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THEOLOGIAN, PREACHER AND POET

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by

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A Thesis

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in Theology

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Preface

The name of George Matheson probably brings first to mind the hymn, "O Love that wilt not let me go." However, a great many more people remember him as "the blind poet-preacher" of Innellan, and later of St. Bernard's, Edinburgh. That he was regarded by his contemporaries as a respected writer on theological subjects - a Baird lecturer and invited by the University of Aberdeen to be a Gifford lecturer - is too often overlooked. So it is that this thesis represents an attempt to investigate the theological thought, preaching, and poetry of Matheson. It seeks to describe and evaluate his work in each of these three fields, as well as to estimate his influence.

Are there any people interested in Matheson today? The Reverend D. Gordon McLean, present minister at Innellan, tells me that over two thousand people each year visit the Church and the Manse at Innellan, to see where Matheson lived and worked. Likewise, the Reverend A. Diack, present minister at St. Bernard's Church, Edinburgh, says that he receives constant requests for information about Matheson; indeed, one woman from Wisconsin, U.S.A., wrote to him requesting facts for a play she was writing about this famous Scot. There is also a controversy which has grown up concerning the date of composition and the circumstances under which Matheson wrote his hymn, "O Love that wilt not let me go." This controversy has resulted in letters to The Scotsman from time to time since Matheson's death in 1906.

Matheson has been the subject of one large biography, The Life of George Matheson, by Donald Macmillan. In addition, there

have been several biographical sketches in the form of magazine articles.. There have also been those who have written of their experiences and conversations with Matheson, and have thereby provided additional facts concerning him. Some of these facts have not been noted by Macmillan, but are included in the Biographical Sketch of this thesis. However, those who have written brief articles on Matheson's life and work have had objectives different from those I have had in view.. Writing primarily for the popular religious public, they have not attempted to analyze Matheson's thought and work with any degree of thoroughness, nor have they had the advantage of almost a half century in which to estimate his influence.. This thesis, in addition, incorporates material from letters and various documents, and from private conversations with several who knew Matheson intimately - which information is not to be found in Macmillan's work or in any of the periodical sketches..

It is both a pleasure and a difficulty to record my acknowledgements, so helpful and so many have they been.. There are certain individuals to whom gratitude must be publicly expressed, inadequate as is my ability to indicate the full measure of my indebtedness.. I owe a prime debt to my professorial advisor, the Reverend Professor W. S. Tindal, O.B.E., D.D., of the Faculty of Divinity of New College, Edinburgh, for his patience and liberality in guiding the composition of this thesis from first to last, and similarly to the Reverend Professor G. T. Thomson, also an advisor, and to the Very Reverend Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt, D.D., D. Litt., of New College, who first suggested Matheson as a thesis subject..

I am likewise indebted to the Reverend R. S. Calderwood, M.A., D.D., and Reverend Marshall B. Lang, M.A., D.D., and the Reverend T.W. M'Andrew, M.A., who knew George Matheson intimately. Dr. Lang was at one time his assistant, Dr. Calderwood and Mr. M'Andrew were formerly private secretaries to Matheson, and lived at his Manse - taking dictation for his books, writing his letters, reading to him in the evenings, accompanying him on his pastoral calls, and regularly listening to his preaching. In extended private conversations, they have supplied me with information, old letters, and other materials unobtainable elsewhere. Their assistance has thus been invaluable. Particularly, do I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Calderwood, with whom I spent many an evening hearing about Matheson, and who very graciously read this manuscript chapter by chapter. Moreover, I wish to acknowledge my thanks to the Reverend Frederick Rae, D.D. now of Edinburgh, who also knew Matheson and read the manuscript, and to the Reverend A. Diack, M.A., B.D., present minister of St. Bernard's and to the Reverend D. Gordon McLean, M.A., present minister of Innellan, both of whom supplied me with much information and source material. My deep appreciation goes to the Reverend Professor George S. Hendry, M.A., D.D., formerly of Scotland, and for the last four years Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, U.S.A., a professor of mine during his first year at Princeton, and to the Reverend Professor Edward Jurji, B.D., Ph.D., Professor of Comparative Religion at Princeton Theological Seminary, - both of whom read the completed manuscript and offered invaluable suggestions.

Interesting materials from St. Bernard's Parish Magazine have been incorporated in this thesis. The personal papers of William Blackwood, the Edinburgh publisher, have recently been

received by the National Library of Scotland and will shortly appear in the Library's Manuscript collection. I am indebted to this Library for its generosity in permitting me to examine, in their uncatalogued state, the thirty-five letters by Matheson to Blackwood, which shed many interesting details on Matheson's literary work. In response to advertisements in The Scotsman, The Glasgow Herald, The Times, and other British papers, old letters and other materials were sent to me from various people in Scotland and England. To all these kind people, I express my thanks.

Last, but not least I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the following: the staff of the New College Library; the staff of the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the staff of the British Museum, London; the libraries of the Universities of St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Princeton Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary.

The spelling and punctuation throughout this work, with the exception of direct quotations which are true to the sources, follow standard American usage.

April 15, 1953

J.C.T.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A biographical sketch of the author's life and work, as well as his contributions to the field of psychology, is presented in this chapter. The author's early life and education are described, followed by a detailed account of his professional career and research interests.

CHAPTER I: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The author was born on [date] in [location]. He received his undergraduate degree from [university] in [year], where he studied psychology under the supervision of [professor]. Following graduation, he pursued a master's degree in psychology at [university] in [year]. His research interests in the field of [topic] were first developed during his graduate studies. He then completed his Ph.D. in psychology at [university] in [year], where he worked as an assistant professor. His dissertation, titled "[title]", was published in [journal] in [year].

After completing his Ph.D., the author worked as an assistant professor at [university] from [year] to [year]. During this time, he conducted research on [topic] and published several papers in the field. He then moved to [university] as an associate professor in [year]. His research continued to focus on [topic], and he published numerous articles and books. In [year], he was promoted to the rank of full professor. He has since continued to work in the field of [topic], contributing to the advancement of knowledge in this area.

1. [Author], "The [topic] of [topic]", *Journal of Psychology*, 1970, p. 123.

2. [Author], "The [topic] of [topic]", *Journal of Psychology*, 1975, p. 456.

3. [Author], "The [topic] of [topic]", *Journal of Psychology*, 1980, p. 789.

4. [Author], "The [topic] of [topic]", *Journal of Psychology*, 1985, p. 1012.

5. [Author], "The [topic] of [topic]", *Journal of Psychology*, 1990, p. 1345.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A descendant from mixed Scottish Highland and Lowland stock, to which has been attributed his latent imagination and reasoning,¹ George Matheson was born at 39 Abbotsford Place, Glasgow, on March 27, 1842.² The Mathesons originated in the MacMathan or Matheson clan, which was divided into two great branches, that of Lochalsh in Wester Ross, and that of Attadale and Shinness in Sutherlandshire.³ His father, George Matheson, a native of Dornoch, had come to Glasgow in early life, founded the firm of Wilson, Matheson and Company, and become attached to the Church of Scotland in which his eldest son was to serve.⁴ His mother, Jane, to whom he was indebted for his spiritual insight, was his father's second-cousin and a woman of considerable musical accomplishment.⁵

George's childhood was passed in a comfortable home atmosphere where his parents encouraged his talents, especially his early fondness for playing at sermons, which, delivered from a chair as pulpit, he addressed to the family circle. One sermon

1. James Stuart, "Dr. George Matheson, the Blind Poet-Preacher," Baptist Magazine, vol. XCIV, Feb., 1902, p. 67; The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.

2. Donald Macmillan, The Life of George Matheson, p. 2. (hereinafter referred to as Life).

3. W. Anderson, The Scottish Nation, vol. III, 1863, p. 121, Suppl. p. 726.

4. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.

5. Life, pp. 6-7.

on "Our Father which art in Heaven," was admired so much by friends that they had it printed, and when he was but fourteen they secured the publication of his poem on the death of Lazarus entitled "Bethany Tears."¹

The boy received an elementary education before the Mathesons removed first to No. 60 and later to No. 30 St. Vincent Crescent in the West End of Glasgow. After being instructed by a tutor, he attended a school in Carlton Place, and thence to a Mr. Buchanan's school in St. George's Place. Buchanan had a great reputation not only as an educationist but as a teacher of elocution. It is likely that Matheson first acquired his oratorical gifts from this schoolmaster.²

When he was about eleven years old, he went to the Glasgow Academy where, during the four years of his attendance, he showed remarkable ability and carried off prizes for Religious Knowledge, History, Geography, English Composition and Science.³ But before he began his university phase he was faced with a trial which was to test his character to the utmost. As an infant of eighteen months his eyes became afflicted by internal inflammation which returned intermittently, so that later on he could read only in bright daylight. In boyhood this defective eyesight became gradually worse. On the threshold of a professional career, for which he was obviously destined, he found himself limited by impaired vision.³ For a time he favored the law, and he might

1. "The Rev. George Matheson, D.D., F.R.S.E., St. Bernard's, Edinburgh" unsigned, The Home Magazine, vol. III, Oct. 14, 1899, p. 846.

2. Life, pp. 14-15.

3. The British Monthly, vol. IV, Jan., 1904, p. 92.

have achieved real distinction as an advocate, for he held qualities, such as mental alertness and readiness of speech, necessary for success in such a profession.¹ But theological scholarship, preaching, and pastoral work beckoned him irresistibly. With the Ministry as his goal, he prepared himself to become a student at Glasgow University.

At this period, and indeed throughout his lifetime of blindness, he was given the unsparing devotion, the noble self-sacrifice, of his eldest sister Jane. It was she who helped him in his work, and cheered and smoothed his life.²

It has been stated that Matheson was never totally blind. He had periods of sight. There were times, indeed, when his friends imagined that "he not only saw them, but saw through them." That was evidently the experience of Eric Mackay, the verse-writer, when he visited Matheson with his foster-sister, Marie Corelli, the future novelist. During Mackay's conversation he suddenly paused and addressed Matheson in these words: "You have a penetrating eye, Dr. Matheson." Sometimes it was possible for him to catch the shadows of certain objects, or to discern something in a particularly strong light. But, on the whole such occasions were seldom. It may be true, as has been thought, that his affliction developed in him that inward vision, that spiritual mysticism, which otherwise, might not have illuminated

1. Life, p. 23.

2. Arthur Jenkinson, "Leaders of Thought in Scotland" The Thinker, vol. XXII, July to Dec., 1892, p. 335.

so fully his intellect and personality.¹

In 1857, at the age of fifteen, he matriculated and began his student days at the Old College in High Street, Glasgow.² There were many eminent scholars and teachers there in those days, and among them the professors whose lectures Matheson attended - in Logic, Robert Buchanan, known as "Logic Bob"; in Moral Philosophy, William Fleming; in Greek, Edmund Lushington, the brother-in-law of Tennyson; in Humanity, William Ramsay; and in Natural Philosophy, William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin.³

Recalling those college days, Matheson once remarked: "Democracy, which has affected everything else, has also affected University life, and in a good sense. So far as I can judge, there is not the same gulf fixed nowadays between the Professors and the students as there used to be. We looked upon our Professors as gods. We never came in touch with them except once a year, when we were invited to a formal breakfast. Now it's quite different. In our Scotch Universities of to-day there is much more of that feeling of fellowship which has always existed between the Professors and the students of Oxford. For this improved relationship we are indebted to Edward Caird, who began his Professorship in Glasgow University in the year (1866) that I left it."⁴

The young student distinguished himself in Classics,

1. Life, pp. 9-12.

2. Ibid., p. 32.

3. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

4. Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, 1901, p. 240.

despite the fact that he read Greek "with the aid of a magnifying glass," and he carried everything before him in Logic and Moral Philosophy. In 1860 he won the first prize in the senior division of the Logic Class. He also achieved distinction in 1861 by winning the first prize in Moral Philosophy as well as graduating B.A., the last occasion on which the degree was granted with "Honourable Distinction in Philosophy." He took his M.A. in 1862.¹ Later in life, when Matheson entertained visitors in his study, one of his old University classmates told them how George took his degree, and, turning to his old friend, he said: "Don't you remember, George, how the Principal handed you your diploma and said 'We are all proud of you, George'?" Matheson's laughter so shook the room that the visitors could think only about "the glory of that diploma and the pride of the University Faculty."²

In 1862 Matheson entered Divinity Hall, where the famous John Caird had been recently established as Professor of Divinity. Though his blindness had become more acute, Matheson's record here was even more brilliant than that achieved in Arts.³

Among his contemporaries in the Divinity Hall there were some who eventually became distinguished in the Church. Besides Matheson himself, the prize men of his year included

1. John Julian in his Dictionary of Hymnology, 1892, p. 1579, states erroneously that Matheson "passed a brilliant course at the University of Edinburgh, where he graduated M.A. in 1862." This error is repeated in the revised edition, 1907, of the Dictionary, p. 1579.

2. Life, pp. 35-36, 38-39, 43-44; Sydney Smith, The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 374.

3. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.

William Stewart, later Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at Glasgow University; Dr. John Maclean of St. Columba's Church, Glasgow; Dr. Robert Blair of St. John's Church, Edinburgh; the Rev. Robert Thomson of Rubislaw Church, Aberdeen; and the Rev. Dr. D.M. Gordon, Principal of Queen's University, Kingston, Canada.

Thomson, minister at Aberdeen, remembered that Matheson's laugh "was the biggest and heartiest in the College quadrangle, being equalled, however, by his tenderness and sensibility."¹ These characteristics were noticeable all through his mature life. He was always extremely human and sympathetic. This man of great intellectual attainments could relax, and become playful and childlike. He was full of wit, humor and repartee, and in some respects he resembled that other very human divine, the Rev. C.H. Spurgeon, the great Baptist minister. When Matheson was "off the chain" and gave vent to frolicsome humor, the laughter it engendered was contagious.²

On one occasion word was passed round that Matheson had actually had a poem published in a magazine - The Sunday Magazine, it was believed - but his fellow-students were not in

1. Life, p. 47.

2. Donald Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, pp. 201-202.

the least surprised. "That he should write a poem and have it accepted and published by a recognised magazine, so far from being incredible seemed in his case the most natural thing in the world, and quite in keeping with all we knew of him."¹

About 1863, shortly after Professor Archibald Hamilton Charteris succeeded Caird as the minister of Park Church, Glasgow, a Literary Society was established in connection with that Church, and among members outside the congregation whom it attracted was Matheson, the young divinity student.² He was then broadening his culture, particularly in the study of English literature. Moreover, he enjoyed poetry, music and society, and delighted in seeing good plays at the theater. He never missed a night at the opera if he had the opportunity of hearing star singers such as Titiens, Grise or Santley. His favorite authors were Byron, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Longfellow, Bulmer Lytton and Carlyle. He would recite "Tears, Idle Tears," passages from "In Memoriam," or the "Ode to Immortality" in a truly affecting manner.

The sixties of last century were a stirring time in Scottish religious circles, which were then becoming emancipated from the more austere ideas of the older Calvinism.³ Edward Caird became imbued with the speculative thought of the great German philosophers, and embraced Hegelianism, which he not only mastered but interpreted brilliantly. In expounding these new views, he broadened the thought of his day generally and that of his students

1. Life, pp. 47-48.

2. Arthur Loudon, The Life of Archibald Hamilton Charteris, p. 95.

3. Charles L. Warr, Principal Caird, pp. 234, 162.

in particular. It was Caird's influence that contributed so much to making Matheson the Broad Churchman he remained all his life. Indeed, Matheson felt that his study of Hegelian philosophy had saved him from agnosticism and despair. Some years later, however, Matheson modified his more Hegelian tendencies.¹

"In Scotland the struggle towards a just appreciation of German Theology was protracted and obstinate."² The Evangelicals of the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, "believed that theology was static, and that no further development was to be expected or desired." This attitude was expressed in typical fashion by Dr. Dewar of the Tron Church, Glasgow, during the heresy case of John Macleod Campbell before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. "Let it not be said," he remarked, "that in the nineteenth century there are new discoveries to be made. There are discoveries to be made in philosophy; but as to a revelation given by God, it is an absurdity to suppose it."³

Charge of heresy was also brought against Fergus Ferguson, the U.P. minister of Queen's Park Church, Glasgow, who was nearly contemporary with Matheson. His metaphysical convictions did not accord with the tenets of Scottish philosophy as then expounded in Glasgow, and he had adopted, and was intimate with, Hegel's doctrines. A leader of the movement for the reform of

1. Life, pp. 45-46, 123-308; The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 373; the Dictionary of National Biography, Second Suppl. vol. II, 1912, p. 588.

2. Preface by William Hastie to F. Lichtenberger's History of German Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 1899, Note 2, p. xii.

3. Andrew J. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland 1707-1929, pp. 185-186.

the Church's creed, he advocated an entire restatement of the creed, and countered the Westminster Standards with a system which inclined more to Hegelian philosophy than to Calvinistic theology. Nevertheless, he had little liking for the newer criticism and had no use for a religion without dogma.¹

Altogether, Matheson's nine years at Glasgow University were marked, not only by remarkable scholarship, but by the effect of his unique personality, the exuberance of his emotional and intellectual life, on his fellow-students,² who always maintained a warm affection for him. At the time of Caird's death it was said: "Caird is dead, but Matheson is still with us."

Concluding his formal education, Matheson was licensed by the Glasgow Presbytery on June 13, 1866.³ In that city a spiritual awakening came to him from the devotional mysticism of Dr. William Pulsford, the Minister of Trinity Church (Congregational), Glasgow. "The man of all others," he once declared, "that shaped my personality was Pulsford. I met him only once, but I never heard a man who so inspired me; he set me on fire, and, under God, he was my spiritual creator." On January 8, 1867, Matheson was appointed assistant to the Rev. Dr. John Ross MacDuff of Sandyford Church, Glasgow, an office he filled for fifteen months.

Before beginning what was to be his life's work, Matheson went to London and Paris, visiting the latter city with

1. J.H. Leckie, Fergus Ferguson, D.D.: His Theology and Heresy Trial, pp. 53-54, Preface, pp. vii-viii; J.R. Fleming, A History of the Church in Scotland 1875-1929, p. 19.

2. "The Rev. George Matheson, D.D., F.R.S.E., St. Bernard's Edinburgh," The Home Magazine, vol. III, Oct. 14, 1899, p. 846; "Rev. Dr. Macmillan's Tribute," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 9; Life, p. 47.

3. Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, Hew Scott, New Ed., vol. I, 1915, p. 92.

his brother John.. On their return the family were astonished at the accuracy with which he described all that he had encountered.. It seems that he was able to do this by the use of the faculties of hearing and touch,with the additional help of his fine memory and imagination.. This was his one and only foreign tour, for he was not an expert traveller.. Railway journeys were a trying experience for him, as the company of fellow-passengers prevented his secretary reading to him.. Later in life he disliked being away from home over night, and he made it a point when taking on any preaching engagements that they would be such as to enable him to get back home the same evening.¹

At the end of his short probationary period in Glasgow, he received a call to his first charge at Innellan on the Firth of Clyde, Argyllshire.. Here he was ordained on April 8, 1868.²

For several seasons in succession Matheson's family resided on holiday in Innellan.. Macmillan wrote:

"Mr. and Mrs. Matheson were extremely popular among the villagers in whom they took a kindly interest, and a vacancy happening at the time in the Church, their son... was elected... there can be no doubt that his blindness might have proved an obstacle in his way to a charge.. Had he been preaching for a parish where he was not known, his brilliant pulpit gifts might have availed him little.. In Innellan, however, people knew him and his family, and this knowledge overcame whatever prejudice existed.. Nobly did he vindicate their choice.. He made the place famous.. Matheson of Innellan soon became as well known as Robertson of Brighton."³

Until 1873, the place of worship at Innellan was a Chapel of Ease, but in that year an endowment fund was the means of raising

1. Life, pp. 72, 73..

2. Hew Scott, op. cit., p. 32

3. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, pp. 195-196.

it to the status of a Parish Church.¹ The young minister had to be content with a very modest stipend, but this was no great hardship, for Matheson was not entirely dependent on congregational contributions.²

In winter the Sunday morning congregation, mostly fishermen and working people, would number about forty or fifty people, but in the summer holiday season the church was usually filled to its seating capacity of about three hundred.³ Members of other denominations were among those eager to hear the blind preacher.⁴

One young student who frequently visited the manse at Innellan was Donald Macmillan. He relished greatly the fine intellectual talks he had with Matheson in these days. "The young student," he has recorded, "was delighted to find one who was more than abreast of the most recent literature in philosophy, and who could have easily held his own with the most noted teachers of the science in any of our universities... He was above all things a student, and by this means he kept alive the freshness of his thought. His modernity was one of his most marked characteristics. Theology, philosophy, science, poetry, general and light literature had an interest and value for him. He had a place in his affections for them all. His culture embraced the sphere of human knowledge as a whole."⁵

1. Sunday Magazine, vol.XXX, 1901, p. 240..

2. D. Macmillan, op. cit. p. 240..

3. As reported in personal conversation with Dr. R. S. Calderwood, secretary to Matheson..

4. Sunday Magazine, vol.XXX, 1901, p. 240; "Beyond the Bourne," Saint Andrew, vol.VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 8..

5. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, pp. 198-199..

All this time he had triumphed over his misfortune of blindness. In order to avoid any uncomfortable feeling, which his hearers might experience in connection with that affliction, the beadle always left the Bible open on the bookboard; when the minister came to read the lessons he could look down on the open Book as if he were actually reading the words.¹

A lover of poetry, music and literature, as already mentioned, Matheson had occupied the vacations of his student days in the composition of verse. Now, at Innellan, in the long, quiet intervals between parochial visits and the preparations of weekly sermons, he gave more concentrated attention to authorship.² Here his best work as an author was accomplished in his tranquil home.³ At first his literary efforts met with little encouragement, and journal after journal rejected his contributions, but eventually, after his first book appeared and proved a success, editors and publishers clamored for his work, and his progress in authorship was rapid thenceforth.⁴

One great literary event of the Innellan days was the composition of his famous classic hymn "O love that wilt not let me go." This hymn was written one summer evening at the Innellan manse in a moment of pure inspiration. First published in the Church of Scotland Magazine, Life and Work, for January 1882, it

1. W. M. Parker, "The Rev. George Matheson, 1842-1906", The British Weekly, vol. CXI, Mar. 19, 1942, p. 280.

2. Alexander W. Stewart, "Dr. George Matheson," Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, 1901, p. 240.

3. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372.

4. D. Macmillan, "The Rev. G. Matheson," British Monthly, vol. IV, Jan. 1904, p. 94.

was incorporated two years later into The Scottish Hymnal with Dr. A. L. Peace's well known musical setting of "St. Margaret." Among Matheson's goodly collection of Christian verse, that hymn was destined for posterity.¹

Matheson first appealed to the reading public by his writings on scientific theology. The religious bearings of the doctrine of evolution filled his mind; he was aware of the spiritual perplexities that troubled his generation; and he was alive to the fact that an unfavorable cleavage had taken place between faith and science. Robertson Smith² was busy at his revolutionary work in the Free Church, expounding the Higher Criticism, and much of the religious speculation of the time was being affected by the views of Darwin and Huxley.

Opposing the materialistic philosophy of Huxley and Spencer, there was the new school of spiritual metaphysicians, represented particularly by Thomas Hill Green, while the cause of natural theology and transcendental ethics was expounded by that great religious teacher, James Martineau. As one writer put it:

Second only to these, were a group of Scotch metaphysicians and theologians, who fully maintained the high reputation which their country had long possessed in those departments. Such, to mention only a few of the chief names were, the Duke of Argyll, Principals Tulloch and Caird, Professor Flint and Dr. Matheson. These writers

1. Cuthbert Lennox, "In Scotland," The Sunday School Chronicle, vol. XXXV, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 817. The hymn is discussed more fully in chapter five.

2. "Robertson Smith and his school freed the mind of our religious teachers from habits of interpretation that were mechanical and unprofitable." See Henry F. Henderson, Religion in Scotland; Its Influence on National Life and Character, p. 72.

had no hesitation in accepting such theories as those of evolution or natural selection, as at least probable hypotheses, while at the same time they spent all their strength in showing that such scientific methods were merely an attempt to explain the manner while leaving untouched the great fundamental problem of the source of creation; and that so far from impairing they really tended to strengthen theistic belief.¹

It was to such subjects of inquiry, and with a desire to welcome the truth from every quarter, that Matheson gave his thought, the fruit of which was contained in the various books he now began to write.²

The first one, Aids to the Study of German Theology, published anonymously in 1874, set out to supply a clear, simplified interpretation and exposition of German Theological ideas. Of this work, Professor William Hastie remarked that it was "a fresh, suggestive and eminently sympathetic introduction to the leading thoughts of the German Schools, and gives in its lucid delineations and criticisms, gratifying evidence of the growing interest of the new Scottish theology in their vital and central positions."³ This was followed in 1877 by a two-volume work, The Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, which was a "philosophic presentment of the history of the Church to the Reformation," and "one of the most illuminating studies of Christian doctrine we possess."⁴

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1. F.W. Macran, English Apologetic Theology, pp. 134-135.
 2. W. Robertson Nicoll, "Dr. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, pp. 509-510.
 3. Hastie's Preface to Lichtenberger's History of German Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 1899, p. xvi, note 1.
 4. Dictionary of Natural Biography, Second Suppl., vol. II, p. 588; Baptist Magazine, vol. XCIV, Feb. 1902, p. 67. "Not long since we read, for the second time, his Growth of the Spirit of Christianity... that is his magnum opus still, and contains more than the germ of his subsequent writings." See The Expository Times, edited by James Hastings, vol. II, Oct. 1890-Sept. 1891, p. 98.

One of the best known and most popular of his books, Can the Old Faith Live with the New? which came out in 1885, considered the problem of evolution in relation to revelation. It was recommended by Sir Andrew Clark, the eminent Scots physician, to many friends as the best antidote to atheism. Containing subtlety of argument, and written in a beautiful, lucid style, the book appealed to Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate.¹ Once when George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, author of works on science and religion, was talking with Tennyson in his home, Ferringford, Isle of Wight, the poet, pointing to Matheson's book lying on the table, told him he had been much impressed by it, recommended it to the Duke, and wanted to hear all about Matheson. Curiously enough, the Duke did not know the distinguished man who was living and working in Argyll's country. Once introduced to this and other books by Matheson, however, the Duke became as great an admirer of them as Tennyson.² A pendant to the book just mentioned, was The Psalmist and the Scientist, which, when it appeared in 1887, was hailed by Professor Elmslie in the pages of Nicolls' journal, The British Weekly.³ Finally, Matheson made his later literary contributions in The Representative Men of the Bible, a first series in 1902, and a second series in 1903, both much favored by the religious public,⁴ and augmented in 1905 by The Representative Men of the New Testament, while a companion volume, The Representative Women of the Bible, was published

1. Arthur Jenkinson, "Leaders of Thought in Scotland," The Thinker, vol. II, July to Dec. 1892, p. 330; Life, p. 352; The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372.

2. Life, pp. 351-352, 214-215; Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, 1901, p. 238.

3. The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 510.

4. D. Macmillan, The British Monthly, vol. IV, Jan. 1904, p. 94.

posthumously in 1907.¹

Matheson was no less successful as the author of some eight devotional books, which, beginning with My Aspirations in 1882, succeeded one another at regular intervals until the close of his life. Moments on the Mount appeared in 1884, Voice of the Spirit in 1888, Searchings in the Silence in 1895, Words by the Wayside in 1896, Times of Retirement in 1901, Leaves for Quiet Hours in 1904, and Rests by the River in 1906. Tennyson's wife was a great admirer of these works, and indeed, as his biographer has remarked, "the spiritually minded of every rank and age love him as the writer of some of the choicest devotional books in literature."²

Convinced that Matheson's writings were as remarkable as was his preaching, Macmillan felt sure he would be equally remembered in the future by both. In his lifetime, his books on theological and religious subjects commanded large sales. During some thirty years' publication of about thirty books, his works became steadily more popular. To quote Macmillan, these writings "are the common ground on which natural and revealed religion, the pagan and the Christian, the scientist and the theologian, the philosopher and the peasant can meet and join hands. The past and the present, however dissimilar, schools of thought, however opposed, are thus brought together and reconciled by the apprehension of a truth which is believed in by all."³

1. Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, 1901, p. 238.

2. D. Macmillan, The British Monthly, vol. IV, Jan. 1904, p. 94.

3. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, pp. 190, 202, 206.

From 1879 onwards, honors of various kinds came to Matheson. In that year his achievements were recognized by Edinburgh University which awarded him the Hon. D.D., degree. In presenting him to the Chancellor, A.H. Charteris, Professor of Biblical Criticism, said that already Matheson had "won for himself a high place on the roll of scholars and divines."¹

He was appointed the Baird Lecturer for 1881. That year saw also the publication of this lecture series, Natural Elements of Revealed Theology. It was at one of these lectures, in St. George's Church, Edinburgh, that William Robertson Nicoll saw Matheson for the first time and was immensely impressed by the lecturer's matter, form and utterance. The book was reviewed by Professor A.B. Bruce, who compared Matheson's address favorably with the former Baird lectures of no less a person than Professor Robert Flint, one of Scotland's pre-eminent theologians. "It may not be the ablest of the Baird series," Bruce wrote, "that honour probably belongs to Dr. Flint's two series of lectures on Theism and Antitheism; but it is certainly the most genial."²

Other addresses, of an honorary kind, given by Matheson, were the St. Giles' Lecture at Edinburgh in 1882 on "Confucianism," and, in 1901, the Murtle Lecture at Aberdeen on "The Problem of Job's Patience."³ Aberdeen University offered him the Gifford Lectureship for 1899. Although he declined that much coveted

1. Life, pp. 146-147.

2. The British and Foreign Evangelical Review, vol. XXX, 1881, p. 377.

3. The lecture was anticipated with keen interest and expectation. Dealing with Job's manifold afflictions, Matheson showed that the writer of the Book of Job put forward an entirely new theory of the origin of suffering as coming from heaven. In his closing prayer Matheson made intercession for the young men, that when out in the desert the Burning Bush might not be quenched by the waters of Marah - Saint Andrew, vol. III, Dec. 19, 1901, pp. 7-8.

lectureship, on the grounds of failing health, he was honored by the same university in 1902 when the Hon. LL.D. degree was conferred on him. Apparently, only one scientific honor came to him - his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh on February 3, 1890.¹

Just after twenty-three years in the Innellan ministry were completed, an important event occurred which brought Matheson into contact with Royalty. For many years it had been Queen Victoria's custom, when residing at Balmoral Castle, to summon the more notable of the Church of Scotland clergy to conduct the service and to preach in her place of worship, Crathie parish church. In 1885, she, of her own accord, selected Matheson with whose meditative writings she was familiar, having been introduced to them by the Bishop of Ripon. In October of that year, therefore, he preached to her on "The Patience of Job" from the text in James 5:2. She was so impressed by both sermon and prayers that afterwards she took his hand, expressed her admiration for his beautiful, interesting discourse, and asked him for particulars about his Innellan parish. She gave him a little bust of herself, as he would be unable to see a photograph, and requested him to get his sermon privately printed so that she might have it beside her for comfort in after days. At parting, she said to him: "Your life has been a sorely tried but a very beautiful one."²

1. Life, pp. 279, 335-338; Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, vol. XXXVI, 1892, pp. 752, 744.

2. Ibid., pp. 215-217; The Home Magazine, vol. III, Oct. 14, 1899, p. 846; "Beyond the Bourne," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9.

Although deeply attached to his Innellan parishioners, Matheson, more conscious than ever of his increased power and influence - "he could feel a crowd, and a large congregation drew from him his very best" - was fitted to enter a wider sphere for his activities. In 1880 he received a unanimous call to Crown Court Church, London, to succeed the Rev. Dr. John Comming, who resigned from the charge on July 21, 1879.¹ Matheson declined the invitation because the managers would not permit him "to exchange freely with the other Presbyterian and Non-Conforming ministers in London."²

When, however, another unanimous call was sent to him, this time from St. Bernard's Parish Church, Edinburgh, he accepted it, although both he and his Innellan congregation felt the wrench deeply and parted with mutual regret.

He would have liked to remain in the little Clyde sea-side resort, where in thought, writings, and parochial duties, he had produced his most substantial and abiding work, leaving behind "a legacy of patient endurance and indomitable courage" but, as he told the Presbytery, "God's finger pointed him to go."³

On May 12, 1886,⁴ he was inducted to his new charge, St. Bernard's, one of the wealthiest parishes then in the Church of Scotland, and having one of Edinburgh's largest and most educated congregations. He succeeded the Rev. John McMurtrie, who left on being appointed by the General Assembly to the Convenership of

1. Dictionary of National Biography, vol. V, 1908, p. 298.

2. Life, p. 148.

3. "Beyond the Bourne," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9; "The Late Dr. George Matheson," unsigned, The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 5, 1906, p. 3; "Through a Vestry Window," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 6; "A Biographical Sketch," The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372.

4. Hew Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, New Ed., vol. I, 1915, p. 9.

the Foreign Mission Committee.¹

St. Bernard's was originally a Chapel, opened in 1823, and it did not become a Parish Church until 1851. In 1880, alterations to the interior of the Church, costing over £2,000 provided better seating accommodation. Previous to Matheson's ministry, psalms were sung but no hymns. Then, on Sunday, June 6, 1886, within a month of Matheson's induction, The Scottish Hymnal was first used in St. Bernard's.²

When Matheson came to Edinburgh, the city was particularly rich in its number of outstanding preachers. This newcomer, who was to give further lustre to the group of recognized pulpit orators in the city, remarked modestly that he came "a taper amid the torches," for, to quote his additional remarks:

Macgregor and Williamson (St. Cuthbert's) were flaring in the West; Lees was illuminating the recently renovated St. Giles'; Scott (St. George's) was trimming the lamps of the Assembly; Whyte was electrifying (Free) St. George's; Mitchell was making footlights in South Leith; M'Neill was setting fire to the Circus; Walter Smith was letting off his rhythmic rockets; and Pylsford was shedding a chastened and mystic glow.³

Matheson was not outshone by these Church luminaries. Indeed, St. Bernard's soon became a focal point for Edinburgh's church-going community. It was packed to overflowing, the congregation exceeding the membership of 1500, the figure at which it stood in 1886. Sunday after Sunday all classes - clergymen,

1. John Turnbull Smith, Sketch of St. Bernard's, 1907, pp. 112, 114.

2. Hew Scott, op. cit., pp. 84, 86, 129, 94.

3. "A Biographical Sketch," The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372.

eminent lawyers, professors, students, scientists, workmen, and American tourists (including clergy), who were intimate with this great minister's books - were drawn, like a magnet, to St. Bernard's. Moreover, success attended Matheson in other ways. The Communion Roll and the Church's revenue increased, and the various Church organizations, especially the Bible Class, flourished exceedingly under his wise and efficient guidance.¹

The large congregation usually consisted of about 1800 members, there were two sermons every Sunday, constant parochial visits, and any number of meetings. "The crowds that flocked to hear him," as Macmillan tells us, "were welded by the orator into a responsive mass, animated by one mind, that of the preacher. His name was now a household word, and it was a great day in any Church when Dr. Matheson occupied its pulpit." The Rev. Robert Howie Fisher, the minister of Morningside Church, Edinburgh, formerly an assistant at St. Bernard's, has recalled "how proud a dear old lady in St. Bernard's was long ago - very poor she was, but very reverent-minded and good - when Dr. Matheson sat beside her and repeated the whole sermon which he had preached before Queen Victoria on the Sunday before."²

All this work, which would have taxed sufficiently most men, did not exhaust Matheson's energies.³ The literary output of Innellan days was continued in his study at No. 19 St. Bernard's Crescent, his residence in Edinburgh until near

1. Life, pp. 230-231, 238, 250, 254-255.

2. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, p. 200; R.H. Fisher, The Outside of Inside, p. 213.

3. Ibid., p. 262.

the end of his life when he moved into No. 14 Belgrave Crescent.

He now reverted to theological subjects which had engaged his mind in his former pastorate. As an apologist, he steered a middle course regarding evolution. In Matheson's view, evolution might or might not be true; he did not try to prove or disprove it. He contented himself simply with trying to demonstrate that if evolution should subsequently be proved true, it would not overthrow the claims of the Christian religion. For his approach to such problems and for the fact that he took no part in ecclesiastical controversy, Matheson was regarded in his day as a great reconciler.¹

Macmillan sums up his attitude in these words: "He was a broad Churchman, but his thought was constructive - he built up. He looked for what was positive in any subject and saw the measure of truth that was in a doctrine, argument, or creed, with the whole of which he might not be able to agree. While in all probability discarding much in the religious opinions of the time which he considered to be unessential, he laid hold of those eternal truths, which, in however imperfect a form, he found in every creed...He was pre-eminently the 'Apostle of Hope.' He had hope for the individual, hope for the family, hope for the nation, hope for the race, and hope for the world; he was also the Apostle of Reconciliation."²

At this time he also gave his attention to the science of comparative religion. Taking the theory of the origin and

1. The Expository Times, edited by James Hastings, vol. IV, Oct. 1892- Sept. 1893, p. 184.

2. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, pp. 204, 206-207.

spread of religion as a central theme, in 1892, he produced The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, an introduction to the subject intended as much for the laity as for theological students..

Although by 1897 his power, and love of work were unimpaired, and his popularity showed no abatement, the heavy pastoral burden at St. Bernard's began to tell upon Matheson. Having discharged, in a thirty years' ministry, all that was demanded of him, he now felt that he ought to give up the rest of his life to study, authorship, and special preaching. In short, he decided to resign.¹

The announcement came as a shock to his church people, who earnestly requested him to withdraw his resignation. He was persuaded to do so, but on condition that, owing to indifferent health, he should be relieved of part of his duties and be given a colleague and successor. The proviso was granted, and so from October 23, 1897, he was assisted by the Rev. James Johnstone Drummond, previously the minister of Longformacus. This amicable arrangement lasted for two years, but on June 15, 1899, Matheson intimated to the Session Clerk of St. Bernard's his desire to resign. This took effect on July 26, when Matheson was succeeded by Drummond.²

At a social meeting in the Freemason's Hall, George Street, Edinburgh, on November 17, he took farewell of his

1. Life, pp. 314-315; The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372; Dictionary of National Biography, Second Suppl., 1912, p. 588.

2. Life, pp. 319, 321, 322-323; J. Turnbull Smith, Sketch of St. Bernard's, pp. 114-115.

congregation, to whom he addressed these words: "Have I not been with you for thirteen years in sunshine and in shadow? And the sunshine has been more than the shadow...The chord between us has been an unbroken chord, and it is still undissolved; therefore it is, that I said, not 'Goodnight', but 'Good morning.'" Towards the end of October, in the Balmoral Hotel, a luncheon was held in his honor and he was presented with an illuminated address from eight young ministers who had assisted him from time to time.¹

Besides preaching frequently for Dr. Alexander Whyte in Free St. George's, Edinburgh, he fulfilled engagements for special preaching in various parts of the country. In 1902 he was heard from the pulpit of the Chapel in the Bute Hall of Glasgow University, his Alma Mater.²

In October 1903, he delivered the annual sermon in Brunswick Chapel, Leeds, for the Wesleyan Missionary Society, his subject being "The Boundlessness of the Bible," based on the text in Timothy 2:9, "The Word of God is not bound." His last public appearances included a preaching engagement in Morningside Church, Edinburgh, on February 14, 1904³, and the

1. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372; Life, pp. 324-325, 326.

2. Saint Andrew, vol. V, Dec. 24, 1903, p. 5.

3. The Rev. F.D. Langlands, in a letter to The Scotsman as recent as Feb. 15, 1936, writes concerning this service: "Sir,... I was assistant to Dr. Fisher for a period of fourteen months, ending in October 1905...It was in the pulpit of Morningside Parish Church, and in Dr. Fisher's absence in Australia, that Dr. Matheson preached his last sermon, viz., on 14th February 1904..."

delivery of a prayer at the annual service of the Life Boat Saturday Fund Service in the Empire Theatre.¹

Fisher of Morningside Church recalled that it was held up to him as a joke that on the first Sunday after he had gone away on an eight months' absence;

the church had rarely in its history been so full...The occasion of the crowd was that the preacher was Dr. George Matheson, so well known... for spiritual meditations of a high excellence. It was characteristic of the man's courage that he was there at all...Dr. Matheson faced the tremendous difficulties of his affliction... The same courage made him rise from a bed of sickness on that February Sunday of 1904 and go to church to preach for me; but he was taken back to bed for three months - and he never preached again.²

Macmillan remembered Matheson's going to Galashiels, in Selkirkshire, when he was assistant there, to open St. Paul's Church. "At the evening service he preached from the text, 'He is altogether lovely' - one of the most striking discourses that he ever delivered. Many months afterwards, a brother clergyman took a MS. out of his pocket and read to me Dr. Matheson's sermon. On my expressing surprise, he said that he had heard it preached on that occasion, could not get it out of his mind, and for very relief had sat down and written it out almost verbatim."³

Discussing the effectiveness of the flashes of illuminating thought in Matheson's preaching, Macmillan commented: "It was this suggestiveness, not only of the sermon as a whole, but

1. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372; Life, pp. 339, 340, 355.

2. R. H. Fisher, The Outside of the Inside, pp. 140-141.

3. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, pp. 191-192.

of each paragraph, sentence almost, that separated Dr. Matheson from his contemporaries and raised him to a platform above the greatest of them."¹

In addition to the books between 1901 and 1906 already mentioned, Matheson's retirement saw the publication of Studies of the Portrait of Christ, the first volume in 1899 and the second in 1900, a work of which 11,000 copies were sold within a year², and the Sceptic Without a Sword (1901). The journals to which he contributed at this period, included the Church of Scotland weekly journal, Saint Andrew; Robertson Nicoll's theological monthly, The Expositor (a series on "Scientific Lights on Religious Problems"); The Quarterly Review (an article on "The Characteristics of Bible Portraiture"); and, surprisingly, in the spring of 1905, an article in the Glasgow Evening News on "The Modern English Novel," which revealed an unsuspected familiarity with the popular authors of the period.³ By this time Matheson's theological and religious works had a steady hold on both the British and American reading publics.⁴

At the inauguration of the Scottish Christian Social Union, a body associated with the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, which took place on April 4, 1901, in the Religious Institution Rooms, Glasgow, Matheson was elected one of ten Vice-Presidents.⁵ At the annual dinner of the Edinburgh Ninety Burns Club

1. Ibid., pp. 192-193.

2. Life, pp. 327, 329; Dictionary of National Biography, Second Suppl., vol. II, p. 588.

3. Life, pp. 341-343, 346-347.

4. Saint Andrew, vol. V, Dec. 24, 1903, p. 5.

5. Ibid., vol. III, April 11, 1901, p. 2.

in 1904 he delivered a striking oration on the poet, stressing the sympathy and universality that distinguish Burns' poetry.¹

At the new Edinburgh house, 14 Belgrave Crescent, which he bought in 1906,² Matheson was to reside for only three weeks, never to live there again, for in the summer of that year he went on holiday to stay at Avenall House, North Berwick. There he took suddenly ill and died in his sixty-fourth year.

On August 27, 1906, he was in good health and spirits, and took his usual drive in the North Berwick neighbourhood. In the evening William Smith, his secretary, read to him for an hour from The Cambridge Modern History, and, in lighter vein, from a W. E. Norris novel. Then, although it was past 11 p.m., Matheson wanted to write another part of his last book. Smith, however, dissuaded him from the attempt at that late hour, and accordingly Matheson retired to rest. In the early morning of August 28, his devoted sister Jane, and another sister, Nellie, saw him pass away peacefully.³

At a meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery on August 29, Dr. McAdam Muir, referring to Matheson's death, said he had been a student at Glasgow University with Dr. Laidlaw, Dr. McLean, and himself, while Dr. Macmillan remarked that whatever success he had achieved in the ministry was due to the stimulus Matheson

1. Life, pp. 347-349.

2. "Through a Vestry Window," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 6.

3. Life, pp. 354, 361, 358, 356-357; "The Last Hours of Dr. Matheson," unsigned, The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 373.

had given him when a student.¹

Before Matheson's remains were conveyed to Glasgow on Saturday, September 1, a short funeral service at Belgrave Crescent was conducted by the Rev. James Robert Burt, the parish minister of North Berwick, and passages from Scripture were read by the Rev. Alexander Fiddes, who succeeded the Rev. J.J. Drummond at St. Bernard's.²

Among the mourners at the burial in Glasgow Necropolis, where Matheson was laid to rest in the family vault beside his parents, were Professor James Cooper, Dr. Donald Macleod, Dr. John Hunter, and Dr. Donald Macmillan. The Moderators of the Church of Scotland and United Free Assemblies, Dr. Thomas Brown, William Niven and Principal George Clark Hutton respectively, were also present, the former conducting the ceremony at the graveside.³ The sun shone gloriously; it was a day of brightness, not sadness.⁴ One wreath on the grave was composed of red roses in allusion to his famous hymn.⁵

The hymn that he wrote at Innellan, "O Love that wilt not let me go," was sung in nearly all the churches of every denomination throughout the length and breadth of Scotland on Sunday, September 2, 1906.⁶

1. "Obituary - Rev. Dr. Matheson," The Glasgow Herald, Aug. 30, 1906, p. 9; "Rev. Dr. Macmillan's Tribute," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 9; The Scotsman, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 9.

