

Frederick Denison Maurice
as
Witness to the Light

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Why choosing the topic of Light?

The reason for choosing the topic of the Light is that it will have a central position in my planned synthesis between Theology and Physics. It is related to the plausibility, of the existence of another world to replace what our ancestors used to think of as a world above the clouds, with winged angels flying up to and around Heaven. That vision has been lost with the advent of air travel where any one can fly above the clouds only to find no one there. The new reality dealt a heavy blow to the faith of many, including myself in my early years. How can we believe in Heaven if it is not even plausible?

Luckily, there is the plausibility of another world that can be predicted by an extrapolation of some laws of Physics. Over a century ago, Albert Einstein mentioned, in passing, that it is plausible that there is a world beyond the speed of light, using extrapolation of the Special Theory of Relativity. However, that world is off limits to us due to the light speed barrier. Recent research on the link between light and DNA suggests a plausibility of connection with that world via living matter.

That world not another universe but another plane of reality. My preliminary assessment of the main

features of it seem to resemble what was our understanding of Heaven: A world beyond our daily reach; totally different from our world, yet it gave birth to our world through the Big Bang; its connection with our world is light; its light is different from the light of this world, yet the two lights form the boundaries of both worlds; that world is not granulated like ours, but continuous and smooth; it has perfect inner connectivity, everything is connected with everything else; movement there lasts forever, never stagnating, never ending; all movement is towards an entity that is impossible to reach; that entity is possibly what created all; that world seems to have direct connection through its light with the living matter in our world (a surprising connection between that light and DNA spirals). That is the outline of my planned work on the Physics side of Quantum Theology. Its counterpart in Theology is the Divine Light, the Higher Light that gave birth to our world. The Higher Light is associated with connectivity, inclusion, union, harmony; all are themes of Maurice's work, culminating in his Christian Socialism.

Witnesses of the Light

Given that the light of the other world cannot be seen by our eyes, nor by our equipment; can we say that it really exists?

If a tree fell in a forest and there was no one around to witness it, was there a sound? At least, one person is needed to be there to witness the sound. The Light of God will be alive when there is at least one person to witness it.

There were witnesses to the Light in the East, and there was Maurice:

In the East, Light was associated with the Hesychast experience such as that of St. Symeon the New Theologian (975 - 1035? AD), and with The Theology of Light as in the thought of St. Gregory Palamas (1296 - 1359 AD). The Hesychast Controversy was a major reason for the schism between East and

West. St. Palamas did not have firsthand experience with the Light but he defended it vehemently based on the experience of others. St. Symeon wrote passionate prayer to the Devine Light, but it is not clear whether it was based on actual experience or not. In all cases, it stopped there: as Hesychast or Theology of Light.

Maurice pushed it further. Even though, like St. Palamas, he did not assert having a personal experience with the Light, he put it at the centre of a whole social theology that impacts all aspects of society, politics and life. Like Palamas, he mentioned the Higher Light (as we will see in his sermon on Light and Darkness ..., below). It is not clear whether he was influenced by Palamas or not, but one thing is clear: he started where Palamas ended and built on it his vision of The Kingdom of Christ (on earth).

F. D. Maurice witnessed it; he trusted in it and called us to trust it too. “I go to the Bible- I would bid you go to it- because I feel how much darkness surrounds you and me; because I believe that He, in whom all **light** dwells, is ready to meet us there; to reveal Himself to us; to guide us onward to the perfect day.” (5)

While Maurice is generally identified as a “Christian Socialist”, I think that is only a feature of a deeper sense of connectivity related to his witnessing the Light. It is not surprising that someone like him who focuses on the centre of unity, will abhor the sins of false pride and greed associated with the fragmentation in the world that he saw around him. From that vantage point, and due to lack of record to the contrary, Christian Socialism would look like a utopia. However, it is my belief, that if was to witness our time, he would have seen that unchecked socialism results in the sins of envy and sloth. The social utopia would have been compromised, but the Light would stay. So, I would join Alec R. Vidler in identifying him as “Witness to the Light”.

His Epistles of St. John are clear example of the intensity of his focus on the Light; so, I included that that first. After that, I covered Vidler's book "Witness to the Light" (1) showing the mention of "light" through a wide range of topics summarizing his whole work. That will be the bulk of this paper as it shows the translation of Light in earthly life. Issues related to conflicts with and opinions of his contemporaries were kept to a minimum in order not to dilute the focus on the main topic. I used quotes extensively for maximum fidelity to his opinions; however, I used the quotes selectively and sometimes with select line of quotes to keep focus on the essence of the issue, while hoping that no important point was lost by that selectivity. Overall, I kept the order of the chapters of the book, but shuffled some quotes and points to reach a smoother flow as much as possible. Quotes are referenced to the references given by Vidler, followed by the page of Vidler's book that gave that reference. Finally, I took the liberty of highlighting the word "light" whenever it appeared in his quotes, as well other words that are closely related to it, for future reference and connection with other papers.

Epistles of St. John

The Coming and Rejection of the Light, F. D. Maurice, M. A. (2)

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not..." (John 1:10-11)

"The light came into men's hearts as into its proper native dwelling-place. The Word from whom that light issued asserted His right over all the feelings, instincts, impulses, and determinations of these hearts, as over His own rightful domestics and subjects. But the light was repelled; the rightful Ruler was treated as an intruder by these domestics and subjects. There was anarchy and rebellion where there should have been subordination and harmony. A usurper had reduced those into slavery who would not have the service which is freedom."

