THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF JOHN OMAN

Francis William Rutherford Nichol

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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A Thesis

Submitted to the University of St. Andrews

by

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M.A., B.D., (University of New Zealand,)

In application for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.
THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF

JOHN OMAN.
a) Declaration by the Candidate.

I declare that this Thesis has been composed by me, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, and that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a Higher Degree.

Signed:
b) **Statement of the Research Training or Higher Study undertaken by the Candidate.**

I have completed eight and a part terms of Research Training or Higher Study.

I was admitted as a research student, under the terms of Ordinance No. 16, in January, 1950.

Signed:
c) Certificate by Research Supervisor.

I certify that the conditions of the Ordinance and Regulations have been fulfilled.

Signed:  

Professor,  
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REFERENCES to Osn's principal works quoted throughout this Thesis.

NS. = THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL.
GP = GRACE AND PERSONALITY.
PF = THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM.
VA = VISION AND AUTHORITY.
CD = THE CHURCH AND THE DIVINE ORDER.
HR = HONEST RELIGION.
PW = THE PARADOX OF THE WORLD
DG = A DIALOGUE WITH GOD.
OR = SCHLEIERMACHER'S SPEECHES ON RELIGION.
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Chapter 1:
OMAN'S HISTORICAL SITUATION.

We must attempt first of all to see John Oman in the context of his times, so that we may ask of him the appropriate questions. Born in 1860, his years of formation and of the integration of his philosophical and theological outlook were those of the turn of the century. We must therefore try to outline the social, scientific, philosophical and theological outlook at that time. First let us turn to the social setting.

The later years of the nineteenth century were, as it has often been remarked, years of optimism and of hope. England had much of which to be proud; and her pride was reflected to some extent in the exhibition of 1851. Britain led the world in industrial affairs, her Empire was great and she was persuaded that her policy towards India was enlightened and Christian; at home the work of reform had introduced profound, much-needed and beneficial changes. And, added to it all, there was an elegant finish, a polish that the age possessed, which lent it an air, as G.M. Trevelyan notes, akin to ancient Greece. (ENGLISH SOCIAL HISTORY, p. 564.) English sensibility and social conscience had responded to the attack and call of Dickens, and had good reason, therefore, to think in hopeful terms of the essential goodness of human nature.

There were, of course, subtle changes taking place in the social scheme of things. Many were, of course, shocked by the methods used by Maurice and Kingsley to reach and to better the social and intellectual conditions of the working classes.
But they did not realise that the very condescension which had played its valuable part in the previous century had itself helped to blur the class distinctions which made it necessary, and what had been looked upon by all as the proper duty of those of higher station came to be regarded as charity in the bad sense of the word. The independence and self-respect that had been gained on behalf of those who had hitherto regarded themselves as the servants of a worthy master class now turned into a question as to who should be master. Such questions were often cast into the form made possible by Karl Marx's studies in the British museum, though, as a matter of fact, British Trade Unions did not in practice share the gloomy and desperate view of the class struggle that characterised the Continentals, who had felt the sharp disappointments of 1848. All classes shared the same optimism and hope that, though there were difficulties to be faced and obstacles to be overcome, these were none of them insuperable, and the better society was not far off.

To this hopefulness evolutionary science gave an expression providing a metaphysical support. Long before, especially in continental thought, it had been suggested that the same methods which had been applied with such success in the physical sciences could also be turned to good account in the science of human affairs. (See J. Beillie, THE BELIEF IN PROGRESS, pp. 100f.) In Communism it was suggested that the development of society was subject to laws of change discoverable and applicable, and though the native strain of British Empiricism worked to prevent this idea from turning into a doctrinaire fanaticism, there remained the belief that the course of human society was
basically controllable and understandable. In the birth of science man had reached his maturity, and it was for him now to take into his own hands the forces that had brought him to the threshold of a new world, and to use them to his own betterment. Evolutionism became a sort of poor man's Hegelian philosophy, in the light of which he felt himself carried along towards a more satisfactory order of things, and in which he felt the partialities and shortcomings of his particular efforts to find promise and resolution.

Because of the native conservatism and commonsense point of view characteristic of British life and thought, the far-reaching changes in the social structure that were certainly taking place did not diminish the moral earnestness with which the whole age worked. To us, the language and moral exhortation that was used even by those who regarded themselves as the enemies of conventional Christian piety would seem and does sound moralistic. A high moral idealism was characteristic even of those who professed to have rejected Christian Doctrine, as is evident in John Stuart Mill's desire for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. And it is apparent that those who actively opposed what they took to be the Christian view of life, did so in the name of freedom from superstition, in the power of a vision of man in possession of his independence and capable of enjoying for himself the good things that life in society with others had to offer.

Perhaps this moral idealism received clearest and most effective practical expression in the care and concern that was taken in the advancement of education in the nineteenth century,
If "scientia potestas est", then education must be given to all for the enrichment of life. Along with this effort went the conviction that man need only to be brought to see the good in order to do it. The demand for education arose, of course, from the effect of the Reform Acts in the enfranchisement of the common people who had, until that time, had no direct influence over the policies of the governing aristocracy. Only after the working classes of the towns had been enfranchised by the Reform Act of 1867, did the politicians at last say: "We must educate our masters."1 Nevertheless, once introduced, education became not only a political necessity, but also a great hope for the generality of men.

On the social level, then, the late nineteenth century may be described as a time of social change in the direction of equalitarianism combined with an optimistic idealism.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the trend of scientific thought as it relates to Oman's situation. The real struggle between religion and science had not begun in England, as it had to some extent in continental countries, with the Enlightenment. It is true that some of the Deists such as Anthony Collins (A DISCOURSE OF FREETHINKING, 1713) had not hidden their views as to the consequences of untrammelled thought in the religious sphere, but such views "all respectable people regarded askance."2 Their importance had rather been that they had called to the defence of the faith such opponents as Bishop Butler (ANALOGY OF RELIGION, 1736) and Lardner (THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPELS, 1727). The truth of the matter is that the great number of Englishmen remained

1. Trevelyan, op.cit., p.518.
faithful adherents of the established religion, and the whole
deistic discussion was carried on largely in the rarified
atmosphere of intellect. Such a scientist as Newton held
himself a true believer, and, thanks to the Erastian and
tolerant character of the English Church, this could be said of
all those who followed him in scientific study.

Science, moreover, justified its own existence in no uncertain
terms by the amazing strides which it took in the years between
1750 and 1850. Here a summary account is most impressive, and
it shows how much was being accomplished, not by speculation
about the nature of scientific knowledge, by by simple concern
with the problems of science itself and the bold application
of likely hypotheses.

The closing years of the eighteenth century and the first half
of the nineteenth had witnessed amazing conquests in scientific
knowledge. It will be sufficient here to mention a bare few
of the masterly experimental and theoretical achievements by
which the Newtonian methods had been extended and refined.
In 1801 Thomas Young demonstrated practically the wave theory
of light and the principle of interference, and some fifteen
years later Augustin Fresnel worked out the mathematics of the
theory, gathering under one comprehensive view a large mass of
observed phenomena. In the meantime the atomic conception
of matter which ..., had formed a central feature of the revolu-
tionary ideas of nature in the seventeenth century, had
received arresting confirmation at the hands of a Manchester
teacher, John Dalton. ..., This scheme provided the basis
for rapid new departures and Dalton's discovery was applied
with extraordinary success to the understanding of the ultimate
constituents and relationships of solids, liquids and gases.
An equally striking advance was soon made in the sphere of
electrical phenomena. The experiments of the Danish physicist
Oersted in 1820 led Ampere to formulate the mathematical anal-
ysis of electrodynamics. Between 1821 and 1831 Michael
Faraday, one of the greatest scientific geniuses of our history,
conducted a brilliant series of experiments on the phenomena
of electro-magnetism and electro-statics. He demonstrated
the lines of force of electric currents, thus linking together
many disconnected phenomena. These varied discoveries were
leading scientific thought to a new and comprehensive concep-
tion of matter. Theories concerning properties of light,
magnetism, electric currents and chemical elements were coal-
cescing, both in relation to the doctrine of atomic structure
and to the mathematical formulation of the underlying forces
of material phenomena. Investigations in the field of
thermodynamics strikingly advanced this process. In a lecture delivered in 1847 Joule maintained that not only heat and mechanical energy but also attraction through space and light are mutually convertible, and that in these conversions nothing is ever lost. In the same year the young German authority von Helmholtz applied the formula to the whole range of natural phenomena. He enunciated the principle of the conservation of force.

It is clear from such a summary as this that the very advance of science was in itself so spectacular that it is not to be wondered at when men became both enthused about it and absorbed in its pursuit.

This advance took what may be described as a three-fold form. First there are the advances in physical sciences such as we have noted in the above quotation, leading on to the periodic nature of the elements themselves, and so to a generalised conception of the physical world as composed of atoms whose behaviour can be mathematically charted. But at the same time zoology was taking great strides, and the physical and chemical relations of organisms to their environment were being studied in great detail, the inter-relations of the types of animal and vegetable life within themselves were being subjected to new and better methods of classification in the search for a principle that would bring a meaningful unity into the study of a vast variety of living things. Indeed it seemed probable to many that the physical universe did form some kind of unified whole, and suggestions as to the nature of that unity were being put forward before the publication of \textit{The Origin of Species}. One of these, \textit{Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation}, published by Robert Chambers of Edinburgh in 1844, was, however, still too much for the religious susceptibilities even of the scientists of its time, and the moment

\footnote{Meyrick H. Carré, \textit{Phases of English Thought}, p. 346.}
had to wait till the biological, zoological and geological ground was better prepared in 1859, when Charles Darwin's THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES appeared.

The publication of this famous work is, of course, the milestone of the road along which the movement we are studying was moving. The sheer comprehensiveness of the material which it gathered, the vast panorama of development which it presented, and the simplicity of the principle of natural selection with which it operated were enough to commend it to the scientific thought of the time. It formed the basis upon which the work of the following years was built, and however much it might be criticised by those who could not accept it, nevertheless it caught the imagination so successfully that any alternative approach could not hope to win a hearing if it departed too fundamentally from the basic picture presented in THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES. It is therefore the chief single object in the scientific background to Oman's religious thought. Although there were modifications and changes made as the century went on, all biological science took, and still takes, its point of departure from the theory of evolution.

At this point we must turn from the inner history of science as such to the philosophy which built itself round, and found support in, these advances so strikingly made in the purely scientific sphere. But we must first note that the prevailing tendency of British philosophy has always been in the direction of empiricism. The line of thought represented by Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Russell is the line characteristic
of British thought, which does not, of course, go unchallenged by men like Berkeley, the Cambridge Platonists, the Cairds, Whitehead; yet it is the line to which it sooner or later returns. The British habit of thinking is, it seems, constitutionally averse to what it sometimes calls "continental systematising", and while it may often be profoundly influenced by such systematising, it remains deeply suspicious of it. And, in the actual history of science, it was naturally with the empirical, experimental type of philosophical approach that scientists were most in sympathy, rather than with a priori methods which seemed to determine results in advance. Thus both the British habit of mind and the traditional methods of science itself brought about the historical marriage between science and empirical philosophy.

When, therefore, in the later years of the nineteenth century, the defenders of the point of view which Darwin seemed to represent were forced by their ecclesiastical and philosophical opponents into a philosophical apologetic, it was to this stream of thought that they turned. To them, in the interests of the laws of nature that seemed to be uncovered by the advance of science, it seemed necessary to deny the spontaneous and unconditioned nature of mental activity, and men such as T.H. Huxley and G.J. Romanes were found to be looking forward to the day when the reign of determinism and calculability extended over every field of human knowledge.

Probably the most influential and widely read of these thinkers was Herbert Spencer, who took it upon himself to provide a whole world-view on a scientific basis in THE SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY (1862ff.). Here the whole range of the worlds
history and activity was surveyed in one masterly sweep on the assumption of the two laws of the conservation of energy and evolution by natural selection. It has been rightly pointed out that Spencer did not dwell long on the philosophic presuppositions of his confident assertions, but this itself was characteristic of the movement of which he formed a part, and shows where the real interest lay. Where such philosophical presuppositions did seem to be needed, he and his friends fell back on the empiricist position, "They spoke for the most part as materialists and when the materialism became too obvious they fell back on Berkeleyanism or upon the scepticism of the empirical philosophy." The one thing needful, they felt, was to continue the advance of science by faithful adherence to the principle of discoverable law, reducing the complexity of experience to as much simplicity as possible (and this they understood in a materialist sense), and leave the problems of philosophy to look after themselves. While science was justifying itself by its achievements there was not great need to find justification for it on other grounds.

But even among their own ranks there were the wistful, the dissentient voices. Romanes regarded the overwhelming advance of materialistic thought with horror because it meant the end of "the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine." Poetic, sensitive natures shrank from the conclusions that seemed so inescapable: J.S. Mill was not alone in the experience of feeling his whole philosophical system tumbling about him because

3. G.J. Romanes, A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM, 1873.
it clearly could have nothing to say of the realities about which music speaks. But there were others, too, who turned with a kind of disgust from this narrow creed, ignored it, and found a basis of their life in some quite different mental realm. The Oxford Movement did not grow and develop as it did simply on the strength of its first convictions about the appointments to See. A new level of existence was opened up by the study of the Middle Ages, with the richness of its mysticism and artistic productivity—a level that seemed denied on contemporary principles. Pre-Raphaelite painters pointed wistfully in that direction, and others, like Tennyson, Carlyle, Arnold, all reached out to some deeper penetration. "What has science to do with the existence of the Eternal Unnameable? Fools! Fools! It widens the horizon of my imagination, fills me with deeper and deeper wonder and more devout awe." 1 All these seeds of discontent looked for a philosophy capable of sustaining them. It was found in Hegelianism.

Neither Kant nor Hegel made an immediate impact upon British thought. Coleridge, it is true, had been influenced by Kant, but he had provided so much additional material from his own thought that the Kant in him was not recognised by those who drew inspiration from him. It was Hegel who was first introduced into the philosophical schools of Britain in 1865 by J.H. Stirling's THE SECRET OF HEGEL, and by the translation of the LOGIC by Wallace in 1874. Readers of Hegel saw behind him the figure of the Koenigsberg philosopher and so began to take an independent interest in the latter, using him as a check.

1. Carlyle, quoted E. Willey, NINETEENTH CENTURY STUDIES, p. 129.
and correction for what seemed to the British mind to be the excesses of his successor. But there had been readers of Hegel in the German—Mattineau and Jowett, for example.1 To them, and to those others who became the translators, exponents and independent thinkers along the Hegelian line, it seemed that here at last was a system of philosophy capable of expressing the grandeur of religion as they understood it, capable of containing and preserving the values they found in poetry, music, and the arts. Hegelianism had a sense of history, not only in its developmental aspect, but also in its richness, its specifically human, creative content. It also, in the Kantian understanding of the human consciousness, provided the much-needed weapon for the conflict against empiricism in its union with "dismal science".  

"Its conception of the nature of knowledge in its wholeness rather than its discreteness effected a complete revolution in epistemology which enabled its supporters to find many loopholes in the writings of Spencer and his devotees. New Vistas were therefore opened up, both for apologetic and for independent speculation. As an example of the change effected by this infusion of idealism into British thought we may instance the following from a later product of the movement, a statement which could not have been made by a philosopher preoccupied with evolutionism.

What is the concrete and material content of such a life as this? What does it come to? I believe it means one thing, and one thing only—love. ... I conceive the self as like a jet of water. All the more so because fountains spread out as they reach the top. I think of us as a fountain the

2. Willey, op. cit., p. 102.
culmination of whose efforts is to reach the heights at which they will directly touch one another. 1

When Oman began to write, this was the ascendant philosophy, especially among those who were, like himself, looking for a basis for religious thought. The names of Bradley, Bosanquet, the Cairds, and later Ward and McTaggart were enough to describe the serious philosophy of the turning century.

But idealism had its own problems, and the spectre of the old stream of British empiricism was never very far away, making itself felt in the caution with which even these great leaders of thought handled the conceptions of their master. Ward himself illustrates the difficulty with which even the greatest of them grappled with the problems of their time, for he never quite succeeded in bringing together his desired principle of unity and his faithfulness to experience. 2 And R.G. Collingwood finds even in Bradley, probably the profoundest thinkers of them all, traces of positivism. 3 In this way systems as diverse as those of McTaggart, of Ward, of Alexander, all make their appearance. At last the fatal blows come, first in the war itself, and then in the strictly philosophical sphere in the publication of PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA by Russell and Whithead, and in the work of G.E. Moore and other advocates of a realist and analytical philosophical method. The way to the modern interest in the philosophy of syntax and meaning was now open, but the character of this period is not germane to the historical background of Oman's thought, the foundations of which had been laid earlier.

2. See THE PHILOSOPHY OF JAMES WARD, by A.H. Murray.
It is impossible for us to give more than a general picture of the theological scene over the turn of the nineteenth century. We will therefore confine ourselves to, first, an indication of the main lines along which British theology has traditionally worked; secondly, the specific problems which faced the Church in its various branches; thirdly, the sources of inspiration to which religious thinkers of the time turned for answers to their questions, with an indication of the way in which some of these were applied by various individuals; and, finally, a consideration of the specific theological fields in which British theology has felt its problems to be concentrated.

We have already remarked upon what we have called the "native conservatism" which is characteristic of British thought in various spheres, which makes thinkers in that country unwilling to depart hastily from accustomed positions, and which imparts a readiness to come to solutions that appear as compromises to more rigorously logical minds. This traditionalism is characteristic not only of one particular school within the Church of England, but of those which stand outside the Church of England as an historical continuum. But it is, of course, a marked characteristic of what has been called the High Church party within the Church of England itself, that group which would not hesitate to lay claim to the title "Catholic." The story of the Church of England since the Reformation is largely the story of the relations and compromises reached between this Catholicism, sometimes only latent, and those groups which look.
back to the continental Reformation as the rock from which they were hewn. The influence of Laud and other High Churchmen during the Stuart period was not wasted, and the elements that they secured within the establishment were not dormant during the Deistic period and the Wesleyan reaction. These received help and stimulation from the work and thought of that strange genius, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The Romantic in him gave him a sense for that continuity with the past and unity with the national history which enabled him to find in the Church of England a fitting and full religious expression of the genius of English life and character. But his theology was of a curiously mixed nature, owing much to both Schleiermacher and Kant, for he read avidly in German philosophy and theology. But because of the diverse character of his thought he is the spiritual father of very differing streams in English theology. Thus it was not until Newman and the Oxford Movement made their appearance that the High Church party began to make itself felt as a major influence. Such men as Carlyle saw in Coleridge only an aesthetic dabbler.

On the other hand, within the Church of England itself as well as among non-Conformists, a powerful stream of Evangelicalism was flowing, out of which grew not so much theological thought as social action and concern. Wilberforce and the "Clapham Sect", with all its work for better social conditions, its campaign against slavery, its concern for the reality of individual salvation, its interest in education and in the beginnings of the Sunday School movement all point us to where...
its real interest lay. As a strictly theological movement it has only recently begun to find itself, but its influence was felt even as the roots of the Offord Movement, as Newman himself was ready to witness. Alongside this group, and in partial connection with it, is the orthodoxy which drew its inspiration chiefly from William Paley (1743 - 1805) and those who thought like him. Though the approach of this school, somewhat rationalistic in character, experienced a revival in the defence of religion against the onslaughts of evolutionists, it was in other directions that most thinkers turned.

Taking up a somewhat mediating position, and in lineal descent from the Wesleyans and Latitudinarians of the previous century, were the group which later came to be called the Liberals or Broad Churchmen, among whom were Kingsley, F.D. Maurice, and F.W. Robertson as, at first, perhaps the most outstanding examples. These men found all the narrowness and traditionalism of the Churchly type distasteful, and they looked instead for a point of contact between the Christian message and the current problems and thought of the time, and yet, as Maurice exemplifies, retained a lively theological interest.

These, then, are the three main lines along which religious thought is to develop through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In Scotland the scene is somewhat different, for there the traditional position of the Church, acknowledged by all major groups, is Calvinistic, and, in the Disruption of the Free Church in 1843, the evangelical wing gains the ascendancy. In such men of the "Auld Kirk" as
Norman McLeod there is a strong sense of the catholicity and national character of the Church, but one may say that throughout the Scottish Church the chief problem has been posed in a more simple form than in England, there being only one main stream of tradition.

Turning now to the problems which faced the Church thus arrayed, the most spectacular, and perhaps that which did most to sharpen the issues into a definite form, was that raised by evolutionary science. Yet, in spite of the sharp and acrimonious debates carried on between leaders of the Church and scientific leaders, of which those of T.H. Huxley with the Anglican Bishops who saw fit to contest his scientific conclusions were perhaps the most bitter, one may regard the whole problem as a simmering undertone in the theological discussion to which writers refer from time to time as insights occur to them while engaged in the investigation of other problems. For the actual scientific theory itself became of lesser interest as the whole understanding of man changed under the impact of a philosophy progressivist in character. But we must note that there were attempts to reconcile the scientific theory with the spiritual view of the universe, which gained considerable popularity, notable those of Henry Drummond, NATURAL LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, and, later, J.Y. Simpson of Edinburgh, NATURE: COSMIC, HUMAN AND DIVINE. The titles of these works indicate well enough the line of thought.

Within the Church itself, however, a special problem began to impose itself: the movement of Biblical criticism.
At first, both in Scotland and in England, its appearance was regarded with suspicion and dismay, as witness the deposition of William Robertson Smith from his Free Church Chair at Aberdeen as a result of certain articles on the Bible in the *ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA*, by the General Assembly in 1881, and the furore created by the appearance in England of *ESSAYS AND REVIEWS* in 1860. This development, and all the discussion which followed upon it, raised in a particularly sharp form for the Church the question of the whole basis of her existence and the nature of her Gospel, and in the fires of controversy and reinterpretation many elements drawn from very diverse sources were smelted together in an attempt to re-establish the basis of faith. Yet it must be noted that, in spite of the horror with which the first appearance of critical studies was regarded, they continued to gain more and more adherents, and religious thinkers began to see that there was no turning back from the methods used, but rather that they must press in the belief that only truth could prevail. George Adam Smith, who followed Robertson Smith at Aberdeen, continued to use them without suffering the same fate as his predecessor, while *ESSAYS AND REVIEWS* was followed in 1902 by *CONTENTION/VERITAS* and other critical symposia which did not equal anything approaching the same stir.  

The third chief element that raised problems for theology may be described as the continuing basic humanism of the enlightenment. Ever since the Renaissance, Western theology has been faced with the difficulty of coming to terms with, or breaking through.

breaking through, the anthropocentric worldview characteristic of that movement, desiccated by the Age of Reason, given a philosophical form by Kant's Copernican Revolution, and filled out once again by Romanticism and Idealism. In Britain the empiricist tradition in philosophy acted as a bulwark against all attempts to give meaning to the conception of revelation, and theology, influenced by Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel introduced Coleridge, the Cairds and others who turned to Germany for fresh thought, continued to struggle with the problem on its own terms. Probably the most influential single discipline which kept moving within this framework was the new and exciting science of history, for romanticism gave clues for its interpretation and therefore motives for its exhaustive study that could not have been provided by the static views of the rationalism of the Enlightenment type. Here man was seen to be developing and expanding towards a richer and deeper life, coming to a more and more satisfying understanding of the nature of the universe and of his place within it. Into this pattern the Bible fitted as another, perhaps the greatest, example of the growth of man's conception of God, and so of the meaning of his existence. Religion, so Schleiermacher averred, was the pioneer and deepest intuition that paved the way for all of man's discrete sciences and activity; or, as Hegel claimed, was the concrete and pictorial expression of philosophical truth. Of this movement towards a scientific religious history within which Christianity takes its place as a deep understanding of a world that is essentially man's, the work of Ernst Troeltsch is the quintessence.

H.R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 161ff.
In the midst of these three problematic elements, evolutionary science, Biblical studies and underlying humanism of outlook, the Church had the very difficult task of making good its claim to revelation, of asserting in terms not merely obscurantist a divine authority, of offering in meaningful terms an atonement for sin that did not reduce sin to mere imperfection, of speaking of an Incarnation in terms which preserved the transcendence of the One Who was made flesh.

Where, then, did the theologians and religious thinkers in the groups we have described turn for suggestions in their task of renewed understanding and interpretation?

The first major source of inspiration was undoubtedly German idealism, especially as Hegel represented it, though, as his philosophy was coloured in British thought, with touches of Kantian criticism. We have noticed already that this view of the nature of the universe, beginning with the wholeness of human knowledge and proceeding to particulars by analysis, offered a way of thought which promised better things in philosophy than empiricism appeared able to do; and theologians likewise found in the new thought a way of escape from the barrenness of orthodoxy, which seemed more and more in retreat as science and criticism gained ground, and from the materialism in the outlook of Spencer and men of like mind. Men of the same group who introduced and expounded Hegel were themselves theologians - James Martineau and John Caird are outstanding examples. This Hegelian flavour introduced into theology led to an immanent view of the activity and nature of God, which, though it found important opponents such as A.S. Pringle-Pattison, nevertheless continued to be very powerful in the thought of leaders like Charles Gore and William Temple, and formed the backbone of much
much Anglo-Catholic sacramentalism.

Together with Hegelianism, and in some part sustained by and associated with it, went the interest in history which we have already noted. History came to be seen as Schleiermacher and Hegel had seen it, as itself the medium of revelation, as the sphere in which eternal truth was mediated concretely in events. While there might be considerable disagreement with Hegelianism as an "unearthly ballet of bloodless categories", it was nevertheless felt that he had grasped the way in which ideas and conceptions of God had grown and crystallised in the actual living contact of man with his situation, and that truth is not a static affair, but has some relativity to these situations. The notion of development, not to say progress, gained an increasingly firm hold upon religious thought, until it became almost an axiom in dealing with such problems as revelation raised. The Old Testament was opened up by the application of this principle, with apparently striking results; but it also found its way into other theological fields. J.H. Newman applied it to the understanding of the doctrine of the Roman Church; Loisy introduced it in a different way to the same problem; the Oxford Movement presupposed something of the sort in its attempt to combine a belief in an infallible Church with a Bible critically approached; and within the Liberal ranks, where the whole idea of authority on the old sense was rejected, it was frankly confessed that Christianity was the highest of man's understandings of God, and Jesus was brought under the category of "religious genius", noteworthy for His profound ethical teach-
ing. R.J. Campbell's THE NEW THEOLOGY (1907) exemplified this thorough-going liberal immanence.

The third source of ideas, especially among Nonconformist groups because of their kinship with the continental Reformation, was the contact with German theology, especially with Ritschlianism. Although the native conservatism of all three lines of British theology looked upon the Ritschlian rejection of the classical formulae of the Christian faith with considerable suspicion, there was agreement that theology was not the same thing as metaphysics, and it is fair to say that, generally speaking, this theology exercised a considerable influence over most theologians writing around the turn of the century, chiefly in Scotland and in English Nonconformity. The rejection of mysticism and dogma, though not taken over with the same thoroughness as in Germany, nevertheless appealed to an age which could not happily confront the religious problems of the common man with orthodoxy and esoteric piety. Again, in such exponents of Ritschlian theology as the great W. Herrmann, theology recovered a strongly evangelical mode of expression, and was able to insist upon the centrality of the historical Jesus and the specifically Christian meeting-place with God. And, further, the strongly ethical note which was to be found in this theology, derived from Kant, seemed to offer a way of overcoming the relativism in which morality seemed about to be swamped. Figures so diverse as P.T. Forsyth and Owen himself, James Denney and A.B. Carvie, were all powerfully affected.

Finally we must turn to the specific points in which
British theology has felt itself most interested. We have seen that of three main streams of thought two, the High Church and the Liberal, have been most active theologically, though it is necessary to qualify this remark by noting that our label "Liberal" covers also men who attempted to conserve the evangelical appeal upon which the third group was based: and in Scotland the native Calvinism gave all theology a strongly evangelical flavour, so that these labels do not apply there. Both of these main parties in England were concerned, however, with the problem of revelation in the form of the question about the Church's authority, its nature and source. The question was sharpened in England, and brought more to the forefront of theological controversy, by the activity of the Anglo-Catholic group under Gore's leadership, and both Oman and Forsyth were among those who attempted to present a Protestant answer to the question. But each of the two groups manifested a special interest in a problem peculiarly its own - among the Anglo-Catholics this was the doctrine of the Incarnation, among Free Churchmen and Scottish theologians that of the Atonement. Anglicans were more concerned with the nature of the Church, Free Church thinkers about the content of her message. These two lines have been carried on clearly from Macleod Campbell's _The Nature of the Atonement_ (1856) through Forsyth's _The Person and Place of Jesus Christ_ (1916) and Denney's _The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation_ (1917) to Baillie's _God Was in Christ_ (1943) and from the Oxford Movement's Tracts through _Doxology_ and Gore's _Reconstruction of Belief_ (1927-4).
Yet around these two main interests, supporting and modifying them, lives a strong tradition of Bible study, somewhat aloof from the actual controversies to which its conclusions lend fuel, and represented by such writers as A.B. Davidson, C.A. Smith, A.B. Bruce, Westcott and Hort, A.E.J. Rawlinson, Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. And, further, there were many, mostly of a very liberal outlook, who felt it their main task to bring Christianity into a living synthesis with the thought of the age. These kept up as far as possible a running dialogue between the theology of the time and its science and philosophy. Their work was the more profound as they kept abreast of the actual theological content of the work of their contemporaries — and many did not succeed in doing this, being content with a speedy and thorough dilution of Christianity with current thought. But Oman, to whose work we must now turn, was closely in touch with all that his fellow philosophers and theologians were engaged upon, and for him, as a theologian, the problem of atonement and reconciliation is central. To his attempt to live on the borderland of philosophy and theology we must now turn.
Chapter 2:

THE PATTERN OF OMAN'S WRITINGS.

Before we begin a detailed study of Oman's thought, we shall try to set clearly before us the process of its development as this is reflected in his major published works. This will help us to relate some of the intricate details to the general pattern of his problem.

There can be no doubt that, from the time that he first began literary expression, the idea of "freedom" is basic for him. Yet it is a conception of freedom strongly affected by Romanticist and Hegelian conceptions, so that all his books amount to a consistent presentation of the view that freedom in its fullness, with a content, is possible only when it is firmly based upon a reality which faith apprehends and which sustains man's free action within the world. Only as man's mind has been set at rest regarding the outcome of his attempts in creativity and interpretation of his experience, has he ever ventured at all.

The great task, one that would be of incalculable gain for the strenuousness of life, is to find a rock in the stream on which to set the individual with his unchanging identity and his abiding responsibility.

Religion, with all its failures and sins, has been the sphere within which man has discerned that "rock in the stream", in virtue of which freedom has been conferred upon man in the very beginning, and by which its content has been increased throughout the movement of history. In the strength of that call of sacred reality man has found strength to look for meaning
and purpose in his world.

On such a view, then, religion is a basic factor in man's make-up, if not the basic factor. His acceptance of this principle led Oman to undertake his first literary venture, the translation of Schleiermacher's SPEECHES ON RELIGION, published in England in 1893; and to this he wrote an extended introduction which included a survey of Schleiermacher's life and the development of his thought. Oman felt with Schleiermacher that for his contemporaries "to despise so fundamental and formative an element in man as religion, was a defect in their culture." PP211.

But Oman was by no means an uncritical admirer of Schleiermacher. Together with other British thinkers of his time, he brought to the study of romanticism and idealism the influence of Kant. In the latter Oman found the quintessence of the age previous to Schleiermacher's, the Age of Reason, the Aufklärung. Schleiermacher, as we shall see, had, in Oman's opinion, swung too far away in his reaction from the activism and moralism of Kant, and had reduced religion almost to a form of aesthetics. But Kant was profoundly concerned with the assertion of human freedom of judgement, the freedom to find truth and obey duty as these authenticated themselves to the individual's standards of judgement only. The outcome of this concern was, in Oman's view, a concentration upon the nature of the individual to whom truth must authenticate itself, and a consideration of the merely formal canons to which all truth must conform. To Oman, the value of Kant's contribution lay in his insistence upon the reality of the "individual
frontier", the inviolate character of the person's own insight and conscience before the authority of truth, beauty and goodness. Although he claimed that Kant expressed this truth in a merely negative, Oman believed that this principle of the Age of Reason was of fundamental importance.

The relation between the two eras of thought before and after Kant Oman set forth in an historical form in his Kerr Lectures of 1906, published under the title THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM. This book closes, significantly, with an appraisal of Ritschl's theology, for Ritschl had brought Kant to bear in criticism of both Schleiermacher and Hegel.

The theology of Albrecht Ritschl, which exerted so widespread an influence through all the latter part of the nineteenth century, not only in Germany, was framed directly under the influence of Kant ... One may see in Ritschlianism an attempt to combine an effective temper derived from old-fashioned Lutheren piety with a philosophic scepticism which might save piety from coming into collision with the results of rational enquiry. 4

Ritschlianism appealed to Oman because it offered a way of combining the insight of rationalism into the independence of the personality with the contribution of Schleiermacher, who saw the individual as a necessary but partial expression of the wonderful variety of the universe. For, to Ritschl, man was a free being aware of his absolute spiritual significance which he knew he must maintain before a world antagonistic to him. To Oman it seemed that the learning of this purpose hidden behind and within the world's antagonism, and glimpsed in man's awareness of his own worth, might be the substance of freedom and man's task as man. Accordingly, he traced the history of thought through the seventeenth,

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and showed how the freedom of the Christian man, rediscovered by the Reformation, had led first to an insistence upon the freedom of the individual, freedom to reject anything that did not appear to him worthy of loyalty. But this freedom became impoverished in that it resolved itself into a claim to reject anything that might enlarge the scope of independence and at the same time increase the sphere of responsibility. This poverty of thought and action caused the pendulum to swing, at last, in the direction of romanticism which rejected the idea that enrichment of experience could come only through the strenuous exercise of responsibility. The romantics felt themselves secure in the flowering process of an increasing development. They thus failed to give any account of freedom as independence, thinking of it in terms of fulfilment, and they thus reduced the individual's struggles, and, what was worse, his tragedies, to a necessary stage in the cosmic process.

Surveying these two movements, Oman noted:

We must carry back with us the historical sense of the nineteenth century - the sense of process, of development, of infinitely varied individuality, and then interpret everything by the authority of conscience and the significance of man as man... Freedom is not merely the fundamental, it is the exclusive basis of spiritual belief now left to us.

In the book THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM Oman had summed up his view of the problem before him, which he later came to call the problem of the individual and individuality. If man is called to stand upon his own feet and conquer the world by entry into its fullest meaning as that reveals itself only to his highest insights and deepest, yet most fleeting, intuitions,
he must also be able to rest in the assurance that the ultimate order of things is directed towards the eliciting and sustaining of this adventurous freedom; and that all lesser orders form, as it were, the scaffolding of that final order.

In the two books VISION AND AUTHORITY (1902) and THE CHURCH AND THE DIVINE ORDER (1911) we find Oman applying this conception of man's freedom to the specific problem which we saw was facing all theologians of that time, the question of the nature and scope of the Church's authority. If he masks, freedom is as he had conceived it, what place is there left for the merely external and ecclesiastical authority to which the Anglo-Catholics and fundamentalists would bid men return? Such a return would be, in his view, the reaction of cowardice in the face of the perplexities of the age, a lack of faith in God's power to lead his people into a new understanding of His ways. He therefore observes that "our differences do not concern the Church but the doctrines of God and of salvation upon which our views of the Church rest." Od3.

The Christian life is a joyful acceptance of the disciplines God appoints and the duty He demands, and the Christian society is that sphere in which the reconciling revelation of His purpose is accepted, and the full burden of bearing and forbearing with others, who may hold very different yet precious insights into truth, is consciously taken up. The Church, as such, can have in view only this work of reconciliation of man with man and of man to the purpose of God as that is grasped in each individual's situation. Once this is achieved, other causes of division can be left to take care of themselves.
But a Church with such an end in view must set aside all attempts at the coercion of conscience by truths imposed from without and simply accepted as lip-service and as a sort of assurance that all proper security measures have been taken. The Church and the Divine Order presents in an historical form, pointing out lapses to a lesser vision than that entertained by Christ Himself, the theme that is stated in more general terms in VISION AND AUTHORITY.

In GRACE AND PERSONALITY (1917), a work described by F.R. Tennant as "one of the major treasures of theological literature" (quoted HRxxix.), the relation of the "final order" of God's love to the individual is studied in more detail, and within the context of the traditional problem of grace and human freedom. This work lies, therefore, at the core of Oman's thought. The two primary factors to be taken into account and which we have noted already, are set out clearly - man's call to complete moral independence, and the reality from which that call comes and which assures him of an adequately supporting vision in the working out of his salvation. Grace is redefined as a gracious relationship present in every aspect of man's life, and trenchant criticism is forthcoming against other ideas of grace which "are much more determined by the idea of how an absolute force would act than by any notion of God as Father." GP12. By the revelation of God as Father in the Son, Jesus Christ, men discern the real attitude of God's mind towards them, which is, to use H.H. Farmer's phrase, "holy love" or "a consuming fire". Such a discernment is given not to moral attainment but to moral earnestness. Once

the poverty of our moral condition is grasped along with the implications of the love commandment, the grace of God at work in the discipline and duty of our everyday existence is appreciated and welcomed, because it is recognized as being concerned with nothing less than a fulfilled moral independence which never sees the end of its opportunity nor, indeed, ever wishes to see it. This reconciliation to God's purpose with us is directly related to the Cross, where

Above all else, we discern the gracious relation of our Father towards us, because there, as nowhere else, is the utter service of our brethren, unconditioned by our merit, shown to be the essential spirit of His family . . . the manifestation of what we may call an atoning order, understood by the sufferings of Christ and our partaking of them. GP208-9.

This atoning order, in which God waits till men are ready to receive in freedom and of their own choice the gifts that He has to offer, is the order of freedom because it works for and suffers on behalf of that of man, and bends all the forced of omnipotence to the task of enabling him to enter it of his own will. The only resource which God does not use is that of compulsion.

Upon this basis the later sections of GRACE AND PERSONALITY are concerned with the application of this personal view of grace to actual theological problems, to show how in various ways it is God's one concern to enable us to accept the burdens our freedom puts upon us, in the assurance that this can lead only to a far deeper participation in the profound meaning of existence.

Owen's work comes to a climax in his largest book, THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL (1931). The thesis of,
the whole is that man gains his freedom, and his consequent power to direct events according to purposes of his own, by means of religion. The book is, therefore, an attempt to work out a philosophy of religion, and to lay the foundations of theological study, from the central conception of freedom.

The work opens by clearing the ground of several questions: religion is shown to deal with a reality which cannot be dismissed as illusion; its sphere is defined as that in which objects, beliefs and customs are regarded as sacred; it is shown that the abuse of religion, so far from being an indication of its unreality, is one of the strongest proofs of its enormous significance; and a method for its study is laid down.

Throughout the rest of the book the argument runs as follows. The religious reality, the Supernatural, is known in the same way as all reality is known, that is, as meaning, which depends upon actual and active evaluation of environment by living contact with it. All knowledge is shown to be the outcome of free and sincere evaluation throughout the whole breadth of experience, and the importance of the concept of the individual frontier for the theory of knowledge is worked out in detail. On the basis of this approach to the nature of knowing all views of determinism are attacked, in both their scientific and their philosophical forms. When, finally, it has been demonstrated that loyalty to value sincerely apprehended is the way to all knowledge and so to purposeful action within the world, a classification of religions is suggested, based on the relation in which the supernatural reality is
conceived as related to the natural world. Everything depends upon whether the supernatural reality is felt, in a given religion, to embody a call to a more creative and victorious dealing with the world of concrete events, or whether it is used as an opportunity to avoid such dealing. On this basis religions are divided into Apocalyptic or Mystical. The highest religion, on this view, is that religion which offers the possibility of eliciting from the whole natural environment its deepest and most abiding meaning, and which, therefore, enables man to regard every experience as proceeding from that meaning. Prophetic monotheism is that religion, and in Jesus it finds culminating as a revelation of all events in their place in the Father's purpose, which is the creation of human freedom exercised in responsibility. In the creation of this freedom and in its maintenance religion has been of the first importance since, by the claim of sacred value, man has been checked in his concern with considerations of satisfaction and self-preservation, and has felt himself to be in a position of mastery over natural things, and called upon to exercise that mastery in dependence upon a reality greater than the natural.

In the following exposition of Oman's thought we will be for the most part dependent upon the last work mentioned, since it forms the most comprehensive and definitive exposition of his thought, and covers almost all the ground covered in his other works. The only noteworthy exception is GRACE AND PERSONALITY, to which, along with HONEST RELIGION (1941), sermonic and historical material, we will turn as we reach problems more strictly theological.
Chapter 3:
OMAN'S METHOD OF STUDY.

If the nature of religion is of the sort that Oman believes it to be, he holds that the method of study by which it is approached is of very great importance. It is the nature of the object which must be determinative of the nature of the method used in the study of it; and to begin with a faulty method can lead only to obscurity and misunderstanding.

When the object of study is a sphere in which religion and freedom are the limiting factors of all that occur within it, this principle is very much in need of emphasis. Neglect of the insight that the freedom which lies at the centre of religion creates special problems in method has been the cause of a notable inability of thinkers all down the ages to give that freedom its due place. As Dr Joad has pointed out, all the good arguments seem to lie on the side of determinism, while the last ditch held by the exponents of free will as a philosophical doctrine is that of our immediate knowledge.

And, Oman points out, such arguments are produced, on the whole, by thinkers interested mainly in the coherence of their own system, the unity of which is in great danger of disturbance by the fact of freedom. The difficulty here arises from the fact that to explain freedom, to give it a place within a system descriptive of reality, is to explain it away. Butler's principle, "everything is what it is and not another thing," has, Oman believes, been more often set aside in this matter

1. C.E.M. Joad, GUIDE TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF MOREL AND POLITICS, 3.
3. Preface to Butler's SERMONS, quoted p123.
than in most, and the creative, independent qualities of human personality have been overlooked or merged into accord with a system where their effects can be ascribed to some other causes. Perhaps the best-known attempt to systematise personality in this way is that made by the late nineteenth century's philosophical science. For the exponents of this outlook upon the world, the universe is a vast machine driven by the impact of forces in varying and differentiated patterns, and the human personality becomes nothing more than "a sort of earthly planet in an extremely elliptical yet calculable orbit". VA29.

Philosophers have been little more successful, and although many of them, especially Descartes and Kant, attempted to begin with the human personality, in the one case it became bound up in the deterministic nature of its own thought as an hypostatised mathematical logic, while in the other it was emptied of all the content of experience in relation to which freedom was exercised. Moralists, too, from the very nature of their specific interest, have tried to give freedom its due as the basis of an adequate understanding of man's world; but Utilitarianism found personality to be determined by pleasure and pain, while character itself is dissolved into a determining disposition in McTaggart's thought. Finally, many theologians, who attempt to understand the salvation of human personality by the grace of God, have been so concerned with asserting the sovereignty of that grace that they seem to have thought that this involves a denial of human freewill. In many theological systems, and not least that of Calvin, Oman receives the impression that man is saved in spite of himself, in which case the idea of salvation is emptied of all personal content.
Calvin found mystery and perplexity in life, but none in God; and so was able to fall back directly on God's sovereignty, with all things being so because God wills them to be so. Then God's whole mind and purpose can be put into definite statements and precise definitions with His plan of salvation mapped out in black, straight, unmistakable lines. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God; justification is a legal transaction, whereby these transgressions are legally condoned; sanctification is wrought out gradually afterwards, by Divine help, which, being thus isolated, can only be conceived mechanically.

Because of a danger thought to be inherent in the admission that man plays a determining part in his salvation, grace is reduced to "sheer unrelated underground explosion" GP55, while in reality nothing could be more concerned with the true independence of our moral nature, since the gracious God is intent on conferring upon us the glorious liberty of God's children.

This inability of systematic thought to do justice to freedom is the outcome of a faulty method which begins with some plan or principle and seeks to subsume all experience under it. A beginning is made, much as Descartes made it, with a "clear and distinct" idea which is taken to be the clue to all existence; but it is not kept in mind that our understanding of the nature of existence is not a clear and perspicuous premise from which we may begin. An adequate method must face the other way from the start, setting out not with our clear-cut plans of how the universe should function, but with an admission that the highest of our knowledge is at best an approximation, dependent always upon the teaching of experience in the light of which it has grown to be what it is.

How shall we ask? Is it to be in the old way of arguing down from the throne of God, of propounding what seems to us fitting ... or is it to be upward from the actual position we occupy here below?
This notion that we can begin with a sort of low common denominator of the universe and find all the variety of it to be mere combinations and permutations of one principle, is one that we shall find Oman combatting at many points throughout his thought. He traces it to Descartes. As the result of the turmoil in thought which followed the Reformation, and especially under the reactionary Jesuit understanding of the truth as that which serves ecclesiastical ends, many began to doubt whether there was any independent way by which a true conception of reality could be arrived at. Descartes, brought up in Jesuit schools and apparently struck by the futility of all that passed for knowledge, was equally struck by the undoubted successes which were being wrought by the mathematical method. Knowledge in that field seemed independent of all human passions, prejudices and interests, and carried its own conviction of truth in the most direct way possible. The Copernican view of the universe had swept all before it, and the age was moving swiftly towards Newton and the formulation of the laws of motion. Impressed by these factors, Descartes cast about him for some fact of experience upon which he might base his philosophical system, something with the clarity and distinctness of a mathematical equation. He found that there was one thing he could not doubt; that he thought. But instead of turning his attention to himself as the thinking subject, he looked instead at the content of his thought, and found there the idea of a perfect being,
a thought which could not have come either from his own mind or from sense experience. It must, therefore, have been placed there by that Being Himself. Once the existence of God was established by this form of the ontological argument, Descartes felt himself assured that the contents of sense experience could be trusted, since it could be no work of a perfect being to deceive him.

Thus the varied universe of experience seemed to have been demonstrated, not from experience of it, but from independent self-evident principles. But Descartes, Oman points out, overlooked the fact that the idea of God is not some static piece of mental furniture which can be inserted into the mind, but, like our knowledge of the character of a person, is the outcome of long and continuous dealing with the reality to which it refers. "... The real source of this idea of a Perfect Being is not an abstraction of the intellect, but our religious and moral ideals and aspirations." PF56 For Oman the importance of Descartes' method lies in the fact that "in all this we have the forerunner of the eighteenth century. We have here the demonstrative method and the purely argumentative atmosphere." PF56.

In the course of time the insistence upon "clear and distinct ideas" was debased to the working principle that nothing which was not completely obvious to the most debased intelligence could be admitted in a consideration of the truth of religion. Writing of the temper of thought during the Deist period, Oman remarks:
The society of the Coffee-houses ruled public opinion, and its sceptical wit tended to make speech freer than thought. If the Deist was usually too poor and despised himself to belong to it, yet, like the other writers of the time, he aspired to address it. The society which set the intellectual fashion of the time, may not have been either very large or very learned, but every man in it considered himself a judge of all ideas and expected to have them set before him in the speech of every day.

In its turn, freedom was reduced to a refusal to allow inspiration and experience to speak their own message, and by this approach Deism reduced God to a mere guarantor of the moral order, which was itself so withered and inoffensive an affair that it hardly needed any such office performed, since the greatest dullard could easily keep within the negatives propounded as the moral law.

