as our duty to the world goes Our Lord should determine for us (I) our own vocation and (II) its subordination to the Kingdom of God.

Leaving aside the tangled question of how Our Lord helps us to determine our vocations, what does Oman mean by the subordination of our vocations to the Kingdom of God? Under what principles does this subordination take place? Here the relation between possession and denial of the natural is raised in what seems its most essential form - how the Christian solves the conflict between the ethics that his function in the world demands e.g., as ruler, soldier, employer, etc., and the personal standards demanded by Our Lord. That such a conflict does exist must in the present argument be assumed. It will be taken for granted that Christian ethical systems can only avoid this contradiction either if they cease to believe that the Cross is a demand upon them and equate the Sermon on the Mount with the Ethics of Aristotle, or else if they contract out of history and so exclude themselves from any of the

(1) W. and Its W. op.cit. p.45. Oman's Presbyterian egalitarianism is seen in his insistence that Our Lord would have been a private soldier and not an officer. As his decision against pacifism is based solely on the principle of responsibility, why should Our Lord not have been a general?

controlling functions in a society.

To repeat what has been said in an earlier chapter, Oman criticises Kant because the latter's ethical system gives no place to the varying facts of function. For example, it cannot show how the duties of the subject and the ruler are different. Kant does not apprehend the differing individualities of God's children, so beautifully understood by Our Lord. ¹. It is well nigh impossible to compare the ethical systems of Kant and Oman. The latter maintains what Kant denies, namely that intuition gives us an 'a priori' insight into the content of the Good. Oman believes that it is through nature that we are given such intuitions. He makes no such rigid disjunction between reason and nature as does Kant. Such different assumptions make comparison difficult. What can be remarked, however, is the result of their assumptions. Oman's ethical intuition given through nature, and enabling us to deal with nature, can account for the wide variety of human experience by which men possess the natural, in a way that the Kantian ethic cannot. On the other hand, Kant's imperious practical reason does give a simple and necessary account of how the ordinary man may deny the natural.

Oman would presumably have affirmed that the right proportion between the individualist 'ought' of function and the universalist demand of the Kingdom of God is achieved when each person cultivates the ethics of his vocation without neglecting his universal duties. The only principle he enunciates to achieve that reconciliation is the contemplation of the Cross in sincerity of intuition.

There can perhaps be found no solution, definable in rational terms more adequate than this "*logique du coeur*",

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.319-321.

which does not drastically curtail the wide variety of ethical phenomena to be brought under the principle. The present writer must admit his own agnosticism as to how universalist and individualist 'oughts' may be reconciled. Two points may be made clear about Oman's position however. First, that despite his criticism of Kant, Oman's sincerity of intuition cannot vie in clarity with Kant's account of duty, in showing how the natural is denied. Secondly and more important, whatever the difficulties of this question, Oman does not take his analysis of it nearly far enough. A theology that scorns speculative metaphysicising and concentrates on the problem of relevance, is dependent for its clarity on a careful examination of the moral judgment. Oman asserts that the antinomies of speculation are only reconcilable as we deal with the natural. We can only understand the true character of Christian monotheism as we recognise how we must deal with the natural in denial and possession. It is disappointing therefore that in his attempt to clarify what he means by this paradox Oman never discusses Aristotle's ethical system, surely the greatest statement of the ethic of function. Dismissal of Greek metaphysics still does not save him from facing the problems with which that metaphysics dealt. Neither does he discuss the Thomist compromise between an Aristotelian ethic of civilisation and the Sermon on the Mount. However certainly he would have rejected these accounts of ethical behaviour, that very rejection, balanced against his criticism of Kant, would have made much clearer his account of the ethical judgment. It would have clarified further what he meant by denial and possession of the natural. As it is, that concept, so crucial for an understanding of what he believed the relation of nature and supernature to be, remains undefined.

- VI -

After the doubts and hesitations of this chapter, it seems worthwhile to return to what Oman thought man to be. To repeat what has been said in the fourth chapter, Oman's theology is a view of man as partaking of the environments of nature and supernature. His theology may be conceived as a poetic description of man's existence in relation to those environments. Indeed implanted in that poetry is the development of the rational implications of his central vision, but that vision itself is in no way necessary. It is the assertion of intuitions that men may either accept or reject. In the light of his political theology, it is now possible to state his concept of man in greater clarity.

Oman's concept of man in relation to his environment is, of course, written within the Christian tradition. Therefore, most of what he says, as in all theologies, is but another version of the great Christian affirmations about man and God - affirmations to which Christians of varying subsidiary traditions would all subscribe. Therefore this account will concentrate on what is particularly individual in Oman's interpretation. To say individual is not to imply that other men have not concentrated on the same aspects. It is rather to search out the quality of Oman's unique vision.

Such an attempt will in no sense appear a proper philosophic activity to those modern philosophers who are insistent that the only questions which should be asked are those for which there are tidy answers. Leave, they would probably say, such imaginative descriptions of man to the novelists and the religious poets. They do not belong in rational thought. Enough has already been said to show how deeply Oman would have scorned that

tradition of certainty. Surely the Christian must agree with him that to fail in a sense of necessary mystery and paradox is to end up content with the teaching of grammar. Then the great questions are left to those who have no respect for reason. The present writer would claim that he can in some small way better understand himself and other men from his study of Oman. Therefore the attempt to understand the tone of Oman's concept of man seems a proper activity.

Oman's view of man is above all else the view of the prophet. That is to say, his anthropology is hardly at all a scientific or speculative one. He is not particularly interested in observing and commenting on all the wide variety of ways in which men do in fact live. He is rather calling upon them to act in a certain way. Therefore to use the phrase 'Oman's concept of man' is not to say that this is what men have been, are and probably will be. It is to say that this is what men could be and ought to be. Therefore Oman is not concerned with a comprehensive definition that will cover all the phenomena, but with Christian man. Such a description must indeed take into account what men are, for a practical theologian who is calling men to certain actions must speak to their condition. As has been said at the beginning of this chapter, Oman often fails in that realism. But such failure is not of great importance to his work for it does not mar the primary task of the practical theologian. A speculative or scientific view of man is not possible for Oman, not only because it is not the function of the theologian, but also because the taking of such a view would be failing to judge man in terms of his essential activity, his autonomy.

Enough has been said already of Oman as a theologian of freedom and joy. One conclusion of that fact must, however, be stated. His theology is for the strong and he

assumes in man a great capacity for moral strength. In making his main division between the higher religions, the distinction mystical-apocalyptic, Oman writes that the difference is between those who make of religion a great mother complex and those who decide that they will come back bearing their shield or borne on them. This remark epitomises his concentration on man's strength and his failure to sympathise with his weakness. Oman's view of what man should be has much in common with Kipling's Scot in "MacAndrew's Hymn". His belief in man's capacity for courage may be seen in his account of the pain of human life. His sermon on Ezekiel shows that he did not underestimate the agony that men must endure, but there is always the sense that it is not too difficult for them to face that grief by girding up their loins and being courageous. ¹ There is little sense of the nearness of defeat, and therefore of those aids to which men cling in order to avoid that defeat.

Oman's strength and confidence is shown in his remark that he is "not greatly edified" by St. Augustine's "Confessions" or by Bunyan's "Grace Abounding". ² He just does not share that sense of overwhelming guilt and the consequent sense of the miracle of salvation that has been the experience of certain of the greatest Christians. One could not go so far as to say, in terms of William James' distinction, that Oman is "once born" rather than "twice born". But it can be said that his temptation was not that of despair, and therefore his theology cannot easily speak to the despairing. To quote Father Hopkins once again, Oman could never have written:-

"I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have no taste. My taste was no."

(1) P. of the W. op.cit. p.236 et seq.

(2) O. of the H. op.cit. p.12.

He would probably have said that such lines were egocentric and that the writer should turn in reason to his objective duties in the world. It may well be asked of Omen how men are expected to turn from their despair. It is this failure to understand despair at its most terrible that prevents Omen from using that language about the Cross that sees it as a beacon in a world of darkness. It is this optimism about man that makes him concentrate on "Christus in nobis" rather than "Christus pro nobis". It is perhaps his expectation that man can and will use his freedom that makes him stress the manhood rather than the Godhead of Jesus. This is in no sense to indict his whole theology as corrupted by optimism, but to say that it speaks more to certain conditions than to others.

Omen's confidence in man's strength is seen in his trust in the powers of reason. However much he reacts from the aridity of a certain type of rationalism and insists on the role of feeling in the ethical judgment, his appeal is always to the power of reason. His comments about psycho-analysis are revealing in this respect:-

"To be hunting out the worst kind of motive, and ascribing to complexes what I should meet by an appeal to reason and conscience, to worry about one's own inside perpetually when I should prescribe open air, or about other peoples, when what seems to be necessary for them is to live objectively in life's interests - is not an occupation spiritually profitable either to the physician or the patient". 1.

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- (1) O. of the L. op.cit. p.25. It is interesting to note that one of Omen's closest friends was a pioneer in the relating of psycho-analysis to the Gospel. Omen was forced in his respect for this man to admit almost unwillingly that such activity might be an activity of love. See "Personal Freedom through Personal Faith", a memorial volume for William Fearon Halliday; Bibliography p.iii.

Whatever may be said of the dangers of a non-Christian psycho-analysis, this statement shows a lack of understanding of the atavistic in man and the difficulties that prevent him from following the Gospel.

Nevertheless nothing must be said that denies how great a glory is Onan's sense of joy and strength and hope. His passionate understanding that the crown of all values is that forgiveness ^{which} ~~that~~ strives to see all men as God sees them, makes his theology in the noblest sense a telling of good news. Men need not despair, for they live in a universe where it is not necessary to choose between weathering the storm in a proud virtue that can find no peace, and a ruthlessness that must cast aside all intuitions of the Cross. At the same time, Onan's Gospel of joy offers men no ease of moral relation. Faith for him means no unimaginative rest, for it is presented with the Majesty of Christ's Love, the mystery of God's transcendent Demands. Whatever has been said about contradictions in applying the Gospel, nothing is said to deny that here is the good news by which all men's lives are regulated. To raise difficulties as to how men are to deny and to possess the natural is not to doubt the glory of Onan's statement of the destiny to which men are called at the summit of the journey of their minds into God. It is the life of love, which by denying value to no part of the created order lives out that divine tenderness and patience by which alone the Christian knows the Kingdom can be consummated.

