



A  
COMPENDIUM  
OF  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY  
BEING  
ANALYTICAL OUTLINES OF A COURSE OF  
THEOLOGICAL STUDY,  
BIBLICAL, DOGMATIC, HISTORICAL.

BY  
WILLIAM BURT POPE, D.D.,  
THEOLOGICAL TUTOR, DEDSBURY COLLEGE, MANCHESTER.

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## **PRELIMINARIES.**

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**THEOLOGY.**

**REVELATION TO MAN.**

**BY JESUS CHRIST.**

**IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.**

**THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE.**



## CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

**CHRISTIAN** Theology is the science of God and Divine things, based upon the revelation made to mankind in Jesus Christ, and variously systematised within the Christian Church.

**General  
Defini-  
tion.**

All that belongs to the preliminaries of our study may be distributed under the several heads suggested by this definition, which is so framed as to include, first, Theology proper ; secondly, its limitation to the relations between God and mankind ; thirdly, its essential connection with Christ ; fourthly, its characteristics as developed under various influences within the Christian Church ; and lastly, its title to the name of a science. The introductory remarks which will be made on these several topics have for their object simply to prepare the mind of the student for what lies before him ; and to give a few hints which will all afterwards be expanded in due course.

### THEOLOGY.

God is the source and the subject and the end of theology. The stricter and earlier use of the word limited it to the doctrine of the Triune God and His attributes. But in modern usage it includes the whole compass of the science of Religion, or the relations of all things to God. This gives it its unity and dignity and sanctity. It

**Theology  
Proper.**

is A DEO, DE DEO, IN DEUM : from God in its origin, concerning God in its substance, and it leads to God in all its issues ; His NAME is in it.

- Theology or Divinity. 1. The only adequate definition of this subject embraces DIVINE THINGS : λόγος περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ περὶ τῶν θείων. The Supreme, whose Being is the first postulate of theology or divinity, declares Himself to be as to His nature incomprehensible and unsearchable. I AM THAT I AM is the nearest approach to a definition ; it asserts without proving His existence, and that He exists in an essence known only to Himself. The Old Testament asks : Job xi. " *Canst thou by searching find out God ? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?* The New Testament, which brings Him nearer in His Son, represents Him as *dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto* to search. In the profoundest sense He is ever 1 Tim. vi. 16. *THE UNKNOWN GOD*. It is His glory that He must conceal Himself. But St. Paul, as a preacher to the Gentiles, nevertheless declares that Unknown God, and in his writings uses two expressive phrases which at once affirm the prerogative and assign the limits of our theology proper. He speaks of *the things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, in reference to those mysteries which the Spirit can and will reveal to those who receive Him. And he indicates that even apart from the supernatural revelations of the Spirit *what* Rom. i 19. *is [or may be] known of God*, τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, is unfolded to man. All that is known is all that may be known : the possible knowledge is the actual knowledge in its successive communications from the light of nature to the light of grace and thence to the light of glory. The thick darkness round about the unsearchable Presence is not absolutely unbroken : the rays that flow from it penetrate every department of true knowledge, especially of this.
- God All in All. 2. There is a sense in which universal theology is concerned simply with the relation of all things to God : if we carefully guard our meaning we may make this proposition include the converse, the relation of God to all things. Relation of course must be mutual ; but it is hard in this matter to detach from the notion of relation that of dependence. The Eternal One is the Unconditioned Being. When we study His nature and perfections and works we must always remember that He is His Perfect

Self independent of every created object, and independent of every thought concerning Him. But there is not a doctrine, nor is there a branch or development of any doctrine, which is not purely the expression of some relation of His creatures to the Supreme First Cause.

3. Hence every branch of this science is sacred. It is a temple which is filled with the presence of God. From its hidden sanctuary, into which no high priest taken from among men can enter, issues a light which leaves no part dark save where it is dark with excess of glory. Therefore all fit students are worshippers as well as students. In the heathen world there was a true instinct of this. The highest tribute the ancients could pay to their poets and philosophers, from Homer and Hesiod downwards, was to call them *θεολόγοι*. Their philosophy was their theology. So in the early Church, when theology put on its perfection, its relation to God was the seal of that perfection: St. John was called the Divine, *ὁ θεολόγος*, because his writings contained most of the manifestation of the Holy Trinity in its internal and external relations. What has been said of God Himself may be said concerning the theological study of God: He is the centre everywhere of a science which has its circumference nowhere. The remembrance of this must exert its influence upon our spirit and temper in all our studies. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.*

Dignity  
and  
Sanctity.

Ps. xxiv.  
3, 4.

#### DIVINE THINGS MADE KNOWN TO MAN.

For Man.

Theology is mainly concerned with the things of God as they are related to man and his destination. This proposition implies the capacity in our nature to receive Divine truth; indicates both the extent and the limits of its range as revealed especially for man; and explains the essentially human character which is impressed on its form and invests it with a profound human interest.

1. Man is in a certain sense the centre of this science. He is specifically the centre of one branch of it, technically called

Man the  
Centre.



**Anthropology.** ANTHROPOLOGY, which has to do with his characteristics as a creature formed in the image of God ; but, more generally, he is the object around which all revolves. The light of revelation is poured upon the human race ; and in its fulness upon it alone. Accordingly the relation of mankind to the Supreme may be said to be one of the definitions of theology. But man is only one insignificant, and yet not insignificant, creature of God. His place in the vast creation, and the development of his wonderful career in harmony with all other Divine designs, marks out his relation to theology universal. But this general truth must be viewed in two lights : man is the object of all revelation, as it concerns him and his destination ; man is the subject of all revelation, as he is its recipient.

**Man the object.** (1) Theology is concerned with the destiny of man in the universe. Its first lessons, the opening of the volume of the book, presents him as the head of the creation of God : the history of the origin of all things, and of the slow formation of this world, is only the preface to his introduction as the representative of his Maker upon the earth. His fall and his redemption are blended in one ; the whole sequel of revelation is the record of the Divine method of retrieving in the Second Adam what in the first was marred, THE DIVINE IMAGE. The redemption of the human race, and the salvation of individual man, are interwoven into one great economy, stretching from the shutting of the earthly to the opening of the heavenly Paradise. There is not a revelation of God in His three Persons, as the Father, the Son Incarnate, and the Holy Ghost, which is not directly or indirectly connected with the salvation of mankind. Thus theology is simply the system of Divine truth which lies at the foundation of human religion or the spiritual fellowship between man and his Creator.

**Man the subject.** (2) But the same general principle may be referred to man as the recipient of revelation. Created in the image of God, he is an intelligent, free and responsible creature, capable of separation from the Divine will and also capable of restoration to the Divine communion. The two first postulates of all theology are the Personality of the Infinite Being and the personality of man His creature. Neither of these is matter of demonstration in the holy oracles ; both are assumed or taken for granted everywhere.

To renounce either is to annihilate theological knowledge properly so called. Although in the prosecution of this study methods of proving both may be adopted, under the pressure of a necessity imposed on us by the waywardness of human scepticism, yet must we finally and always beg the question here. God is a Person who condescends to man; and man is a person who is capable of God.

(3) The objective and subjective relations of man as the centre of theological science meet in the word RELIGION, one of the largest and deepest terms with which we have to do. Its derivation has been much disputed; but the two leading explanations of it may be united for our present purpose. According to Lactantius, *vinculo pietatis obstricti deo et RELIGATI sumus, unde ipsa religio nomen accepit, non, ut Cicero interpretatus est, a relegendo*. That is to say, the eternal bond which binds man to God is signified by religion, which is therefore the relation of the human creature to the Supreme Creator, as acknowledged and borne witness to in all forms of theological teaching and worship. Men have never been without a religion, for God has never left *Himself without witness* in any age or land: there have been gods many and religions many, though to us only one God and one religion. The rejected interpretation of Cicero, however, demands to be heard: *qui omnia, quæ ad cultum deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent et tanquam RELEGERENT, sunt dicti religiosi, ex relegendo*. That is to say, the exercise of the human mind in pondering and considering Divine things is signified by religion, which is, as it were, an instinctive and inwrought aspiration of human nature corrected and purified and directed to its highest issues in the true faith. We combine the two when we say that man is the centre of all theology as it is the foundation of all true religion.

Religion

Inst. Div.  
iv. 28.

Acts xiv.  
17.

De Nat.  
Deor. ii  
28.

2. Hence the limitation that everywhere meets us. The relations of the vast universe, and of other creatures in it, with God, are included only so far as they concern mankind. Revelation brings us tidings from without, from the outside universe; and its communications concerning the earlier probation of spiritual intelligences, their division into orders, their interest and agency in the development of the Divine purposes, amount when syste-

Limita-  
tions.

matised to a considerable department of revealed truth, to which the name ANGELOLOGY is sometimes given. But it is always their connection with man that regulates the method and the amount of these disclosures. There is strict parsimony as to everything not essential to human destiny: the principle of Least Action is maintained in revelation as in nature. Hence it is obvious that the responsibility of theology, so to speak, is limited to one subject. Those who study it must submit to this restriction.

**John xxi. 22.** *What is that to thee?* has its meaning here for all who indulge too much in speculation both as to the past and as to the future.

**John xiii. 7.** Concerning all other things *thou shalt know hereafter*: there are many hints and earnestings of a more abundant compensatory outpouring of knowledge in due time. Meanwhile this is the answer by anticipation to many objections of the sceptical spirit. We have but one leaf out of an enormous book; its page begins and ends, so to speak, in the middle of a sentence. Hereafter we shall see much more of this book. Now we know *in part*. We know ourselves apart from other creatures and other worlds. Then we shall know as also we *are known*: we shall know other beings and other worlds as they know us.