But Oman finds two who took up the task of setting forth a wider view of things in the face of Cartesianism on the one hand and Deism on the other. These are Pascal and Butler. To them, at least, it remained clear that the varied content of experience, while it could not be separated from the human mind whose experience it was, was nevertheless no mere deduction from the first principles of the understanding itself, but had been dearly bought by the past in obedience to its highest loyalties to its most sacred experience. They saw clearly that one could not hope to "sell out all that men had acquired through long and varied experience, and purchase it back again with logical deductions". To Pascal the very idea of a certainty of a mathematical nature in things of religion was a relic of pure human pride, while to Butler the whole aim of all creation was to minister to us in a state of probation in which uncertainty and lack of complete knowledge
called forth trust in the deliverances of conscience. That religious and moral experience is a very tenuous thing upon which to hang all the issues of life all these men were well aware; but this was the very characteristic that gave that experience its place in the purpose of God with men.

There is clearness enough to enlighten the elect, and obscurity enough to humble them. There is obscurity enough to reject the blind, and clearness enough to condemn and render them without excuse. God would rather dispose the will than the intellect, and the perfect clearness which might serve the intellect would harm the will.

Such was Pascal's view of the matter, and Butler's was essentially the same. The general conduct of nature is "not to save us trouble or danger, but to make us capable of going through them, and to put it upon us to do so".

The poverty, then, of the rationalist attitude which grew out of the Cartesian temper lay in its inability to recognise that the idea of God is not simply a unit in a mental mathematics, an a priori concept, but is the growth of the centuries' long attempt on the part of the whole race to gain an adequate view of Him, a striving which is still very far from its completion. If Oman is right and it is in any sense true that "we win a true idea of God only as by it we have victory over the world", the long struggle of the ages to gain such a victory, and the subsequent enrichment of our idea of the meaning that lies behind the changing face of nature and events, are not lightly to be set aside in favour of some less costly method. Man has never had any idea of God of any real significance to him apart from a sincere dealing with all his experience in the light of the very highest ideals he has glimpsed.

1. Pascal, quoted PF60.
2. Butler, quoted PF127.
Not only has his ability to make his own the meaning of this experience been greatly increased in this way, but the actual content of his idea of God, the source of this meaning, has been marvellously enriched. And that the ideals in the light of which he has found his way to a more satisfying knowledge of the character of God are "clear and distinct ideas" is a belief that will not bear the weight of our own experience. It is never the things that are mathematically demonstrable that are worth struggling for; on the contrary, it has been those things which have seemed to possess, in Butler's phrase, a very low degree of probability, that must be ventured upon to prove their worth and truth.

In dealing, then, with religion and the nature of the freedom with which it is concerned, a method must be employed which does justice to this state of affairs. It must be one which is continually to experience in its wholeness, in its unity, in its full height, for its data, and it cannot be one which is content to be dictated to by preconceived notions of the extent of human knowledge or by some cosmological principle which may serve to increase our powers by omitting what seems to be irrelevant for its purpose. For it may be just those elements that are omitted by the most useful general principles that are most important for an understanding of what freedom itself actually means. Of course it is impossible for us not to take up a point of view in the matter of the study of religion, and some would regard the religious point of view taken up by religious thinkers as an immediate disqualification for the task in hand. Yet surely if,
as Whitehead¹ notes, it is mere provincialism to think that impartiality is possible, our duty is therefore not to take the lowest point of view but the highest, that which brings into its orbit the most truly and distinctively human experience.

Writing on theological method² Oman notes its relation to history in these terms:

Unlike science, it is not the uniformities of the past that interest it, but the new, the exceptional, the experience above our own. Thus it is with the past as prophecy, not as antiquarianism, the past as an enlargement of our experience, not as a substitute for it. ... Even the attitude of physical science is only a way of forgetting the things that are behind without losing their lesson for the things that are before. But it leaves out everything except the uniformities which we may hope to meet again, whereas a true theology leaves out nothing of the concrete varied world within the grasp of our finite minds, in the hope of seeing the things unseen manifested in the things which do appear.

Any method which begins with the object of discrediting religious claims without allowing them their full weight as they present their own witness to truth, prejudges the issue from the beginning.

If there are such things in the world as a freedom which reaches beyond itself, and values not yet realised, and a purpose which makes things as they are have their meaning beyond them, they cannot be dealt with by a method which looks exclusively to what is lower for a manifestation of the higher ... If there is a higher reality which is seeking to reveal itself through our whole experience in this present world, it requires us to reach out after our farthest vision and follow even the dimly discerned beckoning of its requirements, as they speak to us of what is beyond demonstration and only discerned in moments of deeper insight and higher consecration. N6109

Oman is convinced that such an approach is that which all religious thinkers of the profoundest kind have always used.

The "dimly discerned beckoning" upon which the going out has been ventured, has been the really creative factor in human experience.

¹ A.N. Whitehead, ADVENTURES OF IDEAS, p. 1.
Yet, says Oman, man has constantly been willing to yield to the temptation to look for some other prop than God Himself, Whose beckoning it is, for the assurance of the highest. Sometimes it has been the authority of a visible institution, sometimes the agreement of the many, sometimes the neat mechanism of a logical argument, sometimes an infallible book. But recourse to such supports is really a denial of the ability of truth to sustain itself in the face of enquiry, and to call forth faith sufficient for its purpose. Upon his own method Oman proceeds, holding fast to what he believes to be elements of our highest if inexplicable experience, and tries to discover what light these intuitions may shed upon what we have taken to be more certain and stable.
Chapter 4:

OMAN'S VIEW OF FREEDOM.

There can hardly be any question along what lines his main contribution has been, and will still continue to be... It is the holding together in a close-knit and indissoluble unity with one another on the one hand the self-authenticating nature of God's disclosure of Himself to the human spirit, so that it requires neither the proofs of the philosophers nor the patronage of secular moralists to establish its right to our utmost allegiance, and on the other the inviolable dignity of the human person as one called in freedom to know the truth, if he will, over the whole breadth of experience. There is always a tendency for these two things to fall apart...

With these words Professor Farmer sums up Oman's view of freedom. As is already becoming apparent, it is not what might be called a "one-sided" view, but, to use Oman's own words, is an attempt to preserve both the form and the substance of freedom. In this section of our study we must try to give a general indication of what Oman meant by both, and how he related them.

Oman finds the classical expression of what freedom is in the experience of the early Church of the liberating power of Jesus, and in the rediscovery of this in the essential features of the Reformation.

The splendour, the sacredness, the inviolability of the moral personality was not only Christ's discovery, but His creation. Upon that basis the order of freedom, love and service which Christ had founded stood secure, and our frequent failure since to maintain it is due less to the difficulty of the task than to the deficiency of our faith in the revelation upon which alone it can rest.

The constitutive factor of man's make-up which had, as it were, been struggling to the surface in all religion, and had managed to break the crust in the monotheism of the prophets, at last burst forth in its full vigour and came to flower in the Life,

Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in the lives of all who put their faith in Him. Jesus is the source of freedom, but not merely because He gave due place to independence of judgement on the most momentous issues. This He assuredly did give, but this "form" of freedom cannot exist apart from the world in which it is exercised. Because it had been able to glimpse in the distance the outline of that "world to come" which Jesus knew and claimed as reality, prophetic monotheism had already been able to exercise a dim foretaste of the freedom that He revealed and exercised in full.

Jesus gave men freedom because He revealed to them the true nature of the world in which they live, namely, that it is the world of the Father, His Father. This He did not by abstract teaching about the nature of God, but by the actual witness of His Life and Death as He "dealt in the most perfect way possible with the matter supplied by his environment during those few years of His earthly life in Palestine". He found in events and in people the ceaseless manifestation of the Father's wise dealing with His Son.

We must leave a fuller description of the nature of this revelation to its place in a later section. It is sufficient here to point out that Oman sees in its effects in the life of the early Church the great argument for its power to bring about a decisive change in man's view of his world. Man had, as it were, attained maturity, (expressed in the New Testament word "sonship"), and all their activities were based upon the conviction that they stood in the same relation to the Father as did

Jesus Himself, and learned to trace in the trials and opportunities of their lives the working of all things together for their good.

The Crucifixion transformed into the Resurrection taught that the last word of power is not human might but the Father's rule, so that we may be one with the Father even amid the hardest trials and the sternest duties.

Christians believed, therefore, that they were living in the power of the world to come.

Men believed that the power of the world to come was even now operative in the present world order, and in the last resort their faith was sustained, as all true faith must be sustained, precisely by finding help of God to live above and not by the present world order.

They interpreted the qualities of the age to come after the highest spiritual ideal they had glimpsed in Christ, and in their Jewish tradition as He shed light upon it. The result was that the world and life within it took on a new aspect, and life became one victorious experience in a way that it had never done before.

While Oman is interested in the form of the Early Church's faith, viz., that Christ is Lord, that the Church is His Body, he is quite clear the the vital question is the content of it. Everything depends upon the kind of person this Christ is, what manner of rule He exercises, what practical significance membership of His Body has for the believer.

So interested is he in the practical aspects of the Christian faith that it is at first surprising to find the review of THE CHURCH AND THE DIVINE ORDER in a learned journal headed "A Quietist Church". But this impression precisely reflects the two-sidedness of Oman's view of freedom, and is the impression

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inevitably given by those whose awareness of the sovereignty of God is so controlling that it completely lifts from the mind all sense of moral burden and sets it free in pursuit of the will of God without fear or favour. In this matter Oman felt himself to be standing in line with the great exponents of prevenient grace, Paul, Augustine, Calvin. In his view the righteousness of the early believers had become "a righteousness that God looks after". This consciousness set the early Christians free with regard to the ever-narrowing demands of a righteousness based on law, and enabled them to set before themselves an ever-expanding ideal of love.

... There is a haunting sense of utter trust in God and not in man which not only does not annihilate the moral personality, but is its supreme succour. The religious man always has ascribed, and found his whole peace and confidence in ascribing, all things to God.

Thus it was not the mere fact of God's sovereignty that set them free, but their new understanding of the nature of that rule. Since it was wholly concerned with righteousness, only the methods of righteousness could be of any final account within a world which lay under such a rule. The methods of Jesus they regarded as vindicated by the Resurrection, for this event did not mean that Christ had now changed His methods of understanding and patience and involvement in human shame for more direct ones of domination and authoritarianism which He could now exercise from God's right hand. We can discern here the Ritschlian contention that the heavenly exaltation of Christ must be understood in terms of the earthly life and what it revealed. In His earthly life and His dealings with men Jesus

did not teach a new vision of the world to His followers in any external way, but so lived in the reality of it that His life upheld His teaching and His teaching was an illumination of His life. Dr T.W. Manson, one of Oman's distinguished students, draws attention to the reticence with which Jesus used the name of His Father, a reticence which found its simple but sufficient reason in the fact that a relationship so profoundly personal could be accepted by others only in the most personal way, and this could not be furthered by mere verbal reiteration of theological facts. Jesus, Oman believes, relied entirely upon the integrity of His life and the inherent truth of His teaching to make their own impression, and to make it within a relationship which left the disciple free to remain blind to the truth, or to accept it of his own insight. He convinced by direct authority, but had no recourse to authorities. His only sharp invective is for those who would so corrupt the spiritual insight that a man's own awareness of the truth could play no part in his dealing with the highest issues. His one aim was by life and by parable to strike below such self-deception and give man such a glimpse of the world as He knew it and lived in it that they must make a free decision of their own for or against truth. The result could only be release from moral preoccupation and a glad acceptance of a destiny which, though hazardous, could be assured of a Father's dealing every step of the way.

The sense of release which the first Christians manifested was the outcome of a realisation that the kind of

dealing with men that they encountered in Christ and saw reflected in His faith in the Father was the ruling principle of the whole Creation, and as such could make sense of every experience they encountered. Freedom of Sonship, as they saw it in Jesus, was no light thing, and the discipline they must undergo may be long and strenuous, but could only promise the greater weight of glory.

In the essential features of the Reformation One found precisely the same view of the relation of the Christian to God and to the world.

God to Luther is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who can in no way be so dishonoured as by doubt of His infinite pardoning love, and salvation is deliverance from self-regarding fear into humble, patient, self-forgetful love of others, by spiritual victory over life's ills and direct access to God.

According to Luther's tract, 'Concerning the Christian's Freedom', union with Christ means a faith which knows all things to work together for good, so that we are made kings and priests over all external things, and a love sufficient by itself to regulate our conduct towards our neighbour without error and without restraint.

But the Reformers were not quite able to recapture the full significance of the New Testament view, and this they were prevented from doing by the nature of the historical situation in which they were placed. Both Luther and Calvin were deeply aware of the fact that they were beginning a new era of Church History, and the responsibility for the breaking up of the accepted forms of the Church weighed heavily upon them. Either they were right or they were terribly wrong, and on both of them the enormity of the sin of schism weighed heavily. In this historical form they glimpsed the vastness of the task that was put upon men by the gift of freedom.
should be called upon to find his own way through a world of terrible complexity, and that upon his shoulders should rest the whole responsibility for decisions of eternal significance—these reflections are enough to make any man look for stouter support than the fickleness of his own will. According to Oman, it was in the light of this necessity that the Reformers formulated their doctrine of the unfree will and cast their confessions into such binding forms, and although Oman does not agree that these were any solutions of the problem as it was set them, he holds that it shows a far profounder awareness of the significance of freedom than was exhibited by those who defended freewill.

What was great in Calvin was his belief that all trust in man is a broken reed and that there is no security save in God, but that, with this, nothing is impossible. ... What was wrong was not this faith, but the direct way in which it was realised and the finality of creed, as well as of organisation, which was expected from it. ... The value for the time is not difficult to see. Its simple and mechanical directness was an almost visible ark of the covenant: and if, instead of going before them, there had been a vision of all the doubt and division through which men would be led, would they ever have ventured on the long journey through the wilderness?  

Erasmus himself, who joined issue with Luther upon the matter, did not appreciate the issues at stake, and humanists and rationalists ever since have continued to whittle down the extent of man's responsibility to a proportion felt to be more easily manageable.

But true Christian freedom, to which the Reformers were loyal even in the mistaken aspects of their formulations, requires both sides of the coin. No one is more clear than Oman that all our destiny lies in the hand of God, but he denies that this fact can be brought into conflict with the fact of human freedom as a divine gift. Without the one the other is
completely meaningless, and yet the issue is not solved by allotting so much power to man and so much to God. Man's freedom is not exercised in the void, but in the world in which God is at work in every part, and that world is governed with fully realised human freedom as its goal. Men are free to act for what ends they will, but they are not free to regulate the consequences. These lie in the hands of God, and, in so far as men rebels against His consistent purpose as this is expressed in Christ and runs throughout the universe, he reaps the disciplinary consequences of his action. At no stage had man's freedom deprived God of His omnipotence, which finds the centre of its activity in His gracious purpose of Samskara for man, and the judgement and education which that involves.

As the Natural will only serve God's end, man, in so far as he seeks a contrary end, may turn it to the most appalling calamity. Yet, as man's highest good is God's end, the only true evil is diversion from it, and calamity, being designed to show the folly of such diversion, is within God's purpose of good.

Unless freedom is really expressed in man's dealing with ultimate issues which can have the most far-reaching consequences, it cannot be said to be true freedom. In some sense our loyalty or disloyalty to what we see to be the will of God must be an ultimate attitude in the nature of things, summing up as nothing else can the ultimate nature of the universe, physical, moral, spiritual. "The tremendous thing about right ... is that it lays us directly on the bosom of reality." PF399.

It is already clear, then, that in Oman's view, man's knowledge of his responsibility is the clearest indication of his real nature, namely, a being called to freedom. Oman
is so aware of man's responsibility as lying at the roots of
his nature, that he finds it one of the most profound, yet most
immediate, of man's experiences. In opening up the discussion
of the theory of knowledge by a consideration of the nature of
perception, he deals first with the poet, because such a man,
he believes, can tell us a great deal more about the fulness
of perception and insight than any psychologist, philosopher,
or physiologist whose views are hedged in by theory. He takes
Shakespeare (of whose works he was especially fond) as his
example and points out the very interesting preoccupation
he finds in Shakespeare with time as what Oman calls "a form
of the infinite". Oman is well aware that time, as
such, is not necessarily infinite, and claims that were there
no such thing as sacredness in man's experience, he would never
be found attributing infinity to any natural object. But
time does serve as a form under which man may represent to
himself the sacred aspect of his environment, a concretion,
so to speak, of the sacred which he cannot experience apart
from particulars. Within the infinite stretches of time man
is seen by the poet to be completely alone, isolated, yet his
significance increased to an absolute degree.

It is this quality of time, surrounding the spirit's loneliness,
which makes the glory and splendour of all he is aware of
and apprehends appear "such stuff as dreams are made on".
In all like Goethe, he feels himself so small, small great'.

Space plays the same part, Oman thinks, in Milton and Dante,
and man placed among the infinite reaches of heaven and hell
is given thereby infinite significance. Carlyle observed,
writing of the Puritans, "The 'Sense of difference between
Right and Wrong! had filled all Time and Space for man, and bodied itself forth into a Heaven and Hell for him. 1
These contents of man's experience point to the final significance of the human order, the order of freedom and of choice.

This aloneness of man in his freedom is further exemplified by Oman in the way in which he treats the experience of children, to which he is especially sensitive. Here again, he draws from the child's experience to exemplify the nature of perception, for he holds that the child has the same uninhibited way of looking upon the world as has the poet. The whole passage is particularly impressive. But we shall confine ourselves to a particularly interesting portion of it, which also has the merit of being good prose, prefacing it, however, with a similar passage from another work.

Under the childlike form of, 'Who was God's nurse? the question of the origin of things assails the child as forcibly as it could his elders in the most abstract expression of it by the metaphysician. Roused by a word or an incident, self-consciousness awakes. No slow process has accustomed him to the change. With awful suddenness, he realises that he too must go out alone upon the great stream of time, his own pilot through the storm and dark. Already he hears the booming of the dark and dangerous ocean of eternity... Forgetful and unsympathetic people may be able to think of childlikeness as freedom from speculation and satisfaction with authoritative instruction, but it is only because they have themselves lost the sense of mystery.

To the very long sight of one who constantly looked from horizon to horizon, the depth of the sky was overwhelmingly impressive, and was the first object I think ever to hold my attention immovably. It compelled me to think of travelling on and on for ever and ever without being any nearer the end. Thus though space was, as it were, the illustration, the real impressiveness was in time: and perhaps time is always what gives the impressive quality. Through this first came the idea that I was alone. 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

1. T. Carlyle, OLIVER CROMWELL, p.
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 water of the sound a path of sunshine carried my 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 they might conceal any difference in 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 arise up spontaneously from the form of our awareness. That is what gives them their extraordinarily intense character, quite different from our later days when, by understanding and explaining, we have reduced time and space from fascinations to formulas, and ourselves, in the midst of them, as bearers of the same impressive quality, to an argument about the existence of the soul. H 8136-7.

By considerations such as these Oman seeks to press home the reality of man's awareness of his independence and its significance. Until we see ourselves as alone, like Kant beneath the starry heavens, we will not be aware of the tremendous import of the moral law within, nor will we realise that our destiny really does hang upon the attitude we take up towards responsibility. And, once the idea of responsibility is grasped, a man's first duty is to enlarge his sense of it in practical matters.

Man's consciousness of his freedom and significance is, as we saw in the chapter on Oman's method, the datum with which the study of religion must begin. Yet theoretical considerations have not infrequently been allowed to obscure the fact that we have this freedom and significance. Attempts have been made and are still being made to show that men's action is continuous with some alien influence - perhaps the
universal chain of cause and effect is conceived as passing directly through the body, and our consciousness is relegated to a mere gauge of what is happening to us, accompanied by an illusory belief that we are doing it ourselves. Against any such naturalistic determinism Owen wages a continuous war, for we have already seen how heavy a weight upon the mind of his time these theories had proved. He points out that all theories of this sort that reduce experience and all its contents to a mere effect of reality as a cause, fail to take into account the fact that the reality that is supposed to bring about such an effect is itself known only by the experience of a mind working for ends and with freedom to pursue them.

The naturalistic theory regards the individual as continuous with a universal mechanical system of cause and effect. In mind this energy is transformed into knowing, somewhat as an electric bulb transforms into light which is seen, the current which, though it is not seen, is continuous with it in the wire. Thus the individual mind, though as a form within the world it is of some consequence, has no real frontier across which knowledge of the world can come only as meaning, but is continuous with physical energy, so that knowing is an effect of it as flame is of heat.

Plainly, then, naturalistic theory is based on a theory of the world we perceive, and not on any concrete study of how we perceive it. No one, from the consideration of his own knowing, would ever imagine that the world it knows is a mechanical arrangement of atoms, with merely quantitative motions and without all quality, and that knowledge of it is an effect of such a cause. The ground of the theory is not anything in the nature of awareness and apprehension, but is a structure by the understanding of a sub-microscopic world of this mechanical nature which science is supposed to have revealed, and which is taken to be more real than the world we perceive, or rather to be the sole reality of it. ...

But perception deals with the world just as meaning, and the dealing with it as measure and mechanism is a later work of the understanding, which itself depends on the meaning given in perception. Moreover, this meaning depends on an active valuing by the mind itself, and is not a mechanical effect of the object in respect of which the mind could only be passive.
Knowledge, Oman believes, is essentially apprehension of meaning, but meaning is impossible for a being without ends and values. Theoretical conceptions of reality are the outcome of an attempt to plumb the order of reality, so that appropriate means may be conceived and employed; and these theoretical considerations do not in practice interfere with the power to pursue these ends. On the contrary, they enhance this power. They cannot be thought to interfere in theory either. At no stage do we find the order of physical science, the order which we set out to know by the strictest mathematical method, coming into conflict with our actual freedom to pursue our purposes; indeed, we are convinced that, the more we can be sure of the world's order and rigidity, the more we can be sure of imposing upon it the purposes we have in mind.

But it is just this order of apparently fixed necessity that seems to many to deny any element of freedom, and they see the world as a whirling mass of particles whose every complex movement is ultimately calculable. It is necessary to make clear that Oman in no way minimises this feature of physical reality, and he believes that he can go far beyond many of his contemporaries in recognising as well as solving the problem it poses.

It is matter for gratitude to find writers in our time, who insist on the necessity of giving a place in our consideration to all the elements involved. Yet our gratitude is moderated when we find that the only solution offered is to lump them all together... so that the universe comes to look like a bench of unruly boys who have to be kept very carefully in their places lest they push one another off into the void.
He sees clearly that physical science is committed to a view of things of which calculability is the nerve and sinew, and yet he sees just as clearly that this physical science only enlarges our freedom of action. It is not enough to say with James Ward that the universe is "mind as a going concern" (NS269) from which science abstracts recurrent events and calls them calculable and inflexible laws. For when a scientist finds an incalculable element he is bound to the view that the mistake is in his observation and experiment, and he never wavers from the belief that he can reduce it to calculation.

In order to maintain that reality is meaning and meaning is free, we do not need to deny that the symbolism of the meaning is of measurable, mathematical precision. If one type of mathematics is found not adequate, the scientist does not say that we must allow for pretty Penny's ways, but he confidently seeks another, and acknowledges any exactness as proving that he has not found it.

Oman sees the universe as an infinitely differentiated, yet unified, increasing purpose, a purpose into which each individual man may enter and in which he participates; but this purpose, this meaning of things requires an "exactly calculable frame of things" (NS252) for its expression to the independent minds which apprehend it and participate in it. When man gains sufficient knowledge of the frame, he is in a position to express his own purpose and meaning within the world.

We may attempt, by way of exposition, to exemplify this "symbolic" function of the world in two ways.

1) A violinist has in mind a melody which is rich in meaning for him, and which he wishes to communicate to others. From the thought in the musician's mind, this is

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1. This use of the word is borrowed, of course, from H.H. Farmer, THE WORLD AND GOD, p. 76, where he is greatly dependent upon Oman's own teaching.
translated into nervous impulses, sound vibrations, back again to nervous vibration and finally into its original meaning by another mind. The violinist may be utterly ignorant of the laws of sound and motion, but their rigid character is absolutely necessary for the communication of his meaning. A lapse in the reliability in the vibrational system, such as takes place at a crack or fault in a gramophone record, would break the smooth communication of meaning as intended by the violinist. Further, anyone who had no knowledge of the meaning which the music conveys would be able to make nothing of the equations in terms of sound waves by which it is theoretically possible to express, say, a violin sonata. These remain pure symbols apart from the meaning they express, and, merely as such, meaningless.

2) When I write a sentence such as I now write, I have a certain meaning to express to the reader. Now this can be done only if the symbols which I use, i.e., the letters and words, are of a sufficiently fixed and rigid nature. Unless they are, the meaning I wish to impart is lost. Suppose I were to write, "This is my own, my jumbley land", the intrusion of mere arbitrariness, a nonsense word, completely fogs the meaning of an otherwise intelligible line. Complete rigidity of symbol is, then, necessary for the expression of meaning. Thus, although HAMLET is a unity of meaning, and is expressed ultimately by twenty-six conventionalised symbols, to say that the symbols contain the play is nonsense.

(NS255) The usefulness and simplicity of the symbols, and the
possibility of their conveying the tragic meaning of \textsc{Hamlet} to us, is dependent upon the freedom of the agent who creates and uses them, and their meaningful order upon the unity of conception in \textsc{Shakespeare}'s mind. Apart from this meaning imparted and received they remain a collection of marks.

Thus Oman is ready to admit that a rigid system of vibration may make up the whole material world. (NS185.) But it is what it is because of the meaning that it serves to express, which must in turn be apprehended as meaning before it expresses anything. This it can do only for minds interested in free purpose and value for that purpose, which the rigidity in no way denies, but actually furthers. For Oman the world lies between man and God, bearing, as the Creation, the latter's meaning and purpose in infinitely varied physical, physiological and spiritual ways.

Fixity, so far from excluding meaning, is necessary for receiving meaning from environment and for imposing meaning on it. The reason why man seeks to get behind varied meaning to fixed symbolism is that he finds it reliable; and more especially, that, when he has found it so, he can make it express his own meaning. Yet the certainty with which science enables this to be done, neither determines what meaning we wish to express, nor does it limit or determine in any way the meaning the environment itself expresses through the symbols. \textit{NS255.}

A further type of determinism which occupied Oman's thought owes its origin to the theory of evolution. Oman agrees that a theory of evolution is a settled fact in modern knowledge; but quarrels with the forms in which it is presented, claiming that without the idea of freedom any idea of upward movement is nonsense. He holds that there is a very real meaning to the word "progress", and that there has indeed been
considerable progress within the history of mankind. If progress is to be measured by positive good, by a fuller awareness of a higher environment, and a possibility of a juster relation to it, and greater achievement in it, with a clearer call to adventure in the open, we can hardly question our advantage over the past] .... [the] test of progress [is] achievement, or still more ... recognition of higher possibilities.

But it is to be noted that progress is in the direction of greater opportunity, greater responsibility, and enlarged awareness of the meaning of our whole environment, and Oman is careful to make it clear that this does not mean that we are better than the past. On the contrary, just because our opportunity is greater, we can justly be accused of greater sin in neglecting it. But such a view of progress presupposes freedom as the element without which no idea of progress would be possible at all; for such enlargement of the world of consciousness is the result of free enterprise at the challenge of the possibilities which presented themselves in the past.

It is just this need for a standard of progress that evolutionary scientific philosophy has both assumed and denied. It assumes it because it presumes to judge between "higher" and "lower" forms, but denies it because it claims that this can be done on a basis of greater or less complexity. But complexity, Oman urges, remains mere complexity which is neither higher nor lower if it does not arise out of an attempt on the part of the organism to participate more fully in the richness of its environment. But, consonant with their Cartesian approach, scientists have persisted in the attempt to explain vital activity and development in terms of sheer chance variation,
an attempt which, Oman believes, has led them into mere mechanistic absurdity. Writing of Weissman's theory of genes, he remarks:

This theory has been described as only making a small photograph of the difficulties. It is not an explanation by positive knowledge of the germ, but merely a hypothesis about the enormous abstract possibilities of the infinitely small.

Once the relationship of complexity to meaning is grasped, (see the very interesting example and discussion of the complexity of the brain itself, NS186ff,) we can no longer conceive of life, even in its lowest forms, as merely a different manifestation of cause and effect, but must take seriously the rather obvious fact that it is forward-looking towards a world in which life is to be lived in ever increasing fulness. There is a radically different element at work when life comes on the scene, an element which gives even physical reality forms it would not have were not meaning and purpose the dominant factors in the universe.

When we consider whereto life grows, mechanical explanations do not even stave off the question of the relation of life to mind and purpose. While life may very well use more mechanical processes than we know, and almost certainly uses them more simply than we have yet discovered, no living creature is a machine. We may be longer than we thought in entering the territory in which life acts after its own peculiar, unified, purposeful manner, in response, not to the impact, but to the value of its environment; but when this is entered, it is precisely life which makes the dealing with environment not mechanical. And if life be thus developing towards mind and purpose, and if nothing can be known concerning it except from this its high achievement, is it not more rational and convincing to carry mind and purpose as far down as we can than to carry up mechanical explanations to the utmost limits of plausibility?

Yet another denial of the self-determining nature of life, and especially of human life, comes from more strictly philo-
Sophical quarters. In the view of some thinkers, individual existences are partial manifestations of the upward march of cosmic process, and sin and error are simply necessary stages upon the way to complete self-realisation. But Oman objects that such a view of human life, with all its tragedy and failure, sees it as a sort of puppet pageantry, "as ghastly as it is dull". The tragedy and calamitous failure of human existence are real and poignant elements within our world, and a satisfactory view of that world must be such as to find for it a goal of a stature sufficient for the gains in striving for it to outweigh the loss; one, indeed, for which we may count even our loss as gain. Since the misuse of freedom is the cause of much of such tragedy, and since lack of reconciliation to its purpose makes it seem meaningless, such freedom and reconciliation must themselves be the keys to its meaning, and provide its worth.

To correct our sins at the moment of their production and suffer them to have no evil consequences, so that we can never learn from the harvest how to sow, might be the end of all hope of realising true independence. We may then go further and see that, if this is to be a commonwealth of good, it might be universal good that all moral beings should live in an order affected by the iniquities of others as well as in one in which each is responsible for the effects of his own. But this means a place for the individual which no process of Reason can allow in its universe and continue to be wholly process.

The facts of history are harsh, but only a view which sees history as a story of the free acceptance or rejection of the true meaning of each situation and of all, can do these facts justice; and this meaning must be of a worth surpassing human understanding, "such as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive", yet of which he may glimpse the promise

1. 1 Cor 2:9.
even now in his present freedom and the dignity it confers. And because of these harsh facts of history, for Oman cosmic pantheism of any kind is to be rejected. It forgets the fact of freedom in its desire to show that its present attainments are necessary stages on the way to a fuller participation in the meaning of things, and, confident that man is carried along in the movement of a benevolent development, it assures us blandly that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. This is, in Oman's view, really the hollowest assurance that could possibly be offered to a humanity which knows only too well the reality of its own struggles and the depths of its tragedies.

We may regard pain and struggle as a necessity for achieving good, and the possibility of moral evil as a necessary condition for choosing good in a way that makes it moral, if, for the true worth of the universe, the moral individual must be self-governing, with an independence which must be won and cannot simply be given. ... While we can understand why there is pain in striving and remorse for sin if the purpose of the individual is a real agent in the process, no explanation of it as of necessary process of which the individual is only a vehicle, can make this other than a useless callousness and cruelty. ... Evil, whether physical or moral, can only be regarded as unreal by putting all earthly things into the same category: and then there is no environment which either challenges or rewards our enterprise, and God is a mere empty name for abstract unity. NS295,6,7.

It must not be assumed, however, that the beliefs which underlie these deterministic systems are not themselves important apprehensions of aspects of the truth. As we have seen, the idea that all material reality is calculable mathematically is a very important and useful principle, provided we do not forget that mere calculation itself cannot give meaning. Pantheism deals with the very important truth that freedom is not exercised
in the void, but must grow and expand into a world of deepening
colour, variety and interest; its difficulty lies in forgetting
that such a movement is worse than meaningless if it is only
inevitable. Unless insight into truth is won by a personality
for whom it is of first importance, it is merely an agglomeration
of facts, and not a unity of insight. But even freedom itself
has, when regarded as the only reality, produced its own kind
of determinism, which Oman calls the "cosmological law of
action and award". NS221-6

The hypothesis of action and award was that all acts are acts
of freedom up to the time when actually done, and then they
are awarded the exact equivalent of their merit. NS221.

That men should receive due satisfaction for their
labour and due punishment for their iniquities seems to us a
fairly clear principle, but Oman points out that this is because
it has been worked into our law, our philosophy and our religion
to such an extent that we now take it for granted. But it
could not be so taken in the sixth century B.C., when it was
first formulated, since in those days men were very much in
need of a faith to sustain them in what must often have appeared
to be very unfruitful labours. In those days civilisations
were in the building, and their fruits were far from certain.

As action and award, and not as labour and work done, men made
the formulation which sustained him in face of endless delay,
disappointment and discouragement, and which enabled not only
individuals but whole communities to possess their souls in
patient application. This was a moral principle, based on
an idea of justice and held, not by faith in a natural order
in which good effects follow good works, but by faith in a
supernatural order in which due awards follow the responsibility
of free actions.
In the first place it must have been quite a material assurance, but as it became clearer that the good man suffers and the evil enjoys life, the principle became more spiritualised until it came to mean that the deep intents of the heart receive their due reward, a quiet conscience or an uneasy spirit.

The fact upon which the principle is based, viz., the fact that we are free to act for the achievement of ends not yet realised, is not to be disputed. But when a cosmology is based upon it, and all states of human existence are regarded as the outcome and merits of some act or acts, it means the end of the freedom it begins with. The very success it gained by concentrating attention upon diligence and singleness of purpose in the assurance of some future justification led to its being regarded as a sufficient explanation of all human states, so that Greeks, Buddhists, and men of Old Testament Israel all felt it enough to say of their present difficulties "the fathers have eaten sour grapes". Their lot was divinely decreed as the merit of past acts, and nothing could alter it. So, a belief in freedom itself, when it is not sustained by a conception of a universe larger than its own achievements, ends in slavery.

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.

We have now reached a point at which it should be clear that, in man's view, a full-orbed understanding of freedom requires two

1. Ezek. 16:2.
things: 1) independence to act as we wish, in accord with aims which we set before us, and, 2) a universe in which we act, but whose meaning is larger than and may not correspond with the goals we set up for ourselves, but, when it does, we enter more deeply into the secrets of our world and become more at home within it, sharing its purpose and being enriched by its very depth. Freedom thus understood is the ability to choose or to refuse entry upon this wider meaning, the ability to bring our aims and ideals into congruity with the meaning of things. At the point of choice, if it can be called a point, since it is a continuous element in the individual's life, he is utterly alone; and the fact that he does have to live in such a realm where absolutes are decided is the most significant thing about him, the deciding factor for men and cultures.

In all of the foregoing it has become apparent that such words as "aims", "ideals", "meaning", "purpose", are key words in Oman's vocabulary, and have a very direct bearing upon his understanding of man's relation to his world, his knowledge of his environment and his bearing amid the vagaries of existence. Man's freedom has, it appears, two aspects: he must stand alone before the great issues of life, and yet he can do so only because the whole power and reality of heaven and earth are bent to give him such independence, and to support and guide him into wider uses of it. This is, as we shall see, ultimately the grace of God. But if Dr Farmer correctly describes the situation as Oman sees it, in which the human person is one "called in freedom to know the truth, if he will, over the whole breadth of experience", we must turn our attention more closely to Oman's account of experience. What is the relation of "ideals"
and "meaning" to man's experience of his environment? We must now turn to a sketch of Oman's theory of knowledge.
Chapter 6:
OMAN'S EPISODES.

Oman devotes almost a quarter of the space in his largest and most important work to problems of epistemology, so that it is quite clear that this is no mere nod in the direction of philosophical interests, but is meant to play an integral part in his approach to the study of religion. We shall, therefore, turn to a consideration of the issues he raises before we enter upon his understanding of the nature of religion itself.

First we may ask ourselves why Oman is interested in theory of knowledge at all. But the reasons are not far to seek. The first is suggested when we recall the historical situation in which he stood. Oman speaks much of "the Supernatural", a reality which manifests absolute values; but the current thought of his time was such as to call in question any idea of such a reality, or, if it did admit the possibility of its existence, was doubtful about the possibility of our knowledge of it. Herbert Spencer found a place for religion merely as that which speaks of and deals with the unknown, that which lies beyond the territory which has not as yet come under the domain of science. In terms of the questions of his times, then, the onus is on Oman to show how, supposing a Supernatural does exist, we come to knowledge of it with senses that seem so wholly given to dealing with the palpable material world. Does it not often appear that the best that we may hope for is to construct as watertight an argument as possible from the material world we do know to that ethereal one of which we are by no means so sure, and be content with that? It is all
very well to assert that by means of ideal values, intimations of vaster reaches of our world are presented to us, but it is quite another thing to make such a belief consonant with the apparently assured realities of which modern thought tells us.

This is one of the contemporary difficulties which Oman wishes to solve by bringing forward an account of knowledge itself. He wishes to show that, so far from its being an inference from the material world of whose existence we seem so certain, the reality which ideal values manifest makes its own kind of testimony to us, one which is not quite so completely unlike that which material reality makes as is sometimes assumed, and which is not to be divorced from the knowledge of even that aspect of reality. He wishes to show that in practice we all assume the validity of its testimony, even when we deny its existence, and we do use it as the creative factor in all our dealings with the world. And, further, he wishes to make it clear that unless we live rightly in relation to this supernatural environment, and put it to use in our everyday doings, we ultimately lose control over, and the sense of the significance of, the very material world itself.

A second reason for presenting epistemological considerations is this: our epistemology follows from our understanding of the nature of ultimate reality. The nature of ultimate reality may seem to be the concern only of the philosophical classroom, remote from life. But "belief is not what we affirm but what we are prepared to act on," (NS236,) and in this sense we all have a certain belief about the final constitution of things, and we act upon it in such a way that our
actions are often a better guide to our actual faith than are our words. Many an unbeliever has been better than his creed, because, whatever his opinions may be, he still believes that kindness, understanding and other such moral qualities really are of some importance, some considerable and central value, in the whole meaning of things.

But Oman is not content merely with making this observation, for he claims that our active belief, our real faith, must find expression in our theories, a place in our most real and sincere thinking. If it does not, other less worthy views will claim the field by default, and our practical faith will degenerate into a mere pious wish held in the face of a world that we have deprived of the power to teach us any right lesson. This, as a matter of fact, was just as the contemporary situation appeared to men of Oman's time, for the outlook of science seemed to turn the world into a meaningless mass of molecules, and left no place, and certainly no determinative place, for higher flights of the spirit.

Defective theory justifies... limited interest, and so impoverishes experience. People can be so self-enclosed by theory, that they cannot see, any more than they can think, outside of it.

A merely philosophical theory, although it may seem quite an innocuous thing in the classroom, can have the most devastating consequences upon our ability to allow experience to teach us the truth about our world. Very few of the exponents of a pure materialism have acted as though they believed themselves to be merely an accidental collection of atoms in motion. But,
sooner or later, a theory of the world that is taken to be a full and adequate picture of that world must begin to dictate our action and contribute to our idea of what we think worth living for. Oman believes that the Western way of life is too deeply imbued with Christian activism for this to take place on a thorough-going scale, but holds that it has taken place in the East. (NS416n.) But he is very much alive to this constant danger of inadequate theory, and his theory of knowledge is an attempt to combat that danger.

As soon as we start to explain anything, it is difficult for our limited minds not to substitute what is easy to understand for the fulness of experience; and theories of perception, it must be admitted, are often the merest dry bones of what we know by perceiving... It is not explained, but reduced to explanations, till it seems that we have discovered the trick of the whole contrivance, with the result of making the universe appear to be a very cheap and soulless affair. NS147.

Thirdly, a theory of knowledge as indicative of the reality that is known is necessary not merely for the negative, protective reason given above, but also for the positive reason that it is itself a positive witness to that reality. Oman maintains that this is evidently the function performed by the respective epistemologies of Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel. He remarks, with regard to this matter, on,

.... the close affinity between views of religion and theories of knowing, because both are determined by what is regarded as the essential contact with reality, which again is determined by what we take the essential nature of reality to be. 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.
Modern scientific philosophy begins with an idea of reality as what Oman describes as matter in motion, and the difficulty then, for epistemology, is to discover how this chaos is built up into a unity of meaning in the knowing mind, a unity that is not a mere reading into the reality so conceived what cannot possibly be there. The construction, for such a view of reality, of a world of physical objects is difficult enough, so that it is not surprising that scientific empiricism has not essayed the task of finding a place for such unlikely factors as goodness, truth and beauty. It fears that most of the contents of our consciousness are merely comforting illusion.

But the right way to put forward a theory of knowledge, as we have already seen in our section on Oman's method, is to begin with the contents of consciousness in their fulness and unity, with all and especially with the highest elements, and ask ourselves how such a reality as we undoubtedly do know manifests itself through the material and sensible world. If we frankly begin with the world as we know it, and build up our theory of knowledge as a witness to that reality, it will come nearer to being adequate.

This brings us, then, to the main plank of Oman's attempt to discuss epistemology. For him, the highest and most characteristically human elements in consciousness are judgements of value, the contents of the moral consciousness understood to include not merely ethical judgements, but also aesthetic and rational values. And value judgement is a possibility only for a free and purposeful individual.
All knowledge, he claims, comes by way of value judgement by the purposeful individual in search of a wider environment in which to live a fuller life. For man, these value judgements take on an absolute and ultimate character, and only by a right relation to them and a courageous attempt to live in their power, does he come to a full knowledge even of his natural environment. The absolute values are the points at which man has dealings with the Supernatural.

But the idea of value and the idea of freedom are indissolubly linked. Oman's objection to both evolutionism as currently expounded and to the cosmic pantheism of Spinoza, Leibnitz, Hegel or a McTaggart at this point is that they do not recognise this simple fact. For evolutionism, developing complexity is a brute fact, brought about by the haphazard mutations of simple forms, while for the advocates of a cosmic reason the individual is understood as an expression of the onward march of the Absolute, produced like a flower on a tree. But the road to richer existence is by no means as easy as this, and values are not possessed except by sincere individual insight and judgement.

Not only is organism a stage in the unfolding of the meaning of the universe, not to be understood except in its own place in the whole story, but the most characteristic aspect of this unfolding of meaning has to do with the individual life, which works with its own meaning, and advances by making a clearer distinction between itself and its environment, as well as by wider and more intimate interaction.

But the real problem of freedom is not that by becoming products of a higher environment we win independence of a lower. It is still more, how we win independence in the higher. Even if necessity were wrought from within to the extent of making us wholly independent in ourselves, it would still be only the appearance of independence. The reality would be determined place in the system. ... Freedom is not
Mere emancipation from the outward dominion of the Natural. It is also by our own choice and determination, our own responsibility, which may be for evil as well as good, in face of the Supernatural.

Here, then, is Oman's root reason for interest in epistemological problems. All knowledge is, he believes, fundamentally interpretation of the meaning of existence for the individual, and grows out of such value judgements. Here the influence of Ritsehl's theory of knowledge upon Oman is apparent, and we may record the comments he makes on Ritsehl's theory in the course of discussion of it in THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM.

His tangled exposition justifies any misunderstanding, but if we ignore details and regard only the general conception, it is not without glimmerings of reason. Would the world be anything more than a series of sensations of a more or less orderly kind to any creature, however intellectually endowed, that merely obeyed its impulses and had no power of reacting on the world according to a deliberate purpose?

Worth does not mean ... what I value according to my fancy, but what I value according to real spiritual significance for me, and therefore according to real spiritual significance for God, in whose image I am made. Thus it is a judgment of worth regarding the real meaning of things, and not merely for the vagaries of the individual.

"Would the world be anything more than a series of sensations ...?" This is precisely the problem of empiricist epistemology, and Oman attempts to show that the problem arises because it has grown out of an attempt to understand knowledge by beginning at the wrong point.

We have already noted how Oman considers all theories of knowledge to be dependent upon particular views of the nature of ultimate reality, as attempts to show how we come to know a world of a given kind.
of his own view he says, as it were, let us admit this frankly, and ask ourselves at the outset what kind of a world we actually know. Indeed, we should not ask merely ourselves, for we are thinkers who may be interested in justifying some theological or philosophical theory of the world. We should try instead to appreciate the knowledge of someone who sees the world very clearly and very profoundly, and to his view we should adjust our theory of knowledge.

We must try to realise how the world looks to a supreme seer and how he sets to work in the seeing of it. From this we are more likely to understand even the most rudimentary perception, because we cannot see what is in any beginning except by what comes out of it. And there is the still more important question of the nature of the environment we perceive. This we must be nearer coming within sight of by dealing with the world of concrete realities of infinitely varied interest and value of the poet, than with even the best and truest abstract cosmological principle of the philosopher. NS124-5.

Now, as we have seen, such a way of approaching the problem is fully in accord with Oman's own method. Aware from the beginning that "what we may call the minimal attitude of mind never reached any great truth in any department"; (NS168) we begin with the fullest development we know of, and trace our steps back from there to lower forms. We do not limit our world to that known by lower intelligences, say that of the caterpillar, as a standard. Neither should we take the world as it appears even to the most "normal" human being and try to explain the insight of the prophet as an unwarrantable aberration from it. Rather we should take the seer as a guide to what the real world is like, and try to see it as he does, interpreting our world by his.
Yet, the "minimal attitude" has been that of most theories of knowledge. They have started from what is taken to be a lowest-common-denominator world, and have concluded that all the rest is an importation of the imagination. Such was Locke's view - the primary qualities, which were based in the demonstrable, measurable, universal aspect of things, were objective, while the secondary qualities, which seemed so much at the mercy of human individuality and taste for their discernment, were thought to be subjective. For Hume the world was a mass of sense, whose customary recurrences led the mind into an expectation of law. And the modern man, under the influence of science, thinks of ultimate reality as a bare collection of atoms somehow clothed upon with colour, form and life by the senses and the mind. The world that poets and children see is regarded with special suspicion, for they are "of imagination all compact."

But it is precisely this view of things that Oman and many of his contemporaries are concerned to attack. Who, he asks, knows the world and the objects in it better - the poet and the child, who are so concerned with taking it all in, in its breathtaking wonder and variety? Or the scientist and the philosopher, or even the busy adult human being, whose 
... eyes are most turned to the backs of their heads, looking for understandings and explanations, and who, even when they do look at their environment, are most in danger of seeing it only with the eyes of their judgements and their theories? N8125.

To begin with the fullest and purest perception rather

1. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, Act V. Sc. 1.
than with explanations and theories also follows from Oman's view of the natural world itself, with which we come into contact in sense perception. For it is not a dull materiality wholly apart from and alien to supernatural reality, which must somehow be attached to it as an afterthought. We do not retreat into our own thought and emotion for our knowledge of the life of the spirit. On the contrary, the natural world is wholly and solely what it is because its true meaning lies beyond it, is given it by the supernatural, and it in turn acts as the symbol by which the supernatural communicates itself. Even in the lowest contact with the natural world, there is more present than mere impact with a force, but there is a sense also of "something far more deeply interfused." For aught we know the whole physical medium may be nothing but vibrations or forms of motion. So far as present knowledge goes, this seems to be an adequate explanation of what carries sound. But the more the physical vehicle is reduced to this simple mechanical form, the more certain it must be that the purely mechanical aspect is not itself the whole reality. The true significance must be from a system of meaning, within which vibrations are symbols of a reality which is also a system of meaning. 