This an example of how Maurice connects “light” with God the rightful ruler, with harmony and freedom; hallmarks of Heaven that he hopes to see on earth

Light and Darkness: Sin and Purification, F. D. Maurice, M. A. (3)

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all....” (1 John 1:5-10)

The following are selected excerpts of it; for full text, see pp. 27-29 at the end of this essay

“**“Light”** and “Darkness” are very living expressions. They belong to the life of us all. ... They (*the pre-Christian Ephesians*) felt that a **higher light** than the light which the eyes could see must proceed from him (*Artemis or Diana*). So these old Greeks thought. They were continually exalting the **lower light** above the **higher light**, and supposing the higher to come from the lower. This was their idolatry. They worshipped the visible things from which they thought that the light proceeded. ... But *He* did not think that these Ephesians had been wrong because they had dreamt of a **God of Light**. **That was a true dream. Christ had come to fulfil it.** The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, whom Jesus had revealed, was this **God of Light**. ... *“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.”* ... All those strange intimations which come to me that I am not what I am meant to be, must be **flashes of light** from the **source of light**. They are painful flashes. ... *“God is light, and in Him is no darkness”*; I am intended to walk in this **light**. This inclination not to be true, not to have fellowship with my fellow men, is an inclination not to walk in this **light**, not to be in that state in which He has intended men to be. ... **God was light**, and in Him was no darkness — that He had sent His Son to bring them into **His light!** ... “

Here, we see reference to “higher light” ... a true dream, even though it was initially wrongly allocated. That dream came true by the coming of Christ. So, Christ is the “higher light” as opposed to the “lower light” of the world. That “source of light” sends Maurice painful “flashes of light”; painful because they

tell him the truth about his deviations from what is good for his real being. So, Maurice seems to have personal experience with the Light; as with St. Symeon the New Theologian who summed up his experience with the Divine Light as:

“Think of a man standing at night inside his house, with all the doors closed; and then suppose that he opens a window just at the moment when there is a sudden flash of lightning. Unable to bear its bright-ness, at once he protects himself by closing his eyes and drawing back from the window. So it is with the soul that is enclosed in the realm of the senses: if ever she peeps out through the window of the intellect, she is overwhelmed by the brightness, like lightning, of the pledge of the Holy Spirit that is within her. Unable to bear the splendour of unveiled light, at once she is bewildered in her intellect and she draws back entirely upon herself, taking refuge, as in a house, among sensory and human things.” (4, p.30)

Maurice’s concise description seems to fit St. Symeon’s experience with the Light.

Witness to the Light (1)

Introduction:

Maurice’s theological career (1830-1870) happened to coincide with a very dynamic time resulting from the clash between classical science that was at the peak of its Newtonian-Laplacian determinism; a time when scientists were at the peak of their delusions of having discovered the ultimate truth (only to burst like a hot air balloon one generation later). The rapid advancement of industry gave unwarranted and naïve believe that the science of that day told the ultimate truth. That represented a challenge to the Church that considered its truth as the ultimate truth. The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1860) added to the clash. It was inevitable that Biblical studies would be infested by the “scientism” of the day which reflected on the work of German Biblical critics. (1, p.151)

The result was that Biblical revelation became double-minded: either rigorous bible study or devotional in the pulpit or in prayer. (1, p.153) Maurice was ahead of his time by thinking of the Bible as a whole.

Only in the entirety of the Bible he saw the revelation of the divine kingdom as it reveals itself gradually. "... the Bible may be read as a continuous history, and that it is the history of the unveiling of God to the creature whom He has made in His image. ..." (6). "He went to the Bible to receive **light** upon its constitution. ...". (1, p.154) The Transfiguration, with the implied light, was central to what he saw in the Bible: "... In the short period of our Lord's ministry there are certain great land-marks such as the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Entry into Jerusalem, which all observe. ..." (7). Light that is out of this world, cannot be interpreted by our logic: "If the Gospel is a Divine message to mankind, it cannot depend for the proof of its veracity ..." (8). But what about the new challenges by science? Maurice was ahead of his time, even ahead of many in our time, by transcending the superficialities of the conflict and focusing on the core of what matters instead: "God . . . has given us an assurance that we shall have His Spirit to guide us into truth. He has not given us a promise that there shall be no errors in the letter of the Scriptures." (9). Alas, if his contemporaries had his faith and wisdom, they wouldn't have allowed themselves to be rocked by Darwin's *Origin of Species*; in due time, the theory of evolution evolved from random mutations that are screened by survival of the fittest (which would have needed trillions of years to give any results), into evolution by quantum leaps that defy randomness and point to the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

He saw that the Bible demonstrates, through reported miracles "that spiritual power is superior to mechanical; that the world is subject to God, and not to chance or nature; that there is an order". (10) The "order" he is referring to is an order in the higher world. Surprisingly this is what we are starting to feel in the Modern Science of today: our world is nothing but vibrations of "strings" (String Theory, also more recently called "M-Theory"); the strings are not from our world and we don't know why they are vibrating; there is an order there which defies our mathematics.

