

BALDWIN BROWN  
A TRIBUTE, REMINISCENCE AND  
A STUDY

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# Baldwin Brown

*A TRIBUTE, A REMINISCENCE,  
AND A STUDY*

BY

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HACKNEY,

LONDON;

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1884

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*In Memoriam:*

JAMES BALDWIN BROWN, B.A.,

MINISTER OF

BRIXTON INDEPENDENT CHURCH.

BORN AUGUST 19, 1820.

DIED JUNE 23, 1884.

EDITED BY

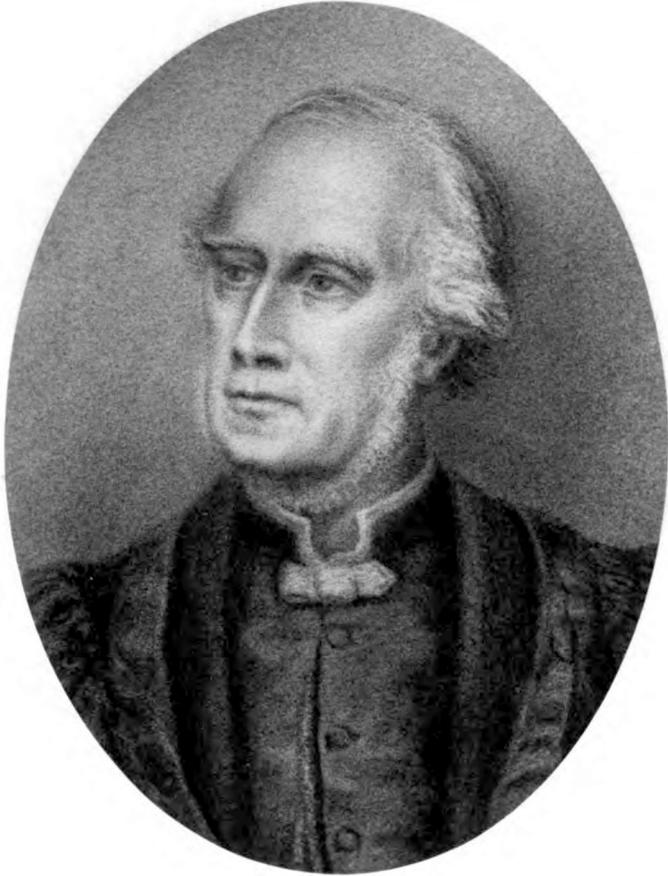
*ELIZABETH BALDWIN BROWN.*

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# BALDWIN BROWN

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*'My Father! My Father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.'*—2 KINGS 11, 12.

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I am sure, under this loss, I truly speak the feeling of, at least, the younger generation of Independents, of the men who will give us our colour twenty years hence, when I put it in these words of Elisha to his departing master. They express the two elements which so endeared Baldwin Brown to us and made him at a very important period of our lives a power over us. These elements were his truly paternal nobility of kindness, and his driving ardour of prophetic insight and inspiration. He was a Christianised prophet and most true and keen apostle, full of quick piercing power and manly love. No man among us Independents possessed the same power of inspiration, nor do I think of any who had more of that specific form of genius so beautifully illustrated in Dean Stanley—the genius of being beloved.

It was not the spell of the commanding thinker that he wove. In the strict sense of the words he was not a commanding thinker. Of metaphysical power he had not much. He was a very genuine theologian but not a speculative one. Neither was he strictly speaking a scholar. As he had not the deepest affinity for the purely philosophical difficulties in faith, so he was not quite at home among the critical difficulties that beset the Scriptural record, and the New Testament in particular. I once alluded in a letter to the fascination exercised on many scholars by the

beautiful development of Hebrew ideas traced by the newer school of Old Testament critics, especially in connection with the notion of sacrifice. He replied that he had not much sympathy with the school. 'But then I am not a scholar.' In that sense it was true. He was not versed in the lore of the sacred text. He was not an orientalist. He was neither a scientific metaphysician nor a scientific critic. He belonged to the department of moral theology. He was one of the theologians of the soul, whose thinking is always, in the best sense of the word, preaching. The spell he held over us was intellectual to be sure. It was a grasp as of bit and bridle. But it was still more moral. He ruled us with his eye. I know one whom he was good enough to rebuke and who loved him with a little fear. It was the inspiration of character leavened with mind that was his. It was the Christian and Independent inspiration of a personality. No pupil of Baldwin Brown (and he was himself one of our colleges) was likely to be unduly influenced by any mere document, institution, or organisation. To him Christianity was the gospel of free individuality, and the great church was the fraternity of the emancipated, the redeemed, the realised, who had received their own souls for a prey.