That the truth of this does not come home to us immediately is due to the fact that we are much more intent, in adult life, in managing the world and working out our own purposes within it, than upon continuing the state of pure perception that is ours in youth. Oman points out how vivid the memories of that time remain, and we may also note how they recur in old age, when the activity of meditation upon the meaning of things is often taken up again with leisure and riper

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1. One of Oman's favourite quotations, from Wordsworth's \emph{Excursion}, discussed MG138ff.
This particular section of Oman’s work has the effect of making us realise how little pure perceiving we do allow ourselves. For him, perception in this full and receptive sense is the only way to knowledge; all the rest is mere cataloguing and simplifying and abstracting for practical tasks, and deals with what we have already gained in perception itself. Even now in our simplest perceptions there are strata of interpretation and understanding which are no less effective because we take them for granted. By treating the purest kind of perception these can be laid bare and our dependence upon them shown. In doing this we also have a glimpse of the world that the “secr” knows, and this is of primary importance, for if his and not ours is the true world, it is yet true that the world we know is a partial and less adequate view of the world as he sees it, and we can come to a better understanding of the world of our consciousness and of that of lower creatures by enquiring of it as it is known by those who “see life steadily and see it whole”.

If it is a world in which the Natural mirrors the Supernatural, the perception of the lowest creature is a very different business from what it would be if its environment were merely a world of hurtling physical impacts. And, even for the highest perception, what may be important may also be far beyond our perceiving. All we can do is to be awake to the largest possibilities of the dependence of knowledge upon the nature of ultimate reality.

It is Oman’s belief that a higher way of perceiving reveals a higher world to be perceived, and that this is attained by pushing forward the frontiers of such perception as has already been attained. With this in mind he selects the world as it

1. NS120-143.
is perceived by the poet and the child, and examines it at some length in the passage we have already noted. (NS120ff.)

Here he distinguishes four kinds of knowing - awareness, apprehension, comprehension, explanation. The first two are directly perceptual, being in direct contact with environment over its whole surface, so to speak. Awareness is of environment in its wholeness and unity, apprehension picking out individual objects by interest and attention, yet never removing them from their place in the whole world of awareness. The last two kinds of knowing are concerned with understanding the environment already perceived, comprehension being concerned with how a thing fulfills its particular purpose, and explanation with reducing this comprehension to some abstract principle applicable to all objects of that sort. Now it is clear that in this view the only way to knowledge is by awareness and apprehension, for it is by them that the mind actually takes in what exists in the world, and provides grist for the mill of understanding and explanation. We cannot comprehend an object until we have apprehended what it is in respect to our whole field of awareness; we cannot understand the purpose of a thing apart from its place in the world in which that purpose is being served. So we do not first perceive discrete objects and then build them up into a world, but we perceive objects which take their own place in the whole world in which they are perceived.

Actual perception of the world and what is in it must, then, come first, and Oman turns to the poet and child because
in them the mind is wholly given to this task. Since neither of them is particularly interested in "getting on" in the world, both of them being rather inept in this sphere, they are concerned only with seeing and knowing the world in which they live. Oman thinks Shakespeare could not have been both a great poet and a great statesman or scientist, since the interests of the latter would trespass upon the need for objectivity required by the former. The child does not need to worry about practical matters, since these are taken care of for him, and so his mind is set free to take in the world about him.

Both poet and child are found to have an acute sense of the individual nature of things. Shakespeare is, of course, famous for the living uniqueness of his characters, but the child also, by the same instincts, is overcome with wonder at each thing's individuality. Writing of his own perception as a child, Oman notes, "That to their owner a flock was only sheep, which he did not know one from another, seemed to show an incredible blindness." (NS133.) But this is because both the child and the poet see these individuals taking their place within one world, within the unity of time and space, which sheds an almost infinite value upon them. "The individual quality of everything gains by being thus held together in one field of awareness". (NS129.) No object is merely discrete; it forms part of a whole world, yet its individual nature, what it is over against other things, is only heightened by being so perceived.

The ground of such profound perception of the essential
nature of individual things is found in the aesthetic objectivity of this type of perception. Emotion, feeling, as we shall see, is here turned from being a mere private stirring in the breast to the task of giving information about the object which stirs it. The object as an objective reality and the individual reaction to it are never distinguished. A child, although he obviously feels very strong emotion, never concludes that it is merely a pleasant or painful feeling within him (although it certainly is that) but always makes, on the basis of it, a judgement about the person or situation which arouses the feeling, assuming that this judgement has objective validity and is a real characterisation of the object.

The notion that the perceived is not just the perception of the perceiver, and that subject and object are merely poles in one experience never arose out of perception, but is a purely sophisticated introduction. The result is a profoundly individual, rich and objective knowledge of the world, which is concerned not with the mere existence of objects, but with their significance in themselves. And this is not lessened because such knowledge of their significance is gained by active evaluation on the part of the perceiver in his feelings, for it is taken for granted that the feelings of the perceiver are the appropriate reaction to the object. The meaning it has for the individual, and which is expressed in his feelings towards it, is also the actual meaning it has in itself and in the world.

Oman also makes it clear that the profound knowledge which Shakespeare has of the significance of men and things is itself dependent upon his having a right scale of values.
Any great poet might serve our purpose, even the austerest of them, such as Dante or Milton, being in a very high degree sensuous. But sensuous is not sensual. Sensuous means masters of keen senses, great perceivers; sensual means slaves of sense, prisoners in the cell of subjective sensations. Sensuous means an alert, interested aesthetic objectivity; and this every great poet has. Sensuality, on the contrary, which turns sensation into channels of subjective gratification, blunts and ultimately destroys fineness of perception: and with this no one can be truly great in any way, and least of all as a poet.

Purity is the discriminating power which, with continual living sensitiiveness, like the eyelids, protects without obscuring the spiritual vision. When no distinction is made in life, no choice of right and repudiation of wrong, but all experience is accepted as of equal value, the result is not, as many contend, the only just and comprehensive view of life.

Lust and sensuality are present in Shakespeare's works as they are in the world, and they are nowhere more realistically set forth, yet never with any suggestion that they are desirable in themselves. They are presented simply and faithfully as what they are, with the dispassion of genius. Shakespeare sees them rightly because he values them rightly, and right valuation simply means placing them in their right position in one meaningful world which contains both tragedy and heroism, degradation and purity.

Throughout all this, Oman is asking us to decide whether Shakespeare sees the world as it really is, or whether the "minimal attitude of mind" is the right one.

The question is whether this is the most adequate way of perceiving, and the true world to be perceived. Is the poet merely a phanastic dreamer, or is he the supreme seer? Is his world the concrete reality for us all, had we eyes to see it, or is it mere vain imaginations?

Is knowledge merely a search for information, or is it a search for the true meaning of all experience with which we come into contact? Is not the really searching question the child's
eternal "why?" which grows into Shakespeare's profound awareness of the significance of men and things? That a thing exists simpliciter is a matter of very secondary import compared with such perception as this. We can, if we wish, separate in our thought the existence of a thing from its significance, but we can be fully aware of the former without its being of the slightest interest to us. It is not hard to see which kind of knowing (if we do separate them, and it may be impossible to do even this, considering the part a theoretical interest plays even in the attempt to consider a thing merely in its existence) goes more deeply into the matter of knowing what a thing is. According to Oman, knowledge of a thing's meaning sees the part it takes in a unity of meaning, while knowledge of existence does not really tell us anything. Yet it has been the attempt to arrive at the latter kind of knowledge alone that has concerned the philosophical classroom in its attempt to demonstrate the existence of tables and chairs in abstraction from the way we deal with them in our whole approach to our world; and this, Oman would argue, is just the reason for the barrenness of its discussion of perception. To know why a thing is what it is, is a far more fundamental knowledge of its reality than merely to know that it is, and carries the latter knowledge with it. The former is, indeed, the presupposition of the latter. This knowledge of significance is, in fact, the essence of all knowledge.

It must not be thought, of course, that Oman's account of sensation and perception are in any sense an attempt to prove
the view of the world as it is seen by the pure perception of
the poet and the child. It is either accepted as the real
world or it is not, and no observations upon the nature of per-
ception can make that more or less credible. This follows
from Oman's belief that theories of knowledge are really only
afterthoughts to show how we know a world of a given nature.
But, given the world of the poet, the question now is to see
what account of perception is capable of showing us that we
do, indeed, know such a world.
The possibility of accounting for the kind of knowing, and
more particularly, the kind of perception we actually have,
is a very important test of a view of the world. NS148.

Since knowledge understood as right appreciation of
the significance of things depends upon how things are valued,
Oman divides all judgements that men make about their environ-
ment into value- and theoretical-judgements. Only as man's
value-judgements actually correspond with the nature of reality
does that reality respond in such a way as to be a satisfying
human environment. Value-judgements are therefore judgements
of reality. But they are also the basis of the other kind
of judgements, the theoretical, for
No kind of judgement ever was, except from knowledge which
derived its meaning from value, nor would man ever take the
trouble to form any other kind of judgement except for value
already determined. NS203.

Until a man evaluates his fellows in an absolute way he is
quite unable to realise their significance as persons - indeed
he does not know them as persons - nor does he begin to think
about ways in which their personal life might be helped or
forwarded, or give time to the theoretical consideration of
what kind of reality personal reality might be. Again, apart from a previous value judgement of great practical significance about the importance of atomic energy, the scientific knowledge of the properties of uranium would never have become as detailed as how they are.

Much of our theoretical knowledge is quantitative in character, but ultimately it all depends upon a prior dealing with our environment as quality, and itself contributes to our qualitative commerce with reality. In our perception of the size of a man, as he recedes he grows smaller, relative to our whole field of vision. But this phenomenon we are never interested in as quantity, for we never think of that as really changing (the man does not actually grow smaller) but we see it all as part of what we mean by a man moving away. Oman also instances space and time which, he maintains, are fixed contents of our perceptions, but we do not perceive them as fixed quantities. Rather we perceive all other things in them in such a way that space reflects the fact that all events are part of one universe, and time that their meaning is continuous through change. The mathematical, quantitative, conception of space and time is a conceptual simplification for practical purposes, but we never perceive space or experience time in a mathematical form.

Because perception is interested only in the significance of environment, and only indirectly in the signs by which that significance is manifested, Oman believes that our best analogy for it is language, which he regards as a further development

1. NS180-4
2. VA90-1, NS170.
of the essential methods of perception itself. He quotes Bishop Butler in this connection, for he spoke of perception as "divine visual language". By means of the world God communicates to us His meaning. Language works with symbols, but goes behind them to the meaning which makes them what they are. Perception, too, works with symbols, and is interested in them only as they can be interpreted to yield the true meaning of environment. At the simplest level, that of perception of physical objects, vibrations of all kinds in the physical medium are the symbols which mind attempts to interpret, but these never come into consciousness because they are immediately interpreted to give information about the actual nature of reality as it is significant for the individual, and it is the meaning of the symbols of which the individual is conscious. "Violet is the reality, and not, except as the symbol of it, a very high rate of vibration." (NS190).

Sensations, sensations, are not simply passive effects of certain arrangements of these vibrations, but are themselves interpretations, the outcome of a complex system of psycho-physical adaption in the course of evolution.

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 knowledge is not knowledge as the effect of an external cause, but is knowledge as we so interpret that our meaning is the actual meaning of our environment. NS175.

All our senses, and the sense of colour in particular, raise the question whether the physical medium does not establish a more direct relation of understanding, somewhat as speech may establish a direct connexion with another mind, so that the knowledge of that mind becomes the interpreter of what is said. This may be the truth of the new Realism; and though we can hardly hope to establish it, it is a possibility not to be ruled out. NS191.
Because of this, sensations are the real order of things, and not the vibrations, for the sensations are interpretations of the meaningful order inter-relating the vibrations which take their character wholly from the order expressing itself in them. The reality is the coherent unity called the chair, not the mass of unobserved vibrations in themselves. But sensations as interpretations imply a mental system to interpret them, or rather to bring them into being as part of the unity of meaning linking them up with all other sense avenues and with past experience of similar situations. The senses, therefore, do not simply give units of information which have somehow to be added up to make an object, but change in their delimitations according to the whole system of interpretation that lies behind them. For this reason, some qualities of sound, for example those in a Bach work, are not heard at all by the mind incapable of appreciation of the whole work; and a change can take place in sensation when the context which experiences them changes — a pleasant taste can give way to an unpleasant one when the object with which it is associated is suddenly found to be loathsome in itself. This type of phenomenon, Oman thinks, shows sensations take their character as mental events from the whole system of meaning of which they form a part.

There is here at work a hierarchy of values, in which the lower are dependent for their adequate apprehension upon the right appreciation of the higher.

Just as even the dimmest discernment of the material world has waiting to be unfolded the whole marvellous world known to our higher senses, and no discernment might have existed had this not been the unknown environment, so with our first rude beginnings with the supernatural, we enter what doubtless has
a scope and perfection beyond the wisest of us to sum up as the true, the beautiful and the good, which yet may be the source of every kind of knowledge we have. While only as we are aware of our environment have we knowledge of it, we must not conclude that nothing but what we know has any significance for our awareness, for it may be there as the wisdom of our teacher, which, though we do not know it, is the spring of all our knowing.

The specifically human apprehension of the world shows that all knowledge depends upon the right apprehension of the source of absolute values, the true, the beautiful and the good. The source of these values is the Supernatural itself, and with that aspect of the universe man comes to terms in his religion, to Oman's account of whose nature we must now turn.
Chapter 6:

THE NATURE OF RELIGION:

I. The Holy.

In considering Oman's view of the nature of religion itself, we must, as we go, make an attempt to show the roots of his thought in various thinkers. His work was avowedly an effort to combine the thought of two apparently opposite points of view: those which came before and after Kant. He felt, along with most of his contemporaries, that while Idealist philosophy had considerable apologetic possibilities, certain difficulties attended upon it, and he was also certain that Kant had already foreseen these very difficulties themselves.

The superior tone ... of these artistic philosophers who soar so easily into the empyrean and look down upon the laborious people plodding along the highway of enquiry, seemed to Kant a sin against the toiler. Philosophy is in his eyes laboriously prosaic, and these philosophers of vision are merely hazarding its hard-won gains. Kant had no hope from anything except fighting in the valley: Romanticism would conquer its land from the top of Pisgah. Kant's is the only secure way in the end. Without it, nothing is proved, nothing won, nothing guaranteed.

He therefore attempted, in all his work, to base the insights of the Romantic movement upon the more secure foundation afforded by the work of Kant. Oman's point of departure is Romanticism; he is keenly interested in the wide and various world, in the richness of experience, and in his love of Shakespeare he places himself alongside those Romantics whom he describes as follows:

The Jupiter of the whole Pantheon was Shakespeare, whose name was as a battlecry against the mechanical rules and intellectual frostiness which the eighteenth century honoured as classical, and the model of which was French drama.

Oman's real interest was, then, to conserve the gains of Romanticism, for he felt that this movement had a much clearer view of
the essential nature of religion than had the previous age, which he held to be much too moralistic in its approach. We must, then, turn first to a consideration of those elements of the Romantic movement with which Oman felt himself to be in sympathy.

We could hardly make a better beginning than with Oman's understanding of the thought of Schleiermacher, not only because he is so obviously one with him on many essential points, but also because his first work to be published was the translation and introduction to the "Reden" in 1893. In an earlier section we have indicated how Oman saw in Schleiermacher's view of religion the suggestion that this aspect of man's life is the creative one, that which goes ahead, so to speak, of the rest of his experience and puts him in direct contact with what is ultimate in his environment. This belief is not, of course, peculiar to Schleiermacher; Oman finds it in all the romantics, and in Kant himself as the bridge between the two eras.

All these theories, though ascribing radically different origins to religion in the mind, agree in seeking them where reality manifests itself to us. Their views of what religion is also differ with the seat to which they ascribe it, yet all agree that it is, or ought to be, victory and peace through providing for us a right relation to the ultimate reality. For Kant this reality is the moral order, for Schleiermacher the artistic harmony of the universe, for Hegel the cosmic process of reason: but, for all, it is that which is absolute in its claim, and, for all, religion is the recognition of this claim and, through it, is emancipation from the fluctuating values of sense, and victory over all that is changing and accidental.

But Schleiermacher was the avowedly religious thinker of that age, and it was, in fact, from him that later theology stemmed, becoming the theology of religious experience. Oman also felt,
not unnaturally, that the real interest of religion was being better served by Schleiermacher than by Hegel. The latter was seriously at fault in that his system was little better than "an illustrated edition of the Cartesian method". (NS116) Hegel works far too much with "clear and distinct ideas" - while man, as we know him in history has remarkably little interest in the ideas which are most clear to him, but has rather reached out in guesses and surmises to realities which he cannot prove but which he only dimly glimpses. Religion for Hegel, and for those who model their study of it upon his, is too often confused with theology. In writing of the school of Troeltsch, Oman remarks:

Such historical study of religion finds in the religions little more than views of the universe as opinions. And opinions frequently are and can still often be explained as being merely a new kaleidoscopic arrangement of the old. But if religion is man's dealing with a true environment, his world expands as he advances, and he advances as it expands.

Religion is very far from being a mere theory of the universe, and the ideas entertained in it are not entertained for themselves, but for their part in the whole living interpretation of experience in which they participate. The error of concentrating too much upon the rational element in religion is that "... the history of religion comes to be presented, not as a long endeavour to know a higher environment by learning to live rightly in it, but as a series of curiously confused speculations, which gradually come to be better ordered." (NS355.) It was Schleiermacher, Oman claims, who saw deeper into religion in its essential nature than this, and found the root
Erratum.

F.W.R. Nichol,
THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF JOHN OMAN,
Page 91.

The fifth complete sentence on this page should read:

"On the contrary, there is a very definite element of cognition to be found in feeling as Schleiermacher understands it, and for this reason Oman would prefer us to speak not of a feeling, but of a sense of absolute dependence."
of it in feeling and not in thought. He defined religion as the feeling of absolute dependence, and in the "Reden" explained this in a way that showed clear kinship with the artistic, contemplative mode of knowing. Feeling was the contact in which man comes into direct union with the universe, and all else, thought and action, is derived from this primal union. But this feeling is not a completely animal affair, as Hegel seemed to think it was. Hegel claimed that, on Schleiermacher's terms, a dog which is absolutely devoted to its master must be the most religious of creatures. On the contrary, there is a very definite element to be in feeling as Schleiermacher understands it, and for this reason Oman would prefer us to speak not of a feeling, but of a sense of absolute dependence.

As we have seen in our study of Oman's theory of knowledge, the five senses are not five disparate sources of information, each producing disorganised data which must somehow be united into a percept, but are themselves dependent upon a whole system of interpretation. They are, in fact, extensions, differentiations of a basic sensitiveness to environment, common to all life however simple. Even the amoeba is more than a collection of atoms being hustled along from behind by the "forces" of nature - it is a forward-looking organism seeking and responding to relevant differentiations in its whole environment.

... There must have been a general awareness, which, at the beginning, could only have been a dim discrimination in the sense of touch. Many living creatures do not seem to have passed beyond this stage. Yet, low as the stage is, this awareness may not have been a mere imperfect kind of knowing, but have some direct effectiveness within its own sphere and for its special purpose ...
This "dim discrimination", this "general awareness" has within it as promise the varied world of the senses which arise as responsive adaptions on the part of the organism to the actual nature of its environment. Apart from the real existence of light the eye could not exist: and apart from the real differentiations of the colours the adaption of the eye to see them could never have come about. The nature of the environment with which it must deal is prior to the particular lines of development the individual's sensitivity will take in respect to it.

But the five senses are not the only avenues of sensitivity to environment, and if we have rightly appreciated the force of Oman's theory of perception, we must draw his consequence from it: that there are aspects of reality not given to the senses but which are none the less "sensed" by man, in and beyond the world of the senses, but in no way merely independent of them. The same world is involved and known throughout. We deal with one world in terms of one mind, and it is the one sensitivity that reaches out in sense and feeling towards it on all levels. There is no need to repeat here Oman's observations of how even sense experience is limited by the apprehension of higher values than those of mere sense. With all this in mind, Oman argues eloquently for the view that sincerity of feeling is of primary importance in religion.

Sensitiveness of feeling ... is the only gateway to reality: and the higher the reality, the greater must be the sensitiveness which responds to it. To be obtuse in feeling is merely to be wall-eyed before every kind of reality: and to have no keen sense of the holy would mean that, however we lived and moved and had our being in the Supernatural, we never could realise it.
What makes religion most repellent and arouses against it the most vehement antagonism, and is the really desolating hypocrisy, destructive of all true experience of any reality and more particularly of the Supernatural, is insincerity of feeling. If not in the hidden recesses of his spirit, at least in all outward bearing, a man may, in intellectual matters, be honest, and, in moral doings, upright, and yet be wholly unreal and disingenuous. This may so corrupt the primary witness of reality that, while all a man thinks may be according to logical rule and all he does according to moral law, none of his ways of feeling about anything may be right. From this an atmosphere of insincerity pervades all his views of the world, all his dealings with men, all his estimation of himself; in short, all his estimations of everything. He may revel in dialectic and be eminently didactic in morals, and yet his mind and conscience be as elusive for earnest thought or moral insight as a ghost for cold steel. This manipulation of feeling to make reality say, not what it wants to say, but what we want to hear, is the ultimate insincerity. Manipulation of feeling is by no means confined to religion. The very senses can be made artificial; and... this is a very important question for sense-perception and so for our whole theory of knowledge.

Other passages exemplify the unitary nature of sensitivity and its decisive position between the mind and the world.

Using mysticism as a laboratory experiment in isolating off the merely formal essentials of knowledge, Oman writes:

The unity of environment and the unity of mind the mystic emptying of content only isolates and emphasises, but in practice at least we all assume them. The third element, however, which is the essence of this mysticism, even if we do act upon it, is usually overlooked. We might call it a unified frame of love emptied of all content. This is the joy unspeakable, which is spoken of by all the mystics with every conceivable superlative... and here we have a very important isolation of the unity of feeling which works in all awareness. It is merely the wish to enjoy light without being disturbed by the world which light manifests, but it works with the fact that there is one light. Hence this unity of feeling, though being empty it reveals no reality, is not merely nothing, but is the form of feeling which is operative in all awareness, and which is the motive to seek in all our world harmony and peace, and which sustains us against all discouragement from their absence.

And in a more general way he comments on sincerity and insincerity of feeling:

... Insincerity may affect the message even of our commonest sensations, and obtuseness may blunt every apprehension.
Wordsworth says that 'he that has nothing to confer has nothing to perceive', and the first thing he has to confer is an alert and interested sensitiveness, which is not merely great and keen activity of the senses but an awareness through them of what is beyond them. It means a joy in our whole awareness of environment, which Wordsworth calls love, though it is much nearer artistic appreciation of the whole than any selective liking for any part of it.

In both (Natural and Supernatural) it is sincerity of feeling by which anything is rightly valued and so rightly known. In both alike it is sincerity of feeling which arrives at right and objective values, there being for anything an appreciation which is according to nature and a perversion which is not. And a true objective sense of the natural world is as dependent on this as a true objective sense of the supernatural.

The tendency of feeling towards action is sometimes insisted on to the point of making will a more consequence of emotion. But this bent of sensation towards perception comes in between, and, for a mind not given over to sensuality, alters the whole situation, so that in the entire process of apprehending an object and dealing with it, feeling may never appear as subjective emotion, but may function all the time as objective information and interest.

Enough has been said to make clear the central place that feeling takes in Oman's religious epistemology. F.R. Tennant points out how this use of feeling is cognitive throughout, and indicates the kinship with Schleiermacher's thought:

It would seem, indeed, that 'emotion' is too narrow a term to be equivalent to the author's word 'feeling' ... and that 'feeling' is a word to which he gives a meaning of his own, including elements such as are wont to be distinguished as instances of cognition, feeling, and valuation. It is the alleged cognitive element in this 'feeling' which here calls for description and justification. Dr Oman ... rejects the view that the supernatural is known inferentially, as the assigned cause of the awe; and also the view that it is directly apprehended as to its essence or quality by any faculty akin to sense, such as some mystics have invoked: its only 'content' is its capacity to excite emotion and evaluation. Yet if the 'sense of' the holy involves immediate, as distinct from interpretative or suppositional, cognition of the invisible or intangible Supernatural it would seem that there must be in it something akin to sensation. ... Feeling, then, includes direct 'acquaintance' with reality, but of no specific kind hitherto met with in psychology or speculative philosophy, unless it be that of Schleiermacher.

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If we keep in mind Oman's view of the place of feeling in the psychic life and compare it with his comments on Schleiermacher himself, there remains very little doubt of the source of his inspiration. These comments are most illuminating when they deal with the subject matter of the "Reden", in the introduction which Oman wrote for his translation. Here he does not deal with the specific problem of feeling in the light of contemporary psychology, but several phrases are significant of the way in which he understands Schleiermacher's use of the word.

By what means the Universe acts upon us, whether by special nomenclature or directly, we cannot tell, but all our experience goes back to the point where our own activity and the activity of the Universe are in contact and mutual understanding. By going back in thought, we reach a mystic point beyond which we cannot go, but which is the source of all our knowledge. That is the touch of our spirits with the Universe whereby, like the touch of lips that love, there are large mutual understandings. This is the source and type of all experience. Perception therefore rests not on reasoned knowledge but on belief; it is a transaction with the Universe and therefore a religious act. As every perception is an interaction of the whole universe with our whole being, the religious man who has once had a feeling and intuition of the Universe can reach the Universe from every experience. And if the sense were not hindered it would naturally reach this intuition ... By reflection we best awake to this larger sense ... This waking of the sense for the Universe is the larger life ... Religion therefore is sense and taste for the Infinite, and is neither metaphysics nor morals, but as essential a part of human nature as either knowledge or action ... It must not be forgotten that he held no act of the mind single and distinct. An activity of the mind is marked only by that element that is most prominent in it, and surely the prominent element in religion is feeling.

Such words as "sense", "taste", "intuition", when used as they are here, as parallels to "feeling", indicate clearly the way in which Oman read Schleiermacher's meaning in the "Reden", feeling most certainly contained a cognitive element - it is, indeed, the sensitised avenue of cognition, present in the

1. Introduction to Schleiermacher's Speeches on Religion, pp. xxxi - iii.
sense as the knowledge of the natural world, and in the taste for the infinite as the knowledge of the whole. Other remarks lead in the same direction.

Religion he defines as feeling or intuition for the Infinite. ... Artistic sense is a sure feeling for every way in which the detail illustrates the unity and the unity governs the detail. The sense of the highest unity is religion ... FF23

Schleiermacher's feeling ... was the first intuition of the universe, and at no time mere emotion ... It is the creative element in all experience, from which religious truth and conduct would naturally grow if not withered by worldliness.

The objective nature of feeling in Oman's thought should by now be quite clear, and we may now turn to his specific use of this theme in connection with his discussion of "the sense of the Holy."

Curiously enough, it is not to Oman but to the German writer, Rudolf Otto, that most British thinkers have been indebted for their introduction to this avenue of religious thought. But Oman claims to have been well aware of its significance for some time before Otto's THE IDEA OF THE HOLY appeared in English in 1923. His utterance on this matter is entirely typical both of himself and of his attitude to the whole problem.

It is necessary at the outset to say that the subject itself is central for all study of religion and remains so whether Prof. Otto has presented it adequately or not. This has appeared to me plain ever since an essay of windelband, drew my attention to the matter many years ago, and personally I remain very much more indebted to Windelband's clear and calm exposition than to Otto's fervour, which often produces more heat than light. The first edition of this book appeared in 1917 ... This remarkable success of a serious work on religion in a distracted and impoverished country at least shows that it has made a great appeal. What it appeals to is not difficult to say, because it is a mood which has appeared again and again in history in times of economic distress and political despair, and the
movement known as "occultismus" is an even more certain evidence of its existence in Germany. The book, therefore, is an important document on the effect of the War in Germany. ¹

Oman's understanding of the idea of the holy will become clear to us if we discuss and exemplify his points of difference and agreement with Otto himself.

1) Oman's first objection to Otto's exposition of the idea of the holy is the way in which the latter asserts a separation between the ethical and the numinous. It was, of course, Otto's precise intention to show that there is in religion something more than a combination of ethics and metaphysics. Otto and Oman belong to the same stream of thought in this respect, to the stream that flows from Schleiermacher, and which finds the "something more" in the realm of feeling. Otto claims that though both high metaphysics and earnest moral endeavour are present in an increasing degree in the higher religions, the essential feature of religion as such does not lie with them at all, but in the non-rational and non-ethical element present in all religions from the beginning. Otto points to the Old Testament conception of holiness which, in the beginnings of Israel's story, did not mean moral goodness of a transcendent nature, but simply referred to the "otherness of the being of God over against man and the rest of His Creation. The basic religious feeling, therefore, is that of creatureliness, of being utter dust and ashes before this overwhelming reality. Otto does not attempt to deny that as religion progresses it becomes more and more ethicised and

¹ JOURNAL OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, April, 1924, p. 275.
rationalised, but that these categories are a schematisation of the basic category of divine otherness. The essential nature of the religious reality is always other than these categories, though they are rightly brought in to help characterise its nature. It is right to speak of God as "good" and "just", but it must always be kept clearly in mind that it is God, the Great Other, Who is thus described. Otto claims that ethical and religious categories, though not to be confused with each other, are yet linked a priori. Oman feels that this a priori linking does not solve the problem, but rather reveals it.

The attempt to relate the rational to the non-rational is the weakest part of the whole book, because what God has joined, being divided, is hard to put together again. The ethical sacred is itself rational, though it cannot be rationalised and remain either ethical or religious. All values of truth, beauty and goodness are sacred, and that depends on religion as the manifestation of a reality in which we live, and whereby we also have sacred worth.

The essential thing in the New Testament, and above all in the teaching of Jesus, is that the religious is always the ethical and the ethical always the religious, so that the one is never the schematisation of the other.

The one supreme example of the numinous, which, curiously, our author omits, is the vision of Eliphaz in Job iv. There it all is in perfection of understanding and expression - heartshaking fear, mystery, a silence speaking of mortal man as a profane creature before God, and impure simply as such. Yet Job persists in sticking to ethical ideas and in maintaining his right to argue rationally with God as well as man. Therefore, it is very unlikely that what made him abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes was merely the irrational in creation.

Such a position hardly needs refuting, and would not have been taken up had it not been necessary, in order to afford support for a non-ethical and non-rational view of religion, without denying, as a consequence, the dependence of all higher religion upon ethics and reason. But how two quite separate developments should be connected a priori is difficult to conceive, for it does not seem to be in accord with any known form of development. In every development, it matters not what may be added

in its course, when we look back, we can detect the germ of it long before it appeared in separate, clearly distinguishable form. And when we thus look back on this evolution of the sense of the holy, it is not difficult to discover, in every stage known to us, the germ at least of the moral developments. N363.

2) The ground of Oman's objection is to be found in a distinction that he had already made when Windelband's paper mentioned above first brought to his notice the importance of the idea of the holy. This is the distinction between the feeling which Oman calls the sense of the holy, and the evaluative judgement as sacred of the object or situation concerned. This evaluation is, of course, intimately bound up with the feeling in the way we have already discussed, but it must, at this point, be carefully distinguished. In an appendix to THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL he writes of his first making this distinction.

My chief differences from Windelband were in making distinctions between (a) the sense of the holy and the valuation of the sacred, (b) the undifferentiated and the particularising feeling, and (c) the significance of the material sacred in itself and for development. N3474

With reference to Otto he continues

... I learned better, though mainly by disagreeing with him, both how to distinguish and to relate the awesome and the ethical, the material and the spiritual. N3474.

The significance of distinctions (b) and (c) does not concern us at this point, but by making distinction (a) Oman is able to charge Otto with making his category of religious reality too wide: much that is not religious at all comes under it; and it also proves too narrow, for true religion as Oman understands it is well-nigh excluded. When attention is concentrated on the mere feeling of awe, the difficulty implicit in all feeling merely as such appears.
All feeling, by its special quality of intensiveness, tends to diffuse itself, and the sense of the holy has this quality in a high degree.

Because of this fact, the feeling for the holy is not to be considered in isolation, but with reference to the valuation with which it is so closely bound up. When this is done, it becomes clear that the sense of the holy and the feeling of mere awe are to be distinguished, with the latter wider in its scope than the former, and referring to much that does not come within the sphere of religion proper at all. The feeling of holiness becomes appropriate only in certain contexts limited by the application of the evaluation as sacred. The awesome, another and real category in human experience, also has its proper object, but it is a different object from that of which the sense of the holy makes us aware. Oman makes this point in his review of Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* by the use of a most characteristic and illuminating anecdote drawn from his early life in Orkney:

When a boy of fourteen or thereabouts, I was riding through the Standing Stones of Stenness on a winter afternoon when dusk was settling into darkness. They stand on the top of a lone narrow neck of land between two lochs. The closecropped heather crackled under my horse's feet, the loch on the right was still shining under the glow of sunset and the loch on the left was dark almost to blackness, and across the bay the gravestones in the Churchyard stood white and clear over it. The circle of stones had a look of ancient giants against the grey sky, and the gaping mounds which had been opened stood shadowy and apart. A more numinous scene, at a more numinous hour, could not be found on earth. And the feeling which suddenly struck me is not inaptly described as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. But at the same moment it struck my old horse at least as vehemently as myself. He threw up his head, snorted, set his feet, trembled, and finally bolted at a rate I should have thought impossible for his old bones. Now there is little doubt that Prof. Otto is right in finding the reason why the early Briton erected this circle of stones on that particular spot in the peculiar eerie feeling it created rather
than in merely intellectual ideas; but as the feeling had probably
not yet 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 beyond, which made it
for primitive man religious? In spite of the mechanical ideas
imposed upon me by a scientific age, I persist in thinking that
the feelings aroused by nature which gave rise to animism have
more to say for themselves than the people whose acquaintance with
nature is chiefly in laboratories and tourist resorts admit; and
it is easier to have a religious sense of a living world than a
dead one. But are these feelings in themselves religious? They
may stir and pass over into the holy, to use Prof. Otto's own correct
description, but are we not then in a new order? And is not the
essence of that, 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 an irrational 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 amid
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.\(^\text{1}\).

All this underlines Oman's view that feeling is not to be understood
in itself, but must always be referred to the value-judgment with
which it is bound up. When this is done in the case of the sense
of the holy and the feeling of awe, it at once becomes clear that
the two are different, although the former never loses something of
the latter.

"As mere feeling, the sense of the holy would be impossible to
distinguish from the mere spooky feeling which is magical, at one
end, and from the sense of the sublime which is artistic, at the
other. But, when we relate it to the absolute value of the
sacred, we see at once that its awe has a different quality from
dread, and its reverence from the sense even of the sublime. As
there is in the poorest awe a certain quality of moral reverence
which distinguishes it from fear, so, at the other end, there is
in the highest moral reverence an element of awe which distinguishes
it from a purely intellectual judgment." \(^\text{NS51-2}\).

Oman, i.e., therefore, unwilling to accept an implicit factor in
Otto's view of ethics - viz. that there is any such thing as what
has been called "mere morality." Otto gives the impression that

the sphere of religion is a different one from that of the moral life, and this Oman regards as mistaken, leaving the way open for moralism on the one hand and a superstitious mysticism on the other. This is the inevitable result of any attempt to find the sphere of religion apart from that of morality, and can only result in the impoverishment of both.

"... Our own experience, the history of faith and morals, all proclaim that nothing except disaster can result from assigning interests so central and so inseparable to different persons, or even to separate compartments of one life." G.p. 54-5.

"This scheme really assumes two Supernaturals. One we realise only by awe and value only by the shuddering of the creature; and one only by moral reverence and moral value in the liberty of God's children." NS64.

From this evidence we may conclude that Oman differed from Otto in asserting the primacy of the sacred valuation in human encounter with the Supernatural.

3. Oman further joined issue with Otto on the precise point of difference between the numinous and the natural. For Otto it lay in the "otherness" of the religious reality. This idea of the "wholly other" has become common coin in theological discussion, and is intended to indicate the difference of nature between God and Man - Man is not God or Godlike; God is the Creator, inhabiting eternity, living on another and completely different level of reality from that in which man lives. It is this difference in essence that interests Otto, though he would object that we are still working too much with conceptual and rational terms. For him the "wholly other" has to be encountered in its transcendent reality, and the feeling of creatureliness must result. For him, recognition and experience of this otherness is religion - the profanity of man in even appearing before the Lord is rooted in his being as a creature, and not merely in his
ethical unworth: "numinous unworth" is sin.

Against all this Oman protests. It is true that he has passages which impress upon us the transcendence of God, such as that in VISION & AUTHORITY Chapter V:

"How shall the Almighty, who has all things and can know no want, Who has all power and can know no struggle, Who is of absolute holiness and can have no contact with the guilt and weakness of sin, participate in the struggle of man..." VA 116.

But it remains true that what is much more insisted upon is the kinship between God and man, between Man and his Supernatural environment. We have quoted a passage which refers to "a Spirit in the world which is absolute and ... a spirit in ourselves in its image," and we would not overstate the matter if we were to say that this kinship (the word is often used) is the dominant theme of his whole outlook. God has created man and placed him in a world of such a sort that he is called to realise this kinship in freedom and fellowship. To insist too much, as Otto appears to him to do, upon the "otherness of God," is to resign this liberty of the children of God, and give religion over to "vague supernatural potencies."

In contradistinction to Otto, therefore, Oman finds the distinctive character of the Supernatural to lie not in its otherness, but in its absoluteness. As H.R. Mackintosh says, Otto is the disciple of Schleiermacher in his insistence upon the feeling element in religion, but at this point Oman would accuse him as a deviationist. In expounding Otto's view of the matter, he writes:

"The numinous is first of all the 'creature-feeling,' the sense of self-abasement into nothingness before an overpowering, absolute might of some kind. Schleiermacher recognised it, but made two mistakes about it. First he only distinguished it as absolute, making the difference a mere matter of degree, whereas it is a unique datum of consciousness;..."
"The religious sense of mystery is stupor before the "quite apart," and is an original experience, not to be resolved into any other. ... Its object is not the wholly unknown, but the "wholly apart," the wholly incommensurable with human nature, before which, therefore, man recoils in benumbed amazement."

And his comment is as follows:

"... Is the religious element in the feeling due to anything psychological, or only to the peculiar quality of the environment into which man ventures in religion? And what is that, if awesomeness is not distinctive, except absolute value? ... In that case, Schleiermacher would be right in making the quality of the dependence absoluteness, and Prof. Otto wrong in making absoluteness a mere matter of degree. It would, on the contrary, mark man's entrance on another order of reality from mere comparative natural values. Schleiermacher finds the source of this to be intuition of the universe, which, he thinks, comes in with all experience, and which would naturally develop into religion were it not suppressed by worldliness and false prudence. It is not quite so easy, as it requires loyalty to our own place in this world of higher values, but Schleiermacher is at least as much on the right lines as Prof. Otto. Schleiermacher is in danger of ending in an artistic mystical feeling, and Prof. Otto of a superstitious mystical awe; and which is worse?"

This is a natural inference from Oman's view of the feeling of awe, which, as we have seen, is an emotional reaction arising from contact with any environment "sufficiently great and strange," and his emphasis on the fact that its object is "the mightier for stirring intense feeling the vaguer it is." (NS61). But this is not specifically religious, and can only be judged so when it is found correlated with the judgment of absolute value. But even in the case of mere awe, he would maintain there is more to be said than that the human subject feels himself as dust and ashes before the wholly other. Otto himself describes the numinous as "mysterium tremendum et fascinans." Even here there is kinship of a kind, in the very experience which gives Otto all his evidence for the notion of the wholly other; how much more, then, if we refuse to admit that awe has the last word in defining the religious sphere, but find the heart of the matter rather in absolute matter, does it involve kinship? For value in the
nature of the case implies purpose, a Spirit in the world, and implies the freedom of man to discern these values and make them his own. For value of any kind is possible only where there is freedom to apprehend it.

5. Finally, Oman’s insistence on the place of the sacred or absolute value in the apprehension of the Supernatural enables him to bring what is perhaps his most grave charge against Otto’s position. This he does in no uncertain terms in the review we have been quoting; it is raised in connection with the discussion Otto carries out on the problem of the Holy in the Old Testament. Otto points out, as many have done, that in the Old Testament the idea of holiness is not, at least at the beginnings, primarily an ethical concept – indeed this aspect is only introduced later, and even in the great prophets there is what Otto has called the “overplus” of non-ethical content in the idea. (Oman gives the excellent examples in the present day use of the word in such phrases as “the holy edifice,” “the holy sacrament” – it is clear that such objects belong in a sphere of reality that is, at best, more than merely ethical, and, at worst, awful in a superstitious way.) But Oman attacks the idea as a complete understanding of the holy in the following forthright terms:

“The political and economic situation in the days of the prophets was even more hopeless than it has ever been in any European country in our time. (Of. P71ff). It so shook the souls of men by the awesome holy that they gave the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls. But the prophets turned to the ethical sacred and said, ‘What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?’ One has an uncomfortable feeling that, with his views, Prof. 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 JOURNAL OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, April, 1924, page 284.
"If the essential element of religion is an overwhelming emotion, without ethical or rational quality, measurable by mere vehemence, how are we to deny that the natural religion is the Phoenician, with its unbounded licence and its unbounded terror? Was it not precisely by an appeal to a higher sense of the holy that the prophets set up against it the first truly rational and ethical religion?... Ought we never to have the perfect love which casts out fear? If not, how are we to condemn the terrorised piety which cut itself with knives in a delirium of surrender, and sacrificed the fruit of its body for the sin of its soul? Is it not the placid mirror of holy calm, clearer perhaps after the storm, which, reflecting the heavens above, shows all the height and depth of what is greatest? This is not schematisation added to the holy, but the sense of the holy itself, directed to its real values and its true environment." NS63-4.

It is clear, then, that Oman finds the idea that religion as concerned with mere overwhelming otherness to be false, and that this error can only be overcome by clarifying the place of evaluation in knowledge. By distinguishing more clearly between sense-emotion and value-judgment, and by relating them rightly, emotion can be put in its proper place in the whole process of knowing. As we have already shown, Oman considers that it cannot be considered apart from the unity of meaning and interpretation with which the individual faces the world, and its function is to be a sensitive channel of objective information rather than an end in itself. It can easily take the latter course when it flares up, so to speak, into consciousness either as pleasure or as pain, and so diverts attention to itself rather than to the situation which brought it into being. This, Oman would say, is precisely what was happening in the days of the prophets - the calamitous events of those days, and the insistent tragedy that faced the nation, were seen only as manifestations of an inscrutable and wholly other grinding man to the dust. The result was that a terrible Supernatural was answered with horrible sacrifice. But the
prophets refused to be mesmerised by the insinence and pain of the emotion this calamitous situation caused them, and looked for a deeper meaning in the experience. (For sermonic illustration of this see FW 236ff). Thus the prophets pointed away from the mere emotion of the situation, and the terrifying conception of the Supernatural which it engendered, to a truer use of the judgment of the sacred; from the belief that the purpose of things was a mere demonstration of overwhelming might which must be answered by abject surrender, to the deeper perception that this purpose strove for nothing less than loyalty to poorer fellow-citizens (Amos 8:6), and care for the unworthy (Hosea; NS 456-7), and refused to let man rest until he found the peace of living in this order of life by his own insight. This fundamental tenet of Oman's view of the Holy is perhaps best set forth in one of his personal reminiscences:

"Professor Otto was interested in the Holy just as intense emotion, and I do not question its power in certain conditions and for certain ends. One evening I walked down to a public meeting with General Booth. He was talking like a common mortal on common things, when suddenly he was surrounded by a band of the faithful, and, in a moment, his speech, his bearing, even his appearance, were transfigured, by what was an afflatus and not an affectation: and I realised that, given a slightly different age, there would have been nothing his followers might not have believed about him. In the meeting, however, what it did was to give intensity to the accepted, not only in idea, but in phraseology, and was quite obviously unfitted for any purpose of new insight or even new presentation. But could anything have been more different from what the Holy meant with Jesus? It is like the difference between experienced sensation, by which the sensational school sought to explain all perception, and its actual place in the process, wherein its significance is in quality not intensity and it so rapidly passes into action and by it to objective reality and we only dimly know the road we have travelled by tracing it backwards. The higher reality, without which no perception is human, is, I have contended, similarly known, only the feeling is the sense of the holy and the action
on the absolute obligation of the sacred. In Jesus we see that this sense is the varied responsive reverence out of which love has cast all fear and the obligation the perfect loyalty out of which joy and freedom have cast all servitude.

We may seem to have come a long way from Schleiermacher. But all this discussion of Otto and the idea of the Holy has helped us to see how Oman stands in relationship to the nineteenth century theologian. Schleiermacher was pre-eminently the theologian of the religious - or God-consciousness, and without doubt he found the central point of that consciousness to lie in feeling. Both Oman and Otto share this point of view, but, as we have seen, Oman is more dissatisfied with it than is Otto; or rather he develops the elements of objectivity and cognition that he believes were present in Schleiermacher, and, while he will not have religion reduced to ethics, wishes to emphasise the incurably ethical character of true religion. It is to this latter element that we must now turn.
II. The Sacred.

In Oman's writings the word "ideals" or synonyms such as "sacred value," or "absolute value," appear again and again; and it soon becomes clear that the conception lying behind such words is of very great importance for his view of religion. The theological climate has changed very considerably since the days for which Oman wrote, and such words smack of moral idealism, of the call to high resolve and moral activism, of sermons in which exhortation figured much more prominently than it does in St. Paul's epistles. There has been a rediscovery of what is meant by the word "Gospel," and the excitement engendered by this discovery has made us chary of using such words as "ideals" or "values" in theological circles.

But it does not take long, when reading Oman, to realise that he is using the word in a sense different from that usually implied. To many, religion does not seem to be concerned with values at all, but with the existence and nature of a hypothetical super-sensible world having little relation to this mundane existence; while to others, like Höfding, the purpose of religion is nothing less than the "conservation of values." (NS306). But for Oman the relation between the two is essential, not in Höfding's sense where religion tends to be regarded as a box whose only real interest is its contents, but because the Supernatural is the reality which "manifests absolute values" (NS371) by our loyalty to which we learn to live and move in the Supernatural as a world in which we may be at home. The Supernatural is, then, the source of ideals, and these are never apprehended apart from an apprehension of a
sphere of reality which manifests them.

*... Awareness of the reality of the Supernatural is not something added to the sense of the holy and the judgment of the sacred by some kind of argument, say from the natural world.*

*By the sacred, in particular, all religion is distinguished; and all religious thinking is right thinking only as it is about what is truly sacred. The Supernatural is not a further inference from it as from effects to a cause, but is felt and valued in it; and when separated from this manifestation, it is without content and deprived of all reality, because it no longer deals with an environment, but is a mere abstract argument about the universe.*

*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 ... But the sphere of religion is not the value or the feeling or both, but the environment known by means of them.*

All this is stated in somewhat academic terms. But if we consider that the key word in these passages is "environment," we may bring Oman's meaning home to ourselves. What he is saying is something like this: unless religious reality does actually environ us, encounter us in such a way as to "pull us up short," it is not real for us. Apart from some such actual inescapable commerce with it, it is simply an idea, a speculation; a wrath of the imagination. And where, he asks, have men actually found this encounter to take place? The reply is: In the absolute moral claim exercised by all that man has come to value as true, beautiful or good. It has always been clear, Oman would say, that man has regarded these claims as much more than the icing on the cake of life, but as an actual encounter with a reality of prime import, which, if he ceased to reckon with it, would bring all the rest of the structure
of his life crashing to the ground.