ONLY A DIGGER

Lady Frederick, like Mr. Gladstone, was a staunch High Anglican. But like her uncle she had an independent and a liberal mind, and though mystified by Maurice she could not refuse to own his spiritual greatness. (1, p.2) "I believe he was a true Saint, though perhaps with the misfortune, which seems to belong to some schools of thought, of inspiring his disciples with his errors rather than his truths." (11) However, he did not think of himself as leading a school of thought let alone having a company of disciples.

There has been a great diversity of opinions about him (1, p.3). Such a person, whose starting point is witnessing the Light is not easy to understand nor to classify along the lines of his time. (1, p.5) Only one label seemed to stick to him: "Christian Socialist." (1, p.5)

As to what Maurice thought of his calling, "Theologian" is the most likely (1, p.5)

However, he was not a main-stream Theologian. According to R. H. Hutton: "Theologians of the ordinary type, coming to the study of Maurice are not only apt to be bewildered as to his real meaning, but to feel themselves reproached for that external and 'Notional' view of things divine ..." (12)

Even Maurice himself saw his work as being out of the ordinary as can be seen from his letter to J. M. Ladlow (1, p.6): "Let people call me merely a philosopher, or merely anything else, or what they will, or what they will not; my business, because I am a theologian, and have no vocation except for theology, is not to build, but to dig, to show that economics and politics ... must have a ground beneath themselves, that society is not to be made anew by arrangements of ours, but is to be regenerated by finding the law and ground of its order and harmony, the only secret of its existence in God." (13)

Maurice criticized the Learned "Schoolmen" isolation in their ivory towers: "... The highest theology is most closely connected with the commonest practical life ..." (14). "I am convinced that theology will be a mere *hortus siccus* for Schoolmen to entertain themselves with, till it becomes associated once more with the Life of nations and humanity ..." (15)

And of their deviation of the essentials of the Faith, he sees the Creed as the necessary essential: "It is a creed for the people which the schoolman cannot and dares not meddle with, and yet which he is obliged to confess says much more than he can say in hundreds of folios..." (16)

With the basics preserved by the Creed, prayer provides safe devotions resulting in human unity: "I don't want to force any one to like it (the Book of Common Prayers) ... but it has helped me to see more of the love of God and of the bonds by which men are knit to each other ..." (17)

His trust in the Light gave him assurance that science should be of no threat to the divine truth as we can see from The Claims of the Bible and of Science: "the conditions which are required for arriving at the knowledge of divine truth.": "Surely they are stern conditions! It is a straight and narrow way which leadeth to life! There must be a continual waiting for **light**; a distrust of our own assumptions; a readiness to be detected in error, certain that God's meaning is infinitely larger than ours, and that other men may perceive an aspect of it which we do not perceive; a belief that He is fulfilling His promise "that all shall be taught of Him," in ways which we cannot imagine; ..." (18). Indeed, "in ways which we cannot imagine"! Who would have imagined at his time, when scientific determinism was at its highest, that a mere generation later there will be the Ultra Violet Catastrophe that will usher Quantum Mechanics and rock the very foundation of the naive science of his time?! In my opinion, he was a

prophet guided by the Light.

The Light cannot be reached by our earthly methods and systems, as he commented on the ancient Ephesians in his sermon on “Light and Darkness: Sin and Purification”. The truth emanates from God the divine teacher who guides all humans; whether they follow His guiding or not, ultimately all events must follow His guidance. (1, p.14)

He did not try to create a theological system; he witnessed his faith. He had a divine teacher, and the Light was shining upon him to which it was his aim to bear a faithful witness for. The object of this work is to discover the truths that he believed he was taught, and that were given to him to communicate to others. (1, p.15)

Maurice believed in “the method of the Creeds and of the Bible, where all things descend from God to the creature, instead of ascending from the creature to God.” (19)

“The theological method,” he said, “is the oldest of all methods...” (20). He did not follow any system, but responded to the challenges of the time as they occurred; his writing were *ad hoc* and *ad hominem* guided by the Light of God's self-revelation. (1, p.16)

Note the similarity with Quantum Physics that started by observations that defied established elegant theories, then proceeded to add one *ad hoc* rule after another; never succeeding in having one elegant theory yet (the String Theory is spinning in complexity and escalating out of control). All are signs that the only order exists at a level higher than our world. Maurice is, surprisingly, a prophet of the era to come.

Since the Light of God is Light for all, Maurice reached out to a large pool of sources. This is evident from his great work on *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*. Bishop Collins witnessed that when he said that Maurice “had the great gift of being able to accept from teachers of the most diverse kinds whatever elements of good they had to offer, without either following them in every ramification of their teaching, or repudiating them on account of what he could not receive ...” (1, p.23)

THE HEAD AND KING OF OUR RACE

Trust in the Light of God: Where Christian apologetics were involved in the argumentative defense of Christianity, Maurice deplored “the unfortunate rage for apologetic literature in the Christian Church.” (21). “God can take care of His own cause.” (22). For him, it was the proclamation, rather than arguments, that would bring men into the light. “Arguments about a Creator will fall dead upon them. A message from a Father may rouse them to life.” (23). The Bible bears witness to the truth revealed by God; theologians are to proclaim it; to be its witnesses not lawyers. (1, pp.29,30)

Wrong start:

In Maurice's view, the Christian preaching and teaching at his time, had a wrong start by declaring that humans are fundamentally evil, belonging to a fallen and depraved race, and then declare that some people are saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. (1, p.30); that God redeemed only part, the elect ones, of His creation while the rest of the human race was condemned to eternal depravity. He considered this false start a perversion of the Gospel and a disregard to the old creeds which focus not on the fall but on the only-begotten Son who was with the Father before all worlds as the focal point of faith and trust for all humanity. (1, p.30). The Lord's Prayer starts with “Our Father” and ends with “deliver us from evil”. That is the order that we should follow, not the reverse.