**Humanly taught.** 3. There is an impress upon theology, whether in its Divine records or in its human science, which results from its adaptation to human faculties. We must here take it for granted that man is a creature capable of religion, that is, of communion with God, as a person related to a Person. The Scripture which does not prove that God is does not prove that man is capable of knowing God: both are the fundamental presuppositions of theology. But, reserving the fuller demonstration of this, we must mark that as he is a creature in probation, his knowledge of Divine things is given in probationary forms, testing his character at every point. All is expressly adapted to his limited faculties, and imparted to him in a way suitable to his present stage of existence. God has *come down to us in the likeness of men*, and speaks to them in their own language. As the Rabbins said of the Law, *Lex Dei loquitur linguam filiorum hominum*, the law of God speaks the language of the children of men. The entire Bible is pervaded by what is called ANTHROPOMORPHISM and ANTHROPATHY: the former gives a name to the condescension of God

**Acts xiv. 11.**

**Anthropomorphism.**

in seeming to take a human form and human attributes ; the latter includes also the peculiar affections of man, not excepting some that belong to his infirmity, such as hope and suspense. Not that the reality does not correspond. The Supreme gives us a true revelation of Himself ; but it is a revelation that can be understood only in our world, and by us men. Even the angels *desire to look into* these things ; they are learning the secrets of the manifold wisdom of God as known by the Church ; but they cannot study them in our language.

1 Peter  
i. 12.  
Eph. iii.  
10.

4. As human students of our own truth, we may be assured that we shall have full and sufficient guidance. Nothing that it concerns us to know has been or will be hidden from us : what is reserved is reserved for our discipline, as what is revealed is revealed for our instruction. *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good* : this must have its widest application. So also must that other saying, which contains the counterpart : *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever*. With what a profound human interest does this invest the whole domain of this sacred knowledge ! Our life, our hope, our destiny, our all, is bound up with it : it is the record of our degradation and of our deliverance, of our ruin and of our recovery, of our woes and of our redemption. How great is the dignity of man that he is the centre, in any sense, of such a science ! If it is the name of God that gives it its surpassing majesty, that grandeur is reflected upon us. *What is man, that Thou art mindful of him ?* Our study cannot be conducted aright without a combination of the loftiest triumph and the deepest humility ; we must always remember the dignity while we never forget the lowliness of the place we ourselves occupy in it. Approaching the revelation of Him who is our Wisdom, we hear : *that no flesh should glory in His presence* ; receiving that revelation we again hear, *he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*. Theology is a *light* shed upon all the universe ; it is the *glory* of God's creature, man. But this leads us to the eternal secret of our dignity. . Our knowledge comes to us through One who is Man and also God ; His incarnation in the fulness of time explains the Anthropomorphism of the Old Testament ; and it is in Him that the theology of God and the theology of man become one.

Sufficient

Mic. vi. 8.

Deut.  
xxix. 29.

Ps. viii. 4.

1 Cor. I.  
29-31.  
Lu. ii. 32.

By Jesus  
Christ.

# BY JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus Christ is Himself in Person and in Word the revelation of God. He has confirmed and supplemented Natural Theology, or that which is independent of supernatural revelation. He has consummated the preliminary disclosures of His own earlier dispensations. He has discredited and condemned all teachers and teaching that reject His authority. Hence the science which we study is essentially Christian theology.

The postulates of the general proposition will be more fully established hereafter : they are now only stated and assumed.

In His  
Person.

1. In its technical sense, the term CHRISTOLOGY generally refers to the doctrine of Christ's Person as such in the unity of His two natures ; but it may be said that Christology is Theology.
- Ja. xiv. 9. *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.* Although He reveals God as the Father who becomes visible in Him, He is in a certain sense the manifestation of the entire Divinity. He is the Mystery of God *manifest in the flesh.* The Old Testament, *Behold your God !* Ecce Deus tuus ! answers to the New Testament, *Behold the Man !* Ecce Homo ! Our Lord is the ever-blessed unity of these : for both were spoken expressly of Him. His Person is the compendium of all that is Divine in human things, and in Him *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* He is the substance of revelation in act and in word. He is Himself the one and supreme Theologian : *neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son.* He is the centre of theology ; all its doctrines revolve around Him :
- 1 Tim. iii. 16. *I am the Truth.* And, as *Mediator between God and men*, making both one, He is in a peculiar sense the bond of perfectness in theology. In Him is its unity, and it is complete in Him. The superscription of the Apocalypse is the superscription of our science as a whole : it is the ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, of Him as its object, from Him as its source.
- Isa. xl. 9. *Ecce Deus tuus !*
- John xix. 5. *Ecce Homo !*
- Col. ii. 3. *He is the substance of revelation in act and in word.*
- Matt. xi. 27. *He is Himself the one and supreme Theologian :*
- John xiv. 6. *I am the Truth.*
- 1 Tim. ii. 5. *making both one, He is in a peculiar sense the bond of perfectness in theology.*
- Rev. i. 1. *In Him is its unity, and it is complete in Him.*

Natural  
Theology.

2. The Supreme Revealer confirms and absorbs into His teaching the original revelations of nature : or what is called NATURAL THEOLOGY. (1.) He presupposes the elements of this natura

knowledge. He everywhere appeals to it. But by the mouth of His servant Paul He has given the fullest exposition of what it includes. First, the Apostle speaks of the *law written on their hearts*, or on the reason of universal man, which is the indestructible evidence of a God in Whose image he was created : *for we are also His offspring*. Secondly, he appeals to the religious consciousness, or conscience, in man *bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another* according to the standard written or rather engraven on the reason ; to the evidences of the *eternal power and Godhead* which were *clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made* ; and to a Providence, drawing men, in all ages, to *feel after* the unknown God of a final revelation. Thus St. Paul, as preacher in the Acts, and teacher in the Romans, traces the broad outlines of the primitive inferior and traditional knowledge of mankind. He is himself pre-eminently the theologian of the finished revelation in Christ, but he indirectly and yet most clearly acknowledges the labours of a certain theology outside of supernatural revelation and preliminary to it. (2.) The New Teacher confirms and supplements the theology of nature. Our Lord came not to destroy but to fulfil this natural law and these natural prophets. Of these scriptures also He silently says to the searcher : *they testify of Me*. His coming reveals their imperfection ; but His tribute to them, as the basis of His teaching, vindicates their Divine origin. The fanaticism of the Jews cried : *Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles ?* He did both afterwards by His Apostles, and the latter He had done long before. This will hereafter recur at more length.

Rom ii.  
15.

Acts xvii.  
28.

Rom xi.  
15.

Rom. i. 20.  
Acts xvii.  
27.

John v.  
39.

John vii.  
35.

3. Christian Theology is the consummation of its own earlier economies. Christ was the Revealer from the beginning. But His revelations have been given by progressive stages ; and now in the end of the world He has gathered the whole into one great system of truth. We may therefore regard His perfect teaching as the consummation of its preliminary forms. It is the fulfilment of OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY as a vast body of preparatory truth, the ruling design of which is to prepare the way of the Lord. This one complex economy of past revelation is itself divided again into several branches : there is the PATRIARCHAL

Old and  
New Testaments.

THEOLOGY, which had in it the earliest broad disclosures of the Divine will, the Gospel before the Law ; the MOSAIC THEOLOGY, which is that of the chosen people, and its theocracy, and typical institutes, the Gospel under the Law ; and the PROPHETICAL THEOLOGY, which is emphatically the Gospel in the Law. These branches of the earlier teaching were all under the guidance of inspiration : under *the Spirit of Christ which was in them*. They are all presupposed, confirmed, and supplemented and perfected by the New-Testament institution of Christ. This also must again be considered more fully.

**Exclusive.** 4. New-Testament teaching, which sanctions the religion of nature and the earlier disclosures of truth, both having the same common element of preparation, denounces every independent source of religious instruction. *One is your Master, even Christ,* *ὁ καθηγηγής* or *ὁ διδάσκαλος*. He has expressly shut out all others who had come before Him, or who might come after Him : the former, *all that ever came before Me*, since My appearance, whom John x. 8. the sheep *did not hear* ; the latter, *Go ye not therefore after them*. He is not more jealous of the honour of His Father than of His own honour. He is the absolute Teacher ; *But I say unto you* interdicts every other : the only supplement of His own words which He admits is that which He Himself gives in the person of *the Spirit of truth*. And this is intended in the comprehensive saying of the last commission : *πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην, all things whatsoever I have commanded*.

**Matt.** xxiii. 8.  
John x. 8.  
Lu. xxi. 8.  
Matt. v. 22.  
John xvi. 13.  
Matt. xxviii. 20

The theological systems of religious teaching which are thus condemned are those which have been based upon perversions either of natural or of revealed religion.

**Perversions of Natural Religion.** (1) The former has assumed many forms, all of them having some common relation to the only truth. There has always been a TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY among men, which, containing vestiges of primitive revelation perverted into error, has been woven into every imaginable form of MYTHOLOGY, or legendary religion, varying with the culture of the nations. These have been connected, especially in the East, with elaborate religious systems which may be called the HEATHEN RELIGIONS, flourishing especially in India, China, and Persia when Christ came into the world. PHILOSOPHY, which seeks the first principles of truth in the love of

it, but without even professing to find it, has been in every age a human disguise of Divine revelation : anciently deeply religious, almost in every age the expression of a religious sentiment, but in modern times led away by false fundamental principles. The theology proper of a perverted religion of nature is DEISM, in its rather less anti-Christian form THEISM, which retains a God but rejects supernatural revelation, and especially that of Christ.

(2) The perversions of revealed religion have assumed also many forms. The most gigantic is that of RABBINISM, or TALMUDISM, as taught in the writings of the Talmud, the foundations of which were laid in the Judaism of the interval between the two Testaments. Next comes MOHAMMEDANISM, an imposture based upon the Holy Scriptures, but reducing religion back again to the lowest conditions of nature : the strangest admixture of truth and error which history presents. And to them must be added that mass of CHRISTIAN TRADITIONALISM which is identified with the corruption of the Christian Faith. All these are the dark background of the science which the name of Christ sanctifies. We shall meet some of them again and again ; and indicate them now only in outline.

Perversions of Revealed Religion.

5. Christ, the Centre of theology, is its Living Teacher also. As the test of all opinion and faith is the place it assigns to Him, — *Whom say ye that I am ?* being the question that follows *Whom do men say that I am ?*—so His doctrine cannot be studied effectually save at His feet. By His Spirit He guides His disciples, as the company of its believing students, into all the truth : no longer by a supreme inspiration, but by a secret instruction that gives *the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, [which is] Christ*, to every believer united to Himself. Pectus facit theologum, the heart's devotion makes the theologian : this aphorism of Augustine holds good of all whose hearts are true to their Master. They are the *holy brethren* who are invited to *consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, [Christ] Jesus*. Of the unbelieving Jews our Lord said : *Why do ye not understand My speech ? even because ye cannot hear My word*. But His true disciples, down to the least, can hear His doctrinal word, λόγον, for they have learned by the Spirit its heavenly meaning as the word of eternal truth ; therefore they understand His speech, His λαλιάν.