"... Man was so constantly and continuously concerned with the Supernatural because he knew it to be the source of his security and progress."

Once we grasp the fact that man is insisting on the necessity for religion to be more than speculation, and God more than a metaphysical idol, and that both come into the actual fabric of our day to day commerce with our whole world, the quotations above take on their proper significance. We must now illustrate this theme from other works. It is, for example, the whole point of his last book, HONEST RELIGION - which is an attempt to survey the field of religious knowledge and discover what elements within it we may retain honestly as part and parcel of our actual dialogue with life:

"Truth is for us what we know to be a right interpretation of experience when in perfect freedom we have allowed it to speak to us."

But the same concern lies behind all the other works and comes out especially in GRACE AND PERSONALITY.

"The highest creed taught merely from without becomes superstition. And even in the midst of superstition, the people cast off restraint. Like black care, which rides behind the horseman ready to strike at any moment, the thought of God may haunt them, yet men may be lustful and false, cruel and base. As a foreign despotism, this dominion, however admirable, even though it avail for some measure of external obedience, is ever resented and, when most meekly received, is not a control adequate to the dignity of man. But the control which is of our own insight is of an absoluteness against which worlds cannot be weighed. It extends its dominion over the heart as well as the hand. The irresistible violence of a physical law cannot rival the necessity it lays upon us. Yet, being a necessity of our own insight, derived solely from our perception of our place and destiny in the universe, a perception which teaches us to accept with gratitude the wisdom and righteousness by which we are led, it is a necessity which is the only and the adequate security of freedom."

"... Religion ceases to be spiritual when moral independence is sapped. Faith is not spiritual unless won by our own insight into truth, received by the consent of our own wills, and applied to the government of our own lives. And, without goodness shining in its own light, every standard
by which we could judge a doctrine of God is lost, and faith becomes mere submission to arbitrary greatness."

"As enmity against God is frequently set forth, the suggestion of a practical situation might seem an idle paradox. The expression calls up the vague idea of a quarrel with a dim, vast figure in a remote Heaven, so utterly unconnected with our present doings that it is difficult to see how we ever could come into conflict with Him. An abstract Being can only be offended by an abstract independence. ... Thus the acknowledgment of being at enmity with God too often ends in superlatives about a guilty and sinful state which deal with no reality that would be admitted if clothed in concrete language and illustrated by examples, and which, even so, are only wrung out by dread of discoveries in another life, without reference to any practical situation in this.

... Religion is often kept so aloof from experience that reconciliation to God may be loudly professed in one breath and everything He appoints be bitterly resented in the next. The God of man's profession is in one compartment, and the God of his life in another. But we are truly reconciled as we live, not as we profess, and we cannot be reconciled to God and be at enmity with what He appoints." GP115,7.

Reconciliation] is thus, in the first place at least, concerned with this life, not another, being the promise of sitting in the heavenly places amid the tumult of the present hour and not of sitting in a remote heaven in a passionless eternity. .... Its immediate significance is reconciliation to the discipline He appoints and the duty He demands." GP119.

Now we have here laid the emphasis rather heavily on what we could call the obligatory side of Oman's doctrine - that all religion must be related to practical experience, to the problem of dealing adequately with the actual world in which we find ourselves. But, if we may so put it, it is not merely that religion ought to be so related to the practical demands and duties of life; as a matter of fact it is so related. No religion is really interested in "Metaphysical idols" in themselves: these are of significance only in so far as they express a whole relation to the problems of existence. If they do not express a creative relation, they will represent an evasive one. Because he believes religion is necessarily of this practical nature, Oman is able to classify religions
in terms of the attitude which their theologies represent towards the problems of concrete existence. The valuation of some thing, idea, or experience as sacred may, as with the prophets, give man such a "footing amid the flux of experience" that he can turn it all to good; but on the other hand, he may rest, as do the mystics, behind a wall of accepted religiosity which protects them from the sharp impact of the world upon the individual's sensitivity. So, in this sense, religion is what it is because of the attitude it takes up towards the practical problems of experience; and its peculiarities it owes to this peculiar task.

"As the really important mark of a religion is the attitude towards the Natural, no religion is marked mainly by mere theological ideas as ideas. The attitude towards life which the ideas represent, and not the holding of them as mere dogmas, is what makes them religious."

Polytheism is only irrational when it becomes theological; and one of the reasons why it seems to us such an utter confusion of mind is that we regard its theology as its essence.

When this practical task of religion is kept in mind, we are able to understand more clearly what Oman means by "ideals" or "sacred values." They are intuitions into the meaning of things, a grasping, so to speak, of what the universe is "driving at." The primary notion involved is that of purpose, so that an ideal is an apprehension of what is of ultimate value, what is persistent amid all the chances and changes of man's day to day existence. At the lowest, most primitive level, there is only a dim grasping, a mere "awareness" that there is more in experience than "meets the eye"; but at the highest, in prophetic religion, where the will of God alone is sacred, it becomes clear that personal life, with its values of faithfulness, kindness,
care for the insignificant are the "final order", and it is
towards the free acceptance of this final order by man that the
whole universe moves.

The place of sacred values as interpretative intuitions
of the meaning of things recalls us to Oman's understanding of
Schleiermacher's interpretation of religions as

"... Not merely groups of more or less true opinions
but organic spiritual interpretations ..." 1.

In the introduction to the "Speechea" Oman writes

"The last Speech has probably had more influence of
various kinds than any part of the book. The polemic against
the abstract jejuné spirit of the Illumination applied to
religion the same principle that had already been accepted
by the younger generation in literature. Religion, being
infinite, must have a principle of individualisation. Here
Schleiermacher's doctrine of individuality found application.
Each religion is not distinguished by the quantity of religious
matter, but by the special form in which the matter is organised.
The same religious matter appears in all religions, but the
fundamental intuition, selected, not by any superiority but by
some need or some insight of the people and age that believe it,
and the mode in which the rest is grouped around it, distinguish
a positive religion." 2

And in THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, again interpreting
Schleiermacher:

"What determines the character of a religion is this
intuition and the way everything is grouped round it. Not by
the mere quantity of truth it contains, greater or less, is a
religion to be estimated, but by its special intuition of the
Infinite." 3

But in various passages he makes it clear in what way he diverges
from this view however illuminating it may be.

"If Schleiermacher's view is right, why is the situation
so difficult, and why does the knowledge of God seem to depend
so much on character and so little on knowledge? The essential
element in the various religions does not seem to be the intuition
of the One in the many; the way of advance does not appear to
be emotional education into this higher intuition; the task of

1 JOURNAL OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, April, 1932, p. 286.
religion is not any contemplation of its unity which enables us to find ourselves at home in the world. We are required to find our way through the world at the cost, if need be, of being strangers and pilgrims in it. No religion offers itself as an insight into the world which would enable us to be at peace with it, but all require that we shall have victory over it for the sake of some purpose which lies beyond it. Schleiermacher's assertion of the immediate nature of our knowledge of God was a great advance on a knowledge demonstrated like a proposition in Euclid, but the advance was mainly because it brought the knowledge of God nearer to life."

"Schleiermacher tends to reduce religion to mystic oneness, and Hegel to metaphysical oneness. Yet, for all this difference, for both alike reconciliation is such a harmony with the universe as assures peace. Neither gave any due place to religion as a practical relation to environment, or to reconciliation, not merely in thought or feeling, but as an actual victory over life's evil and evanescence. By thus overlooking the active task of reconciliation in relation to the natural, both emphasised the mere idea of unity in such a way as to tend at least in the direction of pantheism. Thus in the end both Hegel's rational cosmic process and Schleiermacher's aesthetic mysticism, though they evoke very different feelings, are in idea not very far apart."

In order to place these two quotations in proper perspective we must consider also the following —

"This is the truth in Hegel and Schleiermacher, and we may not lightly set it aside ... Religion is primarily a peace and not an energising, even if it be an active peace of victory and not a passive peace of contemplation."

We must note, that is, that Oman's objection to Schleiermacher and Hegel is not that they seek religion as a "peace," and that their intuition of the One in the many is altogether a wrong line of approach to the understanding of it; but rather that it is a merely contemplative intuition, interested only in what he calls a "unity of awareness," and unwilling that the peace given by perception of the place of the part in the unity of the whole should be disrupted by troublesome elements. But by the introduction of the notion of purpose, Oman is in a position to move beyond the pantheism of Schleiermacher, while retaining his
view of the religions as "organic spiritual interpretations" of the meaning of the Natural. Of course Oman is aware that even the idea of purpose, if interpreted as Hegelian process, does not deliver from the danger of pantheism - but purpose as Oman conceives it is impossible except where autonomy is a real factor in the universe, which for Hegel it was not.

As we have already seen, there are two kinds of value - natural and sacred. Broadly, the distinction here is between goods that are relative to man's needs and purposes, and goods that man must serve; the "goods" and expediencies of our natural life, and the absolute claims of truth, beauty and goodness which lay a claim upon us in such a way that they are beyond all comparison with our needs, beyond all relativity. The absolute value may not be argued about or trifled with; it may only be obeyed or disobeyed. It is significant that Oman quarrels with Otto's suggestion that Schleiermacher was only making a distinction in degree when he spoke of the feeling of absolute dependence: as Oman puts it:

"Schleiermacher would be right in making the quality of the dependence absoluteness, and Prof. Otto wrong in making absoluteness a mere matter of degree. It would, on the contrary, mark man's entrance on another order of reality from mere comparative natural values."

The distinction between absolute and comparative values is really a difference in kind, for absoluteness is a unique category simply in virtue of its ultimacy. Man begins to deal here with an order to whose purposes he must accommodate himself, and no longer with one which exists to serve his needs. The values of this ultimate, final, absolute order, stand over man and his purposes, and call for his subordination to a

1. JOURNAL OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, April 1924, p. 284.
purpose greater than his own. It would perhaps be better to speak, not of a final order, but of a final meaning, for the former gives the impression that the values which manifest a final "order" are static, unchanging, and can, once apprehended, be asserted with dogmatic clarity. But the latter conveys more nearly Oman's position, and is what he uses in THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL when he speaks of the Supernatural as an environment which we know as meaning. It leaves room for the idea of development; for while the final meaning of things remains "one increasing purpose", the actual things, ideas, doctrines, forms of society upon which the value of sacredness has been placed by man, are never the same from age to age - indeed the attempt to retain them spells stagnation.

We have already spoken of the dim grasping, the vague "awareness" of a purpose beyond the immediate business of natural existence, that is discernible in primitive religion. The word "awareness" is Oman's own term, and we have already met with it in his theory of knowledge. It is most suitable when used in connection with primitive religion as he understands it. Awareness, as we saw, is simply a general and "undifferentiated" sense of the world's presence, but without, as yet, any contact with specific objects within that world. The power to abstract, to become aware of ("apprehend") particular and individual things, marking them off from their surroundings, is an achievement which comes late in the evolution of man's mental life, and even with civilised man is not so complete as he imagines. When we are aware of a particular thing, we apprehend it, as Oman puts it, within the unity of perception; that is, we
do not know it apart from a whole unity of interpretative meaning which enables us to grasp its significance. For us, this unity of perception is in large part composed of "free ideas," ideas of which we can think apart from some actual perceived context. But primitive man lacks these free ideas, and the story of civilisation is largely the story of the loosening, so to speak, of ideas from the contexts in which they are first apprehended. Because this process of loosening has been going on in the past long before our point in the story of man, we are able to enter into a heritage which can very largely distinguish sacredness from particular sacred objects; and to us the idea that an action may be a sacred duty one day and not the next is not a difficult one. But when this is said, we must agree with Oman that even civilised man is very much under the spell of the accepted convention, the customary sacred, so that it seems sacriligious to suggest that particular forms, say, of church government are necessitated by passing needs and may need to be superseded.

The old and the venerable tend also to be the eternal and unchangeable.

"Religion, being the greatest power for conserving the past, is the greatest also for making it conservative." NR946.

"... There is a hankering after seeing the Church become again an impressive institution, its doctrines having the prestige of dignity and antiquity and its Bible accepted as a solemn and impressive legislation." HRE14.

It is by urging considerations such as these that Oman attempts to help us understand what he calls the "material sacred" - the innumerable sacred objects, from fetishes to sacred cows, from ceremonial pomp and ecclesiastical symbol. All these things, he maintains, witness to two things; (a) that man has never come
to know the Supernatural except in close connection with his life in the natural world, and with objects and situations within that world, and (b) that his continual preoccupation with those things witnesses to the power they confer upon him in making him aware of his "transcendence" over his world as a being with eternity set in his heart - "akin" to a purpose beyond himself. Now we shall let Oman express it in his own way.

"Here it (the term "fixed idea") is used exclusively for an idea fixed in its context, a thing normal in all minds and dominating in some. Possibly no idea, at least of the higher animals, is quite fixed in its meaning, but all their ideas seem to be fixed in their context. When they come up they bring with them their whole experienced setting, somewhat in the same way as, at a rudimentary stage of reading, we might be able to think our own thoughts with the author, but be incapable of any thinking without him. So nothing can be reproduced except in the original form and context, even though there be some power of altering thought in relation to it.

A free idea, on the contrary, is one separable from its context in any kind of special experience and from any particular material embodiment, and which we can take by itself and apply to any set of circumstances. This is only possible when by firm footing in the flux of experience there is escape from mere impression and natural desire. But, because this triumph over mere happenings is by the power to oppose them given by the sacred, it does not follow that, though all free ideas depend on the sacred, all judgments of the sacred are free ideas. On the contrary, what evolves them as reason and insight and conscience naturally has to do without them till they arrive. By this is explained what we shall call the 'material sacred.' It is just an idea fixed in the particular material conditions which stirred the sense of the holy and gave occasion for the valuation as sacred.

Even in our own better ordered minds, our deepest feelings and our highest thoughts are often stirred by the trivial and not infrequently by the repellent, and are by no means rigidly reserved for sublime occasions. The experiences of primitive man apparently were much more accidental, sporadic, unarranged and uncriticised even than ours; and to the extent in which this was so, the difference in his view of the sacred depended on different experiences. Yet it was only to this extent. The real difference was not due to anything in the experiences themselves, but to the absence of power to deal freely with them; and the main reason why his higher experiences remain embedded in crude material things is
simply that, lacking free ideas, he was unable to separate any part of his experience from the whole context in which it happened to him ... The lack of this power of free ideas, this power of selecting from his experience and thinking it as his own generalised thought, and so of finding what is to be revered in it apart from its material embodiments, is precisely what makes man primitive. His experience, being as it were solid with its context, was necessarily material in form. Moreover, this form was cherished, because his sole method of seeking to revive his experience of higher reality was to return as much as possible to the material conditions in which it first came. N389-92.

This way of distinguishing between the material embodiment of man's apprehension of a higher purpose than his own enables Oman to make a very important distinction between what these embodiments say at their face value, and what they point to beyond themselves. In the passage we have been quoting Oman continues as follows:

"Though the amazing pantheon is not only of the sky and the hosts of heaven and of river and mountain, but of birds and beasts and creeping things, when we think of the way of arriving at it, we should not be wholly without understanding, or doubt that the experience may concern high matters which are really and truly sacred, while the embodiment of it is, so to speak, rather gargoyle than seraph. And with this should go his queer end, to us at least, absurd and irrational taboos, for they are all ways of respecting the presence of sacred powers not at any cost to be brought down to the convenient...."

"... Primitive man could no more conceive sharpness apart from a cutting instrument than sacredness apart from material embodiment. Yet, as he knew what sharpness is, so he knew also what sacredness means. Therefore, if the absence of free ideas left the sacred unemancipated from a sporadic and unreasoned and material experience, we ought not to conclude that there was nothing in it besides the accidental and material." N390-2.

And in the light of this very important distinction, Oman is able to bring some just criticisms against much that goes under the name of anthropological study of religion:

"Travellers note merely what strikes them as odd, without going on to ask what lies behind. Thus fetishism comes to be regarded as the primitive form of religion, whereas an enquiry into what lay behind it might perhaps show that it never was an essential element in any religion. Again, we know that, in many languages, the word for soul means shadow; but when we are told that the Benin negroes regard their shadows as their
souls, we are not informed at all what, under this figure, they take their souls actually to be. ...

Broading it is with the savage as with the rest of us. Those who speak his tongue most freely, whose intercourse with him is most friendly, and who do not court wrong answers by asking inquisitive questions, have the highest opinion of both his piety and his morality. The individual picture at least is never as irrational and repellent as the sort of witches' stew of elements collected from various writers and cooked together in the cauldron of the comparative anthropologist. #

All this is the necessary background to Oman's view of the absoluteness of sacred values in relation to the transitoriness of the situations, objects and ideas in which these values are expressed. Many have claimed that the changing character of the embodiment of the sacred argues the unreality of the whole idea of absoluteness and, indeed, the unreality of the Supernatural. But Oman sees the matter quite differently, and claims that, on the contrary, the changing panorama of sacred things points to the reality which is, in all this, in continual dialogue with man. If there is one idea that is anathema to Oman it is the idea of finality, and he urges us to be very careful to distinguish this from absoluteness. For him, finality means that we have reached the end of our search for what is truly sacred, and that we can define in clear and precise terms what this is, so that it may be imposed from without in some pontifical fashion. The apologist for a final scheme of religion or ethics may say, with Oman, that personality is the highest value of all, and that all our duty depends on our acceptance of this as a fact beyond cavil. But while Oman would agree with this as far as it goes, he would claim that it does not go nearly far enough, and that the sacredness of personality does not rest upon the mere idea of personality, but upon the concrete
obligations with which we have to do in our commerce with persons. In the infinitely varying and changing world with which we have to do, these concrete obligations are never the same from one moment to the next, and vary according to the situation peculiar to each individual.

*If we rest here [with the personal], instead of making it a starting point for further search, we land in as grave stagnation and misunderstanding as anywhere else. Especially, though the place of the individual, as we have seen, is of supreme importance for determining the quality of all environment, the idea of the individual and even of a person can be used as the most barren substitute for our real experience of environment.*

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It is here that we come very close to the meaning of Oman's word "Environment" as we have already expounded it. We often speak of the sacredness of personality, but this must not be taken to mean that there is some existent above and beyond the actual obligations we have towards people - here the sacred reality of personality is actually meeting with us, environing us, and it is these actual obligations that are absolutely sacred, and not something beyond them by preoccupation with which we may side-step, so to speak, the necessity of answering to the real obligation.

On these terms, absoluteness not only does not mean, but also cannot mean finality. For each obligation obeyed and satisfied opens up, as it were, new worlds of possibility, and places us in the presence of obligations of a higher kind.

*As we advance, we see farther, yet we are also more conscious that it is not far. Even the wisest and best see no final goal. On the contrary, it is the quality of ideals not to be final, so that what is absolute can never apply to any verdict of conscience, but only to conscientiousness in following the upward road, to always choosing what excels. *

... Ideals may be concerned with everyday secularities in which no conceivable rule could be guidance, yet be, in certain conditions and relations, of absolute worth, with the worth of our own spirits dependent upon it; how much of life may be merely natural, and what is sacred today be secular.
tomorrow, yet, while it is sacred, require an absolute loyalty in view of its significance for our present progress; how none of our judgments may be final, yet any may be absolute."

No development is more important than the continual exalting our ideals of what the sacred is and requires. Dimly we see that it means the changing of the Natural from being a mere bondage of corruption into being an eternal possession, but were we able to say, "Here is what is, what has been, what always will be the fulness of the sacred," the world would have no revelation for us any more. Finality, therefore, in this sense, so far from being essential to our standards of truth, beauty and goodness, would be a denial of their endless possibility. Nothing high is ever seen which is not a call to look for something higher. And yet this fact that every sacred ideal is the prophecy of further achievement does not hinder its being, amid the changing, a fixed goal and even a secure achievement, without which experience would be mere meaningless and profitless flux of events, and at least all higher development would lack the stimulus of possession as well as all direction.

It is clear at this point that we are here dealing with another example of Oman's own method as we have already outlined it. Starting from the highest vision of truth as it has been passed on to us by the prophets and the New Testament writers, the whole story of religion is seen as leading up to the great reconciliation with God in the secular tasks and duties of every day in which they rejoiced. To Oman, the men of the Bible have found a meaning running through even the greatest disasters, and their insight into that meaning has given them the sure knowledge that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28.) because they have found the assurance, through the death of Christ, that the order of love, kindness, fellowship, is the final order - that is, they know themselves to be "called according to His purpose." Oman believes that because they have this assurance of living in the final order, they never regard any particular state of "apprehension" as the final one, but always look beyond the present to the tasks it presents for the future. Indeed if one were looking
for a text to suit Oman's outlook, the words of St. Paul in Philippians could hardly be bettered: "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfect: but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own." Phil. 3/12 (Revised Standard Version).

This sense of an eternally unfolding world, with increasing tasks for freedom and increasing satisfaction in the fulfilling of them, has been put by another writer of very different interests, but in a way which expressed Oman's view very well indeed:

"The development of events in time, determined by natural and economic causes, and by the conflict of human ideas, is not in itself the process that brings the Kingdom of God. It provides successive situations in which the powers of the Kingdom reveal themselves. The response of men to the challenge of such a situation helps to determine a further situation, in which the challenge is delivered afresh. So far as progress can be affirmed, it consists in the enlargement of the area of facts which are faced by men in response to the challenge of the Kingdom of God, as for example, the conflict to which the Church is called today, in Europe, Asia and America, covers a wider field of human life in all respects than that of the first century -- not merely geographically wider, but wider in the sense of including a whole range of aspects of human life of which the first Christians could be but feebly aware, such as those of economics and of the scientific control of nature. But this is by no means to say that we have progressed towards the realisation of a Utopian "Kingdom of God" upon earth. The expansion and enrichment of civilisation, in which progress is most easily recognised, brings with it not only much that is clearly good, but also new and more powerful forms of evil, and in conflict with such evil the powers of the Kingdom of God are manifested afresh."

Or in Oman's own words:

"... The world and all its secrets are only a fragment half unfolding a still deeper meaning which, as the development of our interest unfolds, we see ever more fully to be beyond us. Here perhaps is the essential attitude of faith. It is that all this mighty frame of the Natural and man as he belongs to it"
have their deepest significance, not in what they are, but in the promise dimly unveiled in such imperfect ideals of the true, the beautiful and the good as we are able to reach out after. Only in this sense does religion rightly cherish a sense of mystery."

This great conception, here so powerfully expressed, is the governing idea behind Oman's discussion of the nature of religion, and the ideals and their embodiments which go to make up the positive religions.

It remains for us to show how religious ideals as the source and spring of moral independence form the coping-stone to this whole construction. We can best place the whole matter in perspective by resorting to Oman's own method and considering shortly his account of the relation between God and the moral personality, a theme which we will develop in much more detail when we come to the actual doctrine of grace. But something needs to be said here, for Oman himself begins with his view of grace, and traces its working down to the roots of religion in the life of primitive man. Let us then go direct to GRACE AND PERSONALITY, and to parallel statements in other works.

"As our moral worth is made secure in God's valuation of us, and our moral progress in being the end of all His dealing with us, God's will alone is the measure and end of our duty, to the exclusion of all consideration of our moral worth or any task of our moral progress. ...

... The love of the Father, in our Lord's teaching, just because it means simply an infinite value set on the possible worth of every moral person, never for a moment means any sparing of the trials or tasks by which evil is undone or good achieved. Yet, knowing this austerity to be love, we can trust God to have a worthy purpose in the most trivial events and a measured care in the most appalling calamities, so that, whether He counts our hairs or crumbles our states, He is alike gracious."

"Man ... through the discipline and duty of life ... is enabled to look forward to the time when God's purpose shall be realised within him as well as around him, not in a subject and enslaved will, but in the instructed and free obedience of heirs of the earth."
... The ideals by which we know and conquer our world are not, like the physical laws by which we manage the material part of it, inferences from it, which we are to keep on adjusting to what is, but the essential quality of the standards of the true, the beautiful and the good, is the unrealised which is to be realised: and they cease to be standards the moment any attempt is made to infer them from facts or adjust them to facts. Yet when we accept their claim and, in the power of it, assert our independence in the face of all happenings, environment does not resist, but only then fully responds.

From the conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and that, to the end, duty is the only way our bleared eyes can discern or our feeble steps travel, the poet can extend his faith and say of duty: 'By Thee the eternal heavens are fresh and strong.'

Religion and freedom are here most intimately linked, for it is on the basis of his religion that man asserts his independence in the face of the Natural forces and influences of his environment. But before we can fully appreciate the depth of this position, we must turn again to Oman's debt to the Romantics, and particularly to Schleiermacher.

Throughout his work, as we have seen, Oman protests against the narrow view of freedom held by the philosophical age which led up to Kant. For them, freedom was merely autonomy, which they interpreted to mean the right to refuse to accept anything as true unless overwhelmed with evidence; an attitude which comes out most clearly in the Deists. But, as we have already noted, Oman shares with the Romantics an acute awareness of the wonder and variety of the world, and of its deep mystery which man is called upon to make his own. It is therefore almost with a kind of philosophic grief that he writes of the Rationalists, as he calls them:

'There was no humble sense that every truth we miss is spiritual loss and every opportunity we let slip moral failure, not the sense of high responsibility for all truth and all righteousness but negation, was the crown of emancipation and
virtue ... True independence is a search for truth, an insight, a vision, a pursuit of what, as it were, must be caught on the wing. But truth was expected to be a sort of tame domestic animal to be led in on a tether of rationalization. If there should happen to be truth not amenable to immediate individual demonstration, so much the worse for the truth, and not so much the worse for the person who misses it."

Although Oman had a high sense of the need for autonomy, and saw that this was the lesson which the Romantic period overlooked in its interest in a varied and interesting world, he saw also that it had to be conceived in more than negative terms.

It was Schleiermacher who provided the key to this door. Schleiermacher had convinced Oman that religion could best be understood, not as a mere set of cosmological ideas, but as the pioneer of man's whole experience of the universe in which he lived. In the intuition of the whole, the sense of absolute dependence, man becomes aware also of himself in his place in the All, and rejoices in his unique destiny. Now we have here a different understanding of freedom from that of the present age. In his introduction to the translation of the "REDEHN", Oman tells how Schleiermacher had for long been under the influence of Kant, and had "never thought to question the position that reason is the identical element in all men." But he goes on to argue that the study of other philosophers helped him nearer to the position that he was later to take up, which saw the flowering of the universal reason, not in these elements which were the same in all, but in those which were unique. (OMxxviii). From this point on, religion was for Schleiermacher bound up with the development of individuality, with personality in its uniqueness, unrepeatableness, and the profundity of individual existence of which the Romantic age as a whole made so much. It is true that
Schleiermacher tended towards pantheism in which the individual was simply lost in the Whole. But Oman does not believe that this was his intention.

"The motive of all Schleiermacher's speculation was to find reality for the individual as a whole within a whole." ORxxix.

"As this transaction between man and the Universe is a more personal transaction in Schleiermacher's view than in other philosophies of his time, his religious conception is less pantheistic." PP222.

The individual as such had very considerable value for Schleiermacher, so that if he conceived of the universe as a vast picture in which individuals were objects contributing to the artistic harmony of the whole, he also believed that these individual objects were themselves works of art. It is not merely the whole that counts, but the whole as made up of such individual objects.

The unique individuality of each person is therefore the most important thing about him, is the very "reason" for his existence. This is his freedom, his ability to be unique. But this uniqueness is conceived by Schleiermacher as the flowering, so to speak, of the universe itself - a tree of blossom is nothing without the flowers, yet they are completely dependent upon the tree's life for their particular being. Freedom therefore is individuality, and religion is its pioneer in the sense that within religious experience we come into direct awareness of our absolute dependence on the universe; religion is a thankful acceptance of the destiny, the uniqueness of existence, which the Whole is attempting to express through each.

The fruit of this insight is to be found in Oman's own work in the way in which he insists that freedom must mean freedom
to be something, a freedom that must be won through insight into the meaning of events and a calm trust in a personal purpose "whether he numbers our hairs or crumbles our states." In expounding Schleiermacher's view he puts it thus:

"Romanticism saw that man must be free, not to be nothing, but to be something; not in a vacuum, but in a world; not in disregard for others, but in possession of the great heritage of the race. All this is summed up by Schleiermacher as freedom in God, and freedom in God may be said to have been the burden of his message."

One could also say that "freedom in God" is the burden of Oman's own message; but it is a freedom that seeks to do justice to autonomy.

Oman's account of the sacred or absolute value in man's experience at once ushers man into the presence of a purpose greater than that of man himself and, at the same time, confirms his independence; his autonomy in the face of considerations of his own needs and desires, by those intimations of his kinship with purposes beyond his own which he must yet make his own. In evaluating something as sacred he is no longer laying claims to something as good for him, but is recognising that something is laying a claim upon him. This distinction between goods which are good in terms of his purposes and goods whose purpose he must serve is the distinction between natural and supernatural value; and it is in the power of the latter that he finds independence from the former.

In an interesting section of *The Natural and the Supernatural*, Oman shows how, in his view, religious awareness of this sort lies at the foot of all independence. He finds that man has been variously defined as a rational animal, a
tool-using animal, a laughing animal, and a religious animal. The first three marks of man presuppose the ability to stand off, so to speak, from the world in which he lives, not to accept it at its face value and be absolutely dependent on its moods. The faculty of reason, the power to find real relations beneath appearances, implies a dissatisfaction with mere appearance; the ability to use tools implies the presence of purposes the world does not serve just as it is; laughter is possible only when the face value of a situation has already been transcended. When this is considered the problem emerges -

"... It is very improbable that man won four separate and unconnected victories over his environment. One must have been the stem and the other the branches, and the stem must have been what gave him faith to stand on his own feet in the changing flood of circumstances...

Only one thing in life challenges in its own right man's submission to his environment, and that is the sacred. But he 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,' even granting that it was said of what to us is the insane 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."

It may appear that this would establish only freedom in the sense of autonomy. But the absolute values, the ideals by the power of which man wins independence from the world, are not free only in the sense that they set us free and enable us to transcend the immediate desire or need of the moment, but also in the sense
that they only do this as they are made our own by individual
insight and consecration, as they become part of our own being.
They do not remain merely external to us, but must be accepted
and built in, so to speak, to the very fibre of our own spiritual
being. And since these ideals are, as we have seen, intuitions
of the meaning of things which interpret to us the purpose of the
passing flux of events, we are what we are in complete dependence
upon that actual nature of the universe, or rather, of the
purpose within it.

It is in this way that Oman seeks to do justice to both
sides of the paradox of freedom as both freedom to be something
and freedom to be autonomous: it is not sufficient to say with
the Romantics that we are the product of the Universal Reason,
nor is it sufficient to hold that we are free only as we deny
everything that is not as plain as a pikestaff, or that does not
force our assent. Individuality and autonomy can be united only
when the idea of absolute value is taken seriously as a confrontation
with life's meaning on the one hand, and as calling us to real and
responsible decision on the other.

... At the very spring of our consciousness, we find
this inseparable demand to be independent by the right dependence,
and dependent only by the right independence. ... Our dependence
and independence are no more alien, but are united in equal
marriage. We are not independent, as though we could ride
over reality; but, alas, we are not dependent, as though
reality could simply ride over us. The moral personality is
neither absolute and self-contained, not overborne by a force
absolute and wholly outside; but it must, in a manner, be always
at home, even while it lives most abroad. It knows nothing
of will, except as it responds to the attractions of a varied
outer world, but it only truly realises its will by possessing
all things and not being under the power of any; it has no
ideals except as it seeks the ultimate nature of reality, but
it cannot find them till it return and discover them as the
absolute requirements of its own constitution; it has no
knowledge except by going out of itself and forgetting itself
in a varied world, but it can garner what it brings back
only as its own experience.

In the end it is a question of the world, that
world which is ever new and provided, yet ours as it comes
within our horizon; ours, moreover, to be possessed, and not
merely contemplated and accepted. Even when it is a
monster, there is still trembling on its lips the secret
whereby it can be turned into our fair princess; and religion
is concerned simply with the discovery of that secret.
III. The Supernatural & Theology.

"By the sacred, in particular, all religion is distinguished; and all religious thinking is right thinking only as it is about what is truly sacred. The Supernatural is not a further inference from it as from effects to a cause, but is felt and valued in it; and, when, separated from this manifestation, it is without content and deprived of all reality, because it no longer deals with an environment, but is mere abstract argument about the universe.

... The sphere of religion is not the value or the feeling or both, but the environment known by means of them.

The recognition of what is ultimately of value involves, at the same time and in the very act, an apprehension of the reality which so values them, of the nature of the purpose which is "driving at" their realisation. This unity of feeling, valuing, and knowing a reality, which is so important for Man, we can best make clear to ourselves if we begin again, as he does, at the top, the highest experience. In prophetic religion the awareness that the deepest purpose of the cataclysmic events which they witnessed was, ultimately, the formation of a truly moral and independent fellowship of persons was at the same time an apprehension of God as a holy, righteous and merciful Person. The second was not a deduction from the first, nor was the first a conclusion derived from having had communicated to them in some way, propositions conveying information concerning the second. What we come in contact with when we acknowledge absolute ideals is not merely a set of "values," which are the figment of the imagination of philosophers of religion who abstract these "values" from the living relation to all environment with which alone religion is concerned. Religion is a living intuition of the purpose in life, and is orientated towards the actual and imperative business of finding a meaning in the "flux of event." The intuition of
ideals, therefore, is not of something static, but is, as we have expressed it earlier, a realisation of what the universe is "driving at."

The pitfall of all science, Oman is sure, is the laboratory technique. And this applies by no means least to the science of theology. In his last book, HONEST RELIGION, he has some very instructive ways of voicing this opinion.

"Perhaps it is a myth that Galileo discovered the laws of motion by dropping stones from the leaning tower of Pisa, and that Newton extended their application to the planets by observing the fall of an apple. But if so, like many other myths, they are truer than history. The only motions we know are those close around us: and while it is marvellous how they can be extended, we should never forget that it is only an extension of what is around us. Here motion is never alone, but is accompanied by much else, our own interference in particular, without which all science would be a closed book. But when motion is removed to the heavenly bodies, we know absolutely nothing about it except that it obeys the laws of motion. Then having been stripped bare by removal into the otherwise unknown, it was brought back naked to explain the earth and all the fullness thereof, in a way so simple and complete and level to what we might do by our own understanding, that people only needed the help of a few large and learned words like 'epiphenomenon' and 'physiophobic parallelism' to explain mechanically the very thoughts and interests by which alone we can know anything or deal with it in any way, in flat contradiction to daily experience and in a way to reduce to absurdity everything, and in particular our own minds, without which we could know nothing, not even this theory."

"Against similar arguing in religion I have spent still more energy than on this kind of arguing against it, but I now see that this also depends on the same use of argument sending our experience into the unknown, where ignorance reduces it to an abstraction, and then bringing it back stripped of its perplexities and uncertainties and so made infallible by its very nakedness, in order to rule out life's irreducible perplexities."

The living reality with which theology deals is religion, and the two must on no account be confused, for religion is the outcome of preoccupation with the burden and pressure of living situations, "the burden of the concrete individual, with all this means of positive conflict with the
world"; (N5415), while theology is one grade removed, as science is from the actual world. The actual religions have been forged by men faced with such things as the break up of tribal society or the downfall of the state, and who have faced them honestly without any attempt to evade the problems they pose, in the belief that the answer is not chaos or "mysterium tremendum", but a deeper and more adequate purpose that seeks something beyond the things at present passing away. It is of the very first importance to remember that when Oman speaks of religion he is speaking of this "existential" situation from which theologies grow, but must maintain contact with if they are to be anything more than "abstract arguments about the universe." Civilisation with its leisure produced by elaborate cushioning mechanisms can evolve speculations which may go by the name of religion, but just because they are so largely produced as mere ideas of the leisureed, and do not arise from a direct partaking of the dialogue of experience, they are at best speculations which may be of interest to cosmology, and have no real relation to what Oman calls religion.

Yet theology is not of secondary importance in the sense that it may be forgotten in the task of getting on with the business of being religious in the immediate sense. We cannot avoid what Oman calls "thinking things together", for there is one human mind in the business of dealing with reality by right feeling, right acting and right thinking, and it acts as a unity in each. If thinking is neglected, the inadequate theory soon begins to impoverish the experience of the actual world.

[We must not think] ... theory of no importance, because
it always in time works back into our experience and comes to
determine the kind of experience of which we are capable. If
we are not continually seeing our theory through our experience,
we shall come to see our experience through our theory. Thus
the theory of the Indian, about the world of the senses being
illusion, makes the world to him in time a dream and paralyses
his practical dealing with it. In the same way, what we may
call our theology is of vital importance, for though our practical
spiritual world may long continue very different from our
theoretical, the theoretical will gradually bring it to its
own level, so that, as a matter of fact, nothing has more
determined the history of the race than men's conscious, though
not necessarily their formulated, theologies, meaning by that
their ideas about the Supernatural. Thus, even for seeing
the highest, we may say that the greatest need of every age is a
true theology.

Religion is not theology, any more than life is science,
the Supernatural, like the Natural, being known only by direct
experience. But, man, at least as he develops, cannot regard
any environment as real, unless it is reasonable. This does not
mean that he must assume it to be one rational unity, but it does
mean that he must think it real, if the more he is able to think
things in it together the better ordered they seem to be.
Moreover, rational man cannot even feel or judge aright except
in relation to this pursuit of objective knowledge. Not merely
is he debased by wilfully perverting the truth, but unless he
is consecrated to a wholehearted purpose to know his environment
as it exists, he cannot be penetrating or even genuine. Feeling
it through, living it through, and thinking it through all go
together.

The task of theology, therefore, seems to be one of consolidation
of the insights won from actual experience with environment "in
the raw," and this consolidation in turn serves as a vantage point
from which we may reach out to a still deeper interpretation of
experience. There can never be, on these terms, a final
theology, because theology is itself dependent upon our ideals
which are themselves found to point beyond themselves the more
our achievement draws level with them.

Theology should be systematic thinking, not to force
everything into a system, but to set forth in order the relations
as well as the significance of our highest intuitions.

But just because theology is "the consolidation of
insights won" and not merely a collection of speculative ideas,
the theologies of the actual religions have a great deal to tell us about the actual nature of religion itself, once we realise that what they are attempting to express is simply the living interpretation to which men were driven by the events of the life in which they are so much concerned, and which is "appointed to disturb" their settled acceptance of customary sequence. The Natural, as Oman conceives it, is really defined, not in any scientific or philosophical terms but in terms of its values — those relative to the needs of man's life and survival. This Natural life is constantly subject to change, tumult and even disaster, and this all the more the higher man builds his societies and his civilisations. At the animal stage, the individual has so little at stake in the world that vast changes may take place without in the least disturbing it; but as soon as man comes upon the scene with his more complex life which depends on tribal unity, the strength of the city state, or the continuance of a highly complex social organism such as modern industrial civilisation, disturbances to these structures begin to pose the question, "What is the meaning of it?" Religion is man's attempt to answer this question, and theologies are the mummified answers he has given to the problem in the peculiar forms in which has been presented to him.

We ought to note, once again, that Oman is still using his method, and, beginning from the highest type of religion, is looking from that vantage point in an attempt to discern the meaning of lower levels. The Biblical faith was quite aware of the activity of a Person in the events of history,
and one of Oman's most arresting sermons deals with the way God is seen by the prophets at work overthrowing all that man has built, so that at last, in the 'still, small voice', that is, in the unearthly silence that follows complete and utter disaster, the people may return to faithfulness and loyalty to the highest, as the only enduring reality. (PW16ff.) From this vantage-point, Oman sees all history as personal intervention, the patience of God shaking the foundations upon which man's life is thus far laid, and calling him to reverence something higher. Even in primitive religion this is present, for there the savage is aware that all is not stable, and that he may not depend on his daily bread being handed out from Mother Nature's cupboard with the regularity which he would like. His society is small, his natural needs are few, so that there is not a great foundation to shake — yet it is enough, even at that stage, to suggest to man that there is something beyond the natural.

We have used the phrases "social organisation," "the foundations of life." In place of these phrases Oman speaks in terms of "unities," which we have already had occasion to mention; we must now attempt to show how they are related to the problems of religious evolution.

First we must recall how, in Oman's theory of knowledge, we begin not with fragments of a world which we must in some way assemble until we have the varied world of experience, but rather that experience begins with one universe and, as interest quickens, begins to concentrate upon individual things within that unity, but never apart from it. We saw also how this unity of undifferentiated awareness (to use Oman's own phrase) acts as what
he calls a "form of the infinite," as a mode under which man experiences a sense of the absoluteness of his world. When interest picks out certain objects within that general field and concentrates upon them as individual things, something of that absoluteness is "poured into" them, and they become in a sense sacred - we may recall Oman's own intense interest in particular birds and animals in his childhood experience.

Primitive man's awareness of the Supernatural in his experience is of this sort, and it is related to his natural surroundings in an analogous way. In the beginnings of religion there is no clear conception of what the power is with which man is confronted - rather his whole world of experience comes under its shadow - his sacred reality is an "undifferentiated" one. It is only an awe-inspiring something; he can in no way define it. We can only describe his experiences in ways that go beyond what the savage himself is aware of - as though, perhaps, his world is alive throughout. In no sense has he secularised any part of it, dividing the material from the spiritual, or in any other way breaking it up. He simply meets this one Natural-Supernatural world as one. Oman quotes Bergson with approval:

"Bergson may be right in thinking that a direct sense of life is a heritage from man's animal ancestry. The animal, he argues, having no instrument but its body, and no way of managing it but a direct consciousness of its life, has a much more direct consciousness of life than is possessed by civilised man, who uses tools and has turned his attention outwards to managing by them his world. The explanation of the universality of the 'inanimate' among all primitive peoples would then be that man does not lose this direct consciousness of life till he begins to use tools and turns his attention from his life in the world to conquering the world for his own ends."
But Oman would not have us confuse a sense of the world as alive with a sense of the world as sacred; although the two are fused in one, the former is only a way of conceiving, a form for the latter, for the same live Natural world is valued in two ways at once - in terms of man's needs and desires, and in terms of a power in it which man must serve.

In this way particular objects with which man has to do, and especially those in relation to which he is specially conscious of a power behind things, take on for him the character of embodiments of this power. This Oman calls the "particularising" holy. (N364).

Now primitive man simply accepts his environment, because his wants are so few that even the niggardliness of nature seems bounty to him. But should he ever find himself in a situation in which his world seems to be withholding its goodness from him, when for example the accepted and working forms of tribal society are breaking up under the pressure of a more agricultural existence, and when this sort of situation demands a creative attempt to manage his world, two ways lie open: he can attempt by whatever means possible, such as ecstasy and asceticism, to keep his Supernatural "undifferentiated," so that no particular tasks and duties issue from it; or he can accept the new situation as a challenge to him from a Supernatural that is beginning, from this point onwards, to take on a character instead of remaining simply one vague unknown. This point, in Oman's view, is the great-water-shed of religion.
There are two types of development. The primitive and mystical is one; and the polytheistic, legal and prophetic the other; and this deeply concerns our subject, because it depends on views of the Natural, either as the veiling or as the unveiling of the Supernatural. In other words, the former seeks the eternal in one unchanging reality which the evanescent as illusion only hides, the latter in the meaning and purpose of the evanescent itself.

Polytheism, with all its faults, testifies to man's acceptance of a new kind of Supernatural - a broken, changing one, instead of a vague unity of power of some kind behind all things. In Oman's language, the unity of awareness has begun to break up under the pressure of particular tasks and is beginning to form into unities of interest, within each of which there is a sense of the Supernatural. While strictly there is no before and after, in principle the moral aspect of faith is before the theological, and man's apprehension of particular problems which claim his whole attention and resource, carries with it the breaking up of the Supernatural in his theology into spheres which correspond to those spheres of his interests. This is the explanation of the pantheon of gods that makes up polytheism; and although the members of this pantheon must have been at the beginning very ill conceived, and still remained fixed in the particular situations in which they were first apprehended, yet as the tasks accepted become more and more specifically human ones, so the Supernatural takes on a human aspect, thus bringing about a freer situation.

Though the relation to humanised divinities seems only to increase chaos, it is a very important advance when unities fixed by interest and the context of happenings are disturbed, and the mind can move more freely in personal forms from which may arise questions about what is the higher reverence and the truly sacred.
Not only is the theology of the gods irrational to us, but also we find it very difficult indeed to enter into the state of mind which entertains the whole scheme. But this is largely because we expect the individual gods to mean the same as one God does to us in terms of transcendence, holiness and justice in personal activity. But, as Oman reminds us, there is a semiconscious polytheism even among so-called monotheists.

Even much maturer persons do not, when engaged in the distracting business of managing their world, always escape from a polytheistic mind merely by professing a higher religion, but the centres of their interests are still apt to be the centres of the universe. When the interest is in creed and worship, then God is no respecter of persons and, if the shadow of a heart-shaking war do not intrude, no mere tutelary deity of the state. But when other interests are absorbing, there is a business god who shows a man's worth by his substance, a social god who, like the French nobleman's deity, would think twice before condemning a man of his quality, and a patriotic deity who would have deplorably neglected his business if he suffered any real calamity to happen to the nation. So long, indeed, as managing the world is concerned more with privileges than responsibilities we are all polytheists, with a dim awareness of the universe as the nimbus of each of our deities.

Monotheism could come upon the scene only when polytheism had created the problems which it had to solve - once the state was built up, and the more complex social organisms had begun to assume the status of a natural environment fulfilling the now vastly increased needs of man, any threat to that organism caused him furiously to think and to look for ideals that could be served even by the downfall of accepted social forms.

From this situation the apocalyptic religions emerge.

The monotheistic religions ... continue the problems of polytheism, seeking to achieve unity in the varied world we apprehend. To them the existence of evil, both physical and moral, is so real that the sharp division it creates in the world makes it impossible to regard the present world as any kind of fixed, all embracing unity of rule. Yet this is the beginning of their task, not the end. ...
the Natural in spite of its evil a revelation and true possession, and in its changes the unfolding of a purpose which is eternal. Thus the Natural is for them at once to be denied and possessed.

The lower forms of apocalyptic religion are still to be found bearing the marks of the problems which gave them birth: as it is man's material existence in the society and state which is threatened by change and disaster, their answer to the problem is conceived in terms of material well-being; but there is the all important factor that such material well-being is seen as dependent upon attitudes of mind and spirit which more and more become released from the material in which they are expressed. In the lower apocalyptic religions, ceremonial rather than moral uncleanness is the great sin; but the moral element is already present, however slightly, in the idea of good and evil powers, and only needed further fire of circumstances to root out the idea of material satisfaction altogether, and with it the idea of ritual conforming to the will of the good power. But the more this takes place, and the more the Natural is seen to be wholly changing and passing, (so that it can never in itself offer the satisfaction required,) the nearer this type of religion comes to finding one purpose of good working through the whole movement of the Natural. This faith is prophetic monotheism, to which there is no longer a devil, an evil power; there is only unwillingness to be reconciled to this "one increasing purpose" in all its breadth and sweep. The discussion of prophetic monotheism we will leave until we come to deal with the actual content of the Christian faith in Oman's thought.
Probably at no time was the idea of ceremonial cleanness wholly divorced from some ethical feeling: and so long as this is above the level of the worshippers, it may be both a discipline and an education. Nor does any progress wholly deliver from something of awe in reverence or from some dependence upon material embodiments of the sacred, though the former should be exalted to the sublime and the latter to the symbolical. The Old Testament is, on the whole, a record of progress in both.