Some of Maurice's quotes on this issue:

“My desire, is to ground all theology upon the Name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; not to begin from ourselves and our sins; not to measure the straight line by the crooked one. This is the method which I have learned from the Bible. There everything proceeds from God; He is revealing Himself, He is acting, speaking, ruling.” (24) Whereas the Evangelicals “seem to make sin the ground of all theology . . . it seems to me that the living and holy God is the ground of it, and sin the departure from the state of union with Him, into which He has brought us. I cannot believe the devil is in any sense king of this universe. I believe Christ is its king in all senses, and that the devil is tempting us every day and hour to deny Him, and think of himself as the king. It is with me a question of life and death which of these doctrines is true; I would that I might live and die to maintain that which has been revealed to me.” (25). His choice of “revealed to me” is fitting with his frequent use of “light”; Light leads to the realization that Christ, not evil should be the starting point.

“Mankind stands not in Adam but in Christ.” (26). “This relation is fixed, established, certain. It existed in Christ before all worlds. It was manifested, when He came in the flesh. He is ascended on high, that we may claim it.” (27). “The proper constitution of man is his constitution in Christ” (28). “If by the very law and constitution of His universe God contemplates us as members of a body in His Son, we are bound to contemplate ourselves in the same way.” (29). “... as revelations of the Son of God in whom all things had stood from the first, in whom God had looked upon His creature Man from the first.” (30).

Maurice proved to be an Anglican Church pioneer in shifting focus from depravity to hope. According to W. Moore Ede, the late Dean of Worcester Cathedral, Maurice's views are gaining greater influence in the twentieth century. (31).

While the devil will never be king, evil is still everywhere: “How hard when evil is above, beneath, within, when it faces' you in the world, and scares you in the closet when you hear it saying in your own heart, and saying in everyone else, "Our name is Legion"..." (32). But evil wins only when we do not confess our relationship with God : “... In Him is life and His life is the **light** of men. The life of a man becomes a vain show, just because he does not confess his relationship to this **Fountain of Life** ...” (33).

The pardon we seek should not be in isolation from the rest of humanity: we say “deliver us from evil”; not “deliver me from evil”. Maurice was vehement about this point: “We are very apt to think thus, "We belong to a guilty race; God looks upon us all as sinners. But perchance I may get Him to treat me differently; I may procure a separate pardon." No! that will not do. There is selfishness, there is separation from *thy* brother, there is the very essence of sin in that thought... You are not looked upon as a sinful race; you are looked upon as a race of which Christ the Son of God is the head. ...” (34). Again, Maurice witnesses the Light for all: “...we shall say boldly to all people among whom we go, "The devil is not your master, he has no right to your worship; the God, in whom is **light** and no darkness at all, has claimed you and the whole creation for His own. His marvellous **light** is as much for you as for us...” (35). To emphasize the universal Headship of Christ, he shows the universality of pivotal points in the Bible, starting from the OT: “... As Adam is all mankind, so is Noah all mankind; and the story of *the Deluge* stands as witness that God's covenant, though historically it was made with Israel, is applicable to the whole human race, and indeed to all created life - a truth finally established in the universal Gospel of the New Testament ...” (1, p.42) .

While the Headship of Christ is universal, sin is personal, according to Maurice: “... If we are going to speak of human depravity, it is better, safer, truer language to speak of individual depravity than of

universal depravity. By individual depravity I mean my own. I find it out in myself; or rather, He who searcheth me and trieth my ways, finds it out in me... It is easy enough to own a general depravity; under cover of it you and I escape.” (36). One cannot but admire Maurice's bravery and honesty in taking personal ownership in one's own sins rather than throwing the blame on humanity at large and then ask for a privileged treatment. Certainly he was ahead of his time.

THE IDEA OF A CHURCH UNIVERSAL

As if by revelation, Maurice announces: “There rose up before me the idea of a CHURCH UNIVERSAL, not built upon human inventions or human faith, but upon the very nature of God Himself, and upon the union which He has formed with His creatures.” (37). As if by some kind of utopia: “... the Church is the world restored to its relation with God, taken back by Him into the state for which He created it.” (38). However, he realizes the reality of the fragmentation of the world, therefore he places the Churches’ roll as a protest movement trying to bring the world to the centre of being: “The Universal Church, constituted in its Universal Head, exists to protest against a world which supposes itself to be a collection of incoherent fragments without a centre, which, where it reduces its practice to a maxim treats every man as his own centre ... The Church exists to maintain the order of the nation and the order of the family, which this selfish practice and selfish maxim are continually threatening.” (39). He refers to John 15: 17-20 as an assertion about the struggle of the Church, being a community centered on God, and the rest of a fragmented society. (40). Here, he doesn't mince words about the fragmentation of the world: “... this world is condemned to a very hopeless kind of darkness. Its members cannot see any light which should guide their footsteps for they confess no light but what proceeds from themselves. They are always stumbling against each other never doing justice to each

other.” (41). Here he sites two kinds of light: one that we should confess to, vs. another light that comes from human minds; that is the higher light vs. lower light. He mentioned that explicit distinction in commenting on pre-Christian Ephesians.