CHAPTER VII.

To use the late Professor Baird's fine phrase, Oman's accounts are not open to audit by reason alone. ^{1.} To say otherwise would for instance in the case of Oman's criticism of idealist monism imply that many of Europe's greatest intellectuals could not properly use their intellects. That presumption must be avoided. Oman's metaphysical monotheism of nature and supernature is based on the faith that only in the vision of Calvary can men in honesty see the pain of the world and still be able to say that the Father is over all and in all. But of course it is possible for an imaginative and reasonable man to look at Calvary and to despair. It cannot be said that suicide is by definition irrational. Moreover, reasonable men are not of necessity graced with compassionate imaginations. All men live in some disregard of the crosses that others bear and therefore accept theologies that in some measure disregard the Cross of Christ. Oman may be right in asserting the historical phenomenon that in societies where monism is accepted by groups of men it tends to become increasingly pessimistic, but that may be 'in the long run' when the monists in question are themselves dead. The change from Hegel to Schopenhauer was not determined by the superior intellect of the latter.

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- (1) See the first chapter of the first volume and the closing chapter of the second volume of Professor Baird's Gifford Lectures op.cit. Reason is used here in the Kantian sense of the understanding without the Kantian limitations.

Also are there not rational contemplatives who seem to perceive the consequences of the Cross, but who prefer their joyless certainty to its demands? There are rational and imaginative men of action, such as Colonel Lawrence, whose fear that joy is an illusion holds them from the Christian faith. It hardly needs saying that a theologian of mystery and freedom such as Cuen recognises to the full the variety of faiths open to rational men.

The following quotation from a letter of Dostoevsky's illustrates the mystery of faith. In it there is much that is remarkably akin to Cuen's doctrine of the simple Gospel. Yet in all its weakness and all its strength, Cuen could never have written it.

" I want to say to you about myself, that I am a child of this age, a child of unbelief and scepticism, and probably - indeed I know it - shall remain so until the end of my life. How terribly it has tortured me (and tortures me even now) - this longing for faith, which is all the stronger for the proofs I have against it! And yet God gives me sometimes moments of perfect peace; in such moments I love and believe that I am loved, in such moments I have formulated my creed wherein all is dear and holy to me. This creed is extremely simple: here it is. I believe that there is nothing lovelier, more sympathetic, more rational, more human and more perfect than the Saviour; I say to myself that not only is there no one else like Him, but that there could be no one. I would even say more: if anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with the truth". ^{1.}

(1) quoted "Fyodor Dostoevsky" J.M. Kurney. Martin Secker London 1923 pp.77-78.

The beginning and the end of this quotation are quite unlike Oman's faith, while the middle is close to him. Oman's concept of the sense of the holy is useful in making explicit to men why it is possible for them to unite their eccological with their cosmological theism. It does not however explain why men such as Pascal and Dostoevsky find always that act of uniting one of aching difficulty, while men such as Oman and St. Thomas find far less. The present writer is quite unwilling to say that that difference is due to greater rationality on either side, or for that matter greater sincerity of feeling or faithfulness in action. All that he is able to say is that in maintaining the tension between monism and dualism the Christian community has need of Jansenism to save it from complacency, and Oman's strength to preserve in the act of faith the note of joy. But to say that the act of faith must always include this joy is to iron out Christian experience into one pattern.

So to insist on the dependence of Oman's metaphysics upon faith is to return to that question at which this thesis began. A provisional assent for the purpose of discussion was given in the first chapter to the proposition that philosophical theology was a possible undertaking. In trying to judge the value of "The Natural and the Supernatural" the issue must be reopened. For ~~if~~ the question is answered in the negative, then no more need be said. Does Oman fall before the attack of the secular sceptic, who would deny that propositions about religion have any place in philosophy, and would turn them over for examination by the empirical psychologist and probably the abnormal psychologist at that? How does he stand before the assertion of the Christian irrationalist that the philosophy of religion is not a proper activity for the Christian, who should confine himself in the intellectual

field to preaching and dogmatics? Some answer to these questions must precede any more specific estimate of the value of "The Natural and the Supernatural".

- II -

To stand Omen before the court of secular scepticism is a fair undertaking, for "The Natural and the Supernatural" does not confine itself to addressing Christians. He explicitly lays open his philosophy of religion to criticism from outside the Christian community. It is in a certain sense unhistorical to hold Omen before the scepticism of 1950 because the "Vienna school" was not of great influence in the years he was writing his philosophy of religion. The tradition of philosophical scepticism he must have encountered at Cambridge was of the gentler variety of Lord Russell. Yet it will be attempted because this modern scepticism, by ridding itself of the irrational niceties that men of Russell's generation still maintain, makes clear the extent to which it disallows traditional philosophy. Omen is so great a thinker that he must stand against the most hostile

court. 1.

In comparing Oman with the modern sceptic, it must be remarked how far he goes in their direction. He ever maintains the place of the irrational in religion, yet without assuming that Humian contempt for it which remains, itself irrational, in the sceptic. His concentration on "relevance" comes from that Kantian criticism of traditional metaphysics, to which the sceptic's concentration on "verification" owes so much. His metaphysics are written with a high consciousness of what the sceptic has to say of their emptiness. Oman would grant indeed as a starting point that ethical and religious notions are the least permeable to human understanding of all man's mental equipment. The question is whether they are in any sense permeable.

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- (1) In discussing modern scepticism it is presumed that it is unlikely to be Christian. This is not necessarily so. It is quite possible for the modern positivist to be a Christian. He must however be either a dialectical Protestant, a Roman Catholic who denies the possibility of Thomist natural theology or else Christian in the sense that the ineffable mystic calls himself so. If he stand with Christian irrationalism, his position will be discussed later in this chapter. In this connection it is worth remarking how similar in their approach to reason are the modern sceptic and Dr. Barth, however different the practical aims for which such cynicism is employed. For a useful account of this similarity see M. Jarrett-Kerr C.R. "Scepticism and Revelation" a review of W.F. Zuurduug's "A Research for the Consequences of the Vienna School for Ethics". See "Theology" - a periodical London Vol. LII No. 353. To remark on this relation is in no sense to imply the same degree of respect for a position which (however inadequately and indeed almost uncharitably) holds high the Cross, and for men who believe that the philosopher has fulfilled his function in demonstrating the irrationality of all grounds for action.

Clearly the main difference between Oman and the logical positivist is on a question of fact. Oman would affirm that reason has an Idea of Spirit (so many different vocabularies might here be used) and with that Idea so much content as always to pass beyond the known or the possessed - very much in the way that scientific knowledge always points beyond itself. Therefore, though conclusions are not so readily confirmed in this field as in the sciences of nature, men are able to correct conservatism and yet avoid mere radical denial. Such a differing view of man's equipment must indeed make argument difficult. The sceptic enamoured of certainty finds this claim quite unsubstantiable. The Platonist (Christian or otherwise) must first and foremost simply assert his indubitable knowledge that man is so equipped. Reason can also appeal to the consequences of denying this capacity to man. In so doing the burden of proof may fairly be cast upon the sceptic. So often the sceptic appeals to common sense. Yet the consequences of denying this capacity force him into positions which hardly seem commonsensical - if that difficult word connotes what is practical for most men.

This seeking of consequences might be taken up at many levels, as for instance, the problem of the self. However, as all men - not only metaphysicians - must of necessity be interested in conduct, the issue is raised at that point. Indeed to raise it there is to be able to say no more than the amazing analysis of the consequences of ethical irrationalism which is the glory of the first books of "The Republic". All that can be done is to dress that argument up to meet the modern sophist, and to see how that lesson is intensified by the Cross.

The division by modern scepticism of meaningful propositions into those which can be verified by an appeal to sense data and those which are the necessary tautologies

of logic and mathematics leaves the account of those propositions traditionally considered ethical to be explained as statements of command or expressions of emotion. It clearly is not possible here to trace in great detail the results of such a description. If ethical statements are emotional expressions, then the statement by a man bred in a cold climate that he dislikes the heat of the Southern U.S.A. is of the same class as the expression of his disgust at seeing a negro beaten up in that area. It hardly needs saying that theoretically and practically the consequences of such a joint classification are no less than prodigious. As most Hebrew, Greek and European writings use language only understandable by assuming the opposite, nearly all our tradition is presumably vitiated by grave misapprehension. The joint classification of the command "Shut up you liar" and "Thou shalt not bear false witness" does not need to be followed out in all its consequences, - for instance, in the bringing up of children. Evidently men are capable of accepting such consequences in the interest of denying the possibility of metaphysics. It cannot be said that they are irrational so to do.

As however it seems impossible, though not irrational, to accept such consequences, one is led to believe that ethical statements are open to rational discourse. Then however great may be the difficulty of understanding the relation of reason to conduct, and however much one's observation of oneself and the world must continue to plague one with doubts about that relation, some attempt must be made to delineate reason's operation in conduct. At this point some form of axiological metaphysics must at the least be allowed. Then as against the sceptics, "The Natural and the Supernatural" must be considered a proper undertaking of reason, whatever may be said of its

conclusions. To accept this minimum - ~~an~~ axiological metaphysics - is not to close the question whether that minimum is all that is possible.

To turn to the Christian tradition is to face the tension that has always existed in that community between those who have affirmed the possibility, and indeed the value, of a philosophical theology or Christian philosophy of religion, and those who have denied it. Philosophical theology has seemed to many within the community a diffusion of energy better spent elsewhere. That such disagreement does exist and will continue to exist unreconciled is here assumed. To ask this question about the possibility of philosophical theology in connection with Oman is not to presume to question whether in this or that set of circumstances a man is right to embark on this activity. To judge other men's actions is not the purpose of speculation, and in Oman's case it would be the gravest impertinence. Rather it is to ask the theoretical question whether such activity is at any time possible for a Christian. Indeed the distinction here may be compared to what Oman says about dualism ~~as~~ a standing problem and dualism as solution. There is a standing problem for all Christian thinkers as to whether they are well employed in such speculative endeavour among the pain of the world, and one can well admire Dr. Schweitzer. But it is another matter to accept the solution that philosophical theology is never possible.