But this Polytheist-Legalist-Prophetic strain is not the only possible line of development: there is also the possibility of mysticism. Since historical, empirical man is constantly subjected to the buffets of change, and this the more he becomes involved in the stuff of history itself, such as personal possessions, societies with political interests and so on, it is not surprising that man should seek a way out of these troubles other than working through them to a meaning that includes them yet goes beyond them. The whole idea that the Natural manifests a purpose beyond itself is rejected in mysticism, and the possibility of finding such a purpose is eradicated, root and branch, by attempts, primitive and exalted, to find the unity of existence apart from a courageous dealing with its complexities.

The natural function of the oneness of mind is to bring all we know into one varied meaning, but by effort the mind can be made a sort of 'vacant interlunar cave'. The supreme task of this kind of mysticism is to be rid of the multitudinous conflicting elements of the concrete personality, by suppressing desire, purpose and self-affirmation, and seeking to reach unity by ecstatic vision, beyond sense and beyond intellect. Being an attempt to have oneness of mind without the burden of the sacred task of thinking all its thoughts and experiences together, it is, as all form without content is, unreal. SN145.

The feature of the theology of mysticism to which Oman has his fundamental objection is the fact that it is a mere "via negativa"—it has nothing to say about the nature of God. He is the ineffable,
the unknowable; and this in fact means, Oman would say, that He has no character. A Person must have a character and a will by which that is expressed - but the God of the mystics has neither, and sets no practical tasks for men. In fact, the mystic's way is only a more exalted way than that of the primitive Yogi or dervish of shutting out all suggestion that the Supernatural is anything more than a vague something, in the presence of which one can congratulate oneself on being "in tune with the infinite" without having to take any practical action to realise that affinity. Such a featureless infinite cannot impose any tasks in which its nature might be revealed, and differentiations cannot appear within it.

This primary evasion is buttressed, Oman considers, by the fact that, since the mind need exercise no moral discrimination towards the Supernatural, the emotion experienced with reference to such a Supernatural, is not a reverence absorbed in knowing its object rightly, and so forgetful of itself, but is rather the "awesome holy" of which we have spoken in dealing with Otto. As this experience is of what Otto calls "mysterium tremendum", its very force is such as to shed a light of unreality over common and everyday life and its problems, and to give the impression that this featureless ecstasy is real contact with ultimate reality.

But Oman is confident that actual contact with the "existential" situations of which we have spoken, and which presented themselves to those who developed the apocalyptic type of religion, soon makes an end of this mystic variety,
for the demands of life, when they are met in the force of circumstances, are too insistent to be got rid of in this easy way. He finds it significant that the author of "Ecclesiastes" was one of the ruling and not of the labouring classes; and he maintains that Indian mysticism is best accounted for by the fact that a caste system gave a certain group the leisure to wonder whether life is worth all the trouble.

Even Buddha's wail that all life is misery ... is not possible for hardworking people, who have to bear another kind of burden.

Even the lower forms of apocalyptic religion, Zoroastrianism and Hebrew Legalism, had their character largely determined by a struggle with nature and cruel foes which was too hard to afford leisure for the luxury of self-pity and too insistent to be dismissed as illusion.

These two lines of development possible for religion are the result of what Oman considers to be the essence of religion - a practical relation to the world, and not a merely theoretical understanding of it. It can take only two forms, a negative and a positive, and both forms exemplify the nature of the Supernatural environment, the one as a purposeful order by free loyalty to which man may unify his environment in such a way as to find victory and peace even when change and history seem to undermine all his greatest achievements; the other as a sphere in which what matters most is freedom itself, and which will not force its values upon man apart from his own willingness to receive them, but will even allow him to use its sanctions to shield himself from the language of the dialogue. But
... We reply to God just by what we are. It is not that God will one day judge us, but at this moment we are carrying on a dialogue with Him, by which we are judging ourselves. Life is just one unending dialogue with God in which none of us can escape in the end from saying exactly what is in our hearts. Emerson says: 'I cannot hear what you say, what you are speaks so loud.' In this dialogue with God, nothing speaks at all except what we are. DG93.

And because our relation with environment is of this sort, we cannot in any direct sense define what the Supernatural is, and even our best theology is only a second-hand description of it in terms of ideas.

The supreme task, the task which has more than any other marked human progress, has been to discover the true Supernatural, and this means again to exercise the true sense of the holy and have the right judgment of the sacred. Only as we are related to it and it to us by the right judgment inspired by the right feeling, can we with profit ask: What is the Supernatural? NS72.

Thus, for Oman, the study of theology is not a study undertaken for its own sake, but, on the one hand, to enter into the relation in which earlier religious thinkers felt themselves to stand to the Natural, and, on the other, to articulate and clarify that relation for ourselves. It has an essentially practical task, and not a speculative one; and its picture of the nature of God Who meets us in the concreteness of everyday life can never be substituted for actual and living intercourse with Him there.
CHAPTER 7.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

1. Moral Autonomy.

It is only in the light of all the foregoing that we can rightly understand Oman's contribution to the actual content of Christian theology itself. The centre of this contribution is in the doctrine of Grace, but his reinterpretation of that doctrine cannot rightly be understood except against this whole background, for it forms part of it, the climax of all his thought. It grows out of, and crowns, philosophical and theological lines of thought and conviction which at first sight seem quite alien to it, but which, as we grow more conversant with the way in which Oman's mind works, are seen to be part of that attempt at an "Honest Religion," facing contemporary thought in the conviction that if we would only allow ourselves to rise to the height of life's great argument, religion's interpretation of life is by far the most satisfying. Yet in the movement of his own thought, Oman did not begin with philosophical positions and work from there to a doctrine of grace - rather he began, as we have seen, with the actual experience of the grace of God as he understood it, and worked back from it to a world view which was necessitated by it, We have therefore come now to that point in his thought which makes sense of, and unifies, all the rest.

Consonant with his whole method, Oman begins his consideration of grace by considering first the moral personality with which grace must deal.
The supreme question ... regarding grace, would be, What, amid all it does with us, is the end it seeks to serve?

If to that question we can give one answer, the succour of moral persons, clearly the way to understand the nature of grace is not to theorise about the operation of omnipotence, but to ask ourselves, What is moral personality, and, how is it succoured?

If grace ... be the operation of love, the essence of which is to have its eyes directed away from its own dignity or any form of self-display and towards the object of its care, an inquiry into its nature must be vain which does not start by considering the human nature it would succour. In that case, the first question is not, What is the nature of God's grace? but, What is the nature of a moral person? GP37.

The sense of God's aid and man's responsibility are found to increase together. When we are most delivered from vanity, by the consciousness that by the grace of God we are what we are, we are brought under a profounder sense of our responsibility for every thought as well as every deed. VA224.

We must therefore turn our attention now to Oman's view of moral personality, and draw together the threads we have been tracing in various ways up to this point. The reassertion of the autonomy of the moral self Oman took to be the lesson of both Reformation and Enlightenment. Over the long period of the middle ages, man had been in a state of "pupilage," following the apron-strings of Mother Church wherever she chose to lead. Now Oman has no quarrel with this state as an historical necessity, and even believes that such a condition may need to be relived by man from time to time, to rest him from the burden of freedom and its incessant demands. But at the best such a condition is to be regarded only as a halting-place upon the way to freedom; and as such it is ever in danger of becoming a retreat from the strenuous life of freedom.
Perhaps the sad story of man's whole history is that he would rather have 'bondage with ease than strenuous liberty' and that this is just what life is appointed to disturb. HR40.

Freedom is a burdensome task and God does not impose the whole weight of it upon us at once. Therefore he appoints the statutory element in life and in religion to be a substitute for freedom when men are weary of it, and a discipline when they misuse it. It is a legitimate though only a temporary resting place. History thus consists of recurring periods of Law and Gospel. The Promise always was before the Law, but the Law always is a necessary preparation for the Promise. Yet such periods of external rule are always more or less marks of present failure, so that the duty of every man who can appropriate the promise of freedom is to live, not for the Law, but for the Gospel." PF418.

Every living institution ought to be attempting to abolish itself; every statutory arrangement should be anticipating a higher than legal obedience; every appointment by men for others should contemplate itself as a discipline for teaching men to recognize no appointment but their own. Human authority may have done much to secure the conditions of man's freedom, but, if it is to do still more, it must stand farther and farther back from man and leave him to a higher rule than man's.

PF417.

The life of the Middle Ages was of abundant variety - far more than we are accustomed to think but all its thought and action were marked by the absolute confidence with which it identified religious faith with the Church's creed and religious duty with the Church's requirements. ... There was the buoyant confidence of a youth who has begun to enquire, but has never yet thought of questioning his father's omniscient wisdom and absolute goodness. In his unconsciousness he enjoys a sincerity of faith and a reality of freedom which are of great value for his education and which he may not wilfully destroy; and he may well look back with regret when he is compelled to judge in a perplexing life by the sole guidance of his own conscience. But it is, nevertheless, a state of pupillage which, in the natural course of things, will inevitably pass, and to which, once he has left it behind, he can no more return than a chicken to its shell." PF6-7.

The greatest thinker of the movement (Aufklärung) conceived it to be the arrival of the race at the stage of manhood, when we must take on our own shoulders responsibility for our own convictions, as well as for our own actions, because we ought to know that even a true belief is not for us truth, unless we ourselves see it to be true, and even a right action not moral unless we ourselves discern it to be right. GP4.
It (the Aufklärung) affirmed that truth is not truth for us, except as we ourselves see it; and that right is not righteous, except as we ourselves determine it; and that to determine our own beliefs by our own reason and our own duty by our own conscience, is man's highest and most personal concern, which he may not delegate with honour. Thus, although it was too negatively stated, the result was to set up, against all authorities external to it, the authority of the witness of reality to itself, and to make it our duty to defer to it alone. For this reason Kant regarded it as man's arrival at intellectual manhood.

Above all, serious thought in our time has been driven to one idea — that we must seek the spiritual in the sphere of freedom. ... All God's dealing with us is to set us free, or else it has no other interpretation than the physical nexus of cause and effect, and looks forward to no goal of events, no purpose of the ages.

Salvation is the succour of our true personality into freedom and the expression of God's essential personality in love. Salvation is the succour of our true personality into freedom and the expression of God's essential personality in love.

Such passages as these make it quite clear that the central moment in all of Oman's thought about the Christian faith, the idea of "the glorious liberty of the children of God", interpreted in terms of moral independence, must receive our first consideration if we are to understand all else he has to say.

In seeking the philosophical background of this aspect of Oman's thought we go directly, of course, to Kant. Although we have already described Oman as a Romantic, we must never forget that the influence of the most un-Romantic "philosopher of Protestantism" is so strong in him as to make his type of Romanticism something quite unique, so that he cannot easily be classified. (I have noticed several times in conversation with others, and in reviews which deal with Oman, how his own independence of "schools" has been noted; the remark of one reviewer, "Oman is a Ritschlian — with a difference," is typical). The two dominant figures in Oman's thought are Kant
and Shakespeare— and if with the latter he indentifies that
love of the colourful and the various, the individual and the
cr;rete in life, in the former he finds the expression of
all his awareness of the moral seriousness, amounting at times
to darkness and gloom, which pervades his writings. None of
Kant's predecessors can compare with him in the thoroughness
with which he presented his view of ethics, and the earnestness
with which he desired it to be carried through. It must not,
however, be thought that it was merely to Kant that Oman went
back in his desire to find an adequate presentation of the
rigour of morality; rather, as Brunner expresses it

Immanuel Kant had enjoyed the advantage of Protestant
instruction in preparation for Confirmation, . . . he knew his
Bible well, and . . . behind his Categorical Imperative lies
the narrative of the giving of the Law on Sinai . . .

Oman went to Kant because he found in him, as in no other
philosopher, the awareness of the absoluteness of the divine
command. In the best of the Romantics he found this distinction
blurred by the relativities of their evolutionary theories, so
that we find it to be a constantly recurring theme in his
thought, that a doctrine of evolution does not necessarily
imply relativity in moral standards. And in one passage this
is definitely linked with Kant himself.

The absolute distinction upon which Kant based all his
teaching has been blurred and toned down by misapplication
of the doctrine of Development. But, as Kant himself argued,
an absolute distinction is not affected by the fact that it
comes slowly to recognition. It is not by a Physics of
this but by a Metaphysics, not by an account of how morals
come to realisation in the world, but by an account of what
they ought to be though no mortal had attained, that we must
rule our action. Kant was ready to admit the possibility of
evolution, and to him it did not seem to affect in any way
the absolute claims of the moral reason, a truth which, if we
could recover it, would be iron in the blood of our age. So acutely aware is he of the need for a thoroughgoing recognition of the place of absoluteness in the moral demand, that he brings against Ritschl, to whom he owes so much in other ways, a criticism along these lines. The Ritschlian school itself owed a great deal to Kant, interpreting all religion in terms of power for moral victory, but Oman's impression of Ritschl himself is that he does not carry this aspect of his work far enough.

The defect ... is the impression of fluidity in the system of moral law. ... There was an idea of God which made men think he required to be appeased, which was pagan not Christian, and a Father's pardon was too much obscured by the civic idea of State condonation. ... But after Ritschl's desert in exposing the roots of these evils has been acknowledged and even warmly appreciated, something still remains which is not the result of a mistaken theology, but of man's deepest religious need. There is a sense in which men feel they need to be reconciled to the Law of God which they have broken as well as to God Himself. If freedom involves the reality of choice which Ritschl maintains, it must involve an amazing relation to the moral order in which alone it can find its sphere and which it is yet in a position to disturb. Reconciliation to God must in that case involve more than the recognition of his honour, and Ritschl's failure to recognise that more is involved in his premises only marks his inability to rid himself of the idea of sin as the mere necessary shadow of evolution, which he had inherited from Romanticism.

The great need, therefore, and the task which Oman sets himself, is to bring into a fruitful relation the insights of both Kant and the Romantics; to show that freedom may have endless possibilities before it, and at the same time to retain the absolute significance of the choice and the possibility of failure at the present moment.
We must carry back with us the historical sense of the
nineteenth century - the sense of process, of development,
of infinitely varied individuality, and then interpret
everything by the authority of conscience and the significance
of man as man.

How is this fusion to be achieved? By a more careful analysis
of what is actually involved in the notion of moral independence,
we can attempt to rethink the whole Romantic movement in an
attempt to give it a sounder basis on a true doctrine of man's
freedom which will make its sense of history possible, without
allowing it to degenerate into a blind trust in a universal
process.

First, then, let us turn our attention in the direction
of Kant as Oman understood his significance. What was the
element in his thought that gave Oman the clue to the solution
of this problem? Perhaps we can see it best by asking another
question: What is it that gives absoluteness and binding
color to an enunciation of duty? Is it because God
promulgates it from the throne of his power? Many passages
give us Oman's view of this answer.

What is spiritual may in some distant way be attained through... authorities and organisations, but so far is it from being
identical with them, that we might even conceive it opposed
by them.

Nothing is morally observed which is done as the exaction
of God's will, and not, even in submission, as the expression
of our own.

Uninquiring submission to external authority is neither
God's method with man nor a desirable method of human
obedience, but mere exaltation of necessity over freedom.
Insistence on the need of an authority without, not to agree
with the authority within, but to dominate it, is at bottom
a disbelief in the possibility or even the gain of freedom.
... If God can be satisfied with mere submission ... this
strange, perplexing struggle for existence, this world of
imperfect endeavour and plenteous failure, is merely a proof
of His incompetence.
To tell anyone what he should or should not do to be truthful and upright, as more information, is possible and is frequently done, but it is the way to corrupt the conscience, not to educate it. No one else can decide our duty and leave it our own duty; and to suffer our duty to be so determined is, by that very fact, to lack conscientiousness. Even in other departments instruction is not education, but in this it is a usurpation in him who gives and a betrayal of conscience in him who receives.

Oman believes that no matter how great and imposing the authority may be which promulgates external decrees, and no matter how true and high these decrees may be, their very externality is sufficient reason for rejecting them as an adequate basis upon which man may found his moral life.

When it is God Himself who so commands and decrees, the issue is really no different in principle from that involved in the claim of absoluteness on the part of an ancient Church or an infallible book: more antiquity proves nothing of truth or goodness, and considered merely as external guides or standards, neither God nor Church nor Book can be of any real avail.

Oman is not, of course, asking us to doubt the fact that God is the God of truth, or that He has finally revealed His will for man; but he is asking us to see that there is really no revelation until at last a man sees the truth of God with his own eyes. This truth cannot be imposed from without, and accepted with a "fides implicita."

Submission without inquiry, so far from being an assurance of truth and righteousness, is a failure to find anything but the shell of truth, and a rejection of life’s highest duty. The soul that might receive God’s direction, and the God who is waiting to direct, are alike dishonoured. The immediate convenience may be great, but no one ever found truth or righteousness by considering convenience. Truth is not true except on personal conviction, and only error is increased by the multiplication of echoes.
We can discern in such quotations as these that Oman is driving us towards a deeper definition of truth than merely "correct information." His pages abound with such phrases as "Truth is not true except on personal conviction," "What we do not ourselves see may be fact, but it is not in any ideal sense truth," and in all of them he is urging that it is part of the nature of truth that it be truly, sincerely, and individually discerned. Truth is what I, of myself, see to be the actual order of things. From the very nature of truth so defined its absoluteness arises without further difficulty: from the fact that it is self-imposed.

We are here at the point at which Oman owes most to the movement he calls Rationalism, and to Kant in particular. In the opening pages of GRACE AND PERSONALITY, Oman goes so far as to speak of the Reformation as the first intimations of a much more thorough-going revolution in thought, which overthrew in the course of time the whole idea of truth revealed authoritatively in propositional form, as ideas, and began to take an entirely different attitude to the whole question of revelation.

The negative assault was conducted with an apparatus of serious inquiry and criticism never before available, but the new and revolutionary development was the positive assertion that nothing is either true faith or right morality which is not our own; and that, in consequence, external authority is, in principle, an unsound basis.

From this point of view, the Deistic-Rationalist movement is not to be regarded as a mere declension in the powers of human thought, but rather as representing in various ways the attempt to apply this principle of independence in various spheres of
though and action. Thus, although it produced shallow thought such as that of Toland and Collins, it also produced Butler and Kant, who each attempted to restate morality and religion in terms that would preserve the rigour of their demands. It is to this latter aspect of the movement that Oman would direct our attention.

... We must distinguish between the temper of a time and its true lesson and call, whether the temper be intellectual or practical, overflowing with enthusiasm or cautious and critical. ... If the infallibilities have been overthrown by inquiry and reason, they cannot be raised again by affirmation or even by the strongest conviction of their utility.

Of this "true lesson and call," the dictum of Butler (quoted at page 128) is the key, and represents an English version of Kant's famous words about the starry heavens and the Categorical Imperative: "Had [conscience] strength as it has right; had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world." For Oman the point about conscience is that it is the internal authority, the authority of man's own insight into the nature of truth and of right.

Oman finds, however, that this characteristic of conscience as man's own insight is made most explicit in Kant, who, in both his theory of knowledge of the physical world and his account of the nature of ethics, concentrates on what Oman calls the "form of the individual." Just as in our knowledge of the physical, phenomenal world the nature of the knowing mind determines the qualities of things, so an "individual frontier" is laid down also in the ethical sphere. Rules of action, the maxims, are deduced from the nature of the individual himself, and nothing can be required of that individual which infringes these maxims.
According to Oman's understanding of Kant, the individual knows himself as the centre of his moral universe, with the task on his shoulders of determining for himself what his duty is, and acting out of "reverence alone," that is, merely because he has seen that such-and-such a line of action is indeed right. Only when this is done can an action be called truly right, for "there is nothing in the world good except a good will." It is clear that Oman has interpreted this to mean that unless we do take upon ourselves the responsibility for deciding the rightness and wrongness of our actions, they are ethically worthless.

As long as a positive conscientiousness is giving it content, even the negative test, thou shalt not come short of the absolute worth and independence of the individual, is valid and imperative.

This form still justifies the basis in principle of the insistence of Rationalism on the duty as well as the right of determining our own beliefs and deciding our own actions. Its absolute valuation of the individual as an individual with this high task on his hands and apart from all he otherwise is or knows or possesses, as what Kant calls an end in himself; may not say more than the old saying "unto this last as unto thee." Nor may the deciding of our own duty impose more than "be not them that kill the body." Yet once again we see the importance of stating a truth definitely, systematically and on principle, and not merely as an isolated intuition. When once seen, there is no going back on it. Truth is not truth, received merely as accepted opinion; goodness not goodness, determined by the approval of others; beauty not beauty which merely reflects the taste of our neighbours. Without independence, we may have facts, but we have not truth; we may have fashions, but we have not beauty; we may have propriety, but we have not goodness.

But when all this has been said, and when Oman has endorsed the view that "judge for yourselves" is the only adequate basis for the moral life, he has two objections to make against Kant's presentation of it.

(1) The first objection is that, with all it claims for the individual and his significance, it remains merely
negative in character. While it asserts the dignity of the individual with a high privilege of self determination entrusted to him, and while it may even assert that privilege as a duty, a talent which may not be neglected, it has not, at least in the Rationalist tradition, been able to give any positive indication of the actual content of duty. It remains what Oman calls a mere "form of freedom." Because of this it can become, and did become, a refuge from the urgent task of decision on particular problems.

More serious minds, like Kant, set themselves austerely to the task of going as far as reasoning would carry them and the categorical imperative demand; but even they failed to see that these are mere empty forms unless we are humble seekers after the truly sacred in the whole world of men and the infinitely varied possibility of the Natural. There was no sense that truth should be the fulness of all that is, beauty the response to all perfection, and goodness the ideal of all that should be; that finite man, with all his highest knowledge, insight and aspiration, is only reaching out towards them; and that no knowledge, insight or aspiration in all the ages is irrelevant to the task.

Morality, ... left to itself, fails to maintain its own special interest - the absolute independence of the moral person. Merely good resolution is no adequate ground for assuring anyone that he can, because he ought. Unsupported by anything beyond isolated determinations, we are certain to bring down our 'ought' to the measure of what we 'can.' Morality is, thereby, reduced to what the older theologians called 'civil righteousness,' which does not go much beyond decency and fair-play, and leaves out of sight the deepest of all moral requirements, which is not to act conscientiously, but to seek an ever more penetrating conscientiousness. Thereupon, the danger besets us of immoral satisfaction with a perfection which is little more than abstinence from the grosser forms of wrong-doing. And that means dependence on the external standards of our society.

Even Kant did not achieve the humility of realising the feebleness of human striving in the face of the endless possibilities set before us; and the ordinary Rationalist, with his abstractions at second-hand, had a still shallower assurance of being a superior person, on the ground of what is not believed, not admired and not accomplished, till it almost seemed that the crown of worth would be to believe nothing, revere nothing, achieve nothing.
Merely to assert independence of judgment is not enough. There is also required a humility before the possibility of "falling short," a vision of an ultimate requirement in morality which makes filthy rages of all righteousness. By concentration upon the mere autonomy of the individual this fact can soon be lost sight of, indeed its significance cannot be grasped within those limits. If independence merely as such is the be-all and the end-all of morality, then rejection of all but the most obvious duty and truth becomes inevitable, and real morality shrivels to nothing.

One claims that this becomes apparent when we examine the particular maxims which Kant does in fact deduce from the self-legislating individual. As a matter of fact, he asserts, they are really negatives in a positive form and are only rightly understood when translated into the negative. The idea of the good will only being good leads us, Kant tells us, to the conclusion that we must treat other people only as ends and never as means: and actually this only amounts to a prohibition against using others as means to our own ends. But,

Here we have the old problem of individuality. Nothing is taught of how we are to treat everyone, not as an individual in general, but as one person in particular; of how we are to fill our own particular place in the world with our own special responsibility; of how we are never to fall below duty yet never to walk in the fettters of mere rules.

These strictures apply equally to the other maxims:

Do not treat man merely as a means; do not make your rule of life convenience; do not look at things selfishly; do not merely be an echo of other people; do not obey mere impulse and self-interest.
But this is only the fate attendant upon all formalism and all thought that deals only with generalities and abstractions. Real life, and so real morality, is in the concrete, the "existential" situation, and while "road warnings against bypaths are true direction" (NS324), the central interest is not in the way one may not go, but in the multiplicity of directions that are still open, and the personal risk involved in choosing one for oneself and following it up in courage. Such situations are unique, and cannot conceivably be brought into the range of rules.

When we look down the ages, it is obvious that exactly the same things have not been sacred; and, even for ourselves, there are situations which, under certain conditions, challenge all our consecration, which, under other conditions, are of mere secular import. Obviously the sacred is relative to the conscientiousness of the individual and the significance for it of special conditions.

True morality is not negative, does not simply avoid doing certain things, but attempts a creative apprehension of the meaning of a situation as a challenge.

Stevenson says that nothing impresses him so much in the morality of Jesus as that no one is damned for what he does, but always for what he does not do. ... The standard is always of positive aspiration and endurance, and never of mere obedience to rules and absence of offence. NS410.

In the light of such a moral vision, independence is more than the assertion of the right to judge for oneself - it is freedom also to make the judgment, especially in the direst circumstances.

(3) The second accusation which Oman brings against Kant's view of independence is that it divides up man's world into two parts, that of freedom, of noumena, which is given over to the moral life, and that of mathematical calculability, the phenomenal,
forming the sphere of science and of knowledge, as against that of faith.

... There is the difficulty about the theory that, while, in knowledge, it works with a mind, which, entirely by its own fixed forms, provides a rigid, mathematically calculable mechanical world, in action it works with another mind, the essential quality of which is freedom, and which gives a world of ideal purposes, a realm of ends to be determined purely by reverence for their worth. A mind which works in perception by fixed ideas determined by the order of the environment it perceives, but which attains to free ideas by its further dealing with the whole environment in which it lives is credible, but this fundamental dualism is not.

This wedge driven between the two worlds of man's experience is the famous attempt on Kant's part to limit knowledge in order to make room for faith. As we have already noted, the dazzling successes of mathematical physics after Newton seemed to encase man in an iron frame of a world, in which any freedom to which he might claim to exercise seemed an illusion. Thus began the great problem in philosophical thought which we can broadly describe as "Spirit versus Nature." Man himself stands at the end of a long succession of attempts to solve this problem.

To the nature of his own conviction in the matter we have already referred in passing. He criticised Kant for wrongly formulating the problem as, "If physical fixity is certain, what room can be made for freedom?" and suggests that a better way of stating the issue would be, "Freedom we are sure of - what then is the place of fixity and order?"

Had he made this beginning, so necessary for his position, he would have seen that he was dealing neither with pure reason nor with a theory of knowledge: and then he would not have given the impression that the mind manufactures all its perceptions; that the world of phenomena derives no significance
from the noumenal world; that freedom is not exercised in
the only world we know; that there is no connexion between
the world of scientific necessity and the world of freedom.

If, then, we begin with Oman at the world of the poet and the
prophet, the world of individual insight and independence-in-responsibility, we find that a true statement of the
position shows that we come to know the fixity of the physical
order, its dependability when we act in it, through the very
exercise of our freedom and through the very attempt to attain
the goals that we set up for ourselves. The very idea of
an ordered whole within which laws apply could not have occurred
to a creature with no ends to achieve and therefore no need to
discover the repeatable ways to achieve them.

A straight line may not be our old conception of the
shortest distance between two points, but just because of
our certainty that it expresses ordered meaning, we are
fairly confident that it will continue to be the most direct
way home. Freedom has no use for it being as incalculable
for the sober as it sometimes is for the inebriated. Fixity,
so far from excluding meaning, is necessary for receiving
meaning from environment and for imposing meaning on it. The
reason why man seeks to get behind varied meaning to fixed
symbolism is that he finds it reliable; and more especially,
that, when he has found it so, he can make it express his own
meaning. Yet the certainty with which science enables this
to be done, neither determines what meaning we wish to express,
nor does it limit or determine in any way the meaning the
environment itself expresses through the symbols.  

If we look back upon the history of the human spirit,
we find that the idea of an arbitrary world and of fatalistic
determination in it went together, and that the idea of an
ordered world and of a world which challenges and supports
our freedom have advanced together. Plainly, therefore,
freedom and order can neither be alien nor apart.

With this conception of the world as, to use a phrase of
Professor Farmer's which he employs to sum up this view,
"God's symbol," 1 plastic to the intention of God's purpose as

well as to man to whom God gives creative freedom, yet self-existent between them both, Oman can turn to the various attempts to solve the problem of "Spirit versus Nature" as with a weapon of considerable power. All of them, he finds, err in one direction or the other, either emphasising with Fichte the all-creating character of the knowing mind as Kant seemed to indicate, and thus allowing freedom no real world in which it could be exercised:

As frequently happens, extremes meet. Fichte's conclusion that, if the mind provides so much (in Kant), it may as well provide also the little that remains, readily follows. Then we have merely acosmic individualism. In spite of the extreme contrast in temper between rationalism and mysticism, this is not very far from the mystic's acosmic pantheism, because, apart from a world of reality in which they act, there is nothing to distinguish God from our mind, or our mind from God.

or, with Hegel, a great show is made of retaining freedom by claiming to have retained the values for which freedom strives and which mechanism seems to deny, but real freedom is lost in a new mechanism of logical dialectic of history.

What Hegel meant by 'the truth of necessity is freedom', is that necessity is more and more spontaneously from within, and less and less imposed from without: and this is the only possible idea of freedom in a system of determined cosmic process. ... The result might be far more wonderful and stable as part of the whole operation of the Supernatural as Universal Reason than as the mere impact of motion, but necessity is not turned into freedom by changing it from fixed mechanical to fixed mental process.

Independence must be conceived in the widest terms possible, for it must include independence in our dealing with God Himself; the moral order cannot be forced down our throats without ceasing to be moral. It must be the kind of order that can only be chosen.
This inability to grasp the fact that no order of necessity can be an order of grace dogged the footsteps of all writers since Kant, and also proved to be the weak point in the work of the theologian who contributed most to Oman's milieu of thought, Ritschl. We can see the root of Oman's disagreements with him if we compare statements made by both, and see how Oman's broader conception of the task of religion comes out. Where Oman can speak thus:

... The real problem of freedom is not that by becoming products of a higher environment we win independence of a lower. It is still more, how we win independence in the higher.

Ritschl defines religion thus:

... The religious view of the world, in all its species, rests on the fact that man in some degree distinguishes himself in worth from the phenomena which surround him and from the influences of nature which press in upon him. All religion is equivalent to an explanation of the course of the world - to whatever extent it may be known - in the sense that the sublime spiritual powers (or the spiritual power) which rule in or over it, conserve and confirm to the personal spirit its claims and its independence over-against the restrictions of nature and the natural effects of human society. 

Here independence is certainly part of the definition, but it is not included in a context wide enough to show the true and most important relation of religion to it. Because Ritschl thinks chiefly in terms of natural determinism and the threat to man's significance by natural process (even though he has in mind that idea of nature in the broad sense given to the word by Hegel and the Romantics) he does not see, says Oman, that the real problem is independence before God Himself. But in their great insistence on the moral life the Ritschlians were Kantians, and, by driving a wedge between the sphere of

1 A RITSCHL, JUSTIFICATION AND RECONCILIATION, p. 17.
freedom and the sphere of necessity, Kant gave the impression to all that followed him that to escape from the one all that was necessary was to escape into the other. The difficulty was that the Romantics, in making their escape from mechanical process, overlooked the fact that their new world was one of spiritual process (if Oman will allow us to use such a contradiction in terms!)

As a result, Ritschl's system, in Oman's eyes, "carries the marks of what it opposes." (PFxxiii). We have already remarked on the way in which Oman accuses Ritschl of glossing over the demands of divine justice, because this was not his primary problem. Oman notes also that for all his insistence upon the moral ordering of the world, physical law remains a hard system over against man.

What is love at the centre, he says, becomes law at the circumference. As the moral law is nearer God's final purpose, being the direct organisation of it, we should expect to find the moral system less tolerant of interference, because more profoundly rooted in the nature of God than the system of physical law, which on the hypothesis has its ground only in utility. Yet Ritschl's general attitude leaves exactly the opposite impression. Physical law seems to suggest rather the idea of fixed process than of the purposes of will, whereas moral law is so fluid as almost to suggest that God has no fixity of operation. Such an attitude can only be due to the subtle influences of the pantheism he so strongly opposed. PF387.

For the same reasons Oman notes...

... His inability to rid himself of the idea of sin as the more necessary shadow of evolution, which he had inherited from Romanticism.

PP390.

But we must come now to a factor in Oman's thought which underlies both the objections to Kant and his influence with which we have been dealing, and which makes its appearance when dealing with both Kant and Ritschl. He points to the inability of either to
give place to intuition. Kant had made it amply clear that
the only way that interested him was the hard one of obedience
of the categorical imperative; and in Ritschl's thought, and
indeed in that of his whole school, the stern element that
undoubtedly exists is rather the sternness of the moral task of
the individual in the Kingdom of God than the sternness of
God's judgment against sin, which, as Oman and others have
pointed out, was a deficient aspect of Ritschl's thought.
Both, Oman claims, were unduly suspicious of the tendency of
any view which gave a place to intuition to degenerate into
pantheism, resting back upon a passive contemplation of the
Whole, the All.

Nothing can meet the elusiveness of appetite and desire
save the absolute claim of the sacred. But in the mere
form of what Kant calls the categorical imperative, it
could only rule them if they are well chilled already.
Freedom is not by any way of repression, nor are the
true uses of our natural selves, or the changes of character
which make them still better possession, by mere duty as
observing moral rules.

Kant maintains the form of freedom to be, Act for
reverence alone on an absolute or sacred imperative. If,
in the strength of the claim we thus recognise, we can refuse
to balance right against other appeals and so stand against
every persuasion of pleasure or pain, gain or loss, or any
other natural advantage or disadvantage, we can do what we
ought. But, while action by reverence for a sacred
imperative may be the fountainhead of freedom, if there are
no tributaries from other well-springs, freedom is confined
within a narrow channel, and so dried up within it as not
to be a very free kind of freedom.

The real failure is Kant's wholly negative attitude. He
has only one rule for all and can only hold differences of
character to be defects in obedience. Even that rule
operates in the void. Wisdom begins and also ends with the
fear of the Lord, and has no way of going on to the love
which casts out fear. There is a failure to realise how much
freedom in this big world needs a free relation to God as well
as to one's own soul. Hence the parsimonious conception of

worship and grace. Kant is like an Egyptian fellah with a vast ditch before him, objecting to the rising of the Nile because it would deprive him of the credit of filling it with his shadoof. He will have no gospel, and no scheme of morals ever stood in more need of one. His yoke is not easy and his burden is not light, ... In spite of the emphasis he laid on freedom, he cannot make man free, but rather discloses the need of a religion above this morality to raise men to the liberty of the children of God.

In regard to the religious intuition by which ... mysticism is nourished, Ritschl had all Kant's sense of its danger, and he had more than Kant's justification, for he had lived to see what Kant had only predicted. The pride of the religious artist had disturbed and perverted Christian humility, while the easy confidence it gave of being able to soar to truth made men impatient of the travail and turmoil of seeking truth. Ritschl's insistence on the more arduous way seems to some as if to say that the religious intuition had never done anything but hinder the true religious method of reaching faith, as if it had never contributed anything but a misleading standard of the harmonious, resulting in the errors of pantheism and an empty mysticism. But though the vision of the truth which is content with its own artistic satisfaction is an excuse for not treading the arduous way, faith lives by intuitions, and there is nothing faith can verify unless it is prepared to follow them. The man who does great things in religion, as in life, is the man who has large visions and who is prepared to realise them in the sweat of his brow.

Underlying both of these objections to the Kantian view of independence there is, therefore, a basic factor in Oman's own view of independence, namely, the need for a gospel to succour it, without which it is only a fitful "striving and crying," to use his own phrase. Unless freedom is at the same time based upon a security in the strength of which it will not be afraid to reach out and hazard itself in unknown places of experience, it will never summon the courage to advance beyond the customary and the accepted and the proved. And this is precisely the error into which "mere morality" soon slips. Once again we are face to face with Oman's conception of truth. Kant had taught him that truth must be grasped by individual insight; but there is, he believes, still more to be said. Truth is also that
which we grasp at the edges of experience, where we are moving out into the unknown, where the real question of an absolute value, calling us to set aside all our comfort and convenience is put.

'Renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty' is the necessary beginning of all search for truth, but if it be merely negative - unconcerned with what is best worth knowing, unresponsive to what is best worth appreciating, unadventurous in what is best worth doing - it will never lead us to the discovery that life's meaning is beyond the seen and its end beyond the fleeting. For this, even an honesty, limited by rules of logic, taste and behaviour, would be as though the ancient mariners had hoped to explore the globe by never going beyond their charts. Like them, we have to use our charts as far as they serve, but our own task only begins where they fail. In all our highest endeavour we must fare forward in the right direction, as far as we know it, to meet difficulties known and unknown, not with mere grim determination but with a high and cheerful glory in the adventure.

... Truth, an insight, a vision, ... what, as it were, must be caught on the wing.

... A higher reality, ... seeking to reveal itself through our whole experience in this present world, ... requires us to reach out after our farthest vision and follow even the dimly discerned beckoning of its requirements, as they speak to us of what is beyond demonstration and only discerned in moments of deeper insight and higher consecration.

This conception of the relation of the individual to truth thus conceived comes out forcibly in Oman's view of conscience.

We have already noted that Oman is indebted to Butler, and in this aspect of his thought he owes much to him. In an age which had reduced the mysteries of life until the universe had become a "dog-hole of a world," Butler, Oman contends, bore witness to the depths of existence outside the reach of rationalist philosophy; and to some extent he over drew one side of the problem.
To walk in freedom meant for him to walk a dim and perilous way, where the mists gather and the precipices yawn. And if man walks alone, how else can he walk except with guarded and hesitating steps? What can freedom mean to weak and erring man except an overwhelming responsibility and terrible possibilities of failure.

But for Butler conscience was the guide in these shadows, and this conscience was not the source of proved and certain deliverances, but of probabilities at best. The truth at the edges of experience cannot be demonstrated, but it is no less absolute in its claim upon us for all that. And it is this insight of Butler's that Oman takes up in developing his own doctrine. Of this there are three chief characteristics:

(1) Conscience involves individual and sincere insight.

We have already dealt with this point at length.

To deal conscientiously it is necessary to see for ourselves what we ought to do.

(2) Conscience is exercised in the sphere of morals, which Oman distinguishes from that of ethics. The latter is the study of laws, customs, ways of acting which are agreed upon by society; it is theory, not practice, and so it is one step removed from life. The moral sphere, on the other hand, is that in which no laws or norms can be laid down, where we act on our own responsibility, determining for ourselves what we shall do, and what we shall love and admire. Thus the sphere of morals is also wider than that of ethics, for it is

The whole sphere of sacred ideals in all.

Thus the search, not only for the good, but also for the beautiful and the true, takes place in the sphere of morals in this sense, which is the sense in which Oman generally uses the word. (See D.M. Baillie, FAITH IN GOD, p. 177f. for a discussion of this
point of view in other thinkers."

(3) Because the scope of conscience is this sphere of all absolute values, and not merely of those connected with goodness in action, and because it involves individual real insight in the existential situation, it follows that conscience operates "beyond charts." We have dealt with the absoluteness of moral intuitions in an earlier section, and we have distinguished this from infallibility and finality. One quotation will suffice here.

... So far is this absolute duty of conscientiousness from depending on infallibility of conscience that no one who is infallibly certain that he is right is quite conscientious. To be conscientious up to our light is an absolute requirement, because to walk by our light is the only way of being right, not because, even with its guidance, we may never be mistaken.

Let us, then, make the position clear in a word. Independence involves, first, individual insight capable of error, and secondly, the exercise of this insight in "existential" situations; that is, situations of destiny, of irrevocable self-determination. For this there must be a third term: the assurance of succour to such moral autonomy. We are here faced with the need for an adequate doctrine of Grace.
II. Grace.

The doctrine of Grace lies at the very centre of any system of Christian thought and is the touchstone of its adequacy. After all, the theme of the New Testament is simply "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich." (2 Co 8/9.) Or, "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." (Ro 3/23-4.) Such passages as these are crucial for New Testament exegesis because they refer to the central content of the Christian message, and in the expression of that central message the word "grace" must always appear.

Yet the variety of interpretations put upon keywords of the Gospel has been amazing, and has caused reactions from them equally various. The word "grace" has been no exception: on the one hand it can be understood as mere good nature, on the other as a material substance injected, as it were, by ecclesiastical rites, into the soul of the believer. Between these two poles of difference all manner of positions have been taken up.

Some of the most influential of these interpretations of the nature of grace have also been of such a kind as to raise sharply the relation of the grace of God and His sovereign purpose to the freedom and the self-determination of man. The difficulty has been raised by asking the question in this
form, "How can God's grace be utterly dependable if God is not in a position to save us in spite of ourselves, against our sinful will?"

Ultimately, Oman thinks, we can classify views of the nature of God's grace in terms of the conception of freedom which lies behind them. If at any point in the story of the Church man has grown tired of the incessant demands laid upon him by a full recognition of the nature of responsibility, if he has become afraid of the magnitude of the tasks that crumbling civilisations or great changes in social conditions have presented him with, he has taken refuge in a grace that works upon him 'ex opere operato', that stands in no real relation with these demands and tasks. In short, he takes a stand in mysticism of the sort we have already described, or in some other relation with the Supernatural by which he may escape from the pressing disturbances in which his concrete personality is involved.

As an illustration of this line of thought we may take Oman's treatment of Augustine. As is well known, there are two aspects of Augustine's writings which, when developed by different types of religious minds, lead in very different directions, namely, in the direction of Calvinism on the one hand, and Catholicism on the other. Oman finds the source of these two strands in the Biblical faith into which he grew, and the Neoplatonic philosophy out of which he came: he quotes Loofs in support of his view.
Inseparably the biblical and Neoplatonic elements mingle in him, and although all his later life it was biblical and ecclesiastical Christianity he wished to stand for, the latter continued to restrict the former more than the former the latter. 1

And he himself comments

... The Neoplatonic idea of God and the Neoplatonic theory of redemption continued to hold him to the end, and through them he interpreted even his Christian experience.

We have already touched on the nature of the God of mysticism, the featureless unity of the Supernatural and it is the same conception that Oman finds in Augustine's Neoplatonic side, expressed in the terms of the substance metaphysics of Greek philosophy.

Neoplatonism was mysticism. To pantheism God is wholly immanent — all is God; to mysticism God is wholly transcendent — God is all. He alone is being, and all else has real existence only so far as it partakes of His substance. This substance is simple, like light, and only turns into the phenomenal world as it is broken up, so to speak, in its descent through the unreality of matter. But the human soul with its centre of unity so partakes of the Divine unity that, by returning into itself, it may escape the sensuous world, rise to pure thought and, then, in an ecstatic vision pass beyond the divisions of thought, see the white undivided light and find the beauty and learn the bliss of being absorbed into the individual unity of God. Thus Greek philosophy, which started out to seek the unity which would embrace all things, ended with the bare unity itself, with absorption in the naked absolute.

By this metaphysic the Biblical insights of Augustine were largely vitiating, and the dross could only be separated from the pure ore when the spiritual discernment of a Luther could see the line of division.

In his thinking he has little more place for the moral personality than Neoplatonism had, however much more his Christian experience meant for him in feeling. This will appear if we compare his doctrine of election with Paul's. To Paul it is a religious assurance that neither life nor

1. Loofs, DOGMENGESCHICHTE, p. 410.
death nor any created thing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. It sets him in the midst of God's world as God's child. Occasionally Augustine's heart is moved in the same way. 'Two things are not doubtful to me—His goodness and my faith.' But his habitual thought is that no one can be sure of having received the gift of perseverance. In so far as his doctrine of election maintained that all goodness is of God's grace, it was a religious idea, but it had not the religious interest that, because it is of God, we may rely on it. In the last issue, though he never denied freewill in the philosophical sense, the source of the doctrine was not Paul, but the necessitarian, mystical, pantheistic feeling of Neoplatonism.

Nothing, Augustine says, stirs love like the knowledge that we are loved, but it is not on that kind of appeal that he bases our security of heaven. That rests not on an emancipation but on a suppression of the moral personality. Man's first freedom was to be able not to sin, his last will be to be unable to sin. But that is a renovation by power, not love; by God overcoming our nature, not giving it the victory. So little can he use any idea of freedom that, though he calls this the highest freedom, it is really an assertion that freedom is a mere evil.

Even when we read of 'love' we can never be sure that it is more than a name for the divine substance. The infusion of grace means the communication of this divine substance, and it is so directly of God's will and working, and has so little relation to the historical Christ that He is simply the greatest example of predestination.

God's grace in Jesus Christ is not something to humble our pride and touch our self-love, to make us realise that our pride rejects God's love and our self-love His fellowship, but is an influx of God's substance into the unreality of our being, the working of which is to withdraw us from the distraction of desire to the unity of an undisturbed contemplation. So it leads to sacramental grace and asceticism.

Oman is ready to admit that these two aspects of Augustine continued to coexist in his mind, and that the mystical never gained complete dominance; but in the working of history it was this mystical strain that gained the upper hand and made sacramental Catholicism possible, by providing it with a deep well of intellectual resources.

God reckons His grace our merit. The Augustinian conception of grace as all of God only needed to be modified...
somewhat, and the moralistic and transferable idea of merit which plays so large a part in the Roman system at once followed. ... In the intellectual chaos of the time, it was easy to tone down or even omit the most characteristic elements in his view of salvation as all of God's grace, and to transform it into a crude idea of salvation by merit, which led to still cruder ideas of salvation by sacraments, saints, and absolutions; a result which was the easier, as we have seen, because of the absence of any right idea of the moral personality in Augustine himself. CD162,6,7.

The interest in all his discussion of Augustine lies in that last clause quoted: "the absence of any right idea of the moral personality." His objection is not to substance metaphysics as such, but because they provide a way of thought which regards the human personality as a sponge (CD172) to be infused with the grace of God, and which leads from there to the notion that if any individual has not been made a recipient of this grace, in this case God has simply not exercised His power: the individual is non-elect, and the ground of His rejection is the inscrutable will of God working in a quite arbitrary fashion. The crux of the problem therefore comes to lie in the question of God's omnipotence and how we are to think of it.

Precisely the same problem is present in Calvinism. Here ...

Election was no longer a trust that every movement of faith had behind it the succour of God's everlasting love, but was interpreted purely by omnipotence and omniscience. CD240-0.

What was great in Calvin was his belief that all trust in man is a broken reed and that there is no security save in God, but that, with this, nothing is impossible. ... What was wrong was not this faith, but the direct way in which it was realised. ... Calvin found mystery and perplexity in life, but none in God; and so was able to fall back directly on God's sovereignty, with all things being so because God wills them to be so. HS38,40,
True religion is so far from being necessarily succoured by any sudden and transforming experience of what Hodge describes with the Schoolmen as a material change, that to rely upon it is to expose ourselves to grave moral and spiritual dangers. GPA70.

What was it, we may ask, in the nature of religion, that drove such profound thinkers as Augustine and Calvin to these extremes of predestination, of irresistible grace? Oman's reply is that religion is essentially a trust, a dependence, a faith, an assurance in the face of life's shiftiness, change, swift challenge, and sometimes complete confusion.