With such a failure to be Christ centered, would there be any blessing to humanity coming out of the sacrifice of Christ? If a tree fell in the forest and there was no one to witness it, would there be a sound? Maurice raised the question: “... I ask you, would be the blessing to mankind of Christ's death, if there were none to bear witness of it, none to claim the universal fellowship which it is meant to establish?... I answer, all nations who, through God's mercy, have heard the Gospel of Christ, and have confessed it to be true; all who by baptism have claimed the privilege of belonging to His Church.” (42). Even “If there be one man in any county of England who declares that the Lord is his God, who says, "I was baptized into His name, I am taken to be His child, and His Spirit dwells with me," that man says what is true of him and true of all the men and women in that county, and true of all the members of Christ's Church in every part of the world...” (43). If there was just person in the forest, then there was sound; if there was just one witness to the blessing of Christ, then the blessing of Christ is alive. For Maurice, witnessing the Light, not arguing about it, is what makes the Light real.

What about those who are outside the Church? Is there salvation for them? Maurice’ answer is that their salvation is possible, given that the actual Church is not limited to the visible Church. Those who are saved will find out, when they are in the other world, that they belonged to the Church even though they did not know that in this world (44). That covers Maurice’s inclusiveness of humanity at large.

THE SACRAMENT OF CONSTANT UNION and SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Baptism:

Baptism is “the sign of admission into a Spiritual and Universal Kingdom, grounded upon our Lord's incarnation, and ultimately resting upon the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (45)

Baptism is a constant union with God and the people of God: “Baptism tells me that I am God's child, and may live as If I were.” (46). “It is an act "for the remission of sins; which declares that God puts them from you, that He does not treat you as a servant, but as His child in Christ.” (47). “Baptism is a sacrament of constant union not only with God but with the whole people of God. Baptism asserts for each man that he is taken into union with a Divine Person, and by virtue of that union is emancipated from his evil Nature.” (48)

Those who are not children of God “have no right to confess their sins to God as their Father; they have no right to believe that He pardons them their sins for Christ's sake. If they are not children of God, all their prayers, thanksgivings, adorations, confessions, are downright mockery”. (49)

The Creed:

The Creed is an assertion in faith "*I believe*" in communion with our brethren. It “is thus our deliverance from partial ideas of God, and from dependence on particular systems of doctrine, whether religious or philosophical.” (1, p.118). According to Maurice, that applies to both the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed. They are both a statement of faith, a declaration of the relation with the Godhead.

Relationship between the Creed and the Thirty Nine Articles:

While the Creed is personal, the Articles are “a set of intellectual propositions affirming conditions of thought” (1, p.120) .They complement each other.

Forms of worship:

For Maurice, worship is a medium of unity both for ecumenism in space and time as well as community fellowship. Ecumenism is very present in Maurice's understanding of worship: "one of the clear and indispensable signs of a spiritual and universal fellowship." (50). "the prayers written in the first ages of Christianity are in general more free, more reverent, more universal, than those which have been poured forth since ..." (51). Communion across the generations and communion across the nations: "It is heart-cheering to feel that a Catholic Church is not circumscribed by space any more than by time; that national barriers have been overcome; that we can feel with men of other climes, and kindreds, and tongues. Glorious fruit of the day of Pentecost! Blessed token that the kingdom of Christ is indeed in the world! Sure prophecy of the perfect fellowship which it shall one day establish." (52)

Community fellowship:

In worship we are "members of one body, and each man incapable of exercising his own spiritual functions excepting in connection with that body." (53) As worship "draw us out of that individuality which is our curse and ruin, and lead us, one and all, to take up our position on the same ground of being justified and redeemed in Christ." (54)

The Eucharist:

Given Maurice's social character, he wouldn't be expected to speak of communion as a religious duty; but he does. Perhaps it is because his socialist ideas have a deep solid foundation of witnessing to what matters: Communion with God based on the sacrifice of Christ. "... without a sacrifice for sins there could be no communion between God and His creatures. His sacrifice removes those impediments to the communion," (55). Such a sacrifice makes Eucharist a duty: "We speak of the Eucharist as a religious

duty which must be performed if we would escape perdition ..." (56). It is a duty because: "communion with God in the largest and fullest sense of that word, is not an instrument of attaining some higher end, but itself the end to which He is leading His creatures ... *they* are secretly longing and crying; and without which they cannot be satisfied." (57). As part of his historical ecumenism, he refers to the old Church for the significance of the Eucharist's connection with the senses as well as the spirit: "The elder church believed that the outward and visible elements proclaimed, by their very outwardness and visibility, a most precious principle - that not only the soul, that which thinks and Judges, but the body also ..." (58).