And the subjects that attracted and engrossed him were in keeping. His chosen and special field was history. He had the historic sense. Theology fascinated him on its anthropological side. Everything centred in the Incarnation, in the historic God. He was too intensely and quickly human for it to be otherwise. God tingled throughout his own life, and the whole of human story was the throbbing manifestation, ordered and sure, of the living and breathing humanity of God. Like Maurice, who so greatly influenced him,\* he had something like a genius for dealing with historic Revelation and epoch-making characters. Bunsens' 'God in History' represents his favourite line of thought. It is easy to see what a power this gave him in his preaching and in his general effort 'to wed theology to life'. It was what God had done for man in history that made for him the fascination of the past. It was what God was still doing for us in history that gave him such a vivid interest in and command of the politics of

\* His Funeral Orations strangely omitted all allusion to either Maurice or McLeod Campbell in connection with his theological development. Yet he was the only Independent of the first rank in his generation who might properly be described as a Maurician. It is mainly through him that Maurice has acted on us. Campbell's book on the atonement, he once told me, he considered the greatest theological work since the Reformation. Campbell preached for him once, and did it at his usual inordinate and profound length. If I remember rightly he was left at 9 o'clock still speaking. Mr. Brown said his people desired, that the word should not be spoken to them any more.

the present. He could keep his head clear in European politics when most people quite lost the clue of the ever changing maze. And it was this same sense of God in history that led him to a concern so keen and practical with the social situation of the present. His congregation has for years carried on a splendid work among the poor of Lambeth, officered first by his gifted daughter and next by an admirable City Missionary. They built an excellent hall before the present movement for mission halls in the lowest neighbourhoods was heard of. It is called the Moffat Institute, after the well-known missionary, whose membership at Brixton in his later years Mr. Brown was so proud of, and whose eloquent bent head in that front pew was a sermon in itself. But it was no mere zeal for 'evangelising the masses' as that is so often understood, that inspired the man who inspired this work. It had its root in his deep, deep sense of God in the present, God there in these worn, or imbruted, or helpless men and women, God in this great laden nation and society of which they were an indispensable part. To him in a very deep and philosophic sense they were Christ's poor. They were in integral part, of a society which had its right and power to exist only in virtue of the indwelling and inworking of the Redeeming Son of God. They had something to do for that society. It was not condescension to bring these people the gospel. It was only in a cautious sense that it was pity. There was no going down to them. It was stretching a hand across. And it was very pleasant to see Mr. Brown amid this same brotherhood. His outstretched hand and his breezy, manly, natural interest in these lumpish men and limp women (though they were not all such) was indeed like a sunshine in a shady place, or the blue sky above a Borough close. I remember with what zest and humour he used to read them scraps of Edwin Waugh's racy Lancashire—'Coom whoam to t'childer and me', or 'The dule's I' this bannet o' mine'. He was deeply concerned about the upgrowing children. Their miserable feeding and puny frames made him anxious about the physique of England (how could he forget thee O England!) in a few generations. He had physiological information that two meat meals, or three, a week would prevent fatal deterioration, and the providing of these meals was an important part of the work at Lambeth. This is a fair example, but only one, of the way in which he brought large interests, and imperial considerations to prescribe and sustain what might otherwise be only sentimental activity. But his whole mind was of cosmopolitan scope, and moved on the scale of nothing less than the Kingdom of God.

It was this same deep faith in the historic God that gave him his hope and belief in the future, and his sympathy with the young men who possess the future. His youthfulness of spirit was no more outflow of an elastic natural man. He rested on an

ageless and unweariable God, who to every generation was more and more. To us juniors he was always young and always, till he became ill, accessible. It was new life to come from the dogmatists with their exclusions, their system of checks, and air of suspicion, to this great generous believer and comprehensive anti-Comprehensionist. No religion will gain youth which is not a generous one, and no other religion will make men of youths. It is self-impeachment when a creed complains that it is losing the young. I never went from him but cheered, sobered, and sometimes exalted—always with the satisfaction (mingled sometimes with pain) of being understood. He believed in us, and to be believed in by some divine spirit is the root of all faith and high emprise, the source of the best severity of self-scrutiny and self-discipline. It is the intelligent benignity of God that stirs us to our very best sternness with ourselves. Mr. Brown was a power over us because he was so much of us. The mother of Goethe, who bore him at 18, used to say with tender humour, 'I am fond of my Wolfgang; we were young together'. Well, *we* were young together.

It was in this region of history to which I have been alluding that Baldwin Brown's scholarship lay and his philosophy shone. His knowledge, especially in the Christian history of Europe, was close and his handling brilliant. It is deeply to be regretted that he did not live to give the world the work which he had long meditated, and which would probably have been his greatest legacy to us, on the Kingdom of God. Its philosophy is hinted at in what many consider the ablest of all his works, which should be every Independent's text book 'First principles of Ecclesiastical Truth'. We were discussing once the title for the projected book, and if Maurice had not prevented it, he would have liked his title 'The Kingdom of Christ'. The conversation, I remember, took place on the battle-field of Stamford Bridge, which we had gone out from York to see. Baldwin Brown's kingliness always suggests to me the noble figure of Harold. This was as long ago as six years, and even at that time he had given up hope of accomplishing the work. After sketching the lines he would have liked to take he said 'But it will never be written. My work is over.' Already he saw the curtain preparing to fall. Stamford Bridge had been well won and he was on his tedious road to Hastings.