... The essential quality of a religious person is to depend on God; and he must be an absolutely dependent as a moral person must be absolutely independent. As he seeks a peace which shall endure through self-distrust and a sense of sinful blindness and the overwhelming might of adverse fortune, no part of his reliance can be on high resolve or a pure conscience or a manageable world. GPA62.

The mention of dependence recalls, of course, the name of Schleiermacher; and Oman finds in the Romantics as against the Rationalists a keener appreciation of the nature of religion. As we have already tried to make clear, the line of thought which Oman found to culminate in Kant insisted upon independence to the point of moralism, so that Schleiermacher heralds a new age in the understanding of religion when he will have none of the suggestion that religion is a buttress to morality and seeks it rather in an "organic spiritual interpretation" of the whole of experience that will give a contemplative peace. Oman therefore finds a parallel to Augustine and Calvin in the Romantic determinist philosophers, and to Pelagius and Arminius in Kant.

Rationalism, the chief movement of the eighteenth century, is not difficult to recognise as Pelagian. ... Though it conceived the issue of freedom far more profoundly, its interest was the same, and its temper not so very different, and for the reason that its principle was the same, and its
limitations the same, in kind, if not in degree. GP17.

The final word (in Romanticism) was immanent cosmic process, and rational man was but its highest vehicle and most conscious mirror.

This is predestinarianism in a way to have taken away even Calvin's breath; and it gives a calm superiority to good and evil, which no doubt he would have rejected with all the intensity of his vehement spirit. But is it other than the logic of his position?

In theory, Rationalism regarded morals as stern resolution on formal, legal imperatives; in practice, it was negative and incapable of inspiring any generous or boundless ideal; and in both it lacked serenity of spirit. In contrast, Spinoza saw, in his own way, that the servant of the Lord should not strive. The solution he offered was extension of contemplation from finite distinctions to the harmony of the Infinite; and this intellectual love of God, as alone virtue and blessedness, he offered as peace. Though this in the peace, not of victory but of being hypnotised into mere unity, it still contains the truth that morality is a new creature, a new creation by a new outlook and not by a series of resolves according to imperatives. NS264.

Religion, then, is characterised by a dependence upon a power capable of sustaining human life in defeat and difficulty, upon an omnipotence. But the vital question at issue is, how does the omnipotence work? Is it to be conceived, as Oman claims it has almost always been conceived, as sheer over-riding force? Does omnipotence mean 'God can do anything?' That Oman is not alone in finding a merely speculative idea of omnipotence in most orthodox theology is seen in a passage from a very different writer, Emil Brunner, in the first volume of his DOGMATICS. One short passage from him sets forth the view Oman has in mind very clearly.

It is from the idea of omnipotence that all those theoretical, curious, fanciful questions arise, which are included in this idea that 'God can do everything,' and

'what He cannot do' - a process of questioning which characteristically begins with Augustine, and in Thomas Aquinas leads to long disquisitions on such questions as 'whether God could make the Past not to have existed', or whether He 'can make that which He does not make', or 'whether God could make that which He does make still better', which finally ended in those absurd problems in sophistry which Erasmus treats with such scathing mockery. Once more: this is no accident; it arises inevitably out of the idea of omnipotence, which would be impossible for a genuinely Biblical system of thought.

We have, then, in this abstract doctrine of omnipotence an example of the type of thought that man is so much against, of ideas taken out of their experienced context and used to discipline experience instead of interpreting it. But, in regard to this special doctrine, no other way was ever thought of, so that omnipotence was, in nearly all important theological thought,

... Might .. directed in an unswerving line by omniscience. GP11.

When such a view of God's action upon man is assumed, the irrational and arbitrary idea of Grace as something forced upon him in some impersonal way is inevitable. Grace is God's help for man in his sin, and unless He helps in some absolute way He does not help at all. This the religious man must claim.

Even Semi-pelagianism can provide no satisfactory religious basis. If God will only act when we begin, or continue acting only as we fulfil certain conditions, then, in the last issue, our reliance is on man and not God. But, to the miserable uncertainty and painful anxiety of that trust, all experience - and not least our present distress - bears witness. GP25.

If grace is the might of omnipotence directed by omniscience, no dubity can arise respecting the side faith must embrace. Its lot must be cast with Augustinianism, for there is no faith, without, in the end, ascribing everything to God. GP24.

1. E. Brunner, op. cit., p. 249.
Now, there can be no doubting the rightness of the motive behind the acceptance of this view of grace. But the idea of God's working that underlies it is open to question, and Oman brings against it two chief arguments.

(1) It is unrealistic. Although this is the way in which ecclesiastics and religious thinkers, with their love of organisation and system, may like to think God should act, as a matter of fact all the evidence of history is against them. Thinkers and organisers deal in absolutes and straight lines, but God, if the evidence of His actual working is to be taken into account, deals rather in "messy relativities". (D.M. Mackinnon).

There is an old and wise adage about a class of hasty persons who should never see work half done. Sometimes they sum it all up as a fixed physical order, and call themselves scientists; sometimes as a fixed rational order, and call themselves philosophers. But the most disastrous are those who sum it up as a fixed spiritual order, whom we can call ecclesiastics, because, as the others do not, they try to convince men that their glimmerings of sight are more calamitous than blindness, and would persuade men to seek their safety in submitting to be led by the hand, or rather by the nose.

For mapping out from above God's operations, it must be admitted that we occupy no vantage ground. We are not able to soar, and we look up with no eagle eye. Only if we see grace as it works on earth and understand it as it affects our own experience, can we possibly hope to have either clearness or certainty.

When we turn from argument to reality, there is little to show that either truth or righteousness ever came by irresistible might. Progress ever winds slowly forward, fretting at every obstacle and constantly returning upon its path; never working with absolute things, but always with the struggle of human thought and purpose. The long sorrowful experience of the ages seems to show that the last thing God thinks of doing is to drive mankind, with resistless rein, on the highway of righteousness.

Few things weigh on Oman's mind more than the thought of the countless sufferings of humanity, and this in its most individual
and concrete aspect. So, when he maintains that the only thing that can possibly justify such a story is the precious gift of freedom itself, he is not simply uttering a platitude, but is refusing to take refuge in any cut-and-dried system which would reduce all the story of mankind to appearance, a hollow but tragic sham.

Because of ... fresh and inspired insight, they (the prophets) not only foresaw war, but they understood all its calamity, never losing the individual in the mass or thinking in terms of armies and political changes. They felt war, as it truly is, as the individual agonies of human terror when all men prided themselves on was laid low and the idols they trusted proved vain and they sheltered in holes and caves like wild creatures. Yet it was precisely in this storm, when it came, that the prophetic hope of a Day of the Lord, which was to transform all this desolation into perfect peace and perfect holiness, blazed up to its full splendour. FW68.

It is against such a backdrop as this, he urges, that we should begin to think about the omnipotence of God, and begin to recast our ideas of its working and its aims. The bare idea of "ability to do anything" merely succeeds in blinding us to the obvious and stark facts of the way of this world.

(2) The second reason for its rejection is that it is immoral, in that it encourages us to by-pass the moral situation, and make election and justification something quite arbitrary. This it does first by an inadequate doctrine of God. The only way that we can know that God is a person is through His action upon us, and if this is impersonal the mere ascription of personality to Him, as a theological idea, can have no real content in our evaluation of any situation in which we may consider Him to have placed us.
Determinists, such as Calvin, have thought that they could regard God as free, with all his creatures under the necessity of his will, yet responsible to him. But, if we have no experience of freedom in ourselves, we have no reason for believing in freedom in God. Nor can all Calvin’s great subtlety of argument avail to persuade us that we can at once be the helpless tools of omnipotence yet responsible for evil; nor does his burning religious conviction that the glory of God requires all things and all persons to be determined by his decrees, deliver us from the sense that such a God is not a father but a process.  

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.  

The grace which was purely the work of omnipotence, would it be so individual that no special pleading could acquit it of partiality, yet would have no manner of right to be called personal. On the contrary, it would be irresistible for the very reason that it had no concern with self-determination or self-direction, or anything whatsoever of which any person was conscious. Being pure outside force, it might have so perfect an individual relation to us as to number our hairs, cleanse every thought of our hearts, and straighten out all crookedness of disposition, yet have no more personal relation to us than a storm has to a ship which, without permitting a rag of sail to be shown or the rudder to be stirred, drove it like a log into harbour. The storm would still be the same kind of violence which dashes more hapless vessels on the rocks; and this form of grace would still be the same kind of force as lands the non-elect into perdition.  

An idea of a divine force working impersonal changes upon us may be called a Father, but certainly does not deal with us as a Father.  

We must not confuse this distinction between “Father” and “force” which Oman is so anxious to make clear with another distinction between “inadequacy” and “adequacy.” As we shall see shortly, the question is not whether God is omnipotent or not, but what is the nature of his omnipotence. To Oman it appeared that Ritschl had lost sight of the fact that power and love must not be too rigidly separated, for we would then be left with a God unable to perform His will of love.
Christ has for us, Ritschl says, the worth of Godhead. But this worth, he proceeds to explain, only refers to God's attributes of love, and not to his attributes of power. In one way that is a just distinction, yet, in another, quite apparently, the system labours to recognise in Christ might as well as grace, or rather to find that in Him grace is might. ... For the Apostles at all events, it was not the death of Christ but the transfiguring of it by the resurrection which created the joyous, triumphant belief in a providence of God which makes all the tasks and trials of life the tribulation whereby we enter the Kingdom. In raising Christ from the dead after He had perfectly fulfilled His vocation by His death God seemed to them to have made Christ a revelation of His power as well as of His love, a revelation that love is power, a revelation that it is meekness which inherits the earth. PP388-9.

But since "The question of whether God works can never be separated from the question of how he works," the actual nature of this omnipotence must be determined by other considerations than mere abstract ideas, and, in particular, by the actual and concrete relations of person to person.

The doctrine of man's dealing with God on this direct fashion also implies an inadequate doctrine of man. It regards him, in short, as simply a disparate individual thing to be "plucked from the burning" quite independently of his own insight and consecration. Man is, of course, far from denying that some of the greatest theologians and deepest spirits have subscribed to this doctrine without neglecting insight and consecration — but he is mainly interested in "the logic of their position," and if, as with the American Calvinist, Charles Hodge, they conceive of regeneration as a material change wrought by God as a fiat of His will, the logic of their position cuts right across any real need for personal insight on the part of men.
If conversion means an awakening to our true relation both to God and man, and not merely some amendment of disposition, how can it be other than of conscious insight? Being a change of outlook - above all in respect of the lowliest things - how can it be a subconscious change of nature?

In thus by-passing the individual's moral life, they lay him open to all sorts of dangers. As we have already seen, he is in Oman's view left 'without God in the world', since God has become an abstraction remote in the heavens and with no real relation to the tasks and disciplines which he is called upon to face in his daily life. The only way open to him, if he is to retain God, is to conclude that the world is illusion, unreality of some sort, and to find in religion the way of avoiding the strenuousness of life in the world. His formula becomes "I ought, but cannot: therefore God must." If individual insight means anything at all, God cannot look after our personal life in this direct way without doing away with that life altogether.

As [God's] greatness has no moral relation to us, it can only operate on us after the manner of a merely mechanical force. Then the self which was expelled by the door returns by the window. The salvation which is of God's arbitrary working can be desired only for our own selfish well-being. A true doctrine of God's grace and power must be of such a sort as to free us from this pitfall of concern for self and set us free to do God's will in all our duties and disciplines with a sense of adventure and purpose.

It is true, of course, that God does work on us in impersonal ways. We are born whether we like it or not, much of the content of our life is simply provided and we must simply accept, and death at last comes upon us willy-nilly. "The Natural
need not all be personal," (NS466). But unless we can find in it God's "mind as a going concern" it remains outside the moral.

Although this position is bad enough, that of the man who insists on the reality of the moral life to the exclusion of an a-moral application of God's grace is perhaps worse. At best, God is, as with Kant, brought in to ensure that happiness will follow virtue as a reward, thus negating the idea of grace altogether by making it possible to earn God's favour, or the whole idea of religious help is rejected as unworthy of man's call to independence. This latter reaction, while just enough when it is considered against the view of grace that is rejected, can only issue in the impoverishment of the moral life to which we have already drawn attention.

We are certain to bring down our 'ought' to the measure of what we 'can.' GP56.

In either case the result can only be a sense of self-satisfaction incompatible with religion whose first word is a word of confession.

Never, except in the atmosphere of living religion, has morality maintained its absolute demand, penetrated from outward conformity to inward motive, grown sensitive to the deeper requirements of humility and sympathy, and, finally, passed all rigid bounds of law and come face to face with the infinite claim of love, which destroys all idea of merit and leaves men, after they have done their utmost, unprofitable servants. GP56.

A "morality" which rejects the need for grace also by-passes the moral situation every bit as effectively as does a "religion" which operates with grace as "sheer unrelated underground explosion" (GP55) because real morality is, as we have noted,
a courageous reaching out beyond the customary, a risking of oneself at the "existential" level.

The solution to this dilemma lies in one direction only: we must reconsider the nature of omnipotence. What, after all, is omnipotence? It is the power of God to do what He will. And what, as a God of love, does He will? There can be only one answer for Oman: the freedom of man as moral personality. God’s omnipotence would then be better described as His patience.

The picture of God as a wise, patient and adaptive craftsman at work upon His creation, and lavishing infinite care on the most trivial of things, is one which constantly recurs in Oman’s writings. It is closely connected with the appreciation, by the Romantic in him, of the individuality of things and of people. In our early sections we have quoted passages in connection with the world as it appears to the poet and the child, and these reveal in a striking way Oman’s sense of the significance of individual things in their uniqueness and unrepeatableness. And this is not limited for him merely to the conscious world, but is a feature of the whole of creation, and is a significant revelation of the Creator.

Even physical reality is made up of units which are, in a definite sense, individual: and from this all the infinite variety of the world is derived. With life we have an individual unity which is not a mere sum of the parts, but is in all the parts. The progress of life is not only an increasing individuality, but is the seeking, on its own, of its noblest place in the universe, and the enlarging thereby of the meaning which the universe has to it as an individual.
The true and quiet and restful and inspiring means of grace (Jesus') found in the sunrise and the sunset, and the uncertain winds and equal rain and the fashioning of the wayside flowers. All experience was a manifestation of the Father, and not least the very indifference of nature which has so often crushed men's hopes when they are based only on a legal and narrowhearted idea of righteousness and reward. Jesus sees God carefully watering the field of the evil even as the field of the good, not in equality of indifference, but in an affectionate wisdom which does not give all the cake and praise to the good children and only dry bread and correction to the bad, because a rule of equal goodness is necessary for both.

The most gracious view of providence was announced in an age vanishing amid the most overwhelming calamity, in which revolt, earthquake, famine and war were only the beginning of such tribulation as had not been seen from the beginning of the world. This Jesus saw, yet never doubted that we live in a world where the skill and care bestowed upon the grass of the field rebukes our anxiety about food and clothes, and that as even the sparrows share the Father's care, no kind of provision they need will be wanting to His children.

To Oman it is inconceivable that God Who lavishes such gentle and individual care should, on coming to deal with men, use methods more reminiscent of the factory mass producer or the military disciplinarian.

God does not conduct his rivers, like arrows, to the sea. The ruler and compass are only for finite mortals who labour, by taking thought, to overcome their limitations, and are not for the Infinite mind. The expedition demanded by man's small power and short day produces the canal, but nature, with a beneficent and picturesque circumambulancy, the work of a more spacious and less precipitate mind, produces the river. Why should we assume that, in all the rest of His ways, He rejoices in the river, but, in religion, can use no adequate method save the canal. The defence of the infallible is the defence of the canal against the river, of the channel blasted through the rock against the basin dug by an element which swerves at a pebble or a firmer clay. And the question is whether God ever does override the human spirit in that direct way, and whether we ought to conceive either of His spirit or of ours after a fashion that would make it possible. Would such irresistible might as would save us from all error and compel us into right action be in accord either with God's personality or with ours?

When we maintain the contrary, it can hardly be that we are interpreting experience. May we not simply be misled by a vain imagination of how we ourselves should act on the throne.
of the universe? But to conceive God after the fashion of
our own impatient, domineering spirits, is not the way to
find Him in all His works.

May it not be that we shall not find less of God in life
and not find His operation less adequate to our spiritual
needs, because we discover His method to be patient enough
to pass round by way of persuasion and education through our
errors and failures?

Once we can accept this wider and more patient view of God's
omnipotence the way is open for a deeper understanding of
God's grace, interpreted as a gracious relationship succouring
the moral personality in the sense which we have outlined.
Grace is therefore nothing else than God's patient work in all
ages and in all places to bring man to a deeper and more
comprehensive state of freedom in acceptance of the purpose
which God has for him. Because freedom lies at the very core
of what God is "aiming at" in all his dealings with man, the
very idea of "irresistible grace" is a contradiction in terms.

It is not then irresistible, but in the nature of the
case, seeing it can only work through our moral independence,
it can be resisted. We are never for it mere subjects, and
much less mere pawns in God's predetermined game, but it
deals with us as with children, not indeed as those who are
free, but as those whom it can only truly bless by helping
them to attain freedom.

If man can learn only, of his
own insight and purpose, by experience of his own mistakes,
is life may even be filled with much struggle that is
otherwise futile, and his history be a record of much that
is, for every end besides his own personal victory, error
and failure. But the reason will be that God is patient,
and not that He is weak; that He will not have us accept
His purpose save as our own, discern His righteousness save
by our own insight, and learn His thought about His world
save as our own blessed discovery. Then our dependence upon
God is no more in conflict with our true moral independence
than, in any other perfect personal relation, the basis of
which is mutual respect, the relation, let us say, of a
father to the son he would equip for finding his task by
his own insight and performing it from his own fidelity.
On this view grace is not an act, or even a series of acts, but is a relationship extending over the whole field of man's commerce with reality, so that Oman's own phrase in terms of which he wishes us to understand grace, very well describe the position. Grace is "a gracious personal relation." That is to say that, in all the hard and challenging aspects of our existence there is in reality manifested God's will of love towards us, which is a will of love because it values nothing so much as our personal freedom before Him. In the word 'love' therefore, there is contained also the idea of 'holiness', carrying with it a stern recognition of the inviolability of moral reality.

History, from the point of view of religion, is the story of the Holy God, in love, shaking man free from his fettering idolatries, reducing him to dust and ashes in order to wean him from lesser securities than God Himself, than the God Who will not have servile dependence in his children. The "gracious relation" is far from easy-going, on these terms — on the contrary, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

In all his exposition of the nature of grace, Oman finds the figure of Fatherhood most helpful. A father's one concern is for his son to become a man, to learn to think for himself and act for himself, yet at the same time to enter into the richest life the father himself knows about. Along with the figure of the Father is the idea of the family, for God never deals with men in isolation, to save them as
disparate individuals, but is saving them into a fellowship. Oman is therefore able to set out the close relation between sin against God and the broken relations between man and man in a most convincing way, and to bring the disasters and failures of the common life into a profound relation with this understanding of the human situation.

God is not a supreme director of souls appointing each particular life as the special regimen designed exclusively for each person's particular ailment, as though his household were a hospital, but He is a Father, treating us all as His family where His children are as unable as He is to keep ourselves apart from each other's sins and failures. Precisely by the common regimen we come to health. By helping each other's infirmities and sharing, according to the whole measure of our opportunity, and not in the restricted measure of our own responsibility, in the sufferings and toils by which, in the family of God, evil is changed to good, we discover that, when we accept the consequences of sin and meet them in humility, everything in life works for their undoing. And if God condescend to use us as instruments to that end, so far from shrinking from the sorrow and the shame, we shall accept them willingly from the hands of God's love, which cannot do other than make large demands from us, because it would not be love were it not also wise.

If this is to be a commonwealth of good, it might be universal good that all moral beings should live in an order affected by the iniquities of others as well as one in which each is responsible for the effects of his own.

The wages of sin must be death; evil must work out its own disaster. God's gifts for life, being missed, become messengers of death; the society He meant for His Kingdom can be turned into the tyranny of darkness. Human responsibility can prove its appalling significance by working evil; the brotherhood of man can be turned into organised destruction. Yet if we could see that it is the very reverence of the Father for His own image in His children which suffers them, in the exercise of the responsibility He has given them, to work these calamities, but that, in their evil-doing, He continues kind, even to the unthankful and evil, and that there is no soul of man He does not pity and love, and for which He has not an eternal purpose worthy of all the discipline of life's agony and death's despair, would it not suffice us?

Here, then, we find the third term that was wanting at the end of our last section. God calls man to find His purpose
for Himself, and "puts it upon him" to do so in all his proneness to error and sin. This could be nothing but a source of despair were man not assured of a purpose beyond the appearance of failure and disaster; were he not assured, in short, of a gracious personal relation through it all. And the apprehension of that gracious purpose is faith.

As Luther says, it is the quality of faith to be able to go against appearances. But faith is sustained by its victories, and languishes without enduring hardness. It endures as seeing what is invisible: and in all the history of religion faith has always looked in the direction of one God, who is the meaning and purpose even of the visible world. But faith in one personal God is only sustained by serving his meaning and purpose as our most real environment.

It is already clear that, the moral independence with which God strives to endow us being such a difficult thing, the faith by which it is won cannot be easily come by. Man's unwillingness to enter upon the adventure of freedom, his consistent endeavours to shield himself by civilisations, religions and various other 'unities of apprehension' from the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' by which God shakes him loose from his idolatries: these subtle combinations of sin and ignorance prevent him from 'seeing the Father' in everything that meets him, so that he finds an appearance of enmity, he experiences the wrath of God.

God is reality, and reality is against all who would interpret life by self-love and self-will. Sin is the attempt to get out of life what God has not put into it. Necessarily it is a hopeless and calamitous warfare, in which the blows are not light and the falls not soft. To deny this is vapid sentiment and self-delusion. As God's rule must, in the nature of things, be against everyone who, with the purpose of evil, would counter His purpose of good, the experience of God's wrath is overwhelmingly calamitous, not as anger, outside of the moral order, but as the essential nature of its working.
In the face of the appalling character of this situation a revelation is necessary before faith as the apprehension of God's gracious personal relation is possible. And it must be a revelation of such a kind that it observes the limitations placed upon God's dealing with man imposed by His own purpose of freedom for man. To Oman's account of this revelation culminating in Jesus Christ we must now turn.
III. The Revelation of Grace.

Let us at the outset of our study of Oman's doctrine of revelation remind ourselves of the conditions that require revelation at all. We have seen how, in his view, a gracious relationship is the very meaning of the universal order, natural and supernatural; but we have also seen that the aim of this order is the responsible freedom of man. It is this last clause in the constitution of the universe that raises the problem of revelation, for man needs to be reconciled to the gracious purpose of God just because it is so sternly concerned with his moral freedom.

According to the earlier work, VISION AND AUTHORITY, revelation deals with the 'four veils' of ignorance, sin, weakness and evanescence.

... Like the enquirer into the ancient religious mysteries, we stand before this Divine mystery enshrouded in thick veils which allow us only the dimmest, most uncertain vision. They are our ignorance, our sin, our weakness, and our evanescence.

The separation of these into four distinct 'veils' is, no doubt, something of a literary device, for evanescence and weakness are, in the later works, and especially in NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL, included under the one idea of evanescence. Similarly, the aspects of revelation which deal with each of these 'veils,' Incarnation, Atonement, Grace, Eternal Life, are not to be thought of as hard and fast divisions. In GRACE AND PERSONALITY all four are really contained in the idea of reconciliation. But, broadly speaking, we have in these three 'veils' of ignorance, sin and evanescence, the same three problems we meet in THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL as 'Knowing
and Knowledge', 'Necessity and Freedom', 'The Evanescent and the Eternal'. The tenuousness of human knowledge and its very personal nature at the deepest levels, the rebellion against the high calling implicit in freedom, and the uncertainty of man's existence as an historical being, all point to the need for revelation of the gracious meaning and purpose in all things. The question we must try to decide at this point is, which of these is, for Oman, the essential presupposition of revelation?

Perhaps the best way of approaching this problem is to turn to Oman's statements on the nature of sin. In any view of revelation, the doctrine of sin must play a very considerable part, if only because the New Testament so clearly brings the two together. Christian thinkers, if they have not succeeded in being agreed about the exact nature of sin, have been unanimous in their belief that the Christian doctrine of salvation is a doctrine concerned with salvation not merely from weakness or from finitude, but from sin.

Now the first thing we may note in Oman's explicit statements about sin is how many of them appear in a context in which the problem of evolution is dealt with. This is not to say that we are accusing Oman of an 'evolutionary' view of sin; rather we find him in reaction from such views, and attempting to define his own position over against them. We find, for example in THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL, that the problem of sin is used as a touch-stone by which to test the adequacy of the theories based on evolution, whether scientific or philosophical.
No reign of purely physical law has any room for sin as disloyalty to the true order of the universe and to our true nature as part of its process. It cannot account for anything being esteemed good or evil...

We must take seriously the idea of evolution. It is not a mere question of slow change, but of direction. Absoluteness of particular acts may be affected by slow realisation, but not the absoluteness of the direction in which we are facing. In the end this must put right and wrong as infinitely apart as the old way of expressing it as heaven and hell. NS293.

[Hegelianism's explanation of sin is] that evil belongs to finiteness as such. Why persons should suffer and do wrong as no other creature does, merely from being finite, does not appear evident, more especially as they are plainly less finite. ... What is assumed, while it is denied, is an individual who is in some true sense isolated in the universe, having his own struggle and being in charge of his own destiny, in a universe which is only to be understood aright by him as he determines his purposes in it, losing it as he slacks and winning it as he girds up his loins, in short the very views both of the individual the universe which make any theory of it as the thrust of mere process, even if it be the process of Reason, entirely inadequate.

The thing that is crucial in the doctrine of the Fall, the absolute significance of the choice of right and wrong, the significance of it as the supreme 'ferment in the race', flows, in spite of every conceivable doctrine of evolution, from the introduction at any point of things so absolute as right and freedom. PF407.

[St. Paul's] view of the place of the flesh is not really different from the evolutionary view of the relation of evil to our animal heritage. If we develop conscience and fall back from conscience to impulse, is it not the sinful state of turning back on the upward road ...?

The prophets never think of the spiritual conflict as relative and due to irregularity of development, but always as the absolute opposition of an organised kingdom of evil to the one indivisible Kingdom of God.

That conception is usually dismissed lightly as in conflict with the theory of evolution. Yet the Apostle Paul, at least, was somewhat of an evolutionist, for whom the physical - the natural and instinctive, was first, and the spiritual - the rational and moral, was later. No one nevertheless, held more strongly the absolute contradiction between what he called the Tyranny of Darkness and the Kingdom of the Son of God's love. GP285.

It is clear from these passages that Oman is neither among those theologians who wish, as F.R. Tennent seems to have done, to come to terms with the scientific theory, nor among those who regard
it as their duty to combat it as a scientific theory on biblical grounds, nor yet among those who, as so many appear to do in more recent theology, regard it as irrelevant. Rather, as large sections of THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL show, his intention is to reinterpret the theory from a view of the individual that has a place for sin. Therefore the relation of his doctrine of sin to evolution is not simply antithetic, and an evolutionary element of his own peculiar kind is to be found in it. Sin is defined with reference to a purpose, a direction.

This brings us to the second aspect of Oman's view of sin, in that we find it, in some important passages, mentioned in connection with Kant's doctrine of radical evil. Whatever this may have meant to Kant, for Oman it carries the idea of absoluteness, in the sense which we have previously examined in connection with Oman's dependence upon Schleiermacher. It denotes an evil arising as a result of man's dealings with the 'final order', an ultimate evil.

Unfortunately, one must admit difficulty here in making a useful quotation which will bring out the use of the idea in one clear passage. The chief passage is in THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL, pp. 326-39, and here Oman uses Kant's phrase to indicate what is required in a view of sin over against the evolutionary view, while at the same time he thinks Kant's own exposition of it inadequate, as

The breach of an absolute imperative, ... merely transgression.

But in another passage in which the actual phrase is not used,
but the thing itself is clearly meant, he describes his understanding of Kant.

Evil (for Kant) thus lies in something which is before any action; yet, as it cannot operate without our choice, as, in the last resort, it must be a free choice for which we are responsible, it is obligatory to alter it; and what is obligatory must be possible. The real hindrance is the deceitfulness of the heart, and neither force of impulse nor defect of conscience. The heart is satisfied with action and heedless of the disposition which alone gives it worth, and ascribes to itself the merit due only to fortune. This self-deceit is the foul blot on our race, disturbing the moral judgment and confusing the sense of merit and demerit. Therefore, the scriptures rightly ascribe the origin of evil to sin, to transgression of the moral law as a commandment of God; and rightly describe the process by calling the originator of it a liar from the beginning.

It is becoming clear at this point that Oman regards the cardinal sin as dishonesty, or, to use his more usual word, hypocrisy. He quotes A.B. Davidson with approval when he says, "Perhaps mankind is one large Pharisee" (GP137), and our earlier discussion of the place of feeling in knowledge, together with the possibility of its manipulation, indicates how fundamental this idea of unreality, of dishonesty, is in Oman's view of sin. As Dr. Farmer says, he used these words in a "deep and challenging sense." (HRxxxii). Unreality and hypocrisy are the root tragedy of man, the refuge of lies. There is a "vicious circle of sin and hypocrisy and hypocrisy and sin" (GP198), in the toils of which we reject the demands laid upon us and refuse to accept the responsibilities in which our situation places us, and then sin further by retreating behind a shell of self-deception which enables us to avoid looking at ourselves as we really are. Oman makes it quite clear that the real problem of sin is not the first step so
much as the second, for it is our moral insincerity that
puts us in such a position that we cannot recognise the
Father's hand in discipline and duty.

Hypocrisy no reality can teach, and least of all
moral reality. With hypocrisy, therefore, we can have
no faith in God of a kind that would reconcile us with
God in all He appoints to make us perfect as He is
perfect, for how can we approve of the road, when we
are not truly desiring its goal? GP198.

The "Kingdom of Evil ... organised by hypocrisy" can gain
so great a hold over men that the sin that hath never
forgiveness, the calling of evil good and of good evil, can
be performed with religious pomp and mummery. (GP267, NS328).

Hypocrisy we often regard only as a cringing vice,
but, though of a voluntary humility, it is usually the
blindness of arrogance. It is not in the Gospels only
that it flaunts itself as God's chosen vessel of power
as well as of righteousness and truth. ... It may be
the Natural that has slaughtered multitudes in panic and
fear; but only the sense of serving an absolute good
could suggest burning a fellow-creature alive with
circumstance and high solemnity as a religious duty. NS61.

All this complex organisation of human life, extending from
the individual to the institution, and enabling sin to continue
at its worst level, with a sense of superiority added to it,
is clearly the central problem for a revelation of the gracious
purpose of God.

In describing the essential nature of sin thus understood,
we find Oman making considerable use of negative expressions.
"Dishonesty" and "unreality" are two of these. Oman, as we
have already noted, thinks of virtue as positive in character,
as a reaching after what yet lies ahead, in the dim distance,
and what is as yet grasped only by intuition. Sin is turning
aside from this activity, resting on one's ears, falling short
of the highest vision. But it is even more than this, it is, as hypocrisy, failure to pursue any higher vision, failure to venture after a deeper interpretation or insight or a more costly expression of the love commandment. There is, therefore, a considerable use of the idea of sin contained in the verb ἀνέβαλλεν to miss the mark, to fall short.

... Sin is just the higher aspect of all failure of life to lay itself open to the witness of its environment and to brace itself to venture upon it; and the difference from any other evolution is in the environment of absolute quality of which man has become conscious and in which he may realise in himself absolute worth and failure as absolute loss. This not only makes sin radical evil, but, as a breach with this environment, every sin is a sin against the whole law, understanding by law not a statute, but the order of an environment to be realised more fully by sincerity in insight, in aspiration and in consecration.

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

Sin, therefore, is used for everything 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 higher environment and what may be realised in it. ...

The only final sin is the hypocrisy which is the denial of aspiration after sacred value and the rejection of the responsibility and the service of ... freedom. It has to do with the absoluteness of conscientiousness which is never satisfied, and not with an infallibility of conscience which we may overtake and think all our works very good. NS329.

In the above definition of sin we see the elements we have separated out united in one conception: sin is decisive in significance because it negates the eternal purpose of God as that meets us in individual challenge at the edges of.
experience, into which 'existential' situations the sinner refuses to allow himself to be drawn, encasing himself instead in the defence mechanisms of respectability and good custom. In such a condition he is impervious to the proffered grace of God because he never feels himself in need of its sustaining power. The result is that the calamities and tragedies in life appear to him only at their face value, and, if he thinks about God at all, he thinks about him as angry, punishing, legalistic.

We are now in a position to refer back to the other two elements in the situation requiring revelation, ignorance and evanescence, and to see that the problem they involved is included in that of sin. We have seen how even knowledge of the world involves the willingness to value rightly, and that even the supposedly secular spheres of knowledge are subtly dependent upon the higher and apparently more unstable insights upon which man lives. Ultimately, the Western concern with the knowledge of the natural world comes, Oman would argue, from its having been trained in a religion that seeks meaning in the Natural order itself, and is convinced that it is not a mere illusion, but is a genuine Creation. Similarly, the problem of finiteness, weakness, and mortality is also, in Oman's view, the problem of finding and making one's own those values which the universe serves, and when, by prophetic insight, these are found to be those involved in personal freedom itself, even death becomes the last great test of our meekness before the discipline of God. But the way to both knowledge
of and immortality with God is closed when sin as hypocrisy makes us resentful of His dealings with us, and it is the breaking of this barrier that is the task of revelation. But such hypocrisy is only possible for persons dealing with a personal supernatural order.

If sin is not mere transgression of law, but an insincerity in our whole relation which prevents us from reaching to the ideals beyond experience by which alone higher environment is rightly understood and lived in with ever growing freedom and emancipation, it also is of the nature of the failure of personal intercourse.

The only way in which we may be assured of the gracious relation in all our experience is to see it manifested in tragedy and defeat in a concrete human life. This is what is done in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ does not appear as a "bolt from the blue" bringing a demonstration of the grace of God to a world unprepared for it. He came rather as the fulfilment of the history of a community, for behind Him lay the great work of the prophets who, in their own persons and words, had already witnessed to the reality of God's gracious purpose with individuals and with the nation.

Revelation, being thus concerned with the reconciliation to God's gracious relation to us by which alone we can discover it is gracious, must be a work of history. What is more, it must be the work of history, the work which gives it meaning and treasures up its gains. The life of everyone who takes the right road and uses life to the right end and lays his heart open to the right influences, will help to interpret God's gracious relation to His fellows as well as to himself. But there will be a special significance in the experience of those who meet life with special insight and sincerity and courage, and more particularly when exercised in times of supreme crisis in human affairs. As in all other human progress, they will establish one line of advance, so conspicuously in the right direction as to make all others mere matter of antiquarian interest. Finally, if there were
One whose absolutely right relation to God manifested adequately God's relation to us, even that line would become only a preparation for His task, and He would be an ultimate revelation, not in the sense of being a substitute for our own insight or of exhausting the whole meaning of experience, but as the inspiration of our insight and the pioneer of our experience.

A historical revelation is ... a necessity of man's position, as a creature working out his freedom by finding his place amid his fellows, who are called to the same high destiny.

This figure does more than stand pre-eminent in the line of the prophets. To speak of them as predicting Him might mislead. Yet His own claim that they testify of Him is fully vindicated. Who else in any degree fulfills their ideal? ... Their ideal, being an understanding of God's mind, was also, in the deepest sense, a forecast of His purpose.

The soul of apocalyptic is the old prophetic belief that power is on the side of those who are on God's side, and that He is not to be found in the thunder and the tempest, but in the still small voice. The prophetic assurance has become more definitely apocalyptic only in the sense that all expectation of this new order is entirely from the introduction of God's rule by God's hand, and not by human efforts and human institutions.

Now the Church is the society which believes in that rule of God and in no other. Apocalyptic in that sense is the nerve and sinew of Christ's teaching, and His significance for the Church is that He so entirely made the Father's rule man's sole environment, even to death and the cross, that it was possible for even the humblest believer to make faith in it the adequate basis of fellowship.

And if, in Oman's view, the revelation in Christ does not come from nowhere, neither does it return to the void, as though it flared up in Christ only to die away and become a merely past event. It continues in the Church which is based upon it, and apart from the formation of which it could have no conceivable relevance. For God's aim in revelation is the freedom of His children, which must receive form and content and historical verification in a fellowship in which the responsibilities of that freedom are faced and accepted in all their depth and

1. See PW 15ff.
complexity, and which can concern itself with nothing less than this long-term aim.

If we have appreciated the very strong element of developmental process that appears on Oman's thought, in the way in which he thinks of man as continuously enlarging the sphere of freedom, as moving into 'higher environment' and finding more and more of the 'endless possibilities' that lie before him, we will appreciate what he means when he speaks of an historical revelation. Our idea of God, as we came to see early in our study, is not something that springs to the mind full-grown, like soldiers from dragon's teeth, but is enriched by the long dealing of man with his one world over the centuries. But 'man' is not a continuous entity in any simple sense which would enable him to enter, without taking thought, into the lessons of the ages. He is an individual who is born and dies at one particular time, and who must see for himself the truth that his forebears have learned. The problem set here is the same problem raised by Kant versus Hegel, as Oman understands these two thinkers. The latter had a wonderful grasp of history as the smelting-fire of human nature; but the former could not share his too easy notion of the individual as the product of that history.

On the one hand, the past seemed to offer the shelter of external authority, with certainty of belief and security of practice in a doubting and restless age, and to be the supreme victory over Rationalism; on the other, the appeal to history came into conflict with the principle of personal responsibility for our own belief and action, which Rationalism had set high above question. And, ever since, the individual-rational and the institutional-historical ways of dealing with our higher environment have lived in conflict.
When we recall that, in Oman's own lifetime, the battle was being waged between the successors of the Oxford Movement on the one hand (the thought of whose leader, Newman, Oman detested; see PP258ff), which bade fair to subject the individual to external authority, and the blatant rationalists such as Blatchford, with whom Chesterton waged such a conflict, and who could see no treasure in the past whatever, this difficulty springs to life. So Oman maintains, as we should expect, that

This is a fatal dividing of what is one, and an evading of the vital question, which is: How can we reap larger harvests from the sowing of the past, as we grow, not only in knowledge, but in independence of judgment and freedom of action? Nor is there any sphere in which the question is so insistent as in religion, because it is the quality of genius, and ought to be the quality of religion, to use our historical heritage, not only more abundantly, but ever more freely and by a deeper and more discriminating insight. Nor should there be any conflict if the story of the evanescent is the pursuit of the eternal.

The only possible solution to this problem is the Church.

In some order of love and freedom, that is in some kind of Church, the historical struggle of mankind must be gathered up ...

Only a society which knows it can afford to wait in patience upon the fitful insight of the 'little ones' can really offer a way into the deepest meaning of life. And only a society that can reveal the grace of God can afford to do that.

We can therefore separate out four 'moments' in Oman's view of the special revelation in Israel, Christ, and the Church. But behind them all lies the fact of God's continuous dealing with man in all history, of which this special line is only the culmination, even though it
be a culmination that supersedes by its very absoluteness.

If revelation is used strictly in [the] sense of God's manifestation of Himself, and without reference to the causes of our misunderstanding, we should have to say that there could be no such thing as a historical revelation. A God of love must be self-revealing in all His intercourse, at all times and in all ways, and not alone in special actions. The love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit are always and everywhere revealing themselves, and to restrict themselves to special channels would merely prove the love imperfect and the fellowship narrow hearted.

But a gracious God is precisely a God concerned with being understood and not merely with being displayed. GP156.

These four aspects which go to make up the revelation of the gracious relation of God with men are (1) The Old Testament, culminating in Prophetic monotheism; (2) The perfect obedience of Christ in life and death, and the vindication of His faith by the Resurrection; (3) The Apostolic community, beginning with, and thereafter based upon, the "glorious liberty" experienced by the first Christians; and (4) The ultimate inclusion of the individual in this New Society founded upon the order of love and faith, there to take up his own tasks and to know his own release.

(1) In our study of the nature of religion, we saw that there were, according to Oman, two ways in which religion could go in its relation to the world of concrete happenings and concrete individuals. On the one hand it could take the way of mysticism, and shut itself off from the world, in which case its idea of God was simply a featureless Being, described in all manner of superlatives, but actually without character at all, since He imposed no task upon His worshipper and offered Himself as power in no situations that would reveal
His nature. The other direction was that taken by polytheism, ceremonial-legalism, and prophetic monotheism. Prophetic monotheism, we saw, was not merely the belief, arguable in itself when entertained as a mere idea, that God is one, or that there is only one God, but is that interpretation of the whole of experience which finds in it, in spite of every appearance to the contrary, one consistent purpose for good.

The Old Testament still speaks to our hearts because it is this supreme search after one God, not as an intellectual conception, but as a moral victory to unite all our life into one, and because of the confidence it gives us that those who seek after God in that way will find Him. No prophet ever attained, but also no prophet ever rested content with any of the easy solutions found in other religions. None ever sought peace in the dualism of one God of their worship and another of their work, or in the easy but hopeless unity of worldliness, or in the more difficult, but not really more victorious, unity of abandoning the world in order to endeavour to live in an ecstatic religion.

At this point we may ask: what was the condition that led to this interpretation of the nature of God? The answer Oman gives quite clearly: insistent and tragic calamity. We may recall how he noted that Indian mysticism was able to grow in a soil provided by the relative detachment of the races whose religion it became from the concrete problems of managing the world. In Persia and Israel, however, no such condition was present, and in the one the problem was to win a steady harvest from inhospitable land, while in the other this task was further complicated by the fact that Israel stood at the international cross-roads of the ancient world, so that she was from time to time reduced to starvation
and slave level by her more powerful opponents. The continual insecurity which touched them so deeply that it could not be evaded by those who, in Oman's phrase, were willing to "follow on to know," and the attempt to find a deeper interpretation in their converse with reality resulted in the profound discovery that the one value that could survive and indeed rise to greater heights in all the chaos was moral independence.

Thus it would be true to say that the prophet interpreted human tragedy even more by the possibility of what is good and great in man than by what is evil and small. He saw calamity to be inevitable, because no evil which could befall man is so great as being protected in greed and pleasant but selfish vices, and in trust in impressive but soulless ritual, and that no price is too high to pay for the freedom which is by true reverence for oneself, one's neighbour and one's God. Thus he could contemplate the destruction of his nation and, with it, of the outward rites of religion, in the assurance that in this rule of God, a higher, securer order was waiting to take their place. Like other apocalyptic hopes, the perspective was foreshortened, but if this freedom in right reverence is the end even of the longest vistas of human history, the sternness of life's lessons, in view of man's idolatries, has justification.

If the individual person is of such great importance to God, and if all else is subordinate to his freedom, the greatest of states and the most superb of cultures are not worth a man's soul, serving only as the back-drop for the drama of his salvation, which occupies the whole field of history and provides its raison d'être.

Because the prophets dealt much with public events, they are often spoken of as if their central interest was political; and misleading pictures have been drawn of them as great statesmen, and even as expert politicians.
But, from the first, the prophets regarded their civilisation as doomed, and their own nation with it: and their supreme discovery was the concrete individual. To him all appeal was made and for his abiding good alone the world may be found in the end to be of Divine wisdom and goodness; however, much evil may be imported into it by his own folly and wickedness. Their monotheism not only embraced the Natural, but found the meaning and purpose of it in the concrete individual, whom the mystery religions take to be the very part of the Natural whereby the evil dominion of desire subjects to the misery of evanescence.

This insight carried with it, as its obverse side, an ethic. For a new light was shed on even the deepest tragedy and the most dire consequences that follow upon sin in some way or another, either upon those who sin or upon their fellows. The suffering of the innocent was seen not as an example of the injustice of fate, but as a pointer to the responsibility of each for all, so that, as in Hosea (NS455ff), the whole attitude towards the sinful and erring was changed.

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.

Yes something more had to be accepted before this was complete. He had to accept without resentment his own share in the misery however unmerited; to be ready to bear with gladness the burden of sin with the sinner; and to be fully rewarded if this helped to work reconciliation. No really sympathetic person ever desired to live, sheltered by his own innocence, apart from all fellowship of sin and suffering: but Hosea stands out as a supreme prophetic figure, because he raised this to an understanding in principle of God's rule and of our share in it, which we can call an atoning service if by it we understand participation in God's task of reconciliation.
There were thus two sides to the prophetic religion. On the one hand there was the purpose of God it revealed and which was such as to give hope and strength in the most terrible times, and on the other there was the revelation of the nature of man as called to take his responsible place in the world, and to "follow on to know" in deeper ways, the purpose so revealed. Here at the beginning, as throughout, "revelation and reconciliation are reciprocal." (HS470, GP156).

(2) The appearance of Jesus Christ in history was the perfection of both aspects of this manifestation, and as perfect, absolute and unique. The prophetic vision, because it had discerned something of God's purpose, had therefore discerned the dim outlines of His goal for man; but Jesus Himself was at once the concretion of that goal and the manifestation of God's own attitude of grace towards erring humanity. He was perfectly at one with the mind, that is, the purpose, of God in the particularities of His life, so that all He did was a perfect mirror of the divine work of reconciliation and meticulous, individual care.

It is along these lines of ethical union that we ought, Oman urges, to understand the union of Christ with God, the meaning of His Sonship. To refer us to some doctrine of two natures in one person is to ask us to be satisfied with inscrutability, though he holds that it does witness to a mystery,

... Christ's practical worth as a Revelation of God and as the Founder of His Kingdom involves that we must believe under the sense of passing over the infinite, a sense which, however little it may be explicable to our thought, continues
to be an essential part of our feeling and of our life. Though the doctrine of Christ's two natures may be no adequate expression of the truth, and may add nothing to our thought and little to our faith, it at all events recognises a mystery of practical significance. PP395.

But it is a mystery "of practical significance", having the same mystery as our highest intuitions have, and sharing the same practical absoluteness. It cannot be proved, and to state it metaphysically is to take it from the realm of religious reality into the realm of the philosophical; but religion does not describe the world; rather it has victory over it. Other statements on the same question reveal much the same interest, placing the significance of Christ's Sonship in the realm of his practical worth for our own need to find reconciliation with God's appointments and duties.

Jesus manifests the Father by being perfectly the Son, not by being Himself the Father. It is as the Son that He is both Christ and Lord, and reconciliation is to make us sons of God, the whole difference in the service being that it is done in the freedom of children and not as the servitude of slaves. The call which came to Him at His baptism as God's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased dominated all His ministry. In nothing else, it is plain, did Jesus feel Himself so unique, yet, also in nothing else was He so closely identified with all His brethren, His very uniqueness being His significance for enabling men to become sons of God. Even when we say that He had it in Himself and we only through Him, it is not a different sonship except in originality and effect from what we all ought to have. His sonship, as has been said, is neither physical nor metaphysical, but is a relation to God through which He was sure of showing the heart of the Father and of all things being given Him of the Father that He needed. Yet even this is not a wholly unique position in our Father's house, for, when we are sons, we also see the Father, and, when we have the mind of Christ, all things are ours.

The words "except in originality and effect" seem here to make some attempt at recognising a uniqueness other than that of priority, but it is clear where the main interest lies. See E. Schurz, THE MEDIATOR, pp. 29 ff.
lies, and also that this is the only important way of understanding Christ’s relation to the Father. But in other places he is more explicit.

