

"Transcendentalism." *The Dial: A Magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion*, vol 2. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, editors, 383-384. (Boston: EP Peabody, 1842).

EDITOR'S TABLE.

TRANSCENDENTALISM.

The more liberal thought of intelligent persons acquires a new name in each period or community; and in ours, by no very good luck, as it sometimes appears to us, has been designated as Transcendentalism. We have every day occasion to remark its perfect identity, under whatever new phraseology or application to new facts, with the liberal thought of all men of a religious and contemplative habit in other times and countries. We were lately so much struck with two independent testimonies to this fact, proceeding from persons, one in sympathy with the Quakers, and the other with the Calvinistic Church, that we have begged the privilege to transcribe an extract from two private letters, in order that we might bring them together.

The Calvinist writes to his Correspondent after this manner.

"All the peculiarities of the theology, denominated Trinitarian, are directly or indirectly transcendental. The sinfulness of man involves the supposition of a nature in man, which transcends all limits of animal life and of social moralities. The reality of spirit, in the highest sense of that holy word, as the essence of God and the inward ground and law of man's being and doing, is supposed both in the fact of sin, and the possibility of redemption from sin.

The mystery of the Father revealed only in the Son as the Word of Life, the Light which illumines every man, outwardly in the incarnation and offering for sin, inwardly as the Christ in us, energetic and quickening in the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, – the great mystery wherein we find redemption, this, like the rest, is transcendental. So throughout, as might be shown by the same induction suggested in relation to another aspect of the matter. Now here is my point. Trinitarians, whose whole system from beginning to end is transcendental, ideal, – an idea is the highest truth, – war against the very foundations of whatever is transcendental, ideal; all must be empiric, sensuous, inductive. A system, which used to create and sustain the most fervid enthusiasm, as is its nature, for it makes God all in all, leads in crusade against all even the purest and gentlest enthusiasm. It fights for the letter of Orthodoxy, for usage, for custom, for tradition, against the Spirit as it breathes like healing air through the damp and unwholesome swamps, or like strong wind throwing down rotten trees and rotten frameworks of men. It builds up with one hand the Temple of Truth on the outside; and with the other works as in frenzy to tear up its very foundations. So has it seemed to me. The transcendentalists do not err in excess but in defect, if I understand the case. They do not hold wild dreams for realities; the vision is deeper, broader, more spiritual than they have seen. They do not believe with too strong faith; their faith is too dim of sight, too feeble of grasp, too wanting in certainty. I regret that they should ever seem to undervalue the Scriptures. For those scriptures have flowed out of the same spirit which is in every pure heart; and I would have the one spirit recognise and respond to itself under all the multiform shapes of word, of deed, of faith, of love, of thought, of affection, in which it is enrobed ; just as that

spirit in us recognises and responds to itself now in the gloom of winter, now in the cheer of summer, now in the bloom of spring, now in the maturity of autumn; and in all the endless varieties of each."

The Friend writes thus.

"Hold fast, I beseech you, to the resolution to wait for light from the Lord. Go not to men for a creed, faint not, but be of good courage. The darkness is only for a season. We must be willing to tarry the Lord's time in the wilderness, if we would enter the Promised Land. The purest saints that I have ever known were long, very long, in darkness and in doubt. Even when they had firm faith, they were long without feeling what they believed in. One told me he was two years in chaotic darkness, without an inch of firm ground to stand upon, watching for the dayspring from on high, and after this long probation it shone upon his path, and he has walked by its light for years. Do not fear or regret your isolation from men, your difference from all around you. It is often necessary to the enlargement of the soul that it should thus dwell alone for a season, and when the mystical union of God and man shall be completely developed, and you feel yourself newly born a child of light, one of the sons of God, you will also feel new ties to your fellow men; you will love them all in God, and each will be to you whatever their state will permit them to be.

"It is very interesting to me to see, as I do, all around me here, the essential doctrines of the Quakers revived, modified, stripped of all that puritanism and sectarianism had heaped upon them, and made the foundation of an intellectual philosophy, that is illuminating the finest minds and reaches the wants of the least

cultivated. The more I reflect upon the Quakers, the more I admire the early ones, and am surprised at their being so far in advance of their age, but they have educated the world till it is now able to go beyond those teachers.

“Spiritual growth, which they considered at variance with intellectual culture, is now wedded to it, and man's whole nature is advanced. The intellectual had so lorded it over the moral, that much onesided cultivation was requisite to make things even. I remember when your intellect was all in all, and the growth of the moral sense came after. It has now taken its proper place in your mind, and the intellect appears for a time prostrate, but in due season both will go on harmoniously, and you will be a perfect man. If you suffer more than many before coming into the light, it is because your character is deeper and your happy enlargement will be proportioned to it.”

The identity, which the writer of this letter finds between the speculative opinions of serious persons at the present moment, and those entertained by the first Quakers, is indeed so striking as to have drawn a very general attention of late years to the history of that sect. Of course, in proportion to the depth of the experience, will be its independence on time and circumstances, yet one can hardly read George Fox's Journal, or Sewel's History of the Quakers, without many a rising of joyful surprise at the correspondence of facts and expressions to states of thought and feeling, with which we are very familiar. The writer justly remarks the equal adaptation of the philosophy in question “to the finest minds, and to the least cultivated.” And so we add in regard to these works, that quite apart from the pleasure of reading modern history in old books, the reader will find

another reward in the abundant illustration they furnish to the fact, that wherever the religious enthusiasm makes its appearance, it supplies the place of poetry and philosophy and of learned discipline, and inspires by itself the same vastness of thinking; so that in learning the religious experiences of a strong but untaught mind, you seem to have suggested in turn all the sects of the philosophers.

We seize the occasion to adorn our pages with the dying speech of James Naylor, one of the companions of Fox, who had previously been for eight years a common soldier in the army. Its least service will be to show how far the religious sentiment could exalt the thinking and purify the language of the most uneducated men.

“There is a spirit which I feel,” said James Naylor a few hours before his death, “that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exultation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thought to any other. If it be betrayed, it bears it; for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned, and it takes its kingdom with entreaty, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it; nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone

being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places of the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal holy life.”