Such a book would have been far more than a Church History. Mere church history had little attraction for him. He had no great admiration for church tactics or tacticians. He had nothing in him of the ecclesiastical politician—an order of character which, except when it rose to heroic proportions, as in the case of some of the great popes, he came as near despising as he could despise anything. 'The bane of Christianity is the Churches' he

said in the last long conversation I had with him. It was a strong expression, but then he was a strong man, and a strong and perfectly consistent Independent. Like the greatest prophetic figures he began his judgment at the House of God, and thought it was more profitable to be severe on the Church than on the world. The greatest crime in history was perpetrated by the Church of the day.

It was a great anxiety to him in his later years to observe tendencies toward something like ecclesiastical organization in Independency. He saw in them a subtle and plausible form of the principle of Establishment or official religion. And he was for leaving to bodies whose principle would suffer less from organization the kind of work that only a strong organization can do. Independency is but one of the organs of the great Church, and they are all members one of another, each with its peculiar function, according to its informing idea.

Especially was he grieved at the course taken by the Congregational Union under what he believed to be panic, and therefore faithlessness, during his own chairmanship in 1878. It was to him an ominous surrender of faith in what, with his happy insight, he saw to form the true genius of Independency. He felt that a time had come, such as comes sooner or later to every institution and nation, such as to us English has come in Ireland and India, when it must make brief but endless choice between its precedents and its genius, between its tradition and its mission, its history and its idea, and must let the world see whether it knows its own soul or only its own annals. And he was very impatient of those who flourished the name of liberty but drew in at once when it became a question of paying its fair price, bearing its shame and taking from the mass of the religious the reproach of Christ.

I met him shortly afterwards in the North, and allusion was made to the expectation of some that he would have resigned his chairmanship. So he said he would have done but for one consideration. The step was not unlikely to lead to a split in Independency. And had such a schism taken place he would have been forced into the leadership of one section—a burden of responsibility which, with signs of failing vigour, he felt he dare not undertake.

It was said at his funeral that his central idea was the Divine Fatherhood. And doubtless the essential, as distinct from the purchased, Fatherhood of God was an issue for which he did some of the severest fighting of his militant life. It is through Baldwin Brown that Independent theology has been almost revolutionized and certainly softened in this direction. We are no longer a garrison of the Hard Church. But there are many who hold the divine fatherhood in this better sense who yet do not

reflect the distinctive characteristic of Mr. Brown. It takes with them a more sentimental and individual direction, one more purely religious, not to say feminine, while with him it took a more ethical, strenuous, and social form. It is one explanation of his failure in 1878 that his most distinctive note was something which, as a body, we are only in process of realising. Much is contained in the words so often already used—‘the Kingdom of Heaven’. As compared with the Church idea and its indispensable correlate of Orthodoxy, the New Testament gives an overwhelming preponderance to the notion of the Kingdom of God and its indispensable ethical and spiritual correlates. And every soul that stands in the truest prophetic and apostolic line maintains a like proportion and perspective. Baldwin Brown was one of these. He felt views to be less powerful in the long run than spiritual affinities. But among Independents at large it would be rash to say that as yet the same relation between the Church and the Kingdom was quite realised, or that we had yet emerged from the shadow of the ecclesiastical power and the merely theological idea. I freely confess that we should suffer a great deal more from the absence of such ideas. Nobody will well understand Baldwin Brown or Independency who talks nonsense about getting rid of Theology or questions its indispensability. But neither will ally understand the essence of our genius or our representative man who does not hold his, and the gospel idea of the relation of creed and righteousness. It is natural that we should have grasped his idea of the Fatherhood better than his more characteristic idea of the Kingdom. It is easier to understand affection than righteousness, as it is easier to get kindness than justice, and friendship than courage. Let me not be misunderstood. A correct creed is just as important in its place as a correct life or a right heart. But it is not certain that it has yet fallen into its true place, or is, therefore, exercising its true power. Nor have we yet so completely blended the old Sovereignty and the new Fatherhood as to have attained to the image of the perfect King. But when we do we shall spend on the Kingdom the wealth of passion that is often now no more than wasted upon the Church, and develop, for the social expression of our loyalty and faith, that idea of the Kingdom of heaven which satisfies the individual soul and meets the growing demand of the future for a social salvation.

Mr. Brown was much more of a prophet than a mystic or a metaphysician. But the prophet's inspiration is not only passionately moral, it is also imaginative and ideal. Now Mr. Brown was both. He was an idealist—not of course in the sense of being a dreamer—no man was ever less of a mere dreamer—but as being a man with an affinity for ideas. And he brought to theology one faculty whose absence has done more than

most things to discredit that science—imagination. What he found brick he left marble. His rhetoric was not stucco but decoration worked in the stone. It was this ideal and imaginative power in him which softened the edge of dogma and kept it to its true place. It gave his theology a background and an atmosphere. It gave his mind a horizon, and his thinking light and shade. For us it gave him a halo. And it gave him a horror of mere rationalism, and preserved him from the baldness that so easily besets us. This fine sense was marked in his relation to public prayer. I spoke with him once after a long retirement, in course of which he had had more opportunity than usual of hearing extempore prayers, and he was painfully impressed with the flatness and jejuneness which continually trembled on the verge of familiarity, and betrayed a sad poverty of anything like spiritual imagination. His own preference was for the grand old forms, and his prayers were mainly borrowed from the liturgies or from Scripture.