The Ministry:

Maurice regards the ordained ministry of the Church as the living establishment of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. "The principle of the Catholic Church, which I have endeavoured to develop in reference to Baptism, the Eucharist, the Creed, the Forms of Worship, is the principle of a direct, real, and practical union between men and their Lord." (59). The ordained ministry is so essential for the preservation of Christianity that "If the priestly idea dropped out of the circle of Christian ideas, the sense of what mankind had gained by the ascension of Christ would disappear also ... if it were limited to Him who had fully realized, and can alone fully realize it, the belief of His union with the creature whom He has called His brethren, would grow feeble ... if it were claimed merely by the Christian body, the belief of the unity of that body in its distinct portion, and as a whole evaporate, and merely a vague blessing be asserted for each person." (60). The priest's object "... is to present Christ to men and men to Christ really and practically ... He is a witness of Christ's continual intercession for every member of His flock. ... the kingdom of God is a mere delusion, if there be not a voice speaking from heaven as well as

one crying from earth ...”. The minister is to say to his congregation: “God has heard your petitions, rise up as pardoned men, with strength to offer praises and prayers, with strength to do your work.” (61)

The survival of the Church “... depends upon the acknowledgement of the Son of God as the Universal Bishop of it ...” (62). “Bishops being as we believe the witnesses and representatives of Christ's universal kingdom, are the very instruments of our communion with other nations.” (63); It is implied that “our nation”, is Christ's universal kingdom. With humility at the foundation of the ministry: “... our Lord laid down the principle that in His kingdom the chief of all is the servant of all ...” (64)

He spoke of “the necessity for Apostolic Succession and Episcopal Ordination.” (65). Yet, we cannot judge those Christians who belong to Christian bodies without episcopal succession, as being out of the Church; as long as they do not reject the institutions which make the universal communion possible. (1, pp. 142-3)

THE BOOK OF THE WAYS OF GOD

“I use the Scriptures because I conceive they set forth Christ as the Son of God and the Lord of every man. I do not use them because I think they set forth some standard which is good for a set of men called Christians, who are different from other men, and who have not the same God with other men.” (66) “I go to the Bible - I would bid you go to it - because I feel how much darkness surrounds you and me; because I believe that He, in whom all **light** dwells, is ready to meet us there; to reveal Himself to us; to guide us onward to the perfect day.” (67)

As mentioned in the introduction, Biblical revelation at Maurice's time was characterized by double-mindedness: either rigorous bible study or devotional in the pulpit or in prayer.(1,p.153). Maurice was

ahead of his time by thinking of the Bible as a whole. Only in the entirety of the Bible he saw the revelation of the divine kingdom as it reveals itself gradually. "... the Bible may be read as a continuous history, and that it is the history of the unveiling of God to the creature whom He has made in His image. ..." (68). "He went to the Bible to receive **light** upon its constitution. ..." (1, p.154). The Transfiguration, with the implied light, was central to what he saw in the Bible: "... In the short period of our Lord's ministry there are certain great land-marks such as the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Entry into Jerusalem, which all observe. ...". (69). Light that is out of this world, cannot be interpreted by our logic: "If the Gospel is a Divine message to mankind, it cannot depend for the proof of its veracity," (70).

But what about the new challenges by science? Maurice was ahead of his time, even ahead of many in our time, by transcending the superficialities of the conflict and focusing on the core of what matters instead: "God . . . has given us an assurance that we shall have His Spirit to guide us into truth. He has not given us a promise that there shall be no errors in the letter of the Scriptures." (71). Alas, if his contemporaries had his faith and wisdom, they wouldn't have allowed themselves to be rocked by Darwin's *Origin of Species*; in due time, the theory of evolution evolved from random mutations that are screened by survival of the fittest (which would have needed trillions of years), into evolution by quantum leaps that defy randomness and point to the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

A LIVING POLITICS

For Maurice, to be a *person* is to cease being an *individual*. Identity as a person can be realized only by being a member of a God-centered community. (1, p.177). If I am not for my brother, then whom I am?: An Individual who cannot see beyond himself, and cannot believe in God. It is a hermeneutical circle:

personhood emerges through belonging, in heart and action, to a God-centered community; and, in its turn, personhood leads to faith in God. Applying this to nations: “Destroy national characteristics, reduce us merely into one great society, and whether the bond of that society is a pope, or an emperor, or a customs-union, the result is the same. A living God is not feared or believed in; ... Therefore let us be sure that if we would ever see a real family of nations, such as the prophets believed would one day emerge out of the chaos they saw around them, a family of nations which shall own God as their Father and Christ as their elder Brother, this must come from each nation maintaining its own integrity and unity.” (72). Where are the nations of today from that? Cutting the throats of each other; maintaining "peace" by increasing their nuclear arsenals, or trying to get one if they don't have it already. How long would the balance of terror last? Maurice's statement proved to be a prophecy about our time.

Again, it is a hermeneutical circle for nations: by failing to maintain peace on earth, they deny God; their denial of God kills peace on earth. “We cannot reverence heaven or know what it is, if we do not reverence the earth on which Christ walked and which He redeemed. ...” (73)

He feels that half-measures are not going to work, so he draws a line in the sand: “The time is come ... when the Bible must be thrown either into the fire as an old worn-out document, or when a nation must be felt to be not a formal corporation but a spiritual reality, a society of which we can predicate spiritual conditions and spiritual emotions, which can repent and be reformed as an individual can.” (74). That is where the roll of the National Church to rectify: “A National Church should mean a Church which exists to purify and elevate the mind of a nation; ...”. (75)

A UNITED CONFESSION OF THE NAME

The fragmentation in Reformation divinity systems was already under way. There were several names, ending with "ism" denoting systems of divinity, already at Maurice's time: Lutheranism (1560), Calvinism (1570), Puritanism (1573), Anabaptism (1577), Presbyterianism (1644), Congregationalism (1716), Evangelicalism (1831), Anglo-Catholicism (1842), and Episcopalianism (1846).