Indeed to repeat what has been said in the proceeding chapter, Oman never makes clear how deep is the tension involved in this standing problem. One wishes indeed that in the light of his pre-1914 writings on the simplicity of the Gospel and the pretensions of Greek metaphysics he had in "The Natural and the Supernatural" justified philosophical theology as against the fundamentalist.

That is not however to deny that he is right in principle.

To ask the question in principle is to bring Oman yet once more before the court of Dr. Barth. As in the case of the positivist it may be judged that it would be more historical to compare him with the evangelicism of an earlier age. But though the Mennonite on the prairies may be more consistent than Dr. Barth in making his retreat from the world actual as well as intellectual, Dr. Barth by remaining in the world has sharpened his weapons against it. So root and branch is his denial of "unredeemed" man's capacity for revelation that the question is raised in clearest principle.

The disagreement between Dr. Barth and Oman, as in the case of the positivist, is a disagreement as to fact and therefore of great difficulty to argue. Dr. Barth denies what Oman affirms, namely that human reason has an Idea of Spirit with sufficient content always to pass beyond the known or possessed. Despite all visions of men as broken, - not what they ought to be, - it must be admitted that to someone brought up in the liberal world, the "imago Dei" is such a basic assumption that Dr. Barth's theodicy is impossible to conceive imaginatively. Yet the question of theodicy cannot be the point of disagreement, for as has been said in an earlier chapter, Oman's theodicy of freedom must end in as great a mystery as any. All that is possible is to try and see clearly, and as fairly as can be the consequences of denying the "imago Dei". Only thus can be justified the denial that the unredeemed judgment is utterly corrupt. Certainly, if there is truth in Dr. Barth's clear distinction between the elect and the unelect, the present writer would choose (though not able) to resist the Majesty of God's election.¹

(1) See The Book of Exodus Chapter XXXII vs. 31-32.

What seem the consequences of denying the "imago Dei" in all men? (1) What are the consequences of such a denial for the organisation of the Church. (2) What are the consequences on the relation of the Christian to the world. All argument will here appear vain to those who hold the contrary view but it must be attempted. 1.

The present writer cannot see how the denial of the imago Dei in all men can fail to mean in practice that the lay members of the Christian congregation will be at the mercy of the ecclesiastical organisation. Theoretically, Dr. Barth would affirm that only God's grace can save from such legalism. But what seems inconsistent in his theory is that although he is so vigilant in doing God's work in saving the Church from Promethean revolt, he leaves it to God to save the Church from the binding hand of tradition. That tradition - particularly in the intellectualist form Dr. Barth conceives it - must be administered by some officials. Empirically, history does not make the layman confident that safeguards are not necessary.

Turning to the attitude of Christians in the world, it is possible to sympathise with Dr. Barth's reaction from the nineteenth century identification of the Church with the world. 2. Yet that need not lead to agreement over

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- (1) The argument with continental fundamentalism has been carried on compassionately by British theologians in the last years, so it is almost redundant to repeat it once again. See for example Professor J. Baillie's "Our Knowledge of God" particularly Chapters I and II. It seems however germane to any assessment of Oman.
 - (2) That danger is ever present to the mind of one brought up on the North American Continent. For there the identification is more complete than in Europe.

theory. Dr. Barth's insistence that God not only provides the miracle of revelation but by His grace gives also the capacity for revelation seems to lead to an ethical irresponsibility about the world that hardly seems Scriptural. ¹. Though Dr. Barth would deny that men can know anything of the Jesus of history, if one asserts that claim does Dr. Barth's attitude stand up before that tender reaching out to all men that is found in the Gospels. Is it practically possible to maintain the deepest levels of charity towards other persons if they are not known (all of them) as bearing that autonomy that will not allow them to be manipulated? Does not such a denial set up a division between the two commandments of Our Lord, making the second but a subsidiary inference from the first? How can this doctrine of election, in men less dedicated than Dr. Barth, fail to lead to a pride among Christians, a note which is hardly present in the Gospels? To state these consequences is not argument. It is just to mention why it is impossible, despite all abasement before the Cross, to deny to reason its Idea of Spirit.

Once the "image Dei" has been affirmed in principle,

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- (1) See "Natural Theology" a translation of a discussion between Drs. Barth and Brunner; Bles London 1946. Dr. Barth writes: "In my experience the best way of dealing with "unbelievers" and modern youth is not to try to bring out their "capacity for revelation", but to treat them quietly, simply (remembering that Christ has died and risen also for them), as if their rejection of "Christianity" was not to be taken seriously. It is only then that they can understand you, since they really see you where you maintain that you are standing as an evangelical theologian: on the ground of justification by faith alone." p.127. This passage is quoted as it seems the most balanced of what Dr. Barth says about this matter.

a Christian philosophy of religion must be considered possible. To say this is not however to place great value upon it. It is not to put scholarship higher than saintliness or to accept the immanentist view of civilisation that so often characterises those who write the philosophy of religion. It is just to say that certain Christians can reach out through reason to explain the challenge of the Gospel by showing other men how inadequate are all their ideas of "things" and "life" as grounds for action, and by relating the world of persons to those other worlds, the reality of which men are so constantly aware.

Yet once the possibility of philosophical theology has been granted, Oman's position must be compared with those who interpret that activity very differently from him. The distinction is drawn between those who proceed to such a philosophical theology from "natural evidence" and those who deny the possibility of such "objectivity". "The Natural and the Supernatural" may here be compared with the late Professor Laird's Gifford Lectures. ¹ Laird's work is singled out because it is judged that his lectures maintain the balanced rationalist tradition in a way for instance that Tennant's "Philosophical Theology" does not, and in a way that metaphysicians of the Thomist persuasion do not, despite their distinction between natural and revealed religion.

Laird expresses his contempt for pulpit theism and soap-box atheism. Philosophical theology is the attempt to search out the truth guided only by the motive of aloof curiosity, and accepting only that evidence which may be called natural, that is, agreed on by men of common sense. Is this the only proper method for any theology that has the right to call itself philosophical? Laird's great

(1) See the first page of this chapter.

difficulty is the question of "natural evidence". It is judged that in his volumes there is not one piece of evidence about which some tradition of thought has not expressed its scepticism. Of course Laird would admit this. But is his a possible position for the Christian? The Christian may be thankful that there are in Europe men who are free to pursue such activities, but he is not in their position himself. He cannot put aside for the duration of speculation facts that he knows to be true. For instance, because some men affirm that intuition only gives reason the data of the senses, can he proceed from such an assumption knowing as he does that intuition gives men more - whether they admit or not? It is such a false appearance of certainty that Onan again and again calls dishonest on the part of the Christian. As is said so often these days in philosophy and theology alike, the Christian is in no position to be disinterested. Onan is surely right in affirming that truth reveals itself to the interested not the disinterested. The present writer is unable however to go so far as to say that the position of ~~dis~~interest is impossible for men other than Christians. Much of the supposed disinterest in the Aristotelian tradition does indeed seem quite unreal when allied to faith. Though men capable of disinterest may be rare, and the price they pay enormous, they do occasionally appear in a long and settled tradition such as that of European liberalism. Enthusiasm for a man such as Laird arises from the fact that in him disinterestedness seems in truth honest.

Therefore agreement must be expressed with Onan about the character of a Christian philosophy of religion. It can never be about the adequacy of argument from facts that themselves are considered "natural evidence". It is argument from the given of faith, by relating that faith

to other experience and so discussing it that there emerges for reader and writer a clearer understanding of the character of the Christian Gospel. Indeed the Christian Platonist must face the question of evidence as much as the Aristotelian, - for the mystery of man's knowledge of the Good and its relation to our other forms of knowledge is not easily clear to himself, or "a fortiori" to others. Yet in so doing he has no alternative but to maintain at one and the same time the challenge of the Cross with the knowledge that in all men there is the capacity to respond to that challenge, and grow in the understanding of how it regulates all experience. Humbly to hold discourse with other men about that regulation, by seeing faith in a wide variety of relations, is the duty of the Christian philosopher of religion. That this is a straight gate cannot hold men from seeking it. ¹.

- III -

Having accepted for these very general reasons "The Natural and the Supernatural" as the embodiment of a proper human activity, one may pass to the questions of its detail. ~~In~~ Recapitulating what are judged its weaknesses and its strengths is but to sum up what has been said in earlier chapters.

(1) Such a justification of Oman's method may seem little more than an admission that the present writer has been convinced by Oman.

The primary failure of that work is that its dependence on faith is not stated with sufficient definiteness. The result is that the radically personalist assumptions are not as clear as they should be. As has been said, it is assumed that the reason for this failure lies in Oman's fear that much of the language of Christian apologetics has become a worthless coinage to the honestly zetetic secularist who can no longer penetrate to its content. Oman therefore seeks a language that will not offend unnecessarily. At the same time he seeks one which will force the Christian reader to abandon any of the complacency of the initiated and think through the faith under fresh conditions. Enough has been said to make clear that that motive seems praiseworthy to the present writer and involves no necessary surrender of the challenge of the Gospel.

In applying this principle, however, Oman often uses terminology that is far from personalist (e.g. "environment"). The failure is more than one of vocabulary, and could have been avoided if in the first section of his work, where he deals with method, he had stated beyond the shadow of a doubt the dependence of his thought upon faith, and had described that faith. As the work stands, from the concluding chapters of Parts 3 and 4 its dependence on faith cannot be doubted. But it would have avoided criticism had that been stated at the beginning, and had language been employed throughout that related more clearly his metaphysics and epistemology to faith. Particularly in the fourth part where he is dealing with the question of history, this hiatus between his theology and his philosophy of religion makes what he says about the problems less profound than it could have been.

The second flaw within Oman's philosophy of religion is its lack of analysis at certain crucial points. Enough

has been said to make clear that the present writer does not believe that the philosopher's function is limited to analysis. The sharpening of the knives is not enough. Oman in speculating from a given hierarchy of values is in the good company of Kant and Plato. Yet his primary instruments do need a more rigorous examination. This difficulty is partly due to his refusal to use traditional philosophic language. In this connection part of the first paragraph of chapter 5 of "The Natural and the Supernatural" may once again be quoted. Therein is laid down the core of Oman's metaphysical position in seemingly simple words:-

" We know all environment, not as impact or physical influx, but as meaning: and this meaning depends on (1) the unique character of the feeling it creates; (2) the unique value it has for us; (3) the immediate conviction of a special kind of objective reality, which is inseparable from this valuation; and (4) the necessity of thinking it in relation to the rest of experience and the rest of experience in relation to it". 1.