Christ the Teacher.

Mark viii. 27—29.

Col. ii. 2.

Heb. iii. 1.

John viii. 43.



- and receive His perfect doctrine. They know Him their Master, and His communications. But He gives His instruction through His Spirit, not only by secret and personal illumination, but through the channels of teaching provided in His Church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth*. They receive both the elements and the developments of Christian doctrine as set forth among the people of God; the teachings of God are addressed to *the household of faith*: *πρὸς τοὺς οἰκεῖους τῆς πίστεως*.
- 1 Tim. iii. 15.
- Gal. vi. 10.

Developed  
in the  
Church.

### THEOLOGY IN THE CHURCH.

The Lord has been pleased to commit His revelation, as finished in the Scriptures, to the keeping of His Church, under the control and supervision of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures are the rule and standard and test of theology, which in this relation must be regarded as the whole sum of the Church's Christian literature, gradually produced and variously modified: an extension of the term which is absolutely necessary, but requires to be guarded by the proviso that all sound theology is that which has its foundations and evidences in the Word of God.

- The former part of this proposition must now be assumed: its discussion is reserved for a future place. Meanwhile, it may be said that there is nothing in theology which does not seek its authority in the Word of God: our science is the arrangement, development, and application of facts and principles given by inspiration. The authoritative volume has from the beginning been lodged in the Church. The early oracles were in the keeping of the covenant people; and the Christian Faith has been *delivered unto the saints*. The oracle has always had its ark. As the Church was enlarged the Bible was enlarged; but never was the one without the other in the world. Neither, however, without the Divine Spirit, Who has always watched over the growth of a theological literature around the Bible. Besides the fixed utterances of inspiration, the Holy Ghost has His own *many other words* spoken by men under His more common influences; and Christian men have also theirs, which He overrules and controls. And
- Jude 3.
- Acts ii. 40.

all these are in their expansion theology, using the term in its widest latitude : a boundless mass of more or less systematised doctrine, the growth of all ages, of all kinds of soil, and of all zones of religious faith. The whole, so far as we have to do with it, is directly or indirectly the produce of the Christian Church : either as the formal arrangement of its own teaching, or as the result of false teaching which it condemns. And we have to consider its various characteristics accordingly.

But religious truth, as moulded within the Church, must be developed according to some laws. First, the requirements of teaching would insure the creation of a large body of various theology. Again, this has assumed specific forms as conformed to different types of doctrine within the Church : giving birth to a great mass of what may be called Confessional theology. And, further, there is a rich development that is governed by the law of adaptation to the internal and external circumstances by which the truth may be surrounded. The idea of evolution is all-pervading in this science ; and we are safe in applying it if we remember that there is one law of development peculiar to Scripture, the law of progressive revelation, and another that governs the human systematisation of this. Divine doctrine is developed in the Bible ; in the Church human dogma.

I. Both as teacher and as defender of the Faith the Christian Church was from the beginning under a necessity to create a theology : whether as the teacher of its converts or as their defender against error. Didactic divinity was the necessary expansion of what in Scripture is termed *the Apostles' doctrine*. Its first and simplest form, as seen in the writings of the earliest Fathers, was EXPOSITORY or practical, aiming at the edification of the flock ; then followed the CATECHETICAL, for the preliminary instruction of converts or Catechumens in order to baptism, conducted by pastors as Catechists, and formulated in the permanent Catechism ; and thus were laid the foundations of all subsequent BIBLICAL theology proper. Defensive assertion of truth was rendered necessary by heresies arising within the community, and by the duty of vindicating the Faith against those without. The latter obligation gave rise to APOLOGETICS in all its branches, called in modern times EVIDENCES : Apology having

Laws of  
Develop-  
ment.

Theology  
of the  
Teaching  
Church.

Acts ii. 42

reference rather to the position of the Christian society as challenged by the world, Evidences belonging rather to its aggressive and missionary character. The former introduced DOGMATIC Theology, taught first in Creeds—the Apostles', the Niceno-Constantinopolitan, and the Athanasian ; afterwards in specific expositions of those creeds, and their individual articles : this, as distinguished from Apologetic, is controversial divinity or POLEMICS. In later times, all these branches have been incorporated into the unity of what is called SYSTEMATIC divinity, or the orderly arrangement of the doctrines of revelation, as they are Dogmas fixed in the decisions of the Church, defended against external assaults, and unfolded in the ethics of human duty. This is the normal development of the science within Christendom, and common to all its branches. Every Christian community presents in its own literature more or less systematically all these various forms of fundamental teaching.

Confessional  
Theology.

II. There is a development also which has been conducted according to the law of distinct types of doctrine, issuing finally in what has been already termed CONFESSIONAL theology. This opens a very wide field, where the differences of the several branches of Christendom meet our view. It requires something like an historical survey.

Scriptural  
Types of  
Doctrine.

1. Such a survey must include the New Testament itself ; but marking the essential difference between its several types of doctrine and those that appear in the Church after inspiration had ceased. It is important to have a clear conception of this. The sum of Scriptural teaching is the combination of many elements which the Holy Ghost fashioned into unity. As the history of the redeeming government of mankind runs on, the gradual evolution of doctrine generally and of individual doctrines runs on with it ; and as all events converge to the fulness of time so all doctrines converge to the fulness of truth. Multiplicity and variety are for ever tending to simplicity and unity. The preparatory teaching of the Old Testament and the perfect teaching of the New are one in the unity of prophecy and fulfilment. The same may be said of the predictions of the Gospels before the Pentecost, and their accomplishment afterwards. And there are different types of doctrine in the Apostolic circle. St. John, St.

Peter, St. James, St. Paul contribute their several distinct exhibitions of Christian truth, each of which is sharply marked off from its fellows, while all conspire to *the unity of the faith*. The first Three received each his special charisma or gift, and represented the Saviour's teaching as given to them in its elements by His own lips, before and after the resurrection, and as subsequently expounded to them by the Holy Spirit, according to the Lord's promise. St. Paul was added to the company; he derived his teaching, according to his own testimony, directly from the Risen Saviour, who elected the future Apostle from a Rabbinical school, and gave him a specific revelation of the scheme of the Gospel. In one of the Epistles which contain the fullest exhibition of what is new in the evangelical system he says: *for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*. Eph. iv. 13

It is most obvious that the method of the Inspiring Spirit was to complete the Christian revelation on the principle of a series of converging developments, the last and highest of which were committed to St. Paul and St. John. This fact will meet us again; it will be our main guide in the Biblical exposition of theology. Meanwhile, it must be remembered that these developments ended with the perfected revelation. Divine doctrine then ceased, and human dogma then began its course. The unity of New-Testament doctrine is perfect. The Apostle Paul, who seems to introduce so many new elements into his teaching that he is claimed by very opposite parties as the real founder of Christian theology, is the most strenuous of all in asserting that unity, and in denouncing every tendency to divide the Christian Faith into several types. Gal. i. 12

*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. . . . Is Christ divided?* 1 Cor. i. 10, 13

2. In Christian history the case is different. Christendom soon was partitioned into provinces: the period of perfect unity in theological teaching was very brief. This is not the place to discuss the moral character of this fact: it is with the fact alone we have to do, and with that only in a preliminary way. Creeds and Confessions

(1) During the first six hundred years, the Patristic age proper, the unity of the Faith was expressed by the Ecumenical Patristic Age.

Creeds: the APOSTLES', which gradually expanded the Baptismal Formula, the NICENE, which introduced a more theological definition of the Holy Trinity in Unity, the ATHANASIAN, which still more fully expanded this, and added to it the precise definition of the Incarnation. Scarcely were the Three Creeds lodged in the universal Faith than the first division of Confessional theology took place: that between the ORIENTAL and the WESTERN Confessions. Beginning with the difference of a word, the insertion of the FILIOQUE to express the procession of the Spirit from the Son as from the Father, the breach wore on, and the two Theologies have had ever since their marked types: that of the East contemplative, mystical, unprogressive, and teaching rather by symbol than by creeds; that of the West abounding in analysis, always progressive, and developing every truth to its utmost issues. The Greek or Oriental Creed, mainly though not exclusively represented by the Orthodox Church of Russia, holds to the decisions of the seven Ecumenical Councils from 325 to 787, the Nicene Creed being its basis. Since the Reformation it has issued several Confessions, that of Peter Mogila in 1643, the Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem 1672, the Catechism of Philaret, sanctioned in 1839. Oriental divinity has many points of specific distinction from that of the West. From the Roman Catholic it differs by rejecting the doctrine of the Papacy, by some modifications of the Seven Sacraments, by denying the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, by circulating the Bible in the Vernacular, and, as a consequence of the first of these differences, by the assertion of its own absolute supremacy as the only orthodox and true representative of Christianity on earth. Classing Romanism among the schisms and heresies as the eldest born among them, it nevertheless agrees with Rome in the great bulk of its doctrines, and has no affinity with Protestantism save in its rejection of an infallible human authority and the consequent possibility of its own reformation.

Romanism  
and Pro-  
testantism

(2) The Romanist and Protestant types of theology have divided the Western world for three centuries: united as they undoubtedly are in many of the most fundamental verities, their differences touch almost every essential topic in the administration of redemption and the presence of Christ in His Church.