Maurice added another word to the list: "Anglicanism"; in 1842 (76), four years earlier than the earliest recording by Oxford English Dictionary. (77) Yet, in that same year, 1842, he gave a sermon on the need for united name and system for divinity: "A united Confession of the Name, a united Worship of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit ... we have a right to look for. It may come when we least expect it; it will probably come after a period of darkness, fierce contention, utter unbelief. ... when we are brought to nothingness, that He may be shown to be all in all." (78). His coining of the word "Anglicanism" perhaps, it meant to him a direction more than a system of divinity. (1, p.202); a direction towards tolerance, inclusiveness and ecumenism, while remaining true to the core Faith. Also, in the same year, he wrote: "Our Church has no right to call herself better than other Churches in any respect ... But our position, we may fairly affirm, for it is not a boast but a confession ..." (79). The national Church, for him, meant a contrast to various system divisiveness included in Roman Catholicism or Protestantism in its numerous systems: "The English Church I look upon as merely one branch of the true Church; and every system, whether called Evangelical, Liberal, Catholic, or purely Anglican, which has been invented by the members of that Church in former times and in our own day to express their notion of the Church, I look upon as "of the earth earthy," and as much carrying in it the seeds of destruction as the systems of the different sects which have revolted from her. ..." (80). He is not taking aim at any specific tradition of the other Churches; only at their divisive aspects, which leads him to call them

"sects": "Let us make the members of the sects understand that we are setting up no opinions of ours against theirs, no leaders of ours against their leaders; ..." (81).

He relates divisiveness of "sects" to an overall decay in that age: "We feel sometimes as if we were born into a busy, and excited, and yet into an exhausted age; when men, even boys, have become prematurely wise about the vanity of human wishes.... There is a decay of hope, and all the moral strength which hope awakens. ...". (82). Alas, if that was the case in his age, what hope do we have in our age?

The Hope is in projecting the unity of the Holy Trinity on our world: "The idea of the unity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, as the basis of all unity among men, as the groundwork of all human society and of all thought ..." (83).

He looked for a Church that is beyond divisiveness, and beyond connection to a state: "The Church is a body which may combine with a State, or rather, submit to it, but which has no natural connection with it. ..." (84). "The Church - it seems to me - is a part, the highest part, of that spiritual constitution of which the nation and the family are lower and subordinate parts; implied in the acts we do and the words we speak, established before all worlds, manifested as the true and everlasting kingdom. ...". (85).

CONCLUSION:

Maurice was not just ahead of his time, but even ahead of our time: Alas, if many literal theologians had his faith and wisdom, they wouldn't lock horns with the likes of Darwin's *Origin of Species*; they would focus instead on the observed fact that evolution is happening by quantum leaps that leave large gaps which have no explanation except that the Holy Spirit is at work. To be so much ahead of his time, and even ours, I have to say he is a profit.

While Maurice's ideas might be provocative for some, one thing is sure: there was no question about his unwavering witness to the Light. In a poll of five Cambridge men chosen at random, all said that their choice for whom to turn to “in the hour of death, and in the day of judgement” would be none other than Maurice! (1, p.226)

Similarities between Maurice’s views and those of the Eastern Church

It is interesting to note that while Reformers and Romanists, had the view that Adam fell from a great height of knowledge and perfection down to utter depravation of any free will for doing good, the east held a more humble idea of Adam as being in a state of undeveloped simplicity, so that he is not to be judged too harshly for his error. So, humanity did not fall entirely from God’s grace. Maurice seemed, unknowingly, very close to the Eastern Church. Another point of similarity between the two, is that the Grace of God is for all humanity; not just an elect part of it.

Hope in projecting the unity of the Holy Trinity on our world: “The idea of the unity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, as the basis of all unity among men, as the groundwork of all human society and of all thought, ...”. (86) This is a classical view in the Eastern Church

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**Full text of
Light and Darkness: Sin and Purification,
F. D. Maurice, M. A. (3)**

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all...." (1 John 1:5-10)

The Epistles of St. John: a series of lectures on Christian Ethics (1881). [Epistles of St. John.]

"Light" and "Darkness" are very living expressions. They belong to the life of us all. Moreover, these expressions were wonderfully suitable for those to whom St. John wrote. The Ephesians had paid an especial worship to Artemis or Diana. They connected her with the moon, the night ruler. They had paid a worship, in common with the other Greeks, to Apollo; him they connected with the sun, that rules the day. They connected them, I say, with these beautiful objects; but they were never satisfied with doing so. The god of light was the god whom they went to consult how they should manage states, conduct wars, make peace. They felt that a higher light than the light which the eyes could see must proceed from him. So these old Greeks thought. They were continually exalting the lower light above the higher light, and supposing the higher to come from the lower. This was their idolatry. They worshipped the visible things from which they thought that the light proceeded. St. John had been taught almost from his birth that he was not to worship things in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, or the works of his own hands. He had been taught that the Lord his God was one Lord, that He was the Unseen Deliverer, Guide, Teacher, King of Israel. He had clung to this teaching. Now he had believed that this God had revealed Himself to them, not in the sun or in the moon, but in a humble and crucified Man. With this conviction becoming every hour deeper and deeper in his mind, he had settled in the city where Apollo and Diana were worshipped. He saw the mischiefs and dangers of that worship more clearly and fully than he did when people told him about it on the Lake of Galilee. But he did not think that these Ephesians had been wrong because they had dreamt of a God of Light. That was a true dream. Christ had come to fulfil it. The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, whom Jesus had revealed, was this God of Light. But there is another reason closely connected with this, why St. John could not abandon the word "light" for any that was more formal and less living. A man may easily fancy that goodness, wisdom, truth, are possessions of his own. Whether he thinks he has got them for himself, or that some god has given them to him, he may still believe that he holds them just as he holds a freehold house or a purse of money. But you can never suppose that you hold light in this way. That I can never boast that I possess, Now the message which St. John brought to the Ephesians was not concerning a blessing of the first kind, but of this last kind. He did not tell them that God had given them certain possessions here, or had promised them certain possessions hereafter, which they could call theirs. That is the subject of the next verse — *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."* Walking in darkness is, alas! the phrase about which we have the least need of an interpreter. Everyone interprets it himself. It is possible for a man to be in this dark selfish state, and yet to say that he has fellowship with God. He may repeat prayers, he may offer sacrifices, he may pass for a religious man. But his life, the apostle says, is a lie. It is not only that he speaks a lie; he acts a lie. He does not the truth. This, indeed, he would have us to understand is falsehood — the very root of falsehood. *"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have*