Here are accepted a multitude of assumptions, some of which are later discussed and partially clarified but many of which are not. For instance, the phrase "we know as meaning" with all its ambiguities and possibility of interpretations is never clarified. Apparently it means "we know as value", but that is not to carry clarification very far. "Feeling" is used very differently and given a much wider connotation than in the rational psychologies of Oman's day and country. (e.g., in the work of McDougall). Yet the alleged cognitive element, though brilliantly described in terms of the consciousness of the artist

(1) H. and B. op.cit. p.58.

and the child is not carefully analysed. Particularly because of the place of feeling in the idealist tradition, he should have made clear how radical is his departure from that tradition. Similarly, the phrase "the necessity of thinking together" is capable of several interpretations, and is not clarified.

To criticise this key paragraph is not to deny that it is highly sophisticated - indeed to imply the opposite. Oman in "The Natural and the Supernatural" is attempting the exposition of a metaphysics which avoids those positions that in his opinion have become untenable in the light of the Kantian and post-Kantian criticism. This paragraph gives an epistemological basis for a metaphysics which can avoid criticism. It would be foolish to deny that it is the product of subtle analysis. What is regretted is that he only makes public the results and not the path to those results. He starts his speculation almost at the point where a critical analyst such as Kant leaves off. ~~For~~ Oman, who is radically questioning the idealist assumptions common in his day, takes his reader with a leap to assumptions that must be very foreign and which by their unexplained foreignness may easily confuse. The relation of his realism to idealism needs more discussion.

This question may also be discussed in regard to those to whom "The Natural and the Supernatural" is addressed. It is certainly not a popular introduction to the philosophy of religion. Oman seeks a level of writing directed to the educated man who has not mastered the vocabulary of European idealism and its off-shoots such as positivism. Indeed it may be granted that technical language may become so detailed and take so long to develop that the subject of interest to most men is never reached. A leap such as Oman's into the centre of the problem however does avoid those questions with which

the professional philosopher must be concerned. His lack of analysis lays him open to criticism from such philosophers. Admittedly to say this is to look a gift-horse in the mouth. It is to ask from one book not only that it should be based on years of analysis of such subjects (which it is) that it have a magnificent personal intuition of the meeting of man and God (which it has) but also that there should be a careful and technical analysis of its instruments (which it has not).

Two other important failures of analysis must be mentioned. With Oman's concentration on the interrelation of religion and morality one could wish for a more careful discussion of the way in which intuition or feeling passes over into judgment. That activity, crucial in his system, is left so undescribed as to make it difficult to follow him. Secondly he does not make clear relationship between ideal and natural values in consciousness. His vagueness here makes it difficult to follow his criticism of Kant. Indeed, this criticism is made more difficult throughout by his refusal to use the technical language of philosophy, so that his attack appears often a series of individual points rather than the root and branch departure that it is. Oman's work needs here to be read with a similar realist criticism of Kant such as Nicolai Hartmann's, who brings out the principles on which his criticism is based in a more systematic manner. To call in Hartmann however must in no sense imply that his positive metaphysics or his account of human personality has anything like the range or depth of Oman's.

A third criticism of Oman's philosophy of religion touches his failure to admit his debts to the traditions of pagan metaphysics, and to earlier Christian philosophy.

This is not to question the wisdom of his remark in the introduction to "The Natural and the Supernatural", that he does not intend to fill the book with evidence of his erudition. Yet so great is his fear of tradition as enslavement that there is a note in his work that would almost imply that all pre-Kantian Christian philosophy was obscurantist. His failure to be fair to St. Augustine in "Grace and Personality" has already been mentioned. In "The Natural and the Supernatural", what may be asked for is a statement of his debt to Christian Platonism. What a Platonist work that is, with its implied acceptance of the ontological argument. How much it follows in the tradition of Christian Platonists such as St. Anselm and St. Bonaventure. Yet in holding before men the uniqueness of the Hebrew tradition with its own theology of creation, Oman never implies that he owes much to the Platonic tradition of epistemological and metaphysical analysis. His one remark in praise of Plato is the hardly overwhelming compliment that he was not a neo-Platonist mystic. Even admitting how much the Cross makes necessary a criticism of Platonism - its tendency towards an intellectualist ethics, its inability to find joy in God's world, its incipient dualism - Oman's conception of "intuition" makes him deeply indebted to Platonism. The fear of Greek metaphysics cannot stand when one has turned out to the world in the speculation of "The Natural and the Supernatural".

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How unimportant do these criticisms seem when one turns to consider Oman's greatness. As a philosopher of religion that greatness appears in the way all problems are taken up into his own powerful individuality, and yet by his concentration on essentials that unique interpretation brings out the universality of the questions. Thus his originality is saved by that intuition of essentials from being merely esoteric and touching only the peripheral and the different. The essentials are illuminated by the freshness of his individuality so that the ancient Christian problems are seen as alive and present.

This combination may be seen in the conceptions of his epistemology - "awareness" and "apprehension". The directness of his mind penetrates behind the rationalist tradition of European epistemology and sees the problem of knowledge in a new light which in its very simplicity and freshness cuts right down to the central assumptions about man and how he knows. So much epistemological analysis seems but a technique learnt in the schools, adding nothing essential to what the masters of one tradition or another have said. Yet Oman by reaching back into his own life escapes from those traditions that in his period bound European philosophy with a dead hand. How simple it all sounds when one comes to describe it but how far reaching in its implications. "Sincerity of feeling" is not an adjunct to decorate other epistemologies, but a concept which shows how the contemplative vision of God is open to all men. Then,

as Oman describes how in mature men this autonomy of contemplation becomes interdependent with the strength of our wills to follow what we reverence, he has developed through the archetypes of the saint and the artist a concept of man so different from the traditions of his age. He has transcended the idea of "rationalist" man yet has maintained all that that tradition has to say about the possibility of knowing the truth in dignity and hope.

This concentration on essentials is seen in the very ramblingness of "The Natural and the Supernatural". That work spreads itself with all Oman's varied scholarship into a myriad of different subjects, touching upon the assumptions of the biologist and the physicist - both Newtonian and Einsteinian - relating the assumptions of differing rationalist systems to their essential religious hope, seeing the Christian faith in relation to other religions, connecting theories of perception to the moralities that go with them. Yet through it all the work flows on with a masterful consistency - not easy to see but always present. All is bound together, the relation of sincerity to faithfulness, of the sense of the holy to the judgment of the sacred, the tension between monism and dualism, the proper conceptions of the natural and the supernatural, the reciprocity of revelation and reconciliation, all are bound together to make clear the essence of the simple Gospel of the Father and His children.

The reality of Oman's sense that all men are the children of God is seen in his account of our knowledge of God. All his writings - whether of mysticism, of metaphysics or of the Church - are bound together by his unwavering conviction that Christian salvation is for all men or is nothing. Oman and von Hügel are in

many ways alike in their account of nature and grace, their epistemological realism of joy and their concentration on the relation between religion and morality. Yet it may be said in humility before von Hügel's genius, that at one point he falls short of Oman. His writings are so often a beautiful appeal to the fine and sensitive products of a great civilisation. Oman always transcends that note and in his account of experience reaches out towards that universality that holds the Love of God before all men.

The firm union in Oman's work between the Father's Love and His children's dignity is seen above all in the way that the strength of his faith reaches out tenderly to the despair of others. Previously it has been said that Oman is not greatly touched by his own guilt and therefore does not use the symbolism springing from that guilt. To say this however is not to take away from his exquisite sensitivity for the world's pain and other men's dilemmas. His very faith in the Majesty of God allows him to understand why others cannot believe. He recognises what a tremendous step faith must be. It is this which never allows him to attempt any purely rationalist metaphysics or arguments for God's existence from the facts of "natural evidence". For Oman, a metaphysics must be a theodicy, because suffering and the nearness of defeat are more real facts to men than sense data.

And the theodicy is made possible through his vision of Jesus Christ. The Cross as triumph is to Oman the Word of God. Some may say that his vision is unreal because it is detached from tradition; others that it is no better than seeing his own face at the bottom of a well. Yet in it subjectivity and objectivity are bound together, so that certainty must depend upon demand,

and faith and hope upon charity. Through his personal statement we pass to that unique moment in time. Onan calls men to that strength which is forgiveness and in that call affirms the Gospel that "all manner of thing shall be well".

APPENDIX A.OMAN'S CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS.

The following account of Oman's classification of religions is added as an appendix to this thesis rather than included in the main body of the work for the following reason. It does not add anything to the essence of the metaphysical position he expounds by the use of the concept 'nature and supernature'. This is not to say that in applying that concept to the interpretation of comparative religion he does not helpfully illustrate what he means by that concept, and also illuminate such subsidiary concepts as 'the holy' and 'the sacred'. Especially in the last chapter, where he interprets the work of the prophets and of Our Lord under the title of prophetic religion, he reveals that faith for the description of which nature and supernature are but instruments. Quotations from that magnificent chapter are found throughout the body of the text. But this fourth part of "The Natural and the Supernatural" does not add to his metaphysic by expounding his attitude to "the theology of history". That must be sought among his Christological writings. Indeed in his classification of religions much is said which illuminates what he would make of such terms as 'revelation' and 'discovery' and their relation, and so throws light on that theology of history. But the main task of this classification is to view the wide variety of religious life that has appeared in history and bring it into some order. As such, it serves the negative purpose of dispelling many phantoms associated with the study of comparative religion, and the positive purpose of an interesting intellectual illustration of a metaphysic. However, it adds less to

Oman's position than the other three parts of "The Natural and the Supernatural".

Oman indeed devotes a chapter, preliminary to the classification, to a discussion of historical knowledge and its interpretation. Here as usual he turns in two directions, first against the traditional interpretation of history (that is as it is found among religious legalisms) and secondly against the modern naturalist and Hegelian interpretations of historical knowledge. As against the first of these what has already been said in Chapter Six of this thesis may be repeated here. In his discussion of the use and abuse of tradition, Oman is always more fearful of its abuse than optimistic about its virtues. Though he maintains that the sacred is always given to men in the form of tradition, he constantly insists on the imperfections of that sacred as it is given, and the need of prophetic insight to stand against that given and judge it in the light of the Good. He lays little stress on the function of those who conserve that tradition and much on the fact that tradition by asserting the authority of an imperfect sacred, may be a weighty force in holding men back from the truth.