2. "The Funeral," The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, pp. 373-374.

3. The Scotsman, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 9.

4. Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 6.

5. The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 6.

6. The Scotsman, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 9; The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 370.

In the course of what was virtually a George Matheson memorial service in North Berwick Parish Church, the Rev. James Burt, who had become acquainted with Matheson during three successive summers, said the association with this blind man "had brought eyes to his own soul."¹ At the service in St. George's U. F. Church, Edinburgh, The Rev. Hugh Black referred to Matheson's passing, and the late blind preacher's famous hymn was sung by a vast congregation.²

The manuscripts Matheson left behind him included scores of sermons, numerous devotional papers, and a completed work on philosophy. Apparently he had not appointed anyone to be his literary executor.³

Everywhere it was felt that the Church of Scotland had lost one of her most gifted sons and that Scotland was the poorer by his death.⁴ Perhaps the most eloquent of the many tributes to Matheson was that from the pen of W. Robertson Nicoll, who wrote:

George Matheson, we verily believe, was potentially the greatest man given to the Scottish Churches since the days of Dr. Chalmers. He was a great orator, a powerful thinker, a man born with the instinct of scholarship, a master of expression, overflowing with love and vehement ardour, and dauntless courage... He did great things, but the greatest of all was the living of his life.⁵

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1. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 385.
 2. "A Day at Free St. George's", unsigned, The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 370.
 3. "Dr. Matheson's Literary Legacy," unsigned, The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 374.
 4. Cuthbert Lennox, "In Scotland," The Sunday School Chronicle, vol. XXXV, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 817; Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 8.
 5. W. R. Nicoll, "Dr. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 509.

CHAPTER II: MATHESON'S APPROACH TO RELIGION

A. What is Religion:

Implicitly or explicitly, Matheson approached all the problems of religion and theology with which he subsequently dealt from the fundamental idea of what he called "the religious sentiment."¹

"The religious sentiment" precedes all the systems of theological speculation, and it survives after dogma has passed away. It is an organ through which the human soul perceives a Power not itself. The religious sentiment begins before logic, or reason, or argument, and survives all the theological formulae. Indeed, it makes possible the appearance of new expressions of dogmatic thought, after the old formulations have had their day.

Matheson defined the religious sentiment as follows:

It is that sense of divine truth which existed in the mind before it had obtained an explanation, and before it had received a name, and which, because it was independent of dogma in its origin, has been incapable of being destroyed by the dissolution of dogma; it survives to be the nucleus for the reconstruction of the system yet to be.²

1. For example, this concept was made the theme of the first two chapters of his work, The Psalmist and the Scientist. Also, he had an introductory chapter in Can the Old Faith Live with the New, in which, as he wrote in the preface, he considered "the scientific value of the religious sentiment in general." See also chapters one and two of his The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, which deal with his attitude toward religion in general.

2. The Psalmist and the Scientist, pp. 2-3; Herbert Spencer admitted the existence of the religious faculty and wrote of it as follows: "Considering all faculties, as we must do on this supposition, to result from accumulated modifications caused by the intercourse of the organism with its environment, we are obliged to admit that there exist in the environment certain phenomena or conditions which have determined the growth of the feeling in question and so are obliged to admit that it is as normal as any other faculty." See H. Spencer, First Principles, p. 16; J.H. Leuba offered some fifty definitions of religion drawn from almost as many writers, in his work A Psychological Study of Religion.

In the course of evaluating Schleiermacher's theology, he stated his concurrence with the great German theologian's conviction "that the spirit of religion itself was deeper than all religions."¹ So it is that the idea of religion cannot be limited to any special time, or place, or creed. Indeed, "...we must admit all times and places and creeds to be in their own way and in their own season the manifestations of that idea" [of religion].²

But what is the relationship between this idea of religious sentiment and dogma? Matheson criticized the view which held that the nature of religious sentiment was simply what remained after the essential articles of theology had been destroyed.. Rather the sphere of religious sentiment is not distinct from the sphere of religious dogma - the difference between them is not a difference of road, but a difference of vehicle.. They both travel over the same way; the contrast between them lies in their mode of travelling.. "Dogma goes on foot; sentiment

1. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 37..

2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 23; Cf. Edward Caird, Evolution of Religion, vol. I, p. 43: "What we want in a definition of religion, is no summum genus, reached by omission of all that is characteristic of the species, but a germinative principle, a principle of the genesis of religions.. Such a principle will reveal itself not so much in each religion taken separately as in all the religions contemplated as stages in a process; and, most of all, in the transitions of thought whereby one religion develops out of another, or asserts itself in conflict against it. Of course if we can expect to find it revealed in any one religion, it must be in the highest rather than the lowest."

goes on the wing."¹ The movement of dogma is measured and slow, but in the movement of religious feeling, all is forgotten in the ultimate destination. Like John Caird, Matheson held that religious feeling is not simply an inward or subjective state. Indeed, sentiment and dogma, while they may have different modes of perception, can have the same object of perception.²

Matheson held that this conception of the relation between religious dogma and religious sentiment forced the modification of certain conclusions prevalent in his day. The first of these is the belief that "the shaking of religious dogma is equivalent to the shattering of religious conviction."³ Thus religious sentiment does not necessarily disappear when the theological forms which contained it have vanished. Secondly, this distinction between religion and dogma also explains the apparent inconsistencies in the religious beliefs of great thinkers. Using Schleiermacher as an example, Matheson sought to explain the existence of almost contradictory elements of cold criticism and warm piety in the same man. "Shall we say that the great German thinker had different opinions at different times of the day? Or shall we say that the attitude of the sceptic represented

1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 3.

2. It is interesting to compare Matheson with a contemporary, John Caird, with whom he shared so much in common and who wrote: "Feeling is necessary in religion, but it is by the content or intelligent basis of a religion, and not by intensity of feeling that its character and worth are to be determined. In other words, in considering what is the nature of the religious consciousness, we must regard as of primary importance, not the element of feeling, but the objective character of that about which we feel; we must look beyond feeling to that intellectual activity by which feelings are determined." J. Caird, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 176.

3. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 6.

his reality, and the attitude of the pastor his acting?"¹ Matheson conceded to Schleiermacher the purest religious intention, maintained that his errors were rather intellectual than spiritual,² and held that his religion survived his philosophy.³ The answer to these apparent inconsistencies is to be found not in the nature of Schleiermacher or any other thinker, but in the nature of religious truth itself. So it is that there exists "a sphere of dogma and a sphere of sentiment, and what a man perceives in the sphere of dogma may not correspond in clearness to what he perceives in the sphere of sentiment."⁴ Dogma sees only the parts of a whole, and may thus see them in contradiction; the religious sentiment begins with the completed vision to which dogma hopes eventually to attain.

This distinction between religious sentiment and dogma also explains why it is impossible for the logical understanding to express adequately any religious truth in a formula. The articles of every religion give an inadequate expression of that which they try to convey. While formulations of dogma may become obsolete, religious sentiment never grows old or becomes an anachronism.

Matheson expressed the relationship between dogma and religion in another way. First, he held that there must be a religion before there can be a theology.⁵ Secondly, the most fervid religious impressions are capable of scientific analysis and representation without detracting from their value.

1. Ibid., p. 8

2. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 52.

3. Ibid., pp. 56-57.

4. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 9.

5. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 95.

He wrote: Theology is to religion what the phonograph is to the human voice; it preserves the impression in a new form when the old form has passed away. Religious impressions, as long as they remain mere feelings, are of all things, the most fugitive; they rise and fall with the changes of atmosphere. To preserve them they must be crystallised; to keep the old metaphor, they must be phonographed.¹

Like Iverach and others, Matheson saw religion as an activity of the whole man.² He declared his agreement with Dorner when, on this point, the eminent German theologian criticized the religious life of the British nation. Dorner had said that the leading weakness of British religious life had been the tendency to separate between matters of fact and matters of faith, making religion departmentalized. Holding that this criticism was valid, Matheson revolted against any position which taught that a thing could be "philosophically false and yet theologically true."³ He pointed to the examples of Hobbes and Faraday, as men who could hold such a dualism, and took his stand with Dorner.

This assertion that there should be no arbitrary departmentalization between the so-called "secular" and "social" was a favorite theme. "That Christianity was the truth in the Church, and science the truth in the laboratory, that prayer was an act

1. "Theologians of the Day - Ebrard," The Catholic Presbyterian, vol. II, 1879, p. 12.

2. Here Matheson was in agreement with many of his contemporaries; for example, Iverach held: "...it [religion] belongs to every part of human nature. It is not a matter merely of the reason, nor is it based on feeling, nor is it only directed toward action... it makes its appeal to the whole man." J. Iverach, Theism in the Light of Present Science and Philosophy, pp. 227-228.

3. The Psalmist and the Scientist, pp. 9-10.

of worship, and business an act of worldliness," was an unsatisfactory position.¹ It is, furthermore, only the Christian who has a right to be called a man of the world,² and "the passport into the present world is assigned to those who have tasted the powers of the world to come."³ This conception that religion is an activity of the whole man is thoroughly Biblical - indeed Moses was the initiator of this idea in the history of the world.⁴

Matheson also gave much thought to what he called the roots of religion. In his writings he reviewed the various contemporary theories on this subject prominent in his day, especially those theories which asserted that religion is the product of fear, or that it is the fruit of wonder or that it originates in "the feeling of dependence,"⁵ or that religion has its roots in the combination of these three sentiments.⁶

Matheson argued that the religious sentiment is "an original" and "underived part"⁷ of man's nature, as against the view that it is a combination of, or originates in one of, the

1. "The Theologians of the Day - Dorner," The Catholic Presbyterian, vol. I, 1879, p. 353.

2. My Aspirations, p. 100.

3. Op. cit., p. 213.

4. The Representative Men of the Old Testament, p. 199.

5. See, for example, Frederick Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers, pp. 26-101.

6. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 1.

7. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 28; The American ethnologist, John R. Swanton, maintained the real existence of several parallel and independent lines of religious development, demonstrating at the same time that religion is a primary component of human nature, and is not connected with any such specific origins as magic, death, dreaming, mana, or animism. See "Some Anthropological Misconceptions," American Anthropologist, New Series, vol XIX, No. 4, 1917, pp. 459-470.

above three sentiments.¹ Without stopping to discuss the point, he nevertheless asked, for example, how the religious sentiment can be a union of two such contrary elements as the sense of abject dependence and the sense of childlike wonder. For, "the one is a stage of necessity," and "the other is a realisation of freedom."² He could not hold that the coalition of these two elements could result in a spiritual unity.

Rather, the feeling of dependence is the occasion which calls forth religion, "just as the visible world is the occasion which calls forth the consciousness of life."³ Man first finds this object on which he depends in the life of nature. "He sees in the life of nature at once the fatherhood and the motherhood of the universe, the principle of action and the principle of receptivity, the power which gives and the power which receives."⁴ Finally, it can never be proved that, even at its beginning, religion is solely the feeling of absolute dependence. In this connection, David Strauss is criticized for making the sense of absolute dependence identical with the sense of fear, and for the implication that religion is something which man has outgrown.⁵

1. Cf. Rudolf Otto, Die Anschauung von heiligen Geist bei Luther: "The religious feeling has rightful claim to its own scope, unimpaired and unobstructed. It should not allow itself to be curtailed or eliminated in favor of other plausible trains of thought..." As quoted by Robert F. Davidson, Rudolf Otto's Interpretation of Religion, p. 11.

2. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 29.

3. Aids to the Study of German Theology, pp. 165-166.

4. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 226.

5. Op. cit., p. 165.

B. The Origin of Religion:

Matheson concluded that even if the religious sentiment could be reduced to an experience of fear, or a feeling of wonder, or a sense of absolute dependence, there would still remain the more important problem of accounting for the origin and development of religion. That is, the really vital question was how this sense of fear came about, from where did this sense of superstition arise, what was it that prompted this sense of dependence? It seemed to him that these three states of mind were really developments of the later stages of life.

He asked how these states of mind "which we should naturally expect to arise in the later stages of life, have found their crowning manifestation on the very threshold of human existence?"¹ Though primitive man canonizes almost every object in the universe, he never canonizes his own soul. This is because primitive man finds an imperfection in his soul which he does not find in the objects around him. It is only when he examines his own soul that he finds something which he finds nowhere else - namely, "he becomes aware of a limit to existence."² Because his memory can only carry him back so far, and because before that there is only oblivion, primitive man arrives at the conception of a beginning. He feels that there was a time when he was not; he also knows he is now an individual being - therefore, primitive man concludes that some mediating power must have effected the transformation from one state to another. In short, he arrives at the idea of a Cause in the universe, and the conviction that

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 4.

he himself is not independent. In the universe he finds objects which appear to be more privileged than himself, in that they do not suggest the notion of having been created, but rather appear to be self-originating. Thus it is that primitive man is first concerned not with finding a cause for the universe, but only in finding a cause for the limit to his own existence.¹

Moreover, there is another fact which Matheson thought needed to be accounted for - the fact that primitive man fixed his first reverence not on such exalted objects as the sun and the stars, but on those things which are not in themselves the grandest. That is, primitive man first chooses stone or wood, or a piece of cloth, and invests these with magical power,² and concentrates upon these his earliest reverence. Matheson held these to be the facts of the matter and the results of the latest fruits of research. The explanation of these facts, he maintained, was this: Man in gazing at the heavens feels that the higher objects of nature exhibit the same continual change which he finds in his own nature. On the other hand, it seems to primitive man that the lower objects of nature give no suggestion of origin or change, but manifest only inertness, passiveness, and hence a semblance of eternity.³ This is the explanation of the fact "that the earliest manifestation of worship is called Fetichism, - the worship of the lowest things."⁴

1. Ibid., p. 7.

2. James George Frazer called religion "the despair of magic," maintaining that it succeeded magic historically. See The Golden Bough, 12 vols.

3. "Should Science Dim the Hope of Immortality?", The Expositor, Series 6, vol. IV, 1901, p. 463.

4. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 11.

Matheson recognized that his own interpretation of these matters differed from the more current views. In that day it was quite usual to hold that man reverences the lower in preference to the higher because his own nature is too lowly to be aspiring. However, for Matheson, primitive man is attracted to the stone, for the very fact that it appears superior to his own nature.

A summary of his position on the origin of religion is as follows:

He [primitive man] finds in his individual life the evidence of fluctuation and change; he finds in this inert piece of matter [the stone] the evidence of steadfastness and immutability... But in giving it the pre-eminence he is manifesting not the absence but the presence of aspiration. He comes to it not because his level is low, but because he is in search of a standard higher than himself, and one that shall be free from those limitations which he has found in nature... We have arrived at the origin of religion...¹

But how does primitive man rise to a desire for communion with the Divine? This he does by advancing from the stage of Fetish-worship and thus losing the sense of his own finitude. He "reaches the conclusion that a beginning in the past does not involve an end in the future,"² - in other words, he arrives at the idea of immortality. This stage is reached, not by the phenomena of dreams as Spencer held, but by reflection on the "waking out of dreams."³ In other words, the transition from

1. Ibid., pp. 11-13.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

3. Ibid., p. 19.

dreamland into waking consciousness first suggests that the individual could keep an unbroken continuity amid the constant disruption of outward associations. In this way, primitive man learns for the first time to associate immortality with the individual soul.

Moreover, the Fetish-worshipper is to be contrasted with the worshipper of departed spirits. The former seeks the immortal principle in matter, while the latter seeks the immortal principle in pure spirit. The former reverences the form, the latter reverences the spirit without the form.¹

Matheson maintained that the stage of completed religion demanded that these two extremes should be united. Indeed, the whole subsequent history of religion is an accomplishment of the process by which "the spiritual life finds increasingly its embodiment in outward things."²

C. Revelation in Religion:

In recent theological discussions it is often held that our knowledge of God can come only as He reveals Himself. Thus natural knowledge has been more and more drawn into the concept of revelation. But this was not Matheson's view. He held rather, that man with his unaided reason can discover some knowledge of God. He applied the concept of revelation only to religious knowledge, which was for him the specific knowledge about the character of God as was disclosed partially in all the great religions, but most fully in Christianity.³ Man by

1. Ibid., pp. 21-24; Edward Burnett Tylor held that religion was derived from animism. He sought to determine the limits of animism, intending it to include "the general doctrine of souls and other spiritual things." Matheson was acquainted with Tylor's work. See Tylor's, Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization.

2. Ibid., p. 26.

3. He held the position that there was a continuity of revelation, which culminated in Jesus Christ as God's full and final Revelation. This conception he developed in "Christianity and Judaism," The Expositor, series 1, vol. X, 1879, p. 275.

his own unaided faculties can discover truth about nature and God, but nothing thus discovered by his own faculties should rightly be termed revelation. More specifically, man deduces the idea of God from discovering design in nature, purpose in history, and conscience within himself, but revelation completes this knowledge. Thus, that God exists, can be discovered by the unaided reason; what He is, can be learned only through revelation. Revelation takes place through the direct action of God's grace, man apprehending it by means of faith. Faith and reason are both gifts of God. Man can never without reason either know or accept revelation.¹ Thus we may summarize his view: it is to reason, by grace through faith, that revelation comes.

Matheson considered that there are two extreme methods by which men have attempted to arrive at a knowledge of the Divine - supernaturalism and rationalism. Supernaturalism is analogous to the Judaic, rationalism to the polytheistic, view of the Divine. Supernaturalism divorces the things of eternity from the things of time, while rationalism identifies them. The former reverences God for His remoteness, the latter dethrones Him by reason of His nearness. Both these positions exclude equally the idea of revelation. Revelation signifies "the drawing back of a veil."² Revelation is not mystery,³ but it is the mystery made manifest. Supernaturalism worships the veil and would perish by its withdrawal; rationalism has no veil to withdraw.⁴ The drawing back

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 8.

2. Ibid., p. 9.

3. Cf. "Christ's Defence of His Parabolic Teaching," The Monthly Interpreter, vol. II, 1885, p. 305.

4. "The Christian Idea of God," British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, 1880, p. 142.

of the veil is the supernatural part of the process which the human faculty cannot perform. But after the veil has been drawn back, the human spirit recognizes the vision as that for which it has been waiting.

In several places Matheson made the distinction between revelation and what he called "inspiration": "The first idea of every religion is not that of revelation but of inspiration."¹ His distinction is as follows: When man first wondered how God could commune with the human soul, communication was conceived as something from without. This conception regarded God as speaking, for example, in the thundercloud, or in a dream, or in a vision. In any case, man becomes in this conception a mere passive organ of the Divine Will, and is made the recipient of a message which he does not understand.

But the idea of revelation is to be distinguished from this. "Instead of being a depression, it [revelation] is an elevation of the human. Instead of being an annihilation of the creature to make room for the Creator, it is a lifting up of the creature to a spiritual level with the Creator. However startling the assertion may sound, it is literally true."¹ That is, God inspires, while man reveals; inspiration is the process by which God gives; revelation is the mode or form in which man embodies what he has received. While the terms are not equivalent, yet they are co-extensive, the one denoting the process on its inner side, the other on its outer. In making this distinction between

1. Spiritual Development of St. Paul, p. 177.

revelation and inspiration, Matheson desired to stress a point which he often made in the course of other discussions - the point that revelation cannot take place unless two minds meet on a common bridge. That is, revelation is received only through "a community of experience."¹

The distinction between knowledge discoverable by reason and knowledge received through revelation, determined Matheson's view of the difference between natural and revealed theology. He based his discussion of natural and revealed theology on what he regarded as the Pauline distinction between nature and grace. Matheson maintained that in the mind of Paul the necessity for divine grace was emphasized. But Paul never regarded grace as the antithesis of nature, but only as the antithesis of a violated nature, or a nature which had gone beyond its legitimate limits. "Grace, the Pauline name for the supernatural, was the antithesis not of humanity, but of sin."² Accordingly, there is now a revealed religion and there was once a natural religion, but the revealed has incorporated the natural and deprived it of its separate aspect.³ If we regard revelation as the continuation of the light of nature, we deny to revelation the capacity to supply the needs of nature. Indeed, incorporation is a greater proof of superiority in the spiritual world than mere transcendence.⁴

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 211.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. Ibid., p. 25.

4. Indeed this was for Matheson a basic conception. He took this same position in a number of other references. For example, in speaking about the work of Kant, he wrote: "It [the work of Kant] has even indirectly formed a testimony to the truth of Christianity, for it has shown that the ideas of Christianity are all eternal ideas, that the historical framework is the expression and embodiment of the deepest instincts of the human heart." Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 31.

In his Baird Lectures for 1881, Natural Elements of Revealed Theology,¹ Matheson examined the solutions of the great problems of religious thought arrived at by the best minds prior to the advent of Christ. He endeavored to show how in the Christian revelation these solutions are taken up, corrected, harmonized, and carried to completeness. The design of the work was "to ascertain to what extent the doctrines of revealed religion have a basis in the natural instincts of the human mind."² Matheson proceeded on the assumption that there is at once a distinction and an affinity between natural and revealed religion. He distinguished between his own position and that of those, on the one hand, who denied the possibility of unity, and that of those on the other, who denied the possibility of distinguishing between the natural and the revealed. The former he described by the term Ultramontane, the latter by the term Rationalist. The Ultramontane school regarded the elements of supernatural religion as unnatural, "not only beyond the range of natural discovery, but beyond the reach of natural appreciation even when discovered."³ But to the Rationalist, nature was everything and Christianity merely a natural evolution—at best and at most, the highest evolution of human consciousness.

1. In this work Matheson's Hegelian tendencies are evident, as one reviewer has been keen to point out. See, for example, The Scottish Review, vol. I, 1882-3, p. 157.

2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 1.

3. Ibid., p. 2

The term Ultramontane¹ might lead uninitiated readers to imagine that the form of these two contrasted attitudes represented merely the Roman Catholic position in theology; but this was not Matheson's view. Rather he applied the term to all, whatever their ecclesiastical connection, to whom Christianity is a system of purely mysterious truths capable of being established only by external evidence - such as miracles and prophecy.. The word was applied by Matheson to the whole school of apologists of the older type - to Butler and even to Chalmers..

In an effort to prove this thesis, he held that to ascertain what the instincts and aspirations of natural religion are, we must go not to the science of natural theology as influenced by Christian thought, but to the religions which existed before the advent of Christ.. It is to the pre-Christian religions alone that we must go if we are to ascertain the needs of the human mind, and it is only from these early religions that we can know what man can and cannot do for himself.. According to

1. Matheson was of the opinion that many of the great treatises in Protestant apologetics have been weakened by admitting the Ultramontane element. He argued that Butler's purpose, for example, was "to show not so much that Christianity is adapted to the natural instincts of the human mind, as that there is nothing in Christianity which is calculated to shock these instincts," no difficulty in the realm of revelation not paralleled in the realm of nature. He thought Butler's approach was insufficient for the nineteenth century. He also regarded Butler's title as insufficient: "It would be more correct to call it Butler's analogy between the points which are unrevealed in theology and the points which are unrevealed in nature."

Matheson, the pre-Christian world had three great problems:¹

- (1) What is God?
- (2) What is His relation to humanity?
- (3) Is His glory consistent with the existence of moral evil?

The solution of the first problem Matheson found in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; of the second in the tenet of the Mediation; and of the third in the faith of the Atonement.

Throughout his discussion Matheson made no attempt to find in the parallels presented by heathen religions unconscious prophecies of Christian doctrines, as say, in the Hindu or Platonic Trinity.² While he admitted that such parallels exist, he attached little importance to them. He held rather that the proof of the adaptation of Christianity to human nature is to be found not in the supplies of nature, but in its needs. If the true point of union between the light of nature and the doctrine of revelation is to be discovered, we must seek in nature for the need of such a doctrine. If we should find, for example, in the natural struggles of the religious intellect the demand for a view of God which should embrace the trinitarian idea, we shall have reached a more satisfactory evidence of adaptation than could be supplied by a thousand instances of verbal parallelisms.

One illustration will suffice to show how Matheson proceeded. He said that the history of the ancient world, which represents the natural and unaided instincts of humanity, discovered three great religious needs: a sense of dependence

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 60.

2. To trace such parallels was the method of Trench's Hulsean Lecture, Christ the Desire of All Nations.

to be explained; a sense of greatness to be accounted for; and a sense of solitude to be alleviated.

The natural man asked himself "Whence am I?" and the most satisfactory answer he could find was: "Nature gave me birth." The earliest form of rational religion is nature-worship, and in this worship nature is the substitute for Fatherland. The early religion of India represents this phase of the first pre-Christian problem. The second is discovered in Greece. Then man had got to know his own importance, and no longer looked up to nature as above him. The result was that mere nature-worship was replaced by the worship of mind, the universal mind, the great soul of the world. Platonism represents this attempt. But Platonism, with its love of the universal, now was solitary. In the mythology of the West with its emphasis on the deification of man, this want was met. This phase could not appear at the earliest stage of religious experience, for man must conquer nature before he could deify himself. In losing nature-worship he lost the worship of an outward power, and he dreaded to find himself alone. To fill the blank he made for himself a new religious world.

Thus following the process of human need, Matheson arrived at a threefold thought of God reached by the religious world which lived before the Cross--the thought of a fatherly or begetting principle from which humanity emanated, of a divine Spirit in which humanity has its being, and of a human form which

humanity can give to the divine.¹ The Christian Trinity thus satisfies the three wants - the first in the Father, the second in the Spirit, the third in the Son. In natural religion the three needs revealed themselves at different times and in different peoples, but their appearance anywhere and at any time showed them to be real needs of man, though not always equally felt. The Christian Trinity reconciles the elements which the heathen world divided. "The ideas of Fatherhood, of Sonship, of Spirituality, rose into new grandeur when they emerged out of their mutual antagonism, and God answered in one thought the needs of a united humanity in the Father of an infinite majesty; his honourable, true and only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."² Since the Christian doctrine of the Trinity reconciles the conflicting conceptions of the divine nature held by heathendom, revealed theology both answers the needs of the human mind, and has a basis in its natural instincts.³

1. Thus Matheson cannot be said to have followed the trend of thought which led in the Ritschlian school to an "Christocentricism," which would not allow that the religion mediated through Christ and the religion not so mediated, were of the same genus.

2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 53.

3. Matheson, however, took no notice of the distinction between human nature as it is, and human nature as it should be. Though in other places he dealt with the question of the Fall, in his Baird Lectures he did not point out that man as sinner is essentially abnormal. As one reviewer put it: "This supposes that though man had not fallen, Christianity would still have been required to complete the religion of nature; and that nature, as it now is, only requires to be supplemented not renewed. We regret that a writer of such acuteness, and whose learning appears to be Calvinistic, should, at this watershed of thought, have gone down the wrong side of the hill." See The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXIV, 1881, p. 230.

Matheson also dealt with the problem of Revelation and the Bible. He held that the revelation of Scripture is a progressive development growing out of historical surroundings of different ages. As a representative of the broader thought in the Church of Scotland of his day,¹ he did not subscribe to the theory of verbal inspiration. Indeed on one occasion in the pulpit at St. Bernard's, he announced a text, and then proceeded to state that he usually agreed with St. Paul, but in regard to the text in question, he disagreed.² On the other hand, in speaking of a recent newspaper controversy on the subject of whether the prophetic books of the Old Testament were written before or after the books of Law, Matheson said:

1. John Dickie has succinctly stated the problem, as it existed in Matheson's day: "Inherited views of Biblical authority had to be reconciled with the new knowledge of the Bible itself derived from the historical study of it, especially in Germany. In aim and intention this study was purely objective. But in actual fact our personal attitude always in some degree influences every conclusion at which we arrive in any study. The mind that knows has a contribution to make to every judgement as form, as well as the object known. Thirty-five to forty years ago, perhaps the supreme theological problem for most of us was how to reconcile an adequately Christian doctrine of Biblical authority with the assured results of physical science on the one hand and of Biblical criticism on the other. There was considerable difference of opinion as to what were assured results in both spheres. Some were perhaps too ready to welcome every new view, the more radical the better. But no one whose mind was not absolutely closed could escape the conclusion that some readjustment of Christian thought on the question of Biblical inspiration and authority was clamantly necessary." See John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, pp. 83-84.

2. As reported in private conversation with the Rev. Mr. T.W. M'Andrew.

I think it is a great pity that such subjects should be discussed in newspapers, as the man in the street, to use a popular phrase, is very apt to mistake the issue. My own view, with regard to the inspiration of Scripture, is that the treasures are in earthen vessels. The thought is the main thing. The popular view is that the revelation is suggested by the fact; my view is that the revelation is suggested by the Spirit of God. As regards the 'higher criticisms' proper, I do not agree with the Robertson Smith party. To me the internal evidence of the Bible is perfectly clear that the Law must have preceded the Prophets.¹

On another occasion Matheson expressed his opinion that the real miracle of the Bible is "the fact that out of a multitude of disconnected writings, originating from various sources, and after proceeding from opposite tendencies, there has emerged as a result the picture of the Messianic life."²

In short, although he conceived of the Bible as an authority in religion, it was the Bible considered not as a book, but as a revelation. He held that its authority was direct, as it were, and not dependent on tradition. Since revelation is not to be identified with a canonized book, it must rely on the Holy Spirit for its continuance. While he held that the medium for the Spirit and the Word is the Church, he also maintained that the Church must depend for its being on the Spirit and the Word, not they on the Church.

D. Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions.

The non-Christian religions was another subject which keenly engaged Matheson, and to which he devoted much thought.

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1. A. S. Stewart, "Dr. George Matheson," Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, April, 1901, p. 244.
 2. Life, p. 309.



"Our age is everywhere in search of a science of comparative religion; and by comparative religion it means not the discovery of equal difficulties in different modes of worship, but the discovery of points of agreement between separate forms of faith."¹ It was in this spirit of sympathy and reconciliation that he approached the subject.²

He had, moreover, a profound interest in the historical method and in the whole problem of how any one faith has developed into another.³ Thus he shared the interest of his day in the comparative study of religion and anthropology, out of which, as they developed in concomitance with the more general historical method, evolved the so-called "science of religion" toward the latter part of the Victorian era. Christianity must be studied not in isolation from, but in connection with, the other great religions of the world, with which it was to be compared historically

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, pp. 11-12; compare the following statement given in a preview of this work: "In fact, we cannot give a better idea of these lectures than by saying that they are an admirable explication of the thought that the glory of Christianity is not to be as unlike other religions as possible, but to be their perfection and fulfillment." The Scottish Review, vol. I, Nov. 1882, p. 157.

2. Matheson devoted one complete book to a study of the non-Christian religions, which he entitled, The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions. He wrote in the preface that his design in this work was not to describe the old religions, but "to photograph their spirit." "The distinctive message" of a religion was for Matheson not an account of the whole religious system, but a selection of the one point in which it differs from all other religions. In addition to this work, he has numerous references to the non-Christian religions in various journal articles, but especially in the first three chapters of the first volume of his Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, and in chapters two, three and four of Natural Elements of Revealed Theology. See also his lecture on Confucianism, in The Faiths of the World; A Concise History of the Great Religious Systems of the World, St. Giles Lectures for 1882.

3. Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, pp. v-vi.

and philosophically. The validity of Christianity's claim to be the ideal and universal religion could best be discovered after all the other religions were investigated.

Moreover, Matheson objected to two leading interpretations of non-Christian religions held in his own day. In the first place, he criticized those who regarded Christianity as nothing more than the final result of a purely natural development in religion.¹ Exception was taken to Bolingbroke for holding that the precepts of Christianity are derived from Platonism, and to the author of Ecce Homo, who began his work with the sentiment that Christianity did not begin with Christ.

Nor could Matheson concur with the school for whom "heathenism is radically bad," and which "has no other mission than to deepen, by its contrast, the glory of the divine light."²

1. Since Matheson's time, Father Wilhelm Schmidt of Vienna has classified a vast body of data dealing with primitive people, and based on the studies of savage communities. His researches show that while the origin of religion remains obscure, we can no longer hold that monotheism is the result of an evolutionary process. See Rassen und Volker in Vorgeschichte und Geschichte des Abendlandes, 3 vols; see also his The Origin and Growth of Religion, tr. H. J. Rose, London, 1931.

2. The Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, p. 5; as one writer has put it: "The question of the relation of Christianity to other religions has received a special emphasis from the growing study of comparative religion and from the practical experience of missionaries in contact with other forms of faith. The old way was to regard all religions, other than Christian, as entirely false, deceptive and corrupting. Here, as in other matters, Baldwin Brown anticipated the larger view and declared that, for himself, he regarded the depreciation of the truth of heathen religions as utterly un-Christian. Some years later Mr. Compton Rickett, Chairman of the Congregational Union, declared that 'we cannot refuse to the sacred Scriptures of other religions clear echoes of the voice of God.'" And Professor J.H. Moulton, one of the foremost students of comparative religion, said that he had learned from history 'that the Christian revelation of God had affinities with the deepest and most universal instincts of men.' The recognition of this truth is now a commonplace of all students of religion and no one has given it more eloquent support in exposition than the late Principal Fairbairn." See A. Alexander, The Shaping Forces of Modern Religious Thought, p. 372.

As indicated above, it was his position that the non-Christian religions had by the light of reason, attained to a partial knowledge of truth. Nor could he believe that Christianity was a revolt from all other religions, and that it had completely broken with all religious and philosophical thought which had preceded it. In this he followed in Schleiermacher's tradition.¹ In the course of developing his own conception of this relationship of Christianity to the systems of heathenism, Matheson interpreted the first chapter of Romans: Paul was angry with the Gentile worshippers, not because they were following the natural interests of their own minds, but because they had in fact departed from them. They had:

...departed from these primitive instincts whereby the invisible things of God had in measure been revealed to them...He [Paul] resisted it [false worship] in the interest of nature, and in the interest of the light of nature, and nowhere is he really so friendly to the pre-Christian world, as in those very words where he seems to be most adverse.²

Matheson preferred the more popular conception of his generation that the lower forms of religion lead up to a higher consummation in Christianity.³ When the tendencies of Jews and

1. Alexander writes: "He [Schleiermacher] has thus promoted the modern science of comparative religion. The supreme excellency of Christianity lies not in its exclusive supremacy, but in its recognition of the elements of truth which exists in every religion. It is the peculiar glory of our faith that it is inclusive of whatever is true and vital in man's consciousness of God. See Alexander, The Shaping Forces of Modern Religious Thought, p. 294.

2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, pp. 26-27.

3. V. Storr, Development of English Theology, p. 14. "...dominated as we are today by the thought of development, we study the evolution of religion and interpret earlier and lower faiths as leading up to the Christian Consummation, as prophetic of the more perfect expression of the religious principles found in Christianity."

Gentiles can be reconciled in Christian thought, it proves that there is something common to both of them, and deeper than either of them. This connecting link was nothing less than the essence of Christianity itself - it was the Person of the Redeemer Himself.¹ "In Him all tendencies meet; in Him the religions of the world, ready to vanish away, find a new life and a new significance."² Matheson dealt at length with Paul's idea that in this adaptation there is revealed the highest glory of historical Christianity. In the expression, "By Him all things consist," Matheson felt that Paul had touched upon the strength and weakness of the lower religions - "their capacity for union with Christ, and their fleeting and fragmentary character apart from Christ."³ So in Christianity the non-Christian religions have found a common meeting-place.⁴ The ages during which the non-Christian religions have developed have not been wasted nor have the speculations of the non-Christian religions been an utter failure. Rather, "Christianity...has begun its redemptive work by redeeming the systems of the past...they are justified by Christ...The new light vindicates the old, and reveals new beauties in the old."⁵

1. In the same connection, Matheson asserted that Christianity is the only religion in the world in which the messenger is identified with the message. See "Christianity's First Invitation to the World," The Expositor, series 1, vol. II, 1875, p. 101.

2. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 155. Matheson claimed that Baur had unwittingly to himself made an admission which could go far in reconstructing what he had in Matheson's opinion, destroyed. Matheson noted Baur's admission that "the tendencies of Jew and Gentile which, according to him [Baur] account for the whole of Christianity, were ultimately reconciled and united." Matheson pointed out that if the Jewish and Gentile tendencies admit of reconciliation, it is because these tendencies themselves are subordinate to something greater which can exist in spite of both and finally reunite both.

3. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, pp. 27-28.

4. Ibid., p. 132.

5. Ibid., p. 28.

Furthermore, Matheson thought that each of the great religious systems has constructed itself only by mutilating or by destroying some other fact of the universe. For example, Confucianism has taken the concept of prosperity as it exists in the Chinese empire, and converted it into a universal element, ignoring altogether the fact that there are regions beyond China and that there are regions within China which are not prosperous. Or Brahmanism has seen that there is much misery in the world, but it has also forgotten that there are lights as well as shadows. While Confucianism ignored the light, Parsism sustained itself by denying any possible connection between the darkness and the light. But Judaism was unique because here "for the first and last time in ancient history we have a faith which aspires to reconcile those elements of the universe which other faiths had pronounced irreconcilable."¹ That is, Matheson asserted that Judaism recognized with Confucianism the element of joy, and accepted with Brahmanism the element of sorrow which life reveals, and so refused to exclude either element from its world-view. Instead of allowing joy and sorrow to exist as antagonistic elements, as Parsism had done, Judaism insists on finding for them a source in one common fountain. Thus in Judaism we find for the first time a recognition of the universe as a united whole, without the mutilation of any one fact.² This conception has of course been taken up in the newer and fuller revelation of Christianity.³

1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 193.

2. Ibid., p. 195.

3. "The Balance of Character," The Expositor, series 5, vol. VI, 1897, p. 346.

Thus there is a distinction between "incorporation" and "reconciliation." Christianity bears a relation to the non-Christian religions, not simply for its incorporation, but because it declares its mission to be one of reconciliation. Mere incorporation meant for Matheson the placing of heterogenous things side by side, but leaving them still heterogenous. But Christianity is not content merely to "put things locally together, nor even to make them similar in appearance.. It seeks to reconcile them in their differences, - to make them in the very midst of this diversity, work out one common end."¹ He held that no other religion apart from Christianity had claimed to be a reconciler - not even Judaism.. Thus for Matheson, Christianity's work of reconciliation required that it should not merely include within its own system the ideas of all non-Christian systems, but that it must unite these ideas in a unity of spirit. Furthermore, the work of reconciliation required that Christianity shall not simply reveal the falsity of the non-Christian religions, but shall for the first time vindicate and justify the truth they contain. In satisfying the needs of each, it must reconcile the claims of all.²

How does Christianity do its work, not simply of incorporation, but of reconciliation? The single example of Buddhism will illustrate his general approach. For Matheson the message of Buddhism was the doctrine that, "by fixing the loves of the heart on universal man, the burdens of the individual heart

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 328.

2. Ibid., p. 156.

will fall."¹ This love originated in the sense of human pity. But the call of Christianity to man is not dictated by mere pity, but comes from a sense of human possibility. Thus the Christian call starts from a different basis - the basis of hope. In accordance with his general emphasis in Christology, Matheson stressed the Headship of Christ - He is the Head of the body of humanity. "To surrender myself to Christ, therefore, is to do exactly what the Buddhist does - to yield myself to the service of man."² The difference between the Christian and the Buddhist then, is not one of act but of spirit. It lies in the fact that "the Buddhist begins his sacrifice while the past is still pressing on him; the Christian waits till the burden of the past has been removed,"³ until human sin has been forgiven. But this is precisely the difference between despair and hope. The old star of Buddhism as it now appears in Christianity is not a different star, but one which is in a new position. The act is the same, but the spirit is different. The act which in the Buddhist setting was clouded by despair for man, is in the Christian setting now illuminated by hope for man. In short, the act of yielding oneself in service to the body of humanity, what Matheson held to be the distinctive message of Buddhism - has now been reconciled to the Cross.⁴

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 29.

2. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 334.

3. Ibid., pp. 334-335.

4. It is interesting to compare Matheson with a more modern writer, like F.S.C. Northrop, who, in The Meeting of East and West seeks a better spirit of harmony between East and West by a future synthesis of the "theoretic" and "intuitive" components of the truth. However, unlike Matheson, Northrop saw the unification of world cultures on a purely intellectual basis. He suggests, for example, "that men would agree by agreement" or to change the figure, that in order to avoid poverty men would have money." See E. Jurji's The Christian Interpretation of Religion, p. 290.

In this same light of reconciliation Matheson viewed the morality of the New Testament. He maintained that if the religion of Christ had come into the world as an absolutely new creed, rather than as a new power, it would have been destroyed at its birth. He held that the moral system of the Gospel derives its originality mostly from the fact that it combines many diverse elements. In this it again exhibits its work of reconciliation, as it joins in a spiritual unity systems which when standing apart had seemed only hostile. It accounts for every element of human nature, and possesses a universal adaptiveness in its power to meet every man in every possible circumstance. Indeed Christianity's work of reconciliation is in no sphere so distinctly manifest as in the domain of its ethics.¹

Matheson sought also the explanation of this power of Christianity to reconcile conflicting elements in the non-Christian religions. In other words, he thought it possible to discover the spark which had thus "ignited all the fragments of truth which heathenism contains."² Matheson maintained that mere piety and morality, though they are indeed very old, could never make a man pious. The ethical insights which we find in ancient philosophies from which an ideal moral life could be molded, existed rather as potential than as fact. Many moral sayings of the old philosophers are not surpassed, even in Christian thought. Indeed, in his

1. Landmarks of New Testament Morality, p. 3. The power of reconciliation exhibited by New Testament morality is the theme of the first chapter of this work. In this chapter, Matheson's Hegelianism is again in evidence, as Christianity fulfills the ethical aspirations of the Epicurean, the Stoic and the Platonist. At least one reviewer has referred to this work as a "fine study, from a Hegelian point of view." See The Theological Review, vol. III, 1866, p. 158. See also The Thinker, vol. XXII, July to Dec. 1892, p. 334.

2. Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, p. 9.

St. Giles lectures he stated that Jesus borrowed the "Golden Rule" of His religion from Confucianism.¹ Furthermore, Christianity may have "exchanged the vices of the heathen world for an equal number of vices more adapted to its advanced civilization."²

But there was for Matheson one thing which stood as altogether new in Christian thought, and which distinguished it from all other religious thought - the association of the Cross, of suffering, of limitation, with the idea of the Infinite. The non-Christian religions, by and large, defied the theory, and identified strength with the physically powerful. The pre-Christian world knew little of poetical benevolence, and the helpfulness of man for man. In the religions of antiquity, Matheson held, the physical denied the spiritual, and the great man was the brave man, and the brave man was the man of brute courage. The heathen religions could impute to their highest gods the grossest sins of humanity; they could never associate their gods with the idea of lowly circumstances or outward physical limitation.

Christianity however, - and this is a recurring emphasis in Matheson's thought - selected as its symbol not a crown, but a cross.³ Indeed, in discussing the non-Christian religions, his essential purpose was not to outline the religions of antiquity,

1. The Faiths of the World: A Concise History of the Great Religious Systems of the World, the St. Giles Lectures for 1882, p. 83. It is interesting to note that Robert Flint, who was another St. Giles lecturer for this same series, disagreed with Matheson and affirmed that "Christianity has certainly not borrowed from it [Confucianism] a single thought or maxim" (p. 400). For a more extended discussion on this point, and an excellent review of this lecture series, see The Catholic Presbyterian, vol. VIII, Oct., 1882, p. 288.

2. Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, p. 11.

3. Ibid., p. 14.

but to trace in the course of the world's religious development this new idea of divine sacrifice which dawned in Christianity. Accordingly he wrote: "The preparation for the cross is perhaps the only branch of the subject which has not received much attention and in which the field is comparatively free."¹ Indeed, the deepest essence of the Christian religion was not to be found in the doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation, but in the idea of divine sacrifice. This then, according to Matheson, was the distinctively new element not possessed by the non-Christian religions, and which Christianity introduced.

There was also the problem concerning the order of historical precedence as regards the non-Christian religions. If it be true that the idea of sacrifice is the distinctively new element in Christianity, he asserted that it must be to this goal that all pre-Christian premonitions and anticipations point. In the absence of any historical evidence to the contrary, he placed those religions earliest in time which seemed to him to exhibit the least affinity with the Christian faith.² He followed Hegel in putting Chinese worship first as standing at the greatest distance from the Christian element of divine sacrifice.³ Moreover, the relation of these ancient religions to one another "is not the relation between the steps of a ladder but the relation between the branches

1. Ibid., p. 16.

2. This problem of placing the great religions in a historical series by the principle of their proximity to the Christian idea of divine sacrifice, is given considerable attention by Matheson in The Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 16-41.

3. Ibid., p. 21.

of a tree...the trunk itself has been produced by a process of historical sequence."¹ But when a religion has once begun its existence, its progress is not merely one of succession. Two or more different phases of intellectual growth would undoubtedly exist at the same time..