fellowship one with another.” The darkness of which St. John speaks is an utterly unsocial condition. A man thinks about himself, dwells in himself; the rest of the universe lies in shadow. What, then, is the opposite state to this? *“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.”* The light is all around us, while we are most dark. I cannot extinguish the creation because I do not think about it or care about it. But this recollection is not enough to bring me out of my dark pit. My selfishness is too strong for all, however bright, in earth, and sea, and air to overcome. It is not too strong for God to overcome. All those strange intimations which come to me that I am not what I am meant to be, must be flashes of light from the source of light. They are painful flashes. They are just what men have tried by their false religions — by their insincere professions of fellowship with God — to drive away. But if, instead of doing that, we will hail them, if we will receive them as His messengers, we may enter into His true order. The proper social life is restored to us, even if we are far away from our brethren. *“And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”* St. John appeals to our experience. You desire to be true yourself; you desire to have fellowship with other men. The moment that first desire is awakened in me, then arises along with it a sense of falsehood: *“I have done false acts. I have been false. I have an inclination to do false acts and to be false now. I have something in me which violently resists my craving to be true.”* And about the seriousness, the terribleness of this fact there is no doubt. It must be at the bottom of the insincerity, discord, and hatred of the world. But how shall I describe this fact? I am at a loss; I cannot find a name. But I discover something more about the strange fact.

“God is light, and in Him is no darkness”; I am intended to walk in this light. This inclination not to be true, not to have fellowship with my fellow men, is an inclination not to walk in this light, not to be in that state in which He has intended men to be. Now I am, perhaps, better able to express this inclination of mine, and what has been the fruit of it. One name, however, does not satisfy me. I try several. I call it transgression; that is, the passing over a boundary which was marked out for me. I call it iniquity; that is, an uneven, zigzag course, a departure from the straight, even course. I call it sin; that is, the missing of an aim; the going aside from the goal which I was intended to reach. All these words imply that there is One who has marked the boundary for me, who has drawn the line for me, who has fixed the goal or aim for me. All imply a disobedience to a Will which I am meant to obey. Now, the message which St. John brought to the Ephesians was, *“God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ as the perfect Truth. God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as the God who has created men to be one. Therefore it is a revelation to us of our sin; for it shows us how we have fought and do fight against this mind and purpose of God; how, in doing so, we fight against our own proper state, our own proper blessedness.”* I do not mean that this sense of sin did not exist before that full revelation of God in Christ. But how much deeper did it become in those who learnt that God was light, and in Him was no darkness — that He had sent His Son to bring them into His light! What a sense of sin must have been in them! How they must have felt, *“It is our own fault, our own choice, that we have been walking in darkness. We have been striving against a God who has been at every moment plotting for our good!”* If, then, the men in the times of old cried out for a purification, those who heard this revelation must have felt the need of it immeasurably more. But what kind of purification could they have? *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

There is a new lifeblood put into this nature of ours. God Himself has infused it. The Son of God has taken our flesh and blood. He is the Head of our race. When we seek to rise out of ourselves — to be

delivered from our falsehood — to have fellowship with God, and fellowship with our brother, then His blood is an assurance that we have that fellowship. It removes the sense of sin against God which is in us; it removes the sense of sin against men. It gives that atonement and that purification which nothing else in earth and heaven can give. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* Instead of this fancy that you are without sin being a proof how clearly the light is shining into you, it is a proof that you are shutting out the light, for that would reveal to you your own inclination to fly from it and to choose the darkness. The truth makes us aware of our falsehoods. Is that hard doctrine? No; for *“if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* His faithfulness and justice are the enemies of our sins; therefore to them we may turn from our sins. They are the refuges from the darkness that is in us. A faithful and righteous Being is “therefore a forgiving Being. *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.”* If we will not confess the evil in us, we impute that evil to Him. We thrust away that Word which is shedding abroad His light in us; we bury ourselves in our own darkness. This is the effect of trying to make out a good case for ourselves, when it is our interest, our privilege, our blessedness, to justify God and to condemn ourselves; to say, *“Thou hast been true, and we have been liars. Deliver us from our lies! Help us to walk in Thy truth!”*

(F. D. Maurice, M. A.)