An abstract omnipotence of like substance with the Father replaces the truth Jesus taught and the life He lived, which speaking through living human intercourse to men’s own minds and lives, were the way to the Father. The divinity of Jesus, set forth by itself as a metaphysical principle and apart from the humanity it inspired and sustained and the love of the Father which appeals through it, reduces the humanity to an illusion and the divinity to an abstract symbol. A humanity which is a mere cloak for deity is not humanity at all; and, with a metaphysical deity as pure omnipotence, real religion has no concern. Faith has to do with God’s mind, and only through it, with His might, even though, if it be truly His mind, it has as much right to be regarded as significant for the quality of the universe as the understanding of motion for its quantity; and in the sense of being the supreme revelation of this mind in all and also the source of a new reconciliation to bring us into accord with it through all, Jesus has universal significance, or we might say significance for the universe.

From this point of view he finds himself "honestly" unable to accept certain passages in St. Paul, St. John, and Hebrews—the Christological passages—as any more than interpolation with an eye on heresy, or a relic of the material way of thinking characteristic of the ancient mind.

Of St. Paul’s expressions he writes:

... The explanation of them all is that God made man in His own image, and Philo calls the ideal man the Image of God, the Son of God, the Word of God. This perfect human reflection of God is secured by a special relation, yet is what we should all have through Him who is the revelation of God’s mind, showing His purpose in all things. Wherefore, however unique in perfection, the sonship continues to be a moral manifestation in the development of a true human life, and so remains within the things of the spirit.

All the positive material on the nature of Christ’s sonship sets out with the express purpose of diverting us from concern about "two natures" and towards His significance as a "reflexion
of the mind of God,* the uniqueness of which lies in its perfection, in the completeness and inexhaustibleness of the way in which He assures us of the grace of God even in the hardest trial.

But while we may not deny to anyone the right to speculate on all these questions, we may also be without much expectation of convincing result. ... The assurance that He and the Father are one requires the steadfast endeavour to conform our perverse wills to this harmony. The proof that the Son came from the bosom of the Father to declare Him unto us, depends on whether, with the spirit of sons, we are reaching up towards the knowledge of the Father.

Belief in God derives meaning and content from experience, and belief in God through Jesus Christ is through the only adequate dealing with it, because of the only perfect relation to God behind it. Neither God, nor aught besides, can be known apart from the world. But, on the other hand, neither can we truly know the world apart from God. We see God through the world, as we see a soul through the body, only because it is not a living body at all except as it is informed throughout by the soul. And even then we only know as we are taught to think as it were parallel with that spirit within, taught by a continuous interaction between knowledge and friendship, which we might equally call revelation and reconciliation.

If it is the essential nature of God to have this personal relation to His children, He could be manifested only in a life perfectly lived among men, through a perfect relation to Himself. If the love of God is thus the inmost nature, as well as the deepest meaning of His outward working, that would be the only possible revelation; and we should never think of God as in Christ merely in condensation to the limits of our humanity. Through Christ we must think after the order of the Beatitudes, where all knowledge of God is mediated through a right relation to man. As Christ helps us to attain this gracious relation to God's children, we learn how He came from the bosom of the Father to declare Him, and how God is in Him reconciling the world unto Himself. GP151.

This manifestation of the mind of God in human life results from a perfection of the two aspects of that manifestation we noted in prophetic monotheism, a relation of freedom towards God which accepts His will in the knowledge that it is the deepest meaning of life, and, as a result of this perfect acceptance, a perfect relation to man such that it reveals this meaning in its full scope as individual care for each and patient waiting for the genuine
and personal response of each.

Oman sees Jesus in the world of His time, and at the point of His nation's history just before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This places Him in one of those times of tribulation which, like that in Jeremiah's time, was so full of significance for bringing out the real thoughts of men. It was An age vanishing amid the most overwhelming calamity, in which revolt, earthquake, famine and war were only the beginning of such tribulation as had not been from the beginning of the world. But throughout all this He remained constant in the faith that the final order was one, not of fate or injustice or chaos, or even of the most efficiently used force, but of love in the prophetic sense. It seems that for Oman Jesus, while he retained the sternness of the prophetic picture of God at work, added to it that individual touch which we have already noted, so that He spoke about birds and flowers and common things, in this way underlining the care and patience of God even in the inexorableness of His purpose. The impression we have of his account of Jeremiah and Hosea, whom he regards as the greatest of the prophets, is one of reconciliation to God's purpose, but it is a difficult, a heart-breaking reconciliation. But in his treatment of Jesus' relation to His Father this relation springs to its full stature as gracious, as "fellowship and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost", as he likes to quote.

But Oman is far from underestimating the suffering of Christ, and for him this perfect relation would be without content were it not
clearly manifested in suffering. This relation of suffering and joy can best be exemplified from passages from sermons.

... Miseries were heaped upon Him such as neither Buddha, nor any other mortal, ever experienced, or perhaps had the strength of mind consciously to endure. Yet He drank this bitter cup to the dregs as appointed by the love of the Father who is altogether good, and as, therefore, in the deepest sense also good. Through the most utter outward defeat, the most cruel and shameful execution devised for the basest criminals, with agony in every nerve and black darkness upon His mind, He yet dreamt of Nirvana, no cessation of being and pain. He did not even dwell on Heaven as bliss after this warfare should have been accomplished, but the joy set before Him was a present as well as an invincible good, for which He was glad to live and ready to die. From the work given Him to do He never turned His eyes, and nothing necessary for accomplishing it ever ceased to be a joy.

That passage gives us the rigour and sternness of Christ's vocation: the following, while not detracting from it, takes us deeper into the joy as Oman paints it.

If, throughout His life, Jesus was a man of sorrows of a depth we may never fathom, His pure spirit must also have had joys to which we cannot soar. We catch glimpses of it in His delight in nature and children and the ways of man, in His supreme insight into the only book He perhaps had much opportunity of reading, in the quietness and absence of hurry amid the tumult of His days, and above all in the serenity and security of His fellowship with the Father. He nursed no trouble and cherished no grief. He knew no ills which are only evil because we think them so. He brooded on no fears and anticipated no troubles. His days were not darkened even by the Cross, till He stood in its shadows. Life He met with a hardened body and disciplined mind, which enabled Him to take privations, dangers, oppositions, misrepresentations, as what Chalmers the missionary used to call, 'the pepper and salt of life'. Having the joy of a great cause and the concentration of a great purpose, He was never the victim of trivial anxieties or mean worries or small annoyances, to which men are exposed by unworthy aims and ungirt loins.

But Christ's sufferings were in no sense a punishment inflicted by the Father upon Him. They were rather 'the contradiction of sinners against Himself' occasioned by His perfect revelation to them, in concrete situations, of the mind of God in the full sense of that phrase. They resented His call to faith in more than legalistic morality, in more than political domination, in more than expedience in their relations with each other. This call to faith Oman sees...
Him exemplifying in the way in which He Himself dealt with sinful people, in the attitude which He took to the State and the institutional religion, in His refusal to take any shorter cut to conviction on the part of His hearers than the slow process of enabling them to see the truth for themselves. By taking an unshakeable stand on the sacredness of the individual before God, He put Himself in the path of all those forces in human life which ignore that sacredness either by over-riding it or by refusing to take up the responsibilities it entails. The result could only appear to the State as an undermining of its authority, to the Ecclesiastics as a denial of the absolute justice of God, and to the individual as an unwarranted intrusion upon his peace of mind. And to this He added a deepened sensitiveness to the sufferings of individual men, because He knew them all as individuals separated by their own folly from the meaning of their life.

Though Oman nowhere asks the question, "Why did Jesus die?", it seems that it is along the above lines that his answer would come. At any rate he is adamant on the point that His death shall not be interpreted as a substitutionary atonement, for, he thinks, this is merely to hark back to outworn ideas about God as a legal administrator of the universe. The true significance of His death is the demonstration it gives of the fact that God is the very reverse of a legalist, but deals with us as persons, suffering in patience and sharing the sufferings of His children until they come to see for themselves that His purpose with them is gracious.
He Who was rich, for our sakes becomes poor. He partakes of our life in everything but its shortcoming. He endures all trial, faces all temptation and undergoes all discouragement; and the only difference is that He shows none of the hesitation which follows even one defeat, and none of the compromise which follows the harbouging of any evil thought. Finally, He faces man's darkest and most inevitable destiny in its greatest agony and blackest ignominy. Love could do no more to show that it would do everything for man, except corrupt his will and replace his freedom, and so deprive him of his best heritage. To help him to attain to the perfect freedom of the children of God, it would employ all the resources of wisdom for him.

By the cross Christ abolished the enmity between man and God, not merely by removing some outward causes of alienation, but by the demonstration of the succour which has nothing of the might which constrains, but is all of the might which persuades, nothing of the easy proclamation of power, but is all of the difficult participation of love. By it man attains to his true freedom, to a freedom which is not compelled even by holiness, but a freedom which is the perfect harmony of the finite human will with the Will that governs all things. By it we are saved into our true inheritance, which is glad acceptance of the place God has assigned to us, and glad obedience to the guidance He has provided for us. Then, and only then, will all opposition between the authority without and the authority within be utterly abolished.

The final triumph of this manifestation is the Cross, the obedience unto death of the Prince of Peace in the service of God's kingdom of righteousness. When persecution for righteousness, even to shame and agony, stirs only pardon and supplication for His oppressors, it is turned from being an evidence of God's indifference into the triumph of His love; and, by sharing in that triumph, His children are made victorious over all evil. But we share only as we too are taught to sympathise with sorrow, forgive sin and endure the contradiction of sinners against ourselves.

If the theory of substitution, legally interpreted, has, as it doubtless has, brought peace to burdened souls... The true reason is that the Cross of Christ has, in spite of the theory, interpreted and displayed to burdened souls the new world in which hard legal conditions do not obtain, but where these legal frontiers of our moral personality have been lost in a deeper moral fellowship with our Father and our brethren. There they have realised that the bearing of each other's burdens, whether of sorrow or of sin, is the surest of all realities, and that the bearing of sin in particular is the very heart of God's gracious relation to us which is love.
Before we go on to consider the aspects of the work of redemption, we may quote one further passage from THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM in which Oman describes the work of Christ as it appeared to that very great Scottish writer, J. McLeod Campbell. The similarities will be so patent that we may well leave the question there. As there is no other reference to McLeod Campbell in all of Oman's works, any attempt, beyond the picture we have drawn of the lines of Oman's thought, to show a relation of dependence, would be guess work. But the remembrance is so striking as to say all that need be said.

The work of the Atonement is to bridge the gulf between what man is and what God wills him to be, and the essence of it is Christ's sympathy with God's judgment of sin. It deals with man on the part of God and with God on the part of man, and is both retrospective and prospective. It deals with man on God's behalf regarding the past, saying about God's will, against which we rebel, and about the Father's heart, in which we will not trust, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Regarding the past also it deals with God on man's behalf, being a perfect Amen in humanity to God's judgment of sin and, therefore, a fuller satisfaction to God's righteous heart of love than any punishment. In a similar way it deals with the future. First, it witnesses for the Father to men. By revealing His Fatherly mind towards us, it shows the inestimable preciousness which is hidden for God in humanity and which only needs the right relation to Him to become manifest. It thus calls us into God's righteousness, which is not legal obligation discharged, but the mind of Sonship towards God. Then it deals with the Father on man's behalf, making intercession for us, not as for something the Father is unwilling to give us, but, as all prayer should be, the expression of the Father's own highest purpose. Christ pleads His merit with the Father, in the sense that what He is we may be, and that His filial spirit contains the new mind in which His rebellious children should return to the Father.
We shall turn now to consider the outworking of this manifestation of the mind of God as it bears upon the life of the individual. That done, we shall examine the effect this doctrine of Grace has upon Oman's exposition of certain religious problems and doctrines, among which the doctrine of the Church will receive a short treatment. This course will be in accord with Oman's own interest, for he clearly concentrates his energies upon the problem of the individual's reconciliation with God, and deals with the nature of the Church primarily in relation thereto.
IV. GRACE AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

We turn now to consider the significance this conception of grace has for the individual believer. Repentance, forgiveness of sins, justification by faith—these traditionally Christian words, taken as they are from the New Testament witness to the work of Christ, point to events in the life of each Christian, and our conception of the nature of these events is, of course, radically effected by our notion of that grace of God by which they are brought about.

God's revelation of His grace through Jesus Christ deals with the inability and unwillingness of man to live without fear in the final order of existence, the order of freedom and love. This revelation exists, as we have seen, not because God is, in Himself, at enmity with man, but because man in his hypocrisy and fear has turned himself against the order of holy love which meets him as the meaning of every event and every demand. Because this love is holy, that is, because it is concerned with nothing less than the freedom of man in the fullest sense, man's failure to meet its demands in trust brings upon him frustration and meaninglessness. Since God's is the only meaning the world bears, the attempt on the part of man to impose an alien meaning meets only with contradiction.

Yet, as we have shown, man is able to protect himself against the sharp edges of events, to avoid the call to freedom which they present, to settle down in a world of unreality and self-deception which finds even in frustration and meaninglessness not a call to a deeper interpretation of life and of the love of God, but a minister to his own pride. The concreteness of life, and all the lessons it can teach him, is abandoned, and
he turns to a God who will justify for him his own belief
that he is ill done by, that his own sterling qualities are
denied by an unfeeling world.

These attempts on the part of man to protect himself
from the unsettling buffetings of existence are reflected not
least in his theologies. Since, in Oman's view, it is the
Christian Gospel which has done most to set man's face in the
right direction, Oman is most concerned to expose those
theologies which threaten to turn the Christian faith into yet
another way of escape, for if the corruption of the best is
the worst, it behoves us to keep as pure as possible our
understanding of what it is that God does for us in Christ.

The doctrines of justification by faith, and of the
forgiveness of sins, are points in theology at which we may
set forth either a most profound understanding of the nature
of God and of His dealings with us, or an equally profound
misunderstanding. Here God may appear as either a person
or as a being indifferent to moral realities.

... if the gracious relation of God we have spoken of
plays fast and loose with the imputation of our own doings
to our own selves, it would be more deadly for everything
that is of moral significance in us than even to be
overridden occasionally by the direct force of omnipotent
grace.

At what precise point, we may ask, does the difficulty
of a doctrine of forgiveness of sins, and of justification
by faith alone, arise? Oman finds that the great
temptation of theology is, as he puts it, to "play fast and
loose with the imputation of our own doings to our own selves."
Man is responsible for his own misdeeds; he has himself
turned away from the light. Does not a simple declaration
that God overlooks these misdeeds fail to do justice to their
tragic reality, does it not divorce the evil of our deeds
from our responsibility for them, and therefore from ourselves?
In other words, can our sins be dealt with apart from our sin,
what we do apart from what we are? And if this division
cannot be made, there seems to have taken place a wilful
tampering with the stern realities of moral life when it is
asserted that we can be justified by faith alone and not by
an active and a fulfilled obedience.

Oman observes that we have here an essentially legal
situation.

Here is a legal situation, directly determined by the
sense of duty and obligation, and, therefore, not to be
ignored.

The difficulty springs from the inmost nature of the
moral person, for, without imputation of our doings to
ourselves, personality would have no existence. In all
else we may change and become wholly different individuals;
but the sense of responsibility abides ... insisting that,
throughout all change, we remain unchangeably our own selves.
... The word imputation has fallen into disrepute through
keeping doubtful company, but the thing itself is the life-
nerve of moral personality.

In describing this as a legal situation, it is not Oman's
intention to suggest that it may be neglected in one's
discussion, moving on, as it were, to a higher point of view
from which the insistence upon responsibility is found to be
unnecessary. On the contrary, if we take another point of
view, it must be one which can include and do full justice to
this insistence. The legal elements of the situation must
remain as they are. Nothing can change the fact that a man
has failed in the pursuit of truth, beauty and goodness, and
that he is responsible for this failure, for he has actively
turned away from that hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
of which Oman speaks so often. Before a moral standard that has not been narrowed down to manageable limits, the fact is that he stands condemned. The question now before the theologian is: How can this reality be faced, and yet a place be found for pardon?

Oman finds that attempts have been made to find a method by which the weight of guilt may be removed, attempts which fail because they continue to work at no higher level than the legal. These attempts take two main forms.

(1) The first Oman calls the way of "compromise." Here the chief thought is, that though man at present stands condemned by his conscience and by God, it will be possible in the future to "make up for" the wrongs committed in the past. Our guilt in the face of the past is great, but it will be possible for us so to amend our ways and overtake our duty that we will be such "creatures of transcendent merit" (GP201) as to justify the pardon received. That this is a very prevalent method of conducting the moral and religious life is not to be contested, for forgiveness is frequently offered and received between man and man, and presumed between man and God, on the expectancy of "amendment of life." But Oman insists, first, that this view does no justice to the nature of moral demand itself.

There we have the legalistic, moralistic spirit at its shallowest, to which the noble and austere form even of a legal morality has not truly appeared, and which has not even dreamt of a morality which demands the whole devotion of a perfect love to God and man. It has no consciousness of life's varied opportunity, no infinite standard of its demands, nothing save the most mechanical conception of character.
The moral demand upon man, if understood seriously, is no such thing as can ever be thought of as attainable, but is of such a transcendence as to leave man always an unprofitable servant. Again, this notion of pardon shifts the interest of truly moral activity from the present and the performance of duty from a motive of self-forgetting disinterest, to the past and the future, so that the good is done from an ulterior motive. The eye is always on the heavenly book-keeping, and action does not flow from a genuine care for the needs and demands of the present in itself. And, further, justice is not here done to the nature of transgression itself. Properly conceived, it is a radical estrangement of ourselves from God (NS342), from our true environment, so that pardon cannot be understood merely as an attempt to fill up a performance that is partly wanting, or introduced "purely to patch up the rents in human morality."

(2) The second method, that of "composition," according to which it is possible to use the transcendent merit of one individual to cover the demerit of others, as, in the medieval conception, the merit of Christ and the saints formed a storehouse, to which sinners might resort, of standing before God. The source of this view, Oman believes, is to be found in the notions of communal solidarity current in tribal society, which can no longer carry an adequate theory of atonement once the seriousness of individual responsibility is recognised. Guilt and merit cannot be shifted from shoulder to shoulder in this easy manner, and when God is conceived as one Who allows or ordains that such should be
done, the true rigour of His moral rule is blurred and
ultimately negated. The substitutionary theory of the
atonement, as it is frequently understood, is open to this
charge of attributing mere arbitrariness to God's dealing
with man's moral situation; for here Christ in His death
is the bearer of so much punishment instead of deserving men
-the guilt is shifted from them to Him, if His punishment is
really to have the effect claimed for it - and the standing
before God gained by His humble acceptance is attributed to
the elect. But such a view is possible only when the true
gravity of man's moral situation has not been grasped.

These ways of "compromise" and of "composition" Oman
describes as legal methods of dealing with a problem legally
conceived. In them God is a lawgiver attributing merit and
demerit according to performance or non-performance of His
demands, and the quantitative, calculating attitude to morality
is here uppermost in the mind. But, Oman holds, as long as
we allow the fact of responsibility to lead us to the view that
the legalistic understanding of the moral life is the deepest
understanding, there can be no possibility of true pardon.

If there is a rejection of an order of absolute value,
must it not be what Kant calls the radical bad? and if all
good is only what ought to be, can there be any compensation
for evil? In any form of process there is no place of
repentance, though sought carefully with tears. In any
legal scheme, there can only be condonation on promise of
amendment by some kind of legal arrangement.

What conditions, it may now be asked, must be fulfilled
by an adequate doctrine of justification and forgiveness?
From Oman's view of the freedom of the moral personality
there flow three such conditions. These may each be set forth in turn, as they throw light on his understanding of justification, of faith, and of forgiveness.

First, that upon which we have already touched in dealing with legalistic attempts to frame a doctrine of justification: the inalienable responsibility of the individual for his sin. This must not be minimised in any way whatever, for because of it men are rightly called moral agents; because of its burden they have condemned themselves "to the treadmill round of sin and self-deception, self-deception and sin"; and the whole of God's work in his gracious relation to us is intent upon releasing him from the burden of this responsibility so that he may find it not a burden but an adventure and a challenge.

Secondly, it must increase and not diminish moral sincerity. Or, more strictly speaking, it should make it possible. Man's problem in the face of his moral situation is that he is afraid to look it in the face, to see himself as he really is. He is essentially self-justifying. He wishes to convince himself that he has, morally speaking, "arrived."

This he does, as we have seen, either by reducing his conception of his duty to manageable proportions, or by using his religion as an escape into an undifferentiated unity with the divine. A true doctrine of justification before God must enable him, at the same time as it gives him hope and peace, to confess his sin without shirking the deepest humiliation this may bring upon him.
From the practical moral standpoint, the problem of all forgiveness arises precisely from this close partnership of sin with unreality.

Thirdly, it must give man the power, in Oman's own phrase, "to forgive himself." The meaning of this is simple, and follows naturally from his idea of freedom. Man must be able, in full moral sincerity, to put his sin behind him, aware of his responsibility for them yet no longer burdened by their guilt, not because of any power of self-absolute inherent within himself, but because he has come to see, through the revelation of God's grace, that they no longer stand between himself and fellowship with God. Oman wishes here to say that forgiveness cannot be a merely objective act which man accepts on purely external grounds. He must be able to accept it for himself and regard himself in the light of it because it comes from God and "the Lord is not a legal fiction, (but) only another name for reality." (GP204).

For Oman, the question we must ask concerning justification and forgiveness is

... When we speak of pardon, what moral reality does it stand for which would give us a right to forgive ourselves? (GP198).

With these three factors in mind as "sine qua non" of a doctrine of justification, it will be well to turn now to a consideration of Oman's conception of the faith which justifies.

It is first of all clear that Oman wishes to hold fast to the Reformation principle that faith is in no sense a work of man, but is a gift of God. Yet the great problem is not to be led to a position which minimizes the equally important fact that faith is really our faith: it is we who
believe.

... If faith in (grace) is neither an influx nor an effort, but a persuasion of its truth solely on its own witness, how, on the one hand, is faith not of ourselves but the gift of God, and how, on the other, can there be an appeal to believe and a sin of unbelief? GP132.

Oman of course rejects outright the suggestion that faith is a gift of God in the direct sense in which he believes this has been understood by scholastic theologians both Protestant and Catholic. Grace communicated in a semi-physical fashion by God's omnipotensia produces the grace of faith. But though this may safeguard the provenience of God in all that concerns our salvation,

Where it comes there can be no place for human limitations, or indeed for human life at all under the only conditions in which we know it. OD181n.

God is indeed a giver of gifts to men, but not in this direct way. If we ask Him for the gift of faith, we must not expect a mysterious and irresistible influx of the divine power which buoys us up irrespective of our sincerity, devotion, and passion for righteousness. True faith is given only when we sincerely desire to know the whole truth, when we are not afraid to face our own unbelief and hypocrisy. At that point God's revelation of His Holy Fatherhood in Christ is able to speak to us, and to give us faith. But this point of view is one frequently encountered in modern theological thought, and there is no need to dwell too long upon it here, as we will be brought back to the study of it again shortly.

But the belief that faith can be a direct gift of omnipotence is not the only misconception against which Oman finds himself struggling. From the true insight that faith
must be really our faith, an act which we ourselves must make, there is frequently drawn the conclusion that faith in and of itself is of saving or justifying value. "Faith is conceived as an independent principle self-operative in respect of righteousness."¹ In much popular religious literature men are from time to time exhorted to "have faith", which will bring "peace of mind", but very little is said of that in which one is supposed to believe, and the impression left is frequently that the object of faith matters little in comparison with the state produced merely by having faith itself. But such misconception of the nature of faith is not confined to popular literature of religion, but lies at the root of all subjectivism in theology and Christian life. Wherever the attention is directed inwardly upon our own apprehension of God's saving action, wherever salvation is thought to be conditional upon a full grasp of "the sum of saving knowledge" or upon the purity or right intention of our state of mind in faith, there Oman believes the true nature of faith to have been misunderstood. For the centre of faith lies not in itself but in its object, and its strength is not inherent in it, but in the trustworthiness of its object. Faith is faith only as informed by its object.

The right beginning is not faith as an emotion concerned about itself, but faith as a trust relying upon God. Only as faith arises from an object which constrains belief is it truly faith, being, by so much as it is of our own effort, the less faith. Only when, on contemplation of the object, belief constrains us, and we have no need to constrain it, is faith real.

¹ V. Taylor, FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION, p. 58.
In the strict sense, we should not even try to believe; for we have no right to believe anything we can avoid believing, granting we have given it entire freedom to convince us. Strictly speaking also, we have no right to exhort people to believe, and much of that very common type of exhortation is mere distrust of truth and disregard of veracity, which leaves earnest people with a painful and confused idea that faith is a self-maintained, sense of nervous tension, and which underlines real faith by turning attention from God to our own state of mind.

The issue does not depend upon the nature of faith, but on the world of spiritual reality in which, on its own witness to itself, we believe.

It should be clear that in his conception of the nature of faith here put forward in GRACE AND PERSONALITY Oman is already making use, in the strictly theological field, of an understanding later developed in full in THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL. Truth is one, and the truth of the Fatherhood of God is not known in any way different from that in which all truth, beauty and goodness is known, that is, by a free laying of oneself open to the witness of reality to itself. We must not believe in panic or in servility, nor must we refuse to believe in the arrogance that claims to have all truth possible for man; true faith is given only to that fusion of humility and independence with which we have already found ourselves so much concerned.

True freedom is courageous sincerity in face of all reality, but is also humility before its witness. It is freedom as it gives independence of human opinion, but also as it gives reverence for all true human experience, and is the pursuit of truth as the search for all that is real, and of goodness as the following of all that is abiding, with the discernment of something that is beyond both, only to be seen as it is a joy to the pure in heart.

From this point of view, then, the true question we should ask about justifying faith is not a question about the nature of faith in itself, but about the nature of the object which informs it. If we are justified by faith, we are, in Oman’s view, in fact justified by the reality which reveals itself.
to us in such a way as to convince us that, in truth, our sins need no longer stand between ourselves and reconciliation with God. We must, therefore, now turn our attention to the object of faith.

Faith justifies because God creates it by revealing Himself to us not as a Lawgiver or Judge, but as a Father, in the perfect Life of Jesus Christ. Faith is the relation sons have to the Father in the face of the mystery and contradiction of this life. In this interpretation of justification there are three main points to which we must give consideration. First, the personal nature of God which makes forgiveness possible; secondly, the way in which this is revealed; and thirdly, the precise meaning of the term "justification" in this context.

(1) The object of faith is God as Person, the Father of our spirits, the One Who cares for His children and shares the shame of our sin in the way in which a father in human life shares the shame of his wayward son. This is not to be thought of as lessening the rigour of the moral demand God makes upon us, but rather as transmuting it, giving it poignancy where, in the idea of God as a mere Judge and Moral Governor, it has only chilly grandeur; giving it a new quality of judgment which derives its shame not merely from the transgression of a moral law, but from an estrangement, the breaking of an infinitely personal relationship.

God must be inexorable towards our sins; not because He is just, but because He is loving; not in spite of His love, but because of His love; not because His love is limited but because it is unlimited, and because, as George Macdonald said, "nothing is inexorable but love". 1

In this view of God as Person, it is seen that forgiveness is two edged, for while it restores the sinner to the fellowship of God, it does not do so as though his character as a sinner were of no real consequence. The sinner is drawn by the love of God into a fellowship that is essentially cleansing. The hymn Dr. Baillie quotes exemplifies this insight:

The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is not with wrath to them. 2

While we are admitted to the fellowship, our sins are not. The very idea of forgiveness, if we realise the true content of the word, carries this two-edgedness, and Oman makes this quite clear in his own exposition.

The essence of a personal system is not to manufacture us free, but to help us to win our freedom. In that case the one thing God cannot relieve us of is our responsibility. Without it we might be the clay and He the potter, but we should not be children and He our Father. With responsibility however, sins are real disasters to him who commits them, yet they may be permitted of God to the end of true moral victory over them.

If sin is not mere transgression of law, but an insincerity in our whole relation which prevents us from reaching out to the ideals beyond experience by which alone higher environment is rightly understood and lived in with ever growing freedom and emancipation, it is also of the nature of the failure of personal intercourse.

One experience would enable us with fullness and concreteness of meaning to speak of God as a person. This is forgiveness. In all higher religions the question which has given both poignancy and tenderness to the idea of God, is whether to the sinner there is restoration and peace. 3

... The saints of the Most High are, above all, those who have the perfection of the Father in His kindness to the unthankful and evil and whose whole world is determined by a love which surrounds all in pardon, pity and succour.

The positive efficacy of forgiveness is in being born again, out of our world of resentments and bitterness and vengeance and weighing of awards, into this world of the rule of God's love and the fellowship of His Spirit.

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 more 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. R683.

... Grace sets right our legal relation to God, but only by making it cease to be legal. That the essential quality of grace is not to be legal is, indeed, the reason why it is not a straight line of force passing directly through our personality, but a curve of personal succour, encircling and embracing it. ....

We are justified because by faith we enter the world of a gracious God, out of which the old hard legal requirements, with the old hard boundaries of our personality and the old self-regarding claims of rights, have disappeared, a world which is the household of our Father where order and power and ultimate reality are of love and not of law. GP206,8.

Oman repeatedly opposes "forgiveness" and "condonation" of sin; for the latter is merely an overlooking of its tragic and alienating quality, while the former is possible only because the Forgiver bears the shame of sin along with the sinner, stands beside him in his plight.

Were (Forgiveness) only a letter from the father to the prodigal, saying, Come home and nothing will be said about the past, the past would not require to have anything said about it, for its own voice would be loud enough. True forgiveness demands positive manifestation of a love which will triumph over the evil past and silence its voice. The Father must say by His whole bearing towards us, My son, let us share the sorrow and live down the shame together. GP209.

Finally, this situation demands and permits moral sincerity on the part of the pardoned sinner, helping him to see himself
as he really is and to accept as Fatherly care the "duties and disciplines" of life as he meets it day by day. In this "succour demand" unity the personal nature of God's relation to us is most fully comprehended.

Moral sincerity alone, it asks, and makes no enquiry regarding moral attainment, yet it so displays the mind of God as to take away every reason for being insincere, and furnishes every reason for being open and manifest in His sight, and for putting away every hidden thing of shame, which means every secret deed and thought which shame would hide.

(2) In our section on "The Revelation of Grace" we have already dealt in detail with Oman's view of the place of Jesus Christ in that revelation. It suffices here to summarise and exemplify His relevance at this point. In Him we meet with One who actively consorts with and freely pardons sinners, assuring them that the Father thus pardons and loves. Yet in Him also there is never to be found for a moment any suggestion of compromise with evil. He thus reveals His Father's demanding succour by living in such a way, and acting among men and towards them in such terms as to manifest to them His knowledge of the "nature of things", the meaning of existence. By living as He did He showed forth the nature of the reality in which He knew Himself to be living, the reality of holy love.

... The sacrifice and service of Jesus Christ ... are the manifestation of our deepest and holiest relation both to God and man in a world, the meaning of which, in spite of everything that appears to the contrary, is love. They form the holy of holies of a new world with new and healing moral conditions, where legal ideas of meeting God's judgment fall away from us, and God's service rises upon our spirits ...

In the Cross, ... we discern the gracious relation of our Father towards us, because there, as nowhere else, is the utter service of our brethren, unconditioned by our merit, shown to be the essential spirit of His family.
(3) "Justification" in this context is, therefore, an equivalent for "reconciliation" or "restoration to sonship."
Indeed, for Oman, the meanings of all these three great words of Christian faith include and interpenetrate each other: Justification, Reconciliation, Forgiveness. This is because he finds the whole aim of God's gracious dealing with us over the whole of our commerce with Him in the activity of this life, to be the conferring of responsible freedom upon us. When He, by His revelation, has assured us of His trustworthiness in all things, He places us in a position of being able to live dependent upon Him yet at the same time unafraid to use our own discernment and exercise our own responsibility. This is only possible when we have reached out beyond an idea of God as a Moral Governor or maintainer of the status quo, to an idea of Him as a Free Spirit seeking and supporting our freedom. The only adequate picture of such a God is that of a Father grieving over, chastening, yet caring for His sons as true sons. To all, whether rebellious or obedient, He is the Father; but from our side the relation may be broken, and we find ourselves involved in what seems to be enmity with "the meaning of things." Yet, because this enmity is grounded in the very depths of the Father's love, and is not in antithesis to it, pardon and forgiveness is always implicit within it. Upon repentance and faith there is, in a sense, a change in God's attitude towards us, not from wrath to mercy, but from grief and pity to joy and hope. But this is no change in His essential attitude, for before our return it is His hope for what we may be that is the motive of His pity and grief; and afterwards it is His stern demand for
fulness of consecration that still faces us with "discipline and duty." There are two sides to this holy love of God, and justification, reconciliation, and forgiveness correspond to our movement from the one to the other, by readiness to confess failure and accept responsibility.

There are no conditions, no compromises, no compositions, no legal dealing with the past in any way, but simply arising and going to our Father and finding, in Christ, every manifestation of love which makes pardon a perfect restoration to a fellowship which, on God's side, has never been broken; but has always been a waiting and a longing, ready to see us on our return a long way off and to anticipate our confession with every token of forgiveness.

Thus Oman makes it clear that, for him, God's forgiveness is not simply a general amnesty but a truly personal act, not a static existent over against us in and out of which we may step at will but a real adaption and change of relation on the part of God. He admits us to a renewed fellowship with Himself, calls us His sons, and this act of admission and renewal is the act of justification, in which our sins are forgiven, and we find ourselves reconciled to God across the whole area of experience.

Because it is the act of a Person, justification is not an achievement on our part, nor is it dependent upon any moral attainment. Indeed its one prerequisite is the frank admission of utter moral inadequacy, and the need to hand our moral destiny over into hands adequate to take care of it. Justification is admission to, the establishment of, a relation of trust without which true moral growth and development are impossible. We must be assured that we are already sons before we will have
the courage to take up the responsibility that goes with the inheritance. Justification, then, is understood by Oman in terms of "sonship," of the renewal of our relation to God as children in the Father's world.

The practical issue of reconciliation to God is thus to find ourselves in an order of love which is our succour, so far beyond our own contriving and for ends so far above our own conceiving, that we have no concern except to serve it. .... A saved soul, in other words, is a soul true to itself because, with its mind on God's will of love and not on itself, it stands in God's world unibrutable and undismayed, having freedom as it has piety and piety as it has freedom. CP241-2.

... The faith of Jesus in the Father, which makes all free who accept it, in the assurance that, for his end, all things work together for good, and that his end in his children. ...

Finally, just because we become sons in justification, we are faced with a communal responsibility. We are not brands plucked individually from the burning, but are saved into a responsibility for one another; we become members of the family of the one Father. This naturally involves a new attitude towards our fellow men.

He is a Father, treating us all as His family where His children are as unable as He is to keep themselves apart from each other's sins and failures.

... We can only judge that to be of God's goodness as we realise our place in the whole family of God, and not as we take life to be a mere private concern. GP219.

He (Hosea) had to accept without resentment his own share in the misery however unmerited; to be ready to bear with gladness the burden of sin with the sinner; and to be fully rewarded if this helped to work reconciliation. NS456.

All this possibility of restoration of the family relation between man and God and man rests upon the nature of God Himself, Who, since He is Himself holy and suffering love, gives to those who allow His revelation to speak, the power to leave
their own salvation in His hands, and to turn with love and pity towards their fellows.

No really sympathetic person ever desired to live, sheltered by his own innocence apart from all the fellowship of sin and suffering; but Hosea stands out as a supreme prophetic figure, because he raised this to an understanding in principle of God's rule and of our share in it, which we can call an atoning service if by it we understand participation in God's task of reconciliation.

... The Cross of Christ has ... interpreted to burdened souls the new world in which hard legal conditions do not obtain, but where these legal frontiers of our moral personality have been lost in a deeper moral fellowship with our Father and our brethren. There they have realised that the bearing of each other's burdens, whether of sorrow or sin, is the surest of all realities, and that the bearing of sin in particular is the very heart of God's gracious relation to us which is love.
Finally in our exposition of Oman's religious thought we come to the consideration of three theological problems, as an attempt to exemplify his characteristic way of approaching them. As we have already seen, he seldom ventures, in his published works at any rate, into the field of strictly systematic theology. His work, as he himself puts the matter, is

... Not a theology, ... but it springs from a conviction of the supreme importance of thinking on high matters; and is an attempt to lay a foundation for theology, by considering its method 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.

It is to be pointed out that the main interest of his chief work, THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL, lies rather in the field of philosophy of religion; yet it should be clear by now that the fabric of his thought maintains a remarkable consistency from THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND FREEDOM to HONEST RELIGION. It is inevitable, however, that from time to time a "particular question" should be raised, and this is done, of course, quite deliberately in GRACE AND PERSONALITY, and at points at which he finds them relevant in the other works.

At this point, therefore, we turn to notice how Oman deals with, first, the nature of Prayer; secondly, Eschatology; and thirdly, the Church, and especially the unity of the Church. Here it is our concern to show how his underlying doctrine of grace as succour to moral personality works itself out in particular contexts.

1) Prayer. What, in Oman's view, is the problem posed by prayer? The answer is simple: How is it that we need to
ask a loving and all-powerful God for the things we need? Is it not the case that "your heavenly Father knows that you need them all"? Does it not betray a lack of faith, of contentment with our appointed lot? Or, on the other hand, does not a beseeching of God for specific things reveal a belief in God as reluctant to give good gifts to His children? Or, yet again, are we to think of God as One whose mind can be changed by our petitions, and therefore whose will is untrustworthy?

Such questions as these present themselves because we persist in working only in the realm of theory, with an abstract idea of God's omnipotence. But if we leave this method, in which we assume that we know exactly what omnipotence is, and return to the actual revelation of God's working with His children as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, we find that we have been asking the wrong questions. If we seriously set at the centre of our belief the Fatherhood of God as Jesus revealed it by being the Son, we learn to understand the nature of prayer very differently, namely, as a commerce between children and their Father. Prayer takes place within this relationship, and cannot be understood outside it.

But, as we have already seen, the principle by which we understand the nature of this relationship is to be found in the nature of freedom. God does help His children, but not in a direct way by an assertion of His power, but by the indirect method of grace.

God is not concerned first with good gifts, but with right giving as measured by right receiving. Grace, that means, is never a mere direct line of power, passing through us with impersonal directness, as light through windowglass, but is a curve of patient, personal wisdom, encircling and embracing us and all our concerns. And with that curve a true theology is wholly occupied.
The key words here are "right receiving". God's whole relation to us is concerned with our right receiving, in perfect freedom and knowing what we are doing, of all the good that He holds in store for us.

It is interesting to note at this point that, as Professor H.H. Farmer has observed, Oman here brings petitionary prayer to the very centre of the prayer life, as the sharpest and truest expression of a faith in God which knows Him as personal. Usually, as Dr. Farmer points out along lines similar to our introductory questions, it is prayer of petition that is first jettisoned as "unworthy" or "unspiritual". By those whose way of thinking is predominantly mystical, we are exhorted to learn to accept the will of the Unchangeable, not to ask Him to accommodate Himself to our finite desires, but instead to place prayer of adoration at the centre. Prayer is here conceived as meditation and contemplation of the divine majesty and glory, in which our personal wishes and needs are "lost in wonder, love, and praise."

But while Oman would be very far indeed from rejecting these elements of prayer, his views on the nature of mysticism prevent him from according them the central place. Personality rightly conceived is concerned with its tasks in the world, and with its needs in relation to them, and, in his view of the matter, mysticism and contemplation are attempts on the part of man to avoid the hardness of seeking God's will in the world. In contemplation God all too readily becomes an "undifferentiated unity" unrelated to the distressful disunity of actual existence with its multitudinous claims and ever-increasing demands.

1. THE WORLD AND GOD, p. 137.
But if, with Oman, we set the moral personality at the centre, we are immediately driven to consider prayer in terms of the claims made upon it and its needs in relation to them. Understood thus, petitionary prayer reveals and is necessitated by a right relation between divine and human persons. It is not enough to state that God knows all our needs and is more ready to hear us than we are to pray, and to conclude from this that we need not pray. The truth of the matter is that God waits for our sincere and earnest prayer before He will bestow His gifts. It is more important that we should desire them rightly, "Earnestly desiring the best gifts." (I Cor 12.31.) And, of course, this conception of prayer which is so clear in petitionary prayer holds for the whole life of prayer: intercession for others cannot be real unless we ourselves truly desire the whole will of God for those for whom we pray; supplication for God's mercy must include within it a lively sense of our need of it; adoration and praise must spring from a heart which knows, and "presses on to know" the faithfulness of God in all that a man does. So, in Oman's understanding of prayer, God waits upon man to seek out His will for him, and man finds that God freely bestows all those things upon him all those things for which he prays in the true spirit of sonship and service.

Of course the deepest prayer is still, "Thy Will be done." But this prayer is not made in a spirit of mere submission, for the believer's attitude is one of glad acceptance and searching out in the concrete decisions of everyday existence of the will
of God, in the manner we have already made clear. (Section I of this Chapter.) It remains, therefore, only to quote the two most specific passages in Oman's works on the subject of prayer.

Prayer, Word and Sacrament are still the means of grace, yet only as they are moral means adapted to moral ends, and not merely as they are devices or vehicles or impressive doings. Except as moral means, they cannot help to manifest God's gracious personal relation to His children, for as devices to wring blessings out of God or as vehicles to convey something into man, however individual they may be, they would not, in any moral sense, be personal.

Prayer is not bombarding God for acts of omnipotence which, otherwise, He might withhold, but is the intercourse of the family of God, wherein our brethren are included as well as our Father. As it manifests a gracious relation, whereby all things work together for our good, its chief task is in everything to give thanks; and, though our needs require special petitions, it is because, being straitened in ourselves, we need God's help to receive with profit, and not because God forgets to be gracious till He is urged.

Prayer being the children's intercourse with their Father, the assurance that God knows what we need before we ask Him and the sense that our asking makes it more God's gift and our good are in no conflict, but is God's most personal way of giving and ours of receiving. Yet in such personal intercourse there may be better answers than even giving and receiving, and therefore a better way of waiting upon God than besiegling with repetition and insistence, because God may both have a better gift and a better way of giving. To help us to find by seeking may enrich us more than just to put it into our hands; and the highest of all may be what we can neither ask for nor seek because it is beyond our knowing. It lies behind blank doors at which we can only knock, yet which, if our whole life is a patient knocking at them, will open on discoveries we have not even imagined. Thus, as a father, God gives in the way that would make us most His children in freedom and power.

Finally, we may note that, in a sermon on the text from Luke 11:9, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you", entitled "The Laws of Prayer", Oman sums up his view of prayer under the three "laws" of receiving, of finding, of discovering. The first we have discussed at length - God does
not simply "hand out" His gifts, but teaches us to be ready to receive them. The second intensifies the first — it is better for us to search for and find "the best gifts" if they are to be really our own; and the third underlines these two, and adds the further insight that what God has to give is, though always new and unexpected, yet all of a piece with the true meaning and value of all that He has given up to the present. The true attitude of prayer is therefore to seek God's meaning in all things, and to learn to ask and live in accord with that meaning, in all its growing richness.

God keeps us waiting and dissatisfied and unblessed, not because He would not gladly satisfy our desire and reward our seeking, but because His is a larger love which would give us a still higher possession on the better title of our own discovery. In that confidence let us pray — asking, seeking, knocking — knowing the blankest door of His seeming denial to be only the barrier that will open upon His fullest manifestation. So shall we pray, not only when we worship together in the sanctuary or kneel at our private devotions, but by a whole life of trust, of dependence, of thanksgiving, and, above all, of waiting at the door of life's mystery, which is life's prophecy and hope.

(2) **Eschatology.**

The related problems of the meaning of death and the nature of the Christian hope of immortality Oman also deals with in a way entirely characteristic of him and exemplary of his whole position. We are already clear, from our earlier exposition, about that conception of human history and the situation of man as such which Oman entertains. There we saw how the empirical life of man is essentially unstable, and God is pictured as always at work in the world, shaking and disturbing man as he tries to settle down and shield himself from larger claims upon his freedom, and not allowing man to bury his freedom like a talent that he does not wish to put to
the moneylenders.

At the end of this life, as an inescapable reminder of its nature and quality, stands death, the one form of this bondage of corruption which waits for all alike.

The gates of death prevail against all the living and all beneath the sun, and the sun itself and all the material world are hastening to dissolution. The strongest in its clutches are as the lark in the claw of the hawk. It stops the merry heart of childhood as easily as the heavy pulse of age; it breaks the young man's strength and blanches the bronzed face of the hardiest, and before its onslaught the proudest bearing stoops and totters. Rank gives no immunity, wealth cannot purchase one day's exemption, genius has often fallen an early prey. It is the conqueror of all the conquerors, and to it all monarchs resign their sceptres. Death is the victor of victors and the sovereign potentate of all realms, swallowing all in victory. And it is a victory that none dispute and none reverse. His place knows the man no more, his value is nothing accounted of, his plans scattered to the wind, and it is only as if a breath had passed and a handful of dust been scattered in the air.

Death is, as it were, the seal, the guarantee to man that, try as he may, he cannot avoid the evanescence which accompanies and accompanies him at every point in his life of which he would be aware if he only had the courage to look his existence in the face.

But no more than instability and evanescence is the true and only meaning of man's life, is death the real and last word, the bitter end to the human struggle, proclaiming all to be futility. On the contrary, when we understand God's method of dealing with us in view of the possibilities of moral personality, we find that death, just because it does sum up the nature of our whole life at one point, plays a definite role in the shaping of moral personality.

Firstly, Oman sees death as a limitation of life. A human life is lived out, so to speak, between the brackets of birth and death, and only within these brackets are service and
fellowship opportunities to man. Dostoevsky, in one of his novels, retells the story of Dives and Lazarus, and makes the unhappy Dives, now aware of the significance of his neglect of the beggar, say, "Even though I would gladly give my life for others, it can never be, for that life is passed which can be sacrificed for love, and now there is a gulf fixed between that life and this existence." It is the shortness of life which gives it its urgency. Oman notes, as many others have done, that in Israel the appearance of a doctrine of life after death is a very late phenomenon in the story of the nation's thought; for Israel was concerned with the call to serve God upon earth, and a reference to a future life seemed to them to divert attention from the pressing demands of the present. The future life could not be for them, as it was for other peoples round about them, a sphere in which the injustices and the inequalities of this life would be adjusted. They sought instead the "goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

... It was of the highest consequence for the faith of the prophets that they never disposed of the difficulties of our actual experience in this life by leaving them to be settled by the unknown possibilities of another. By nothing is the Hebraic faith more distinguished than by an almost entire absence of this imaginative transference of life's desires and hopes to the other world. This absence is the more impressive that the Hebraic prophets were endowed with the highest gifts of imagination.

Because, then, man's life has a span of three-score years and ten, there is an urgency laid upon him by this very fact. Man is the child of time, and of a particular time at that, which lays upon him particular duties and tasks to which he must give his whole and undivided attention. The power of grace lies, as we have seen, in the fact that it sets a man free from
preoccupation with himself and his destiny, enabling him to
leave that in the hand of God, and to turn confidently and
obediently to the task of seeking out God's will for him in
the present moment. Death, therefore, is an instrument of
this gracious relationship of God towards man in that it hides
from him the glories of a future life and imparts to him a
healthy sense that he has only a limited time in which he may
work and express his care for others.