It was his affinity for ideas with a fascination for the imagination that was at the basis of all his culture. Every doctrine for him expanded into a divine idea, as every such idea again had its expression in some doctrine which gave it a quality of absoluteness and fact. Thus theology was for him not the enemy but the chief agent of culture. And we shall not (he would probably have agreed with me in saying) be a cultured people, we shall be literary, scientific, religious, or political Philistines till the day when theology does become the grand agent in serious culture, and the noblest, widest, most humane and gracious instructor of the human spirit. There is after all but one agent of culture. It is not literature alone or art, or science, but ideas. And it is only a religion with an ideal range and spell, a religion built on real ideas about the divine man, a religion of the very largest, and most generous interests, that can hope to be the grand educator of the human spirit. It is when tradition is bled and drained of its ideas, when it is made merely intelligible instead of imperial, when it has to be held instead of holding us, and carried because it cannot go, that it becomes an offence to human progress and a stale insult to a living Revelation. It is this ideal element in religion that gives it its affinity for all the glories of human achievement, and its power, with fearless and hospitable mind, to assimilate the endless processes of spiritual growth. Mr. Brown offered Independency the one feature which it lacks to commend it to the age and forestall the influential scepticism. And that feature is with all its old truth and new philanthropy the blended charm of ideality. It has been made a taunt against us Nonconformists that we are Philistine, ordinary, and the like. That the taunt is partially true we may bitterly confess. Driven from the Universities by the Church of our revilers, our ministers had to be trained

as seminarists; and how could they escape some of the defects of the Seminarist, whose study is indirectly controlled by congregations and directly by a theology behind the dimensions of the contemporary mind. Mr. Brown's training for the bar had a very great influence indeed in protecting him from this intellectual jail-fever, and co-operated with his use of London University to give him an unusual grasp of mind and intellectual *savoir faire*. He was a short time at Highbury College, where, I remember his saying, he learned "patience and how to shave with cold water." He rejoiced in the new spirit that is reforming our ministerial education, and the great revolution going on in consequence in the methods of our theological thought. It is a revolution which, I think, even he did not quite measure, and which is being effected by other, deeper, and less suspected agencies than those that alarm popular vigilance.

A certain amount of his influence, especially in the championship of unpopular causes, was lost owing to the soil on which it fell. It fell upon a not uncommon notion that this chivalry of his was no more than a noble idiosyncrasy, not to say an eccentricity. It is curious to mark in how many references to him since his death this constant knightliness of his has been treated with an air of generous indulgence, as if it were something that got the better of him, a mere unbridled passion of quixotic magnanimity, which a sounder and stronger man would have controlled. Well, there is much of this self-control going, but the theory I believe to be in Mr. Brown's case a mistake. It *was*, doubtless, the instinct of his fine militancy to leave the gods the conquering side, and take the conquered for his own. But he was not the man to live in such matters the life of mere instinct he had much of that 'totality' of mind which somebody indicates as a sure sign of genius, and there was too close a tissue woven between his creed and his conduct for a note so fundamental in his character to go on as a mere indulgence of the natural man. He had found in history, and possibly in experience, that generosity of treatment and a readiness of prevenient charity were not high among the ecclesiastical virtues; and, considering that the 13th of Corinthians made generosity for Christians not ornamental but fundamental, it was not far to the inference that this defect lay somewhere near the source of the inadequate impression produced by the Church, upon the world. He had found in the Christian aristocracy, from Paul downwards, a certain something that might be described for want of better words as 'holy *élan*', a spiritual courage and godly credulity of unpopular enterprise, which was a sure sign of a heart God had touched; a surer sign than much of the hesitancy which covers religious timidity quite as often as it does due reserve. He had something of Maurice's suspicion of popular religion, and was inclined to think there must be something good, and for the,

hour very necessary, in a man whom the societies and the denominations united to taboo. As soon as a truth became established, it almost seemed as if he thought that the form of it so stamped, should be watched with some vigilance of distrust, and much freedom encouraged in its criticism. His own experience had given him a fellow-feeling with those who do not enter on a position of influence, but have to earn it by laborious work and hard fighting. Truly if

“A Warrior is man from his birth,”

this Baldwin Brown was very human indeed. It pleased him to think how he had conquered public confidence step by step, and won his opponents to see, and admit by the honour they paid him, that a Christian zeal and Gospel, at least equal to their own, could exist under forms to them unintelligible or dangerous. He was near enough to them essentially to give him a greater leverage in the liberal direction than men who go much farther, only to leave more behind. This is one reason why his influence has been so great and beneficial within the religious world. He had every reason, then, in history and experience to esteem the value of minorities, and to wish to clear a free space on every occasion for the tender plant, formless and uncomely, that might grow into a tree with leaves innumerable for the healing of nations. His chivalry was no mere outburst of generosity like the Englishman's sympathy for the ‘little one’. It was with him, not a peculiarity, but a principle. It was part of the delicate, no less than vigorous enthusiasm of justice, which is exposed to so much danger from the enthusiasms of religion. It was no more a mere generosity than it is simple generosity which has made his fellow Independents, as a rule, pocket their deep and natural dislikes, to make way for the principle of justice in the ease of Mr. Bradlaugh and the House of Commons.