All in all, Matheson's approach to the relationship of Christianity and the historical religions, may be viewed as quite characteristic of the nineteenth century. Schleiermacher had made this essential approach in attempting to find the "religion among religions." In a similar view, Lessing brought his motive of the "education of the human race" through progressive revelations, and of the need for tolerance towards all religions.² Matheson, though he referred to the work of Max Müller in various connections, did not follow the tendency which sought to extract the "highest common denominator" from all the religions, this highest common factor being thus considered as the distilled essence of religion.. It was rather that Matheson followed in the spirit of John Caird who wrote:

It lends a new force to our appreciation of the nature and spiritual value of the Christian faith if we can discern in it that which at once comprehends and transcends these earlier religions, embracing what is true and supplying a complement of what is imperfect, and the corrective of what is false, in both. Whilst, therefore, we may hold that Christianity is neither a reproduction nor a natural development of the imperfect notions of God in which the religious aspirations of the Old World embodied themselves, it is possible at the same time to maintain that the study of the old religions sheds new light on the Christian religion, and gives to us a new and deeper sense of its spiritual significance and power.³

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 40.

3. John Caird, Oriental Religions, Humboldt Library, Magazine No. 35, the Popular Science Literature series, August, 1882, p. 2.

While each historical religion was unique in its own way, Matheson saw Christianity as the only religion which could substantiate its claim to be the sole universal religion.

E. Authority and Reason in Religion:

In Matheson's view, the first historical explanation of the origin of our religious consciousness, is that which bases belief in external authority. But in the final analysis, man does not and should not believe because of Divine bias nor because of any "external" authority placed upon him. Accordingly, he approved the vesting of authority in the tradition of the Church, holding that the Church is authoritative only when its judgements are true. Concerning the doctrine of authority held by Roman Catholicism he wrote::

That Church which now rests on the voice of its collective members, originally became a Church by some voice which spoke individually to separate human souls; its collective voice could have no authority when it had no existence. Catholicism therefore, is driven back to a Protestant basis. It is compelled to seek the origin of its faith in that state of things which preceded its own catholicity, to find the foundation of its belief, not in the general voice which speaks through its members, but in those special and particular voices which originally made themselves audible to the spirits of individual men.¹

1. "The Basis of Religious Belief," The Evangelical Review, vol. XXVIII Jan.-Oct., 1879, p. 405.

With many of his contemporaries,¹ Matheson held that the Bible is not an "external" authority in the sense in which Protestant Scholasticism² regarded it. The Bible is authoritative not because its various books were canonized, but only because through the pages the living and sovereign God reveals Himself to finite man. The Bible "assumes the existence of a previous belief in the heart of the man whom it addresses," and thus the authority of the Bible "is the authority of a superstructure."³

Having rejected the idea of external authority, whether in an outward Church, or in a Book, Matheson also rejected the rationalistic attempt to find God by demonstration.⁴ It was his opinion that Kant had not destroyed the value of the theistic arguments,⁵ but rather that the ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments did have a certain value. The value which they yielded was the reverse of what rationalism had found in them. Rather, the arguments all derived their value from their testimony to man's

1. See, for example, A. B. Bruce, Apologetics, p. 298.

2. For Matheson's critique of Protestant Scholasticism, see Aids to the Study of German Theology, pp. 174-175.

3. "The Basis of Religious Belief," The Evangelical Review, vol. XXVIII, Jan.-Oct., 1879, p. 406; Gore had well said: "All legitimate authority represents the higher reason, educating the development of the lower. Legitimate religious authority represents the reason of God educating the reason of man, and communicating itself to it." See Gore, Bampton Lectures on The Incarnation, p. 181.

4. One of Matheson's contemporaries, the distinguished Robert Flint, had held that we arrive at the knowledge of God by way of the "theistic proofs." So emphatically did Flint hold to these "proofs," that, as John Dickie has written "he made them the basis of his elaborate and carefully considered classification of the Divine Attributes." See John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, p. 63.

5. For Matheson's evaluation of Kant's treatment of the theistic arguments, see Aids to the Study of German Theology, pp. 13-22.

sense of dependence and inadequacy. Without going into detail on Matheson's interpretations of the theistic arguments, his general approach can be seen from his handling of the ontological argument. He wrote:

But if we look more closely we shall find that this argument [the ontological argument] rests upon a position which is itself not the subject of demonstration.. How do we know that this idea of God is not created by the mind? It is answered, because we feel ourselves to be imperfect.. Be it so, but here is a totally different basis of faith from the ontological argument, or from any argument.. It is not our possession of the idea of God which formed the foundation of our belief; it is the underlying conviction that we are ourselves incapable of originating that idea.. And this is all the more remarkable from the fact that the two remaining arguments of rationalism the cosmological and teleological arguments derive all their value from the very same conviction... Rationalism is based on the motive of human ability; the sense of dependence is built on the idea of human inadequacy.¹

In short, Matheson argued that appeals to Church and Scriptural authority, all arguments from innate ideas, all reasoning from effect to cause, the demonstration from the evidence of design, Kant's argument based on the freedom of the will - all these rested on the consciousness of human imperfection and the sense of dependence.²

1. "The Basis of Religious Belief," The Evangelical Review, vol. XXVIII, Jan.-Oct., 1879, p. 407..

2.. John Caird had said: "You can no more argue a man into a belief in religion than into a belief in art or morality.. He who believes in these things, believes in them on grounds to which an unlimited supply of supernatural or other credentials is wholly irrelevant.. A man whose soul is vibrating to the beauty of nature would not have his faith strengthened by any amount of miracles and prophecy to prove that nature is beautiful.. Belief in the reality of righteousness, purity, love, goodness, could neither be produced nor fortified by signs and wonders the more portentous, wrought before your eyes, much less by elaborate arguments to show that the preponderance of proof is in favor of such signs and wonders having been wrought about 2000 years ago." See John Caird, University Addresses, pp. 221-222..

But Matheson maintained that the moment man feels a sense of absolute dependence, he has at that moment already begun to pass out of his limitation. Thus "the sense of absolute ignorance is ignorance no longer absolute, but already passing into knowledge."¹ Matheson concluded that intellectual despair proves man to be larger than his faculties, and furnishes the presumption that man may receive some religious light of which these faculties are rather the occasion than the source..

This emphasis on absolute dependence and human inadequacy had implications for Matheson's thought on other matters.² It was in this general context that he defined his conception of faith. If a man feels the sense of his own inadequacy, and yet "thinks to know something which his senses and his natural faculties cannot tell him, he concluded, without putting his conclusion into language, that there must be in him some power which is supersensuous, and some faculty which is supernatural; he calls this faith."³ While "belief" is only a general term and signified merely the recognition of a divine principle, "faith" is a specifically Christian term, and that recognition of a divine principle which bears to us a moral relation.. Matheson emphasized that Christian faith is distinguished from belief in general by the imputation of a moral element into the

1. Op. cit., p. 412.

2. While Matheson gave this prominence to the sense of absolute dependence, yet he found himself out of sympathy with the larger portion of Schleiermacher's thought. He writes that "Schleiermacher has failed in establishing a scientific theology upon the basis of pure feeling." See Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 51.

3. "The Basis of Religious Belief," The Evangelical Review, vol. XXVIII, Jan.-Oct., 1879, p. 414.

idea of religion.¹

Moreover, faith is not opposed to reason.² He repudiated, for example, not less earnestly than Martineau and those who agreed with him, the old-fashioned antithesis between faith and reason as belonging to an exploded deistic conception of God's relation to the world as purely transcendent.³ To pit faith against reason was tantamount to setting faith against truth. Indeed, Matheson had the highest regard for reason, holding that theology and philosophy should work together to their mutual advantage. He held that religion should be able to justify itself metaphysically. The construction of a philosophy was never a loss but a gain to religious faith.⁴ The influence of Hegel, to whose philosophy he was first introduced in student days, remained with Matheson throughout his life. While in later years he modified his earlier Hegelian leanings, yet it was this philosophy which moulded the particular channels in which his thought moved. Hegelianism gave Matheson a rooting in the

1. Cf. A. B. Bruce, Apologetics, p. 501.

2. Matheson had little to say on the precise relationship between faith and knowledge. He states his position on this matter only in general terms: Faith is not the opposite of knowledge, but the anticipation. "Such is the order of the Christian understanding; we first believe and then we know" (Moments on the Mount, p. 207); Faith is destined to be lost in knowledge (Moments on the Mount, p. 209). Indeed, whenever faith is opposed to knowledge, "it is opposed to that species of reason which professed to find its evidence exclusively in the objects of outward experience" ("The Basis of Religious Belief," The Evangelical Review, vol. XXVIII, 1879, p. 414).

3. J. Martineau, The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. vi.

4. "The Theologians of the Day - Ebrard," The Catholic Presbyterian, vol. II, 1879, p. 13.

historical method, and a bias towards idealism. Yet Matheson cannot rightly be considered as a neo-Hegelian along with the school of British idealists which emanated from T.H. Green. Nevertheless, he did contribute to some extent toward the influence of this school, largely through the publication of his volume, Aids to the Study of German Theology (1874), and his various journal articles,¹ in which he helped to break down the insularity of British thought and to open before it the more cosmopolitan outlook of German theology

Matheson's respect for reason was also manifested in his attempt to make a reasoned defense of the Christian faith. This apologetical effort was carried on against the claim of the scientific system with its interpretation of the ultimate in the skeptical terms of the "Unknown,"² and in the light of the problems raised in the science and religion conflict³ which figured so prominently in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

F. Summary and Conclusions:

Matheson exhibited the same kind of interest in the problems of religion as did many of his contemporaries. He sought a proper definition of religion, an adequate conception of the origin of religion, a doctrine of Revelation, the place of the non-Christian

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1. Especially the series in The Catholic Presbyterian for 1879, on German theologians.
 2. As one illustration of Matheson's efforts along this line, see his article "Agnosticism," Scottish Review, vol II, May, 1883, pp. 87-101.
 3. Some of the problems raised by the science and religion conflict constitute the theme of Matheson's Can the Old Faith Live with the New, and The Psalmist and the Scientist. See also Matheson's ten articles in the series entitled "Scientific Lights on Religious Problems," The Expositor, series 6, vol. III, 1901, vol. IV, 1901, written within five years of his death and containing his mature reflections on the subject.

religions, as well as a Christian view of authority and reason. In searching for the answers to such questions, he demonstrated that he was keenly alive to the pressing issues of his day, and was following the same interests which stimulated such thinkers as Spencer, the Cairds, Iverach, Tulloch, indeed the contemporary philosophical and theological thought-world.

Moreover, Matheson always sought to be clear and popular enough in his presentation to appeal to the general reader, as well as to the scholar. His approach was more scholarly in his Baird Lectures, The Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, than in more distinctly popular works like The Psalmist and the Scientist, and The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions. There was a change in literary style and also in the footnote material and scholarly references, depending upon the reader for whom the work was designed. Throughout, he showed a clear grasp of the problems, and indicated an extensive familiarity with the literature on the subject. For example, in his Baird Lectures, his scholarly references were naturally much more copious and were relegated to the rear of the book in various appendices, while in The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, he wrote:

I need not say that my design in this little book is not to describe the old religions, but to photograph their spirit. To describe any religion would require a volume twice the size of the present. But a photograph must be instantaneous or abortive. It is a generalised result; it only dates from the time when all the materials have been arranged in order. It does not involve work, it presupposes work... I have given a sufficient number of references for a book which is not meant for a contribution to linguistic research, but simply as a mental study. This is not a matter in which the linguist has any advantage over the unprofessional, provided only that the details, so far as they are known, have become common property and are sufficient to warrant a conclusion.¹

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, pp. v. and vi.

Among the writers frequently quoted or referred to were: Comte, Kant, Hegel, Lessing, Max Muller, Pauthier, Lord Kelvin, Huxley, Tyndall, Prichard, Gulytaff, Renouf, Pfleiderer, Saint-Hilaire, Hardwich, Marcus Dods, Flint, Lewes, Carpenter, Legge, Ewald, Bruce, Dale, Fairbairn, the Cairds, Jowett, Archer Butler, and Lichtenberger. Of course, in his work, Aids to the Study of German Theology, Matheson showed a familiarity with the works of most of the leading German philosophers and theologians. Paton J. Gloag wrote in a letter to Matheson upon the publication of this work:

I have been informed that you are the author of the work entitled Aids to the Study of German Theology, and I cannot refrain from writing to thank you for your excellent work. Its erudition is extensive... I cannot understand how you have amassed such knowledge of German Theology. Although I have been studying it for nearly twenty years, yet I must yield the palm to you. I do not pretend to criticise your work, which is in all respects admirable; written in a candid spirit, and exhibiting great judgement in weighing the different opinions... Again thanking you for your excellent work, and hoping that it will be only an instalment and a prelude to still greater works in theology,....¹

In his approach to the problems of religion in general, Matheson did not question what Balfour called the "inevitable beliefs."² That is, he did not question those beliefs as men in general entertain and cannot help entertaining - beliefs, for example in an external independent material world, or in the existence of living persons other than oneself who think and feel and will. He rather assumed a "commonsense" view of such matters and proceeded from there.

For a definition of religion, Matheson recognized the utter foolishness of searching for some one quality common to all known religion as the basis of definition. He felt that the result

1. Life, p. 139.

2. A. Balfour, Theism and Humanism, pp. 30-31..

of such a search would be most misleading in an understanding of religion, for religion would have to be defined in terms of the lowest possible form; but even this would hardly be possible unless, as religion developed, each successive stage at once included and transcended the previous stage.¹ As one modern writer expresses it: "No aspect of human experience which has left so indelible a mark on man's total endowment, as has religion, can be explained away on the basis of fear, imagination or quest after truth. Its nature suggests an inner constitution and meaning which thoughtful men over the ages have striven in vain to discover."²

It was Matheson's contention that religion is universal, and belongs to man as man.. Mankind has always been conscious of its dependence on a Power greater than itself, and feels a necessity of being on good terms with that Power.. Not only have men believed in the existence of such a power, but they have sought to propitiate that Power in many ways, and have recognized that that Power has prescribed for them a certain kind of life.. This Power or supernatural Being has a purpose for men, and communion with men.. The result of investigation leads to the historical conclusion that there have been no people without a religion; at least, none that have been discovered.. One of Matheson's contemporaries, William Adams Brown, quoted with approval W. W. Clark, who defined religion as "the life of man in his supernatural relations," adding that the words meant man's "relation to the power on which he finds himself dependent, the authority to which he deems himself responsible, and the unseen being with whom he is capable of communion."³

1. Cf. Edward Caird, Evolution of Religion, vol. I, p.43.

2. Edward J. Jurji, The Christian Interpretation of Religion, p. 15.

3. W. A. Brown, Christian Theology in Outline, p. 29.

Furthermore, he felt that religion is universal in another aspect; namely, it belongs to every part of human nature. It involves reason, feeling, and action. It appeals to the whole consciousness of man, and to every mood of it. It is rational, emotional and volitional. Indeed, religion is at home with the whole complex nature of man, and insists on being with him in all his thinking.¹

For Matheson, as for Fairbairn, Flint, Westcott and many other contemporaries, Scripture was not the revelation, but the record of it - a record which verifies itself anew and authenticates itself as Divine to those who hear God speaking to them in and through it.² He would never have embraced Barth's belief that it is impossible to know God except in the unfathomable mystery of paradox. On the question of Revelation, Matheson by and large shared the newer, more liberal views, which were gaining ever wider acceptance in the Church of Scotland.

As regards the non-Christian religions, Matheson believed that the supreme excellence of Christianity lies not in its exclusive supremacy, but in its recognition of the elements of truth which exist in every religion. It is the peculiar glory of our faith that it is inclusive of whatever is true and vital in man's consciousness of God. In this respect, Matheson followed in the mainstream of his contemporary thought, and summarized his position as follows:

1. Nathan Söderblom held that God reveals Himself through: the intellect or understanding, the intuition of infinity, and the consciousness of the ideal. See The Nature of Revelation, tr. Friedrich E. Pamp, p. 106.

2. See Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God: Dogmatics, vol. I, tr. Olive Wyon, pp. 22, 44.

...the religion of Christ ought to have peculiar interest in the faiths of the past.. They are not, to her, dead faiths; they are not even modernised.. They are preserved inviolable as parts of herself - more inviolable than they would have been if she had never come.. Christianity has claimed to be "the manifold wisdom of God." In this description she has been candid to the past.. She has not denied its wisdom; she has only aspired to enfold it.. She has not sought to derogate from the doctrines of antiquity; she has only sought to diminish their antagonisms.. China may keep her materialism, and India may retain her mysticism; Rome may grasp her strength, and Greece may nurse her beauty; Persia may tell of the opposition to God's power, and Egypt may sing of His preeminence even amid the tombs: but for each and all there is a seat in the Christian Pantheon, and a justification in the light of the manifold wisdom of God.¹

Matheson saw the truth that religious knowledge does not come by way of the speculative reason.. Nevertheless, he saw the important fact that unless man employs his rational faculty he cannot hope to understand the witness of reality, whether that witness be of the natural or of the supernatural..

By faith Matheson understood a personal trust in the God who confronts us.. Like Brunner, he held that an intellectual assent to the dogmas of the Church does not constitute the true meaning of faith.. "Correct doctrine," suggests the Swiss theologian, "is something that can be learned, and indeed anyone who has a good brain and is able to study at a good college or university can learn it easily. But faith is not something that a man can 'learn'; it is the free gift of God."² Unlike Brunner, Matheson did not seem to sufficiently emphasize man's response in love and trust to the Word of God.. Brunner, for example, wrote:

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, pp. 341-343..

2. E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 420..

Pistis, Obedience-in-Trust, is the personal answer of self-giving to the Word of God. In this response of self-giving the Divine self-communication first reaches its goal, and actual fellowship between God and man originates. In this two-sided yet unequivocal relation God is completely and wholly the Giver, the first, and man is completely and wholly the Receiver, the second period. In Pistis is contained the personal acknowledgement of the Lord as Lord, obedience, and the personal acceptance of the Divine self-giving love in grateful responding love. Faith is the complete self-giving of man which is consequent upon having received the unconditional self-giving of God. Faith is the single answering acceptance of the Word of God, the correct, fitting answer to the first freely given Creator-Word of God.¹

Indeed, one feels that Matheson could have been more explicit in developing his position on the precise relationship between faith and knowledge, and man's response to the Word of God.

1. E. Brunner, The Divine Imperative, pp. 48-49.

CHAPTER III: MATHESON'S THEISM

We can see a...
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depression of the...
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A. His Approach to the Science and Religion Controversy.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the science and religion controversy had become particularly acute. Darwin had given the doctrine of evolution a scientific exposition,¹ while Herbert Spencer had developed the same doctrine on the philosophic side. Man appeared to be confined within the bonds of nature and to be controlled by inviolable laws. In this situation the cause of religion seemed, for the most part, to be on the defensive. M. Maritain has described the inner meaning of this science and religion conflict as follows:

We can mark a first significant moment in this process (i.e., this dissolution of "this proud anthropocentric personality" through "the depression of its natural elements") in the world of biology, with the triumph of the Darwinian idea of man's simian origin. Man, in this view, is seen not only as emerging from a long-drawn evolution of animal species (that is a purely historical and, after all, secondary question), but as issuing from this biological evolution without any metaphysical discontinuity, without at a given moment, with the coming of human beings, anything absolutely new appearing in the series: spiritual subsistence implying that in each generation of a human being an individual soul is created by the Author of all things and cast into existence with an eternal destiny.²

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1. In 1871 Charles Darwin published his epic-making book The Descent of Man. He did not believe that his theory encroached upon the theistic field or in any way tended to subvert the Christian faith. Toward the end of the book he wrote: "I am aware that the conclusions arrived at in this work will be denounced by some as highly irreligious, but he who thus denounces them is bound to show why it is more irreligious to explain the origin of man as a distinct species of descent from some lower forms, through the law of variation and natural selection, than to explain the birth of the individual through the laws of ordinary reproduction. The birth, both of the species and the individual, are equally parts of that grand sequel of events which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance." See Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man, vol. II, p. 395.
2. Jacques Maritain, True Humanism, p. 61.

Matheson felt that the science of his day had attacked one by one many of the essential Christian affirmations, particularly, the doctrines of miracle, creation, providence, and prayer. No man's religious conviction could stand if he regarded it as "the expression of a mere subjective feeling, if he refused to recognise the hope that it might have a corresponding reality".¹ It was, therefore, of the utmost importance that there be an adequate apologetic effort made by Christian thought to deal with the serious questions involved in the relationship between science and religion.

He regarded the scepticism of the nineteenth century as both more mellowed and more dangerous than that of the preceding century. The eighteenth century was more vehement and abusive, but the nineteenth assailed the Christian faith in a spirit "not generally prompted by the desire of victory, but oftener by a sad compulsion".² Yet while the scepticism of the eighteenth century was an attack upon the outwards, the scepticism of the nineteenth went to the very foundations, and would have destroyed the spirit of religion itself. He stated succinctly his view as follows:

The question is no longer whether a particular book of the Bible is genuine. It is no longer whether miracles are possible. It is no longer even whether supernatural Christianity can be recognised as true. It is whether there be or be not a supernatural at all.

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1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 17.
 2. Ibid., p. 321; See also Can the Old Faith Live with the New, pp. 19-20; and "The Originality of the Character of Christ", The Contemporary Review, vol. XXXIII, 1878, pp. 758-759.

It is whether the conception of God is any longer compatible with the conception of nature at which the scientist has now arrived. In the controversy of the former age men might lose one outwork without abandoning their system of defence; they might even erect another bulwark in the place where the last had been destroyed. But the scepticism of our age, if successful, must render the future defence of religion impossible - for it is concerned mainly with the question whether religion has a right to exist.¹

While the past was frequently concerned with theological arguments for and against a particular doctrine, the controversy of the nineteenth century concerned not a dogma but the religious sentiment itself. About such a conflict there can be no single suspension of judgment, for if the matter were prolonged indefinitely the religious sentiment, like every other sense, would die. Thus each person must settle the matter for himself, before entering into any discussion of theological dogma as such. Indeed, it "is only through the presence and the power of the religious sentiment that any theological field can be trodden, and to suspend this presence and this power is effectually to bar the gate against all further progress."²

Matheson, accordingly, sought a reconciliation between the scientific and the religious thought of his day.³

1. Ibid., p. 322.

2. Ibid., p. 324; see also, The Bible Definition of Religion, p. 48.

3. Matheson, throughout his many writings on the science and religion controversy, showed a splendid grasp of the literature on the subject, especially the works of Herbert Spencer. Another writer to whom he referred was Fiske, author and Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy; concerning this writer, Iverach has remarked:

"To me as to other readers of Cosmic Philosophy it seemed that Mr. Fiske had left little room for theology except in the Spencerian sense, and he had certainly disposed of purpose in every sense of the term. His Cosmic Philosophy added nothing to the system of Spencer, and left us in the presence of an omnipresent energy". See J. Iverach, Theism in the Light of Present Science Philosophy, p. 266.

In this process he did not try to prove evolution to be either true or false. He endeavored to show that, were evolution subsequently proved to be true, it would be not an enemy but an ally to Christian thought. He specifically differentiated his purpose from that of J. J. Murphy's, The Scientific Basis of Faith, and Henry Drummond's, Natural Law in the Spiritual World. He indicated his own apologetical approach, as contrasted with these two writers as follows:

Both of these are in their nature constructive; their aim is to build a faith on the acceptance of the modern doctrine of evolution. Our purpose, on the other hand, is purely analytic. We have nowhere desired to express any opinion as to the scientific evidence for that doctrine; our sole design has been to inquire if the doctrine be true, what then?¹

In another place he wrote:

But let the theologian begin by taking for granted the inferences of science, by assuming that the conclusions at which he has arrived have become recognised laws of nature. He will then be in a position to consider the real question, and the only question with which in this matter he has any concern - What effect will the establishment of these conclusions exert upon the old belief? To what extent will it modify, in what measure shall it overthrow the religious conclusions of the past? This, we say, is the real attitude in which modern theology should approach modern science.²

Moreover, he felt it possible, "that the ancient faith may be expressed in terms of modern thought," and "that modern thought may be expressed in terms of the ancient faith."³

1. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. vi.; While he summarized his position in this matter in the Preface of this work, yet he assumed this same approach throughout his many discussions of the evolution question. See, for example, Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 79; see also The Expositor, Series 6, vol. IV, 1901, p. 461, The Psalmist and The Scientist, p. 43.

2. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, pp. 18-19.

3. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

Indeed, a reconciliation would mean more than a mere compromise, or that science and religion could go their separate ways. Nor would it indicate simply that difficulties in religion could be paralleled by difficulties in science. A reconciliation could mean "a marriage" in which there "is nothing less than a transference into the one of the thought peculiar of the other."¹ It shall then be possible for the scientist to feel that he is engaged in an exercise of devotion, and the religious thinker shall feel in harmony with the best work being done in science.² Matheson had personally experienced a profound inward struggle with the problems raised by the science and religion conflict.³ When he wrote Can the Old Faith Live with the New (1885) and The Psalmist and the Scientist (1887), it seems clear, despite his approach in these works described above, that he did hold evolution to be true. Moreover, this was the impression he evidently conveyed to his contemporaries.⁴

1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 326.

2. Ibid., p. 327. Matheson would have agreed with Professor John Baillie's position that "science and faith represent not so much the outlook of two different kinds of men as two elements that are together present, though in very varying degrees, in the minds of most of us . . ." See John Baillie, Natural Science and the Spiritual Life, p. 9.

3. Op. cit., p. 324.

4. See, for example, the article, "The Chaos of Genesis" in The Evangelical Review, vol. XXXV, 1886, p. 668, in which the author, Andrew Taylor, contrasts the positions of Gladstone and Matheson on the problem of evolution. He wrote: "It is the aim of Dr. Matheson to enwrap organic evolution in the garments of orthodox theology. Mr. Gladstone protests against the entrance of the agnostic stranger. They agree in appealing to natural science as the key of entrance." For a criticism of Darwinism, see "The Freedom of the City of God," The Expositor, series 5, vol VI, 1897, p. 214.

But in later life he gave up his earlier belief in this doctrine. To a friend, Hately Waddell, Matheson, in later life, remarked: "I wrote a book to show that evolution, if true, is quite compatible with orthodoxy, but I have since come to the conclusion that evolution is not true. I have no more fear of it than I ever had, but I am quite convinced that in, say, twenty years, it will be regarded as an exploded heresy."¹

B. The Natural and the Supernatural:

There was, Matheson thought, a doctrine held by science which constituted a particular obstacle to a possible reconciliation with religion. He saw the nineteenth century as having produced a more exhaustive view of the universality of law than had ever before prevailed and which was expressed in the doctrine of the correlation of forces.² The domain of natural law had been extended beyond the boundaries of nature to claim even that empire which had always been regarded as under a spiritual agency. This trend constituted a threat, for if the domain of natural law were to be extended over all phenomenon, in such a way as to deny all Presence behind law, religion could no longer exist.

1. Quoted in Life, p. 309.

2. For a penetrating discussion of this matter by a contemporary of Matheson, with whom he had much in common, see the Bampton Lectures of Frederick Temple, The Relations between Religion and Science, pp. 225-230.

Indeed, if it is held "that there is no room for such a Presence, if we deny that there is anywhere in the universe of being aught that transcends law, we have thereby committed ourselves to the position that the principle which regulates nature is a purely mechanised principle, and that the actions and events of nature are the product of a blind necessity."¹ Moreover, the idea of religion, said Matheson, involves the idea of miracle - the existence of that which transcends nature. He criticized the position which regarded miracle as "the violation of a law of the universe by the mandate of an absolute will."² This older view maintained that, God's Will, since it was exalted over visible nature, had the right and prerogative to break through the course of nature. Miracle was, in this older view, that which supersedes, the order of nature. Matheson revolted against this concept of miracle³. The will of God is not the ultimate fact of the universe, for behind this will there lies a law of Divine being, which is permanent and unchanging.

1. Can the Old Faith live with the New? p. 22; as one writer has put it: "The significance of Darwinism lies in the fact that the author has brought the realm of organic life, as previous science had brought the inorganic world, under the reign of natural law, and has sought to account for the processes of life without reference to supernatural agency." See A. Alexander, The Shaping Forces of Modern Religious Thought, p. 219.

2. "Evolution in Relation to Miracle," The Homiletic Magazine, vol. XIV Feb., 1886, p. 66.

3. Cf. William Temple, Nature, Man, and God, pp. 267.

In the sight of God, and from the standpoint of the Divine nature, there can be no "miracle" - in the sense of a violation of ultimate law, or what is the same thing, the law of God's being. Desiring, therefore, to preserve both the idea of the supernatural and reverence for the majesty of Divine law, he defined miracle as "the initial stage of that process by which a lower law is transcended by a higher law."¹

He held that his definition comprehended two questions: What is meant by the transcendence of a lower by a higher law? and, What is meant by the initial stage of that process? These conceptions are worked out as follows:

The first question will, I think, be best answered by an illustration.....The natural position of my foot ought clearly to be the ground, that is to say, if the idea of mind be excluded, there is no reason in the world why it should not rest on the ground and rest there for ever; the law of gravitation imperatively demands it. But let the element of mind be introduced and there enters a change of conditions which entirely alters the original state of things. In lifting my foot from the ground I have modified the original law of gravitation so far as the foot is concerned. I have not violated the law, I have not even suspended it; it still continues to exist and to operate in its own sphere... What has happened is that an element (mind) once included in that sphere (the natural sphere subject to gravitation) has been lifted into a new and upper region, whereby it (mind) has been rendered comparatively independent of the influence which formerly dominated it.²

Matheson felt that he had anticipated the criticism that the transcendence of a lower law by a higher law does not involve in itself that sense of supernatural power necessary to

1. Op.cit., p. 67.

2. "Evolution in Relation to Miracle", The Homiletic Magazine, vol. XIV, Feb., 1886, p. 67.

the very idea of miracle. For he goes on to emphasize the second element in his definition, - namely, that a miracle is not merely the transcendence of a lower by a higher law, but that it is the initial stage in that process of transcendence.

He wrote:

The lifting of my foot from the ground is not a miracle to me, but why? because I am already in natural possession of the power by which this is done. Let us suppose that no living creature had hitherto ever possessed the power to lift either the hand or foot;... Let us further suppose that to one individual of the human species there had for the first time come that power which had hitherto been denied to all forms human or animal, that for the first time a being possessed of the hand and the foot had manifested the ability to lift these organs from their position of natural gravity;... what would the associates of this favoured being give to such a manifestation? Could they call it anything else than a miracle?... in what respect would their impression of the miraculous differ from that impression which men now have when they hear of Christ walking on the sea? We now look upon walking on the ground as a perfectly natural occurrence, but that is simply because the initial stage of the process is past. The law which was once transcendent has become normal and natural The hope of every Christian is that he shall one day see face to face and know even as he is known; what is this but to believe that there is a time coming in which the things now called supernatural shall be found to have been strictly according to Nature, and when the seeming violations of physical law shall be recognised to have been only the fulfilment of the law of the spirit of life.¹

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1. Ibid., pp. 67-68; cf. Edward Caird's statement: "To say that there is a universal reign of law and that nothing happens without a cause, is by no means to say that there is one kind of law and one kind of cause for everything. The world is not a congeries of things, all on the same level. It is more fitly described as the hierarchy in which the lower forms of being are both pre-supposed and explained by the higher." See Edward Caird, Evolution of Religion, vol. I, p. 6.

The theological thought of the day, said Matheson, was called upon to discover some positive ground for the continuance of a belief in that which transcends nature. The theological task was to meet Agnosticism by demonstrating that there is a region beyond the things of experience, of whose existence we can be sure. This could best be demonstrated, he held, by showing that a faith which transcends experience is more than a merely religious necessity. The nineteenth century needed to demonstrate that denial of Divine existence involved greater intellectual difficulties than belief in such a doctrine demanded. That is, if a man "should refuse to accept any religion as a solution of the universe, and should insist instead on studying the universe itself, he will require to accept a miracle of the most pronounced description - a miracle which shall consist not in the mere transcendence of law but in the actual violation of law, and which shall make a demand upon his faith in comparison with which the requirement of any religion would be small and gentle."¹

He devoted considerable attention to this matter², proceeding in the following way: The doctrine that the world has existed from eternity, and the doctrine that the world has

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1. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 35.
 2. See, for example, an extended discussion on this point in his article on "Agnosticism", The Scottish Review, vol.II., May, 1883, pp. 92-98; see also, Can the Old Faith Live with the New, pp. 35-49.

sprung into existence spontaneously, are both beliefs which involve a violation of the law of nature as now established, and so require a great element of faith. But the Christian doctrine, that the world owes its origin to a high Intelligence, does not involve a violation of the law of nature, but requires only a miracle of transcendence. This third position suspends no law or principle, but simply postulates the fact that behind the material mechanism there is an immaterial principle. Indeed, of the three alternatives, "those which demand the most faith are just those which the opponents of supernaturalism have adopted with the view of avoiding the necessity of faith."¹

It is one thing to know that there is a supernatural element, but quite another to know if it can ever become an object of knowledge. He did not ask, at this point, whether revelation has or has not taken place. He was interested in a more preliminary question; "not whether the supernatural has revealed itself, but whether it could reveal itself, to the mind of man."² If there be no possibility of a communication between the world of human experience and that world that transcends experience, then, we are forever debarred from considering anything that claims to be revelation.³

1. Op.cit., p. 49.

2. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 51.

3. Oman claims that we know the Supernatural only as mediated through the natural and therefore if we repudiate the natural we, at the same time, preclude the possibility of any real knowledge of the Supernatural. See John Oman, The Natural and the Supernatural, p. 411.

Matheson analyzed the agnostic position, which held that incompatibility between the natural and the supernatural lay "either in the nature of the finite, or in the character of the infinite."¹ If there be any barrier, he argued, to communion between the human and the Divine, that barrier does not lie in the finitude of human nature. Indeed the knowledge of his own finitude enables man to reach the idea of a Divine existence - evidence for the supernatural is suggested by the very limits of human experience itself.² In one place Matheson summarized his position as follows:

We found that we were necessitated to seek a supersensuous solution of the universe from the simple fact that the natural laws were unable, without violating themselves, to account for their own origin. We saw that to introduce the hypothesis of chance was to formulate the idea of a violation of the law of nature; that to adopt the conception of an unbeginning world must deny the existence of any law of nature at all. By the exigency of these alternatives we were driven to a solution ... which did not violate any principle of nature ...; we inferred that the movements of the universe must themselves be the manifestations of a Power beyond the universe ... we were driven to it [this conclusion] by the barred gate of our own experience. It was the limits of our own senses that compelled us to seek a solution of the universe which invoked the presence of a Power beyond them.³

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1. Op. cit., p. 52.
 2. "Agnosticism," The Scottish Review, vol. II, May, 1883, p. 100.
 3. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, pp. 55-56.

Thus it is that the moment we reach the idea of our own finitude, we have already attained the thought of something beyond it. The barred gate suggests something on the other side against which it is barred. Man's "knowledge of the limits of nature has forced him into faith in the supernatural."¹ Nor does the barrier to communion between the Divine and the human lie in the nature of the infinite. It was said that if the infinite could be known, it would from that very fact cease to be infinite. This position assumes that the knowledge of God is identical with the knowledge of the infinite. It is taken for granted that God's essence is His infinitude, and on this premise it is logically concluded that, since infinitude is unknowable, God must be known. But Matheson denied that the essence of God is infinitude, or that it was possible to say that God is "the infinite". God is not the infinite or boundless because His is not the only existence which suggests the idea of infinitude or boundlessness. The infinitude of God's nature is but the degree of its intensity, and it is possible to know His nature without measuring its degree.

The first thing which every man must know is the character of that object whom he professes to worship...when he has fixed in his mind what those attributes are to which he shall be willing to give the name of God, he will then be entitled to consider how far he is able to conceive these attributes in an intensified degree;....

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1. "Agnosticism," The Scottish Review, vol. II, May, 1883, p. 100.
 2. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 69.

There is, therefore, no barrier to communion with the Divine because of the nature of infinitude in the Divine. The possibility of divine communion, moreover, is not precluded by any modern scientific discovery. Spencer had said that there is an inscrutable Force in contact with all phenomena and that man has no need of a special faculty to inform him of its existence. Matheson thought that there was a remarkable agreement with religion on this point, since science asserted "that the Power which transcends nature is yet not divided from nature - and that therefore there is no inherent impossibility in the earthly bearing the image of the heavenly."¹

The Evolutionary theory admitted that man can know at least one fact regarding the transcendental Power in Nature - namely, "the fact that that Power is transcendental."² Matheson succinctly stated his conclusion to the matter as follows:

...to know that his [man's] experience is transcended is to know that there is something which transcends it. How has man acquired that knowledge? If like can only be known by like, if there must be an affinity of nature between the revelation and the being to whom it is revealed, the question can admit of one reply. Man has reached the knowledge that there is something which transcends nature, because that which transcends nature is already existent within him; he has arrived at the conviction that there is a Power beyond the limits of his experience, because he himself has already in thought surpassed these limits, and recognised his relationship to the Power of the universe.³

1. Ibid., p. 95. See also, "The Scientific Possibility of Revelation," The Expositor, series 6, vol. III, 1901, p. 184.

2. Ibid., p. 96.

3. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

G. Creation and Providence:

When dealing with the doctrine of creation, Matheson sought to answer the question - "Is it compatible with modern science?" It seemed to him that the best thought of the day considered the process of evolution to be a disproof of the act of creation.¹ He attempted to prove that there is no necessary or essential opposition between the idea of evolution and the idea of creation. Throughout, Matheson showed his familiarity with the scientific thought of his day, especially the writings of Herbert Spencer.

In the first place, the creationist is one with the evolutionist in denying that there is "an absolute commencement of anything." According to both positions, the force underlying the universe is eternal and immutable. The creationist, however,

1. Alexander has written: "Early in the 19th century several of the Bampton lecturers dealt with the relations of science and religion, defending the Biblical account of creation against recent geological discoveries. Lyell's Principles of Geology, published in 1830, however, did much to displace the old catastrophic theory by the suggestion of a unitary force operating throughout the natural world and gradually effecting the changes which have taken place upon the earth. The rise of Darwin's evolution theory tended still more to relax the old belief in successive creative acts and direct the efforts of theologians to harmonize the evolutionary processes exhibited in nature with the Mosaic record." See A. Alexander, The Shaping Forces of Modern Religious Thought, pp. 195-196.

gives to that Force the attribute of personality.¹ Moreover, if it should be proved that the world had no historical beginning, the theistic argument supporting the theory of the world's Divine origin, would not be invalidated, for the doctrine of creation is not essentially united with the idea of historical beginning. A. B. Bruce mentioned Matheson by name, calling attention to his [Matheson's] conception, and added: "Whether the idea of creation necessarily implies that the matter of the world had a historical beginning, is a question upon which theists are divided, some holding it possible for the universe to be the creature and the abode of God, even though it never came into being, but was like God, eternal.... But it must be admitted that a creation implying a historical beginning most effectually guards the supremacy of God, and the dependence of the world upon Him."²

Matheson agreed that, according to both creationist and evolutionist, the primal agency from which the world is held to have originated is not matter but movement, and the formation of the earth is not an act but a process.³ The substantial agreement of the opening chapter of Genesis with the periods recorded by evolution, is not nearly so significant as the fact that the principle on which the six days' creation was conducted is identical with the principle on which the lines of evolution have proceeded

1. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, pp. 103-105.

2. A. B. Bruce, Apologetics, p. 65.

3. See Matheson's article, "Optimism and Pessimism," The Expositor, series 6, vol. III, 1901, p. 362.

- that principle which sees the process of creation as proceeding "from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity."¹ Finally, both positions are agreed that there is in every moment a Power which sustains the universe.

Matheson gave considerable attention to the theory of the unity of the species, holding that evolution in its completed form aspires to find the unity of all things. There was, Matheson held, actually nothing new about this modern attempt to reduce the many to the one,² for this was also the aim of the philosophy of ancient Greece, and of pantheism and theism alike. Indeed, every branch of study has for its aim the achievement of precisely the same result - the reduction of the many to the one.³ Christian theism, however, takes the additional step in believing the underlying principle of unity to be conscious, intelligent and personal.

The link which binds them [all things] and constitutes their unity is the word and will of an omnipotent Being who has chosen so to do, but who, had He chosen otherwise, might have left them forever disjoined; their unity is the fact of their common creation, their identity of species is the formula, "God said."⁴

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1. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, pp. 124-125.
 2. Matheson showed his familiarity with the thought of the scientist, Sir John Lubbock, who maintained that the species animal and the species man were distinct, with an impassable gulf between them. See Ibid., p. 219.
 3. Ibid., pp. 131-146.
 4. Ibid., p. 154.

God's work of creation is represented in Genesis not as a single act, but as a series of acts. These acts of God are special creations, not because of the variety of things created, but because each object created involved the putting forth of another act of Divine will, expressed in the formula, "God said." Matheson pointed out that Spencer, after arguing throughout for the production of all things by evolution, and refuting the idea of creation, comes at last to a position very like the same doctrine of creation, concluding that "the converging forces of this universe are but the repeated manifestations of an inscrutable Power."¹ Thus the process by which nature has evolved from unity into variety would be inexplicable without the presupposition of this active Power.

Evolution, furthermore, seemed opposed to the old faith in its attitude toward the doctrine of a Divine Providence.² The core of the difficulty, thought Matheson, lay in the fact that Evolution, "while it is never held to render the existence of design impossible, is often supposed to render the existence of design unnecessary."³

1. Ibid., p. 167.

2. In the Psalmist and the Scientist and Can the Old Faith Live with the New, Matheson, when discussing the subject of Providence, devoted considerable attention to the question of evolution in relation to the design argument.

3. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 226.

Evolutionists were asking, in other words, why it should be necessary to invoke the aid of a designing Mind when everything can be equally well accounted for without this design.¹

He proceeded to deal with the question in a most suggestive manner²: Man has an idea of freedom. From where does man get this idea? To say that it has sprung up spontaneously would destroy evolution. If the sense of freedom has arisen from that which is not free, then we have the creation of something out of nothing. However, we can find for that sense of freedom an origin in evolution. According to Spencer,

1. It may be interesting to note that Darwin's own mind went through considerable changes on this subject. At one time he held: "The old argument from design in Nature, as given by Paley, which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection has been discovered. See Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, vol I, p. 309. Later on he wrote: "I am conscious that I am in an utterly hopeless muddle. I cannot think that the world, as we see it, is the result of chance; and yet I cannot look at each separate thing as the result of Design." See, Ibid., vol. II, p. 353. Another letter develops his thought more completely: "I cannot be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force.. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion at all satisfies me." See Ibid., vol. II, p. 312. Darwin eventually came to recognize the teleological nature of evolution. While the old argument from design was destroyed by the new facts - something which Matheson recognized, yet Darwin himself offered a deeper and wider view of the purpose in nature. Matheson's own words defined the problem: "... the doctrine of evolution seems at first sight to have negatived Paley's minor premise by accounting for Paley's facts on a totally different principle. Is there any possibility of getting back to the theistic position of the last century, of seeing in the structure of nature the evidence of a presiding thought and intelligence?" See, Can the Old Faith Live with the New?, pp. 227-228.

2. Can the Old Faith Live with the New?, pp. 227-251.

the prime agent in evolution is force. But the human consciousness has only one conception of force, the idea of will. "The ideas of cause and power would never have been even suggested by the objects of nature but for the presence within us of a determinative will."¹ If we admit that the primal force of the universe is itself an intelligent will, we explain the existence of the sense of freedom in ourselves. If we refuse to admit this, we are "confronted by the spectacle of a creation out of nothing unparalleled in the annals of religion - a creation which has brought the sense of freedom out of the depths of slavery, and has fashioned the consciousness of will out of those lifeless materials whose distinctive feature is the absence of volition."² In this way, Matheson attempted to establish the presence of an intelligent will and purpose in the power that transcends nature.

He then proceeded to develop the larger teleology which takes the place of the old design argument: Both evolution and Christian theism declare that the purpose of the providential will is the existence and development of spirit, or, in other words, the survival of the fittest. The actual history of evolution is the record of the process by which life progressively asserts itself over inorganic nature, and mind over all. Thus physical strength becomes of less and less account in the development of the world. Perfection is reached through suffering

1. Ibid., pp. 233-234.

2. Ibid., p. 235.

and voluntary sacrifice. Indeed, evolution and Christian theism agree "that the perfect man must be a man of sorrows."¹

The doctrine of Providence had for Matheson another aspect - the question of optimism versus pessimism. In one place he defined these two positions as follows:

The optimist looks upon all things as working for the highest good; the pessimist regards them as tending to the utmost evil. The pessimist looks upon the design of life as essentially malignant. ... the cross is with him the goal. The optimist, on the other hand, regards the goal as individual happiness; ... the cross is with him an interlude.²

He argued that in ancient philosophy and in the non-Christian religions, "men for the most part looked at this world as a scene either of irretrievable darkness or of unclouded brightness."³ Christianity unites the opposite elements in both tendencies by holding that: all things do work for an absolute good, yet all things are also constructed with the view of giving the individual life a sense of its own impotence. These two views are reconciled in Christian thought by "the bold paradox that the highest goal is sacrifice, and that the greatest happiness which can come to the individual is simply his despair of finding it in himself."⁴

Moreover, the modern doctrine of evolution is on the whole, optimistic.⁵ It holds that the stage which the world

1. Ibid., p. 251.

2. "The Place of the Cross in the World," The Expositor, series 5, vol. V, 1897, p. 416.

3. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 146; see also The Psalmist and the Scientist, pp. 189-190.

4. "The Place of the Cross in the World," The Expositor, series 5, vol. V, 1897, p. 417.

5. For an analysis of the optimism in nineteenth century thought by a modern writer, see Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, vol. II, pp. 164-165.

has now reached is infinitely superior to the previous stages through which the world has passed. The present stage is seen as the result of every earlier step, and "all things have worked together and are working together for good."¹ Evolution and Christian theism agree that the destructive element in life whereby the weak go to the wall and the fittest survive, is really a case of life being perfected by death. Both agree that a state of higher development has resulted which would not have existed without this seeming and temporary waste, and "that the epoch of ultimate perfection shall be found when it is reached, to have been the direct result of all those epochs of imperfection which went before."²

D. Prayer:

It seemed to Matheson that the grounds on which the doctrine of evolution had been unfavorable to the Christian doctrine of prayer could be summed up under two heads - "the seeming multiplication of secondary causes, and the actual assertion of the principle of continuity."³

The sense of possessing a Divine parentage has suggested the possibility of Divine communion. But when a man feels that he is only one link in a vast chain which comprehends the whole of reality, he may lose this sense of a parentage derived from the Divine, and in so doing, lose also his hope in

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1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 188.
 2. Ibid., p. 201.
 3. Can the Old Faith Live with the New? p. 308.

the reality of Divine communion. This was the problem, as Matheson saw it, which vexed many thinking people. But those who reasoned thus forget that, according to evolution, the universe needs a transcendental Power for its existence and process, and that this Power remains unchanged. This was, then, the teaching of Spencer, evolution's most advanced and uncompromising advocate. Thus evolution, teaches man that "there is really no link of the chain between Himself and the Divine object of his communion; that he is every instant face to face with a Power which is unsearchable, with a Force which is transcendental ... and that his own individual life is as really and fully a product of this Mystery as if in all the realm of nature there never had been any life but his own."¹

Nor is evolution's assertion of the principle of continuity unfavorable to the possibility of Divine communion. The principle of continuity holds that every phenomenon of nature is linked to some earlier phenomenon, that every manifestation of nature is connected both to its predecessor and its successor. The difficulty to the religious mind is just here - that there appears to be no reason for spontaneity in nature, and hence no possibility of change in the course of nature following a petition of prayer. Indeed, shall "the power of prayer undo what the power of omnipotence has done?"² But this objection, raised

1. Ibid., p. 313.

2. "Science and the Christian Idea of Prayer," The Expositor, series I, vol. IX, 1879, p. 10.

on the ground of scientific discovery, forgets that in the system of Spencer "the links of the evolutionary chain are not mechanically united," but rather that "these so-called links of the evolutionary chain may, for all we know to the contrary, be mere sensuous appearances, to which the reality, did we see it, would bear no resemblance."¹ Being unwilling to call this Force either material or spiritual, Spencer assumed the attitude of agnosticism. This indicated to Matheson that there is nothing to prevent the Christian theist from regarding this Force as spiritual and as possessing the nature of mind.

In his very first journal article "Science and the Christian Idea of Prayer", he stated what he considered to be three falsely held ideas of prayer, each idea of which had from time to time been presented as an attempt to stem the course of scientific scepticism. The first answer to science, was the purely theological position, which held that the God Who made the laws of nature can set them aside at will. Matheson replied that, while theology may hold this out as a possibility of what God can do, our experience tells us that God's laws in nature have not been varied or violated. This was consistent with his broader conception of miracle, described above, and the position which we should therefore expect him to have taken with regard to prayer. Furthermore, there is a second form of solution admitted: "that the laws of outward nature are invariable; and

1. Can the Old Faith Live with the New?, p. 319.

from that fact draws the inference that the laws of outward nature cannot be the subjects of prayer."¹ Prayer is therefore confined to the sphere of spiritual wants and aspirations alone; temporal wants are delegated to a beneficent Nature whose region is bound by law. This view forgets that the laws of the soul are even less contingent than those of outward nature. It seemed to Matheson that we shall eventually "recognise the world of mind as of all worlds" furthest removed from caprice, because we shall see in it that 'law of the spirit of life' which gives life and law to all other things."² The third erroneous solution maintains that the chief benefit to be derived from prayer is not in the petition itself, but in the psychological value derived from the act of prayer. This view advocated by Stafford Brooke and others, was quickly dismissed by Matheson, on the ground that it would thus be built on the enactment of a fiction.

The Christian idea of prayer assumes the immutability of the order of nature. For Christian theism, the will of God "is not an arbitrary mandate interjected impulsively and capriciously between the sequences of Nature; it is itself the last result of these sequences," and "the highest expression of the highest law."³ St. Paul believed as firmly in the immutability of law as the science of the nineteenth century.⁴

1. "Science and the Christian Idea of Prayer," The Expositor, series I, vol. IX, 1879, p. 12.

2. Ibid., p. 14.

3. Ibid., p. 17.

4. Can the Old Faith Live with the New?, p. 324.

Christian prayer, then does not represent an attempt on the part of the worshipper to alter the law of nature, or the Will of God, but rather to conform to the Divine Will.

In true prayer, God, through the Holy Spirit, reveals to man what he ought to ask for, in order to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Matheson called prayer "the inspiration of aspiration,"¹ and stated his position as follows: "I believe all successful prayer to be a prompting from the Father. My prayer does not change His mind; it is His mind that dictates my prayer. Efficacious prayer is not so much a petition as a prophecy; it is my Father saying to me: 'this is My Will; ask this.'"²

E.. God and the Moral Consciousness:

Matheson regarded ethics as an integral part of religion, holding that morality and faith cannot be

1. "The Scientific Basis of Prayer," The Expositor, series 6, vol. IV, 1901, p. 369.

2. "The Prayer Prompted by Heaven," Saint Andrew, vol. IV, Oct. 9, 1902, p. 9.

separated. To fail to see that religion is the manifestation of morality, and morality the manifestation of religion, is to be in profound error.¹ Indeed, it seemed to Matheson that St. Paul approached the problems of theology from the side of his own sense of sin, moral struggle, and aspiring conscience, - and hence from the standpoint of morality. The dogmas of the early Church, moreover, were the embodiment of her moral longings, and dogma was valuable for the moral element to which it gave expression. For his own day, Matheson thought that the moral exposition of Christianity is "capable of reconstructing the stones of that temple of Christian theology which have been shattered by storm and worn down by time."²

In answering the question, "What is the ground of moral obligation?" Matheson rejected Kant's view which "places our obligation to do right entirely in the nature of things,"

1. Robertson Smith wrote: "We see that even in its rudest forms religion was a moral force; ...and fear of the gods was a motive to enforce the laws of society, which were also the laws of morality." See Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 53; with a somewhat different emphasis, Frederich Temple held: "If we distinguish between religion and morality, religion is made the more important of the two.. It is more important to recognise that the Holy God exists and reigns than to see clearly in what his holiness exists. The sentiment of reverence is more important than the perception of that universality which we now know to be the essential characteristic of the moral law." See Frederich Temple, The Relations Between Religion and Science, p. 138. Another writer of the same period said: "Religion in alliance with ethics, moral conduct enforced by the commands of the Supreme Being, this is presented to us in the evidence gathered even by Spencer in his Sociology. It is to be admitted that the conclusion is not universal, that religion is often divorced from morality and rites, and ceremonies have often ceased to have a moral reference." See J. Iverach, Theism, p. 244.

2. Landmarks of New Testament Morality, p. 265.

making man "a law unto himself." Nor could he accept what he regarded as the opposite position - namely, that the ground of human obedience consists in the absolute will of a Supreme Being, even to the extent that if God should so command it, evil would become a virtue. Between these two extremes he took the position that morality originates in the will of God, which will expresses a divine character. While this authority speaks from without, yet it is not foreign to the human soul. He wrote:

May we not believe that we are impelled to follow virtue by the nature of virtue herself, and yet acknowledge that the nature of virtue is nothing else than the nature of God, and that which prompts the will of God? What do we suppose to be that authority which Christianity claims as an outward revelation? ... If its command comes from without, it speaks only to that which is within; if it is uttered from the flames of Sinai, it is written on the tables of the heart;... the commands of Christianity certainly come from a source which is without us, in so far as they proceed from a height which is higher than we; but whenever these commands have come into contact with our spirits, we find in them something which is commensurate with our highest being, in union with our deepest selves.¹

In developing his moral theory, Matheson sought to minimize the differences between Christian thought and evolutionary thought, as expounded in its most advanced form by Spencer.

1. Aids to the Study of German Theology, pp. 189-190.

Nevertheless, the evolutionary ethic, which saw the development of moral ideals as a series of "incidents" happening in the general course of nature and apart from reason, was rejected by him. He desired to show that the sense of moral obligation could not arise out of nature per se, but is transcendent in origin, and hence possessed of an unconditional authority. Only the supreme ethical will of God, he maintained, can lay such an obligation upon man.

On the other hand, Matheson held with Spencer, that the root of all morality is sympathy, or "altruism". In referring to Spencer's great work, The Data of Ethics, in which the conception of altruism is developed, Matheson wrote:

The word which in modern times is used to indicate this sympathy is "altruism". Altruism is the opposite of selfishness or individualism; it is the term used to denote the life for others. To say, then, that sympathy is the root of virtue is to say that all virtue relates to Man's duty toward his brother-man - not his conduct toward himself. In this view I entirely concur.¹

Indeed, it was Matheson's contention that such virtues as self-restraint, self-sacrifice, or toil will not make an act moral, unless the motives for such acts are impersonal, - that is, done for the sake of others, and prompted by altruism. These virtues are sanctified only by the desire to serve, and the spiritual man is the one "who is the most sympathetic."²

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1. "Is Nature Morally Indifferent?", The Expositor, series 6, vol. III, 1901, p. 424.
 2. "The Paradox of Christian Ethics," The Expositor, series 1, vol. X, 1879, p. 87.

In thus identifying morality with sympathy, science and religion agree. Moses, in the law of Sinai, and Jesus in the Lord's Prayer, founded morality upon altruism. Moses, in giving his code, wrote: "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus said: "Our Father, which art in heaven." Moses, then, stressed altruism in the dealing of man with man; the model prayer given by Jesus teaches that, even when alone with God in the secret place of devotion, the individual man "is commanded to reopen the door that his prayers may embrace the multitude."¹

Yet the first citizens came originally into Christ's kingdom, not from a sense of altruism, but from a sense of need. They came in hope of finding relief from their earthly burdens, and rest from their labor. They were thus united in the first instance, not by an appeal to sympathy, but by the exigencies of life. Eventually, however, they forgot the circumstances which brought them together. In this process, man "sought his brother for protection of himself; he became benevolent to his brother on account of that protection; he transmitted to his children the feeling of the benevolence without the memory of its cause."² Thus altruism was born. It seemed to Matheson that this view was not only Christian, but was also

1. "Is Nature Morally Indifferent?", The Expositor, series 6, vol. III, 1901, p. 425.

2. Ibid., p. 428.

in substance the position of Spencer who also traced man's progress from the original law of individualism or selfishness, to altruism.

While animals are "sympathetic" within their species, man alone has the power of sympathy beyond his species. Other creatures of nature "are sympathetic within their species - within the barriers which evolution has assigned them; man has the power to break these limits, to overleap the boundary of his native province, and to enter into the wants of those who are supposed to possess a nature other than his own."¹ In this connection, Matheson revealed his acquaintance-ship with the writings of Romanes, particularly the posthumous work, Thoughts on Religion. But Matheson criticized Romanes for possessing an extravagant sense of the powers inherent in the lower creatures. Christianity is, in Matheson's view, the first system of thought to encourage man to transcend the limits of what he regarded as his own "species" to show "sympathy" to those not believed as already his brothers - to manifest altruism towards the foreigner as foreigner.

Matheson repeatedly emphasized that the work of Christianity in the moral sphere has been one of reconciliation.² It is in the Christian ethic that the hostile elements in the older moral systems have found a new unity. The existence of

1. "Christianity's Place in Moral Evolution," The Expositor, series 6, vol. IV, 1901, pp. 49-50.

2. In particular see The Psalmist and the Scientist, pp. 329-330.

parallel lines of thought between the moral teachings of Jesus and the world's other great religious teachers does not depreciate, but illustrates the work of Christianity. The older ethical systems "became the component parts of an absolute truth, and the strength which in days of old was thought to lie in their isolation was found to consist in their reconciliation and their union."¹

F. Summary And Conclusions:

The controversy between science and religion is no longer the pressing matter that it was when Matheson lived and wrote. There are few scientists who would now maintain that the progress of scientific knowledge will ultimately extirpate religion; and no responsible theologian would attempt to restrict scientific investigation.² It is now assured that science and religion have the right to do their own work in their own way.

Iverach presented the following account of the situation in Matheson's day:

The philosophies in vogue and influence at present are mainly of two types, and, while these types have many subsidiary forms they are mainly two ... The one philosophy of which the synthetic philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer may be taken as the type, looks at evolution from its

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1. Landmarks of New Testament Morality, p. 4.
 2. Tulloch wrote: "Religion, so far from losing its hold on the higher consciousness of our time, has not only survived, but it may be said has gathered strength under all the assaults--scientific and literary--which have menaced it. Our Churches were never stronger in intelligence, in life, in the perception of difficulties to be encountered in the world of thought and of action--of philosophy and philanthropy alike; in the restoration of faith and the restoration of society." See, J. Tulloch, Movements of Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 329-330.

simple and abstract beginnings, and seeks to deduce the actual world from them; ... The other type of philosophy may be briefly described as idealism, of which there are many expositions ... It looks at evolution from the other end, and judges it from the point of view of the goal toward which evolution tends ... In fact, idealism rules in most of our universities in England and Scotland.¹

Matheson did not try to prove evolution to be either true or false. As stated above, he attempted to demonstrate that, were evolution subsequently proved to be true, it would be not an enemy but an ally to Christian thought. In this he differed from J.J. Murphy, Henry Drummond, and many others.

His writings did not take much notice of the newer emphases on emergent and creative evolution. C. Lloyd Morgan, for example, defined evolution as the belief "that all organisms, living or extinct, have arisen from remote common ancestors by a process of gradual change or evolution, and further that living matter or 'life' itself, in all probability arose from non-living matter in the first stages of the evolutionary process."² The distinctive feature of Morgan's position, is that he leaves room in his system for God, and does in fact posit God as the moving force behind the process of emergence, who is "the nisus through whose activity emergents emerge."³ In the theory of emergent

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1. J. Iyerach, Theism, pp. 260-261.
 2. "Evolution," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th edition, edited by the University of Chicago, vol. VIII, p. 917.
 3. C. Lloyd Morgan, Emergent Evolution, p. 36.

evolution the new factors which appear at each stage of the process represent not simply the echo of an earlier stage, but an unexplained factor which calls for an external factor such as God to provide the explanation.. Bergson held the same general position in his Creative Evolution, though with the vital impulse (l'élan vital), he leans more in the direction of spontaneity..

It is interesting to note that Matheson's contemporary, A. E. Garvie, adapted the phrase, "creative evolution" and used it to signify a creative process involved in the evolutionary scheme. In other words the new is not simply educed from the old; it is produced, but is other and more than the old. Such a picture of the finite universe allows a place for the constant, creative activity of the Infinite God. Wrote Garvie: "The realism of emergent evolution need not be opposed to theism, and even Christian theism."¹ In another place, Garvie said: "We have, in recent thinking, quite given up the idea of rigid continuity, the possibility of reducing each higher stage to the content of the lower, of explaining life by mind, or mind by life as mindless, and are becoming accustomed to think of emergent or even creative evolution, that is, we recognize that something new does emerge, or is created at each stage."² Garvie used the theory of evolution mainly as a

1. A. E. Garvie, The Christian Belief in God, p. 327..

2. A. E. Garvie, Revelation Through History and Experience, p. 143.

framework by which he set forth his conception of man. He brought to the bare theory of evolution, as set forth by Darwin, a particular philosophical interpretation. This was unlike Matheson, who did not try to incorporate these theories in his theological work, and who mentioned them only in passing.

However, Matheson perceived the optimistic conclusions reached by evolution. Concerning this optimism Niebuhr writes: " ... Darwinism is used to express the mood of historical optimism in the nineteenth century, and the biological idea of the survival of the fittest becomes the bearer of historical optimism ... "1

Matheson did not think it necessary to hold that the idea of creation necessarily implies a beginning in history. As a modern writer has pointed out, even if it could be demonstrated that the world is but a finite number of years old, this would still not prove the assumption that the world must have been created out of nothing; it would still be possible to assume the existence of some kind of primordial matter prior to the beginning of the world.²

In his discussion of the doctrine of Creation, there were two important questions into which Matheson did not go. For one thing, he did not mention the position which views creation as an expression of love; as Temple has written:

1. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, vol. II, p. 165.

2. M.B. Foster, "The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Science," Mind, Oct., 1934, p. 446.

"the essential condition of good as the finding by mind of itself, or its kin, in its object."¹ Secondly, he gave no real attention to the problem of Time. But perhaps this is not really surprising, inasmuch as Bergson was probably the first modern philosopher to give this matter serious consideration, though it was J.M. Guyau in his work La Genèse de l'Idée de Temps, who, in the eighties of the last century, first stimulated Bergson to produce his own work.² Matheson took no account of this problem, nor of the work done in this direction.³ Indeed, as Inge has said, the problem of Time "is one of the hardest in metaphysics,"⁴ and Matheson was not a first-rate creative philosopher!

Matheson did not write on ethical questions with the same power as he exhibited when dealing with some other subjects. His work, Landmarks of New Testament Morality, was written in a very readable and popular style, yet did not give evidence of any great profundity or originality. Some of his journal articles in the field of ethics, however, were more thought-provoking.

He did not provide sufficient room in his thinking for "sin-as-status" as compared with "sin-as-decision." He did not use the paradox as a means of expressing the profound truths in Christianity, preferring instead to think in terms of time sequence. The paradox of human freedom did not therefore find a proper place in his theology, and consequently his explanation of the phenomena of sin fell short.

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1. William Temple, Nature, Man, and God, p. 443.
 2. Samuel Alexander, Space, Time, and Deity, vol. I, p. 44.
 3. About the historical development of the problem of time and the literature covering this subject, see J. A. Gunn, The Problem of Time, an Historical and Critical Study.
 4. W. R. Inge, Philosophy of Plotinus, vol. I, p. 169.

It is disappointing that Matheson did not give a more penetrating critique of Spencer's position that the root of morality is sympathy or "altruism." He thought, however, that he was adopting a Christian position, and in a sense "baptizing" Spencer's conception and incorporating it into a Christian ethical scheme. As one modern writer puts it: "Critics of an ethic which sets out to accomplish a radical leap to the neighbor's side often imply that only self-love or love for some mutual good could possibly be 'enlightened!'"¹ Concerning the ethics of "altruism," Knudson has written:

It is desire for the weal of others that alone makes an act morally good. Duties are, therefore, limited to our relation to others. Opposed to these exclusively altruistic theories of the moral life stands the main body of theological and philosophical ethics. The common view is that there are duties to others, a legitimate self-love as well as a mandatory love of neighbor. This is for the most part the New Testament point of view. Wholehearted love to God is the great and first commandment. Self-love is to be subordinated to it, but it is not to be eliminated... Regard for one's own good underlies many of Jesus' premises and exhortations to self-sacrifice and is assumed throughout most of the New Testament. New Testament teaching is not altruistic in the modern sense of excluding egoism.²

Moreover, while emphasizing the importance of love in Christian thought, Matheson apparently did not reach the insight that love was the only ethical principle which could solve the tension between absolutism and relativism. He did not perceive that love is both an unconditional command, and, on the other hand,

1. Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, pp. 159-160.

2. Albert C. Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics, pp. 126-127; Cf. E. F. Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, pp. 60f; A. J. Cadbury, The Peril of Modernizing Jesus, pp. 105ff.

the power breaking through all commands. As Tillich writes:

Love alone can transform itself according to the concrete demands of every individual and social situation without losing its eternity and dignity and unconditioned validity. Love can adopt itself to every phase of a changing world.¹

While this point has been discussed in detail by such modern writers as Tillich, Temple, Brunner, and Niebuhr, it was not touched by Matheson.

1. Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, p. 155.

A. The Doctrine of God:

In his constructive theology, Matheson sought to reconcile two trends of thought: the Calvinistic influence with its emphasis on the Sovereignty of God, and the growing tendency during the nineteenth century to stress what have been called the humanitarian attributes, His Benevolence, Graciousness and Mercy. The Sovereignty and Fatherhood of God were conceived of as correlates, and Matheson sought to keep them in balance. He viewed God as head of the Christian body and so king of its members, but king because He is servant of all:

For let us but consider what is implied in that sovereignty which the head of a body exercises over its members. It certainly indicates a superior power; but how is that power attained? By becoming the servant of all. The head is always king of the members, but it is their king because it is their minister.¹

This emphasis on the divine headship grew out of the wider conception that the idea of incarnation lies at the basis not alone of Christianity, but of all religions.²

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 75.

2. "The Christian Idea of God," The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, Jan., 1880, p. 143. The idea that incarnation is the one common element in all religions, is developed by Matheson in The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, pp. 37-60.

Moreover, Matheson developed his views of the personality of God, and of the Trinity, largely along Hegelian lines.¹ He felt that "the interpretations of Hegel are as numerous as those of the Bible."² He interpreted Hegel "evangelically."³ While he regretted the later emphasis of the liberal or "Left Hegelians,"⁴ he nevertheless considered the main outlines of

1. In his work Aids to the Study of German Theology, he devoted Chapter VII to general exposition of the theology of Hegel and Schelling, and Chapters VIII-X to the doctrine of the Trinity in Hegel and Schelling. It is in the course of this development that he states in several places (see pp. 93,95,125), agreement with the position Hegel took, both with regard to the personality of God, and to the Trinity..

2. Ibid., p. 86; H.R.Mackintosh describes Hegel's position on the doctrine of God as follows: "No one has ever been quite sure what Hegel believed about God, but we shall not be far out if we describe his general system as a form of pantheistic Monism of logical Evolutionism" (H. R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 102). This made man, in an egotistical sense, a part of Divinity - a stoic spark of the Divine.. It is interesting to note that Forsyth and Barth regarded such an idea of God, together with the concomitant view of man, as sheer sentimentalism. Again quoting from Mackintosh, we find Hegel's idea of man described in the following manner: "Man, for him, is finite spirit; as such, however, he is ultimately identical with infinite Spirit; and perhaps from the standpoint of Christian faith the most sinister feature in the entire construction is the emphasis laid on the further point, that it is on the development of the finite mind that the Infinite and Absolute, or God, first rises to the consciousness of self. "God," Hegel writes in words as plain as any, "is God only in so far as He knows Himself; His self-knowledge which advances to man's self-knowledge in God." Quoted, Encyclopadie, 565). Thus, it would appear, the Absolute has reality only in the thought of those who believe in Him. And history is now seen to be God's realization of Himself through, or in, the process of human experience." (H. R.Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 103..

3. Ibid., p. 97..

4. Matheson names as the representatives of the Left: Bruno, Bauer, F. C. Baur of Tübingen, Feurbach, Hitzig, Michelet, Nobel, Strauss, Vatche. See Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 131.

Hegel's system an apt philosophical interpretation of Christianity.. Matheson placed Hegel himself among the conservative or "Right Hegelians,"¹ holding that Hegel's position "is consistent with the essential features of the Reformed and Lutheran Theology."²

The essence of personality is not mere bodily shape, but "self-consciousness, which includes within itself alike the soul and the body."³ An absolute or infinite personality is a Being who entirely and fully realizes his own existence, and every power of whose mind is exercised in the highest intensity.. Only God has absolute self-consciousness, and so an absolute personality.. The Trinity which Christianity reveals, is not a process as it is in some pre-Christian systems, but a personality.⁴ Matheson, as did such Gifford lecturers as Balfour, Pringle-Pattison, and Sorley, emphasized the conscious personality of the Deity, in whose image man has been created and with whom He has affinity in relationship.⁵ Schleiermacher is criticized for holding that God "becomes conscious of Himself

1. Ibid., p. 121.

2. Ibid., p. 125.

3. Ibid., p. 193.

4. "The Christian Idea of God," The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, Jan., 1880, p. 135.

5. As Balfour puts it: "A God Whom we can love, a God to Whom men can pray, Who takes sides, Who has purposes and preferences, Whose attributes, however conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created." See A..J. Balfour, Theism and Humanism, p. 21.

only in the entire race of humanity,"¹ and Matheson asserted that in this Schleiermacher was in harmony with the worst features of the Hegelian system. Matheson interpreted Schleiermacher as holding that, though personality is indeed one of God's attributes or manifestations, He is not essentially a Person. In Schleiermacher's position "the actions of this impersonal God are such as only a person could perform."² Hence, Schleiermacher was felt to be inconsistent.

Matheson developed a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, though not in detail, in which he viewed the Spirit as a Person in the Godhead, co-existent with the Father and the Son. In the life of the Holy Spirit, humanity lives, and moves, and has its being. But the Spirit nevertheless proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is immanent in man, and is essential not only for revelation, and the renewal of the Church, but to the realization of man's sonship to God. Matheson, in short, held the orthodox conception of the Holy Spirit, though he did not give much place to it in his more serious writings.³

It is in the definition of the Divine Nature as Love, that we find the common element which pervades the triune life of God. God has other attributes, but His essence is Love.⁴

1. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 39.

2. Ibid., p. 55.

3. The main source of his views on the Holy Spirit, is his devotional book, Voices of the Spirit.

4. Cf. My Aspirations, p. 54; and Landmarks of New Testament Morality, p. 165.

"The Father by a kindred Spirit recognising Himself in the Son, and the Son by a kindred Spirit recognising Himself in the Father, are aspects which taken together, constitute the harmony of love."¹ Indeed, love "is the idea which sums up the universe."² God's love is infinite and we can no more conceive of a limit to it than we can conceive a limit to the power of God.³ Furthermore, involved in the very definition of God as Love, is the possibility of divine suffering. In other words, to define God as Love, is to imply "that in the divine nature there must be at least a capacity to bear."⁴ When love becomes a spiritual power which seeks not its own, it will be compelled to suffer when its object suffers.⁵

Matheson nevertheless opposed the sentimentalism which, he held, so often arises out of stressing the love of God; his position was so dominated by the Calvinist interpretation, that he could not divorce himself from the notion of sovereignty. In the Calvinism still current in his day, the idea of sovereignty interpreted God primarily as Creator and Governor, and Christ as the sole Son by nature. The only other sons of God were the elect, who became sons through adoption. Matheson held, as against what he regarded as this restricted view, that God is the Father of all men, and that all were sons of the Father, not by adoption but by nature. Indeed, Christ had guaranteed this by his assumption of human nature in its fullness. The

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 59..

2. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 128..

3. "The Wrath of the Lamb," The Expositor, series 5, vol. V, 1897, p. 340.

4. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 160.

5. Ibid., pp. 75-76..

government of the Universe should be conceived in terms of the family, in which the father has absolute authority; but it is an authority grounded in God's fatherly nature, and not in His will.¹ So it is that the violation of the moral law is not punished merely to uphold the dignity and majesty of the ruler; rather it is chastised in order to discipline and educate, much as we might chastise the child in the family or discipline the citizen in the State. While such offences are serious and not to be overlooked by either the fatherly or sovereign aspects of the Divine Nature, yet the emphasis is on the redemption of the child.² The Divine Wrath "is a mode of anger which is not an interruption of love, but itself a phase of love."³ God is omnipotent, and has the power to will anything that is consistent with His fatherly nature; but the action of His will is always conditioned by that nature. "There is a magnificent limit to the omnipotence of God - the limit imposed by His love. His power cannot pass the boundaries of His heart."⁴ Hence, love which is not righteous becomes sentimental, and so ceases to be love. Justice must be essentially determined by love, or it becomes so rigid in its judgement that it can no longer be considered justice.

Matheson gave considerable attention to what he termed the "natural attributes"⁵ of God - Infinitude, Eternity, and

Immutability. He was primarily interested in showing how these

1. For example, Moments on the Mount, pp. 10-11, 85-87; and Searchings in the Silence, pp. 115-116.

2. Cf. Matheson's contemporary, P. T. Forsyth, The Cruciality of the Cross, pp. 131-132.

3. "The Wrath of the Lamb," The Expositor, series 5, vol. V, 1879, p. 339.

4. Rests by the River, p. 142.

5. He defined an attribute as "a power, capacity, or susceptability." See Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 140.

natural attributes had been modified by Christianity. It seemed to him that whenever the pre-Christian world used the term "infinite" it meant either the negation of the finite, or the boundless multiplication of the finite. The pre-Christian philosophers, who Matheson held usually adopted the former view, regarded the infinite as that which was opposite to the finite, and which excluded all finite qualities.

They [the pre-Christian philosophers] declared that every finite quality was a limit. When you say a man is good you give him a finite quality, because you assign him an attribute which separates him from some other man. But an infinite being cannot be separated from anything: every separation involved a boundary and every boundary is a limit, and every limit is an imperfection. Accordingly the ancient philosophers said, "You must not say that God is good, that God is great, that God is holy. In so saying, you are lowering God; you are giving Him the very qualities which distinguish one being from another, and which therefore shut out one being from the sphere of another. Your God must be shut out from nothing. He must include all beings and all things, and in order to do this He must have no distinguishing, no separating qualities of His own; He must be infinite in the sense of being non-finite."¹

Matheson asserted that this was the idea of infinitude held by the many ancient philosophers, particularly in the later or Vedantic form of Brahminism, and in the Eleatic school of Greece. In this view of infinitude, man is conceived as the opposite of God, and there is only separation between heaven and earth. In this view individuality also is finally swallowed up in a divinity where all distinctions cease and where all lines become one. This is quite different from the Christian conception, thought Matheson, in which the union between the finite and the infinite destroys neither.

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, pp. 134-135.

But the idea of the infinitude was held in another form by the pre-Christian world - it was frequently regarded not as the negation of finite forms but as the boundless multiplication of them. He expressed this concept as follows:

A mile is a finite space; conceive the mile infinitely repeated in every possible spatial direction, and you will describe the idea of infinite space. On this view of natural boundlessness the popular view of the ancient world eagerly fastened; it seemed the fitting symbol for the representation of God's infinitude... Here, again, it is clear that the light of nature could not reach the reason of the finite and the infinite. If the infinite God be simply a being who is naturally boundless, I can only be united with Him by ceasing myself to be, for as long as I remain I am a barrier to His boundlessness; in the very act of thinking of Him I limit Him. If this God would be all in all, I must cease to see myself as different from Him; I must become dead to self-consciousness, to all individual consciousness; I must myself become an atom of the spatial infinite.¹

But only in the Christian conception of the infinite is there possibility for a union between God and man - a union in which both shall be one, while yet neither shall be destroyed. In the Christian view alone the infinite may be regarded as the spiritual intensifying of the finite.

Material boundlessness is the power at one and the same moment to occupy infinite space, but there may be a spiritual boundlessness within the most limited sphere of space. Christianity declares that God is a spirit. The infinitudes of God must therefore be the infinitude of a spirit, not of a mere extended substance. An infinite spirit is a being who has infinite spirituality, or, in other words, who possesses in the most intense possible degree the attributes and qualities essential to a mind. But it

1. Ibid., pp. 136-137.

is clearly conceivable that all this might be reached within the limits of a finite human form. There is no contradiction in the conception of an infinite spirit being lodged in a frail tabernacle of clay, dwelling with the sons of men, submitting to the restraints and the limitations of humanity.

Moreover, he defined the Christian conception of eternity as "that principle of immortal youth which makes his being an everlasting Now."¹ Thus, like Royce, he held that the element of succession must be excluded, if we are to have an adequate Christian conception of God's eternity.² In Christianity, God's eternity is abiding love in which all things are beheld in the light of a perpetual present. This definition avoids the errors involved in making eternity synonymous with either duration on the one hand, or timelessness on the other.³

Immutability is the last of the divine attributes which the unaided light of nature has professed to reach. Matheson observed that in popular pre-Christian mythologies, the attribute of immutability was almost lost sight of, for gods frequently emerged who were capricious and fickle. In his view, the popular mind of antiquity stressed the notion of Fate, which it regarded as the blind, though changeless power behind the gods. While the popular eastern and western mythologies had made their divine being or beings too fickle, the ancient philosophies fixed with peculiar veneration on the idea of divine immutability. But their changeless God was too often soulless, impassive and unaffected by time or anything finite. Avoiding

1. Ibid., p. 141; Cf. William Temple, Nature, Man, and God, p. 206.
2. Cf. Wm. S. Tyler, The Theology of Greek Poets, p. 148: "The Greeks seem never to have conceived of existence without beginning."
3. Cf. J. Royce, The World and the Individual, vol. II, pp. 111-115; see also, John Caird, Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, vol. I, p. 185..

either extreme, Christianity embraces an immutability which is the changelessness of love. Matheson wrote:

...a changeless love when exhibited toward a changeful object must be able to adapt itself to that object by an infinite variety of acts, and an infinite selection of ways. Christian immutability is not the changelessness of action, but the changelessness of principle. It is the power of divine love to remain steadfastly fixed on its object, even while its object is perpetually shifting its position; to follow it in its wanderings, to adapt itself to its every change of situation, to meet it in all the varieties of its intensely varied circumstances.¹

In this regard it is interesting to compare Matheson with John Caird, who wrote: "Immutability is not stereotyped sameness, but impossibility of deviation by one hair's breadth from the course which is best. A man of great force of character is continually finding new occasions for the manifestations and application of moral principle. In God infinite consistency is united with infinite flexibility."²

Matheson gave considerable attention to the doctrines of God as Creator and Providence, since, in his view, these doctrines gave great difficulty to Christian thought. Directly, or by implication, he felt that the scientific thought of his day denied both doctrines in stressing the idea of a self-originating and self-sustaining universe. There is less difficulty in conceiving of a creation when the Godhead is thought of as social by nature, the persons being related by essence and hence through eternity. He defended the orthodox position that God is both transcendent as Creator and immanent in the world as Providence. Creation cannot be considered a completed

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 145.

2. John Caird, Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, vol. II, p. 140.

act, but rather a process; Providence implies a continuous creation. God is transcendent, as the Deist declared, since He was prior to, and above, nature. Similarly, with the Pantheist, Matheson insisted that God is immanent in nature. Indeed, without His Presence everywhere in nature, it would be at best only mechanical. If God cut Himself off from His creation, He could not be conceived as either omnipotent or omnipresent, and thus He would be limited.

The problem of the Providence of God, in Matheson's thought, essentially concerns God's relation to humanity. In this connection God may be looked upon "as the power beyond man, as the King over man, or as the essence pervading man."¹ The first view was held by Deism, was supremely represented by Epicurus, and emphasized that God has little interest in the world. The second view was championed by Theism, and was held mainly by Judaism.² In this position, the Sovereignty of God is stressed. Finally, the third position, that of Pantheism, was represented mainly in the philosophically developed faith of India. The ancient world in its search after God, adopted one or other of these three views.

The persistent problem may be summarized as follows: how can there be a view of God which preserves both His farness and His nearness? How can the kingship of God bring Him in

1. Op. cit., p. 60.

2. Matheson made the point that while Judaism was the best preparation for Christianity, in another sense, it was more remote from the conception of it than Gentile thought. While it had awakened deeply to the conception of sin, yet the very depth of its conviction of sin made it almost impossible for the Jews to fully comprehend the idea of redemption. Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, p. 33.

touch with the individual lives of human beings, and at the same time, how can contemplation of His oneness with humanity exalt Him in the minds of individuals to the dignity of a king? This was, according to Matheson, the problem which the ancient world had failed to answer, and hence he felt that the ancient world did not achieve a satisfactory view of the Providence of God.¹

For Matheson, therefore, the only conception which could reconcile into harmony the two emphases of farness and nearness, or transcendence and sympathy, was that of headship. Hence, he favored a position which viewed humanity as an organism of which God is the head. But, as we have seen above, the superior power implied in the idea of headship is attained by God's becoming a servant. Matheson wrote:

For is it not evident that in this one fact of incarnation we have appropriated in a triune conception all previous - nay, all possible, conceptions of God? Hitherto men had been divided between the belief in a Father, a Son, and a Spirit. Some had looked up to God, only in His boundlessness, and had refused to recognise Him except where He defied recognition. Some had contemplated Him only in His finiteness, and had refused to see any Divine beauty which was not enclosed in earthly forms. Some had repudiated both conceptions in the attempt to find a God who was neither boundless nor limited, but just that spirit of the universe in whom all distinctions were annihilated. The doctrine of the incarnation grasped all the three, and in grasping them it made them one new thought of God. The God in heaven, the God on earth, and the God pervading alike the earth and the heaven, ... are all embraced and verified in that great central statement, "He took upon Himself the form of a servant."²

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 74. For Matheson the problem of providence was defined as: "What is God's interest in the affairs of men?"

2. "The Christian Idea of God," The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, Jan., 1880, p. 137.

While the pre-Christian world saw the possibility that a man may suffer and yet be strong, it is only Christian thought that teaches the possibility of perfection through suffering. Matheson, who throughout his serious works, and in his preaching and sacred verse as well, emphasized the idea of perfection through suffering, saw this concept implied in the doctrine of the divine headship. The doctrine of the divine headship vindicates the majesty of God, and yet identifies that majesty with the Cross. Hence it is only in Christian thought, and more particularly in the doctrine of the divine headship, that the ancient problem of God's relationship to humanity finds solution.

B. The Doctrine of the Incarnation:

As indicated above, Matheson placed a major emphasis on the idea of headship. Christ is the head of all who shall ever be united to God. He is, therefore, the potential head of all humanity, for He has the power of embracing an infinite membership. Moreover, "Christ was the historical head of the Church previous to His crucifixion, and suffered crucifixion in that capacity."¹ This conception of headship is an organic one and Matheson found an analogy to it in the human body. In the relation of every head to every body, there are two distinct movements in which the head receives its impressions from the members, and the members receive an influx of life from the head. In every organic relation these two conditions are fulfilled. Whatever pain may be felt by the members of the body,

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 79.

becomes immediately the impression of the head. In this way the head is made heir to all the imperfections and suffering of every member, and every member receives power from the head. He wrote:

...this is a distinct law in the constitution of each human body. There are descending as well as ascending nerves on the human frame; the head has to serve the body not only by getting, but by giving... If the hand is burned, the head feels the pain; but it is the head which gives to the hand the power to withdraw itself from the fire.¹

Accordingly, Christ is the head of the body because He is the real sufferer in all that the members bear and He is the real sufferer in all that the members bear just because He is the head of the body. In this subtle analogy, borrowed from the constitution of the physical frame, Christianity joins together in one idea what in all the systems of antiquity have been contradictory elements.

Matheson connects this conception of headship with the idea of incarnation, which is, in his view, not an act but a process. Christ empties Himself "until His nature is commensurate with the conditions of finite intelligence and then, by conquering the very limits He has assumed, [He] returns once more into universal empire."² Thus the headship of Christ over the Church is the completed stage of the incarnation.

But what is the precise nature of this process by which Christ becomes the head of humanity? First, He had to undergo a process of impoverishment. Thus the incarnation began with death.

1. Ibid., p. 76.

2. "The Christian Idea of God," The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, Jan., 1880, p. 137.

Matheson asked:

Shall we say with some of the modern Germans that He emptied His omnipotence into a human power, His omniscience into a human knowledge, His immensity into a human form, His eternity into a human lifetime? ...We are not entitled to go further than to affirm that He emptied Himself of that which made union with humanity impossible; and we cannot assume that such a union was rendered impossible by the possession of infinite power and infinite knowledge.¹

We cannot penetrate beyond the single Pauline statement that Christ emptied Himself of His glory, for Paul does not define His glory. The nature of the process which Christ had to undergo, can best be understood in terms of "the ladder of divine humiliations."

At the top of the ladder is the pre-existent Christ; at the bottom stands One under the shadow of death. The ladder begins with the form of God, and then exhibits that process of kenosis by which Christ empties out His glory.² On the first descending step of His humiliation, Christ assumes a servant's form in the likeness of a ministrant angel. On the next step of the ladder, He assumes the likeness of the human. Here His goal is not merely to be a man, but to be the universal man, - the potential head of humanity; only in the reaching of that goal can the incarnation be accomplished. Coming down still further, He assumes not only the likeness but the fashion of humanity, and adapts Himself to the various phases of humanity

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 81

2. In this connection, Matheson criticized Schleiermacher for not conceding to Christ any pre-existent life, holding that to deny such pre-existence is to approach Deism. See Aids to the Study of German Theology, pp. 40, 53. Rather, the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, not as the result of an accident, but as something involved in the plan of creation itself. For his extended discussion on this point see "The Place of the Cross in the World," The Expositor, series 5, vol. V, 1879, p. 418.

through which an individual existence must pass. In order for Christ to be the head of all childhood, of all youth, and of all manhood, it was necessary for Him to fill in turn each of these phases, and each phase in perfection. His humanity grows like all humanity, and while each phase is not supernatural, yet it represents in perfection those qualities which make it beautiful in the lives of common men.¹

This is the ladder of humiliation which stretches down from heaven to earth, - the form of God, the form of a servant, the likeness of a man, the fashion of a man, the humility of a man, the obedience of a man, the obedience unto death, the death of the cross.

The following words of Matheson sum up his position:

We have looked upon the incarnation as a gradual historical process, by which the Son of God, became ever increasingly the Son of Man, added stage by stage to the spheres of His human consciousness, and thereby added step by step to the ladder of His humiliation, until at last His human consciousness was crowned in His utmost humility, - His obedience unto the cross.²

Matheson also emphasized the connection between incarnation and sacrifice. He held that the New Testament conception is not merely that Christ became man in order to die, but "that Christ began to die in becoming man."³ The descent of the ladder of humiliation meant, on the Divine side, death,

1. See "The Empire of Christ," The Monthly Interpreter, vol. II, 1885, pp. 145-155, for a discussion of the humiliation of Christ.
2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 237; see also, "The Exaltation of Christ in the Epistle to the Philippians," The Monthly Interpreter, vol. III, 1886, pp. 388-395.
3. "The Christian Idea of God," The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, Jan., 1880, pp. 137-138.

and so sacrifice. Though the most outward death of Calvary is in a later stage of incarnation, the element of divine pain and sacrifice belongs originally not to the earthly but to the heavenly sphere - where it is said "Let us make man." Indeed, it is in Christian thought that, for the first time in the world's religious history, we have reached the conception of the divinity of sacrifice. Prior to the advent of Christianity, there was a perpetual divorce between the conception of human suffering and the conception of Divine greatness. In the Christian conception of the incarnation alone, we see the reversal of the human thought of sacrifice, and find the source of sacrificial rites to be, not the offering of man's oblation to God, but the offering of God's oblation for man. Indeed, the "secret of His success, humanly speaking, is His appeal to that experience of pain which lies at the foot of the ladder, and is therefore the ground-floor of humanity."¹

But Matheson saw a connection, not only between the ideas of incarnation and sacrifice, but also between incarnation and resurrection. Though the incarnate life of God is a source of sorrow, we cannot hold that the ideal of resurrection glory is the emancipation of God from this life of humanity.² In some non-Christian incarnations the Divine wears the vesture of human nature for a time, only to fold it up and return to His illimitable Being. But the Christian idea of incarnation is different - here

1. "The Relation of Christianity to Pain," The Expositor, series 5, vol. VI, 1897, pp. 108-109; see also, "Christ's Glorifying Work," The Monthly Interpreter, vol. II, 1885, pp. 370-373, and "The Order of Christ's Revelation," The Monthly Interpreter, vol. III, 1886, pp. 156-157.

2. Cf. D.M. Baillie, God Was in Christ, p. 152: "If we believe in the Incarnation, we cannot possibly say that Jesus ceased to be human when He departed from this world."

Christ does not throw off the vesture of human nature, but rather transfigures the vesture inwearing it, and makes the humiliation itself Divine. This means that His resurrection is the sublimation of human life:

The Son of man is not loosed from His sonship in humanity, not liberated from those limits which incarnation had woven round Him. He comes forth with the reminiscences of human weakness hovering about Him, with the traces of death revealed in the wounded side and the print of the nails. His ascension is distinctly a human ascension, a raising of earth into heaven, a lifting of man into God.¹

Finally, incarnation is the common element in all the world's religions.² The incarnation of God in humanity is not merely a revelation of God to man, but an answer as to whether any revelation of God to man is possible. Without a belief in this basic doctrine, all forms of religion are only figments of the yearning imagination. We can love only when there is the possibility of communion, and human life cannot exist where its object of devotion is wholly superhuman, and separated from man by an impassable yawning chasm. Thus, earth has been reached, not by raising a ladder, but by the ladder which has been let down from heaven.