Those differences will meet us only too often : meanwhile it is enough to say that each type of doctrine is developed into a large body of theology. The basis of Romanism was until lately the TRIDENTINE symbols and decrees and canons, or the solemn sanction given by the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century to the dogmas which had been growing up in the mediæval times, and were formulated in opposition to Protestantism. In the present century the VATICAN decisions on the Immaculate Conception, 1854, and Papal Infallibility, 1870, have been added to the Tridentine decrees and Roman Catechism of the era of the Reformation. PROTESTANTISM as such, that is, the general system of decline which derived its name from the protest against Rome, has many subdivisions, and its confessions are many. Historically considered, these divided into two at the Reformation : the LUTHERAN and the REFORMED ; the chief expositors of the former having been Luther and Melancthon, and of the latter Calvin and Zwingli. These are one in their adhesion to the three ancient Creeds, but specially in the restoration of Holy Scripture to its supreme place as the standard of faith, in the vindication of the fundamental doctrine of grace which in the ancient Creeds had not sufficient prominence, and in the establishment of the Scriptural view of a sinner's personal relations to Christ. But they differ in other respects : mainly in that Lutheran Theology is more deeply sacramental, and the Reformed is pervaded by the revived predestinarianism of Augustine. The chief standard of Lutheran doctrine is the Augsburg Confession of 1530, with Luther's Catechisms of 1529, and the Formula of Concord, 1577. The chief Reformed Standards were the Helvetic Confession of 1564, the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563, with the various Confessions of France, Belgium, and Scotland. The Reformed doctrine has spread more widely, and is now represented by many formularies, among which may be classed the Thirty-nine Articles, and more distinctly the Westminster Confession, which unites most of the English-speaking communions of Calvinism.

Lutheran  
and  
Reformed.

(3) In the beginning of the seventeenth century the ARMINIAN, or rather REMONSTRANT, Confession arose in Holland, under the direction of James Harmen, Arminius, as a protest against what has been called, from its second founder, CALVINISM. The

Arminian

supreme principle of this latter type of doctrine is the Absolute Sovereignty of God : its best representative is the Westminster Confession. The Arminian type has for its principle the universality of the benefit of the Atonement and the restored freedom of the human will as an element in the doctrine of the Divine decrees. The Remonstrance presented by the followers of James Arminius contained five articles, of which the following is the substance : that God elected to salvation, or to reprobation, those whose faith or whose final disbelief He foresaw ; that Jesus Christ died for all, but only believers receive the benefit ; that repentance and renewal are of the Spirit's operation ; that the grace which effects this may be finally resisted ; that the question of a necessary final perseverance must be left undecided. These Five Points, the last of which was afterwards made more explicit, have been the foundation of Arminianism in Holland, and in England, where it leavened theological thought to a great extent. In the Revival of the last century the original Methodists were distinguished from the followers of Whitefield as Arminians. But the immediate successors of Arminius declined from sound faith in some particulars ; and in its own country the system is deeply tinctured with Socinianism and Rationalism.

(4) All these Confessional types are exhibited in the systematic teachings of the larger communions into which the modern Unitarian. Church is divided. Nor are there any other, unless a UNITARIAN type is admitted : there was after the Reformation a SOCINIAN Confession ; but that, as a Confession, has vanished, scarcely any trace of its peculiarities being found in modern Unitarianism, which has its most productive field in America, and can scarcely be distinguished from pure Theism. Nor can there be said to be an ECLECTIC or LATITUDINARIAN system : for these words apply to no one particular type of Christian doctrine.

Methodist (5) METHODIST theology, which has spread during the last century over a very wide area of Christendom, is Catholic in the best sense, holding the Doctrinal Articles of the English Church, including the Three Creeds, and therefore maintaining the general doctrine of the Reformation. It is Arminian as opposed to Calvinism, but in no other sense. Its peculiarities are many, touching chiefly the nature and extent of personal salvation ; and

with regard to these its standards are certain writings of John Wesley and other authoritative documents.

III. There is a third view to be taken of development in the theology of the Christian Church: having reference to the form it has in all ages taken from external circumstances. This also will be best seen in such a brief review as may serve to indicate the importance of the study of the ecclesiastical history of doctrine or dogma, and, at the same time, prepare the way for those historical summaries which will be given under the several heads of the following course.

General  
types.

1. In the Patristic Church—including the ante-Nicene and post-Nicene periods down to Gregory, A.D. 600—there were schools of theological thought, which represented almost all the later tendencies. For instance, Asia Minor and Antioch, Alexandria, and North Africa were severally centres of three very distinct kinds of teachings: the first, more faithful to Scripture and Apostolical tradition; the second, blending philosophical speculation, allegorical interpretation, and the mystical element with its Christianity; and the third, hard, real, and dialectic. The early writers in these distinct schools betray their influence in every age, and in all their views of Christian doctrine; and the same influence extends downwards, more or less, through subsequent times. These schools reign still without the names.

Patristic  
Schools.

2. During the earlier part of the Middle Ages, superstition moulded tradition into forms of doctrine that more and more diverged from the Scriptural standard. This was a period, however, of comparative stagnation, as contrasted with the luminous activity of the post-Nicene age and with the deep theological devotion of the Schoolmen beginning with Anselm about 1100. The Scholastic divinity in the universities of Christendom wrought up the materials it inherited into systematic forms, which carried dialectic subtilty and philosophical speculation to their highest point. By the toil of many indefatigable minds it laid the foundation of the complete system of Roman Catholicism as formulated in the Council of Trent; while, at the same time, it transmitted its methods to Protestantism, the first century of which almost rivalled the work of the medieval doctors in analytical severity and completeness. Whatever deductions may be

Middle  
Ages.

Scholasticism.



made from the value of its results, the Christian Church owes very much to the industry and devotion of the Schoolmen. Systematic theology had its origin in their labours.

### **Mysticism**

3. Through all these, however, struggled the Mystical spirit, which controlled a large part of the Scholastic theology, and penetrated every branch of the Christian Church, influencing the doctrines of each by turns. Its law of development is the independent teaching of God in communion with the human spirit: independent, first, as without the external means of grace, and, secondly, as given to the individual apart from all others. The theology of every period, and of every region of Christendom, has received the impress of this law working lawlessly: its operation has touched Pantheism at the one pole, and at the other merely imparts a mystical colouring to Christian doctrine and devotion. Consequently, it is impossible to characterise Mystical theology as one distinct whole; and still more evidently is it wrong to brand it with indiscriminate condemnation. Its earliest Christian representative, the pseudo-Dionysius, teaches with all his errors a sublime doctrine of the Supreme and of man's communion with Him; and the purest spirit of self-renouncing consecration pervades the writings of Scotus Erigena and other Mystics who held the leading doctrines of the Christian Faith. The *Theologia Germanica*, a work which transmitted to modern times the ancient Mysticism, was made by Luther almost one of the textbooks of the Reformation. From that time downwards Mystic devotional theology reappears in every region of Christendom. Romanism has had its several types in Spain, France, Italy, and Germany; and its Mystical writers, apart from their unevangelical and quietistic errors, carry devotion into a very high region. Every community of Protestantism has had its representatives both of the sound and of the unsound Mysticism. In some it has passed into a transcendental theosophy, Jacob Behmen being their expositor; in others, into a fanatical independence of external revelation, and indifference to the common fellowship of the Church; in others into a visionary religion of intuitional sentiment and feeling. But its healthiest manifestations have been simply a tribute to the pure Mysticism of the New Testament; a protest against the mere form and externality of godli-

ness ; and the true expression of all that is high and unearthly in communion with God.

4. In every age, but especially in these last times, theology in the Church has been influenced by a tendency the opposite of that of Mysticism : the spirit of Rationalism, which makes the human understanding the measure of the truth it accepts. Rationalism is either philosophical or critical : the former has aimed to recast Christian doctrine, and make it the manifold expression of its own ideas ; the latter has been destructive, eliminating from the faith everything that human reasoning cannot explain. In both these forms it has widely influenced the development of Christian theology, though both may be said to carry their doctrine to a region altogether outside of Christendom. The term Rationalism, as signifying one of the elements that mould religious thought, may be restricted to the latter meaning. It is the spirit which perpetually labours to make the truths of revelation acceptable to the human understanding. In a very different sense from that of the Apostle, it testifies only that which it has seen : seen with the eye of reason alone. Accepting the Christian Faith as a whole, it claims to give a good account of it to the intuitions and judgments of men ; but this at the expense of all that is transcendent, mysterious, and past finding out in the ways of God with mankind.

**Rationalism.**

5. The other aspect of Rationalism may more appropriately be termed Speculation in theology. Speculation starts from certain *a priori* determinations which thought finds in itself as the necessary and primary ground of all being and thinking. It fixes upon its point of observation, and speculates or regards attentively the whole field of possibilities from that point of view. Hence it constructs its own philosophy of religion from subjective principles. It aims to understand Christianity as the expression of eternal laws governing the universe. The result has been an ever-shifting variety of theological conceptions of the sum of things. The characteristics of each system have been marked by some primary category or law of thought to which all is reduced : in that of Scotus Erigena it was the idea of Nature uncreated, creating and created ; in Leibnitz the Monad ; in Spinoza, the one eternal Substance, with its attributes of thought and exten-

**Speculative Theology**

sion ; in German transcendental philosophies, all more or less theological, the idea of the absolute, the Ego and non-Ego, the Idea. Each makes the Christian revelation the eternal and necessary expression of its own self-gendered thought. But another application of the term speculative in relation to theology requires to be mentioned : that which simply implies a disposition to push inquiry into the fringe of thick darkness which encompasses the circle of every revealed doctrine, and to fill up the chasms in the system of truth at every point. It is the undue exercise of imagination in the religious domain ; and it differs from Rationalism only in this, that it does not reduce faith to knowledge, as if we must perfectly know in order to believe, but rather strives to include within the sphere of knowledge what is left to the acceptance of naked faith. With speculative theology, however defined, we ought to have but little to do.

Development with  
the Times.

6. Finally, there are healthy developments in theology, and especially in some branches of it, which are guided by the general advancement of human affairs. With the progress of human culture theology progresses. In its relation to science, philosophy, learning, and civilisation generally, it both gives and receives. It absorbs the good influences, and counteracts the evil, of the times. It begins, as it were, afresh in every land in which it is planted and grows with its growth. The tree is everywhere the same, and its fruit the same ; but its development varies with the influences of soil and culture. In every Christian Church theology is, at this moment, undergoing as a science manifold and obvious improvement ; and each community contributes its part to the general advance. But this leads to the last branch of our general proposition.

Theology  
a Science.

### THEOLOGY SCIENTIFIC.

Christian Theology is the systematic arrangement of the truths pertaining to the revelation of God. It may lay claim to the character of a science : its aim is scientific, as it is the basis of practical religion ; its methods also are scientific, in the best and only legitimate sense. But theo-

logical science has peculiarities which distinguish it from all others, and must be kept in view by every student.