But in Mr. Brown this chivalry had its roots deeper even than the principle of justice or an intuition of spiritual sagacity. It flowed from the nature of his faith in the Incarnation, and it indicates a mode of viewing that great fact which some of his fellow Independents found, and still find, not only unfamiliar but obscure, and where lucid, untrue. I suppose it is true to say that, in the long run, the practice of any body of Christians will be found to be determined more by their view of their central doctrine than by anything else. If their habit of mind have a straitened, jealous, and nervous complexion, it is safe to infer that it is associated with some defect and impoverishment, in their view of their greatest trust. The heart will be not only with, but as the treasure. Now Mr. Brown's large and confiding policy was one that flowed naturally and inevitably from the centre of his Christian system. To him the Incarnation was a historic fact which was not merely past or temporary but Eternal, and so every-

where always present in mankind. Man is constituted in Christ. He is supernatural in his very nature. All his growth, truth, and achievement of glory is due to Christ that dwelleth in him. When the historic Christ came to human nature, he came to his own. The spirit of man is not something that is developed only in the pale of the Church, or under the conditions of conscious personal Christianity. There are other sheep that are not of that fold, and they not only hear Christ's voice, but may be the organs for its utterance. The Incarnation, if it may in some sense be spoken of as a moral miracle, is yet in a deeper sense, the moral base, and spiritual constitution of mankind. And it is in this sense that the belief in it will most influence an age so shy of the miraculous as the present. It is only the incarnation in this sense that can make miracles credible. We must work from the law to the exceptions, and riot *vice versa*. The Incarnation is a fact which works and redeems even where it is not believed, and some of its real operations take the shape of criticism, or even denial, of the forms in which for the hour it is conceived. The Incarnation has sometimes to protest against its own incarnations and burst them. Thus to Mr. Brown it was not a theory but a fact. In a multitude of unfamiliar ways Christ was still appearing on the earth, God was speaking, working, redeeming. He was invoking in a tongue still, as in old Judea, strange, lonely and rejected, the help of his truest servants against the multitude of the mighty. Now as ever the communion of Christ and his sufferings meant the fellowship, and on occasion, the championship of the insignificant, and a disposition to believe in forlorn hopes; "When the Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is." "Wherefore I say unto you watch, for in such a day and hour as ye know not the Son of man cometh." Woe unto you if ye offend one of God's minorities. The spirit that despises and bullies minorities is already a millstone hung about the neck of the popular creeds, dragging them down to the depths of worldly submersion and spiritual death. The stamping out process starts with the assumption that spiritual variation is spiritual pestilence; and it is a sign of abandonment by the Spirit of God, and the loss of that docility which marks the kingdom of Heaven. The scope and power of the Incarnation produce in minds like Baldwin Brown's a spiritual modesty too seldom realised; a sense of genuine reverence for the world and man; a keen and humiliated sense of what they are not, only less deep than the jubilant faith in what they eternally are; a feeling of moving about under the shadow of Christ, in worlds but half realised; and a watchful dread of missing the least word of the Lord in the mighty sum of things and souls speaking for ever.

Feelings and convictions like these lay near the deepest roots of Mr. Brown's sympathy for the young, and championship of the

forlorn. You could not feel that this nobility of his was a mere efflorescence of the natural man or the illuminated side of a "cross-bench mind". It was Independency glorified, but the Independency which has for its principle and propulsion the essential and distinctive power of the Gospel of Christ. It was in him a Christian grace, a spiritual fruit. It can hardly be said to be the habit of mind always characteristic of those who are most concerned for the purity of the Christian communion, or the changeless integrity of the Christian creed. Why should the staunchest apologists of the Incarnation, with its power to redeem and claim the whole living and growing world for God, be so frequently associated with an incapacity to assimilate the best new truth, or be taught of an ever living God? Why should they so often set themselves, without compromise, against the spirit and the results of an age abler than any that has preceded it, full of more wealth of human spirit and various readiness of human goodness than ever the world saw before. Why should a belief which is the very principle of spiritual sagacity so often seem but to consecrate a spiritual pedantry? There must surely be some very serious error in many current *conceptions* of our most vital doctrine and fact—some error of which we are but dimly conscious, but which our posterity will marvel and regret that we failed to see. There must surely be some great correction required, some grave re-adjustment, some increased disposition on our part, of mingled humility and shrewdness, to profit by the complaints and criticisms of those who have sadly been driven to total rejection and contempt. We Independents at least have a great and peculiar service to render to the Protestant idea, if we know the day of our merciful visitation, and do not make the great refusal which hides it from our eyes. The world is waiting, weary of dogmatisms, positive and negative, which concede nothing, for a reconciliation of Evangelicalism and Criticism which is based for each side on some other presupposition than that the others are bewitched or blind. We Independents have many facilities for performing a portion of this Christlike task. And with Baldwin Brown we may say that it is a service which we can render well upon no other basis than the Incarnation. That is an idea which is one with the idea of true and eternal religion. But shall I be misunderstood if I say that it may be the Incarnation with a difference, with a difference more deeply rational and, humane, something sweeter, wider, sharper, and more searching for the modern soul, than some traditional dogmatics have made it seem. The more it becomes a human fascination, and the less it is treated as a temple palladium, so much the more will it be realized as a divine power. It will operate less as a test to exclude, and more as an inspiration empowering us to interpret, coordinate, and comprehend. That seems to me how it worked in the greatest

Independent of our time. It was the key note of his character, no less than of his creed. It prescribed his chivalry no less than his faith. It approved itself a divine idea and power by the vital warmth, the concrete realism, and the air of great affairs which it gave to his activities, as if the world had been set in his heart. It had more than anything else to do with making a man of him to us. For there is nothing makes such men as the faith that God is man.

