

Eliminate, declassifying my faith
 Since I adopt it : keeping what I must
 And leaving what I can ; such points as this.....
 Since you bid me purify the same,
 To such a process I discern no end.....
 First cut the liquefaction, what comes last
 But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?.....
 I trust nor hand, nor eye, nor heart, nor brain
 To stop betimes : they all get drunk alike.
 The first step, I am master not to take".

This is surely the apotheosis of wilful ignorance! We may think, perhaps, that Browning is "hedging" when, in the last paragraph, he says : " For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke "1 and hints at some deeper ground. It is useless to say " This is Blougram and not Browning ". Browning could hardly have affronted the dilemma without seeing it. What he really believes is, perhaps, a mystery.

That Browning, however, believes in universal salvation, though he nowhere (so far as I know) gives his reasons, save as they are summarized in the last lines of the below-quoted passage, is evident from the last stanza of " Apparent Failure ", and from his final pronouncement of the Pope on Guido, represented in Browning's masterpiece as a Judas without the decency to hang himself.

" So (i.e., by suddenness of fate) may the truth be flashed out by one blow,
 And Guido see one instant and be saved.
 Else I avert my face nor follow him
 Into that sad obscure sequestered state
 Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
 He else made first in vain : which must not be ".

1. Probably a record for a bishop.