I. The aim of theology is to exhibit the grounds and principles, the connection and harmonies, the results and applications, of the facts of revelation. In common with every science, it obeys the law of the human mind, which demands that the materials of its knowledge should be inductively generalised and systematically arranged; and, in common with every science, it arranges its materials for use and practical application. Theology is the science, and Religion is the art. The two derivations of the word RELIGION—from *Relegere*, or *Religare*—blend, as we have seen, in making it the practice of the duties that flow from man's relation to God. Whether more subjective, according to the former, or more objective, according to the latter, it is, and has ever been, the art or practice of the Divine service. The reasons, obligations, laws, arguments, and results of this service are set forth in the science which is its foundation. And, as religion is from God, so also is theology. The Bible is as full of the science as it is of the art of religion. It will be seen hereafter that there is a distinction between Biblical and Systematic theology; but that distinction does not involve the exclusion of theological science from the Bible: almost every treatise in it refuses to allow this. Wherever man's duty to God is taught, there must be the establishment and enforcement of its grounds; and Holy Scripture encourages both the theoretical and the practical study of Divine truth.

The  
Science  
and the  
Art

II. The methods of theology are scientific. It observes, tests, and arranges facts and makes generalisations; it uses both the inductive and deductive processes of argument; it depends upon the same primary laws of thought upon which those processes rest; and it sets out, as all legitimate human inquiry must set out, with a firm faith in certain truths which lie behind experience, being inwrought into the fabric of our minds: such as the primary law of causation and all that it involves, and the validity of those laws of belief which are innate. But the facts of our science are gathered from regions some of which are thought to be interdicted to scientific observation. There is the sacred deposit of

Methods

original truths in the constitution of man's nature. There are the economies of Creation and Providence. There is the boundless storehouse of the Word of God ; and there are the innumerable testimonies of common experience, of which Scripture is the test, while they confirm the Scripture. Strictly speaking, all these regions of observation are one, inasmuch as every element of religious consciousness, and every lesson of the external universe, is wrought up into the fabric of Divine revelation. We cannot take a step further without the assurance that these are legitimate fields of observation, the facts or phenomena of which are as real as the facts with which physical science has to do. Theological science is dissipated at once if this is denied. Supposing it granted, then there remains only the careful, honest, and religious observance of the accepted laws of reasoning. The result, whether by analysis or synthesis, is the scientific presentation of each doctrine and class of doctrine and the entire compass of theology. In this way, that is by the rigorous processes of induction and deduction, systematic theology arrives at a clear and distinct apprehension of every article of the Faith. For instance, its doctrine of sin is the result of a wide and exhaustive examination of a large number of testimonies in Scripture and in experience which force conviction on the mind that one, and one only, theory can account for all the facts. The same may be said of its doctrine of the Person of Christ, which is inductively established by a comparison of many passages, none of which individually contains a formal statement. Of this we shall have manifold other illustrations as we proceed.

Theologi-  
cal Ency-  
clopædia.

III. Hence a distribution of the truths of revelation in systematic forms, which combine into a complete encyclopædia of theological science. A comprehensive view of this divides it into Biblical, Historical, and Dogmatic ; each of these, however, more or less penetrating the others, and all combining to form what may be called Systematic divinity.

Biblical.

1. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY, in its widest meaning, includes the criticism and study of the text of Scripture ; its construction as a whole ; the laws of exegesis and their application, or Hermeneutics ; its archæology, geography, and history, and all that belongs to the Introduction to the Bible. More restricted in meaning,

It is the arrangement of the theology of Scripture in its own terms and according to its own laws of development and classification. In this sense it is the foundation of all theology properly so called: every doctrine, as will be seen, having its own and proper Biblical development.

2. **HISTORICAL THEOLOGY** embraces ecclesiastical history in its whole compass, or the history of the kingdom of God within and without the Scripture; including all that belongs to the Church, its antiquities, ceremonies, and jurisprudence, but especially the progress and development of Christian doctrine through the ages of controversy and formation. It is in this latter sense that we shall use the term: endeavouring to present every specific article of the Faith in its evolution in ecclesiastical systems. Historical.

3. **DOGMATIC OR DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY** includes both the doctrine and ethics of Christianity in their scientific arrangement, with their apology and defence; in it doctrine as taught in Scripture, and dogma as taught in the Church, are one. Dogmatic.

4. **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY** may be said, more or less, to include all these: it takes the system of doctrine as its basis, but illustrates it from history, and verifies it by Scripture. It has this peculiarity, that, while the other three may be independent of any particular standard, every work on systematic theology more or less bears the impress of one confessional stamp. Systematic.

5. Of this fact the present course will be an illustration: exhibiting the compass of Divine truth, whether as presented in Scriptural forms, or as moulded by ecclesiastical development, or as dogmatically stated in its results. It will first treat of the Christian Religion, and of its Documents as the **DIVINE RULE OF FAITH**: including the topics of Revelation, Inspiration, Canon, with such exhibition of the credentials or evidences of the Faith as are consistent with the strictly dogmatic character of our course. This is the necessary introduction to the supreme doctrine concerning **GOD**: His Being, Essence, Names, and Attributes. The consideration of these subjects will lead to the relations of **GOD AND THE CREATURE**. Then follows the doctrine concerning **SIN**: its origin, nature, and universality. The **MEDIATORIAL MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST**, His Person, and His Work, as objectively finished on earth and in heaven, will next demand The Present System.  
Analysis.

prolonged attention, leading to the ADMINISTRATION OF REDEMPTION, including Personal Salvation, the Ethics of the Gospel, and the Institutions of the Christian Church. All must needs be closed by the doctrines pertaining to the LAST THINGS.

Unity of  
Theology.

2 Tim. i.  
13.  
1 Tim. iv.  
6.

IV. It is of great importance that the mind should be imbued at the outset with a sense of the possibility and the advantage of a well-articulated system. In the organic unity of Christian truth every doctrine has its place in some cycle of doctrines, while all the lesser systems revolve around their common centre. And it is one of the fruits of theological study to enable the student to locate every topic at once. But not only so. There are rich and profound harmonies among these truths ; and every doctrine, having its proper place, has also its relations to almost every other : the quick discernment of these relations is another fruit of devout and earnest inquiry. Putting the two together, the high aim of the proficient in this study should be to discover all the affinities and connections of the truths of the Christian system. It may be objected that such scientific precision in the definitions and demarcations of doctrine is out of keeping with the free spirit of Christian theology. It is customary to point to the rich and irregular luxuriance of Scripture. But the Scripture is altogether on the side of order. Some parts of it are as systematic as they could be made ; and none are without system. It has, and bids us have and hold, the *ἰσορῳπῶσιν*, the *form of sound words*. St. Paul distinguishes between the words of *faith* and the words of *good doctrine*, which he exhorts Timothy to combine in their unity. Of course, the effort to systematise must be governed by a higher aim, and guarded against the danger to which it is peculiarly exposed. Theology, the city of God, is built, as it were, upon seven hills, which are the great doctrines that may be discerned to be fundamental. These several hills of the Lord are not sharply separated from each other, but throw out their spurs in all directions, making it hard to show where one department of truth ends and another begins. To maintain the distinctions without marking them too mechanically is the aim of sound theological science.

Peculiarities.

V. It remains only to mark the sacred peculiarities of this study. True as it is that its methods are the same which are

employed in the inductive sciences, it is also true that its materials are partly or mainly collected in a region which merely human science cannot penetrate, and where a special kind of demonstration is alone attainable. It is wrong to place theology on a level with the inductive sciences: it is either below them, or above them, or both, according to the spirit in which it is viewed.

1. There is a sense in which the entire round of theological truth is matter of faith: even those facts which belong to the consciousness of every man are connected with great verities that are delivered to faith from the invisible world. Now, faith is the inward assurance of things not seen, and makes the materials of theology as real and certain as the things that physical science has to deal with. But that faith is not altogether common to man; it is connected with certain moral conditions; and, to those who have it not, theology in every form is only an incomprehensible pseudo-science. They retort upon it its own words, and brand it as *science falsely so called*. Not that they entirely reject the study of Divine things: to them also there is a Science of Religions, or of the superstitions and quasi-spiritual delusions of mankind. To those who believe it is the truest, most comprehensive, and not least exact of all the sciences: and it is not their fault if it remains, nevertheless, a region of esoteric mysteries into which they alone are initiated.

Faith

1 Tim vi  
20.

2. Mystery is everywhere in this knowledge: its simplest elements are things unsearchable by the faculties of man. This is to some extent true of all other sciences; they all have their mysteries, in both the Scriptural senses of the term: things brought to light that have been long hidden, and things unsearchable, the signs of which only are seen. The latter always wait on the former; when the mystery ceases to be a matter reserved from knowledge, it ceases not to be a matter reserved from reason. This is true of the impenetrable things of nature; it is a mistake to think that when science has discovered the laws that govern the wonderful phenomena with which it deals, the mystery ceases. The simplest elements of every department of knowledge are things unsearchable by human faculties. Supposing scientific research to be successful in penetrating every secret of nature, so far as to find the secondary cause of every effect, there is still a large residuum over which it

Mystery



1 Tim iii.  
16.

broods, waiting for light which probably will never come. But the theological mystery is *confessedly great*. Every doctrine, however bright and blessed in itself, is compassed about with thick darkness; every page and every line of its record "exit in mysterium." There are, and will ever be, great antitheses or, as men call them, contradictions in thought which our limited capacity is unable to reconcile. Metaphysical thinking is compelled to leave these antinomies unsolved wherever the finite and the infinite meet. Our science also has its speculative region, into which reason soars, but the logical understanding cannot follow. Moreover, and finally, it has revelations to deal with which appal the minds which they baffle: the dread and awful truths which are its dark side, having their reflections in human experience and the ordinary course of nature, but not the less a stumblingblock on that account. All these are the cross of theology, which to itself is its glory, to unbelieving man its reproach.

Petitio  
Principii.

3. Like every other science, but in a peculiar sense, theology has much in it of the "petitio principii." It assumes many irreducible first axioms. The consciousness of self, the consciousness of a world not self, the consciousness of God neither self nor the world, we may seek to demonstrate, but they are postulated in the demonstration. It will appear, as we proceed, how often and in what various ways theology seems, in its general credentials and in its defence of every doctrine, to argue in a circle. This is a necessity of which it need never be ashamed, and no truly philosophical or scientific mind will charge this as an offence.