The following passage from a letter which I have preserved will be authority at first-hand for some of the statements I have just made. It contains his views on the propriety of meeting, on the same platform, on such an occasion as, for example, a recognition service, members of the Unitarian Ministry:

With regard to my Unitarian brethren the question is, I frankly confess, not without its difficulty. But it seems to me that just now Unitarian is the vaguest of terms. I know many Unitarians who seem to me to approach very closely indeed to us, while others drift away in the direction of what I am well persuaded must, in the end, be the abyss of all noble, fruitful life. It seems to me that a willingness to meet them on an occasion like this [on which he had been consulted], when they know perfectly well what are our beliefs, is wise and Christian, and may be a means of helping some to what we cannot but believe is the more excellent way. But I feel the difficulty of the question, and I feel for the difficulties of my brethren. But my rule is in a case of difficulty to act on the side of charity; in the end it is quite sure to be right. I grieve that so many excellent Christians seem always to lean in such a case to the side of suspicion and fear. I think it is a great mistake, and that it has a great deal to do with the bitter feeling of the Agnostic school against the Christian faith, as a narrow, timid, and selfish form of belief, doggedly opposed to all true reform and progress. Until Christians believe that what they hold to be truth must conquer in its contact with error instead of fearing that it must fail, what hope is there of a vital progress of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world? When shall we understand that Christ came, not to organise a system of safeguards, but to quicken in men a free, vigorous, victorious life.

It is almost a sufficient account of Baldwin Brown's Christianity to say that he believed in truth. Nor is there a deeper need of the religious world than the rational identification of The Truth and Truth.

I do not venture to suppose that Mr. Brown had adjusted completely in his own mind all the aspects of his central faith. There were two sides to him as he drew two classes of people towards him. He had about him those who went further than he did and those who could not go so far. They were united on what he was, more even than on what he said. He was too honest, and too little of a systematiser, to be very, careful about precise consistency of utterance. That is a failure about which men of spiritual solidarity need not seriously trouble; while there are subjects and junctures where it is impossible. He once described Mr. Binney in public as 'a timid theologian'. Well, he

had himself no timidity in his theology or elsewhere, but for a man of his stamp he was singularly free from temerity. He felt that forced and hurried adjustments were worse because hollower, than no adjustment at all. The disposition shown by some of his eulogists to minimise the differences which separated him from them was not in his own strain. He would have felt that it savoured of that desire to make things smooth all round, which is such a vice of the ecclesiastical world. Differences like men exist to be reconciled not erased, to be left standing and growing in a unity larger than them all, where they are not lost, but only properly placed. And he was the less disposed to round a system off because of the genius which gave him so fine and true a sense of the real spiritual situation of the age. His flue, humble spirit was in loving touch with the most vital spirit of the time. He refused many of its results, but he sympathised as cue of its own sons with its inspiration. If he had much to teach it, he had much that he learned from it. He not only read but understood the *Zeitgeist*. He had the precious power of not simply recognising but of measuring spiritual forces. I have already said he had the gift of spiritual imagination. He had lived in the Interpreter's House. Just as the great statesman feels by an incommunicable instinct the pulse of the country, and gauges with a special faculty its political mind, so in the Kingdom of Heaven there are men equipped with the congenital tact and ingrained faculty of spiritual measurement, the sense of spiritual proportion, and perspective. By an anointed nicety of apprehension they can assess the real value of forces, friendly or hostile, which ordinary observers and expositors deal with by an algebra of unrealised symbols—the stock-in-trade of fashionable apologetics. It is the spiritual man's gift of trying the spirits, of discerning spirits, of judging all things. *All things*—for the sum of things is that catholic reason which constitutes the spirituality of God and man. The man who is merely pious, or who is sectional in his culture, is prone either to under or to over-estimate the forces about him. He misreads them, hears and utters them with a misplacement of quantity or accent infallibly provincial, not to say parochial. He is too eager for a portable and immediate synthesis. He does not decipher the signs of the times or realise the true resources of his own capital. He talks like a respected preacher I once heard begging a popular audience to be under no alarm about German heresy. 'He had seen it ripe and was seeing it set.' Mr. Brown was too well versed in the Kingdom, in Heaven as upon earth, to vend amusing quackeries like that. He saw that there were circumstances in a time like the present which Christians ought to reckon with more than they mostly did, circumstances, making a formal re-construction of belief a slow and serious enterprise,

which to hurry or vamp up was no less dangerous than the mere iteration of an out-worn scheme. Mere dogmatism was to him no more lovely new than old, and won no more charm from a tone of hasty negation than from an air of impatient and indocile assertion. Dogma is simply the truth about the Absolute, and for Religion is, therefore, indispensable. But Dogmatism or the spirit of forced, arrested, pertinacious, pretentious, and exclusive dogma—religion has few worse foes than that.