Oman criticises naturalism under the title "anthropological theories of history". There is no need to repeat here his general criticism of the naturalist view of man and his environment. Oman tracks it to its lair as a theory of history with his customary incisiveness and cynicism. Its main confusions are its identification of origin with beginning and its use of the word "fact" to describe its dogmas about man's determination by nature. Two quotations not only clarify what Oman says but also show his style at its best.

"Supposing that religion had this low beginning, to argue that it must remain the same is like denying that there may be good fruit on a

"good tree because its roots were first planted in rotting manure. Obviously the result depends on the life of the tree itself, and of this the evidence is the fruit it produces." 1.

Or again:

" A man is not necessarily honest because his ancestors were Lowland farmers who bred their own cattle, nor dishonest because his ancestors were Highland reavers who appropriated them from others. Superstitions are superstitions and truths are truths according to what they in themselves are: and this is not to be determined either by their origin or by their development." 2.

In the world of the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties, the exorcism of naturalisms in the fields of history must have been of crucial significance. Again it is interesting to note that Oman is not concerned with what may be called the naturalism of the will (as compared with those of the intellect), namely Marxism. It would be interesting to know what he would have made of such 'prophetic naturalism', with its Messianic undertones and its comparative social realism.

Oman proceeds to deal with the school of historical interpretation he calls the 'Religious - historical'. By this phrase he means generally those thinkers who pursued their historical studies within the general framework of the Hegelian dialectic (though he includes as a subsidiary category those who used biological categories for the purpose). This school of thinkers had the merit of a great interest in history compared with the ahistorical rationalism of the eighteenth century. They were at least learned and serious, and with their use of the categories of spirit and the absolute gave more weight

(1) N and S. op.cit. p.351.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. pp.351-352.

to religion than did the crudities of naturalism. Oman admits the practical utility of much of the work done under the Hegelian inspiration. His criticism of Hegelian monism need not be repeated again. It interpreted history as an impersonal process of the Absolute Reason. Thus it fell prey to an historicism that allowed no place for creative autonomy. In the study of religion this Hegelianism went particularly astray by treating it as mainly a concern with dogma or theology. It therefore saw the fossils that time preserves rather than the living faiths by which men have sought so to live in the supernatural as to have victory over the merely natural.

Oman calls his own position as to the interpretation of history the "prophetical". He applies his conception of personality both to what history is as an object and to the consequent method of the historian. He says many useful commonsense things that were often forgotten in the age of a scientific history whose tone had been set by Ranke. The historian cannot look at the world from any absolute standpoint. All historical knowledge must ultimately be related to practical judgments. In writing of history as object it must be remembered that one is writing of persons and therefore the categories applicable to persons must be employed. Many of Oman's points are more and more becoming the common coin of the new personalism. If today a great historian, Arnold Toynbee, can still sometimes write as if history could be interpreted by the categories of biology, à la Bergson, how much more important was it to insist on this personalism twenty years ago.

Despite Oman's common sense personalism about the nature of historical knowledge, two criticisms must be made of what he says about that knowledge and of his classification of religions. The problem of historic

knowledge and its relation to other forms of consciousness is not discussed in any detail. He remarks that men are related to tradition both as enrichment and enslavement, but never attempts to analyse how that relationship functions. It was certainly a useful service to state the problem in a personalist way, but he does not take the reader into a discussion of personalism and history. To refer to chapter six, it was remarked there that there is conflict between Oman's liberalism and his quietism. If he is a quietist then the problem of historical knowledge does not arise in any difficult form. If he is a liberal in politics, then clearly it does. What would Oman say as to the way that men learn from history?

This may be related to another criticism of Oman's classification and its method. What did he think was the purpose that this classification served? At the minimum it may be granted that it is a pleasant intellectual pastime so to classify religions. To mount the scale of utility, it is clearly useful to show men how the modern myths as to primitive religion are not mainly fact but dogma, and how other personalist interpretations seem more probable. The difficulty however arises when the relation of this classification to a theology of history appears. What is the relation of this scheme of development to the consummation of history on the Cross? In the fifth chapter, it was remarked that Oman remained agnostic about the questions of Christ's Being partly because he was willing to be agnostic about all schemes of history - whether traditionally Christian or progressive. But at times in this classification he seems openly to be affirming a doctrine of progress. If he does so, then the relation of the Cross to such a doctrine arises in clear cut form. Yet Oman never attempts to reconcile these two ideas. Whether such a reconciliation is possible the present writer would not hazard a guess. At the most it is possible

to say that there seems a contradiction between Oman's liberal account of the development of religion and his Christology. At the minimum, here is another example of that failure to bring out the relationship between his theology and his philosophy of religion. Oman's refusal to use the traditional categories of Christian theology raises more difficulties than usual when he faces the problems of history.

Before elaborating his own classification, Oman briefly describes and rejects several other methods. These are:

- (1) (a) The Pre-Romantic quantitative valuation of truth and falsehood in terms of orthodoxy. 1.
- (1) (b) Hegel's and Schleiermacher's attitude to comparative religions, both based on the idea of reconciliation - Hegel's on intellectual harmony with the universe, Schleiermacher's on artistic harmony.
- (2) A Kantian interpretation (elaborated by Tiele and Siebeck) which judges religions in terms of ethical legalism, with universality as the standard of its imperatives.

Oman's criticism of (1)(a) and (b) was that these interpretations do not understand religion as a practical relation to environment, nor in their intuition of 'reconciliation' do they allow that reconciliation to the natural must be active, that is, a victory over life's evil and evanescence. His criticism of (2) would follow

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- (1) Oman seems to consider all thinkers before the Aufklärung to have been obscurantist. He may not mean to be so sweeping, but his words certainly lead to an almost Comtian interpretation.

his general metaphysical criticism of the Kantian morality, namely that it cannot transcend law, as does the Gospel.

Oman himself prefers to classify religions according to their conception of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural. What truly marks a religion is the faith on which it bases the conduct of life (in other words its attitude to the natural rather than to the supernatural in any isolated sense). In the realm of conduct, however, the distinction between the two is in a sense artificial, for man has never acted as though the natural were his sole environment. But the relation and distinction between the two environments is the central significance of a religion, by which its quality may best be determined. Since the problem of all religion is redemption from the evanescent, (i.e., the natural as isolated from the supernatural) the test by which to judge a particular religion is "the worth of its view of redemption, measured both morally and theologically."¹. Thus this form of approach allows Oman to maintain his attitude to the interdependence of religion and morality with which so much of his theology is concerned. Religion should not be regarded as creed nor morality simply as conduct. It has too often been held that the only relation of religion to morality is to provide rules of conduct and motives for following them. This is to Oman the natural masquerading as the supernatural. What religion really provides, and all it provides directly, is a sphere of absolute valuation and obligation. Without that sphere there would be no morality. To maintain this relationship in the study of comparative religion is of the

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.367. Refer to the end of Chapter six of this thesis where Oman's use of the word 'redemption' is criticised.

greatest importance. The natural-supernatural classification allows this.

Oman classifies in terms of five kinds of redemption.

- (1) The Primitive: Redemption by seeking the abiding in the natural through faith in an animistic force indefinitely many and vaguely one.
- (2) The Polytheistic: Redemption as the management of the natural by faith in the supernatural conceived as individual spirits who rule over various parts of the natural.
- (3) The Mystical: Redemption either by accepting the natural in its wholeness as the supernatural, or by excluding the natural wholly from the supernatural as illusion. Such acceptance Oman calls Cosmic Pantheism. The rejection he calls either Acosmic Pantheism or Acosmic Mysticism. It is with this rejection rather than with acceptance that he is chiefly concerned in this classification.
- (4) Ceremonial-Legalism: Redemption by distinguishing sharply in the natural the secular from the sacred, and in the supernatural the power of good from the power of evil.
- (5) The Prophetic: Redemption as reconciliation to the natural by faith in one personal supernatural, who gives meaning to the natural and has a purpose behind it.

These five distinctions include two separate types of development that lead Oman to make a subsidiary classification. This is: (1) The Primitive and the Mystical both seek the eternal in one unchanging reality which the natural, being illusion, hides. (2) Polytheism, Legalism and Prophetic Monotheism seek the eternal in the meaning and purpose of the natural itself. Thus one

group views the natural as the veiling of the supernatural, the other as the unveiling. One seeks the "undivided and disturbed primitive awareness of awe and sacredness," the other seeks "the eternal by a higher possession of the evanescent, not by escape from it." 1. This subsidiary classification Oman calls apocalyptic-mystical. 2.

(1) The Primitive.

In attempting to understand religion at its most primitive, the scholar of the philosophy of religion must be particularly cautious. As primitive man's response both to the natural and the supernatural is 'from environment to minds akin', the scholar is left with inference and intuition and must be careful that his own prejudices are not hidden in those inferences, (e.g., Sir James Frazer). Here it is a question of stretching intellect and imagination back beyond recorded history and dealing with men very different from ourselves. Deductions cannot properly be drawn from what are commonly known as 'primitive religions' still extant since these are often merely stagnant rather than primitive. With this caveat about his own and other's conclusions in this field, Oman continues.

Primitive religion is sometimes called the religion of nature, and it has two aspects which make such a description appropriate. The first is the fact that redemption is looked for within the natural and not from it. The second is that in primitive religion man's mind is working mainly at the level of fixed unities of

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.404.

(2) What follows will be mainly descriptive. Particularly in the first two religious classifications, the primitive and the polytheistic, there is little that concerns Oman's metaphysical conclusions.

~~Awareness~~
~~reflexion.~~

These are the two characteristics which mark a religion as primitive - not savagery, which may be the result of stagnation or retrogression.

Oman would agree with Ankermann that primitive religion is an emotional response to immediate situations. But to say this is not to say that the ideas of 'sacred' and 'profane' are simple developments from those of 'dangerous' and 'safe'. All knowledge of any environment - natural or supernatural - can only arise in terms of practical interest. But this interpretation of the origin of the sacred does not explain how the sacred could ever have developed its absolute connotations. Agreement upon fact must not allow the acceptance of naturalist inference.