The ignorance which cuts off the child from the tasks of
manhood, by enabling him to attend to the tasks of childhood,
not only prepares him better for the future, but allows him
to live at the same time his own true life. Similarly we
should give ourselves to the tasks of this life, as sons of
the Kingdom, citizens of the realm of God now, grateful that
a thick veil prevents us from being distracted by the more
glorious activities of another.

Let us see on the one hand that life with nothing at the
end but death, is a poor mockery and futility, a thing of
delusions and disappointments; and on the other, that life
without death would be a dull certainty without urgency,
without discipline, a call to pleasure and an encouragement
of self-love. ... So shall it demand from us strenuousness
in the labours that are so short, love and pity for the fellow
mortals who may so soon pass out of reach of our service, a
just use of the material blessings which serve us with such
uncertainty for so short a time, a devotion to the spiritual
gifts and grace which alone endure, a loyal obedience to
God's law which is the only guidance which will not fail us
when this life shall end, a growing trust in God himself as
the one confidence that does not change with changing scenes,
and a growing love to Christ who will take us to be with Him
where He is.

But, secondly, death has for Oman the significance of
a reminder of the "beyondness" of the meaning of human
existence. As he expresses it, the Christian finds in life
a meaning and a purpose for which this life is "too small."
Another life, greater than this, and with greater possibilities,
must be entered into if the truth of this life is indeed truth.
Death is thus a marker, for the Christian, pointing beyond the
limitations of this existence to a deeper and richer existence.
for which God prepares him. It is the sign of the mystery of God's purpose which can be his only in faith, in trust in the power of God to make it his just by means of this apparently all-negating fact. Man makes much, in this connection, of the phrase in Hebrews, "the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16) and speaks also of "a sense of forever and forever", which pervades the Christian's understanding of all that he does. As we have seen, it is the nature of reconciliation with God that we find ourselves reconciled not merely to an abstract being in the heavens, but with all His "appointments" for us in this life. And among these appointments is the fact of death, itself an inscrutable curtain rung down between one act and the next, yet nevertheless full of promise because of the very nature of the reconciliation achieved on this side of it. For this promise God prepares man especially and ultimately by death.

... Jesus stands alone in having wrought for man a nobler victory over death, swallowing it up in a victory that has brought man peace and the knowledge of God. Christ alone has added it to all things which are working together for man's good.

In us, also, as in Him it is prepared for a better resurrection, a resurrection which shall not be the mere resumption of this sinful selfish life; but be an entrance into a life where sin has been vanquished and sorrow is no longer needed for the discipline of our wayward hearts. And what is there that works more truly for us that glorious end? How otherwise may we enter if not by being conformed to His death that we may attain the purity and triumph of His resurrection? Then truly death is swallowed up in victory. Death aids the victory which destroys itself, death is its chief ally and not, as we have so long feared, its chief foe.

At the beginning of the sermon we have been quoting, on "The Easter Victory", Oman tells a fable to bring out this meaning of death in human life as a pointer beyond, and he likens death to a monster which rises from the sea to devour,
from time to time, the inhabitants of a narrow strip of land which runs between the sea and a high range of mountains that divides them from an unknown hinterland. Then, when they have grown dully used to the horror of the monster's depredations,

Through the cleft in the hills someone comes and tells them that the monster has all these years been appointed to warn them that they were not to live on this barren stretch of shore, but to pass through the gorge into a country all fair and rich and good. He leads them to the crown of the road whence they look into this country, and then they look back and see, that, had they known it, this monster was all the time their friend and helper.

Thirdly, death, as the symbol and consummation to which all life hastens, is also the symbol and consummation of God's opposition to sin. Sin is the unwillingness to trust the gracious personal work of God in the concreteness of His appointments in duty and discipline of life. God, therefore, in His Fatherly activity towards man, brings upon him all manner of trouble and calamity, the last, most final, and most complete of which is death. Man can do nothing to assure himself of a safe passage through death, and his only hope is to trust in God.

What but death, death in its darkest, most forbidding form, could proclaim the depth and reality of His words: 'Nevertheless not my will but thine be done.' It says how awful is the bondage of sin, what chaos and ruin it works in God's world, and it says that the heart of the Eternal will spare nothing to save His world from its power, from its pollution, from its disorder, from its attraction, from its guilt. Had there been no death, what expression, what vehicle, what instrument could God have found to utter and convey the entire, the absolute devotion of his love, to maintain the majesty of His injured law, and redeem the guilt of His erring children? D6120.

It must be admitted at this point, however, that Oman writes little specifically on the subject of death. The reason for this is not far to see: he is much more concerned in the present possession of eternal life, and his approach to the
problem of death is determined by his understanding of the life of which it forms the close. This is exemplified by his strong words against older people who speak too freely about death as a "blessed release" from the trials of this life. This, he thinks, has a bad effect upon young people whose natural attitude to life is to seek a meaning in it which will sustain its promise and challenge.

Young and generous souls are, and ought to be, intensely conscious of life. Nothing could convince them, nothing should convince them, that life is not their immediate and urgent concern. When, therefore, persons, who, in spite of their chilled blood, are manifestly as tenacious of life as ever, exhort those standing on life's threshold, with all life's glorious possibilities before them, to say with an aged, imprisoned saint, 'It is better to depart and to be with Christ;' the result is merely a sense both of unreality and dismay, as though religion, finding no meaning of any sort in this life, had, in desperation, to fling itself upon another. Weakness, captivity and old age have a right to be weary of life; youth and vigour under the open sky have not.

Oman's objection to that doctrine of eternal life which thinks it better to depart and be with Christ is that it is fundamentally mystical, as we have found him to understand that word. It is an attempt to escape from the search for meaning in existence, and not a power by which man is sustained in his attempt to see "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Death draws a proper veil over the future, and our part is not to yearn after the life of the world beyond, but to live in the assurance that all, in this world and the next, is of God. This assurance is itself a present possession, a weapon in daily use in the vicissitudes of life -

... The faith of Jesus in the Father, which makes all free who accept it, in the assurance that, for his end, all things work together for good, and his end is his children...
For the same reason Oman is equally opposed to a speculative interest in the nature of the life after death, a merely intellectualistic attempt to assert its reality. He is ready to admit that much has been said in support of such a life, and also that much can be said against its possibility, but he observes that religion has never been interested in a purely logical and passionless demonstration of the pros and cons.

As a purely intellectual opinion, it can be assailed by an argument like dependence on a corruptible body, and it can be defended by an argument like the unity of the soul which has not parts to disintegrate; or it can be dismissed because death is 'the country from whose bourne no traveller returns', and led home again in triumph because Spiritualism has established communication with the other side. But when we meet it in the religions as the faith which has been, negatively, victory over the fleeting; and, positively, the power of an endless life, it is not held by reasoning at all.

When all has been said from the point of view of argument and fact, we are not much further along the road to a belief in immortality that can really be called a faith, in the sense that it confers victory over life. The possibility, and even the probability, of a life after death can be reviewed in cold and objective detachment; but faith is not cold and objective. It is "what we cannot help believing." How is this belief in immortality reached, as it is in all religious thought, properly so called?

As an article of faith, belief in immortality is reached by the awareness of the "eternal and infinite significance" of all our decision and activity in this life. There is a sense of "for ever and for ever" in all we do; the life of faith is led standing under eternity, and every decision is one upon
which destiny hangs. But the ultimacy of the decisions which faith makes in freedom is not something which they have in themselves, but in virtue of the order of love in which they are taken. In them man is working out his sonship before God, and it is this order in which he is a son of God, and, in God, a brother of all men, that is the final reality—end that, as such, testifies directly to its own indestructibility.

The only truly religious hope of immortality so lives with God now as to know that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. It does not say, Let us live for the life to come, but, Now have we eternal life. Instead of having us miserable now to be happy hereafter, it would give us present possession of a blessedness of such a quality that we know it cannot end. By having already in it victory over mortal terrors, it gives us a right to be assured of victory over the last enemy, death. Only by finding a blessed and endless purpose in this life, can we have a triumphant hope larger than this life can contain.

It is necessary to insist that "sonship before God" is not to be understood as a concept, as a theory of the universe, but as faith. As a fish lives in water, so, Oman would have us understand, the man of faith lives in the presence of the Father's work. His primary relation to it is that of living and acting in terms of it, rather than thinking about it in an objective and speculative fashion.

By dealing with it in this way, Oman is able to link belief in immortality firmly to belief in God Himself. It is, indeed, only one aspect of this primary faith. Because God is not a metaphysical idol but the Author of life's meaning, neither is faith in survival a merely intellectual notion. Faith in God, lived out in the exigencies of the human situation, must come before any belief about death,
and must form the ground of it.

What is beyond death will no doubt be the final test of life, our works following us, the wood, hay and stubble to be burned up, and the gold, silver and precious stones to be shown alone in beauty, which may well leave us sorrowfully poor. Yet, death itself is not life's greatest task. If there be a white streak in us, the whips and scorches of time, with long delay and failing strength, are more likely to show it than the mere fear of death. It is, therefore, a greater assurance that life will not separate us from the love of God than that death will not, for the blankness of life's futility may sap our courage more than death itself.

We may notice also that Oman's one specific reference to the resurrection of the body interprets this doctrine in such a way as to bring out the idea that the real power of a belief in eternal life lies in its relation to all our present activity, in giving it infinite significance.

... Time and eternity are linked together, the great end in both being to purify ourselves even as He is pure.

By this purpose we should interpret the idea of the resurrection of the body. Interpreted materially it is nothing more than a stumbling block and a perplexity. St. Paul carefully distinguishes it from the resurrection of the flesh. Whatever abiding reality there may be in matter, the doctrine has no connection in his mind with the gathering of material particles from earth and sea, and the apportioning of them among rival claimants. The hope is presented to help us in the present; and by the present life it must be interpreted. It is not a prediction of a remarkable physical phenomenon, but an assurance that the discipline of this mortal flesh, which is a task of our mortal state so urgent and so difficult, is of eternal importance. It embodies a truth of the highest value for the conduct of life, a deliverance at once from dry asceticism and from debasing impurity. It is a hope which gives greatness to every relation of life and to every phase of duty, sanctifying all and ennobling all. The sense of forever and forever is thus given to the whole of life.

At this stage it may occur to us to suggest that we have here an example of Kant's approach to belief in immortality, as a necessary correlate of the moral life. This observation is, in a sense, just; but Oman believes that his conception of the moral life is so different from that of
Kant that to accuse him of attaching the belief to morality merely as a necessary postulate would be a complete misunderstanding. One does not argue from the moral life to the proposition that virtue must be rewarded and completed. In Oman's view the difficulty of Kant's position was simply that it did not conceive of the moral life in such a "parsimonious" fashion that it was possible to argue from it to belief in God, freedom and immorality as necessary postulates. Kant conceived morality purely as a human work, and the idea of grace was not to be introduced at any point, lest it corrupt the autonomy of the good will.

In this scheme the supernatural, in the ordinary sense, has no place. Every wise man, Kant thinks, admits the possibility of miracle but proceeds in action as though everything depended on himself. Prayer should do no more than ask conformity to God's will; and even such prayer a good man might not practice. The whole religion of ritual and outward worship is an attempt to gain God's favour as if he were a mere human superior susceptible of being influenced by praise or persuasion; whereas God is only pleased when men are morally good. God's succour, no doubt, is a reality, but it is outside of our experience; and to be always expecting a work of grace to do what we must do ourselves, if it is to have any merit, is a hurtful moral attitude. PP181.

But of this reduction of morality to the "mere morality" of the plain man Oman will have nothing. The gracious personal relation of God to men, undergirding all his independence, is the "sine qua non" of the moral life if this is to be more than customary morality. God, freedom and immortality are not postulates of such a life, a aspect of reality towards which the good life, complete in itself by virtue of its autonomy, points to as consequents. They are inherent in the moral life itself, part and parcel of the situation in which it is lived, and without which it is not possible. It is one thing to fear, as Kant did (and in this Oman followed him, as we have seen), that the direct application of a belief in a future life to the moral claim will end in diverting attention from the claim itself; it is quite
another to relate the two in such a way that the hope of immortality
buys up, supports, and lends seriousness to the sense of independence
casting a light of "infinite and eternal significance" upon the tasks
of the present. This latter course Oman believes he has succeeded
in taking.

In Oman's account of the problems of death and the future life,
then, we find once again that the operative principle is the freedom
of the moral person in dependence upon God's grace, over the whole
area of life.

3) The Church, Ministry and Sacraments.

We cannot attempt to give here more than an outline of Oman's
thought concerning the Church. Two of his works, VISION AND
AUTHORITY and THE CHURCH AND THE DIVINE ORDER, are given over to a
discussion of its nature and its history. But in both of these, it
is avowedly his doctrine of Grace that lies at the root of all his
thought, and our aim here is simply to indicate how he applied this
doctrine to particular problems.

In commencing this work I had no thought beyond the more
practical issues of the present ecclesiastical situation. It has
grown to be an enquiry into the foundations on which all Churches
rest.

... No good can be accomplished till we recognise that our
differences do not concern the Church but the doctrines of God and
of salvation upon which our views of the Church rest. Arguments
about the Church can only end in barren logomachies so long as we
are not at one about what manner of God we believe in and what manner
of salvation from Him we expect.

What, then, is the Church? To this we may reply quite simply:
the Church is that unique society among men which has its sole
"raison d'être" in that final ultimate order glimpsed by the prophets,
lived in perfection by Jesus Christ, and operative among the Apostles.
Of this order the Cross is the symbol and centre, and the Church is
true to itself when it bases its entire existence upon the conviction
that reality so presented is the ultimate meaning of all things. This order, is, of course, the order of God's gracious personal relation to men.

Just as the justification of the individual is not dependent upon his moral achievement, but only upon his discernment by faith that he actually lives in a reality which is atoning and gracious, so the Church does not cease to be the Church because she imperfectly manifests the reality by which she lives. On the contrary, the Church begins at the same place as God's grace begins, with man in his actual fallen condition, and, within the Church as the society of those who know that God is the Father already, there is room for a hope which will sustain the members through the difficulties that face them in their concrete individuality.

The Church is different from all other societies in this, that its ideal is its essence.

If the Church is engaged in the task of history, it is necessary before he can serve the Church to cut himself off from its failures and to endeavour to create a new fellowship corresponding in everything with the ideal, before he can begin. If the Church's task is the task of history, we may not deny responsibility for any branch of the Church, or for the whole struggle, human and passionate and violent as it has been.

Simply because the Church is based upon the revelation of God's gracious relation to men, it cannot be perfectionist, seeking always "ecclesioleae in ecclesia". The Church, because "its ideal is its essence", is inclusive, not exclusive. The "ideal" that Oman speaks of in this connection is not an ideal in the sense of something unattainable, an aim towards which the Church is tending, and which makes only those who have recognisably approximated to it real members of the Church: the ideal here referred to is the ideal
that is actual in God's existing and active relation to men, the ideal of encircling and inclusive holy love.

Thus understood, the Church does not stand above society issuing orders and promulgating decrees, but stands among men, partaking of their imperfections and sins, sharing in the atoms work of God by caring for each man as men, and not making human distinctions among persons on the basis of moral attainment, but offering instead fellowship and support in spite of empirical division and incompatibility.

Along these lines also the unity of the Church is to be understood. Oman was evidently impressed by an overhasty desire for Church unity, and believed that he discerned an unworthy motive in much of the discussion that was being carried on at the time he published the two works mentioned above. The unity suggested by many seemed to be a unity brought about by fear, by a desire to make the Church great and impressive, so that its orders would be hearkened to by a society much in need of guidance and a firm hand to lead. But Oman believes that the disunity of the Church is itself an act of providence, especially in days of social dissolution for while confusion of voices may lead many to despair, it will, he believes, also have the effect of making faith real to those who have hitherto based it merely upon custom or upon the merely external authority of the Church. Faith then rests upon its true foundation, the insight of individual into truth. But this approach to the truth of faith seems to consign the One Church to destruction, for what unity is possible when every man is left to believe whatever seems good to him? Oman replies that no other truth is worth possessing than that which is individually discerned,
and the only unity worth considering is unity in the truth, based on respect for the sincerity of the insight of those who differ from us.

God alone is one. He alone sees life as a whole, calling things that are not so, they were. In His omniscient vision every detail has its place. That vision we cannot see, but our own place at least we may distinguish; for if we cannot see the whole as one, we nevertheless may know the bond which binds into one. God is love, and all His government is love. Wherefore, to find our place in the universal plan, we need only walk in love....

The Church has had too much of the unity of creed which rests on a compromise of convictions, and of the unity of action which rests on forbearance with evil. It is merely a state of unstable equilibrium, wherein nothing may be disturbed lest we discover how little we agree. Even hypocrisy may not be exposed, lest scandal and conflict arise. The end is delusion, and, in the day of trial which must inevitably come, division; so that neither is unity maintained, nor are any of the ends forwarded which unity ought to serve. Instead of asking how many convictions may be obscured and how much imperfection tolerated, we ought rather to believe that the greatest champion of the true unity is the man who most ardently seeks truth and truth only and utterly, and who most uncompromisingly follows righteousness with entire consecration of aim and energy.

The Church's ministry is the organ of the fellowship thus understood. It exists to bring men to a free, independent acknowledgement of God's order of grace as the final order for them, in which they will henceforth live and move and have their being. It does not exist to command, to inculcate doctrine, or in any way to lord it over the flock, but simply to act as a permanent expression of that loving concern which the whole fellowship must have for all of its members. The whole Church is Apostolic, not because it can trace a lineal descent of succession of its Bishops, but because it has made the vision its own that the Apostles had first received through Christ of the love of the Father in all experience. And the ministry is Apostolic insofar as it seeks to elicit from each member of the community, and from the community as a whole, a sincere and personal participation in this vision.
Neither the Apostles nor the ministry are to be thought of as the possessors of unique channels of special divine gifts, for even Christ Himself sought to lead men away from a slavish dependence upon Himself to an independent sonship. Thus the Church and the Ministry are founded on the prophets and the Apostles in the sense that there is to be found in its perfection that pattern, that essential attitude, which enables life to reveal its true meaning to men.

Just because the truth of God, to be perfectly understood, must be incarnated in the interpreter as well as for him, the interpretation of the first Apostles, the humble, loyal, transformed ambassadors of Christ, in the days when His memory was still fresh and His work still new, the interpretation of those whose transfigured lives were more directly from the Life they interpreted, must occupy a place of its own. To later experience it presents both methods and results, not indeed for the determination of our relation to Christ, but of imperative necessity for the application of His truth to our own nature and to our own time. VA198.

The true theological attitude is defined by Christ in a sentence "All ye are brethren," He says, "and one is your teacher." The wise and learned, the high and low, are all alike helpers of each other's faith. They are brethren in a common search, not lords over one another's submission. Even Christ is not our Rabbi. Even He does not demand from men uninquiring acceptance of His verdict. On the contrary, He is our Teacher. And this assures all patience with us till we learn and receive, and not merely submit. VA187.

To be founded on the Apostles and prophets is not to have a sure traditional link with them which every century must make weaker, but to share in their victory to which every century may contribute. It does not mean that, because they knew God immediately, we may only know Him at secondhand - that, because they recognised God's rule directly, we may only do it indirectly. It means, on the contrary, that through them we also are helped to be apostles and prophets, to hear the Spirit of God's Son in our own hearts and see for our own lives the divine rule working good through all things. Jesus is the chief corner-stone precisely because He means more for our direct knowledge of God than all others. He gave the creative impulse and abides the supreme inspiration of the Church, because, had He not been crucified from weakness and raised in power, there never could have been a society of those who realise that love alone is victory and are assured that God's rule will come for the world, seeing it has already come for their own hearts and, in spite of all the powers of darkness in this world and the next, for their lives. CD321.

Oman mentions the sacraments only twice in passing, but here the interpretation of them is consistent with his view of grace. He
notes that the elements of the sacraments are common things, and this fact points to the real means of grace, life itself in all its varied aspects. But this it does because the elements are chosen to point to the Cross, in which is to be seen the reconciliation with God in all His appointments actually at work. Oman also follows Paul in finding in the bread, the loaf, a symbol of the unity of the Church across every human barrier. So the sacraments are means of grace because they at once point to the demand to find life in the actual demands of daily existence, and to the purpose of God in giving true life itself in these very demands.

The Sacraments solemnly employ water, and bread and wine - the common things in daily use - to express, and, as it were, give the concentrated essence of the sacrament of life. They presuppose that there is more in every gift of food than to eat of the loaves and be filled, and that we ought therein to see the miracle of a gracious God manifesting Himself in goodness. The miracle is extended in these rites to all God appoints for us; and the special rites which connects this sacrament of life directly with the Cross, forbids us to rule out any part of experience, and teaches us to find in agony and shame and death the manifold wisdom and measureless love of God; and by that message it become pre-eminently the sacrament of reconciliation.

Of all ways of showing how the love of the Father in the life without and the Fellowship of the Spirit within is one in the grace of Christ the greatest is the sacrament in which the symbols used sanctify the whole material life and make it transparently radiant with the spiritual. This is not a rite of any church, or for that matter of the Church at all, but expresses the nature of the Fellowship, and should never be observed without inviting all who acknowledge it to partake.
Chapter 8:
EVALUATION AND CRITICISM.

We cannot, in this chapter, approach John Oman's work point blank, as it were. We must estimate first whether or not he offered a solution of the problems of his own time in terms of the thought of that time, a solution appropriate to the religious position in which he and his contemporaries stood. We have already, traced, in our introductory chapter, the forms in which the theological problems seemed to pose themselves around the turn of the century and later, and we must now do our best to indicate the value of Oman's answers.

Perhaps our most suitable starting-point is with the problem of authority. This was apparently the immediate cause of the peculiar direction which his thought took. In the introduction to VISION AND AUTHORITY he writes of his reaction as a student and young minister to the attitude taken by churchmen to the Robertson Smith case in Scotland, and of his vow at that time to find an adequate resting place for religious authority, a resting place which left the religious man free to follow his conscience wherever it should lead him. The problem assumed the proportions it did for two main reasons. On the one hand Biblical criticism had apparently undermined the authority of scripture to such an extent that it seemed to have lost its power to speak except possibly to the erudition of scholars. But this had clearly never been the real position of the Bible in the Church, and certainly not in the Church of the Reformation both in Scotland and in England. The nature of its authority must, he thought, be differently understood.
if it is to be regained. One must be able to strike below the apparently literalistic approach which had been taken for granted for so long, and seek the real authority of which this was only the shell.

Further, the Church itself provided a problem. That it should be able to speak with moving power to the people seemed self-evident, yet it was plainly not accomplishing this task by the mere reiteration of orthodox formulas or by the conventional application of an individualistic conversionism. The Church needed both a wider view of its work than that of plucking brands from the burning and a deeper understanding of the nature of its peculiar task. Among the supporters of the Oxford movement Oman felt that he discerned a mere archaism, a mystical retreat from the problems with which the living and ordinary member of the Church and of society at large was having to struggle. The collapse of Christian society was providing a panic situation, and this return, this yearning for a lost unity of spiritual life, was a reaction characteristic of the human unwillingness to assume the problems of freedom and change. Among evangelicals the same pattern was manifesting itself in the cry for the "old Gospel" that had stirred the hearts of earlier generations. The lack of, and general desire for, unity within the Church intensified this nostalgia, for it was felt that the Church, if unified, would regain its old prestige within society, and would be able to guide men out of the perplexities which seemed about to overwhelm them.

It must be noted that, in standing within the Church as it faced these problems, Oman had a sure eye for the central point. If we are to reinterpret the function of the Church and restate the claims of the Gospel in a way appropriate to our contemporaries, it is of little use to concern ourselves with peripheral questions. We must go to the heart of the difficulty, and reconsider the nature of God Himself.
purpose with man, and therefore the nature of God himself. And Oman's clarity of vision carried him further still, for he saw that the real problem was in the doctrine of grace. He saw that the doctrine of atonement is of crucial importance; but this awareness was shared by most of his contemporaries, especially those of the Reformation tradition. It was Oman's special contribution to find the central point at issue to be the doctrine of grace. This, he claimed, must first be considered and settled, before an attempt is made to construct an adequate doctrine of the atonement or of any other Christian doctrine.

The problem related to that of authority was, in his estimation, that of the nature of freedom itself. In speaking so much about freedom he showed himself well aware of the tendencies and interests of his time. The middle of the nineteenth century had seen the attempt on the part of the industrial worker to throw off the rule of the middle class. In Europe this had been more violent than in Britain. There an abortive attempt was made in 1848 to introduce constitutional governments more mindful of the rights of the depressed classes, and in the latter part of the century the influence of Marxist doctrine steadily gained ground. But in England also the Chartist and the rise of the Labour Party had made evident a desire for a less externalised form of Governmental authority, and the right of man to govern himself was to be increasingly recognised.

Oman saw all this ferment in social life and read in it the prolongation of the ideas of Renascence and especially of Enlightenment and with these he sympathised profoundly. They were, he felt, the upward gropings of man for an order of society that would express his maturity, his ability and his right to order his own existence among
his fellows. Yet at the same time Oman was equally aware of the dangers, for, with many of his fellow thinkers of that time, Oman had a deep and sensitive understanding of the meaning of the word "culture". Amid all the reaction from merely externalised authority there was a grave danger that much of the richness of human life and the gains of civilisation and history would be lost. Oman's contempt for every attempt to reduce all this richness to some simple principle of explanation has already been made clear; this tendency was at work in his time in the shape of scientific philosophy. The values most worthy of man's effort were being completely overlooked in favour of a supposedly superior technical advance. Agnosticism was thought to be justified by the idea that a religious belief did not seem to be necessary to bring in a scientific and technical Utopia. Oman, and, indeed, many like him, felt the shallowness of this mood, and he found it to be a parallel to, and an effect of, the rationalism of the Enlightenment. His problem was, then, to find an understanding of freedom which would be adequate to the needs of the time as they sprang from social, economic, and especially religious change, and which would at the same time offer a possibility of retaining the depth of culture and meaning in civilised life which the nineteenth century had glimpsed. Thus Oman, acutely aware of the tension underlying the times in which he lived, was also aware of the great need for a principle of intergration, a possible "organic spiritual interpretation" of existence which would give his contemporaries the power to handle the centrifugal pressures to which religious life was especially sensitive.

This is further reflected in his approach to the philosophical
context of his day. Probably more than many others, Oman felt the contradictions in the realm of thought, and yet was aware that they must not be left unresolved. The standing problem was the relation between man as understood by evolutionary and scientific thought, and man as a spiritual being. Full justice must be done both to the rigidity of scientific procedure and also to the spontaneous and intuitive character of the ethical, the aesthetic and the religious. Any attempt to rest in pluralism could not satisfy Oman. There is, therefore, in his writings, an implied criticism of the work of James Ward, one of the few with whom Oman must have felt himself closely allied, for Ward did not escape pluralism in his attempt to do justice to the empirical approach of science. But if in Ward's thought the unruly boys on the bench were dangerously jostling, in McTaggart's all but one had fallen off. Cosmic reason reigned supreme. It is for this reason that Oman carries his discussion in THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL into the very camp of scientific theory itself in the attempt to disentangle the philosophical presuppositions of some scientific theories from the actual requirements of the facts themselves. But he was just as aware that the problems did not all lie on the side of empirical science. Questions had to be asked and modifications introduced into the substance of philosophy itself, hence his trenchant criticisms of contemporary idealism. Oman knew and stated in a very impressive manner the fact that philosophy is not a merely speculative, armchair business, but is that discipline which comes into being when man attempts to understand his existence. Philosophy is, at bottom, an extremely practical affair, and there ultimate questions must be asked and answered. In the realm of philosophical discussion, one could
point to this insight as his greatest contribution, whatever one may have to say in criticism of the details of his philosophical analysis. It is quite obvious that he was very much at home in contemporary philosophical thought, so that his religious thinking was consciously related to the questions about existence being asked by his contemporaries.

Moving now into the theological realm, we find Oman early at work at the critical point for his day. Perhaps the most striking single piece of evidence of this insight was the translation of Schleiermacher's REDEM as his first work. For it is indeed Schleiermacher who sets the problem for nineteenth century theology.* Oman, more clearly than any other in Britain, saw the importance of Schleiermacher's "Schlechthinigesabhängigkeitgefühl", consciousness of being absolutely dependent, as a cognitive act, an organic spiritual interpretation. He consistently refused to be led into an understanding of this as merely emotion, as "feeling", in terms of which Schleiermacher has been largely misunderstood in British theology in spite of great dependence upon him. But Oman also saw that Schleiermacher lacked, in his somewhat aesthetic view of this cognitive act, a sufficiently personal understanding of it, in virtue of which it could be more directly related to the person of Christ. Ritschlianism, the dominant theological influence of the latter years of the century, exhibited, in Ritschl's own presentation, a firmer resolve to center theology on Christ Himself, and, in Herrmann, a new appreciation of the Person of Christ as demanding obedience, as requiring discipleship by personal encounter. God, as Schleiermacher seemed to understand him, could as well be revealed without

* See Karl Barth, DIE PROTESTANTISCHE THEOLOGIE IM NEUNZEHnten JAHHRUNDERT.
Christianity as within it, but a Ritschlian reinterpretation seemed to offer more hope of centering full and final revelation in a Person, interpreting the nature and character of God to persons and specifically for their life as persons. We have seen how criticism of idealism in Britain amounted to a correction of Hegel by Kant, and the same method is applied in theology, for Schleiermacher was given a more Kantian twist by the Ritschlians and by Oman himself. Oman centred his personalism in the sphere of the practical, and understood revelation in terms of its relevance for the individual faced with his tasks and his trials in everyday life.

This brings us to the centre of Oman's religious thought, to the doctrine of grace itself, and it must be claimed for him that he made his distinctive contribution at this point, a contribution which will have a lasting effect upon British theological thought. It was undoubtedly with this in mind that F. R. Tennant spoke of GRACE AND PERSONALITY as a "major treasure of theological literature". For Oman made it clear once and for all that God's action upon man must be thought of in personal terms, and that, however useful impersonal analogies and manners of speech about grace as a force, it must never be forgotten that the core of God's dealing with us is in His relation to us as the Father to His beloved children. Too often theology has neglected this central truth, and Oman brought a just criticism of Protestant scholasticism to bear from this point of view. Whatever may have been Calvin's original intention in the INSTITUTES, the section on the freedom of man's will always leaves the impression that God simply bends the will of man whereasover He pleases, controlling him as a man controls the horse he rides. Oman saw beyond this Islamic conception of God's sovereignty to a deeper understanding of the Biblical view of God's dealing with man, and
was able to formulate a doctrine of the prevenience of God's grace which left untouched man's real self-determination. As Barth has more recently expressed it, God's activity is that of "a grand seigneur" ordering and adapting his activity with respect to his world with infinite patience and spontaneity, and is not a once-for-all decree promulgated in the deep recesses of eternity and applied legalistically to individual cases.

But Oman did not leave the matter there. For he also asserted that grace can only be understood if it is conceived as having its own proper direction, downwards from God to man. There must never be, in considering the nature of God's saving activity, any suggestion that God is unwilling to impart His forgiveness. The whole work must come freely and unreservedly from Him, if we are to interpret the New Testament rightly. Yet the idea that God must be in some sense placated before He will forgive is never very far from the understanding of the atonement that stems from the Reformers, and this is the reason for Oman's unreserved rejection of a Substitutionary theory. We have seen that he recognised a value in such theories in so far as they witnessed to a need that no moral influence theory could satisfy; that he was unaware of the depth of this need is Oman's criticism of Rashdall's discussion. Forgiving cannot be understood as merely condoning, and it is the awareness of this, Oman thinks, that creates substitutionary theories; God's grace must be understood as a gracious personal relation in the power of which we are able to see and accept ourselves for what we are. But this is only possible when we also know God as sharing with us the shame and ignominy of our sins, and assuring us that they no longer stand between us and Him.

This personal understanding of God's relation to man is thus a
valid boundary of all discussion of a theological doctrine of grace and Oman must take the credit for asserting it in unequivocal terms, and, moreover, for stressing it long before it became a commonplace through the influence of Buber, Heim and Macmurray.

Oman also gives his personalism a clearer and more explicitly ethical content than it sometimes achieves it later writers. If we may regard Rudolf Otto as one of the first of the modern writers who are preoccupied with the nature of religion as a confrontation with divine reality, it may be argued that Oman's strictures against him could equally well be applied to some of them, for it is not clear that they have succeeded in avoiding the impression that the reality man meets in religion is anything more than a "vague supernatural potency". They tend to lose the personal in the mystical, the reality and the explicitness of the meeting in their insistence on the "otherness" of the divine "Thou". But however right it may be to insist upon this otherness, we cannot stop there, for God has revealed Himself, has spoken a Word which comes to us in the particular and the concrete.

Rudolf Otto's "Idea of the Holy" whatever it may be, is at all event not to be regarded as the Word of God, for the simple and patent reason that it is the numinous, and that the numinous is the irrational, and the irrational something no longer distinguishable from the absolutised power of nature.*

From Oman's contribution to the understanding of God as personal we may move, as he would wish us to do, to his understanding of man's response to him as personal.

Oman was insistent that no particular faculty of man should be regarded as the exclusive channel of his religious experience. On the contrary, the whole of his being is involved, not in the sense that he can be religious only in so far as he is a unified,

* Karl Barth, DOGMATICS I/1 (E.T.) p. 153.
harmonious personality, but in the sense that, in making ethical
decisions and acting upon them in the power of grace, he risks his
whole personal existence in a decision made only in faith. As has
been made abundantly clear in the foregoing, faith for Oman was cer-
certainly not security in the sense that it has a rationalised and
certain knowledge, demonstrable to all comers, of the ways of God in
the world and the explicit duty of man. Faith is rather a glimpse
of the eternal purpose in some concrete situation, an awareness of a
concrete demand; and this awareness is, at the same time, an
intuitive evaluative knowledge, an interpretation of the meaning of
one's existence. This interpretation is not something given to man
from without, so that he is absolved from the responsibility of it as
his own decision. On the contrary, it is something that he must
himself make: he must actively seek out his duty, always reaching
out into the world of personal relations and deciding to act now in
this way, now in that, as he sees fit, conscious that, in thus
asserting his freedom, he is upheld in the partiality and finiteness
of his vision by the power of God Who seeks to confer upon him this
independence.

It may not unreasonably be claimed that, in this conception of
the nature of man's moral and religious life, Oman made his most
striking contribution, both in his own time and in ours. He made it
quite clear that philosophy and theology, so far from being
activities descriptive of a static reality 'out there', are really
on all fours with the simplest and most homespun thoughts of
everyman as he seeks to deal adequately with the situations which
confront him, situations which change and develop in an alarming and
disconcerting way, and which call upon him for an ever renewed
understanding of himself and courageous action on the basis of it.
Philosophy and theology are simply more complex and sophisticated versions (and therefore dangerous, if their real nature is not apprehended, because they are one step removed from the concrete individual) of this attempt upon man's part to understand himself. Few British theologians and philosophers have developed this theme so consistently and explicitly, not, of course, because they were unaware of its importance, but because they have been interested primarily in other problems. Yet one might not justly suggest that a renewed apprehension of this contribution of Oman might do much to invigorate British thought which, in these days, is in danger of a traditionalism or a theological positivism.

Having attempted to indicate the points at which Oman made significant contributions to the thought of his time, we must attempt now to raise questions in the light of later developments. But before we do set out upon this necessarily tentative venture we should recognise that Oman shared the difficulties as well as the possibilities of his historical epoch. Great as were the positive contributions of that time, the new sense of history, the patient and disturbing criticism of the Biblical texts, the courageous questioning and self-examination which thinkers of those days did not spare themselves, there was one basic problem which haunted them and which none of them really succeeded in solving, which we have called in our first chapter "the basic humanism of the enlightenment". Oman was fortunate enough to stand at the end of a theological era that was soon to pass away, the era primarily concerned with such problems as the relation of religion to science, the problem of the relation of religious to general epistemology, the attempt to find a place for the Church as a Society with a specific life of its own in the midst of general society. It was,
in short, chiefly concerned with apologetic questions. But, whatever the rights or wrongs of the matter may be, interest has since swung sharply away from such problems to a consideration of the actual content of the Christian message, from an apologetic theology to what Tillich calls "kerygmatic" theology. This has meant that many of the problems mentioned above have either been shelved to a very large extent (e.g. Religion v. Science) or have been approached from a radically different point of view. As a result of the process Oman, though he was undoubtedly one of the ablest of the thinkers of that time, has suffered an eclipse.

It cannot be doubted, however, that a return to a "kerygmatic" theology has resulted in great gains in the Church's understanding of itself, principally in its understanding of the nature of revelation.

Against the idea of revelation as the Bible appears to understand it, the humanism of the theology that stems from the enlightenment has proved to be inimical. While it is not necessary to maintain that the idea of "the infinite qualitative difference between God and man" is a purely biblical notion, it is, as a method of interpretation of the biblical material, a key that has unlocked many doors and brought new understanding of biblical categories. But such a category is the antithesis of all theological principles which find a basic unity to exist between God and man, a oneness of spirit, a likeness of "character" so that God is thought of as revealing Himself in the perfection of a human life as such. Revelation in the Bible is never a matter of course, the natural thing for God to do in the circumstances, the final working out of the inherent possibilities of the world and human life. It is rather a surprise, the overcoming of a great gulf between God and

* SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, Volume 1, p. 6ff.
man, an ever new act which God accomplishes as an act of His sheer grace. This unexpectedness of grace and revelation is something which is not appreciated by theology of Oman’s time, and his own work suffers from lack of that insight.

But let us turn to the centre of Oman’s thought itself, and attempt to indicate where it seems to fall short at this point. Let us examine his doctrine of grace, for it is there that he himself would wish the problem to be argued. What is to be said in criticism of his understanding of the grace of God?

We saw that Oman pressed the problem of the understanding of the idea of omnipotence. But, while the observations he made on the abstract idea of omnipotence were important, can it be said that he went deep enough into the question of what God’s sovereignty means? It is true that the real question is not whether or not God is actually sovereign, but what sort of sovereignty He actually wields. Oman maintained that His sovereignty is to be thought of in personal term and not merely in terms of absolute force moving in a straight line. Yet this does not go to the root of the biblical understanding of grace, for there the wonder is not merely the care and patience which God lavishes upon all the individuality of the creation - the wonder is that He should condescend to exercise such care at all. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4.) The extraordinary element in God’s activity for which men are to praise Him is not the sheer amplitude and comprehensiveness of all that He does for men, but the miracle of His undeserved issuing forth His mystery to be their Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. This miracle is wonderful and worthy of praise because it is His free and unconstrained decision, upon which man has no claim whatever, for, on the contrary because of
his sin, his desert is to sink back again into the nothingness from which God in His creative act calls him forth. The root and centre of the biblical conception of God's sovereignty is not merely at the point of rulership, but at the point of freedom, God's absolute freedom over against His creation.

Let us take three moments of Christian belief and compare Oman's treatment of them with a treatment that would begin from God in His freedom: Creation, miracle and prayer.

If it is really the case that the Bible understands God's relation to the world as Creator in the sense that Oman seems to understand it? In his mind, the world is the plastic instrument by means of which God, in His infinite patience and care for the human person, teaches him the lessons of his independence. But Creation is not, according to the biblical understanding, that by which God speaks to man. This He does in His word, in which He reveals Himself as the Creator. The Bible speaks of Creation rather as a witness to God's freedom and unconditionedness. To say that God is Creator and that the world is His creation is not to make a statement about the world and its power to reveal God, but to witness to the nature of God Himself, to declare an inalienable attribute of His Godhead, and to accord to Him the power to reveal Himself wheresoever He pleases.

The problem of miracle is one that is not discussed in Oman's works at all, and this fact in itself should give us pause to think about the whole basis of his thought. For miracle is clearly very closely associated with the content of the "kerygma", and may attempt to formulate a Christian system of thought must give some account of it. One feels, however, that his great stress on the independence of man rules out the possibility of giving any such account, for
would not any miraculous act on God's part amount to a denial of the principle that man is able to, and must, grasp the truth of God by his own insight and consecration? The biblical miracles, on the other hand, witness to the hopelessness of man's position under the powers of darkness and sin, a hopelessness that can only be turned to joy when God, out of His unmerited good pleasure, intervenes and reveals Himself as his Redeemer and Justifier. Man does not know such a God, and can only speak of His appearing in terms of miracle. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Is. 53:1.)

Oman's extremely interesting interpretation of the nature of prayer we have expounded at length above. But has he not, in the attempt to give a more "gracious" understanding of the idea of prayer, really done away with the actual character of grace as a free and unconditioned gift? Has he not rationalised the New Testament command that we should pray and not faint on the basis of his personalist principle? God, he maintains, desires us to pray so that we may receive aright the good things of his providence. He knows that God is always at hand, always available, always ready to give, and that he does give, even to those who do not ask. But, if God's grace is free and unmerited, can we, as sinful human beings, assume any such thing? Should we not rather assume the precise opposite? Prayer is therefore, according to the Gospel parable, the cry of the importunate woman at the door of the judge to whose attention she has no right whatever, the desperate appeal of the sinner who dares to believe that God may hear him. We can never assume that God will be and is our Creator, Provider and Redeemer, and prayer is the appropriate human response to the miracle of His
revelation of Himself in this role to the sinful and undeserving. Why God should be what He is to us is something we can never understand or explain, for it remains a mystery of His grace. But Oman does know why, and finds the reason in the inherent worth of man's possibilities in independence.

It is already clear from these three instances that God's freedom has become obscured by Oman's insistence upon the inviolateness of man's autonomy. God is, in fact, reduced to the status of the servant of this autonomy. The problem of reconciliation becomes only a problem for God - how can He get Him to see that He is, in fact, always gracious? But surely in the New Testament the boot is on the other foot, and the matter for wonder is what God has chosen to do with His freedom, and does choose to do. God does in fact speak to men His Word of judgement and forgiveness, and men do in fact hear: to these incredible facts the Church witnesses. Who will hear and what they will hear is not at the disposal of man but is entirely a matter of God's free choice. But for Oman the Word of God is not merely something which man may speak to himself, but something which he must speak to himself; it is not strictly speaking a revelation of what man is and Who God is, a speaking to man from a position he could never conceivably occupy, but is an intramundane insight into his relations with a being Who lives ultimately on the same level as himself. Thus Jesus, simply by the perfection of His human life, manifests the essential personality, the "humanity" (in the sense in which Oman understands this word) of God. But if God is God and not man, can He be revealed in a human life as such? Does humanity infinitely extended in the direction of goodness bring us one iota nearer
Godhead? If it does, there is no essential miracle, no paradox about the Incarnation, no confrontation of men by Another wholly incommensurate with themselves, the Lord and Determiner of their existence. And it may be further asked, is man revealed on such terms? Is not the perverse man every bit as much real man as was the Man of Galilee? Man is really revealed as man when he is revealed as standing before God, and not simply as he himself sees himself. These are two radically different points of view, God's and man's, and all of Oman's insistence that truth is not ours until we see it of our own insight cannot dull the edge of this distinction. God, if He is to be known as God, must speak a Word to man which man cannot speak to himself.

It is appropriate now for us to raise a question about Oman's understanding of the nature of theology itself. Theology is, as we saw, an articulation, a bringing into order in accordance with our highest conceptions, of those insights and intuitions by which man apprehends the nature of God as it is expressed in the meaning of our concrete existence. It is never a meekly speculative activity, but is essentially practical, for it involve that evaluation and understanding of our world and of ourselves in the power of which we rise to the call of each occasion. Its limits are prescribed only by its task, which is to give us a firmer hold on every aspect of life's meaning so that we may learn its fullest lesson. Our conception of God, which theology presents, is enriched and fed by our actual meeting with Him in the calls and trials of the common life interpreted by the deepest insights into their nature and the most full-orbed demonstration of their final meaning. In this sense theology is dependent upon Scripture and the Church, for in the former the deepest
demonstration is presented, and in the latter it is tested and proved in contemporary experience.

But if the considerations we have been urging up to the present have any force at all, is theology simply a clarification of man's insights into the nature of things, however much they may be assisted by the perfect demonstration of that meaning in the Life and Death of Christ? This may be, and perhaps is, an adequate description of non-Christian theology, but surely Christian theology has a much more limited task, limited by the nature and content of the message which the Church is commissioned to proclaim, not as its own insight, but as the Word of God. It would appear that we have in Oman, in spite of his great desire to avoid the charge by insisting upon the practical character and goal of theological thought, a tendency to drift into a species of gnosticism, a speculative and intuitive apprehension of the meaning of things, in which man's understanding of his own existence is transformed into revelation. The Church's theology, however, does not make any such claims; it is concerned to exist only as an act of obedience, of keeping the Church's contemporary language in which its message is couched, true to the original apostolic witness to God's saving act in Christ. Although it may often speak in terms of this philosophy or that, it is not bound to them as interpretations of existence, but simply uses them as far as is possible to bring out the depth and nature of its own message, the Church's witness to Christ. Oman was not alone among the theologians of his time in his unwillingness to admit this limitation upon the work of theology, and he felt free to dismiss the Christological passages in Paul and in Hebrews, as well as the dogmatic statements of the ancient Church, as relics of an outworn metaphysics of no great practical importance. But in these statements the New Testament
writers and the ancient divines were not doing metaphysics: they were presenting the content of the Gospel, examining and crystallising its presentation within the Church, and calling upon the whole household of faith to strive with them for its purity. It has often been observed that, even in terms of the philosophical fashions of their own times, their formulations leave, as philosophical statements, much to be desired. But this would not have perturbed them, for their responsibility was not towards philosophical necessity but to the necessity of the Gospel itself. Oman's conception of theology would set it alongside other interpretations of human existence, to be compared and contrasted with them. But if its subject is God's Word to man, this is simply impossible.

At an earlier point in this section we pointed out that Oman's understanding of theology as an expression of man's understanding of himself with a view to concrete activity within the world, his idea of moral activity involving an evaluation and understanding of himself and his world, is his chief contribution to the thought of his time and to ours. But at this point we must note a proviso when we make this judgement, for Oman did not see clearly enough that a Christian's understanding of himself in the light of the Word of God is not commensurable with an understanding of human existence outside the Church. Simply because the one hears, in faith, who he is before God, he is in a very different position from the other who does not begin from God in His revelation. The moral acts of the Christian man are acts of one who knows the source of his being, who knows that he does not create or preserve or justify himself by means of them. Because of this his acts do not take on that somewhat heroic, idealistic cast which Oman's man, firmly grasping his independence, sometimes assumes. Life for him is not an adventure, an assertion
of his creative powers, but a humble waiting upon God to act. He does not try to master the universe, for he knows it has a master already. In the same way theology does not feel it incumbent upon it to build up a complete world view by means of which it may know its way about in every conceivable human situation, or to provide the outline of the meaning of things, but is content with its small task in ensuring that the Church is really obedient to its Lord.

In conclusion, we may say that, provided the limitations of theology are observed, Oman has much to tell us about "Honest Religion", for as Christian religious thinkers we think "existentially" under the message which God has spoken to us. Unless we do realise that, in our theology, we are reinterpreting and reunderstanding ourselves, our thinking is simply speculation and theory. But we are not attempting to build up an impressive system - we are trying to hear more clearly what God says to us in His Word which creates and sustains us. It is easy to turn out the ecclesiastically correct phrase, the fashionable jargon, but it is quite another matter to handle these matters and wrestle with them for their meaning for our own life. But it must always be remembered that it is with our Christian existence at stake that we think, and as Christians we live only by the Word of God. It was this to which Oman tried to point us in his conception of "honest religion", and, though he fell foul of the pitfalls of his day, we would do well to hear him yet.
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