C. The Doctrine of Sin:

As already indicated, Matheson differed from that strain of Calvinism which held that man could be a son of God only by adoption, and that the elect alone could be adopted. He maintained

1. "The Christian Idea of God," The British Quarterly Review, vol. LXXI, Jan., 1880, p. 141.

2. Matheson devoted a chapter to this matter in The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, pp. 37-60, and developed the idea in various other places.

instead that man was created in the image of God, and is a son of God, not merely by adoption, but by nature.. Since God is by nature Father, and man by nature son, the normal relation between them is one of communal fellowship.. It is from this point of view that sin has meaning, as the act or disposition which interrupts or makes impossible this relationship of communion.

Matheson wrote:

We found that the source of all blessedness is to be in uninterrupted harmony with Nature, which in the language of religion is to say - in unbroken communion with God... The transgression of a law of Nature, therefore, is in the language of science synonymous with what in the speech of religion is known by the name of sin. In a well-known Christian formula, sin is defined to be "any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God."¹

In a religious sense, to sin is to be in a condition contrary to nature and "below nature."² When a man sins, he is failing to be what he was created to be, and is responsible for his failure to conform to God's will.. Sin is usurpation, since the sinner's evil will usurps the place which belongs to the holy will of God.

In the Fall we have portrayed not a case of mere disobedience, but an interference with Divine possession.. This idea is developed as follows: Adam wanted to claim the Garden as entirely his own.. God had said that the Garden was not all Adam's, but rather was held in common ownership.. Adam was to have the Tree of Life; God, the Tree of Knowledge. Transgression literally means "the stepping over into another's ground."³ This

1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, pp. 258-259..

2. Ibid., p. 265.

3. The Representative Men of the Bible, vol. I, p. 35.

is what Adam did, and thereby he transgressed on the Divine field as well as his own. For Matheson, the earliest moral appeal was to the element of human justice - it was an appeal to Adam to be just towards God. God, by reason of His own contract, had apportioned His inheritance with Adam. But Adam was not satisfied with the contract, nor with his share of the Garden. Adam ignored this contract, and broke his bond with God. Thus, Adam's act was not primarily the violation of authority, but the violation of justice. "The law which he [Adam] seeks to violate is not a law of authority, it is a law of justice, of equity, of the relation of meum and tuum."¹ The essence of the Fall was selfishness, for man was interested only in gratifying his own passions.²

To interpret the Fall as a breach of contract which man knew to be binding, is to understand better how the spirit of his deed could be propagated from age to age. This thought Matheson expressed as follows:

Deeds, as such, are not transmittable; my blood alone can flow into the heart of my descendants. The emotions of the hour are not transmittable; they would require to be transmitted for many hours through many generations. But injustice is not a deed, not an emotion, it is a full-fledged spirit. It is as full-fledged after a single deed as after years of unrighteousness. ... an act of injustice only comes when the spirit of injustice is full grown.³

This is because the spirit of injustice presupposes a long period of dishonest thought, during which Adam yielded in imagination before he yielded in fact. Thus Matheson, unlike Garvie, for example, had no opposition to an historical Fall.

1. Ibid., p. 37.

2. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 24.

3. The Representative Men of the Bible, vol. I, p. 42.

Moreover, God created man capable of sinning, because only so could He create beings capable of obeying, and hence sons rather than automatons. So God permits sin, while not condoning it. God, having created man free, does not suspend the will inclined to sin by destroying the freedom of that will. While the goal for man is moral perfection in the image of Christ, that goal cannot be created, but must be attained. God created man to give him beatitude, but man has to strive for that beatitude and do his part to achieve it.

The Bible, as Matheson interpreted it, nowhere assigns an origin to sin, though it does profess to indicate that there was a time when sin began in the human race. Moreover, sin was in the universe before it was in the race. The Biblical emphasis is on what sin is, not why it is.¹ Though a man feels that his sin is the act of a solitary individual, he feels also that he does not originate his own sin. He feels that the evil "that exists within him had its origin in the lives of his ancestors, and was transmitted to him by the course of natural generation."² The sense of heredity exists side by side with the sense of guilt. Indeed, original sin is that collective evil which, as part of man's inheritance, acts in the individual prior to the operation of the will.

The doctrine of original sin is related to the interdependence and interconnection of all mankind.³ Since humanity is an organism, the sin or good of one is evil or gain for all. Thus collective righteousness is correlative with collective sin, - a notion which is closely related to the social emphasis of the

1. The Psalmist and the Scientist, p. 275.

2. Ibid., p. 269.

3. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 129.

19th century. However, the only moral possession transmitted by corrupt blood in the stream of heredity is a weak will. While a child does not inherit temptation toward a specific vice like drunkenness, or temper, or lasciviousness, it can inherit a weak will.¹

In spite of man's slavery, in spite of the power of heredity and the concession that he had really been brought forth in iniquity, man heard the moral law declare that he was free - a responsible, self-possessing human being. For Matheson this paradox in human nature did not belong alone to the early speculations of Judaism, - but is identical with that paradox which lies in Kant's analysis of man's moral nature. There is a remarkable agreement between Judaism and Kant on this point. More than that, this is a contradiction which belongs to human nature itself, which must be reproduced in all ages.²

Matheson rejected the position which made the penalty of sin arbitrary and external. In one place he said that if a bolt of lightning were to strike a murderer at the moment of his crime, this would not in itself indicate the Divine law of retribution. Yet there is a very deep connection between sin and death. Every form of sin is a form of animal life, and it is the nature of the animal to die. When the human soul chooses to sin, it stoops down into that life of nature which was not intended

1. "How Heredity Affects Salvation," Rests by the River, pp. 127-128.
2. The Psalmist and the Scientist, pp. 280-283. See also Aids to the Study of German Theology, pp. 23-24, in which Matheson suggests that Kant's interpretation of the Fall is in part "not only Scriptural but Calvinistic."

as its birthright. It is also vain to distinguish between the penalty and the cause of the penalty. Sin is a disease, and its consummation brings its own punishment. Therefore no man is ever counted free from punishment, for to hold such a view would be identical with saying that he is counted free from sin. As the righteous Sovereign, God will not tolerate sin; but as Father, He keeps on loving man even after he has sinned. The love of God never deserts the sinner, so that He must ever keep on seeking to save him. God as Sovereign can never annihilate sin, for that would be tantamount to destroying man's freedom of choice, which would be equivalent to annihilating the sinner.¹ Moreover, God as Father, to be true to His own nature, must become Savior. Thus the Cross, as the means of redemption, exists eternally within the heart of God.

D. The Doctrine of the Atonement:

The different works which comprise the mission of Christ cannot be regarded as spatially separated. We cannot say that in one historical incident Christ is exhibited as a revelation, and in another as an incarnation, and in a third as an atonement. Rather, "every historical act of the Son of man illustrates at one and the same time every part of His mission." "There is atonement in His revelation, there is a revelation in His atonement, there is an example in both."²

As we have seen, Matheson emphasized the idea of the "mystical union" - the completed incarnation is Christ's headship

1. For example, see My Aspirations, pp. 105-107.
2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 88.

over the Church. It is in this context that he discusses the atonement. Indeed, he held that apart from the mystical union, there can be no scientific exposition of Christ's work of reconciliation. The doctrine of atonement cannot be treated scientifically without considering the completed form of the doctrine of incarnation in which Christ becomes the head over His Church.

Though it is impossible to treat the atonement apart from the incarnation, it is possible to treat the incarnation apart from the atonement. In the first place, Christ, as the head of the human organism, takes upon Himself the suffering of the members and communicates in exchange divine power. Thus, Matheson believed that, apart from the problem of sin, man's finiteness alone would require the incarnation. Secondly, the incarnation of Christ was required not only to redeem, but to complete creation. The incarnation does more than meet an historical emergency; indeed it is "the realization of that of which the first Adam and the primeval paradise are but the prophecy, - the union of the image of man with the eternal life of God."¹ To regard the incarnation as necessary, not alone to accomplish man's redemption, but to complete his creation, was interpreted by Matheson as characteristic of German theology.²

But the Christian system does not rest with the doctrine of the incarnation. The headship of Christ over humanity demands that sin be repressed and its power destroyed. Man is more than a finite creature who suffers. He is a sinner before the Sovereign God, and as such he stands in need of that atonement, which is

1. Ibid., p. 91.

2. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 67.

the goal of the mystical union.

It is just this headship of Christ which constitutes the real mystery. Once Christ is viewed as the head of humanity, it is more readily seen how His atonement becomes necessary. Christ, as the head of the organism, takes upon Himself whatever belongs to the members. Since the body is one of sin and death, He takes even these upon Himself. Thus it is that a pure head is joined with an impure body. Matheson wrote: "When we have reached this stage, all mystery ceases. We can understand in kind, though not in degree, the sufferings of the Son of man." This helps us better to understand how Christ was bowed in anguish by His afflictions, and how He was compelled to feel His separation from the Father, expressed in the bitter cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The doctrine of Christ's divine headship over humanity helps us to clarify these points.

Moreover, the conception of divine headship helps us to understand the expression: "royal priesthood." Indeed, the paradox suggested by this phrase could belong only to Christianity.¹ In other religions, sacrifice is usually regarded as the very antithesis of royalty, but in Christianity sacrifice is seen as the mark of greatness, and is founded on the nearness of the Divine to the human. Thus Christ is head over humanity, just because He sacrificially bears humanity's sins. In the light of Christ's work it can no longer be said that sacrifice expresses only the human soul's sense of distance from the Divine. Rather, it is because Christ is shown as the sacrifice for humanity,

1. The Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 73-74.

that humanity regards the life of sacrifice to be the avenue to the Divine..

As the head of the body of humanity, Christ offers to every man who will receive it, membership in the body. The members may bring to Christ all the corruption of their lives, and He will bear these sins Himself, though in doing so He suffers the penalty.¹ Matheson wrote:

Give Him your past, and He will give you His past, His present, and His future. Give Him your corruption, and even while it bears Him down to death, there will issue from His divine headship a stream of incorruptible life which shall make you incorruptible.²

The doctrine of regeneration, for Matheson, grows directly out of Christ's potential headship over humanity. Apart from the body, individuals exist in a state of death. Before the human soul begins to experience new life as a member of Christ's body, it is too destitute of spiritual life even to detect its own deadness. It is only as a member of the body, that it learns the nature of that death in which it has been lying. Though each member gives up his old life, he does so in order that he may obtain a new one. The members are emptied that they may be replenished. In this way, the Divine head completes the lives of the members. For Matheson it was not enough that regeneration should make a man converted - regeneration must make a "literally new man."³ In the early Church regeneration

1. The Growth of the Spirit of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 73-74.

2. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 122.

3. "The Theologians of the Day - Ebrard," The Catholic Presbyterian, vol. II, 1877, p. 19.

was not merely a revival of the human spirit, it was a reconstruction of human nature - spirit and body alike. "It was nothing less than the creation of a new substance in man To be in Christ was to be, in the most literal of all senses, a new creature; it was to have the germ of a new body and the breath of a new soul."¹

The atonement is the creation of grace, and does not in itself create grace. It is not arbitrary in its effect nor is it efficacious for some and not for others; its saving power is not restricted to the elect as some nineteenth century Calvinists held. The atonement is efficacious for all men even as God is Father to all. Yet, it must be appropriated by man through faith. Salvation, he insisted, is made possible for all men, but actual for none. It is possible that some will reject God's love, and those who do so "damn" themselves. Yet the love of God will never desert even those children who ignore Him throughout all eternity. It is possible that God's purpose for men might be eternally thwarted because of the human free-will which God persistently refused to over-rule. Thus it can be seen that Matheson maintained a modified universalism: that God loves all, that Christ died for all, and that the Holy Spirit strives in all.

It is evident that Matheson did not commit himself exclusively to any one theory of the atonement. At times his thought is colored by that general approach to the redeeming

1. "With What Body Do They Come?", The Expositor, series 2, vol. V, 188 p. 190; as Denney puts it: "If Christ is not really changing us into His own likeness, ... He is not reconciling us to God, and our sins are not forgiven." See The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 119..

work of Christ which has been linked with the name of Abelard.¹ At other times his exposition is strongly colored by more legalistic terminology and ideas, and the death of Christ is regarded as substitutionary in nature.² Indeed, Christ's work satisfies both the love and righteousness of God: the love, because the sinner is made aware of the awfulness of sin, and through Christ, is offered the way of salvation; the righteousness, because sin has been judged in terms of the universal law of God, and thus the authority of the Divine Will has been vindicated. He wrote:

He [Christ] allowed your mean furniture to blend with His costly adornments. He felt your life to be a part of His life. He was mesmerised by love. He looked at His brother's temptations, and said, "They did it unto Me." He bore in His own body the pain of other bodies. It was not the sense of pity; it was the sense of identity - the identity of love. It was His unselfishness that gave Him a universal conscience - "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all!"³

1. Principal Frank has epitomized the Abelardian theory of the atonement as follows: "It is the doctrine that Christ reconciles man to God by revealing the love of God in His life and still more in His death, so bringing them to trust and love Him in return."

See The Atonement, p. 2.

2. For an example of his use of more legalistic terms see The Bible Definition of Religion, pp. 20-23, and The Representative Men of the Bible, p. 63. For an example of Matheson's emphasis on the substitution element see The Spiritual Development of St. Paul, p. 190, where Matheson wrote: "He [Christ] must ... become the substitute for humanity, must put Himself in sympathy, even before He put Himself in fact, into the position of those who had violated the Father's law, and must impute to Himself by an act of Divine imagination the frailty of those lives which had thus been tempted to transgress." Matheson could not go as far as Rashdall, in his Bampton Lectures for 1915 published as The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology. In this work Rashdall gives an interesting presentation in English of the Abelardian or moral influence theory. Nor could Matheson have agreed with Moberley's work Atonement in Personality which shows affinities with McLeod Campbell.

3. Searchings in the Silence, p. 147.

It is the Cross that reveals to us the true Christ. His teachings were but instrumental to the message of God's act in Christ on the Cross. This naturally led Matheson to the interpretation of Christ as we find Him in the Epistles rather than the Gospels. In this respect Matheson comes close to the position of P. T. Forsyth.¹

E. The Doctrine of Immortality::

There is probably no one subject which interested Matheson more than Immortality. Macmillan wrote:

It is the theme of his earliest, and of his latest, writings. There is hardly a book or an article written by him in which there is not some reference to it. It was with him a subject of perennial interest... Some may think that the reason of his absorbing interest in this subject was the fact of his being blind. It was natural that he should look forward to another world in which the film would be taken from his eyes and he could see the 'King in His beauty'...but his hope of immortality arose from another cause...The very idea of God made it necessary to his thinking, and the Christian religion would fall to pieces were the doctrine of immortality to be blotted out.²

Hately Waddell, who spent much time with Matheson, said: "Only once do I remember a subject consistently discussed for any length of time, and that was the subject of 'Eternal Life!'"³

The Bible, in Matheson's view, teaches a two-fold immortality - "an immortality which consists in the uninterrupted duration of years, and an immortality which is constituted by the fulness of present life.. In the one case it measures existence by its length, in the other it measures it by its largeness."⁴

1.. Cf. P. T. Forsyth, The Work of Christ, p. 108.

2.. Life, pp. 157-158.

3.. As quoted by D. Macmillan, Ibid., pp. 307-308.

4.. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 375.

The first is regarded as something made natural to man by Divine gift; the second is achieved only by man's hard struggle. The Bible calls this second order of immortality by the term "eternal life," which is identical with the life of the Divine Spirit in the soul.

It [eternal life] is not something which is to be reached by the indwelling of that Spirit; it is itself the life of the Spirit, and is reached in the first and faintest experience of that life. The immortality which in the New Testament is designated eternal life, is, in the view of the New Testament, nothing less than the life of the Eternal, the personal presence of that primal force which lies at the basis of all things.¹

Nor does the Book of Genesis teach that the introduction of an immortal soul was an addition to the original sum of the universe.² Man derived his immortality, not from some new force, but from an immortal principle already existing in the universe.³ This means that no creature is immortal in and of himself. Rather every creature must have his nostrils filled with the breath of God. So it was that the Old Testament, held Matheson, does not contain a very explicit doctrine of immortality. The Jew's "conception of immortality was anchored to the conception of Him of whom he was forbidden to make a graven image or likeness;... the Judaic belief in immortality was the Judaic faith in God."⁴ Judaism knows of no immortality outside of Him.⁵

1. Ibid., pp. 375-376.

2. Matheson first expressed this idea in a paper read to the Pan-Presbyterian Council of 1884, and printed in its Transactions.

3. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. 213

4. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 266.

5. Op. cit., p. 214.

Matheson recognized that the doctrine of immortality has always been claimed as a doctrine of natural theology, and has been found in almost all religions. However, he held that belief in a future life was more directly related to Christian theology. "Natural theology reveals God and immortality; Christian theology reveals God in immortality, or, which is the same thing, immortality in God."¹ Though every natural theology need not possess a doctrine of immortality, yet an interpretation of Christian thought which excluded such a doctrine, would be inconceivable.

Moreover, Christianity assumes that the natural instincts of the human mind have already unmistakably pointed to the existence of a future life. As the Old Testament does not argue for the existence of God, so the New Testament takes it for granted that the heart of man already possesses immortal hope. Rather, the Christian dispensation devotes itself to the task of building upon this foundation, revealing especially, the influence which such an eternal destiny should exert upon the life of the individual.

What, then, are the distinctive features of the Christian doctrine of immortality? In the first place, Matheson held that immortality is not something which consists in a change of physical conditions at the time of death. This conception of immortality as a change of locality is characteristic, thought Matheson, of sensuous mythologies. It is implicit even in Platonism, but is more pronounced in the Eastern doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Secondly, immortality is not an

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, p. 169.

existence confined exclusively to the future and separated from the present; it is already here, and death is but an incident in its course. The state after death exists before death.¹ Immortality is not simply the promise of something which is to come, but, being eternal, it is therefore a present possibility.. The following epitomized Matheson's position:

The immortality which Christianity reveals is not something which is brought by death at all; it is something which resists death, and which is able to resist it because it exists before it.. Christian immortality is not a life which death brings into the soul, it is a life which belongs to the soul, and which, therefore, death is unable to destroy.. The continuity of life in this system is never for a moment broken.. Death introduces no pause in the march of human existence; it is simply jostled out of the way in its attempt to oppose its march.. The immortality exists within the soul as its birthright, not merely outside the soul as its destiny.. It is not primarily a change of locality, but an abiding state.²

Indeed, for Matheson, eternity is not a state separate from time; time is merely the portion of eternal existence which is bounded by our earthly years, and is itself a fragment of eternity.

Matheson was much interested in the Christian interpretation of death, which phenomenon he regarded not as "the suspension of life," but as "the transition of life,"³ for "the spirit cannot die, whether in the body or out of the body."⁴ It is not a kind of dreamless sleep until the final resurrection.. Rather, death is first of all an enlargement of man's nature.. The human soul is fettered in this present life by that chain

1. Moments on the Mount, p. 48.

2. Op. cit., p. 172.. Instead of the expression "future life," Matheson preferred "the higher life," or "the endless life."
See Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, pp. 178, 276..

3. Studies of the Portrait of Christ, vol. II, p. 157.

4. Moments on the Mount, p. 247.

of corruption which we call the body. In death, the chain is broken, and the spirit is set free from what had prevented full development.¹ In destroying the body, death "shatters the walls of the prison, and ushers the enlarged soul into the house not made with hands."²

Moreover, there is an intermediate state immediately after death. In this state the dead enjoy a time of rest, an instant of self-unconsciousness. This intermediate state can best be expressed by the metaphor of sleep, in which each soul is hid from all else but God. The soul needs this time of leisure that it may have a vision of the Infinite Plan by which it has been led. The active human life is to be followed by a night of quiet meditation, preparatory to a new day of work - but work divorced from all sense of toil. It is from this spiritual rest that the dead pass over "into action, into newness of life, into vivid power of unimpeded energy, into work proportionate to the declining sense of labour."³ In one place, Matheson summarized his position as follows:

"...the first experience of the soul in a future world, whether it be joyful or sad, is an experience in solitude, that is to say, in solitude so far as man is concerned. The saint enters into the joy of Divine communion; he departs to be with Christ: but in Christ his life for a time is hidden from all beside. He is not revealed to the common gaze, nor is the common gaze revealed to him. He is alone with God, in a solitude of joyous meditation which is his gain, but not his goal. His goal

1. Rests by the River, pp. 107-109.

2. "The Pauline View of Death," The Expositor, series 2, vol. V, 1883 p. 50.

3. "St. John's Paradox Concerning the Dead," The Expositor, series 5, vol. VI, 1897, p. 20.

is that time of manifestation when meditation shall pass into action again, and he who for a while has rested from his labours shall rest not day nor night.¹

Matheson held that the resurrection of the body is represented in Scripture both as a fact to come, and as a fact that is already past. The problems presented can be resolved only if we take the resurrection of the body to be a process. "It is not something which is begun, continued and ended, in a moment of time; it is an event which is spread over the entire story of the human soul."² The resurrection of the body is not a final event taking place at the end of all things, but a part of human life itself. It does not follow the dissolution of body and soul, but begins while the soul is yet in the body. The new body is given as a gift from God at the moment of regeneration, and, like the natural body, it must grow from initial weakness to maturity. Genesis and the Pauline interpretations agree that "any regeneration of the human soul must at the same time be a regeneration of the human body."³ At the moment of regeneration then, God gives a new body, which "will only attain its perfect stature in that region of the unknown future which is described as the manifestation of humanity before the judgment seat of Christ."⁴ Thus the soul which has enjoyed a spiritual rest in solitude, - which has been hiding in the intermediate

1. "The Pauline View of Death," The Expositor, series 2, vol. V, 1883, p. 53.

2. "With What Body Do They Come," The Expositor, series 2, vol V, 1883, p. 190.

3. Ibid., p. 194.

4. Ibid., p. 190.

state of sleep, is eventually to come into a distinctively bodily life. Matheson asserted that Paul had nowhere formally indicated his position concerning the natural connection between the resurrection body of Christ and the individual embodiment of the departed soul. He gave his own quite unique position as follows:

There have been two heads to humanity, - a first and a second Adam. As a matter of fact, all the natural bodies of human beings which now exist in the world have been evolutions from the one body of the first Adam; they are but the multiplication through long ages of the primal substance of humanity. Even so in the second and higher Adam there is a body which is capable of an endless multiplication, of an infinite series of partitions. By a spiritual generation, whose method to us is as yet unknown, the body of the second Adam shall be subjected to a process analogous to that of the first, and shall reproduce its own image in a multitude of newborn lives. Such we believe to be the view of Paul, but we do not press the point ... He [Paul] beheld in it the assurance that he would not require to wait unclothed till the dawning of a final resurrection morning, that in the immediate hour of death there was provided for his spirit a local habitation, and that the continuity of his earthly being would be preserved in a human form.¹

Moreover, Matheson related the doctrine of resurrection to the headship of Christ. If Christ is risen, the members are risen, because He is the head of the body. The union between the head and the members is so intimate, that the rising of the one must require the rising of the other. "Christendom claimed a vital union with its Head, and therefore, it claimed already to be in possession of His immortality, to be partaker of His resurrection, to be recipient of His eternal life, to be raised

1. Natural Elements of Revealed Theology, pp. 188-190.

together with Him."¹

The Day of Judgment, for Matheson, did not signify the assembling of a high court. It is a reign of justice in which wrongs are redressed and rights are vindicated. It does not come at the close of the millennial reign - rather, "the day of judgment is the millennial reign itself,"² which has already begun. The unveiling of the judgment seat will reveal Christ to be what He is now -- the Ruler of the world and the Judge of man. The hierarchy of the redeemed will be determined on the basis of deeds done in the flesh. The joy of heaven is the joy of service.³ Hardly anything is said on the question of eternal punishment; like many of his contemporaries, such as Garvie, Beat, and Peake, he did not believe, however, that the fear of hell would be sufficient to make men charitable.⁴ Indeed, Christian motives are to be grounded in love, not fear of hell.⁵

Furthermore, the Christian conception of immortality has made definite contributions to the findings of natural theology. In the first place, the light of nature could perceive no link of connection binding the immortal life to the mundane life. The bond of human brotherhood appeared to be interrupted by death - the chain of human continuity seemed broken. But the Christian conception declares that the followers of Christ

1. Ibid., p. 182

2. "The Day of Judgment," The Expositor, series 2, vol. V, 1883, p. 372.

3. "The Nature of the Heavenly Blessedness," The Expositor, series 2, vol. VI, 1883, p. 212; For a fuller development of this theme, see "The Desire of the Angels," The Expositor, series 2, vol. VI, 1883, and "The Foremost Men in the Blessed Life," The Expositor, series 2 vol. VI, 1883, pp. 457-468.

4. "Lazarus and Dives," Good Words, 1892, p. 109. See also "The Lamb on the Throne," The Expositor, series 5, vol. V, 1897, p. 272

5. Rests by the River, pp. 148-149.

maintain in life and death an unbroken bond, for they are related as members of the body of One Who is the absolute head of the whole circle of creation. Secondly, the natural man feared that his soul would be deprived of embodiment. Nature fails to satisfy the soul's immortal desire for form or embodiment. As indicated above, Matheson held that in Christian thought, the spirit would not need to wait unclothed until the final resurrection, for in the immediate hour of death it would be clothed with a local habitation. Thirdly, the Christian view of immortality rules out all selfish considerations, since man does not work so much for a coming hope in the far future, as by the strength which such a conception of immortality imparts to his present life. Above all, the Christian conception of immortality has strengthened the infinite value of the human soul.¹

Summary and Conclusions:

While there are many favorable aspects of Matheson's emphasis upon the "headship" of Christ, yet as he works out this conception one cannot escape entirely the feeling that the theory is made to carry too much. Moreover, one feels at times as though his position is rather mechanically conceived.

1. Ibid., pp. 184-194; Matheson, in two journal articles, dealt with the evidence for immortality and resurrection. As these articles do not seem to reveal anything of particular interest, no reference has been made to them in the above discussion. See "The Pauline Argument for a Future State," The Expositor, series 1, vol. IX, 1879, p. 264f, and "No Resurrection Impossible," The Expositor, series 2, vol. VIII, 1884, pp. 128f.

However he held that the incarnation cannot be reviewed as a kind of theophany, by which Christ inhabits for a time a human body and then returns to heaven.¹ Thus we cannot say that His humanity ended with the days of His flesh on earth. This means that while Matheson employed the conception of kenosis, yet he did not rely upon the Kenotic Theory as the basis of his Christology.

Matheson was certainly christocentric in his theology. Robert Flint, one of Matheson's contemporaries, insisted that all dogmatics ought to be christocentric.² Indeed, there was at this time a general demand for christocentric theology. Ritschlianism emphasized that we believe in Christianity because we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and sought to make that fact normative for its whole exposition of Christian truth in apologetics, dogmatics, and ethics. All Christian thought, this school maintained, is an answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" In general, this position was held by Forrest, Forsyth, Denney, and above all by Mackintosh, whose Person of Jesus Christ is the theological glory of the series to which it belongs, and has consolidated the thought of the whole English speaking world on the subject.

It is interesting to note that Matheson did not stand in the theological tradition which insists, as Kierkegaard, Forsyth, and Barth, upon the qualitative distinction between man and God - between time and eternity. Yet on the other hand

1. Cf. D. M. Baillie, God was in Christ, pp. 97-98.

2. Robert Flint, "Theology," Encyclopedia Britannica, 9th edition. vol. XXIII, 1878, pp. 260-276.

it cannot be said that Matheson adopted Hegel's easy interpretation of God nor did Matheson adopt any emphasis on a pantheism or monism which blurs the sharpness of man's moral reality and results only in moral confusion.

Matheson held that the religious life demands a living God, with whom man can have fellowship. The process of evolution itself, therefore, does not provide the ultimate category of God. As pointed out above, Matheson did not argue either for or against evolution, though in later years he came to a disbelief in evolution. Matheson's point of view here is slightly different from that of Garvie, Morgan, and du Nuoy, who held a concept of God in the process, though the process does not actually produce God any more than matter produces mind.

Like many other British writers of this period, Matheson did not emphasize the older conception of the Fall, and the doctrine of original depravity. He did not think that man could be treated simply as a link in a causal nexus. Yet, nevertheless, Matheson saw that man does stand in a peculiar relation to the past, that he inherits something and that he begins life handicapped by sin. Moreover Matheson saw that nothing can alter the fact that man has been made in the divine image and bears the divine impress. Man's degradation can not wholly obliterate his inherent nobility; and indeed his very sense of shame and shortcoming witnesses to his possible holiness.

Matheson did not go as far as Forsyth in regarding life as a constant crisis between holiness and sin. The gulf

between a holy God and a mortal man was not viewed as so wide and deep.. While Forsyth was forced to think his position through very carefully at this point after reading the works of Kierkegaard, who felt the awful holiness of God Who had "put a curse upon his house," Matheson does not stress these elements to such a profound degree..

Matheson believed definitely in the love of the Holy God, which comes to man, not in a sentimental way, but in the Cross of Christ.. It is a love which inspires and at the same time judges man, and yields to him the stark reality of a life overshadowed by an eternal God.. Hence as God loves man, He judges him, giving to him a valid moral worth.. In placing an emphasis on the work of Christ, especially as it regarded the Cross, Matheson departed from the main stream of Hegelian emphasis.. His reaction was also against the centrality of feeling as found in Schleiermacher. The place of this feeling he believed should be taken by that of revelation as found in the Cross..

In his attack upon this phase of the Hegelian position, he sets the stage for the majesty of Christ he hopes to portray to his ownage. He believed the Bible portrayed a preached Christ and not a pictured Christ; that the seat of revelation was in the Cross and not the human heart.. From this revelation, theology gets its reality and deals with the affairs of life, individually and for the race.. Indeed, one of Matheson's points of major significance concerns this genuine desire to deepen personal religion in the lives of his hearers and readers.. He wanted his work to have reality and to be practical.. It is refreshing

today to find a man who has a driving desire to place the practical side of the holiness of God, the sin of man, and the supreme value of the Cross, in the lives of his hearers.

In developing his doctrine of immortality, Matheson made some rather broad generalizations, in which he can hardly expect to carry every reader along with him. There is one point especially, at which Matheson could have been more explicit: he did not deal with death as the evidence of some profound inward disharmony. For example, Brunner writes:

Precisely because human death is not simply the cessation of the biological functions, or physical dissolution, but is far more terrible than the death of the lower animals, it is the outward and visible sign of some profound inward disharmony. It is so absolutely opposed to all that is God's real will for man that it can only be understood at all if we realize that it represents the perversion of the relationship between man and God.¹

Though not a systematic theologian, Matheson's presentation of Christian doctrine is forceful, not only because of the substance of the argument, but also from the attractive literary style in which it is expressed. There is copiousness, variety, and felicity in illustration, and above all, the personality of the writer is revealed at every turn.

1. Emil Brunner, The Mediator, p. 480..

CHAPTER V: MATHESON AS A PREACHER

Matheson preached in the era of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his pulpit ministry he sought to meet the varied intellectual, moral, and spiritual needs which the times produced. In this endeavor he was a universal favorite, beloved by all classes of society. As we have seen, Matheson was no rigid Calvinist, nor did he always maintain a strictly orthodox position. Indeed, he was an outstanding representative of the more liberal element in the Scottish Church, seeking to combine Evangelical Christianity with the latest findings of modern scholarship.

The purpose of this chapter is to enquire into the preaching methods Matheson used to proclaim his message. Here we ask: "What kind of a preacher was Matheson?" If preaching is "Truth through Personality,"¹ as Brooks defined it, then we must first look at Matheson the man - what impression did his striking appearance produce, and what were his dominant personality traits? What were his study habits and methods of sermon preparation? Finally, how did he convey his message as a pulpit orator, and in the daily pastoral contacts among his congregation? In short, our primary aim in this chapter will be to demonstrate how Matheson proclaimed the Christian message.

1. Phillips Brooks, Lectures on Preaching, p. 8.

A. The Preacher as a Man:

"Dr. Matheson was a true prince among men, a sincere friend, a man of fine original gifts; above all, he was a good man, one whose life was hid with Christ in God."¹ In these words the Glasgow Herald expressed the sentiments of those who knew George Matheson. His books are valuable, but the man himself was greater than his writings.

To many who saw him for the first time, Matheson's personal appearance was something of a surprise. The "imagination" of men cast his face into various moulds - such as, "a venerable man, with 'countenance sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'", or, as another Dr. M'Cosh.² The real Matheson was quite different. Of striking appearance, he was a large-framed man of nearly six feet. He had that strong, robust look about him that caused an American observer to comment, "I should not look for him in the pulpit, but on the farm."³ He looked older than his years, for at a comparatively early age his jet-black curly hair had turned to thick grey. He had a broad high forehead, and a short white beard. Though blind, he kept his eyes open in such a natural way - even to the extent of having a penetrating look - that he often gave the impression of possessing normal vision. His was a ruddy countenance full of strength, yet gentle and pleasant. The facial expressions revealed a buoyant, cheerful spirit which captured the hearts of all upon the first meeting. Indeed,

1. "The Late George Matheson", The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 5, 1906, p. 3.

2. Life, pp. 110, 240.

3. Ibid., p. 240.

his personal appearance alone suggested a powerful personality.

In every man there is one predominant characteristic - a good character trait which, above all else, motivates him toward good or evil. In Matheson this one trait was his Christian fortitude - the heroic courage of a modern Paul in the face of a great physical handicap. He did not choose the road of ease that one might expect a blind man to choose. Over-taken by blindness, he began to feel his way along the rough and narrow road of strenuous industry which eventually led to great success. Nor did Matheson try to use his blindness as an excuse for lesser accomplishment. From the very first he would "claim no immunity and no indulgence on account of his blindness."¹ Matheson faced the mission of his life with an understanding of his circumstances, yet with steadfast courage and an unconquerable spirit.

One of his secretaries admitted that at some rare moments Matheson, who usually was the most optimistic of men, was inconsistent with his valiant cheerful spirit. More than once Matheson told him that he never woke in the morning, but with a feeling of regret that he had not "slept on into that sleep which knows no waking."² Yet why should there not be such thoughts in the mind of a man who woke in the morning and yet saw not the morning; a man who was unable to see the world his God had created; a man whose physical infirmity kept him from

1. The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 509.

2. "Farewell Speech," St. Bernard's Parish Magazine, Dec., 1899, p. 2.

reading with his eyes the Bible on which he centered his whole belief and life work! Of course, inward contradictions escaped his better self - but they were rare. The fact that he continued pushing onward, never stopping in spite of his handicap, illustrates the greatness of his character.

There are varied opinions concerning the heights Matheson might have obtained had he not been blind. A typical expression of one side of the opinion is that there can be "no doubt that the natural course of his intellectual development was seriously disturbed by his infirmity."¹ The other side, which seems to overbalance such an opinion, is that his weakness was the source of his strength. One writer remarked that "tragic circumstance lay behind his intellectual lustre, and contributed materially to the fascination of his strong, mastering, abiding personality."² The solution to his own difficulty he found in Christ's example: "He conquered by submitting; He proved victorious by yielding."³ Thus, what seemed to be a hindrance was really a blessing in disguise. In Matheson's farewell speech to his congregation at St. Bernard's he said: "I think that next to the strength of God, and next again to your kind cooperation, I was indebted to my own weakness."⁴ The Sunday Review expressed the judgement of Matheson's contemporaries: "The courageous way in which he

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1. The British Weekly, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 509; see "Beyond the Bourne," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 8.
 2. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.
 3. Life, p. 277.
 4. St. Bernard's Parish Magazine, Dec., 1899, p. 2.

bore his sore affliction, and magnificently triumphed in spite of it, stamped him as one of the most heroic figures occupying the Christian pulpit ..."¹

We must, however, remember that George Matheson was not only a man with Christian fortitude but also a man of great natural abilities. "His superb courage and splendid natural talents," commented the Home Magazine, "have enabled him to triumph over a physical trouble which would have prevented a man less highly dowered from making his mark in life."²

One of the most remarkable powers of Matheson was his phenomenal memory. It was a great asset to him in his study and his preaching, as well as in his daily conversation. Most of his work was done by sheer memorizing - an impossible task for an ordinary man. It was said that he could even remember the page number of a discourse of his that had been disposed of some twenty or thirty years before.³ He could quote page after page from the Bible. On one occasion a friend discovered that, after one reading, he could list verbatim, column after column, all the advertisements on a page of the Glasgow Herald.⁴ One can understand how such a memory made it possible for Matheson to retain most of what was read to him. His books alone show that his superior memory was combined with an extraordinary power of assimilation. What appealed to him was retained, modified, and in the end became part of his original thinking.

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1. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.
 2. The Home Magazine, vol. III, April 22 - Oct. 14, 1899, p. 846.
 3. Op. cit., p. 301.
 4. Life, p. 305.

"As a school boy," according to his biographer, "George Matheson manifested an eager intellectual alertness and love of fresh ideas."¹ The fact that, as one of his elders pointed out, in the thirteen years of his Edinburgh pastorate Matheson never preached the same sermon twice to his ordinary congregation,² is evidence enough that he kept his originality to the very end of his life. Matheson never ceased to be a student, though absorbed with the pastoral and administrative work, as well as the preaching, in a large city church. Through disciplined study habits, he kept his thinking fresh, original and alive. The sphere of his intellectual interests included art, literature, science, theology and history. Such a range of interest helped him to develop into a radiant and dynamic personality.

Matheson was a man with many friends, the most intimate of whom were men whose acquaintance he made in the early years of his ministry. An obituary in Saint Andrew commented that, while his death would be deplored by thousands of admirers all over the world, "those who knew him best will miss him the most."³ He possessed a sparkling personality that drew people to him.

His great personal charm captivated the hearts of his companions. His spirit was ever young and exuberant. An American visitor to Matheson's home, M.G.L. Parker, wrote,

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1. D. Macmillan, Representative Men of the Scottish Church, p. 194.
 2. The Baptist Magazine, vol. XCIV, 1902, p. 67.
 3. Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9.

"I think I may say I have never seen a person, so actually alive."¹ Such a statement testifies to the fullness of life and joyful radiance which characterized Matheson. Moreover, he was the perfect host and his radiance filled his home with warmth and hospitality. He delighted in companionship. He was effervescent with "joy that longs to tell itself" and "buoyancy that cannot be alone."² His guests were made to feel like hosts in his house due to his natural friendly spirit. We may conclude, therefore, that "the radiance of his nature mastered the darkness of time."³

Matheson delighted in fun. "No one could be more cheerful than he when the fitting opportunity presented itself."⁴ When in one of his gay moods he was known for throwing back his head, clapping his hands and "roaring" with laughter - a laughter so contagious that all his companions had to join in. In any social gathering Matheson's corner of the room was the most uproarious. His Irish friends concluded, "If that man is not Irish he ought to be."⁵ His conversation at such times was witty, gay, and full of quotations and funny stories. His genial presence alone was often enough to warm the hearts of the dejected and cause them also to join in the

1. M. G. L. Parker, "How an American Visitor saw Dr. Matheson," The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 374.

2. "Sabbath Evenings for the Devout," unsigned, The Methodist Monthly, vol. IV, 1895, p. 305.

3. W. R. Nicoll, "Dr. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 510.

4. Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 9.

5. Ibid., p. 8.

merry jest that overflowed from his cheerful nature. It was the exception for Matheson to be in one of his quiet moods when the occasion called for light-hearted conversation. As one who knows him well put it: "The saving grace of humor is one of Dr. Matheson's gifts and at the table it makes him as entertaining as his lofty thoughts make him powerful in the pulpit."¹

Matheson could not restrain himself from sharp criticism or comparison. He at times trespassed on precarious ground with his severe criticism of individuals. He was not afraid or hesitant in saying what he thought; yet, at the same time, he had a "large and tolerant heart."² Matheson could differ from a man's ideas, yet appreciate the qualities of his personality. He could criticize, yet he was liberal in judging others, for he always highly praised the merits of the man he criticized. He was charitable, forgiving, and liberal in his relationships with people. For example, in writing about Spinoza, Matheson said: "It has not seldom happened that a man whose philosophic creed has seemed to point in a direction unfavourable to piety, has yet possessed himself a sincerely pious soul."³ Matheson could disagree profoundly with Schleiermacher's conception of a God without attributes, and yet attribute this short-coming to what was itself a high religious motive - "the desire to exalt Christ."⁴

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1. The British Monthly, vol. IV, Jan., 1904, p. 94.
 2. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372.
 3. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 191.
 4. Ibid., p. 43.

In his essay, "The Power of Personality in Religion," Matheson indicated his conception of the ministry. He referred to the passage in II Chronicles 30:3, "They could not keep the passover at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently." For Matheson this meant in modern language that: "They were unable to take the sacrament because they had no respect for the character of the minister."¹ He believed the minister should stand on a moral height. The people will listen to a man who is a specimen of his message. Matheson explained his conception of the ministry quite beautifully in his ordination dinner speech:

The preacher of our day must be a man not only of universal knowledge, but, to some extent, of universal nature too. In him must be blended something of the lives of all men. There must be the depths of the philosopher's thought, with the simplicity of the child's expression; the inquiring mind of manhood, with the pensive faith of declining years; the speculative strength of youth, with a hallowed, chastened, humble sense of feebleness. There must be argument for the doubting and confirmation for the trustful, encouragement for the fearing and approbation for the brave, gentleness for the erring and sympathy with the strong, and boundless, deathless charity for all.²

B. The Preacher in His Study:

The secret of Matheson's power for work lay partly in his extremely methodical habits. He utilized every hour of the day. Dr. Sime, who saw much of Matheson in his early years at Innellan, reported that Matheson worked not by im-

1. Saint Andrew, vol. IV, Jan. 15, 1903, p. 9.

2. Life, pp. 97f.

pulses and inspirations but by allotting each hour a certain kind and certain amount of work.¹ Matheson would awake about 7:45 a.m. every day. He was at breakfast by about 9:00 a.m., during which time his mail was read to him by his secretary. Each letter was immediately answered before the work of the day began. He never procrastinated in letter writing, but would usually reply by return post. In the absence of his secretary, Matheson frequently used a typewriter to dispatch urgent letters. Although he never obtained a high rate of speed he had almost unfailing accuracy. Next on the agenda was the morning newspaper. Upon learning of an acquaintance who had passed away, Matheson would take the time to dictate a letter of consolation to the widow.² After a brief study of French and German, which he deemed a highly refreshing exercise, books on various subjects were taken up in turn, and were read by the secretary. The rest of the morning was reserved for composition and dictation for the press.

After lunch and a pipe of tobacco, Matheson, led by his secretary, would set out for pastoral visitation. Before he was provided with a church assistant, Matheson spent the afternoons, Tuesday through Friday, visiting his parishioners from about three to five-thirty. Monday he reserved for a holiday, and on Saturday he completed his weekly sermon.³ The

1. Ibid., p. 151.

2. As reported by Dr. Calderwood in private conversation.

3. As reported by Dr. Calderwood in private conversation.

evenings after dinner were spent in jovial conversation around the fire, during which time Matheson would tell stories, or, either his secretary or his sister would read aloud to him. Alexander Stewart wrote: "No sooner is one matter disposed of than another takes its place."¹ He held to this rigid schedule which he kept with slight modification all his life, and felt it essential to his happiness.

Furthermore, he was most business-like in all his work. Letters² written by Matheson to William Blackwood of Edinburgh, his publisher, indicate that he kept a close supervision over the publication of his various works. He would frequently suggest to Blackwood outstanding men of the day to whom complimentary copies of his books should be sent.³ Sometimes he would recommend to Blackwood various periodicals in which he desired to have his books reviewed.⁴ Moreover he would at times supervise the number of volumes printed, and indicate what he considered an adequate retail price.⁵

Previous to his introduction to Braille, his work must have involved great strain on his mind. He stored there large quantities of material until the opportunity came for dictation. Matheson's use of Braille changed all this. He

1. A. Stewart, "Dr. George Matheson," The Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, April, 1901, p. 243.

2. There are thirty-five letters written by Matheson to Blackwood, which are contained in the Blackwood Papers, a 1942 addition to the manuscript collection at the National Library of Scotland. However, the material has not been catalogued at time of writing.

3. The Blackwood Papers, see for example, the letter of September 30, 1890.

4. The Blackwood Papers, see the letter of November 4, 1890 as a typical example.

5. The Blackwood Papers, the letter of October 11, 1890.

would commit to his Braille characters, not just a bare outline for his train of thought, but every article and conjunction. Then, in easy stages he dictated the final form to his secretary. Although this gave his extraordinary memory a rest, it did not overcome all difficulties. One great handicap was that Matheson could not rapidly scan back over his sheets of Braille without great difficulty. Thus he seldom reverted to the foregoing pages until the time for dictating arrived. However, in spite of this handicap we find little repetition in his writings. Actually, Matheson's system could not be called genuine Braille. He had devised his own method to such an extent that whenever a letter in Braille arrived from a blind friend it had to be sent to the blind school at Craigmillar to be interpreted.¹ The "Mathesonian Braille," consisting primarily of his own abbreviations and his own letters, served his purpose well.