Oman interprets the primitive mind as enclosed in its fixed unities of awareness, thereby excluding all that does not fit into its pattern and accepting environment as destiny rather than as challenge. Its unity is a world by itself, with the focus of attention at the centre, and an awareness of the undifferentiated sacred as its universe. This awareness is the source of animism and magic. It must be admitted that Oman does not make clear how this inferential interpretation is reached.

Since the primitive mind cannot achieve unities of reflexion, and therefore is not capable of reasoning, it is probable that the conception of soul arose mainly from a direct consciousness of life (à la Bergson) turning gradually into a free valuing of the sacred. At first, Oman suggests, although the world was felt to be one, each object on which attention focussed was imputed a soul, because the felt unity of the world could not be taken out of its context and the variety underlying it recognised. This, he believes, is how animism arose.

In the practice of magic, barbarous as it was, one

can at least begin to see a possibility of progress. For magic ritual stages situations to give effective fixed context for its operations. In this staging some kind of effort is made to impose a pattern on situations, to manipulate them instead of remaining passive before them. This freedom to arrange the situations was probably the first stage in developing an attitude of mind which could become scientific. The staging may easily however become mere routine tradition, and although "Tradition is man's first equipment for progress", it may also be "his supreme device for evading the labour of it." 1.

Thus although magic ritual gives an opening for the emergence of free ideas, it only fully displays fixed ideas. Oman, in an interesting comparison, calls it "mysticism in the fetters of fixed idea." 2. By this he means that both magic and mysticism work "with the sense of the holy as awe-inspiring in itself, as an infinity of undifferentiated feeling and not as it manifests a varied reality". 3. He goes so far as to draw a parallel between the drugged medicine man or whirling dervish, and the Yogi or the Christian contemplative, because they both practise strange devices in order to preserve "a shell of sheltering unity, and prove the power to exclude everything disturbing." 4. These mortifications and other practices, whether of the savage or the sophisticated mystic, "are all regarded as religious for the same reason that they are an exalted dismissal of the conflicts of life." 5. As has

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.384.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.384.

(3) N. and S. op.cit. p.384.

(4) N. and S. op.cit. p.385. Such a comparison must be left unquestioned and will be expanded when what Oman says about mysticism in general has been described.

(5) N. and S. op.cit. p.385.

been stated in Oman's sub-classification of religions, it is this attitude to the natural that Primitive religion and Mystical religion have in common - both attempt to escape from it into an undisturbed unity of awareness.

The working of the primitive mind, as seen in animism and magic, throws some light on what has been called primitive monotheism. Oman admits the evidence for some limited kind of monotheism¹, occurring mostly in simple communistic societies. He places its source in the primitive sense of unity of environment, which is an awareness and not a reflexive unity. So it is not marked by that victory over environment which is the mark of true monotheism.

The last aspect of primitive religion that Oman discusses is how it serves to illustrate that interdependence of religion and morality which is his chief interest in the study of all religion. However far one goes back in the study of primitive religion, the sense of the holy is always more than mere awe. It is always passing into some judgment of the sacred, however fettered in the material, and so there is some sanction of the supernatural, however beclouded by magic. Because there is no natural divorced from the supernatural, even in the most primitive times there is neither purely natural religion nor naturalist morality. There is even then a dim sense in man that he is dealing with that which manifests ideal values. 1.

(1) Though it is judged that Oman's theory ~~brilliantly~~ illuminates primitive religion, this section suffers from the fact that there is no single example from any particular religion to illustrate his points. Though examples in this field may be so easily used to prove what one wants, his argument would have been clearer if some had been used.

The Polytheistic.

Oman begins his description by stating that the origin of polytheism has always been considered an easy problem of deduction. Either it was imputed to man's vanity, or else to his desire to explain phenomena simply in terms of cause and effect. Oman describes this interpretation of polytheism's supposed development in the following words:

" From a polyzoic or lowest animism, or animatism, through a more individual polydaemonism, to a therianthropie polytheism, in which, if the likeness was still to four-footed beasts and creeping things, the god behind was conceived in the likeness of man, until finally we arrive at anthropomorphic polytheism, or polytheism proper, with reverence for beings in human form but above human power." 1.

This kind of interpretation derives the individual personal polytheistic deity from the vague 'numina' that are found in quite advanced religions. These 'numina' are manifestations of "one mysterious awe-inspiring diffused potency." 2.

Oman distrusts this account of the origin of polytheism, for three main reasons. First, there is no evidence that belief in 'numina', prevalent as an element in so many religions, ever existed as the sole religion. Secondly and more important, an intellectual inference from cause to effect is most improbable at the primitive stage under consideration. Thirdly, it is not likely that the higher deities were compounded out of these vague numina. "How the vague unity of awareness which was felt as a whole at every point of interest, came to be broken up into powers corresponding to a wide range of organised interest and graded values, is a question as

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.390.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.391.

difficult as it is important." 1.

Rather than a rationally constructed explanation to provide a clear cut theory of development Oman prefers parallels to help the imagination. First he uses the analogy of a university, whose original medieval unity has been broken into the variations of its modern specialisation. Then he uses the analogy of that stage in the individual's mind when "life divides into many varied interests, each a unity of imagination, which break up the whole awareness of life, yet raise problems which, if they are faced, may in time effect a harmonious unity of reflexion." 2. Polytheism as a stage in the development of the race is parallel to this stage in the development of the individual.

In polytheism, to use Oman's main terms, the sense of the holy is still awesome rather than ethical; and the judgment of the sacred is still well imprisoned in the context of material associations. Unity of awareness turns each particular sacred interest into a closed universe. Man's power of reflexion is however growing, and as it grows he is more and more able to face life's concrete distracting problems as a concrete distracted individual. This allows in higher polytheism for some degree of what Oman calls "possession of the natural".

This growing self-realisation finds its expression in the fact that with polytheism there develops the institutions of private property. Although material possession may become a ghastly idolatry, and needs in any case to be transcended by the discovery of higher possessions, it does on a lower level provide a sphere of rights and responsibilities in which the individual may exercise his freedom. This is a great advance for man

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.391.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.392.

as it gives him a sphere for moral or immoral action.

Because the primitive unity of awareness has been broken up, polytheism leads to great progress in civilisation on many fronts. The interrelation of polytheism and civilisation is admitted by all leading scholars. Which was the cause and which the effect is more arguable. As usual, other presuppositions determine the historical judgment. Those who believe that social order and harmony can be achieved without the existence of ideal values may be able to see the whole supernatural structure as a later decoration. Yet once again Oman lays bare the naturalist assumptions of such an interpretation, particularly here in its relation to psycho-physical parallelism. Oman in his own position would reverse the determination. Only by living in the higher environment could man recognise the higher possibilities of civilisation. ¹.

The polytheistic managing of the world is clearly related to the rise of agriculture. In contrast we find Buddha's refusal to let his monks engage in this activity. Such work not only led men out of the unity of awareness, but prevented the deliberate return to a primitive paradise which Oman sees as the psychological aim of mystical religions.

It may well seem that polytheism led more obviously to material than to spiritual advancement. But to say this is in Oman's opinion to put the cart before the horse. If we take the idea of evolution seriously, instead of assuming it to be an automatic process, we see that civilisation could only be produced by ideas and ideals. These, however imperfectly embodied in the natural, are of the supernatural. Therefore though history shows us

(1) It is not necessary to raise again the difficulties in understanding what Oman conceived to be the relation of Christianity to civilisation. See Chapter 6. In his classification he is much nearer the liberal's "good life" than the quietist position.

mainly the material gains of polytheism, the spiritual insights are primary.

Polytheism's contributions to civilisation were the following: the first Oman defines thus:-

" Polytheism gave a greater freedom of mind, which was a call to adventure upon wider and higher environment and a sense of security in following it."¹. He illustrates this spirit of adventure by the spreading of the Aryan race in so many directions over the globe. They are thought to have located their principle god in the sky, the only place that would not disappear when they travelled far afield. The word 'Day-Father' is found in ~~so~~ many Aryan languages far apart from each other, which suggests that the conception of the god preceded the venturing forth and dividing up of the race. A faith by which to travel had already been won. This Aryan concentration on one of their gods might almost be regarded as a kind of monotheism. Because all polytheism had this dim sense of the unity of the supernatural, it always had a potentiality for progress.

The second benefit conferred by polytheism Oman described in the following words:

" Polytheism, by setting free higher sanctions from local limitations, made possible the formation of a state with universal laws." 2.

Oman admits that political conquest accounts in part for the fusing together of the gods of conquering and conquered tribes. But this only happens when the victors are already highly civilised, as were the Babylonians and the Romans. The Assyrians meted out savage treatment to the religions of their enemies. Oman does not however believe that political expediency nor civilisation by themselves could

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.398.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.399.

account for the transformation of a collection of subject peoples into a larger state with equal laws. Oman is difficult to follow at this point. Neither his interpretation of this development nor his imputation of it directly to polytheism are clear. The ease with which the Romans fused their gods with those of defeated enemies does not seem evidence of great religious fervour, especially among the patricians. Oman's statement, to justify this approach, that it is a fact that 'no law----- works merely by the will of the majority, but only as it seems to be established by some absolute quality of righteousness',¹ is so vague as to what is meant by 'works' as to be meaningless. It may be repeated that when he deals with the ethics of the ruler he seems at his weakest.

The third benefit Oman discerns in polytheism is intimately connected with the second. It is the rise of the family as a moral society, as well as a blood and bread and butter relationship. Necessarily he takes up his position from an a priori insight and does not give nearly enough evidence to show what he means by this interdependence.

These three main elements of 'progress' are according to Oman balanced by three limitations. The first is the failure in respect of a wider environment. "Polytheism arose with the beginning of reflective unities, but when reflective thinking was carried farther, polytheism failed to meet its needs." 2. It either becomes completely irrational as in Egypt, or is criticised out of existence as in Greece. It could never develop a systematic theology, because essentially it "presupposes the absence of thinking things together in one unity." 3.

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.400.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.400.

(3) N. and S. op.cit. p.401. It is a pity that Oman does not discuss the breakdown of polytheism before the attack of the sophists, and the rise of Platonism from that attack.

The second failure of polytheism concerns its relationship to civilisation and the state. Polytheism has the power to create civilisation and has no quarrel with it. But when the particular civilisation disintegrates, the religion must decay as well, having no idea of a higher value. We see this in Babylon, Egypt, India, Greece and Rome. Polytheism never could rise above what Oman calls "the imperial idea of the Supernatural". 1.