The battles to which the future invites us are not exactly those whose trumpets stirred the youth of Baldwin Brown. He had to vindicate and clear the ways of the Lord, while we are confronted by foes who do not so much challenge the equality of the Lord's ways as deny their visibility. But Mr. Brown has done much to fill us with the battle awe no less than the battle joy, to impress us with the gravity of the issue, to set us against short cuts and patent medicines, to discourage the spirit of contempt and disrespect for our opponents, and to give us the wholesome sense that truth and goodness do not lie entirely with one side, and that questions are not to be settled by the simple dictation of terms. He has helped us to feel that the battle of Faith and Unfaith is not exactly the conflict of the Church and the World, and that the great problems are not capable of answers that can be provided from a body of divinity. When he set about 'wedding theology to life', he parted with the 'cocksureness' of the one but he enlarged the significance of both, and did much to help us to a modesty in the presence of the last realities which some had deep need to learn. If we are going on to meet the spiritual problems of the future with a weightier, a more cautious and competent educational equipment, it is very greatly due to the extent to which Baldwin Brown taught us to measure our world and understand our foes. He has done much to foster among us a new and nobler type of Christian apologist, a type more patient and sympathetic, and has doomed, let us hope for ever, the vigour and rigour of the slashing school.

He was accused sometimes of an excess of melancholy in his preaching, and was thought by some to be unduly detained by the sadder aspect of things. This was due to his keen and eager feeling, 'but it was still more a result of his deep insight into the meaning of Redemption—especially what it meant for God. The joy of the Incarnation was tempered and chastened by the sombre shadows of the cross, which represented not a redemptive expedient but an eternal factor in the nature of God. God himself was the archetype of all sacrifice, and the first, chief, and last of all sufferers. Mr. Brown believed in no easy gospel, in no God who accepted sacrifices greater than he had himself made, in no forgiveness which was in its generosity a mere piece of good nature. It was hard for God to redeem however freely he might forgive,

and as the agony of Christ was the principle and epitome, so the whole travail of creation was the expansion of the divine pain and sorrow in the awful task. It could be no world of mere gaiety in which the cross of Christ had once stood. It was no more limpid and sparkling air this that had once been pierced by the Redeemer's cry. And the heart, in God or man, that that cry had pierced could be merely cheery no more, but must henceforth for ever shine with a solemn joy if it rejoiced at all, and smile smiles blended of a thousand awful records and pathetic memories. This melancholy of Mr. Brown's was inevitable moreover with his sympathetic intelligence of an age so full of the grounds and tendencies of pessimism as the present. He was a true modern in that he knew the *Weltschmerz*. He always carried about with him the sense of what civilization and progress cost, as Paul bore about continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, and he seemed never to cease hearing the friction of the human spirit as it ground along the heavy grooves of change and became developed, and redeemed. His favourite definition of man was that he was a being born to be redeemed, an heir of pain and glory, to come only by sorrow to rest. He would have none of that deputy piety which, treating a true vicarious sacrifice as a mere substitutionary victim, suffers by proxy and enjoys in person. The pessimist philosophy owes half its fascination to the fact that it is half the Gospel, a half that the happy school of Christians is prone to overlook, and the energetic school too common sense to feel. Much of the power of Romanism, in England at least, is due to the fact that, however defective its gospel of Resurrection, it has grasped the idea of the Cross, and charms with its spell that night side of human nature which grows weary of perpetual sunshine and incessant 'go'. Baldwin Brown's was a gospel of the Resurrection. That historic fact but expressed an eternal principle. But its obverse of the cross was to him an eternal principle too. The two were indispensable in the Eternal Redemption. The evening and the morning were one day—one great, sweet, and terrible day of the Lord. All that pessimism realizes of the cross is true. We Protestant Christians do not always realize it enough. But there is something else as true which Pessimism does not realize, and which transfigures all. And Mr. Brown was so unique among us because of his equal grasp of both. I love to trace in him the Saxon battle joy, but no less the grand sadness which is so striking a feature of his great English race, with its indomitable strenuous force. I think of it as the melancholy that darkens the heroic page of Beowulf. And his deep fellowship of the sorrows of Christ seems to me, in some measure, a survival or reflection of that sad bent which our brave forefathers deified in the *Götter-dämmerung* or Gloaming of the Gods. Wherever you have an imagination and a heart like Baldwin

Brown's applied to the problems that make theology you will have an air of sadness a little trying to mild minds, and quite inexplicable to the clear heads who view in a dry light the very river of life.