Conven-  
tional  
language.

4. In common with all the sciences, theology has its phraseology of conventions: partly of scriptural precedent or suggestion, partly of human appointment. Conventional terms are necessary in all knowledge: the symbols of ideas once settled are, and ought to be, unchangeable. The systematic arrangement of Divine truth requires them, and has enlisted them in great variety. It has its precise technical terminology, the fixing of which has been the result of sound inductive processes, and the accurate maintenance of which gives its precision to our study. Revelation, Inspiration, Scripture, Faith, Trinity, Substance, Person, are instances of terms which have their established conventional meaning. The importance of this may be illustrated in the case of two of these

terms in particular. Inspiration is a word in common use to signify an influence breathed upon or flowing into the mind from any external source, as opposed to its own inherent operations: hence it has a current philosophical and literary application. In religious matters it also signifies any influence or energy of the Holy Spirit in the awakening of spiritual feeling. But it has in theology a conventional meaning, which is limited to the direct and specific discipline of the Inspiring Spirit preparing the writers of Scripture for their task; and to that use of it the term is strictly to be appropriated. Again, the word Person has a variety of applications. It signifies generally the ground of personality, or of independent, conscious, responsible action. But it has in theology a specific relation both to the doctrine concerning God and to the doctrine concerning Christ. As to the former, it is used conventionally to distinguish the Three Persons in the unity of the one Divine essence. The personal God is known to us as Three Persons; and the term which has been long established stands simply as the symbol of an incomprehensible mystery. As to the latter, the indivisible Person of Christ signifies the result of the union of His two natures. The conventional term has here another and distinct use, being again the symbol of a mystery equally unfathomable with that of the Triune personality. The same term has its different conventional use in these two supreme subjects; and its applications must be remembered and respected. But every department has its own specific theological vocabulary. They will defend themselves as we proceed: meanwhile, the student should be impressed with their importance, making it a law of his study to define them carefully and hold them fast tenaciously.

5. Theological science, in conclusion, has a Divine sanction, influence, and control, which no other can claim. *There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding* in every department of knowledge. But in theology, which seeks in all truth its relation to God and eternity, there is the guarantee of a special guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. His witness is not given only to the personal acceptance of the believer; it is a testimony to the doctrine on which his experience rests. *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the*

Divine  
Teaching  
Job xxxii.  
8.

1 Cor. ii  
12

- Spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.* This declaration of St. Paul refers to nothing less than the whole compass of theology, as it unfolds *the deep things of God* ; and, what is more, it assures us that the sufficient knowledge of these deep things is not the prerogative of inspired Apostles only, but is the common privilege of all who receive the Divine Spirit as a Teacher. The theological student who does not imprint this truth on his heart at the outset goes on his perilous way without the strongest incentive for the encouragement of his labours. In this study the Holy Ghost more than blesses the diligent mind : He directs its pursuits, shapes its conclusions, and sanctifies its reasonings. The first condition of the successful pursuit of this science is the submission of the reason to the teaching of *the only wise God our Saviour*. In the Holy Scriptures this is laid down as a primary axiom. No one who despises or neglects it will ever be more than a learner, *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* ; but St. Paul, using the same strong word for a perfect experimental apprehension, says elsewhere that *God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας*. The intellectual and spiritual perception of truth which is denied in the one case and affirmed in the other is expressed by a phrase which the Apostle never uses save for the highest certitude of knowledge. The sum of all is that no one who steadfastly relies on the Heavenly Teacher will fail to reach *the full assurance of understanding*, in relation at least to that knowledge which is all that is essential to man, **THE MYSTERY OF GOD, even CHRIST.**
- Jude 25.**
- 2 Tim. iii. 7.**
- 1 Tim. ii. 4.**
- Gal. ii. 2**

# **THE DIVINE RULE OF FAITH.**

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**REVELATION.**

**INSPIRATION.**

**CANON.**



## THE DIVINE RULE OF FAITH.

The  
Divine  
Rule of  
Faith.

**CHRISTIAN** Theology, as the science of Christianity, the one, perfect, and only Religion, is based upon the documentary records of God's revelation of Himself and of His will in Christ Jesus. Of necessity, therefore, its first inquiry should be directed to the nature and authority of its Sacred Writings, which contain at once the historical development and the finished result of the Divine revelations to mankind. One proposition gives here the summary of the whole truth. The Holy Scriptures are the Divine Rule of Faith: a statement which, unfolded, opens three departments of investigation. First, they are the documents and the depository of the Christian Revelation, or the Christian Faith, which is the consummation of all religious knowledge. Secondly, they are Divine in their origin: the product of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Thirdly, they are the Rule of the Faith, as forming a body of canonical Scriptures, regulating for ever the doctrine and teaching of the Christian Church. Hence we derive the three great words which are the superscription of the whole body of dogma concerning the written oracles of God: Revelation, Inspiration, Canon.

### REVELATION OR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

The  
Faith.

These two terms may be studied as counterparts, and in some sense as synonymous. The Christian

Faith is the perfected Revelation, and the perfected Revelation is the Christian Faith; each and both being coincident, generally speaking, with the Christian Scriptures. But Revelation refers them to God the Revealer; Christian Faith regards them as received by man. It will be useful to make this distinction govern our treatment of the whole subject. Human faith and Divine revelation are DOUBLE ONE AGAINST THE OTHER. What God is pleased to make known, man's acceptance makes his Faith.

Ecclus.  
xlii. 24.

Revela-  
tion.

### REVELATION.

The term Revelation signifies in its last and highest theological meaning the unveiling or disclosing of God's redeeming purpose to mankind. This definition distinguishes it from more general manifestations of the Supreme Being, and gives to the Christian revelation its distinctive character, as including all other forms of Divine teaching and adding its own supplement and consummation. It is at once the most elementary and the most comprehensive word of our theological system.

### REVELATION GENERAL.

**The Term.** Revelation, taken in its broadest sense, includes every manifestation of God to the consciousness and perception of man: whether in the constitution of the human mind, in the framework of nature, or in the processes of Providential government. The term is used to embrace the whole compass of the Divine disclosures, whether in act or word, whether by immediate contact of the Eternal Spirit with the human soul or by mediating instrumentalities, whether of truth generally or any special token of the Divine will. In this more general application other words are used besides ἀποκάλυψις, or revelation: such as φωτίζειν, of the light of the Son in human reason *which lighteth every man*

John i. 9.

*that cometh into the world*; φανεροῦν, of the declaration of the Divine glory in the universe, and of the testimony of the Supreme to all men to whom *that which may be known of God is manifest*, referring to His providential guidance of the Gentiles before whom *He left not Himself without witness*, οὐκ ἀμάρτυρον. It is sufficient for our present purpose that all these lower and more unrestricted or improper revelations and methods of revelation are taken up into Revelation proper. The Records of the Faith are the records of all the teachings that *at sundry times and in divers manners* preceded and prepared for it. There is, however, a special and limited meaning of the term. But, before considering this more fully, it may be well to note some theological distinctions which lead the way to it.

Rom. i. 19.

Acts xiv. 17.

Heb. i. 1.

1. The word revelation unites the two ideas of a Divine unveiling or ἀποκάλυψις, and making known or φανέρωσις, of the mysteries of religion, or of the soul's relation to God. We must remember the conventional meaning of these terms in theology. There are secrets gradually unveiled in the worlds of mind and matter, the slow disclosure of which is appointed to be the aim and the reward of human science; but we do not call them mysteries. Nor do we call their discovery revelation, save as they are directly connected with religion and taken up into the economy of the Providential government of the world.

Unveiling and Manifestation.

2. This leads to another distinction: Revelation, in this higher theological meaning of the term, is general and special. As GENERAL it is undoubtedly common to the human race as such: the foundation of what may be called natural theology and natural religion. Although, as we have seen, the highest word is not used of this universal unveiling of God in the creature, it may be called natural as distinguished from supernatural revelation. This latter is SPECIAL; as being imparted not so much in man as to man, through the medium both of Divine works and Divine words, as will be hereafter seen.

General and Special.

3. External and internal revelation are to be separated: the former is as it were given objectively and for all; the latter is specially imparted to the organs of revelation, and to those who receive it in faith. They are united in St. Paul's words: *by revelation He made known unto me the mystery which in other ages*

External and Internal.

Eph. iii. 3-9



was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit. Here is the special revelation not included in the former general manifestations of God; the disclosure to the organs of inspiration as a body; and the internal unveiling to St. Paul by the Spirit, *to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery*. But it is obvious that all external revelation must also be internal, though the converse may not be said with the same propriety.

## SPECIAL REVELATION.

- The One Revelation.** Revelation, in the stricter, deeper, and fuller sense, is the unfolding of the eternal counsel of God in Christ, for the restoration of man to fellowship with Himself. This is the sum and substance of truth as truth is in Jesus; it is the conclusion of the whole matter of Divine manifestation to man; and, as such, it is perfected in the Christian Scriptures, that is, in the final testimony of Jesus. His testimony is the last word of all objective revelation. In this definition there are three salient points; the one Eternal Purpose in Christ the Revealer, the perfect Scripture, and the identity, or rather coincidence, of the Christian oracles with the Christian Faith.
- The One Purpose.** 1. Revelation proper is consecrated to the mystery hid with Christ in God, the one Secret which it unfolds. This is the common burden of the prophets and of the Apostles and of Christ Himself. It is the ONE TRUTH of the whole Word of God. The entire range of its disclosures, in all their many forms, is governed by this supreme purpose, and all pay their tribute to this one subject. Christ, Himself the Sum of all revelation, is Himself also the one Revealer or Apocalyptist. He is the Revealer in act and in word. First, and above all, in act. He is Himself the personal revelation of God and His whole eternal purpose towards the human race. This profound truth of Christianity is presupposed throughout the New Testament. It may be studied in the combination of several Pauline passages. In the first the great *Mystery of Godliness* is spoken of as being manifest in the flesh: this refers to the Person of Christ Incarnate, Who elsewhere is termed the *Mystery of God, which is Christ*, the one Secret to be revealed in
- Period.**
- 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Again,
- Col. ii. 2.
- Col. ii. 3.

this manifestation is said to be reflected from the mirror of the Gospel, which consummates all Divine disclosures: *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.* Finally, it is still more clearly explained in a passage which combines the others, as *the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,* the Countenance of the personal God in His incarnate Son looking upon man and giving him, in the light of that countenance, all that he needs to know for time and eternity. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the substance of all revelation of God, according to His own testimony: *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.* Secondly, therefore, He is the Revealer in word. *No one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willet to reveal Him: ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύπτει.* Christ is THE WORD in His original and eternal estate, Who, however, became incarnate to be the Oracle of God in the temple of humanity. *No man hath seen God at any time; the Onlybegotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath made Him known.* In His incarnate estate He is also THAT PROPHET, Who should absorb into Himself all prophetic functions, whether of announcing or of foretelling the will of God. In virtue of that first name, He has been from the beginning the Revealer: it was His voice that uttered the ancient oracles. In virtue of the latter name superadded to the former, He has summed up, satisfied, and consummated the revelation of all past ages in one perfect revelation for ages to come. He spake by the prophets; He spake upon earth; and, though gone from us, He yet speaketh. His word means all revelation, and all revelation means His word. The ORACLE and the oracles are one.