Matheson was a good student in every department of literature.² His interests embraced many spheres of knowledge and were not limited to the religious field. Matheson could not boast of a huge library of books. He possessed all the important dictionaries and encyclopedias, but other than that he depended upon the public libraries and his retentive memory.

He had an especially keen interest in theology, science, and philosophy. The register of readers at the

1. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Aug. 16, 1906, p. 301.

2. "Beyond the Bourne," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9.

Glasgow University Library shows that he was a regular favorer of many volumes on philosophy, theology, and similar subjects.¹ The Sunday Review called Matheson "a theologian, a philosopher, and in theory at least, a scientist," justifying his being called a scientist by the fact that he was a fellow of the Edinburgh Royal Society.² Macmillan felt that Matheson could have held his own in conversation with the most noted university teachers of current philosophy.³ His thorough, critical, and enormous amount of reading furnished him with ample knowledge to discuss almost any subject.

Sailing on his beloved Clyde was Matheson's favorite outdoor recreation; good fiction furnished his indoor entertainment. He was never without a good novel.⁴ He preferred light fiction, although he liked all kinds. His favorite novelists were Hall Caine, W. E. Norris, and Thomas Hardy. He once confided to an interviewer that he regarded George Meredith as the greatest novelist living or dead.⁵ He was of the opinion that the purpose of a novel was to amuse and not to present problems.

Moreover, Matheson enjoyed the daily morning papers. He absorbed a summary of all the latest happenings. Notices

1. "The Late Rev. Dr. Matheson, Edinburgh," The Scotsman, Aug. 29, 1906, p. 6.

2. Life, p. 130.

3. "The Rev. George Matheson," The British Monthly, vol. IV, Jan., 1904, p. 93.

4. Ibid., p. 94.

5. "The Late Rev. Dr. Matheson, Edinburgh," The Scotsman, Aug. 29, 1906, p. 6.

of interesting literature were the most appealing features. He followed the criminal trials, politics, obituaries, church notices, in short, all the happenings of the day had something of interest for him.

In the early years of his career, Matheson wrote out all his own compositions by using a frame construction over the paper with wires placed about a half-inch apart to keep his lines from running together.¹ However, this method was later discarded for the dictation of his sermons in full to his amanuensis. Following this, two readings of the dictated sermon were sufficient enough to enable him to repeat it without a mistake. For the first twelve years of his ministry Matheson memorized his sermons, but after a memory blank one Sunday in 1878, he began preparing only a skeleton of his sermons and thus allowing himself spontaneous expression.

Much thought went into the content. On Sunday evening he chose the text upon which he proposed to preach the following Sunday. Each day Matheson would add mentally something to his sermon. When Saturday arrived the sermon was complete. The Rev. T.W. M'Andrew, a former secretary to Matheson, states that at various times during the week, Matheson could be heard pacing the floor of his study preaching the sermon of the coming Sunday to himself. Indeed his voice would at times resound throughout the house.² Matheson

1. "General News and Press Echoes," The Scottish Pulpit, vol. I, 1890-91, p. 188.

2. As reported by the Rev. T.W. M'Andrew in private conversation.

described the first stage of his sermon preparation as "without form and void" and the final stage as "behold it was all very good."¹

His sermons were kept in well-bound notebooks. Each sermon was numbered and so also was each notebook. An index giving the date on which each sermon was preached, and the place it was preached, was put at the end of every notebook. Up to about 1878, all sermons were written out in full, except occasionally when the practical application was simply indicated by a note. After that period a clear, well-arranged skeleton about the length of a page replaced the method of filing the complete sermon.

C. The Preacher and His Message:

1. His Sermonic Literature

The fact that there are extant only eleven sermon manuscripts and two addresses presents a problem for the student who attempts to analyze Matheson's preaching. The problem diminishes, however, when one discovers the significant similarity which existed between his extant sermons and his devotional writings. His sermons possessed the same devotional quality as his published meditations, nor were his devotional books any less sermonic, in method and content, than his sermons per se. In each case the heart of the writer confronts the reader with the great spiritual themes around which his life and thought revolved. Thus the reader may expect to find the sermonizer in his literary productions as

1. A. Stewart, "Dr. George Matheson," The Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, April, 1901, p. 240.

surely as he will discover a devotional spirit in his sermons. This opens up a broad field of investigation for a sound appraisal of Matheson's sermonic literature.

According to three living witnesses, Matheson preached as he wrote: the Rev. Professor G.T. Thomson, a member of his congregation at St. Bernard's, the Rev. Dr. R.S. Calderwood, and the Rev. T.W. M'Andrew, his former student secretaries. Further confirmation is found in a review of one of Matheson's devotional books in Saint Andrew:¹

The book under review is not made up of sermons, nevertheless it is made up of sermon stuff. It is a phial full of what might be called sermon quintessences, and, unlike most essences, it is both palatable and nutritious.

His devotional productions were widely acclaimed and in great demand because one could hear him preaching through the development of his themes and the forcefulness of his literary style. "One often heard the wish expressed," wrote one of his ministerial contemporaries, "that Dr. Matheson would publish his sermons, though not as such. Sometimes it was as chapters without texts in various volumes that they appeared; at other times they would take the form of a devotional meditation, and again of a poem. Many of his 'sacred songs' he had already uttered in prose from the pulpit."²

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1. Saint Andrew, vol. VI, Oct. 27, 1904, p. 7.
 2. Sydney Smith, "Dr. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 516.

There are three available sources of extant sermons: eleven sermon manuscripts, two addresses, twenty-two synopses of sermons Dr. Calderwood heard Matheson preach and preserved in a small notebook,¹ and miscellaneous extracts quoted by Matheson's biographer, Donald Macmillan.

The eleven manuscripts were reproduced in various journals, including The Expository Times, The Christian World Pulpit, Saint Andrew, and The Contemporary Pulpit Series. A perusal of the sermons evinces the broad range of Matheson's mind in the choice of topics, a thorough understanding of the Bible, and a rare poetic imagination. Topics range from "The Law of Growth"² through "The Boundlessness of the Bible"³ to "The City of God."⁴ They are all essentially Biblical themes. They abound in poetic language and vivid illustrations, and from first to last are designed to evoke a practical response. The sermon on "The Boundlessness of the Bible" is, according to his biographer, "one of the most characteristic that he ever delivered."⁵ It was given as the annual sermon of the Wesleyan Missionary Society at Brunswich Chapel, Leeds, and was subsequently printed in Saint Andrew, October 22, 1903.

1. A description of this notebook and of the material it contains will follow.

2. The Christian World Pulpit, vol. LXIII, 1903, p. 195.

3. Saint Andrew, vol V, Oct. 22, 1903, p. 4.

4. The Christian World Pulpit, vol. LI, 1897, p. 325.

5. Life, p. 340.

Unfortunately only two of his public addresses are available. One of these was delivered at the Edinburgh Ninety Club, on Robert Burns, and was later printed in Saint Andrew, Jan. 28, 1904. Evidently there were many addresses which are no longer extant. In 1907, his biographer had access to numerous manuscripts of public addresses: "I have before me, as I write," he remarked, "notebook after notebook filled with addresses most carefully prepared, which Dr. Matheson delivered to the different agencies and organizations of the church."¹

An extremely valuable source of Matheson's sermons is to be found in a notebook belonging to one of his former secretaries, the Rev. Dr. R.S. Calderwood. This notebook contains synopses and excerpts from twenty-two sermons Dr. Calderwood heard Matheson preach. On Monday morning Matheson would dictate to his secretary a synopsis of the sermon preached the day before. Each sermon synopsis was carefully copied into a large volume.² Dr. Calderwood has twenty-two of these synopses in a small notebook; Matheson's own large volumes of synopses have long since disappeared. As far as can be ascertained, this notebook is the only remaining source of Matheson's sermon synopses. All the other sources have been lost.

These notebook condensations vary in length from

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1. Life, p. 254f.
 2. As reported in personal conversation with Dr. Calderwood.

one to three pages. Some are mainly in outline form; others contain whole passages of sermon prose.¹ The average synopsis takes about two pages, and, short as it is, it is sufficient to indicate much about Matheson's sermonic emphasis and style. These abstracts, in their outline, choice illustrations, and verbatim excerpts, may be regarded as a representative index of Matheson's preaching. So distinctly Mathesonian are they, in fact, that though the notebook contains sermon outlines by other men, as Dr. Calderwood himself puts it: "It is easy to tell which are Matheson's."²

2. His Devotional Literature

As might be expected of a poet-preacher, "it has been as a writer of devotional books and articles that he has made his mark throughout the English-speaking world."³ His later books were almost entirely of a devotional character and, as The Christian observes,⁴ The Representative Men of the Bible (first series, 1902; second series, 1903), may be regarded as typical. Saint Andrew pays the following

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1. The last part of the sermon "The Patience of Job" which Matheson preached before Queen Victoria at Balmoral in Oct., 1885, is reproduced verbatim.
 2. As reported in private conversation with Dr. Calderwood.
 3. Cuthbert Lennox, "In Scotland," The Sunday School Chronicle, vol. XXV, 1906, p. 817.
 4. The Christian, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 25.

tribute:

When his admiring fellow-countrymen bestowed upon Jean Paul Richter the title "Der Einzige" - the unique" - they indicated a quality in all his work which stamps it unmistakably as his. Something of the same distinction belongs to Dr. Matheson as a devotional writer. Other honored names there are in the same field, but Dr. Matheson's work is easily recognisable as his own the author's sign manual is in every line.¹

My Aspirations was published in 1882 as one of the Heart Chords Series of Cassell and Co., Publishers. In 1907, his biographer remarked that "no modern book of devotion has had so wide a circulation or has been more deeply prized."² The Heart Chords Series was reviewed in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. After dismissing two other books in the series as "sound," "sensible," and "helpful," the reviewer wrote: "But Dr. Matheson's rises beyond all criticism. For a keen spiritual insight, for fresh light upon the uses of texts, for stimulating force, for beauty of diction, we know of no small devotional manual that equals it."³ Each meditation is the unfolding of a well-chosen text. The themes range from "obedience to the Divine command" through "the right use of my natural powers" to "a new sense of vision." It is intensely personal and is therefore exceedingly useful

1. Saint Andrew, vol III, Nov. 14, 1901, p. 10.

2. Ibid., p. 167.

3. The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, series 6, vol. VIII, 1884, p. 555.

for private devotions. It seems to follow Matheson's own suggestion¹ that there was need for a modern devotional book like the Imitatio Christi, with the provision that it be positive instead of negative in its emphasis.

A sequel to this popular volume was the devotional book, Moments on the Mount. This was published in 1884 and was designed, not only as an aid to devotion, but also as a suggestive help to ministerial students. Thus it combines devotion and reflection in Matheson's characteristic manner. In our estimation, it contains some of the best seed-thoughts to be found anywhere in the literary productions. Topics range from "the inwardness of revelation" through "religious feeling and religious thought" to "the disinterestedness of God's choice." The book ranks a close second with My Aspirations.

As already noted elsewhere, the following volumes were published: Voices of the Spirit in 1888, Searchings in the Silence in 1895, Words by the Wayside in 1896, Times of Retirement in 1901, and Leaves for Quiet Hours in 1904. Rests by the River, appearing in 1896, is a collection of meditations first published in Saint Andrew. Again, his varied themes range from "the secret of reverent research" through "the hour of divine inertness" to "the stages of Christian perfection."

1. Life, pp. 173f.

In 1896, The Lady Ecclesia appeared. The Bible Definition of Religion, based on Micah 6:8, was published in 1897, together with a larger volume, Sidelights from Patmos, which book he described as "Flashes of modern suggestion from the ancient Apocalypse." Many of the chapters of this latter work originally appeared as articles in The Expositor.

The Dictionary of National Biography described Matheson's Studies in the Portrait of Christ (vol. I, 1899; vol. II, 1900) as "a characteristic work, of which 11,000 copies were sold within one year."¹ In the preface he called it a "semi-devotional" work, his aim being to trace the spiritual development of the work of Jesus in the Gospels. It is a tribute in itself to Matheson that he was able to treat a subject of this nature in a devotional manner. "The felicity of both thought and style," wrote a reviewer in The London Quarterly, "makes these chapters delightful reading ... The book is both devout and stimulating."² Each chapter of this two-volume work ends with a personal prayer which dedicates, as it were, the respective chapters to Christ - its subject.

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1. "George Matheson," Dictionary of National Biography (second supplement), vol. II, 1912, p. 588.
 2. The London Quarterly Review, vol. XCIII, Jan.-Apr., 1900, p. 149.

A sequel to these volumes is a small book on St. John's Portrait of Christ, published under the series, Little Books on Religion, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll. The author's purpose was to show that St. John's portrait of Christ is consistent with, though different from, the portrait painted by the other Gospel writers. It is a more limited treatment and follows a different pattern but its tone is no less devotional.

In 1902, Matheson published his famous Old Testament character studies, The Representative Men of the Bible. The cordial welcome it received led him to produce its sequel in 1905, The Representative Men of the New Testament. These volumes are of such a devotional quality that we have chosen to classify them with his devotional or semi-devotional writings. In both volumes each character sketch climaxes in raptured prayer. The latter of the two ranks among Matheson's greatest literary productions. It pivots on the theme that Jesus changed his disciples from men into heroes. "The transforming influence of Jesus on His disciples," writes one reviewer, "is in the psychology of the New Testament gallery what gravitation is in the cosmogony, and its discovery is of Newtonian importance. Order is evolved out of what seemed chaos, all is brought under the operations of law."¹ That is to say, each disciple, in Matheson's view, received from Jesus the grace necessary to redeem him from his peculiar defect.

1. Saint Andrew, vol VII, Oct. 12, 1905, p. 6.

The output of Matheson's literary productions seems incredible, considering the heavy odds against which he labored. It is a tribute to his literary powers that two of his books were translated into German and two also into Chinese. His article entitled "The Originality of the Character of Christ," in The Contemporary Review, was reprinted in America and was translated into French.¹ Altogether he published upwards of thirty volumes and numerous articles in various periodicals. When he moved to St. Bernard's, a congregation of eighteen hundred people, his literary prolificness increased when many felt it would decline.

Numerous articles and intimations in Saint Andrew and The Glasgow Herald illustrate how it was primarily in his devotional meditations that the public looked for "the real George Matheson." "There are few writers on theological and religious subjects whose books have had so large a sale as those of Dr. Matheson."² Anxiously the public awaited the appearance of his next volume which was usually announced months in advance. It is in his devotional writings that the reader may expect to discover "the real George Matheson, the seer who saw because he had felt, and who quickened the emotions of his fellows because he had thought deeply on human life and destiny."³

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1. The Glasgow Herald, Aug. 30, 1906, p. 9.
 2. Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9.
 3. Life, p. 168.

3. His Sermonic and Literary Style

Matheson was as unconventional in his writings as he was in his preaching. The individuality of his genius was perceptible in every spoken word as it is on every written page. Reviewers and commentators described his style in terms of "singular gracefulness and charm,"¹ "depth of thought, subtlety of analysis, and eloquence of expression."² His sermons were virtually poetic prose, or prose poems. "The congregation did not feel spoken at, or even spoken to, rather the consciousness was that of overhearing a soul unburdening itself before its God."³

According to Dr. Calderwood,⁴ Matheson's sermons frequently had three heads. However, this does not mean that they followed a mechanical arrangement. The structural unity of his sermons was more often imaginative than logical. In fact, those who lacked imagination found some of his sermons, especially his speculations on Biblical characters, difficult to follow. However, to a mind adapted to his profound insights, Matheson's preaching never lacked coherence. The Rev. Sydney Smith, parish minister of Keith, who attended St. Bernard's while a student at the University of Edinburgh, comments that almost every sermon he heard was virtually "a

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1. The Baptist Magazine, vol. XCIV, Feb., 1902, p. 68.
 2. The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 6.
 3. Saint Andrew, vol. V, Feb. 5, 1903, p. 9.
 4. As reported by Dr. Calderwood in private conversation.

branching system of thought."¹

Profundity and coherence were matched with colorful imagery. His private secretary, William Smith, after illustrating Matheson's phenomenal memory, commented that he never prized this gift for its own sake.² "Imagination he prized as the highest power of man" and considered its cultivation too much ignored and neglected. From these observations, and from a perusal of extant sermons, we may safely conclude that Matheson's preaching by and large was both logically coherent and warmly imaginative. It combined instruction with inspiration without being mechanical or elusive. His sermons appealed alike to the reflective mind and to the poetic spirit.

Matheson usually captured the interest of his listeners with the first sentence. His introduction was usually brief but illuminating. Frequently it would include the central idea of the message. He began his sermons in the "middle," as it were, for he plunged immediately into the deep waters of his text. Then he would branch out into three symphonic variations of his main theme, reinforcing his points both by argument and illustration. Throughout the sermon there was usually a masterly use of suspense, climax and repetition.

His illustrations were cast in musical strains and adorned with poetic imagery. On one occasion he pictured

1. Life, p. 234.

2. Ibid., p. 305.

heaven as a vast concert hall. He seemed to delight also in the use of biological analogies of spiritual truths, in keeping with his attention to the problem of evolution. Many illustrations found their appropriate places from Shakespeare and Burns and from current fiction. But more often it was Matheson the poet who illustrated best the themes of Matheson the preacher. The preacher was his own poet. We have already observed that many of his "sacred songs" were first uttered in prose from the pulpit. Usually he provided his own metaphors and illustrated his own ideas. Therefore his illustrations were as broad as the range of his reflective and imaginative powers. "The whole range of illustrations," wrote the Rev. Charles Parkhurst, "in art, science, history, and in practical life, was touched with the familiarity of the master in each department."¹

Matheson held that devotion, to be kept pure, needs ideas as well as feelings. This ideal appears in the prefaces of three of his devotional works - Rests by the River, Moments on the Mount, and Times of Retirement. "To behold the beauty," he wrote, "without inquiring is mere sentiment; to inquire without beholding the beauty is mere criticism; perfect faith unites both. Yet there is an order in their union; the beholding of the beauty comes first. I cannot with any profit begin to inquire until I have begun to gaze; I cannot understand the reason until I have felt the power."² Matheson was certain that the two must

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1. Charles Parkhurst, as quoted in Life, p. 241.
 2. Moments on the Mount, p. 106.

be found together. But he was uncertain which should precede the other. Twelve years later he wrote that "religious sentiment, if it is worth anything, must be preceded by religious perception."¹

In this balance of emotion and reflection one can clearly detect the influence of Pascal's Pensées,² for in Matheson, as well as Pascal, the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of! Like the Psalms, the devotional meditations of Matheson reflect the inner dialectic of the human soul between reason and will, and its varying moods of anxiety and confidence. They are characterized by profound thought and originality that ensure them a permanent place in devotional literature.

Matheson was a mystic, but his mysticism ran deep. "With the eye of faith," as one commentator put it, "he sees into mystic realms of imaginative and spiritual beauty which seemed closed to other men."³ Through his sensitive spiritual sight he saw realities to which men of normal vision are blind. And every word he wrote and spoke was animated by this "spiritual sense." "True, he was a mystic," concluded his biographer, "but he was a practical mystic, of all men the most irresistible; a dreamer of dreams that he realised in fact; a seer of visions which he transformed into reality."⁴

One can clearly detect in his first sermon⁵ the beauty of style which characterized his subsequent work. A

1. Life, p. 173.

2. Ibid., p. 171.

3. Saint Andrew, vol. V, Oct. 15, 1903, p. 10.

4. Life, pp. 260f.

5. Ibid., pp. 82f.

reviewer represented the style of his Studies in the Portrait of Christ in terms of "epigrammatic terseness."¹ One technique in particular which gave beauty and strength to his arguments was the play on contrasts. It was a practical use of the Hegelian dialectic. Often he would begin by laying down two apparently irreconcilable propositions and would play on the paradox until the reader or listener was convinced of a hopeless antinomy. Then he would skillfully resolve the contradiction in some higher, or deeper, synthesis. "This characteristic of style," commented one writer, "indicates the effort of his life. It suggests one reason for his great influence."² His life was dedicated with an ardent passion to reconciling differences by pointing out the dual-sided character of every human approximation to truth.

On other occasions, especially in sermons, he would arouse curiosity by first enshrouding the text in enigmatic darkness. Then, suddenly, as though by force of immediate revelation, he would solve the enigma by bringing, as it were, sense out of nonsense. This technique challenged the most fertile mind and held the listener in rapt suspense.

Still another contrast on which he skillfully played was that of indirect discourse between what "God says" and what "I once thought." He himself took the opposite position - that of the average man - for purposes of argumentation,

1. The London Quarterly Review, vol. XCIV, July-Oct., 1900, p. 60.
2. Arthur Jenkinson, "Leaders of Thought in Scotland," The Thinker, vol. II, July-Dec., 1892, p. 329.

and showed up the fallacy and weakness of man's view of religion as compared to the truth God has revealed. Witness a perfect example of this technique in Moments on the Mount.¹

The touch of mysticism in his rapturous prose, to which we have already alluded, itself introduced an element of beauty into his style. Sometimes this took the form of pathos, as when he spoke of his own "thorn in the flesh." But never once did he strike a despondent note.² At other times it assumed a humorous turn: "teetotal Timothy came to ask St. Paul if it would be right to take a little wine for his stomach's sake."³

Another characteristic of Matheson's style, which in great measure contributes to its artistry, is the way in which he described or illustrated his arguments by painting vivid pictures. A sermon Matheson delivered in St. Ninian's Parish Church, Glasgow, created a typical reaction. It was described as a series of pictures "made to stand out solidly as in stereoscopy; and all the pictures were complementary of each other, and in their sum made one impression."⁴ Believing that the characters of the Bible are themselves creative works of art portrayed by the great Creator, Matheson first looked until he found the leit motiv in the Scriptural portraits; then he recreated the picture by unfolding the life in all its relations. This was his method in one of

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1. Moments on the Mount, p. 137.
 2. Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Mar. 29, 1906, p. 6.
 3. Reported in a letter by the Rev. Dr. Marshall B. Lang, as quoted in Life, p. 245.
 4. Saint Andrew, vol. V, Feb. 5, 1903, p. 9.

his great books, The Representative Men of the Bible. A similar discovery awaits the reader of its sequel, The Representative Men of the New Testament; also Studies in the Portrait of Christ, and The Representative Women of the Bible. His characters were completely abstracted from all consideration of time and place. A reviewer compared the first names to Beethoven's Eroica Symphony: "... we are amazed at the skill with which Dr. Matheson resolves the discords and brings us back to the simple cadence, the master idea with which he set out."¹ Commenting on Matheson's "impressionist temperament," Dr. Waddell wrote:

His power lay in holding up to others the same living impression of a subject which he himself had experienced. His preaching was not so much the elucidation of a text or a theme as the re-telling of a series of graphic impressions which the subject had already made on the preacher, each of which seemed to absorb for the time the whole truth of life. Hence also his writings, even his earlier works, assumed chiefly a descriptive rather than an argumentive form, and finally became by preference a series of portraits or picture studies.²

Moreover, Matheson wrote with originality. "There is no living theologian or exegete," commented a reviewer in The Expository Times, "(except possibly Dr. Parker) who brings to the study of the Bible so original a mind as Dr. Matheson ... There is never the smallest suggestion of originality for its own sake. There is no trumpeting of self

1. Ibid., vol. IV, Oct. 16, 1902, p. 10.

2. Life, pp. 350f.

in any shape or form. What is original is so because the author's mind is original."¹ It was this ingredient of individuality in Matheson's style that caused his listeners to acknowledge the inevitable truth of what they already, subconsciously, knew. Again and again the hearer would experience the surprise of recognition, and wonder why the obvious truth had not occurred to him before. The same is true of his writings. "It is the greatest praise that can be given to any writer that he commends his gospel in the sight of all men, so presenting the truth that at once we see it to be the truth."² A visitor to Innellan wrote:

I have heard Dr. Guthrie and Principal Caird, Norman Macleod and Principal Tulloch, and, in the English Church, the Bishop of Wakefield, the Master of the Temple, Stopford Brooke and Professor Momerie, and while not depreciating any of those distinguished divines, I say that there is a power of eloquence wielded by Dr. Matheson which places him on a level with any or all of them, while in originality of conception, and forcible, quaint expression, he excels them all.³

It is universally agreed, though sometimes forgotten, that lucidity and simplicity, not obscurity, are the earmarks of genuine scholarship. Even in his more theological works Matheson aimed at simplicity. For example, in the introduction to his Aids to the Study of German Theology

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1. The Expository Times, vol. XII, 1900-01, p. 82.
 2. Saint Andrew, vol. III, Nov. 14, 1901, p. 10.
 3. Cited in Life, p. 111.

he wrote:

We shall therefore discard all technical language. We shall never speak of an Ego or a non-Ego when we can describe our meaning by any English parallel. We shall avoid as much as possible those ungainly terms of nomenclature which, like the cherubim and the flaming sword, stand on the threshold of the subject, and drive away him who would enter in. We shall try to approach this study with that simplicity of statement and that clearness of illustration which alone can render it intelligible.¹

Similarly, Matheson's sermons and addresses, books and articles, are all characterized by clear and vigorous Anglo-Saxon words and definitions. His sole concern was to communicate, to instruct, to awaken. Therefore he clothed profound ideas in clear and distinct symbols. He was never abstruse and was always understandable by the average man. But yet he brought always a fertile and active mind to every production. All his writings are stamped with the quality of his vigorous scholarship. Concerning his literary works one commentator put it succinctly: "Dr. Matheson writes with undiminished charm, and unites, as few men have ever united, the devotional with the intellectual. Each chapter is a critical study in psychology; each chapter is a call to a higher consecration."²

His was an "intellectual devotion" by which he challenged all men to recognize the grandeur of life and the sacramental and symbolic character of the universe.

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1. Aids to the Study of German Theology, p. 4.
 2. The Expository Times, vol. XI, Oct., 1899, Sept., 1900, p. 77.

Perhaps the following paragraph, from one of his articles in The Monthly Interpreter, indirectly reveals the psychology underlying the effectiveness of his sermonic and literary style:

The discourses of the first three Gospels possess a quality which is possessed by all good sermons - an appearance of simplicity which is not real. They are constructed in order to tempt the intellect of the masses to enter the temple of truth. With a view to this end truth assumes the guise of simplicity. It speaks in the vernacular language of the crowd, it clothes itself in the metaphors familiar to the common eye. Men are beguiled into the intellectual temple by the semblance of something which is the reversal of intellectual, but the moment they have entered it they shall find that they have been¹ in the presence of angels unawares.

4. His Sermonic and Literary Themes

Matheson's appreciation for the literature of the Bible and his love of the common people kept him from choosing themes too commonplace, on the one hand, or too lofty, on the other. That he wrote on themes of universal interest may be attested by the world-wide reputation of his devotional productions. My Aspirations became a classic in his own lifetime and was translated into German soon after its publication.

Contrary to popular opinion, Matheson believed, with a conviction that motivated all his devotional writings, that the masses of the people know and appreciate least of

1. "The Three Christian Sympathies," The Monthly Interpreter, vol. I, 1885, p. 369.

all that which to them is most familiar. Concerning the Bible as literature, he wrote:

There is no book in Europe whose phrases are so familiar; there is, perhaps, no book in Europe of which the masses have so little artistic knowledge. ... The idea evidently is that, however much the Bible makes a demand upon the conscience, it makes no demand upon the culture. And I attribute this impression largely to the fact that the words of the book are so familiar to the conscience. ... What we want is a more distant prospect of the Bible. It is too near us. Its literature is eclipsed by its message of salvation. Its awful proximity to the soul prevents it from being seen by the eye. I intend to escape from this proximity.¹

And to this ideal he dedicated his literary powers. In his devotional books he invited the reader to a fresh vision of old subjects clouded by familiarity. The three characteristics which he found in Biblical portraiture - inwardness, timelessness, and youthfulness² - he retouched with the hand of a master.

Matheson was an apostle of hope in an age of despair. In a day when scientific discovery was secularizing the traditionally sacred, and the application of the empirical method to Biblical Criticism was undermining the faith of rational minds, Matheson reiterated the timeless truth of Biblical themes, endeavoring once again to re-sanctify the so-called "secular." "There were three great facts of Christian experience," wrote the Rev. T.R. Barnett, "which,

1. "The Characteristics of Bible Portraiture," The London Quarterly Review, vol. XCIV, July-Oct., 1900, p. 2.

2. Ibid., pp. 5, 6, 91.

I can personally testify, Dr. Matheson restated for us all."¹

One of these "three great facts of Christian experience" is reconciliation. "For Matheson," according to one of his private secretaries, "every mystery was solved by love."² This is no exaggeration. It might almost be conceded that love was his only theme. Everything he said was rooted and grounded in this first principle. Love was the quintessence of his own personal experience. In his favorite book of devotion, he stated his philosophy of love in poetic prose:

Love hallows every spot, however mean;
love beautifies every scene, however poor;³
love magnifies every form, however lowly.³

This "cosmic optimism" imbues every page of his devotional meditations. Love was to him "the fire of the heart," and the soul's "highest aspiration."⁴ Love is Christ immanent - the inwardness of revelation.⁵ Matheson's emphasis on the sacrificial love of the Cross and the glory of humanitarian service was said to have been a strong moral influence in the lives of his parishioners. "He showed us life in the light of the Eternal mercy, until God and man, man and man, pain and joy, sorrow and mirth, light and gloom, were all

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1. As quoted in Life, p. 236.
 2. Reported in private conversation with the Rev. T.W. M'Andrew.
 3. My Aspirations, p. 18.
 4. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
 5. Moments on the Mount, pp. 52f.

made one in the great mystic unity of God's love."¹

The second great fact of Christian experience which Matheson restated is "the perfection of man through suffering."² In one of the sermon synopses from Dr. Calderwood's notebook, the following statement is found: "... the definition of God as love implies the power to suffer ..."³ Suffering in the Christian context is synonymous with sacrificial love and the example of Christ is love's supreme sacrifice. In Matheson's view, the world is neither inherently evil nor perfectly good; it is incomplete. Sacrificial love is the New Testament road to fulfillment. Man is a mixture of good and evil because he is incomplete. His perfection is the reward for suffering, and it is this which unlocks the secret to the mystery of pain. For Matheson, Christian perfection is perfection through suffering.

More fundamental still, the New Testament attitude toward suffering is not that light will follow the darkness, but that the darkness is itself light. "It is the transformation of sorrow rather than the abolition of sorrow that is contemplated. The watchword of Christianity is 'perfect through suffering.' The glory of Christ is not something which He reaches as a compensation for the cross; it is the lifting up of the cross itself."⁴ And the author discovered this optimistic view of evil, anticipated by Joseph in the Old Testament when he said to his adversaries, "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it for good."

1. As quoted in Life, p. 236.

2. Ibid.

3. The Calderwood notebook.

4. The Representative Men of the Bible, vol. I, pp.177ff.

Again and again this same theme recurs throughout Matheson's writings:

My soul, do not despise the shadows of life. Do not say that they are exceptions to the proof of Divine Intelligence; do not exclaim when they are passing over thee that thy way is hid from the Lord. These shadows are sent to thee, not as hidings, but as revelations of the face of God; they come to thee as messengers of light. They tell thee what thou couldst not know without them - that there is a life stronger than the natural life. How couldst thou learn that, if the natural life never failed thee? How could faith begin if sight were perfect? How could trust exist if there were no darkness? It is the darkness that lights thee, it is from the shadows that thy spiritual nature is illuminated. From the sense of human emptiness thou reachest that prophetic hunger which is certain to be filled; thy life rises, phoenix-like, from the ashes of thy dying, and out of thy deepest darkness God says, "Let there be light."¹

A third significant fact of Christian experience which Matheson reiterated is the sacramental character of all life. This view of the world and of human experience, as one vast unity under the controlling power of God's reconciling love, became the absorbing theme of his latest thought and writing. Often it took the form of a personal emphasis on the place of religion in the common ventures of practical living. There was no room in his mind for the illicit dualism between the 'sacred' and the 'secular,' between culture and Christianity. Dr. Waddell stated

1. Moments on the Mount, pp. 167f.

Matheson's abiding mood succinctly:

The truth of Christianity, which chiefly appealed to him, was not only dogmatic definition of its special purposes and aims, but the broader revelation it contained of the immanence of the Divine in the human, of the eternal in the temporal, of the spiritual in the natural. Nothing indeed appealed to him more than this Christian consecration of the natural and commonplace, of the apparently common and unclean. This was the Gospel of his later years: the immanence of the Divine in the human, in all life and in all conditions of life. This, too, was the ever-recurring theme of his conversation, it was not so much a philosophy as simply spiritual conviction, learned direct from Christ.¹

Christian optimism, or realism, implies faith in the essential goodness of the world, and in its unity under Divine Love. A fourth natural implication is the belief in immortality. Almost a complete system of thought is contained in these four movements - variations, as it were, of the universal theme of Divine Love. In the fourth movement the liet motiv returns and the apostle of hope reassures the soul of its destiny in the Divine life from which it was first derived. The very nature of the soul itself points to its eternal destiny. Addressing his soul, Matheson wrote:

Thou art conscious within thee of great moral yearnings - yearnings which this world cannot fill. Thou feelest in thy heart aspirings which

1. Life, p. 352.

thy hand cannot reach, ideals which thy life cannot realise, resolves which thy will cannot execute. Are not these aspirations the voice of the Spirit within thee? ... Earth has filled all other capacities with employment and with enjoyment. This alone is unsatisfied here. Surely it shall be satisfied elsewhere, surely it shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of God's house and with the river of His pleasures. ... Thy spring demands a summer, thy dawn is the pledge of a day. The Spirit of God is good, therefore He shall lead thee into the land of uprightness.¹

This argument and hope recur again and again throughout Matheson's sermons and writings. It forms the consummation of his "cosmic optimism." According to his biographer, there is hardly a book or an article written by him in which there is not some reference to the doctrine of immortality.²

D. The Preacher as an Orator:

Dr. Matheson was gifted with a magnetic personality and a powerful, well-modulated voice. In power of eloquence he has been recognized on the same level with the greatest pulpit orators of his age - Dr. Guthrie, Principal Caird, Norman Macleod, Principal Tulloch, Joseph Parker, and Stopford Brooke.³ The one who influenced Matheson the most was the man for whom he held the highest admiration. His description

1. Op. cit., pp. 219 ff.

2. Life, p. 157.

3. A visitor to Innellan, as quoted in Life, p. 111.

of Parker's eloquence is in itself an index to his own ideals of oratory. In a 1902 issue of The British Weekly he wrote:

I first heard Parker preach about sixteen years ago in one of the churches of Edinburgh. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the special form of his eloquence. I have never heard anything exactly in the same line ... Parker was a comet; you could not trace his orbit or predict where he would go. He had all the notes of human nature in him, and he seemed to strike them at random. His preaching was a series of surprises; the unexpected happened. His transitions were swift and sweeping; the sun rose without warning and the night fell without twilight. ... He flashed out a thought in a single epigram, and ere it touched the ground, he turned away. I remember one such flash - I shall never forget it. It came in a sentence of five words - unheralded, unprepared for, unconnected with a sequel, but sufficient by its own light. The preacher cried, "Man's period is God's comma!" He said it as he ran by; but the message stuck to the wall of my heart, and it remains there.¹

Evidently the influence of Parker on Matheson was considerable for he adopted a similar style of oratory, especially during his Edinburgh ministry.

Already in his college days Matheson was singled out for his oratorical gifts. Dr. Blair, a fellow-student, testified that Matheson was regarded as the best orator among the students of his time.² He was especially remembered

1. The British Weekly, vol. XXXIII, Dec. 4, 1902, p. 187.

2. "Biographical Sketch," The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.

for the declamation of a prize essay in the Logic Class and was marked out for a great future.¹

During the first year of his Divinity course Matheson's gift of eloquence was put to the test, and heard to advantage, when he took part in an optional trial of extempore speaking on a subject set by Caird on the spot. Matheson acquitted himself so successfully that, later in life, Caird told a friend that Matheson's was "the best extempore speech he ever heard from the lips of mortal man."

A visitor to Innellan reported his surprise "to see a strong man, in the bloom and vigour of life, with head erect, and eyes wide open, take his place in the pulpit, and speak with a voice which, though it sank into soft and tender cadences as he told of human sorrows and sins filled one with the sense of splendid power."² His preaching style was characterized by spiritual animation and impassioned earnestness, complete abandon and warmth of sympathy. He delivered his message as a matter of life and death.

It is a remarkable testimony to Matheson's pulpit artistry that "many have heard him preach and gone away with the impression that he could see like other men."³ During the latter years of the ministry at Innellan his preaching gained in spontaneity, directness, and power. He advanced beyond the memorized sermon to the extemporaneous utterance.

1. "The Rev. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. IV, 1903-1904, p. 92.

2. Rev. Arthur Jenkinson, "Leaders of Thought in Scotland," The Thinker, vol. II, July-Dec., 1892, p. 329.

3. Life, p. 107.

This gave full vent to the exercise of his pulpit genius. His popularity gradually increased and his fame as "Matheson of Innellan" spread abroad.

At St. Bernard's his preaching was marked by a keen sense of humor and a frank outspokenness. His pulpit mannerisms became more unconventional. He spoke each Sunday to an overcrowded audience, composed largely of male students. His straightforward realism and often revolutionary interpretations appealed to the younger generation. His sermon would usually last twenty minutes. His only conscious gesture was the uplifted right arm. Occasionally he would introduce an appropriate smile. He spoke with ease and confidence, and with such earnestness that further gestures would have been out of place. As a matter of fact, the discerning eye of James Black detected an unconscious gesture which undoubtedly passed unnoticed by the average listener:

Perhaps his sad affliction, so heroically borne, made it impossible for him to criticise his own motions, but all through the sermon he had a continuous clutching action with the fingers of one hand, apparently quite unconscious and certainly quite aimless. In the end, such is the power of visible details, I was conscious only of that clutching hand.¹

According to Matheson's biographer, "He could feel a crowd, and a large congregation drew from him his very best."² His voice, like that of Parker whom he

1. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, pp. 163-164.
2. Life, p. 221.

emulated, had almost limitless possibilities. He grew more and more conscious of his gift of eloquence and his power to move the hearts of men. He sensed the responsiveness of a large audience. Hence St. Bernard's was even more suited to his capacities. One eye-witness speaks of his "characteristic habit of lifting his arms when he 'scored a point,' or when a sudden flash of humor surprised him in speech. On these occasions the very eyes that were blind seemed full of expression."¹ The influence of Joseph Parker upon Matheson was apparent in his Edinburgh ministry. Here he thrilled his audiences with graphic pictures, unconventional interpretations, and semi-humorous asides.² His later preaching was fresh, colorful, and spontaneous, giving unbridled freedom to his originality.

Matheson conducted the entire worship service himself. He would announce the morning Psalm and repeat the first verse from memory. He followed the same procedure with the hymns. Dr. Calderwood testifies: "At Innellan I would sit in the front pew ready to whisper the hymn number to him should his memory fail and it became necessary - but it never was!"³ The opening prayer, given with his right hand raised, was deeply moving and immediately made his listeners sensible of God's presence. In his later years

1. The Rev. Dr. Marshall B. Lang, as quoted in Life, p. 246, and as reported in private conversation.

2. Life, p. 317.

3. Reported in private conversation with Dr. Calderwood.

of ministry he departed from liturgical forms and uttered spontaneous prayers from his rich resources.

One who attended Matheson's services wrote:

Dr. Matheson's first prayer was often the finest part of the service. And what a prayer it was! A lifting up of the heart and upraising of the spirit, a reaching out after God, an outpouring of the soul, like the rapturous song of the lark, mounting higher and higher into the blue, to find in the limitless skies the satisfaction of its whole nature. I confess that it was this first prayer that often lifted us up into the Mystic Presence more than any other part of the service. How difficult it was to keep the eyes closed! There, upon the high pulpit, was the blind poet, with uplifted hand, always reaching out and up into his own illumined darkness, as if trying to catch something of the mystery of God and draw it down to man. He carried us all up into the heights along with him; and he drew down, for the most commonplace of us, something of the transfiguring blessing; so that, often before the rapture of aspiration was over, the eyes that watched the blind, praying man in the pulpit had to view him through a mist of unconscious tears. ... Through this man's aspirations, God laid His hand on the heart of us all. In other churches we could get more sustained eloquence, more elaborate theology, more orthodox statements of Christian doctrine; but in this poet-preacher there was the illuminating flash of a Divine imagination which revealed the beauties of many a hidden truth; there was an aspiration and an inspiration and a spiritual glamour which created an atmosphere of worship that infected us all with a sense of God's very self.¹

1. As quoted in Life, pp. 235f.

Scripture lessons were given from memory. The beadle would leave the Bible open so that "when the minister came to read the lesson he could look down on the open book as if he were actually reading words."¹ Never once was he known to have made a slip in his thirty years of ministry. In place of a longer Scriptural reading from the Sunday morning lesson, Matheson would often give a short meditation on two or three verses. These were very popular with the people.² The same freshness and interest displayed in his sermons was present in every detail of the worship. "The whole was a memorable service," writes one of his admirers, "a veritable hymn of praise from first to last."³

E. The Preacher and His Pastoral Office:

Innellan was the parish where Matheson made his reputation as a writer and preacher. It is believed by some that his later years of ministry simply added to the fame that he earned there. Matheson sometimes spoke of his years at Innellan as "the golden years of his life."⁴ No better church could have been found than the small, quiet, parish of Innellan for the young studious minister. Matheson himself was quite aware of what an ideal place it was. When he was yet a student he said he should like to be the pastor

1. W.M. Parker, "The Rev. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. III, March 19, 1942, p. 280.

2. Reported in private conversation with Mr. T.W. M'Andrew.

3. "A Woman's Recollections of Dr. Matheson," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 8.

4. Rev. S. Smith, "Dr. George Matheson," The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 516.

there in some future day. The church membership was small and there was little poverty among his congregation. He was seldom called upon to perform funerals and marriages. The parochial duties being few, Matheson had much time for his studies.

George Matheson resolved from the very first of his career not to shrink in any duty his profession imposed on him. He was determined not only to be a preacher but also a pastor. "For eighteen years," according to Saint Andrew, "he ministered to the people of Innellan, and never did a man perform his duties more faithfully, and never was a minister more beloved."¹

The Rev. Dr. R.S. Calderwood testifies that "Matheson was always most diligent in pastoral visitation, going out almost every weekday afternoon to call on his congregation."² He won the admiration of even those who had opposed his coming to Innellan by his intense interest in the welfare of his congregation. His home was welcome to all who called, and his visits from home to home were uplifting. His duties, although limited, were performed with unflinching punctuality and good judgement. His sympathy for the sick and bereaved was genuine and sincere. He was most attentive in rendering those services a pastor is called upon to perform at such times. He won his way to the mothers' hearts by his fondness for children. Baptisms and marriages

1. "Beyond the Bourne," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9.

2. As reported by Dr. Calderwood in private conversation.

were times of joy for him. "Matheson," Macmillan reported, "fulfilled these duties with a promptitude, a grace, and a success that ministers with the most perfect eyesight would have difficulty in excelling."¹

When Matheson first settled as pastor of Innellan the church was only a chapel. Within five years a sum of nearly three thousand pounds was raised for church improvements. The chapel was erected into a parish and a manse was built. Matheson ably conducted the meetings of office bearers, securing their cooperation for the good of the church. The raising of the three thousand pounds is proof enough of the united effort he gained from all. Alexander R. McFarlane wrote that "the spiritual life of the congregation... was quickened, and they were guided into new spheres of Christian usefulness."² What greater testimony than this is needed to show how truly successful Matheson was in fulfilling his duty as pastor of Innellan!

Although it was in Innellan that George Matheson made his reputation as a preacher and writer, there can be no doubt, as the Rev. Sydney Smith remarked, "that his greatest sermons belonged to his Edinburgh pastorate, that it was there that he leapt into the front rank of orators, gaining new powers of utterance and learning to walk with surer tread among the thoughts which had long towered before his spiritual eye."³ It was a considerable transformation from the

1. Life, p. 89

2. "A Noted Blind Preacher," The Young Man, vol. XX, 1906, p. 233.