The third limitation which Oman singles out concerns its relationship to the family. Though polytheism had done much to establish the family as a social unit, it did not see that such natural organisations could be transformed by the vision of the supernatural. Not only was polytheism too weak to stem the tide of licentiousness, consequent on the rise of a successful material civilisation, it was even made the occasion and the justification for sensuality.

The problems of polytheism, being those of the natural, can never be solved in its own terms, since it is too little concerned with the supernatural for a true possession of the natural to lie within its reach. As men recognise the weaknesses of polytheism, they may either avoid its problems altogether by attempting to escape from the evanescent by means of mysticism, or they may continue to face it by seeking a higher possession of the natural in legalism or in prophetic monotheism. 2.

The Mystical.

With the mystical we come to more controversial material. When man becomes capable of unity of reflexion

(1) W. and S. op.cit. p.401.

(2) It would be interesting to know what Oman would have made of the modern recrudescence of polytheism.

and so can think his unities of reflexion together, he needs to express his religion in terms of a theology. There are two main kinds of theology to which he may turn. Neither spring essentially from reason and speculation though they have to be worked out in terms of them. They are rather dependent on man's attitude to the natural. Therefore the issue at stake is not which argument is true, but which attitude is right. 1.

The distinction between the two main roads is the one already described as Oman's subsidiary classification, mystical-apocalyptic. The mystical sees the Natural as illusion to be escaped by absorption into the one unchanging supernatural; the apocalyptic attempts to possess the natural by discovering in it the meaning and purpose of the supernatural. It is with the former of these attitudes that Oman here deals. 2.

Oman first describes some of the ways in which mystical and apocalyptic religions can be distinguished. He judges pantheism as an artificial return to primitive religion, the main difference lying in the fact that it is the product of the reflective mind, working consciously with the unity of awareness, which the primitive only knows as feeling. By going back a step, as it were, pantheism avoids the problems raised by polytheism, with which it is

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- (1) This is yet another example of how little Oman stands with the traditions of rational theology. See Chapter 7.
 - (2) Oman has previously distinguished cosmic pantheism from acosmic pantheism - that is the distinction between those who reject the natural and those who submerge themselves in it. In his chapter on "The Mystical" he devotes himself to those who reject ~~of~~ the natural. Spinoza is only mentioned in passing in "The Natural and the Supernatural".

the task of apocalyptic religions to deal, and to which the prophetic monotheism of the Cross can alone give an adequate answer.

In wishing to escape from the natural, the mystical religions according to Oman throw overboard at the same time the concrete individual with all his rights and responsibilities, in direct contrast to prophetic monotheism, which exalts the value of each person. ¹.

Another contrast is the negative nature of mystical morality, the goal of which is Nirvana, as compared with the emphasis on active positive righteousness found in other religions.

These differences all spring from a different conception of the natural. Therefore again it may be said that the proper question on which to judge them is the right relation of man to the natural. Sheer speculation might indeed seem to favour pantheism because, proceeding from a given certainty of unity, it simply imposes unity on all things. This imposition of unity on all experience does not mean that thereby all things are brought into unity. More than anything else, Oman's dislike for these mystical religions seems to be based on his intuition that they are not compassionate and somehow disregard the sin and suffering of the world.

Oman proceeds to discuss Indian religions. He claims that as they alone embrace mystical pantheism wholeheartedly and consistently, they will be his main concern. In fact they are not. The position he clearly distrusts the most is Christian mysticism, to which he returns again and again.

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- (1) It hardly needs saying that a theologian, one of whose chief terms is "the sense of the holy", makes quite clear that by mystical he does not mean religious intuition given in contemplation, but the cult of contemplative ecstasy in which the self is submerged in union with the Divine. He uses the German distinction "Mystik-Mysticismus" for this difference.

His general criticisms of mystical religion will therefore be postponed till his discussion of mysticism's appearance among Christians.

Oman first discusses the change from the primitive polytheism of the Rig-Veda to the cult of the pantheistic Brahma. This development is an example of how the change from polytheism to the mystical is not really an advance but rather a retrogression, though decked out in a more sophisticated dress. Whereas the gods of the Rig-Veda were many and the attitude towards them indeed utilitarian, they were at least in some sense transcendent, working in answer to prayer and sacrifice and controlling men's actions. Higher ethical ideas began to have some place as in Varuna, "who is strict against sin while showing mercy to the penitent". Brahma, on the other hand, could be actually controlled by the magical practices of the priestly caste, who were even allowed to use black magic. To control the natural under the guidance of the supernatural is all very fine, - but to control the supernatural is going a little too far.

This change is partly accounted for according to Oman by what was once an objective and accurate language, made permanent in sacred writings, becoming the tool of subjective and dialectical minds. The traditional archaic ritual is used to arouse the sense of the undifferentiated holy, which lies at the root of all mystical religions. This kind of point may well make one hesitate, for how would Oman say that the vigorous and objective Aryans developed minds "subjective and dialectical" enough to use their traditions as a tool?

Oman above all, attributes this return to the primitive to the fact that the Hindus lived an aristocratic and irresponsible sort of life, with no responsibilities and with superiority to hard work. "Any class which has freedom from the challenge of life's tasks and problems has

a primitive mind". Those "who were in a position to provide their own discipline for their bodies, instead of being indebted to life's battle for enough of it" are likely to take a false attitude to the natural. ¹. All such monisms, having no place for striving and achievement, cannot long remain optimistic, but must degenerate into dreadful pessimism. Feeling, driven in on itself, becomes predominantly an awareness of pain. ².

Oman's assertion that the false attitude of Indian religion is largely determined by the fact that it was a product of a ruling class detached from the problems of the natural cannot pass without comment, for it raises once again his liberal political assumptions. First, simply as a question of fact, can it be said that a class that imposed its rule and maintained its authority over most of a sub-continent can have been as unaware of the problems of the natural as Oman makes out? They had organised their world so that others were responsible for growing their food. To say that is not to say they were released from natural responsibilities. Secondly, the question of theory: let the failings of Indian mystical religion be for the moment granted, (indeed religious failings seem common to ruling classes that remain dominant for any length of time) but what is implied as to Oman's positive position by this general determination? In it we come back to what Oman thought about the possibility of the Christian ruler. If he accepted the position that the Christian ruler is a contradiction in terms, then this account of Indian religion would be understandable. But

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.415.

(2) Compare with Oman's remark that rationalist monism in Europe degenerated from Hegel's hope to Schopenhauer's despair.

as has been seen in Chapter 6 , he does not. His ideal rulers seem then to be a body of Jeffersonian farmers, not cut off from the duties of earning their bread and ruling their communities in their spare time. This Orkney egalitarianism is indeed a fine Christian ideal. But it must be asked whether such societies are likely to produce the art and science that Oman so admires. In the past, such societies have not been noted for these accomplishments. Oman seems to want it both ways. This matter must be raised as his account of Indian religion as the product of a soft ruling class may be a partial truth, but in making it the way he does, Oman raises unanswered questions about Christian political theory, both as to what is right and what is possible.

In discussing Indian religion, Oman compares the three forms of Christian salvation by works, by knowledge and by love with the three unities of form with which mysticism works. "One is the world as one magical

"potency; one is the self as one knower including all knowledge; one is the feeling which is one all-embracing yet empty emotion." 1.

Thus the essence of all Indian religions is acosmic pantheism, however different are their methods.

"All work with the abiding as mere undifferentiated unity, and all come to the same result of a feeling which has no objective meaning and victory, of a self that has no difference of quality or profit from experience, and of a universe which has no meaning or purpose in its changes." 2.

The present writer must admit his inability to judge the content of what Oman says about Indian religion, for despite attempts at reading its sacred writings their

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.419.

(2) N. and S. op.cit. p.420.

terminology is so foreign as to convey little to him. Certainly when put in the language of the west by its European exponents, it entirely lacks the victory of the Cross. On such evidence it cannot however be judged. The form however of what Oman says can be criticised. One may well sympathise with his desire to be freed from any of that relativism that damned so much of the study of the philosophy of religion. And since Oman's faith is in the Cross and not in the Resurrection, his insistence on the difference between Buddha and Jesus Christ is necessary. However, his work lacks that charity which he demands from the naturalist. As has been said, he criticises von Hügel as an eclectic, but his account of Indian religion would be the stronger for the tolerance of the latter. Surely the sternness of the prophet is better employed indicting his own civilisation (the activism of which had just passed through a bloody war) than in an indictment of another civilisation which he had never visited and in whose languages he was not a master. In view of his insistence elsewhere on the need of understanding religions as living attitudes, it seems a pity that he does not mention Tagore and Gandhi in all their virtues and failings. This section on Indian religion is the least judgmatical of any in "The Natural and the Supernatural". Is it even a useful polemical attempt to prevent intellectuals from espousing empty creeds?

Oman's account of Christian mysticism is mainly an account of "undiluted" mysticism in general, rather than the particular Christian manifestations. He discounts the mysticism of St. Augustine, St. Gregory and St. Bernard as being neither essentially mystical, nor of the essence of their respective faiths. The later Christians whose contemplation has more features in common with the East - visions, ecstasies, etc. - are the particular object of

his attack. He does not however analyse any particular man or woman. When the mystic way is carried to its ultimate point of ecstatic union with the Infinite, the adjective Christian can have no bearing as all ideas of personality are lost.

Oman criticises undiluted mysticism for its failure to shoulder responsibilities in the natural. By concentrating on the undifferentiated supernatural the mystic, in the words of William James, is guilty of "taking a perpetual moral holiday". Oman denies that the "true" mystic has any wish for his experience to bear fruit in practice. "Because the mystic's flights into the empyrean of ecstasy have exhausted him, he must return to the world to recover energy for a higher flight, but this is not regarded as the natural fruit of energy and inspiration received from this ecstasy." ¹. Though one may agree wholeheartedly with Oman's attack on irresponsibility, is this a fair description of fact? St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and Jacob Boehme do not seem well described by these words. ². If Oman then defines mysticism as excluding the above figures, then surely he is falling into that error he criticised in others of so concentrating on the worst aspects of politics or religion as not to understand its proper functioning. No doubt it is a fact that certain mystics have been guilty of neglecting their practical duties. Perhaps, even, mysticism does not aid men to fulfil their duties. But

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.500.