In another age and another Church Baldwin Brown would have been among the memorable heretics. He had just that inspiration of faith and constitution of scepticism which are salt and ozone to the religious world, and, in some quarters, as unwelcome as a bath to a monk. And amongst ourselves had his bias been as metaphysical as it was historical, I do not say we should have lost our apostle, but he would have lost some of the confidence which he came to possess. It was not in his views only that he differed from many around him, but in something more serious—in his way of viewing views. He had *Geist*. It was not his conclusions so much as his quality of mind that marked him off. The deep faith that disposed others to acquiescence stirred him to an incessant restlessness in the following of it out. If the Incarnation lay beneath all knowable reality, then to meddle fearlessly with all knowledge and deal freely with all thought was a part of the worship of Christ, and there was nothing discoverable, but must be an exposition of the Eternal Son. Others accept novelty; it was his tendency to go out of his way to seek it, to enrich and vary the fulness of Christ. He did not brood on truth. He flung himself into its stream. It was something for us still in the making, and not wholly made. The coming of the Kingdom was God manifesting in the flesh, an organic part of the process prophetically and ideally complete in Christ. He was always impelled rather "towards making than repose on aught found made." Indeed, in all the masculine poetry of Mr. Browning, with its profound and passionate theology, I find much witness of the Spirit that spoke in Baldwin Brown, but nowhere more than in the poem where the above words occur—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*. It is very remarkable how our two great poets not only bold the Incarnation but preach it, and it might indicate, without offence or invidiousness, the difference between Mr. Brown and the rest of his fellow believers in that fact if I ventured to say that, while both are of Christ, they are of Tennyson, he is of Browning among its apostles.

It would be somewhat juvenile to imply that the tendencies represented by Mr. Brown embraced every aspect of Christian truth and left nothing to justify the views by which they are opposed. There are other kings than Agamemnon, and heroism is not exhausted in Achilles. But without going so far, it may be said, I hope, without offence, that the loss of Mr. Brown is, for the present, irreparable. There was no other man who occupied the same position for the younger generation and the "modern side" within Independency. That such a tendency has there its legitimate place may be fully admitted without denying a like freedom

to the other. And if it ought to exist to make Independency complete, all parties suffer from its loss of a centre and a head. There is danger, in the absence of a leader so admirably blended, that the progressive tendency may proceed to leave its Evangelicalism behind; and there is a like risk that the close ranks, despising criticism, may close up in consequence still more, and a period of reaction set in in which we may be tempted to think we can serve the Gospel by limiting freedom and maiming Independency. Let us never forget that the genius of Independency is worth far more than its precedents, that it is the principle of the Incarnation, and that we cannot offend the former without a practical denial, in greater or less measure, of the latter. Nothing is so charged with awkward results as a great principle, but then nothing but a great principle faithfully trusted can navigate a crisis or give us the power safely to carry the dangerous part of our cargo. Let us pay little heed to the gossip or, the taunts of the surrounding sects, and be unmoved by the criticisms of bodies that marvel at our boldness because they do not understand our secret. If our principle do not carry us over our risks no compromise with it will. And if our own faith be sure we shall suffer nothing from association with a faith that is incomplete, but which we cannot except by a momentary treason out off. It is not as if the principle of Independency were a subordinate principle which the principle of Christianity could utilize to the point of prudence and then discard. But the principle of Independency is the principle of Protestant Christianity, and its genius is consecrated in the moral theology of the Incarnation. To betray our Independency might be to sell our Christ.

I find it hard to utter a memorial of Baldwin Brown which shall not cease to be an estimate and continually melt into an elegy. But no character like his can be really honoured by an exaggerated and indiscriminate praise. Assuredly it is not intended to do him that injustice here. It is not asserted that he possessed every quality of the first order of Christian character. There are figures for example marked by a repose and deliberate strength foreign to the restlessness of Mr. Brown's temper. Whatever he may have been to us Independents—and I think he is our greatest since the 17th century—it would be extravagant to describe him as being for the world the 'Spiritual splendour' which Mr. Gladstone described Maurice to be. But to place him in the second order of Christian character not only seems below pitch but it is a mode of speech which consecrates in the ranks of the great Christian hierarchy a sharpness of graduation foreign to nature of the spiritual scale. Let it rather be said how much was in him to remind us of the greatest Christian names. We think of the unusual blending in him of ethical passion, spiritual insight, intellectual grasp, personal piety and sensitive brotherhood. We

think how admirable was his union of fine morality and masculine religion, of apostolicity and fairness, faith and charity. He was a great example of the large, anxious and imperious charity which sits lightly lord upon the divine enthusiasm of righteousness. There may be many as eager for justice and no few more seraphic in mystical piety. He was more of Paul than of John. But there are very few whose ethical and religious inspiration are at once so balanced and so intense, so leavened with the fight of mind, so braced with the vigour of understanding, and so sweetened by the large culture and the loving kindness of the fairest humanities.

His noble and adventurous nature was always fascinated by our English epic of Arctic Exploration, and there are lines written by the Laureate on the tomb of Sir John Franklin, which, with the change of a word, seem to me good to lay on the pall of one so full of breezy hope, stormy conflict, sacred courage, stalwart outlook, indomitable faith, knightly enterprise, strenuous love, and noble sadness:

*“Not here! The cold [earth] holds thy bones, but thou,  
 Heroic sailor soul,  
 Art passing on thy happier voyage now  
 Toward no earthly pole.”*