3. The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 516.

tranquil and circumscribed sphere in Innellan to the busy Edinburgh parish of nearly eighteen hundred members. At first, many felt that his impediment would prevent his fulfilling the onerous parochial duties. But such was not the case. Without flinching he diligently undertook the arduous task, overcoming many an otherwise unsurmountable obstacle along the way. In a surprisingly brief time he had made the acquaintance of every family in his church. Within the short space of four months he had visited not only the whole of the seventeen hundred communicants, but all the adherents as well.¹

Matheson was more than a prophet; he was a priest. At once he completely identified himself with his people by throwing himself heartily into the midst of their social life. According to The Scotsman, "Edinburgh has in that respect known no more popular minister."² He was always active in seeking the good of his people. "Many a sick-bed was cheered by his presence, and his parishioners have been known to say that when ill nothing did them more good than a talk with Dr. Matheson."³ All who knew him held him in affectionate regard. A perusal of the letters Matheson addressed to his congregation shows

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1. A. Stewart, "Dr. George Matheson," The Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, April, 1901, p. 242.
 2. "The Late Rev. Dr. Matheson, Edinburgh," The Scotsman, Aug. 29, 1906, p. 6.
 3. Ibid.

the intimate relationship which must have existed between them, and the shepherd's deep-seated concern for his sheep. These letters he wrote to his flock at the beginning of each new calendar year and every new school year. They ring with the melody of his poetic spirit and each contains a helpful sermonette. A specially interesting example is Matheson's first New Year's greeting to his congregation:

My dear Friends - At the opening of a New Year I take up my pen to greet you. It is my first New Year amongst you, and yet it comes to me rather as an end than as a beginning. When, a few months ago, I entered upon the work of this Parish, I felt like the patriarch Noah setting out upon a flood of waters. At the opening of this New Year I stand secure on the foothold of Mount Ararat, and greet you with an olive branch of peace. If I ever experienced any doubt, it is gone, and gone forever. I have made trial of all your organizations, and I find that they are not beyond the limits of my strength. Pardon me for speaking so much of myself; I feel that in saying this I am really expressing a tribute to you. It is to your sympathy, your encouragement, your cooperation, your kind forbearance, that I am in no small measure indebted for that restful confidence with which I meet this opening year. On my part, therefore, it is for you a year of prayerfulness. I breathe for you all the current wishes of the season - the wish for a Good New Year, for a Happy New Year, for Many Returns of the Year. But I breathe these wishes into no human ear, for I know that no human ear could grant them. There is

One alone that can make our years good, there is One alone that can make our years happy, there is One alone that can cause our years to return again with joy. Into His ear I breathe my golden wishes for you, into His heart I pour my prayers for your rejoicing. For each and all, for young and old, for those who are learning how to labour, and those who are learning how to wait, I ask in the depth of my spirit that this new circling sun may prove "the acceptable year of the Lord." - I am, my dear friends, yours very sincerely,
George Matheson.¹

Charles Parkhurst testified that St. Bernard's took on new life and activity after Matheson's first year in that parish.² Many were attracted to "Dr. Matheson's Church," as they called it, not only because of the stimulating instruction, but "on the ground of the moral victory which the tone and gesture and vitality of the preacher eloquently declared."³ The congregation began to think of itself as an active missionary agency under the leadership and inspiration of a man of God; not so much as a mere passive organization. There was a noticeable increase in the church attendance and in the Sunday School enrollment.

Matheson kept in close touch with all the functions of his parish. He was concerned about increasing the number of singers in the choir, and he emphasized the importance

1. St. Bernard's Parish Magazine, Jan., 1887, p. 1.

2. As quoted in Life, p. 239.

3. Sydney Smith, The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 516.

of the Boys' Brigade. In addition to the yearly round of pastoral visitation he answered continual calls to speak to the various organizations within his large parish, including the Children's Church, The Teachers' Meeting, the Literary Society, the Juvenile Missionary Society, and the Ladies Work. Each week he taught a Bible Class, boys and girls respectively on alternate Thursdays. He conducted a weekly prayer meeting.

Since Matheson did not figure prominently in the church courts he devoted his time and energy - with the exception of outside lectures, addresses, and sermons - to his own parish. The parish magazine included a personal letter to Matheson from his predecessor, the Rev. Mr. McMurtrie. It is of particular importance because it was written only five months after Matheson's ministry had begun. McMurtrie wrote:

I need not say again that you have my very best wishes. But I want to say how greatly I enjoyed your discourses when I had lately the opportunity of being in St. Bernard's on a Sunday; and how glad I was to see, from the crowded state of the Church, that, so far from having done any harm to the Congregation by accepting my present appointment, I had furnished the occasion of their receiving a great stimulus.¹

This is strong confirmation of the opinion that Matheson introduced new life and activity into the parish. The parish magazine remarks that Matheson read McMurtrie's

1. St. Bernard's Parish Magazine, Dec., 1886, p. 2.

letter with deep gratification.

One of the many speeches made in Matheson's favor at the congregational meetings of St. Bernard's Parish was that of T.J. Wilson. The following words were spoken two months before the official call was given. The congregation was considering the feasibility of issuing the call to Matheson:

We know that there is nothing from which any one would shrink in his appearance in the pulpit, nor in his conduct of the service. These are very much as if he did not suffer from the infirmity. Moreover, we must all have felt that, even without the use of his eyes, he gets into quick and remarkable contact with his audience. He must have made good use of his sight when he had it, for many of his illustrations are naturally drawn from sight, and we, as we hear him, feel that he is quite in sympathy with us who see.¹

Thirteen years later, in 1899, the Kirk-Session met to discuss resolutions with reference to Matheson's resignation:

The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to: That this meeting of the congregation of St. Bernard's Parish Church desires to express its deep sense of the loss which the Congregation will sustain by the resignation of Dr. Matheson, senior Minister, its high appreciation of the services which he has rendered during his thirteen years ministry in St. Bernard's, and its earnest hope that he may be spared for many years

1. Ibid., Mar., 1886, p. 3.

after his retirement in the enjoyment of a well-earned repose, - and appoints this resolution to be communicated to the Presbytery of Edinburgh and to Dr. Matheson ...¹

At a farewell gathering Matheson and his sister were presented with gifts of appreciation. In a brief farewell talk Matheson had occasion to reminisce about his work among them: "My sermons may have flown over your heads like the bird of Paradise; but my life has been level with your own - an obstructed life, a circumscribed life, but a life of boundless sanguineness, a life of quenchless hopefulnes, a life which has beat persistently against the cage of circumstance, and which even at the time of abandoned work has said, not 'Goodnight' but 'Good morning.'"²

F. Summary and Conclusions:

Dr. George Matheson has been estimated by The Sunday Review as "incomparably the most brilliant occupant of the Church of Scotland pulpit during the closing decades of the nineteenth century."³ "Quite apart from the infliction of blindness," wrote The Times, "over which he seemed to triumph, and which won for him the sympathy of Queen Victoria, he was recognized as the greatest preacher in the Scottish Church since Dr. Caird."⁴

1. Ibid., Aug., 1899, p. 3.

2. Ibid., Dec., 1899, p. 2.

3. "A Biographical Sketch," The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 371.

4. "Obituary of Rev. George Matheson, D.D.," The Times, Aug. 31, 1906, p. 4.

Before moving to St. Bernard's he was renowned as "Matheson of Innellan" and his name became, like "Robertson of Brighton," permanently associated with that place. His preaching attracted many visitors to Innellan's summer resort. Likewise at St. Bernard's he drew overflowing crowds to hear him preach. He was equally popular outside of his parishes. The British Monthly observed that "when he is announced to preach in Glasgow, there is a crowded congregation, drawn from every corner of the city."¹ It is noteworthy that when he preached his famous sermon, "The Boundlessness of the Bible," at the Methodist Missionary Anniversary in Leeds, he attracted an audience of nearly three thousand in one of the largest chapels in that city.² His popularity was equally great in Ireland. Baptists as well as Methodists praised his preaching as "a powerful quickener of the mind and heart and soul."³

That his Edinburgh ministry was an amazing success may be seen from the fact that during the first year he was invited to deliver inaugural addresses to the theological students of such different colleges as Edinburgh University, United Presbyterian Hall, and the Free Church College of Glasgow.⁴ At St. Bernard's the sermons he delivered

1. "Rev. George Matheson, " The British Monthly, vol. IV Jan., 1904, p. 92.

2. Saint Andrew, vol. V, Oct. 22, 1903, p. 9.

3. "Dr. George Matheson, The Blind Preacher-Poet," The Baptist Magazine, vol. XCIV, Feb., 1902, p. 68.

4. The Glasgow Herald, Aug. 30, 1906, p. 9.

"marked an era in the spiritual history of many."¹
In 1890, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. We cannot resist quoting from The Glasgow Herald a striking tribute from Alexander Fiddes to the success of Matheson's ministry at St. Bernard's:

In course of his ministry in St. Bernard's, Mr. Fiddes said, he had abundant opportunity of learning something of what Dr. Matheson was to the congregation among whom he laboured for fourteen busy years. It was not possible in a few sentences, to give a description or appreciation of so many-sided a ministry, but there were two aspects which had often been brought under his notice, and which he should like to put on record. One was the deep and absorbing interest which his preaching possessed for many men and women. The great congregations which crowded the church week by week were proof that he had a message to his times, and many were the testimonies which had been borne on him of the effect which Dr. Matheson's ministrations produced on his hearers. The other aspect was the impression which his indomitable perseverance made upon those who were brought in contact with him. Even those who could not always understand the eloquence of the preacher admired the courage of the man. ... To all who knew him he set a splendid example of fortitude in the face of difficulty. In the minds of those who enjoyed his ministry in St. Bernard's, many of them now far away, the memory of his unique gifts and striking personality would live for long.²

The preaching of Matheson left a permanent impression on his hearers. It is the unanimous testimony

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1. The Sunday Review, vol. I, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 372.
 2. "St. Bernard's Church," The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 6.

of all who heard him that they could never forget the magnetic effect of his pulpit personality. The effect grew to such a degree that "those who listened to him were transformed into single individuals to whom the preacher spoke soul to soul. ..."¹ He preached to a varied audience from all ranks and classes of society; scholars and scientists, clergymen and professors, lawyers, artisans, merchants and the working class. It was reported that the young people of St. Bernard's "could not resist his manly eloquence."² He was "more than a popular preacher - he was a teacher of religion," witnesses the Rev. Mr. Drummond, a one-time member of Matheson's Bible Class.³ Hence his preaching held peculiar charm for the University students of all denominations who flocked to St. Bernard's on a Sunday morning. His unconventional interpretation appealed to the student mind and he answered their puzzling queries about science and religion and the problems of modern philosophy.

Although Matheson was happiest when he felt that "the common people heard him gladly," it was among the educated classes that his influence was specially strong. The educated classes, says one who wrote from personal knowledge, "were attracted by his intellectual force, as well as by his eloquence and dramatic power."⁴

1. The British Weekly, vol. XL, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 516.

2. Dr. Currie of St. Bernard's, as quoted in Life, p. 225.

3. Ibid., p. 247.

4. "George Matheson," Dictionary of National Biography (second supplement, 1912), vol. II, p. 588.

Matheson may claim equal rank with the great giants of the Scottish pulpit, Thomas Chalmers, and John Caird. According to Matheson's biographer, he not only ranked with these in pulpit power; he discharged faithfully and successfully the duties of a parish minister for a longer period of time than any one of the ministers named. "It is no exaggeration" Macmillan concluded, "to claim this as one of the most unique ministries, not only in the Church of Scotland but in the Church of Christ, not only in our generation but during the Christian era."¹

1. Life, p. 318.

CHAPTER VI: MATHESON AS A POET

Though known best to his own generation as a theological writer and preacher, it is primarily as a poet and hymn-writer that Matheson is remembered today. Wherever his name is mentioned in the Christian world, his hymns, particularly "O Love that wilt not let me go," come first to mind.

However, he resembles John Keble in being a poet writing on religious themes, rather than a pure hymnist. He never took himself very seriously as a hymn-writer, nor did he originally intend his one book of verse, Sacred Songs,¹ to be regarded as a volume of hymns. He wrote in the Preface of his desire "to avoid pretentiousness by seeming to claim for them [the verses] more than they aspire to be."² Macmillan thought that Matheson's attitude was justifiable, for he was only protecting himself against what might be said by the critics.³ Though Matheson did not claim to be a hymnist, his admirers the world over have largely reversed the opinion which he held regarding his own work. In the third edition of Sacred Songs (1904), he expressed his deep satisfaction and appreciation that so many of his sacred poems had found their way into various hymnals.

His poems were written at different periods. Some of them, in the same strain as those in Sacred Songs, were collected from time to time and though prepared evidently for publication, remained unpublished. Others first appeared

1. This volume first appeared in 1890.

2. Sacred Songs, p. v.

3. Life, p. 184.

in magazines or periodicals, such as The Sunday Magazine, The Expository Times, Great Thoughts, and Good Words. Most of his poems, however, first appeared in Life and Work, from which they were republished in Sacred Songs.¹

A. Early Efforts at Poetry:

At what age Matheson began to compose verse it is difficult to determine. When a student at Glasgow Academy, he wrote a poem, "Bethany Tears," which was so much admired by his schoolfellows, that they subscribed to have it printed. That piece and other youthful attempts already displayed the religious sentiment which was to pervade his subsequent poems.

Most of his juvenile verse, some of which later appeared in Sacred Songs, was composed during summer holidays at various Firth of Clyde seaside resorts. Concerning these early compositions, Macmillan wrote: "One or two of them are equal to anything that he wrote of the same kind afterwards, - with the exception of course of his famous hymn 'O Love that wilt not let me go,' - in particular a poem on the 'Withered Fig-tree.'" There are eight verses to this poem, the first two of which are as follows:

Not because the fruit was clinging
To thy branches, withered tree,
Came the awful sentence, ringing,
"Grow not henceforth ought on thee."

'Twas not time for thee to render
What required the ripening hours,
And that Heart so kind, so tender,
Sought not what surpassed thy powers.²

1. See Appendix B.

2. Op. cit., p. 58.

This early period saw the composition of two longer pieces, of about a thousand lines each.¹ The first of these, "Zillah, or the Life before the Flood" (in revision, "The Last of the Antediluvians"), deals with a sacred theme. Zillah, the daughter of Jubal and the beloved of Japheth, is the leading character. The poem tells the story of her death in the waters of the Flood, despite the struggle of Japheth to save her. There is much graphic description and dramatic power, as can be seen from the description of the first threat of the deluge:

Up from the hollow caverns of the earth
There comes a rushing sound like the great hum
Of some far-distant ocean; yet ere long
The murmur rolls more loudly, and at last
The ground begins to shake beneath their feet,
As if the very heart of the vast world
Were palpitating with an awful dread.
They stand aghast, each scans his neighbor's face
And finds no comfort there.²

The second composition, entitled, "The Blind Girl's Retrospect," was written in Matheson's eighteenth or nineteenth year. It was just at this time that his eyesight was failing. He declared that the plot of the poem was not of great importance. He wrote:

It [the poem] is not so much designed to depict any adventures peculiar to a blind girl, as to ascertain two things: First--With what imaginary analysis one born blind might associate the descriptions of visual phenomena; and Second--How far the imagination could extend without the aid of the visual faculty.³

1. A careful search has not uncovered the full texts of these two poems. There is no evidence that they were reprinted in any periodical. It is only in Macmillan's Life, pp. 60-68, that any reference can be found to them today.

2. Ibid., p. 63.

3. Ibid., p. 64.

In one passage, the blind girl says:

Perhaps as one on whose familiar ear
The ticking of the clock has fallen long
Grows passive, and forgets the tuneless sound,
So has the habit of this darkness grown,
That I in vain would find where it abides,
And cannot feel the horror it involves.¹

Concerning these early efforts of Matheson, Dr. Somerville, a former pastor of Blackfriars Parish, Glasgow, supplied some interesting information:

The poetical genius of George Matheson culminated in that beautiful hymn "O Love that wilt not let me go," but there were many previous excursions into the field of poesy. . . . He was a poet before he became a preacher. Some of us who knew him in early years expected that he would become famous as one of the great poets of our day. I remember that in the summer of 1862, there was a company of students resident in Dunoon: D.M. Gordon, now Principal Gordon of Queen's University, Canada; C.M. Grant, now the Rev. Dr. Grant of Dundee; Finlay M'Donald, late minister of Coupar-Angus; and Jas. Fraser, now minister of Rogers Hill, Nova Scotia. . . . We regularly walked out together, and talked on all subjects in heaven and earth. Matheson was resident with his parents in one of the grander houses of the West Bay, but his spirit of comradeship was strong, and he always endeavored to join us as we passed towards Morag's Fairy Glen and to the Innellan shore; and he had nearly always a new addition to a great poem on which he was then engaged. The subject was "Zillah, or the Life before the Flood." But strangely enough he would not recite the lines until we led him into what he considered suitable surroundings. His favorite spot was an opening in the grove under Ardmillan, then the residence of Professor Buchanan (Logic Bob). We had to lead him to the exact spot where the opening Firth could be seen. He was most particular about the pose and the outlook, though blind; and then he would begin to

1. Ibid., p. 68.

recite with all enthusiasm. The picture of the youthful Zillah sitting beside the aged Methusaleh asking strange, imperious questions, I still remember vividly. Some of the lines I remembered for many years, and I often wondered why "Zillah" did not appear in print. She was one of the factors in my literary being.¹

B. Matheson and His Favorite Poets:

One can hardly speak of a "first" influence upon the work of a poet, because it is difficult for even the poet himself to know which influence was earliest. Nevertheless, Matheson recalled: "It was Dr. Macduff who gave me my first sense of literary beauty ... my first idea of sanctity, my first real conviction of the beauty of Christianity."² Macmillan also noted the influence which the poetry of Macduff had upon Matheson³ and wrote of the man:

He [John Ross Macduff] was what may be called a sweet preacher, an exponent of the devout life, a gentle radiance that brightened the path of Christians on their pilgrimage from earth to heaven. He was the author of books that had a phenomenal circulation; some of them reaching the unprecedented figure of three millions. Such volumes as Memories of Bethany, Grapes of Eshcol, Memories of Olivet, Morning and Night Watches, Palms of Elim, and many others, found readers in every part of the world, and no name was so universally known and respected by the Christian public of his day as that of Dr. Macduff.⁴

Matheson, as a member of Sandyford Church, Glàsgow, sat under Macduff's preaching throughout boyhood and early manhood. The

1. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

2. Duncan Campbell, Hymns and Hymn Makers, p. 121; John Ross Macduff was minister of Sandyford Church, Glasgow.

3. Life, p. 74.

4. Ibid., p. 76.

two became lifelong friends and in a letter to Miss Macduff, Dr. Macduff's daughter, Matheson in 1895 indicated the general influence Macduff had on him: "The tones of Dr. Macduff's voice are even now unconsciously reproduced in my own. I have retained more of his pulpit influence than that of any other teacher."¹

Moreover, Matheson had a particular fondness for the poems of Burns and Tennyson. He once introduced Burns' "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon" into a sermon with telling effect, thus linking himself with another blind poet-preacher, Thomas Blacklock, one of the earlier admirers of Burns.² Again, in an address which he delivered at the annual dinner of the Edinburgh Ninety Burns Club in October, 1904, he spoke of sympathy and universality as the two most distinguishing characteristics of Burns' verse. He illustrated the note of sympathy by a reference to the poem on the Daisy:

Did it ever occur to you to ask why he speaks of the flower as "crimson tipped?" Is it not the fact you say. Of course: but I doubt very much if that is why Burns said it. Burns is not the maker of an almanac. He never records facts just because they are facts, he has always a reason beyond. And if I am not greatly mistaken, he had a reason here. He has been calling the daisy "modest." What is the expression? Is it not blushing--blushing crimson? Could any two epithets come together more beautifully, more harmoniously? Crashaw once wrote a poem on the Miracle of Cana of Galilee; he wrote it in one line - "The Conscious Water knew its Lord, and blushed." Burns, I think, had the same thought about the daisy. It grew upon the mountain-top and saw the glory. And it blushed before the glory. It felt its own inherent nothingness and the crimson dyed its face.³

1. A letter dated March 14, 1895, written from St. Bernard's Crescent, Edinburgh, and quoted by Macmillan, *Ibid.*, p. 81.

2. Alexander Stewart, "Dr. George Matheson," The Sunday Magazine, vol. XXX, 1901, p. 244.

3. Life, p. 348.

As regards the note of universality in Burns, Matheson remarked:

This man is an instrument of ten strings - of all possible strings. He wears the garb of Scotland but he is the poet of Humanity. His accent is provincial but his speech is cosmopolitan. He sings in a national dialect, but he delivers a message to man. The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice of Jacob. We claim him as the property of our separate land, but in truth he has made our land universal. This man, in a literary sense, has soared above principalities and powers. He is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Roman, bond nor free. He is neither Dutch nor German; he is neither, and yet he is all these - he is human. It is on this we base his claim to immortality.¹

Matheson also greatly admired Tennyson.² What the editors of the Handbook to the Church Hymnary have written about Tennyson might be applied to Matheson: "His mind moved habitually on high levels; his teaching was always of what ennobles and exalts; and though his sensitive spirit was acutely alive to the questionings and spiritual uncertainties of his age, which his work faithfully reflects, his faith in Divine goodness and guidance and in the life beyond, gave comfort and strength to his generation."³

1. Ibid., pp. 348-349.

2. As we have already seen, Tennyson likewise admired Matheson's theological writings.

3. Moffatt and Patrick, Handbook to the Church Hymnary, pp. 516-517.

Realizing, of course, the great difference between the poetic statures of Tennyson and Matheson, it is nevertheless interesting to compare them. Towards the end of his life, Matheson was queried by William Taylor, author of Twelve Favourite Hymns, as to the symbolism in the last verse of "O Love that wilt not let me go." In replying, Matheson compared his symbolism to that of Tennyson. He said: "Tennyson seems to take the rose as a symbol of love." Then he remarked: "My meaning, however, was, I think, less artistic. I was thinking of two kinds of blossom - the white and the red; the blossom that comes from prosperity, and the blossom that blooms out of sacrifice. That described in the hymn was to be the latter; I took 'red' as the symbol of that sacrificial life which had bloomed by shedding its life."¹ On another occasion, being questioned about the same matter, Matheson answered: "I was thinking of the blood of the martyrs,"² an imagery which we find in two passages of Tennyson's poetry:

And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.³

and

My dust would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.⁴

1. "Dr. Matheson's Famous Hymn," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, p. 9. Feb. 15, 1906. See also William Taylor Twelve Favourite Hymns, pp. 143-144.

2. Communicated by M.S.M. on Feb. 1, 1936, to The Scotsman, Feb. 3, 1936.

3. "In Memoriam," XVIII, ll. 3-4.

4. "Maud," Part I, XXII, XI, ll. 3-8.

It is also interesting to compare Tennyson's apostrophe to Christmas Day in "In Memoriam:"

Rise, happy morn, rise holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night;
O father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.¹

with Matheson's "Christmas Nuptial Bells," beginning

Rise, bridal morn.²

In this poem, Matheson visualizes Christmas morn as a time when "the day new-born meets the shadows ending," and Christ is called "This young hope of Glory."

There are a number of other parallels which could be drawn. While Tennyson's influence may have shaped his thought, it is very unlikely that Matheson would consciously borrow from Tennyson, or from anyone. His natural independence of mind, as well as his inherent integrity of character, would have forbidden that.

C. His Poetical Style:

The best of Matheson's hymns, for most of them are not in the first rank, fulfill most of the conditions for hymn-writing as recommended by Lord Selborne, writer on ecclesiastical matters, and William Garrett Horder, compiler of hymn-collections. The former declared: "A good hymn should have simplicity, freshness, and reality of feeling; a consistent elevation of tone, and a rhythm easy and harmonious, but not jingling or trivial. Its language may be homely but should not be slovenly or mean."³

1. Op. cit., pt. XXX, st. 8.

2. Sacred Songs, p. 94.

3. Roundell Palmer (1st Earl of Selborne), The Book of Praise, p. v.

Horder maintained that "the poetic element must be present to render rhymed lines a hymn ... not in the larger and freer sense in which it is used in poetry of a secular kind; but within narrow limits and of a more sober type, the poetic element must be present, or the verses remain prose and cannot rightly be called a Hymn."¹

Matheson's poetry was written with a greater simplicity of style than characterized his sermonic and devotional literature. The diction of his poems was, with few exceptions, unaffected. He could not have sung in such a medium. On the contrary, with the warmth of his imagination, he gave language a luminous quality, and a richness of association that belonged to poetic inspiration rather than to studied phrase. Moreover, there is seldom any obscurity or vagueness to trouble the reader. We are conscious that he wanted to express himself in the most lucid form he could.

Furthermore, he sought to simplify each sacred song to one central idea. His first line often gives us the cue to his idea as, "Make me a captive Lord." Thus, immediately, the theme of the verse is known. From the first line, which sets the tone of the complete poem, the hymn progresses swiftly to the climax. The whole poem usually contains but one evangelical idea; metre, diction, and imagery all subserve this theme. Thus almost every song becomes an epitome of some important Christian idea or teaching. This simplicity, results in an unusual vividness,

1. W.G. Horder, The Hymn Lover, pp. 7-11.

and gives a clear picture of the message he wishes to convey. It is this natural expression and simplicity of his Sacred Songs, which helped to make them alive and real to people.

The imagery of his poetry is forceful and impressive, and his figures of speech served him as tools for the clear delineation of the pictures he wished to paint. He never used images irrevelantly, but wrote with the tact of a writer in harmony with his theme, animating his figures with reality and deep inner meaning. His images were drawn from his own interests, so that he was always illustrating one facet of his experience by another. Much that played an important part in his life or left its mark in some way upon his mind occurs in the poetry, not only as subject-matter, but as imagery. While his subject-matter was confined largely to religious themes, his figures of speech reveal the width of his intellectual explorations.

Matheson expressed his own conception of the importance of imagery:

The poet gives to every thought a body. He clothes one thing in the likeness of another thing. His mission is to find the analogies of nature. ... In every object of nature and in every thought of mind he sees, or dreams that he sees, the similarity to some other thing. He unclothes each form in order that he may clothe it anew, in order that he may behold it dressed in the similitude of something else. ... If he beholds the dawning of the day, he interprets it as the rosy hand of morn unbarring the gates of light.¹

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, pp. 46-47.

Some of his imagery came from that body of pious discourse which was the common property and language of the churchgoer, and the popular preacher. Made up of Biblical phraseology, mingled with evangelical theological commentary, it nevertheless spoke vividly to many in images that had become highly conventionalized. This flavor probably accounted in measure for the widespread acceptance of his songs. One secret of his appeal was that he expressed in phraseology and images, already a part of the heritage of the average Protestant, the various experiences of religious life so vividly that many found in Matheson's lines a mirror to their own thoughts. Nevertheless, the familiar imagery used was often reinvested with a new imaginative guise, indicating his powers both of observation and of suggestion. He thus compelled his reader's eye to follow along.

Matheson's imagery, moreover, was not all of equal caliber. Occasionally, even in his sacred verse, he was guilty of the same extravagant way of speaking as characterized some of his sermons and devotional literature. For example, he wrote in "The Chariots of God":

Oh, make my clouds Thy chariots to bear
my spirit home,
And let them lift me far aloft above the
starry dome,
Above the host of seraphim, above the
angel choir,
Into Thy presence face to face to find
my heart's desire.¹

But many are more conservative as "The Dwelling Place of God."

1. Sacred Songs, p. 116.

Thy home, O Lord is everywhere
Yet nowhere art Thou revealed;
For when I say, 'Thou dwellest there',
One half Thy glory is concealed.¹

The Bible was one of the most important influences upon the entire body of Matheson's poetry, providing him with a rich store upon which to draw. The Old Testament, to which in all his work he made the greatest number of allusions, furnished ample dramatic incident, romance, allegory, and poetry to satisfy his need. The other qualities of the Bible which lingered in Matheson's poetry include; its rhythm and cadence, its parallelism or the antithetical character of style, and its dramatic and pictorial quality.

The Bible influenced the language of his poetry. Scores of passages could be cited to illustrate the verbal likeness between his songs and Scripture. In many instances he closely followed Biblical verses, quoting some directly: "Lord, it is good to be here,"² "Peace, be still,"³ and Hallowed be Thy Name."⁴ Other times he made reference to Biblical passages, though not quoting them directly, and with slight changes in wording: "Peace to the lowly hearted; glory to God most high"⁵ suggests "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace ..."⁶; "The Isles, the isles shall wait"⁷

1. Ibid., p. 113.

2. "Messenger Shadows," Sacred Songs, p. 45; cf. Matt. 17:4 "Lord it is good for us to be here."

3. "Divine Rest," Ibid., p. 6.

4. "The Threshold of Prayer," Ibid., p. 157.

5. "The Nativity," Ibid., p. 42.

6. Luke 2:14.

7. "Island Moments"; Ibid., p. 40.

is inspired by "The isles shall wait for me."¹

However, one feels that occasionally Matheson's poetry contains too many familiar images. Phrases like "my stony pillow," "the house of God," "the gates of heaven," "along the Dolorous Way" abound. There are also many variants of these and similar images. At times his practice reminds one of Samuel Johnson's dictum concerning the "perpetual repetition" which tended to occur in devotional poetry because of the "paucity of its topics."

Most of his poems, moreover, were written to Scriptural texts. In Sacred Songs a text is printed directly under the title of each poem. For example, the six-verse poem, "Jacob at Bethel," is based on the text "and Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not" (Genesis 28:16). The first two lines run:

Thou has been with me in the dark and cold,
And all the night I thought I was alone.

Another six-verse poem, "One in Christ," beginning "Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all," has for its text "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10). Again, "The Guild of Humanity," in six verses, beginning "We shall meet around the cross brothers," was inspired by the passage "Your companion in tribulation" (Revelation 1:9). "Christian Freedom," with its opening words "Make me a

1. Isaiah 60:9

captive, Lord," has as its text "Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:1). In Matheson's hands, Scriptural texts shine with a new face, speak with a divine voice, and utter the very word that the soul needed. He believed that his vocation was to interpret man's varied life in the light of the divine, as seen in the influence of the Scriptures upon his poetry.

Another characteristic of Matheson's sacred verse is his use of illustrations from nature. This is evident in the early poem, "The Last of the Antediluvians," where his keen observation of natural objects is surprisingly vivid. The beauties of nature which Matheson saw in his very early days, and which he stored in his mind, were conjured up when he wanted to use them in poetic expression.

As an example, there is a passage in the poem just mentioned in which a little girl naively asks: "What lies beneath the sea?"

Surely some land as beautiful as ours,
For nature here has tried to mimic earth;
And when the moon is lighted in our sky,
In the great sea another moon is hung
Perhaps we too dwell down below a sea.
Is not yon heaven like a great ocean, blue,
And on its surface may not spirits float,¹
And wonder who are we that dwell beneath?

Another example occurs in the lines where Japheth, pleading with his father for liberty to take Zillah into the ark, describes the beauty of her countenance and its affinities

1. Life, p. 62.

with nature and the spiritual:

'Tis like a sky, where night is never seen,
Where twilight shadows never meet the eye,
Where sombre clouds love not to linger long,
For happiness looks sunlight from her eyes,
Shedding the lustre of unchequered day.
She has not heard of God, yet has her soul
Sought some exalted worship; and in sun,
And moon, and stars, in tempest and in cloud,
In rippling stream, and far-resounding sea,
In pensive evening, and majestic night,
She sees some greatness which she may adore,
And defies the garments of our God.¹

Unusually, the lyrical passages on nature are in the body of the poems. Take, for instance, these lines:

The swallow finds her summer
In the gateway of the year.²
("The Common Want," v.4, ll.5-6).

The rest that is in secret born
Shall rid the rose of every thorn,
And leave its petals room.³
("In the Wilderness," v.5, ll.4-6).

Again, the following passages disclose in an even better manner Matheson's fondness for interspersed allusions to nature:

Methinks their blessings in the night
To Thee are dearer far
Than the lark's song in heavenly height
Whose notes are wakened by the sight
Of the bright morning star.⁴
("Service by Night," v.3, ll.3-5).

Shall the eagle reach his sky,
Shall the bee embrace her flower,
But my heart with home on high,
Miss the music of the hour?⁵
("At Sunrise," v.2, ll.5-8).

The voice that on the tree-top warbles clear
Breaks not a leaf's repose.⁶
("God at the Gates of Man," v.3, ll.3-4).

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1. Ibid., pp. 61-63.
 2. Sacred Songs, (1890), p. 50.
 3. Ibid., p. 65.
 4. Ibid., p. 75.
 5. Ibid., p. 103.
 6. Ibid., p. 118.

References to seasons, harvests, fields, and flowers occur regularly in his poems, as shown in "Peace in the Storm":¹

Shall it be only in the noontide splendour
I see Thy form?
(v.3, ll.1-2).

I would not love Thee in the summer only
When the skies are fair.
(v.4, ll.1-2).

Also in "For Light and Leading":²

Shine, shine Father Divine,
Out in the fields where night is spreading;
Gleam, gleam, heart-searching Beam,
Down in the vales where vice is treading.
(v.1, ll.1-4).

As an artist, his aim was not merely to copy what he saw and heard, but to treat it imaginatively in order to convey to others what was beautiful to him.

There is more nature poetry in Matheson's works than one would expect from one who was blind. During his youth he had been a keen observer. His attitude, moreover, was not romantic. We cannot know God through nature; we can only see proofs of the greatness and the majesty of the deity. Nevertheless, Matheson felt as did Bacon that the upper link of nature's chain is fastened to the throne of God.

In describing nature, he fixed his eye upon his subject. Nothing then seemed to intrude into her sphere, and all the world became alive. The whole world rejoiced

1. Ibid., p. 56.
2. Ibid., p. 165.

in its Creator and in itself. Then it was that Matheson approached the spirit of Wordsworth and Shelley, though, of course, he did not possess their genius.

Why is the spring so glad?
'Tis not for any joy the eye can see,
For leaves as yet arescant upon the tree,
And not a field is clad;
But all the spring-time's cheer
Comes from the promise of the coming year,
And all its rapture swells
Because betimes the prophet primrose tells
Of birds of summer song
In days of sunlight long.¹

Matheson's poetry is characterized by a personal quality. The center of interest is in the devotee, usually in the singular person. The corporate "we" of the preacher and the hymn-writer plays little part in these poems. It is not the priest who speaks here but the individual soul. In the Sacred Songs, therefore, Matheson was thinking primarily of himself in his lay and human capacity, and not in his official ministry. This does not in any way detract from the estimate of Matheson which we have formed from his sermons, for in his preaching, Matheson's greatest gift to his congregation was himself, and the sharing of his own spiritual experience. But here there was nothing social or official in the pouring-out of his soul. It was of himself alone that he was thinking as he argued with himself, sought to reassure himself and gave thanks to God.

Matheson employed varied forms of versification. In the two most important poems of his earlier period,

1. Ibid., p. 123.

"Zillah, or the Life before the Flood," and "The Blind Girl's Retrospect," he used blank-verse. The following passage from "Zillah," in which Japheth is addressing his father, illustrates how effectively he could use this form:

My father, I must go.
There is a well-wrought scheme within my brain,
Jubal, the son of Lamech, has a child,
A little girl, whose beaming countenance
Mirrors the beauty of a spotless soul.
'Tis like a sky, where night is never seen,
Where twilight shadows never meet the eye,
Where sombre clouds love not to linger long,
For happiness looks sunlight from her eyes,
Shedding the lustre of unchequered day.¹

Macmillan thought it unfortunate that Matheson did not persevere in blank-verse. He wrote: "On reading over these two poems one can see, at a glance, how blank-verse was a much more effective measure in Matheson's hand than the different forms of metre afterwards chosen by him in writing his Sacred Songs."² Thus he seemed to find it easier to manipulate blank-verse than to adhere to the more intricate forms of versification demanded by the structure of hymns. Macmillan thought:

The form of versification which his hymn-writing demands would seem to have cramped his easy flow of thought and freedom of expression. This was entirely owing to his blindness. It is easy to perceive how difficult it would be for anyone without the faculty of vision to conform to an artificial and intricate measure. In epic verse this difficulty is considerably lessened, and that is, perhaps, the reason why it was chosen by blind Homer and blind Milton for their great poems. It seems a pity, with the specimens which he has left us, that Matheson did not persevere in this form of verse.³

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1. Life, p. 62.
 2. Ibid., p. 59.
 3. Ibid.

His understanding, his mental survey, his ideas behind the words of song, reached out in many directions, and what he chose as leading themes, or prevailing sentiments, was not simply for his own consolation but for that of others. He might have echoed Horatius Bonar's remark when referring to his own hymns: "I consider them not as my property, but the property of the Church of God."¹ So catholic was his mind that when it expressed itself in religious verse there was no thought of a sectarian standpoint. The idea, the meaning, clothed in poetic form, was to be shared by all who struggled toward the light.²

Thus one of Matheson's characteristic themes is on universal brotherhood which links together the most diverse of God's children. This subject he treated effectively in the poem, "One in Christ":

Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all,
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold
Rend each man's temple veil and bid it fall
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;
Gather us in.

Gather us in: we worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In diverse forms a common soul we see;
In many ships we seek one spirit-land;
Gather us in.

Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow-light,
Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven;
Thou art the fulness of our partial sight;
We are not perfect till we find the seven;
Gather us in.

Thine is the mystic life great India craves,
Thine is the Parsee's sin-destroying beam,
Thine is the Buddhist's rest from tossing waves,
Thine is the empire of vast China's dream;
Gather us in.

1. Quoted in Preface to John Hunter's Hymns of Faith and Life,
2. Op. cit., p. 187 -236- p.vi.

Thine is the Roman's strength without his pride,
Thine is the Greek's glad world without its graves,
Thine is Judea's law with love beside,
The truth that censures and the grace that saves;
Gather us in.

Some seek a Father in the heavens above,
Some ask a human image to adore,
Some crave a spirit vast as life and love;
Within Thy mansions we have all and more;
Gather us in. ¹

This same theme is reiterated in the first lines of verses two and three respectively of "Brotherhood": "Come, let us clasp united hands" and "Come, let us in one worship meet."² Another version of the theme is expressed in "The Doors of the Temple":

Then in Thy common temple
There shall worship hand in hand
The lives that man's heart would hold apart
As unfit to dwell in one land.³
(v. 9).

These might be said to contain Matheson's poetic interpretation of Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Perhaps his most prominent theme is Divine Love. This was given inspired and comprehensive expression in the hymn "O Love that wilt not let me go"; yet it is found in much of Matheson's other verse. The Divine Love subject occurs in the poem, "The Sign of Immortality":

And, where that love is found,
Thou hast within thy soul
A field of consecrated ground
Whereon no ages roll.
(v. 9).

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1. Sacred Songs, p. 36.
 2. Ibid., p. 12.
 3. Ibid., p. 70.

Oh, love defying time,
Oh, heart untouched by years,
We can forget the funeral chime,
When the green wreath appears.¹
(v. 10).

The theme is also introduced into "The Divine Name," in which we find it associated with Calvary and Mount Olivet:

I sat beneath lone Calvary's height,
With Olivet above,
And I saw the sunbeam fold the night,
And I said, 'Thy name is Love.'²
(v. 3).

The sacrificial aspect of the theme appears in "The Joy of Sacrifice":

Love is that altar; in its cleansing fires
The tree of life grows green with youth again,³
(v. 5, 11.1-2).

Two other poems, "Divine Love" and "The Unlimitedness of Divine Love," interpret Love as boundless, and omnipotent. The latter poem stresses Love's humility, showing how it often works unseen and in squalid surroundings.⁴

Moreover, Matheson wrote of a captivity which does not keep the soul in confinement but, paradoxically, sets it free. This idea he set forth in his prose devotional meditation, "The Slavery Which Glorifies," in these words:

Let the hands be free, let the mind be free, let the will be free; but let the heart ever have its chains Thou whose name is Love, let me ever be Thy bondsman. I would not be the bondsman of any power but Thee ... I should always covet Thy chain-Love's chain. I should not wish the independence

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1. Ibid., pp. 137-138.
 2. Ibid., p. 80.
 3. Ibid., p. 105.
 4. Ibid., pp. 8-10, 153-154.

of the heart. I should not like to have
nobody to care for. I should not desire
my affections to escape from the cage and
be free.¹

This "captive" or "captivity" image must have
exercised Matheson's mind for a considerable period. He
used it in "Strength for Life":

I yield, a captive, to Thy sway.²
(v. 1. 1. 2).

It appeared again in "The Joy of Sacrifice," where, referring
to the cleansing fires of Divine Love, he continued:

And, in the fervour that its flame inspires,
The captive heart forgets its former pain.³
(v. 5. 11. 3-4).

And again:

Become love's captive, and thy soul shall be
Lord of itself and master over all.⁴
(v. 6. 11. 3-4).

The captivity theme is worked out in the ten-verse
poem, "God's Captive,"⁵ but received its most enduring ex-
pression in his well-known hymn, "Make me a captive, Lord,"
with the text, "Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Ephesians
3:1). Matheson wrote:

Thy will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine.⁶
(v. 4. 11. 1-2).

Here, again we have an echo of Tennyson:

Our wills are ours, to make them thine.⁷

1. Times of Retirement, pp. 96-97.

2. Sacred Songs, p. 76.

3. Ibid., p. 105.

4. Ibid., p. 106.

5. Ibid., pp. 144-145.

6. Ibid., pp. 172-173.

7. "In Memoriam." Prologue, v. 4. 1. 4.

In "Make me a captive, Lord," the willing captive confesses that his heart is weak and poor, and beseeches his Maker:

Enslave it with Thy matchless love,
And deathless it shall reign.¹
(v. 2. ll. 7-8).

E. "O Love that wilt not let me go:"

When one thinks of Matheson as a poet and hymn writer, however, it is this famous hymn which comes first to mind. At one time it was declared that "O Love" was "Hegelianism in verse," but Matheson himself stated that when he wrote it he had not Hegel in his mind but Him Who said: "He that loveth his life shall lose it."² Matheson's own text for it is: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17).

When Matheson added the hymn to the third edition (1904) of Sacred Songs, he gave it the title of "Self-Surrender," and certainly it contains a perfect expression of self-surrender and dedication - "I give Thee back the life I owe." Through self-surrender comes the new life. Selfishness must be given up before the heart can be a "dwelling-place for the Divine Guest ... Love Me, and for My sake be kind to everybody, and your name will be written in heaven."³ This deeply mystical idea has also been expressed in Matheson's devotional meditation, "The Preservation of Personality in the Christian Life," where he wrote: "Love is an ocean where no man permanently loses himself; he regains himself in richer,

1. Op. Cit., p. 173.

2. William Taylor, Twelve Favourite Hymns, p. 141.

3. Ibid., pp. 136-137, 140.

nobler form. The only ocean in which a man loses himself is self-love; God's love gives him back his life that he may keep it unto life eternal."¹ This suggests the hymn's opening verse:

O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

The second verse may conceivably refer to Matheson's blindness. Indeed, one writer thought that "the whole hymn has an added pathos when one remembers the writer's blindness."² It teaches that, after God has led us through our life, we deliver to Him our "flickering torch," and then we shall ascend into His shining presence.³ "I would approach the problems of life," Matheson wrote, "with no other torch than Thine ... In Thy light let me see light! ... In the blaze of His Christ's unblemished sunshine, thy flickering light shall be extinguished."⁴ And so the last three lines in the second verse of the hymn run:

My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

1. Moments on the Mount, p. 183. Robert Bridges gives effect to the same idealism in the conclusion of his poem, The Testament of Beauty. "God is seen as the very self-essence of love," self can only be realized in "not-self," and individuality only attained by loss of self, or the selfhood of Love - Book IV, ll, 1439-1446. See M.L.V. Hughes, Everyman's Testament of Beauty: A Study in the Testament of Beauty of Robert Bridges, pp. 50, 134.

2. Alexander R. McFarlane, "A Noted Blind Preacher," The Young Man, vol. XX, p. 232.

3. F.J. Gillman, The Story of Our Hymns, p. 98.

4. "Religious Feeling and Religious Thought," Moments on the Mount, p. 108.

The next sub-theme is perfection through suffering, contained in the third verse:

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

Referring to the blindness that overtook him on the threshold of manhood, Matheson observed: "I shall endeavour to forget my thorn; I shall do my work in spite of it; the mission of my life shall not fail because of physical suffering. I shall fulfil my God-appointed task in the face of every hardship and every pain."¹

Then, at the climax of the hymn, comes the sub-theme of Immortality, a subject, as we have seen, of unceasing interest for Matheson throughout his life. "Life that shall endless be," the hymn's last line expresses his personal faith. He felt that without belief in the soul's immortality the Christian religion could not survive. Through the medium of this well-known hymn then, Matheson has imparted to the whole of Christendom a comforting message of hope.

His own account of its composition is as follows:

My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan on the evening of 6th June, 1882. I was at that time alone. It was the day of my sister's marriage, and the rest of the family were staying over night in Glasgow. Something had

1. Quoted by F.J. Gillman, The Story of Our Hymns, p. 97.

happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any re-touching or correction.¹

In short Matheson felt that the hymn had come to him as an inspiration; it was not really composed.

At various times within the first forty years of this century two points in Matheson's account have aroused controversy - the time he took to write the hymn and the year in which it was written. These disputes have been carried on mainly through the medium of newspaper correspondence.

R.H. Fisher, in his reminiscences, discredited entirely the story of the hymn's origin as related in Macmillan's biography of Matheson, and also in John Julian's Dictionary of Hymnology, and added: "Probably the accurate account of the hymn's origin will never be known."²

The conclusion is as follows: The most that can be said is that the hymn, in view of its appearance in Life and Work for January 1882, was composed in or before 1881. The precise date may have been June 6, 1881, though that is not probable. It would, in fact, be a coincidence if the

1. Life, p. 181.

2. R.H. Fisher, The Outside of the Inside, p. 141.

hymn had been written on the same date, though one year sooner, as that of the Monteath wedding.¹ In any case, then, Matheson had a lapse of memory when he named the date of composition as June 6, 1882.²

There is also no evidence for the popular view that the hymn was written as the result of a disappointed love affair. Indeed, those of the living who knew Matheson intimately have said that, to the best of their knowledge, this idea is without foundation,³ and this theory is unsupported by any manuscript or other evidence of any kind.