(2) Oman says of St. Theresa that she could have been better occupied than organising girls into cloisters. See for a balanced dissent from Oman's account of mysticism J.K. Mozley's review of "Grace and Personality" in J.T.S. op.cit. Vol.XXI pp.349-352.

Oman's sweeping generalisation that no true mystic can fulfil his practical duties seems invalid.

Oman attacks mysticism because it is esoteric - the religion of the aristocrat, not open to ordinary men. "The mere fact of being esoteric is itself primitive". 1. Religious experience which is not open to all types and conditions of men is to Oman a kind of blasphemy. Certainly it may be granted that much mystical practice seems far from the Gospels. Yet along with the accusation of esoteric practices, Oman makes the suggestion that the mystic's experience is easy of attainment. This is implied in innumerable words and phrases that occur whenever the subject is mentioned. A few examples even out of their context make this clear: "to sink itself in bliss", "peace in quiescence", "primitive paradise", "the supreme Mother-complex of humanity", "relief from struggle", "The apocalyptic religions ----- do not find it so simple". Even though peace be the end of the road, the earlier stages of the mystic way do not seem to be in any way relaxing. Whether Oman is right about the essence of mysticism, his description of it is freighted with quite irrational antipathy.

These points, however, only touch the periphery of the subject. What is essential is Oman's account of the content of the experience. "The suggestion has already been made that it has its source in real forms of unity.----- If so, it is just the attempt to have the forms without being troubled by their harassing, conflicting, and not always manageable content.-----The fact that mysticism works with real, and even fundamental elements in

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.415.

experience, does not prove it to be revelation, because while empty forms may be real subjective experience, they are not experience of objective reality." 1.

Oman denies a priori the possibility of knowing God above the categories of nature and history, and therefore rules out the mystic way as illusion. It is acosmic pantheism. 2. In withdrawing from the challenge of the natural and of the concrete individual, the mystic refuses to face life on the terms that God has given it. He despises the categories by which God has ordained that He shall be known. He evades both the Cross and the Crown. Far from rising above the idea of a personal God which was incipient even in polytheism, they fall far below it.

As Oman writes:

" Are we to find the eternal only in what is unchanging, and the sole ultimate reality to be the All-one, into which we enter as we discard the empirical self? Or are we to seek the Supernatural as the Father of our spirits and him in whom all fullness dwells, as what gives meaning to the world and a purpose beyond it which assures that to be called according to his purpose is to find it all working for good?" 3.

It may be granted that mystical experience, defined in Oman's careful limitation of that term, is not of the essence of the Gospel, for it is not a knowledge of God open to all His children. So ineffable however is the experience of the mystic that the present writer would

(1) N. and S. op.cit. pp.423-424.

(2) Oman never mentions Eckhart's "scintilla animae, increata et increabilis".

(3) N. and S. op.cit. p.425.

remain agnostic about whether it has any cognitive content. Oman's certainty and heat at this point does not seem necessary to his position.

The Ceremonial-Legal.

Ceremonial-Legalism falls into the second class of Oman's sub-division - mystical-apocalyptic. Throughout he uses the word apocalyptic in its literal and more general sense rather than in the specialised meaning of eschatology. In fact, nevertheless, the more specialised sense of apocalyptic does apply to all the religions he discusses under that word except Mohammedanism. The essential quality of these apocalyptic religions is that they seek an unveiling of the supernatural in the natural. They do not seek to escape the problems of the natural as do the mystical religions. Zoroastrianism and Hebrew religion, for instance, arose in periods of physical hardship when men had to fight to get a living from the soil. As Oman writes:-

" In such a conflict the negations could not be the virtues, nor the affirmations the vices." 1.
The person is not identified with the evanescent but is seen to serve some purpose that is of the Supernatural.

On the other hand, Ceremonial-Legalism does not attain the faith of prophetic monotheism. It cannot achieve the trust by which the natural may be all possessed. There is a double estimate of the natural as being tragically far from the absolute worth to which it points. Morality is judged in terms of material reward and so life becomes more and more the observance of ritual and ethical laws. The distinction between sacred and secular is conceived materially rather than morally. This

(1) N. and S. op.cit. p.427.

involves a dualism which cannot understand the world as all God's. Thus Ceremonial-Legalism carries the problems of polytheism one step further, but cannot solve them.

Ceremonial-Legalism must not, however, be entirely cut off from Prophetic Monotheism. Not only do they overlap historically, but the legalisms are penetrated with prophetic elements, because often they have had prophetic founders such as Moses or Zarathustra. When these leaders taught a higher religion than their followers were able to assimilate, their teaching was incorporated into the popular religion in the form of ceremonial law. Often the prophetic spirit was so crushed by this shell of legalism that it could only be saved by the destruction of that shell. The higher the prophetic faith, the more elaborate must be the shell. One has only to consider, for an illustration of the process, the way in which Our Lord's rejection of the old Law was gradually turned by his followers into a far more elaborate Ceremonial-Legalism than was ever Judaism. This does not imply that Oman believes that the Prophetic is the earlier form historically. The Law absorbed the prophets because it is deeply ingrained in natural man.

The characteristic of Ceremonial-Legalism with which Oman is chiefly concerned is its dualism. His discussion is mainly of the difference between dualism as a problem and dualism accepted as an explanation. The difference¹⁵ seen in Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Zoroastrianism found in dualism its final theological solution; Judaism, though always concerned with dualism as a practical problem, kept it out of its theology.

Just as in India the heat and the ease had favoured the development of mystical religions, so in Persia the harsh climate and more dangerous life prevented men from

unduly neglecting the Natural, and called forth the virtues necessary to deal with it. 1. In this situation Zoroastrianism had two great achievements. First it transformed the sense of the holy from mere awe into something close to reverence. Zoroastrianism could maintain "Thou shalt seek the good thou dost seek only from the Good Power and never by any dealing with the lie or any favour of the might of evil". 2. The awe thus concentrated solely on the Good Power could pass from fear to reverence. To have given up appeasing the powers of evil involved also confining oneself to lawful means in obtaining one's desires. Thus though the good remained highly eudaemonistic, it still led to a higher standard of morality. The second achievement was the formulation of the law. The very formulation implied some kind of universal validity, and the law-givers themselves came under that universality. As Oman writes:-

"Laws which are a revelation from Ormuzd to Zarathustra are very different from the unknown, uncertain, uncanny doings of the medicine-man." 3.

Despite these two elements of progress, Zoroastrianism was prevented from spiritual advance by its acceptance of dualism as a theological solution. Righteousness was so clearly associated with the idea of material prosperity, and sin with worldly misfortune, that it was impossible to believe the world to be all of God. The good principle had created the world, but the evil principle had entered

(1) Here Oman's writing may clearly be compared with Professor Toynbee's theory of "challenge and response" as the governing factor in history. As in Professor Toynbee, this explanation of history is not related to the theological dogma of God as the Ruler of history. Oman uses the phrase that "in principle" the faith is first. But it is difficult to see what he means.

(2) H. and S. op.cit. p.437.

(3) H. and S. op.cit. p.437.

in and spoiled it. The chief means of self-preservation was in punctilious observance of Ormazd's laws.

"Moral good is thus inextricably confused with circumspection about material good ----- as every evil could be explained as neglect of the sacred, there was nothing to raise question about dualism as a complete and final solution." 1. The decline of Zoroastrianism was above all caused by this dualist attitude to nature. ^{This} prevented it from reaching true judgments of value. The natural so interpreted as the pleasant and the unpleasant could not lead to objective judgments of the supernatural.

The Hebrews faced very much the same kind of external situation. The difference between them is seen in the fact that to the end the Persian considered the difficulties of agriculture to be caused by the powers of darkness, while the Israelite saw that God had created the earth with its grudging response for man's own sake. The idea of good is no longer rooted in the material but has become moral, and thus dualism has been rejected as a final solution. Evil as well as good could be related to God, and affliction in the world could be seen not as ceremonial pollution but as some kind of moral failure. Once having spurned dualism as a solution, the problem of evil was always an open one to the Hebrews. However they could not grasp the answer to which all the prophets pointed and

(1) H. and S. op.cit. p.439.

which Jesus revealed on the Cross. ¹. Since the Hebrews did not, as did the Persians, interpret the natural in terms of the pleasant and the unpleasant, they could be the vehicle for ever deepening insight into the supernatural. Thus though in Judaism all the elements of Ceremonial-Legalism were present - the appeal to the awesome holy and the material sacred, moral and ritual legalism, the division of the world into sacred and secular - the elements for the transcendence of legalism were also present. In the fullness of time, the Gospel was to fulfil the Law.

The Prophetic.

Enough has been said, particularly in Chapter IV of this thesis, about Oman's conception of prophetic religion, so there is no need to repeat his account of the Hebrew tradition, culminating in Our Lord. It is the faith by which men know that the Father is in all and over all, as they take up their share in His redeeming work. Once more the difficulty in Oman's use of the conception "prophetic" may be mentioned. It is of the essence of prophetic religion to be looking forward to the "as yet unrealised"; yet it is consummated on the Cross. It is not clear how these two aspects are reconciled.

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- (1) This account of Hebrew religion leads to a better understanding of the Book of Job than an earlier remark about that work in "The Natural and the Supernatural". Oman says earlier in criticising Otto that:--"What Job is summoned to do, in face even of the most terrible works of nature, is, in repentance and humility yet in boldness, to gird up his loins like a man, not only to hear God but to answer him." N. and S. op.cit. p.60. The end of the book of Job seems far from a demand to answer God but rather indeed the most irrational law-giving of a tyrant. If Job is an authority, Otto's account of the holy is much truer than Oman's. However in this account of Hebrew religion, the Book of Job may be seen as a noble statement of the problem for which the answer is inadequate.

APPENDIX B.

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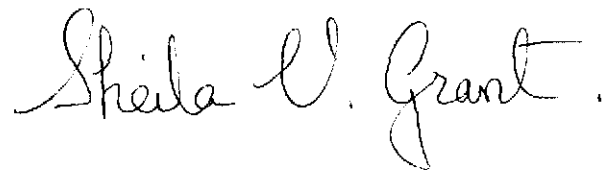
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheila V. Grant". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

(Mrs. George Grant)

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