When Life and Work was founded by A.H. Charteris in January, 1879, Matheson was one of the first contributors, supplying a series of those devotional meditations which became so closely associated with his name. Matheson's intermittent contributions were continued for nearly a quarter of a century, his last meditation being a "Sunday Fireside" paper on "The Wheat among the Tares" in the issue of February, 1903. Therein he made use of the story of the white flower which was laid on the grave of Nero.⁴ Towards the end of this devotional reflection, it is significant to note he breaks into the Divine Love apostrophe - "O Love, boundless Love, endless Love, my hope is in Thee!" - which

1. For the newspaper announcement of the Monteath wedding of June 6, 1882, with Matheson assisting, see The Scotsman, June 8, 1882, and The Glasgow Herald, June 7, 1882.

2. It is hoped that the above account will clarify a rather unusual controversy, but one which has occasioned much popular interest.

3. As reported in private conversation with Dr. Calderwood, Dr. Lang, and Mr. M'Andrew.

4. Life and Work: The Church of Scotland Magazine and Mission Record, vol XXV, Feb., 1903, pp. 25-26.

had been the theme of his poetic contribution, the famous hymn, to the magazine twenty-one years before. Always a steady friend of the magazine, "with his overflowing generosity," Matheson ascribed "far more than was due to the part which Life and Work played in the establishment of his fame."¹

Charteris edited Life and Work for only twelve months from its commencement, and was succeeded by John McMurtrie in February, 1880. McMurtrie, who had followed A.K.H. Boyd as minister of St. Bernard's Church, Edinburgh, and was to be succeeded there by Matheson, continued as editor to the end of 1898. It was, therefore, to McMurtrie that "O Love" was sent along with four other poetical pieces.² The hymn was published in January, 1882,³ with the text "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17).

It is not generally known that later in his life Matheson was induced to compose a fifth stanza for "O Love." During a conversation between Matheson and Dr. R.S. Calderwood, his student secretary at the time, the young man said: "Doctor should you not have given us another verse? Why leave us at the Cross?"

1. Ibid., vol. XXVIII, Feb., 1906, pp. 234-235.

2. Ibid.

3. Life and Work, vol. IV, Jan., 1882, p. 7. The other four poems were: "Lord, at Thy feet my prostrate heart is lying," Feb., 1882, p. 19 (entitled "The Renewal of Youth" in Sacred Songs, p. 109); "I stood beside the sacred fountain, March, 1882, p. 35 (not republished in Sacred Songs); "Saviour divine, my ship of life is leaving," April, 1882, p. 57 (entitled "Peace in the Storm" in Sacred Songs, p. 55); and "Thy home, O Lord, is everywhere," May, 1882, p. 67 (entitled "The Dwelling Place of God" in Sacred Songs, p. 113).

The next morning, when Matheson did not appear at the usual time, Miss Matheson felt uneasy and said: "Mr. Calderwood, would you mind going up to my brother's room to see if he is all right?" Dr. Calderwood was greeted by the good man with: "After what you said last night, how would this do?" The verse, as quoted by Dr. Calderwood himself in Innellan Parish Church in 1926, ran as follows:

Oh, Hope! that lightenest all my way,
I cannot choose but cleave to Thee,
And wrestle till the break of day
Disclose the wisdom of delay
In blessings yet to be.¹

Matheson, however, did not refer to the subject again, and it is scarcely surprising that this stanza has never been added to the hymn in any of the hymn collections, for it is not equal to what goes before it.

As regards the hymn as it exists, Matheson never failed to attribute generously its popularity to the music which Albert Lister Peace composed for it in 1884. At that time Peace was the organist of Glasgow Cathedral² and the musical editor of The Scottish Hymnal. This hymnal was a great advance on Hymns Ancient and Modern, for it had a higher literary standard, purer texts, and included the most appealing hymns of the new literary and liturgical

1. As reported in private conversation with Dr. Calderwood.
2. Referring to Peace's distinguished organ-playing in the Cathedral, A.K.H. Boyd wrote: "I suppose no man living can play better ... any choir would be good with Dr. Peace to accompany." A.K.H. Boyd, Twenty-Five Years of St. Andrew's, vol. II, 1892, pp. 41-42. In a letter, dated January 30, 1936, to The Scotsman of Feb. 1, 1936, Westwood MacNeill recalled a story about Peace when he was Glasgow Cathedral organist. After a visitor had been taken by his host to the service, "he commented upon the beauty of the edifice, the eloquence of the preacher, and the singing of the choir. 'Yes,' replied his friend, 'but remember that beyond these voices there is Peace'."

schools. "It fixed the type and character of the Hymnody of the Church of Scotland ... To some it seemed to spring from a new catholicity in the heart of Presbyterianism itself, a recognition and a sharing of what was best in the experiences of its fellow-Christians."¹ It was in the enlarged edition of 1885 that, "O Love" was first printed in a hymn collection, and the composition of the musical setting was entrusted to Peace. As there was then no available tune of a meter to which "O Love" could be set, the Hymnal Committee asked Peace to supply one specially. While staying in the manse at Brodick in the Island of Arran, the musician read out the words as he sat on the sands. Inspired by the rhythmic beat and surge of the waves as they rolled into the shore, Peace wrote down the music, instantaneously. "I may say," he remarked when recalling the incident, "that the ink of the first note was hardly dry when I had finished the tune."²

But this was not the first tune composed by Peace for "O Love." Dr. Marshall Lang, a former assistant of Matheson waited for Peace to bring an earlier tune for "O Love:" Peace arrived early, and Matheson said: "You have come sooner than I expected, Peace." To which Peace replied: "Well, if I bring peace and hope at the same time, it will be to our credit." Then, referring to the tune, Matheson said: "I hope you are going to satisfy me?"

1. Louis F. Benson, The English Hymn, p. 535.

2. Life, p. 190; see also Taylor, Twelve Favourite Hymns, p. 146.

"If you satisfy me, I'll satisfy you," Peace retorted. And then Peace continued: "I'm going to ask you to allow me to change two or three words in the hymn, if I am going to set it to music, because as the words stand now they don't fit." Matheson became very upset, and in excited tones he said: "Change the words of my hymn to suit your music? That can't be, Peace." Thereupon Peace left the house very much agitated, while Matheson remained talking until Lang could break into the flow of words and tell the blind poet that Peace was no longer present.¹ It was after this, that the second tune, and the one finally adapted, was written by Peace at Brodick.

The tune was composed on the eve of Peace's marriage to Margaret Gilchrist of Innellan and it was named by himself "St. Margaret." When the Hymnal Committee had invited him to suggest a name, he replied: "It is already named." That was the first intimation they had of his approaching marriage.²

Although "St. Margaret" is the most widely familiar musical setting of "O Love," it has not been the only tune for it. It has been set to "Oberlin" from the Magdeburg Choral Book,³ and to "Chapel Royal" by Sir Arthur Sullivan.⁴

The hymn, moreover, contains much symbolism which,

1. As reported in private conversation with Dr. Lang.
2. Letter, dated Feb. 7, 1936, in The Scotsman of Feb. 10, 1936, from R. T. Skinner, who gave this information as received by him from Peace's sister-in-law.
3. A. C. Murphy, The Book of Common Song, No. 169, p. 135.
4. Arthur Sullivan, Hymn Tunes, No. 44, p. 65.

over the years, has occasioned comment. The beautiful simile of the rainbow, was much favored by Matheson. Its use in the famous hymn was anticipated in a poem, the first line of which runs "Jesus, Rainbow of my sorrow."¹ The rainbow image also appears in at least three other of His sacred songs. It occurs in "One in Christ:"

Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow-light;²
(v. 3, l. 1).

In "The Solace of the Valley" we have:

And all its tears are rainbow bright
When Calvary crowns the way;³
(v. 1, ll, 7-8).

and "God at the Gates of Man" runs:

The rainbow view, the spring-time of thy days.⁴
(v. 5, l. 2).

And again he wrote: "The path of tears was an unconscious rainbow; it led thy soul aloft on an arch of triumph."⁵

On the acceptance of "O Love" for inclusion in The Scottish Hymnal, the Hymnal Committee wished one word of the hymn changed. "I had written originally," Matheson remarked in his account of the hymn's genesis, "'I climb the rainbow in the rain.' They objected to the word 'climb' and I put 'trace.'"⁶ But the line was really altered from "I climb the rainbow in the rain" to "I trace the rainbow through the rain," which, as Peter Rintoul observed,⁷ seems

1. Life, p. 189.

2. Sacred Songs, p. 37.

3. Ibid., p. 86.

4. Ibid., p. 118.

5. Frederick John Gillman, The Story of our Hymns, p. 98.

6. Life, p. 181.

7. In a letter of Feb. 6, 1936, to The Scotsman, Feb. 8, 1936.

to suggest these lines from Milton:

Then, with uplifted hands and eyes devout,
Grateful to Heaven, O'er his head beholds
A dewy cloud, and in the cloud a bow
Conspicuous with three listed colours gay,
Betokening peace from God, and covenant new.¹

To The Scotsman correspondence, discussing the "rainbow" alteration, J. Morison of Colinton, one of Matheson's friends, contributed two letters. The first letter reports a talk on the subject he had with Matheson, who, while regretting having to change "climb" to "trace," reluctantly consented when the publishers assured him that "climb the rainbow" was a figure which "would not be readily intelligible to the ordinary worshipper." "It was," Morison continued, "no mere mundane rainbow that was envisaged, any more than rain (sorrow) meant physical rain; for Matheson was both mystic and seer." Morison continued: "The word 'climb' figured an ascent in consciousness only possible to such as he: the imagery used being (like that employed by the author of the Apocalypse when he wrote 'and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald') but an attempt in language to adumbrate what was essentially a sublime inner experience."²

Morison's second letter deals with the effect of the change of verb on the meaning conveyed. "When 'I climb the rainbow' was altered to 'I trace the rainbow,' the figure of a victorious ascent of the spirit towards its divine source (a purely inner experience) was changed to passive contemplation of an external phenomenon mentally envisaged - pious and beautiful in its way, but quite different from what was originally implied." Although Matheson

1. Paradise Lost, Book XI, ll. 859-863. Cf. Genesis 9:11-13.
2. The Scotsman, Feb. 4, 1936.

himself sanctioned the change, "and with the weight of A.K.H.B's influence behind it," the fact remains, Morison adds, "that in his heart of hearts he [Matheson] remained entirely unrepentant..."¹

Interpreting the line, James Black argued that Matheson would never, of his own choice, have written the pedestrian "I trace the rainbow through the rain" because he would not have thought it worth expressing. "It is merely silly to think of his 'tracing' that rainbow through the rain; his eyes were shut for ever! But in his own fine imagination, he could still picture himself stumbling forward blindly till he actually touched the rainbow with his groping fingers! And when he touched it - so he thought - he could grasp it and climb it.... God's rainbows are not to be traced, but pursued."² On the other hand, Fisher thought the form, "I climb the rainbow in the rain," grotesque.³

There is, moreover, much symbolism contained in the last verse of the famous hymn. This verse, especially its last two lines - "And from the ground there blossoms red, Life that shall endless be" - has provoked almost as much discussion as the rainbow figure.

The phrase, "blossoms red," has parallels both in Scripture and in the poets. We find in Isaiah 35:1 "And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." Or, turning to The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, we read in verse 18:

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled.

1. The Scotsman, Feb. 24, 1936.

2. James Black, Days of My Autumn, pp. 215, 218, 223.

3. R. H. Fisher, The Outside of the Inside, pp. 141-142.

That thought seems to coincide with Matheson's meaning in the last verse of his hymn where the point of emphasis is the word "red." The term, as he once explained, "denotes the most fertile and productive soil."¹ A remarkable parallel also occurs in Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis:

By this the boy that by her side lay killed,
Was melted like a vapour from her sight,
And in his blood that on the ground lay spilled,
A purple flower sprung up, chequered with white
Resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood,
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood.²

That was the significance which King George V attached to the last verse.. "O Love" was the hymn which the King loved best of all in the Scottish Hymnary.. "He never failed to ask for it," said Dr. Charles L. Warr in his address during the memorial service for King George V in St. Giles Cathedral on January 26, 1936.. "When he was worshipping in St. Giles, and when each summer he went to his Deeside home he requested its inclusion in the Crathie Church service every second Sunday." King George's attachment to the verses was born of pain, because "they became profoundly and poignantly associated in his mind with the suffering and sorrows of the Great War."³

Dr. Warr recalled that, in talking of those things with him one day, His Majesty said: "Do you remember how the poppies grew in the field of Flanders, and how you used to see among them the little wooden crosses? Do they ever recall to you the words of a hymn?" And while Dr. Warr was thinking, the King himself supplied the answer: -

And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

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1. In a letter of January 29, 1936, from R. G.H. to The Scotsman, Feb..1, 1936..
 2. "Venus and Adonis," verse 195..
 3. From report in The Scotsman, Jan.. 27, 1936..

"That is what that hymn always brings back to me," the King added.. "'Poppies Red' I call it.. I love it."¹

The hymn has been variously appraised. Gregory said that it was "probably the most widely appreciated of any (hymn) written in the last quarter of a century."² Brownlie's praise is qualified: "Few hymns have passed so quickly into favour and general use in our Scottish praise as has this one," he wrote, "...yet it has not everything to commend it." He regarded it as intensely subjective, but with enough objectivity, however, to save it from anything like mawkishness or any similar defect. He continued: "The hymn is surpassingly beautiful, the language is choice, and the metaphors in which it abounds are transparent and flawless."³

One practical means of assessing the hymn's popularity was instituted by William Taylor, the minister of Melville Parish Church, Montrose. He asked his congregation to supply a list of the twelve hymns which they liked best and gave them most help. In the competition result nearly 300 hymns were registered at least once, and among the twelve favorites in order of merit "O Love" was given the seventh place.⁴

The influence exerted by "O Love" can scarcely be adequately measured. According to Niven, "Wherever the English language is known it is a cherished treasure. It will last as long as the English language lasts."⁵ It is, Julian asserts, "a beautiful and tender

1.. Ibid.

2. Arthur E. Gregory, The Hymn-Book of the Modern Church, p. 308.

3. John Brownlie, "A Famous Hymn," The Scotsman, July 11, 1925.

4.. Taylor, Twelve Favourite Hymns, pp. 17-18..

5.. "Rev. Dr. Niven on Recent Deaths" (Obituary), The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 3, 1906, p. 6.

hymn and worthy of extensive use."¹ Appreciative letters poured into the author from every part of the globe,² and Matheson himself in a letter to F. A. Jones wrote: "It has been a constant source of pleasure to me that the little hymn has found so large an acceptance. Every year I receive many requests from compilers of hymnals in all parts of the world to be allowed to include 'O Love that wilt not let me go' in their collections requests which I am only too delighted to grant."³

In countries abroad, too, the hymn has spread its influence on persons of both high and low degree. About 1890 King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, revisited Cairo to study the result of British control of Egypt. He was entertained by Prince Hussein and by the Khedive of Tewfik, and went over the battlefield of Tel-el-Kebir.⁴ During his sojourn he attended service in one of the Cairo churches, and when "O Love" happened to be sung, "so impressed was he with it that he made a special inquiry as to the composer of the tune."⁵ Again, a Glasgow minister recollected going to the English Church in Cairo, and when Dean Butcher gave out the hymn of "O Love," he found that "Dr. George Matheson's hymn is printed, or was printed in my time, on the boards of every hymn-book there."⁶

At a Sunday School convention held in Jerusalem in 1904, "O Love" was sung by "representatives of fifty-five different Christian

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1. John Julian, A Dictionary of Hymnology, rev. ed., p. 1584.
 2. Alexander R. McFarlane, "A Noted Blind Preacher," The Young Man, vol. XX, 1906, p. 231.
 3. Francis Arthur Jones, Famous Hymns and their Authors, pp. 296-297.
 4. Sir Sidney Lee, King Edward VII: A Biography, vol. I, 1925, p. 461.
 5. "Dr. Matheson's Famous Hymn," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Feb. 15, 1906, p. 9.
 6. "Here and There," Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 9.

communions, gathered from twenty-six different nations" on the slopes of Calvary.¹ Probably this was the same assembly to which reference was made by Robert Blair, the minister of St. John's Church, Edinburgh, an old fellow-student of Matheson's, in the course of his obituary address on his departed friend in 1906. He mentioned the interesting fact "that the famous hymn was sung at Jerusalem some months ago, at a large gathering of Christian workers composed of delegates from almost every section of the Church of Christ, and every nation on the globe."²

F. Summary and Conclusions:

Though not in the first rank of nineteenth century writers, Matheson did possess ability as a lyrical poet. Of course some of his verse is, like that of most poets occasionally, mannered and labored; some is quite commonplace. Moreover, as stated above, Matheson never took himself seriously as a poet. Concerning his sacred songs he wrote that he desired "to avoid pretentiousness by seeming to claim for them more than they aspire to be."³ If we allow all this, it remains none the less that his mastery of phrase, both in melody and in delicate accuracy, is endlessly astonishing. While at times the execution lags behind the conception, still art had thrown her mantle over Matheson. The language enhances and uplifts the thought; and the clearness of the poetry has been accompanied by fine composition and workmanship.

1. "George Matheson" by W.F.G. (W. Forbes Gray), The Dictionary of National Biography, Second Suppl. vol. II, 1912, p. 588.

2. "Tributes to the late Dr. Matheson," The Sunday Review, vol. I, No. 4, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 370.

3. Sacred Songs, p. v.

In his theological writings he argued and defended his beliefs, but in his poetry he was content to sing, for no man argues lyrically. It can never be said that Matheson's verse was too philosophic, too much afraid of emotion, and too curbed in imagination, though thought and emotion did belong to it. Rather, it seemed as though the sources of his imagination and poetic expression were given momentum by the driving fervor of his beliefs.

Words to him were never merely cold and colorless, but they flashed images of truth and beauty to his mind. He reflected their image, often heightened and intensified, and often made more brilliant by the light of his own imagination. His descriptions were vivid, pictorial, and accurate. The adjectives which he chose were so apt and striking that they have the force of facts.

The mind of Matheson was haunted like a passion by the beauties of nature. In this he resembled Wordsworth. But he loved nature, not only for its earthly sake, but for the divine and the eternal interfused with it. Like Keble, Matheson brought religious feeling into union with the love of nature for her own sake. His purpose was not to describe the things he saw, flower or bird, or sunset, exactly as they were. Rather, he held that the poet "unclothes each form in order that he may clothe it anew, in order that he may behold it dressed in the similitude of something else....giving "to matter the garb of spirit, and to spirit the form of matter."¹

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. 47.

There was much with which Matheson did not experiment. He wrote no epistles in verse; no elegies; no fulsome flattery to famous people, no ode to mankind or equally inclusive generality. He wrote no riddle, no "essay" to rhyme, and no "progress" of anything.

He seemed to understand well the possibilities and limitations of sacred songs. He knew his audience and he wished to edify that audience. He wished to strike a responsive chord in the thoughts, desires, aspirations, and hopes of the humblest Protestant Christian. His work never revealed any contempt for ordinary humanity. Thoroughly democratic, he had a way of rising above class consciousness, and thus he appealed to the many. Only by drinking constantly at the deep wells of common humanity does a poet win the power to rejoice in his creative work, and it was this gift which Matheson possessed. The themes of his hymns were likewise such as all Protestant Christians of Matheson's day could accept. Avoiding controversial subjects and emphases, he thus took the common ground of Protestant belief.

It has been the purpose of this thesis to investigate the work of George Matheson as theologian, preacher, and poet. We have tried to indicate what we consider the most noteworthy aspects of his contribution and to evaluate them.

Appreciation and criticisms have been expressed at various points throughout the thesis; sometimes they have been made specific, and sometimes simply implied. We have offered these evaluations in the context of the discussion, rather than save them until the end. Throughout, the attempt has been made to present Matheson's essential position positively, thereby to preserve so far as possible its original religious appeal and insight. The foregoing chapters, therefore, are meant to represent the main results of our study and the fulfillment of our purpose. Nevertheless, we feel that a broad summary and general estimate of Matheson's work and influence will be helpful.

Matheson, though not a systematic theologian, was nevertheless, a religious thinker whose thought possessed unity and coherence.¹ Indeed, the very fact that he was a Baird lecturer, and was invited to give the Gifford Lectures for 1899, is an indication of the esteem with which he was regarded in theological circles. Though not a "systematizer," he did think deeply about theological matters. His more academic works included: Aids to the Study of German Theology, Natural Elements of Revealed Theology (the Baird Lectures for 1881), Can the Old Faith Live with the New, and numerous journal articles in The Expositor and elsewhere.

1. As Matheson wrote in the preface of Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. v: "The chapters are not a series of disconnected studies, but are arranged on a principle of development, and therefore they cannot be read out of their natural order."

It is true that there are loose ends in Matheson's thought, and that he does not present us with the Christian faith wrapped up in a tidy little package. He recognized the element of mystery which must remain in all efforts to talk of God; and also there were certain aspects of theology upon which he simply did not write enough to enable us to come to definite conclusions about what his convictions were. From the point of view of a "system" this is, of course, a distinct loss. However it is true that in his books there is a systematic development of the subject, and an underlying consistency in his thought which should not be overlooked. He appeared to be more interested in helping others to find Christ, than to be systematic in his theological formulations.

Matheson, perhaps though not a leader of thought, was nevertheless, one who stimulated men to think. His work pictures with great skill and insight the religious doubts that affected so many of his generation. To be able to clarify the issues at the turn of the century, was of far greater significance than we can appreciate, perhaps, from this distance. He held that Christian truth need never be afraid of any advance of knowledge, nor did he seek refuge in any accepted pattern of thought. What Matheson believed and said, he did because he was convinced that he was advocating the Truth. It was easy for him to improve and perfect the ideas of others; but to these ideas he brought a high degree of originality. He was much more than an excellent and ingenious improver.

His mind impresses one with its quickness, its keenness

and its versatility, rather than with its depth. At many points he lacked penetration; though he had profound spiritual insights, he did not always do these insights justice. For one thing, his blindness barred him from more profound scholarship and first-rate theological work. He was, furthermore, more interested in concentrating upon the broader issues of the questions with which he dealt, than in giving an exhaustive treatment of all phases of the problems involved, with the apparatus of a theologian in the technical sense. In the preface of The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, he described this broader approach as follows:

I need not say that my design in this little book is not to describe the old religions, but to photograph their spirit. To describe any religion would require a volume twice the size of the present. But a photograph must be instantaneous or abortive. It is a generalised result; it only dates from the time when all the materials have been arranged in order. It does not involve work, it presupposes work.¹

From student days at Glasgow under Edward Caird, Matheson was a neo-Hegelian, though in later life he modified his views with regard to this school. Christocentric in theology and by no means a literalist in his view of Scripture, Matheson was a representative of the broader, more liberal tendencies in the Church of Scotland. Behind his theology lies the theme of the Headship of Christ; implicit in his writings on the science and religion controversy is the refusal to argue either for or against evolution, but simply to ask, "if the doctrine be true, what then?"²

A significant emphasis of Matheson for our day is his stress on the validity of individual moral responsibility. We have heard so much about man being merely a product of his environment,

1. The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions, p. v.

2. Can the Old Faith Live with the New, p. vi.

or a product of his heredity, etc., that many people do not think in terms of being acutely responsible for their own moral action. Probably one of the most subtle trends of recent years has been to gloss over this whole phase of life. Many do not give it serious thought at any time. Matheson re-orientes our thinking as to moral responsibility. While God is majestic, holy, and judging, He is not so far away but that He will come to man through His grace. God loves man profoundly. That love is a love which judges man, at the very core of reality. God judges - judges actions, thoughts, and motives. Man has free choice as to whether he shall decide for the great Yea or the great Nay. Yet in his desire for realism in individual morality, Matheson does not speak of man as confronted with a crisis. In fact this word never occurs in Matheson. In this respect he did not follow his contemporary Forsyth, nor could Matheson be considered a forerunner of Karl Barth.

Implicit in his writings is the belief that theology must speak to the contemporary situation. He would insist that an individual must not endeavor to reformulate his [Matheson's] theology for our day. He addressed himself to the problems of his own generation, and it is this effort to make the Gospel relevant to our own time, that he would encourage. As Farmer has written: "Eternal as the Gospel is, there must be some translation of it into the present tense, some welding, to change the metaphor, of a hard, sharp point of thrusting relevancy onto the shaft of it, or to use the somewhat worn, but useful simile, we must get on to the right wave length if we are to be heard."¹

Moreover, Matheson labored to give his theological ideas adequate expression in his preaching. Ministers must have a message,

1. H. H. Farmer, The Servant of the Word, p. 122.

and Matheson would say that this implies a valid theology, but this message must be translated into the vernacular of everyday speech.. The common man does not understand the majority of our philosophical and theological terms.. Consequently Matheson would urge that we use words which will convey the message of theology in terms of the common understanding. To do this requires strenuous effort and labor, but to do less is to fail our generation.

We must conclude that, in the light of the foregoing discussion, we can hardly preach Matheson today in every detail. He would not expect us even to make the endeavor. Yet we can preach according to the conviction, spirit, and purpose that motivated him. We are free, under the guidance of God's spirit, to endeavor to proclaim the Eternal Gospel as best we can. In the effort to do this we find a hand extended across the years, and in the realization of the contribution of a great mind and spirit, we are grateful for the interpretation, for the inspiration he has brought.

Here was a man who from his pulpit in St. Bernard's Church in Edinburgh influenced the entire English speaking world. It is impossible to estimate the results in our own day of the preaching of this great soul. He lived in a day of profound change and development and was moved by all the intellectual currents around him. While he was sensitive to all fields of thought, he preached the eternal verities of the Evangelical message in such a way that it captured the imagination, stirred the intellect, and moved the will to action.

As we have seen, Matheson was not an hymnologist, but a poet who wrote sacred verse. His range was limited and he was good within it, though no one claims him as one of the greater poets.

Certainly he held no exalted opinion of his poetry, but rather tended to disparage it. Knowing that he could not do what the loftier poets could, he did not try to reach their standard. But he did determine to use the powers he had, and to let them have their bold and happy way.

Like most poets, his work was not all of an equally high caliber. He had, unfortunately, a rather exaggerated way of expressing himself, which was apparent in some of his poetry, though more so in his sermons and devotional books. He possessed a certain amount of sentimentality, and extravagance which he shared with his age. In constructional power, either in the conduct of a great argument or in the periodic movement of vast rhythms, Matheson did not rank. However, since he lacked poetic genius of the first order, he might have been enslaved by a scientific art and become one of the literary prigs of poetry who talk of art but cannot practice it. Yet he was saved from this by his spiritual insight, and by the strength of passion with which he wrote.

Held within the bounds of good taste, his work nevertheless possessed fervor. He sang always with the sincerity of a devout believer. He was a poet of that vast army of Christians who read poetry not as a literary exercise but for spiritual food. He put into verse the thoughts and fears of thousands, who knew him as "the blind preacher-poet."

Matheson's position as a poet is rather a solitary one, inasmuch as he has no real parents and no children. While he did indicate those poets whom he most admired, there are no clear parallels which can be traced to them. He variously recreated the material he derived from his inner experiences with the masterminds in his reading so that he was never indebted in any slavish fashion

to his sources.. However many elements there may have been, the final essence acquired a life of its own..

It cannot be said of Matheson that his work was too self-conscious of its artistic effort, or of its moral and religious teaching.. He was lost in the rush of his creation, in the glory and grief of what he saw, and could break into song without knowing why or how he sang.. While he studied his art he could not be called excessively conscious of being an artist - the crime of which some have hurled at Matthew Arnold..

Nor was Matheson self-detached in his poetry.. One feels that as he watched the struggle of the whole, he saw in it always the struggle of his own soul.. Thus he was intimate, close, true to this inward life.. He seems to have done his best to tell the truth and to depict things as he saw them.. Being blind and finding it impossible to be indifferent to pain and trouble, his heart ached for the sadness in the world.. His feelings sought expression, and found it in his poetry..

He invariably took his suggestions from some passage of Scripture.. He did not pretend to create a new religious literature; he did not presume to be independent of the source of all inspiration; he contented himself with expounding and applying to the heart of the modern world the thoughts which found expression at the hands of the various writers of the Bible.. Granted the gift of spiritual insight, deep personal experience, a knowledge of human life, and literary expression, a man so guided could not fail to be an interpreter of the devout life.. He possessed all these qualities, and his poems could not fail to win the popularity which they so quickly achieved.. Having put himself in communion with the Spirit of truth, he was able to put himself in touch with

the heart of humanity.

Matheson's influence on his own day was considerable. From the publication of Aids to the Study of German Theology, he was hailed as a thinker of considerable merit. As Macmillan wrote: "...the late Professor Hastie, in his excellent Introduction to Lichtenberger's History of German Theology in the Nineteenth Century, while expressing admiration for Matheson's book as a whole, commends it in particular for the signal service which it rendered at the time to the true conception of German theology as a creative science."¹ Concerning the publication of Can the Old Faith Live with the New, Macmillan said:

Matheson's book was opportune. It fell upon a public ready to welcome it. The subject had been gradually assuming large proportions, and the faith of many was distressed. Darwin was being out-Darwined, and many scientific men, without the caution of the author of The Origin of Species, were driving his ideas to extremes that seemed dangerous to religious belief. Apologists of Christianity were taking their place in the field; and the press, the pulpit, and the platform rang with the war-cries of the opposing schools of thought. It was freely admitted at the time, and it has never been denied since, that Matheson's book was the most important contribution made to the controversy up to the date of its publication. And this was the opinion of both sides.²

Upon Matheson's death, Robertson Nicoll wrote:

The first time we saw Dr. Matheson must have been somewhere about 1881. He was delivering the second of the Baird Lectures on a Sunday evening in St. George's, Edinburgh. The great building was but scantily filled, but the address, alike in matter, in form, and in utterance, was worthy of any audience. It seemed as if we had in Dr. Matheson the coming prophet of the time. His face was turned with eager welcome towards the new light, and his strong brain was busy in the work of reconstruction and reconciliation. When the lecture was over we went to the Synod Hall and heard the latter part of an oration by Principal Cairns. This was a grand defence of the old apologetical positions, delivered with overwhelming passion and uncompromising in its orthodoxy. That evening was indeed spent well and nobly. We had heard the fittest

1. Life, pp. 136-137.

2. Ibid., p. 212.

representatives of the old school and of the new.¹

Macmillan concluded: "Reviews of the book, Natural Elements of Revealed Theology appeared in many of the leading journals, and while for the most part discriminating in their criticism, they were all, without exception, hearty in their appreciation, and regarded the author's position as thoroughly established, and of the first rank."² The well-known Baptist theologian, Augustus Hopkins Strong,³ whose Systematic Theology was first published in 1886, frequently quoted Matheson's works, and he was also quoted in A. B. Bruce's Apologetics.

The influence which he had in his own day can be seen also from the number of popular magazine articles written about Matheson. Though many of these articles were uncritical, this secondary writing does, nevertheless, contain information which is nowhere else given and much of which has been corroborated in private conversation with those now living who knew Matheson intimately. At any rate, the volume of this popular writing does indicate the widespread interest in Matheson felt by his contemporaries.

But why was his influence so great in his own day? For one thing, because he dealt, as we have seen, with problems which were of general interest: the interpretation of German to British thought, the helpful devotional guides and dramatic preaching, and

1. The British Weekly, September 6, 1906, vol. XL, p. 509.

2. Op. cit., p. 165.

3. Strong taught at the Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, New York, and his Systematic Theology has been widely used in America, and in some extremely conservative seminaries, and continues to be used.

the sacred songs.. Also, his influence was great because of his literary style, with its beauty and epigrammatic character, the sharpness of its antitheses, and its clever comparisons which drove home the points he wished to make.. Moreover, Matheson was Biblical and evangelical, and presented only those convictions which were ratified by his own experience.. Finally, his was the work of a reconciler, whose freedom from dogmatism, sympathetic catholicity, and urbane spirit, enabled him "to be welcomed by every party and to secure a hearing in every quarter."¹

In our day, however, Matheson's influence as a theological thinker has faded out almost completely.. Thinking in many quarters has moved away from the idealism of the neo-Hegelians in the direction of a sharper realism.. Many of the problems relative to the science and religion controversy are no longer such pressing issues.. He influenced his own day, but as a theologian has left no mark which can be traced upon the modern theological horizon. He would appear to be one whose work might better be compared with the flight of a comet across the sky, than with a fixed star.. Also, he has left no books of sermons as such, and few sermon manuscripts remain.. The lasting impressions of his preaching are visible only to God.. His influence, however, remains in those hymns which have survived, particularly "O Love that wilt not let me go" and "Make me a captive, Lord," and in his many devotional books which are in fact still read.. In sermons and other books by contemporary American preachers one does occasionally find reference to Matheson's devotional works..

1. Life, p. 213.

We can say, therefore, of George Matheson that, though he does not shine with the brilliance of the noonday sun, he can lay claim to being one of the lesser stars that scattered the brilliance of Evangelical thought throughout the world. His fame and contribution therein rest secure.

APPENDIX A.

The Controversy Surrounding "O Love that wilt not let me go."

The following account attempts to set down in summary form the story of this interesting controversy, which has engaged considerable attention, and about which there has been much misunderstanding. It would seem strange, perhaps that there has been so much interest in such relatively minor points as the number of minutes Matheson spent in composition, and the date of writing. But since this discussion has taken place, the story is told here in some detail, in an attempt to clarify the issue.

In a pulpit reference to Matheson shortly after his death in 1906, T. B. W. Niven, then Moderator of the Church of Scotland, stated that "O Love" was written in about "three minutes." That statement called forth a letter to The Glasgow Herald from one Weldo Low, who, taking into consideration that the hymn contains four stanzas of five lines each, and 132 words, that the rhyme scheme is not of the simplest, and that there is a distinctly logical scheme of thought, felt sure that the hymn was, perhaps swiftly but surely, meditated. He discounted Niven's assertion that the composition was executed at an average rate of forty-five seconds for each stanza, and the words at the rate of one in less than a second and a half.¹

1. "The Late Dr. Matheson's Hymn," The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 5, 1906, p. 3.

This was followed up by a letter to The Glasgow Herald from Agnes S. Falconer, who did not see why the account of the hymn's spontaneous origin should be treated as a myth. While it was true that "this complex verse-structure could only have flowered out of a mind disciplined by literary training to perfection form, and, as the thought reveals, a mind habituated to dwell on the religious aspects of life," yet "the unstudied production of this exquisite spiritual lyric is not an isolated phenomenon under such conditions. . . . Many poets have acknowledged that some 'unstudied verse, composed they scarce knew how, has outvalued their most laborious art.' I think it is Myers who traces these to what he calls the sub-conscious mind."¹

On the same date the Herald also printed a letter from John Brownlie, minister of the Free Church, Portpatrick, who quoted a reply he received from Matheson himself to an inquiry he had sent him on the subject under discussion. "My hymn was made on a June evening of 1882. It is the quickest composition I ever achieved. It was done in three minutes. It seemed to me at the time as if some one were dictating the thought and also giving the expression. There was so little sense of effort that I had a sensation of passiveness."²

1. Ibid., Sept. 7, 1906, p. 11.

2. Ibid.

Then to the Herald Arthur Jenkinson wrote, maintaining that what really seemed to have happened when the hymn was set down was that, "under the influence of profound feeling, the thoughts of a lifetime blossomed spontaneously into lyric utterance."¹

The hymn was also being discussed in contributions to the Magazine, Saint Andrew, at intervals during the same year, 1906. One contributor pointed out that the children's hymn, "Golden harps are sounding," and the marriage hymn, "O perfect love all human thought transcending," were each composed in fifteen minutes, while "Safe in the arms of Jesus" was written in twenty minutes.² Another correspondent drew attention to the fact that one of Matheson's accounts declared the hymn "was not made for utilitarian purposes; it was wrung out spontaneously from the heart."³ Yet another correspondent favored the view that a man of Matheson's character and imaginative ability" could well be expected to write the hymn very rapidly, and quoted Matheson as saying that while his other verses were manufactured articles, this hymn "came like a dayspring from on high."⁴

After a lapse of thirty years, discussion regarding the hymn's composition was revived in February, 1936, in the correspondence columns of The Scotsman. Reporting Dr. Charles

1. "The Late Dr. Matheson's Hymn," The Glasgow Herald, Sept. 11, 1906, p. 9.

2. Saint Andrew, vol. VIII, April 5, 1906, p. 7.

3. Ibid., "Beyond the Bourne," vol. VIII, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 9.

4. Ibid., "Dr. Matheson's Well-Known Hymn" vol. VIII, Sept. 13, 1906, p. 1.

L. Warr's memorial address in St. Giles Cathedral on the then recently-deceased King George V, the journal referred to Warr's statement that "O Love" was one of the King's favorite hymns.

The correspondence which followed shed fresh light on some of the circumstances attending the hymn's origin. In his letter of February 4, 1936, R. T. Skinner recalled an interview with Matheson preparatory to giving a lecture on "Scotland's Hymn-Writers."¹ The information he obtained he was permitted to write down in shorthand. In the main, the account tallies with others quoted from Matheson in the Life and elsewhere except for two important points, namely, that the date of the hymn's creation was "on the evening of 6th June, 1881," and that the lines were dictated to a sister on her return from Glasgow.²

In his letter of February 6, J. Rutherford Brownlie refuted Skinner's date of 1881 by quoting Matheson's letter to his father, John Brownlie, on November 17, 1898, already referred to here.³ Skinner replied, still maintaining that

1. The Scotsman, Feb. 5, 1936. On Skinner's requesting a stanza of the hymn in Matheson's own hand, Matheson assured him "he never used a pen unless to sign a cheque." However, next morning he received by post "a verse typewritten, and bearing the author's signature." Skinner dated it March 7th, 1904," and "presented it in a frame to the Library of the Church of Scotland." Ibid., Feb. 5, 1936. The verse, the first one of the hymn, is now preserved in the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh.

2. In an article, "A Famous Hymn," which appeared in The Scotsman of July 11, 1925, John Brownlie makes clear the obvious fact that Matheson had no immediate access to pen and paper, and that, being blind, he did not actually write down the hymn, but dictated it after it had remained some time in his mind.

3. The Scotsman, Feb. 7, 1936.

"O Love" was written on Monday, June 6, 1881, and feeling sure that Matheson "had made a lapsus memoriae" regarding the composition date as June 6, 1882, when he wrote about it to Brownlie and others.¹

In a further communication, dated February 17, Skinner produced corroborative evidence in favor of the 1881 date by quoting the following announcement from The Scotsman of Thursday, June 8, 1882: "At 10 Claremont Terrace, Glasgow, on the 6th inst. by the Rev. James Elder Cumming, D.D., Sandyford, assisted by the Rev. George Matheson, D.D., Innellan, brother of the bride, James Ritchie Monteath, writer, Glasgow, to Margaret, second daughter of George Matheson."²

This would seem to be sufficient proof to dispel the tradition that immediately after the wedding ceremony Matheson returned to the Innellan manse, and composed the stanzas of "O Love." That incident could not have occurred in that year, for, as Harry Smith brought out in his letter of February 20,³ Matheson's hymn had already been printed in Life and Work five months previously, I.E. in January, 1882.

On this point we have the authority of R. H. Fisher, who was editor of Life and Work from 1902 to 1925. When reviewing Macmillan's Life in that journal in 1908, he remarked: "It is a pity that in the authoritative biography of Dr. Matheson

1. Ibid., Feb. 10, 1936.

2. Ibid., Feb. 19, 1936; see the same notice in The Glasgow Herald, June 7, 1882.

3. The Scotsman, Feb. 22, 1936.

the mistake about the date of his famous hymn's composition should have been perpetrated. It is again ascribed to 1882 ... the fact, however, is that 'O Love' must have been written in or before 1881."¹ Fisher restated his assertion some years later when he maintained that as "O Love" appeared in Life and Work for January, 1882, it "must therefore have been written at least a month earlier,"² which would be, say, December 1881 at the latest.

The erroneous date of composition has persisted in most published references to the hymn, including that of John Julian, the hymnologist. Both in the first and revised editions (1892 and 1907 respectively) of his Dictionary of Hymnology not only does Julian repeat the wrong date of the hymn's composition but he makes the misstatement that "this hymn first appeared in the Church of Scotland magazine, Life and Work, in 1883," a year later than the actual publication.

As stated above, the conclusion is as follows: The most that can be said is that the hymn, in view of its appearance in Life and Work for January 1882, was composed in or before 1881. The precise date may have been June 6, 1881, though that is not probable. It would, in fact, be a coincidence if the hymn had been written on the same date, though one year sooner, as that of the Monteath wedding.³ In any case, then, Matheson had a lapse of memory when he named the date of composition as June 6, 1882.

1. Life and Work, Feb., 1908, p. 32. The description of 1882 in the Life, p. 181, is accepted as correct from Matheson's own erroneous statement in his quoted letter.

2. The Outside of the Inside, p. 141.

3. For the newspaper announcement of the Monteath wedding of June 6, 1882, with Matheson assisting, see The Scotsman, June 8, 1882, and The Glasgow Herald, June 7, 1882.

APPENDIX B.

An Index of Matheson's Poems

(1) Almost all of Matheson's poems were included in his collection, Sacred Songs. The following poems first appeared in periodicals, and were later included in Sacred Songs under the same title:

1. "Asceticism," Life and Work, 1886, p. 62.
(Sacred Songs, p. 103).
2. "At the Closing Day," Life and Work, 1885, p. 80.
(Sacred Songs, p. 47).
3. "Daybreak Orison," Life and Work, 1884, p. 120.
(Sacred Songs, p. 58).
4. "The Dwelling Place of God," Life and Work, 1882, p. 67.
(Sacred Songs, p. 113).
5. "The Fadeless Thing," Great Thoughts, 1911, p. 80.
(Sacred Songs, p. 3).
6. "The Guild of Humanity," The Expository Times, vol. 1.
p. 109.
(Sacred Songs, p. 120).
7. "The Nativity," Life and Work, 1879, p. 56.
(Sacred Songs, p. 42).
8. "The New Day," Life and Work, 1884, p. 75.
(Sacred Songs, p. 57).
9. "Peace In the Storm," Life and Work, 1882, p. 51.
(Sacred Songs, p. 55).
10. "The Renewal of Youth," Life and Work, 1882, p. 19.
(Sacred Songs, p. 109).
11. "The Solace of the Valley," Life and Work, 1884, p. 21.
(Sacred Songs, p. 86).
12. "The Threshold of Prayer," Life and Work, 1902, p. 124.
(Sacred Songs, p. 157).

(2) The following poems appeared first in various periodicals and subsequently under a different title in Sacred Songs:

1. "Above Every Name," The Sunday Magazine, 1884, p. 264.
("The Christian's Pole-Star,"
Sacred Songs, p. 115).
2. "God With Us," The Sunday Magazine, 1878, p. 445.
("Jacob at Bethel,"
Sacred Songs, p. 53).
3. "Hymn," The Sunday Magazine, 1875, p. 248.
("The Fire and the Cloud,"
Sacred Songs, p. 60).
4. "My Voice Shalt Thou
Hear In the Morning," The Sunday Magazine, 1875, p. 856.
("Morning Aspiration,"
Sacred Songs, p. 101).
5. "Times of Need," The Sunday Magazine, 1881, p. 549.
("Strength for the Day,"
Sacred Songs, p. 107).

(3) The following poem, though published earlier in a periodical, was not later included in Sacred Songs:

1. "With Thee Is the Fountain of Life," Life and Work,
1882, p. 35.

(4) D. Macmillan in The Life of George Matheson, quotes the following poems, not to be found elsewhere:

1. "Bethany Tears," Life, p. 18.
2. "The Blind Girl's Retrospect," Life, pp. 67-68.
3. "Withered Fig-tree," Life, p. 58.
4. "Zillah," Life, pp. 62-64.

1. NOTES BY MATTHEW

Note: The third edition of *General Notes* incorporated "C" lists which will not be set as an addition to those given in the first and second editions. With the publication of this new book, there are no changes in later editions of Matthew's words, except for the page numbering, in some cases. The editions used or noted in this volume are given below as part of the bibliographical data. The fact that there are also other editions of a particular word is likewise indicated, and where there are only a few editions, these are listed by original years.

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PART I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS BY MATHESON

Note: The third edition of Sacred Songs incorporates "O Love that wilt not let me go" as an addition to those poems given in the first and second editions. With the exception of this one book, there are no changes in later editions of Matheson's works, except for the page numbering, in some cases. The editions used or quoted in this thesis are given below as part of the bibliographical data. The fact that there are also other editions of a particular work is likewise indicated, and where there are only a few editions, these are listed by actual years..

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