2 Cor. iii. 18.

2 Cor. iv. 6.

John xiv. 9.

Matt. xi. 27.

John i. 1.

John i. 18

John i. 21

2. The Scriptures contain and are this perfect disclosure and finished revelation. Of their Divine origin we need not think as yet; though it is anticipated in the fact that the Saviour has given His authenticating testimony to the whole body of them in their integrity. That sanction, first, makes the Old Testament the revelation of Christ. As it testified of Him so He testifies of it. He took it into His hands, and blessed it, and hallowed it for ever as His own. As revelation is Christ, and Christ is the subject of the Old Testament, the Old Testament is of necessity the revelation of God. Knowing better than any human critic

Scripture

- can know all its internal obscurities and difficulties, He sealed it nevertheless for the reverence of His people. The canon of the ancient oracles, precisely as we hold them now, no more no less, He sanctified and gave to His Church as the early preparatory records of His own Gospel and kingdom. That sanction, secondly, assures us that the New Testament is His own authoritative completion of the Scriptures of revelation. Leaving the fuller study of this proposition for a further stage, we need only note the general fact that our Lord declared His own purpose to complete an unfinished revelation. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil, ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι*: not only to fulfil the predictions both of law and prophecy, but to fill out their meaning; to set on them the seal of perfection by revealing fully what they revealed only in part. All the lines of Old-Testament revelation were broken off and incomplete: He gathered them up into Himself and His word, so that in Him they might have their vanishing point and yet not vanish. In regard to the Old-Testament oracles the word of St. Paul does not hold good: *When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will come to an end*. And He made full provision for the preservation of His perfected doctrine. All that we need to assure our hearts of this was given in one large promise, which declared that His sayings should be revived in their unbroken unity in His disciples' memory, *He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*; that what He could not yet speak concerning His Person, His Spirit should reveal, *He will guide you into all truth*; and that the same Spirit should show them the *things to come*. The Spirit was no other than Himself by His Agent re-uttering His own words, revealing His own Person and work, and filling up His prophecy of the future. Hence, lastly, our Lord's sanction makes the complete Scriptures the finished revelation, never to be superseded. Nothing can be more plain than that the entire fulness of what the Revealer had to say to the world was to be communicated to the Apostles by the Holy Ghost; and that, not as a further disclosure on the part of the Spirit, but as the consolidation of the Saviour's teaching into its perfect unity, and its expansion into its perfect meaning. No future streams of
- Matt. v.**  
17.
- 1 Cor. xiii.**  
10.
- John xiv.**  
26.
- John xvi.**  
13.

revelation were to rise higher than the fountain-head of truth opened in Himself. Hence we may repeat concerning the Book what has been said concerning the Lord's teaching: the Bible means all revelation and all revelation means the Bible.

3. We are justified, therefore, in holding that the Scriptures of revelation and Christianity, as the Christian Faith, cover the same ground and strictly coincide. As yet, we have nothing to do with the question of inspiration, nor with inquiries into the genuineness and integrity of individual books and individual passages; but only with the general fact that in all sound theology the Bible and Christ are inseparably connected. Not that they are in the nature of things identical: we can suppose the possibility of an Incarnate Revealer present in the world without the mediation of the written Word. Indeed we are bound to assume, as has been already seen, that there is a wider revelation of the WORD in the world than the Scriptures cover. Moreover we may assert that His revelation of Himself is still, and even in connection with the Scriptures, more or less independent of the Word. But, as the basis of the science of theology, the Bible is Christianity. It has pleased God from the beginning to conduct the development of the great mystery by documents containing the attested facts, the authenticated doctrines, and the sealed predictions of revelation. The process of the Divine Counsel has been bound up with the enlargement of the Volume of the Book. That Book is the foundation of Christianity: the Lord of the Bible and the Bible are indissolubly the Rock on which it is based. We have no other Christian Religion than that which is one with its documents and records; we have no documents and records which do not directly or indirectly pay their tribute to the Christian Religion; and there is no revelation in any department of truth of which the same may not be said. All revelation is identical with Christianity and summed up in it. Hence, generally speaking, and as yet regarding the Scriptures only as a whole, we may say that the character of Christianity is the character of the Bible; the claims and credentials of the one are the claims and credentials of the other. This observation will lead us by an easy transition to the counterpart of Revelation: the Christian Faith

The  
Scriptures  
and Chris-  
tianity  
One.

The  
Faith.

### THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

The Revelation given by God is the Christian Faith as received by man. The entire body of revealed truth is addressed to the principle of faith, receiving on Divine evidence what becomes matter of certitude and assurance. This is the objective dogmatic Faith delivered to the saints. But this same Faith may also be regarded as having to win the assent of the world, and as presenting its credentials to the reason in order to universal acceptance. Hence we have two general aspects of our present subject: first the Christian Revelation as accepted by faith, and, secondly, as presenting its evidences to reason.

Received  
by Faith.

### THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION AS ACCEPTED.

The Christian Revelation in all its compass of truth is addressed to faith primarily, to reason only as subordinated to faith. It is committed to the supreme tenure of that principle which is the evidence and substantiation of spiritual things. This faith extends explicitly to all the facts, doctrines, and promises of the Holy Scripture, and implicitly to all its mysteries whether already revealed, in course of revelation, or reserved for the future.

Eph. iv. 21

Its supreme object is Christ and the truth as TRUTH is IN JESUS. But it must be remembered that the Christian Faith is effectually such only to those whose belief is quickened by the Holy Ghost into the assurance of personal knowledge and experience.

It is obvious that this general proposition involves a consideration of the credentials of Christianity; but we have now to do with Revelation only as addressed to faith. As containing the Christian system of truth, and recorded in the Bible, it appeals

to a universal principle of human nature, the faculty of believing. This primary faculty is profoundly seated in our constitution : it works as the acceptance of truth on sufficient evidence, whether of consciousness, or intuition, or testimony. It is at the root of all knowledge generally, especially of all knowledge of spiritual things. Now it is to this principle pre-eminently that Revelation appeals : to faith alone as it is a revelation of spiritual principles and truth ; to faith conjoined with reason as it is a Divine record of facts through which these principles are taught. These two points have now to be briefly discussed.

I. Faith must here in all things have the pre-eminence.

Faith.

1. The grand revelations of the Word of God are all committed to that highest and noblest faculty which the Scripture calls *the evidence of things not seen*. The existence of a Supreme First Cause, the creation of the world *framed by the Word of God*, the nature of sin and the glory of redemption, the Person of the Incarnate and His atonement, the union of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of man, the processes and issues, in time and eternity, of the redeeming economy, in short all that belongs to the supernatural world, must be believed or they are not the heritage of the soul. There is no faculty competent to deal with them, to receive them, to appropriate them, but faith. Reason of itself is the soul's judgment according to sense : if it is regarded as occupied with the mysteries of the spirit and the spiritual world it is no longer reason but faith under the name of reason. Faith is to the other world what the senses are to the world that now is ; the eye, the ear, the taste, the touch that perceives what the physical senses cannot perceive. All is thus summed up : *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned*.

Heb. xi. 1

Heb. xi.  
3, 4.

1 Cor. ii  
14.

2. Hence it is that, inasmuch as the principle of faith belongs as certainly to human nature as reason does, the evidences of the supernatural world are addressed to a faculty which they ought to awaken, even as light ought to awaken the faculty of seeing. If the great truths of Revelation excite no response it is because a deadly evil vitiates the faith which does not vitiate the natural senses. It is necessary to dwell upon this, because reason, thus set aside, will ask why it is that Revelation addressed to a uni-

Its Place  
in  
Human  
Nature.

versal faculty in man does not meet with instantaneous and universal acceptance.

3. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* There is a Spirit Who demonstrates truth to the mind, affections, and will of the personal man; but only to him who is sincere and *cometh to the light*. The credentials of Divine truth are self-evidencing: they are like the light of the sun in the natural world. This preliminary postulate is of the utmost importance, and may be established from the Scripture itself without any irrational begging of the question. First, let our Lord Himself be heard. The testimony concerning Him is, that He is *the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. His testimony to Himself, borne, moreover, to one who was not His disciple, is: *Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice, where of the truth* points to the mystery of man's free posture of mind as disposed or otherwise to be guided aright. This final declaration of Him Who *knew what was in man* expresses the spirit of His entire teaching concerning the self-manifestation of His truth to every man's conscience who *wills to do His will*. Secondly, the light of the body of revelation is the Holy Ghost. The Saviour does not appeal to reason, apart from the mediation of the sole and supreme Convincer. That Spirit also knoweth what is in man, and brings His own Divine demonstration to every mind that does not refuse to consider what He says. He so adapts His arguments to the present fallen moral nature of men that their rejection can spring only from the perverseness of those whose spiritual eye of faith is darkened. As Christ is the Truth incarnate, the Holy Ghost is *the Spirit of the Truth*. He is the great Apologist of Revelation to the world. And St. Paul says, concerning His argument, that it is nothing less than demonstration: *ἐν ἀποδείξει Πνεύματος*. Hence, thirdly, descending to man, we may appeal to the testimonies of Scripture as to the sin and self-conviction of unbelief. The tenour of those testimonies may be summed up in the same Apostle's last word, concerning the heretic, the *αἰπευκὸν ἄνθρωπον*: he is *αὐτοκατάκριτος, condemned of himself*. Those who *resist the truth* are *men of corrupt minds*, and this has its evidence in their being *reprobate concerning the faith*. On the other hand, he tells us that there is a manifesta-
- The Spirit.  
Job xxxii.  
8  
John iii.  
21
- John i. 9.
- John  
xviii. 37.
- John ii.  
25.
- John vii.  
17.
- John xvi.  
13.
- 1 Cor. ii.  
4.
- Titus iii.  
11.
- 2 Tim. iii.  
8.

tion of the truth *to every man's conscience in the sight of God*; and that, in every case in which it is hid, the cause is to be found in a blindness superadded by *the god of this world*. The same God who in the natural sphere *commanded the light to shine out of darkness* in the beginning, commandeth still the light of His knowledge to shine *in the face of Jesus Christ*. No command of God can be disobeyed. *There was light follows Let there be light* in the moral world also; but the light, like its Author, may be rejected of men: *the darkness comprehendeth it not*.

2 Cor. iv.

2, 4.

2 Cor. iv.

6.

Gen. i. 3.

John i. 9.

4. To those who receive the light, in the sense of not refusing it, revelation is one whole, and all its glorious system of truth is received and surely believed. To them it is both objectively and subjectively THE FAITH; and, inasmuch as Christianity has brought it in all its fulness into the world, it is to them THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. This phrase has therefore a large meaning. It signifies that it is not their Philosophy simply, the glory of their reason, the Tradition they have derived from their fathers, but the rich inheritance which the Holy Spirit has given to that one supreme faculty of their souls, the faith which is the *evidence of things not seen*. It is a body of truth which, as reason did not give it, so reason cannot take it away. It is a region in which they walk by faith, which their faith habitually visits, in which their faith lives, and moves, and has its being.

The  
Faith.

Heb. xi.

1.

II. But some of these remarks have already suggested that faith is strictly allied with reason in the acceptance of Christianity as a system of truth. The Spirit Who awakens faith regenerates the reason so that it humbles itself to receive mysteries which it cannot understand; the evidences on which faith rests are such as the reason is called on to approve, here the judgment of the mind having its full honour; and in the acceptance of the whole economy of the Scriptures of Revelation faith and sound reason are blended into a perfect unity.

Reason.

1. The Christian Faith presents to the faculty by which the infinite and the eternal are perceived a system of truth which human reason cannot fathom or understand, against which it naturally rebels. But the same Spirit Who opens the eye of faith gives reason its perfect soundness, so that it consents to accept what it cannot itself verify. Here of course we regard Revelation

Reason  
and  
Faith.



as one organic whole, which has for its unifying principle one overwhelming truth, the union of God and man in Christ. Around this centre revolve other equally incomprehensible doctrines; and beyond these in a wider orbit many which are not in the same sense beyond the human faculties. And speaking of the one vast Revelation we may say that it is committed to faith and submissively wondered at by reason. Faith is elevated to receive it and reason humbled to submit to it.

**Faith and  
Reason.**

2. But this faith is not arbitrary or despotic. It gives its rights to reason in all things over which reasoning presides. It presents the evidences for the being of God, for the Incarnation of the Son, for the mystery of the Atonement; and reason must either admit the evidence as in the case of the Divine existence, or confess that it has nothing to plead against it, as in the case of the Incarnation. Like sin before the presence of Divine justice reason shuts her mouth and is silent. But, descending into the province of the general external evidences of Revelation the matter changes its character. Either it must be said that here reason and faith are one under different names, or faith must be regarded as no longer the faculty of perceiving the infinite but as the principle of believing on evidence. In either view faith and reason are here inseparable. Faith accepts and relies on what there is every reasonable ground for believing. Our great term, THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, then becomes the body of external revelation which is surely believed in by all Christians because they are assured of the strength of its evidences. But this leads us at once to the Credentials of Revelation.

**Cred-  
entials**

#### THE CREDENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

Revelation, which is one with the Christian Faith, which is one with its documents and records, presents its sufficient Credentials to the reason and heart and will of man as one great body of irresistible evidence. First, it comes to mankind as a response to the universal desire and expectation of communication from above: to the craving

of the human heart for communion with God. Secondly, Revelation exhibits, in its own structure, the Divine attributes as stamped upon every part of its system in the form of miracle, prophecy, and inspiration. Thirdly, it furnishes, in the Person of Christ the Revealer, its heavenly guarantee of its own truth. Fourthly, in its perfect consummation as Christianity, it appeals to the character of its influence in human history: positively in its victory over the world's evil, and negatively in its victory over all opposition. Lastly, it relies, as a Divine revelation might be expected to rely, on the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. All its credentials may without much difficulty be classed under these several heads: so far that is as they are a general apology and vindication of the Christian Faith contained in itself.

The Revelation of Christ in the Scriptures enforces its own claims, and theology must pay supreme deference to those internal credentials. These become Evidences when they are arranged in their order. What the Law was to the earlier Gospel, Evidences are to Credentials: added because of human weakness. They have their use, as it respects both the believer and the unbeliever; to the former for confirmation, to the latter for conviction.

Evidences  
and Credentials.

1. The believer is taught by them how to give a reason of the hope that is in him: to be ready or prepared, *πρὸς ἀπολογία*, for Apology. St. Luke, the Evangelist of the Evidences, sets this clearly before us: he so arranges the testimonies of the Faith that Theophilus, already instructed in the verities most surely believed, might *know the certainty of those things*: *ἐπίγνω*, referring to an accurate and systematic knowledge. Both for the confirmation of his own faith, and for the conviction of the gainsayer, every Christian, especially every Christian minister, should have the form of sound defence at hand to guard the form of sound words: the *ὑποτίπσις*, or systematic arrangement, is equally necessary for each.

For  
Believers.  
1 Pet. iii.  
15.

Luke i. 4.

2. As to the unbeliever, the Credentials must be so arranged as to form a complete body of evidence for his possible conviction:

For Un-  
believers.

2 Tim. i.  
13.

without either undervaluing or over-estimating their importance. They must not be despised by a transcendental reliance on the self-evidencing light. Christianity, like its Founder, has a mission to seek that it may save. Its history, both within and without the Bible, is a record of calm reasonings with the mind, even of those who turn away. Evidences or signs are for those who believe not. There may be cases in which the arguments used concerning Revelation may induce the sceptic to listen to the voice of Revelation itself. But, on the other hand, too much must not be expected from them, as they are external evidences apart from the interior demonstration of the truth. Our Lord and His Apostles have left us no instance of argument with those who held not some measure of faith to which their reasonings might appeal. As the Book of Revelation does not reason with Atheism, neither does Christianity lay any stress on reasoning with Infidelity and disbelief.

**Vocabu-  
ary of  
Unbelief.**

**Disbelief**

**Doubt.**

**Scepti-  
cism.**

3. Various terms have been here introduced : such as unbeliever, disbeliever, doubter, and sceptic. These bear their shades of meaning, which it is important to remember and discriminate in all discussions on this subject. It is well known that in the New Testament there is everywhere a clear and broad distinction between two classes : believers and unbelievers. But it is not implied that the state of unbelief is that in which nothing is believed : on the contrary, **UNBELIEF** is **DISBELIEF** and disbelief is the belief of the opposite of that which faith holds. Not that no room is left for a neutral state, that in which men muse in their hearts and remain suspended in doubt. **DOUBT** hesitates between two contradictory conclusions. It may have some degree of belief, checked by a consciousness of ignorance : in this case it is provisional, waiting for more light, and the New Testament gives several instances of this as worthy to be reasoned with. It may be definitive, and is then **SCEPTICISM**, or the surrender of the mind to a conviction of the impossibility of certainty, with a tranquil complacency in such a state. But as scepticism believes that truth cannot be found, it is itself faith in necessary ignorance, unbelief of that about which it doubts, and therefore really disbelief. Hence the bad sense which is generally attached to the word in Christian Evidences.

4. Let it be further observed that these credentials have no reference to those branches of evidences that concern the volume externally viewed : they come from the heart of Revelation as it is one great communication in Christ ; and the question of the authenticity and authority of the several parts of the Holy Scriptures must be postponed. It must be remembered also that the Apologetics of the Christian Faith accompany the several doctrines ; every article of the creed requires its own defence ; and therefore the evidences of Christianity must needs be distributed over the whole course of our dogmatic system. Again, they allow opportunity for the fair consideration of everything that can be said for or against Christianity as such, without descending, however, to innumerable subordinate questions, which have no importance in themselves. Once more, the exhibition of these credentials in all their grandeur will simplify the later evidences as to the several doctrines of the Bible, and at the same time lend those evidences their own force. Finally, this arrangement enables us to do justice to the cumulative character of the argument : it is not merely an accumulation of all that may be said on the subject, but such an orderly presentation as will make every argument, whether more or less important, both give and receive strength through its connection with the rest.

Credentials and Evidences

THE RESPONSE TO THE RELIGIOUS EXPECTATION OF MANKIND.

Christianity, or the perfect Divine Revelation, presents itself as the answer to a universal demand. It explains while it appeals to the innate craving of the human mind to know God, or its sentiment of religion, and accounts for the general expectation of the Race, as expressed in its traditional Religions : appealing to them by what they contain of truth, and by what they contain of falsehood. It comes with these credentials ; and, moreover, pleads as being the perfect utterance of a Revelation which has been among men from the beginning, and, therefore, as the response to an expectation kept alive in the world by its own earlier teachings. Under

Revelation Expected

this first department of credentials must be included all those preliminary considerations which are sometimes reckoned as Presumptive Evidences.

**Presumptive Arguments.**

In systems of Apologetics, or Evidences, presumptive arguments are commonly arranged in a threefold gradation. First, it is shown that a Divine revelation is POSSIBLE, whether as it respects the Giver of it or the recipient. Secondly, the deficiencies of reason within and the failures of human religion without are urged to establish that such a revelation is NECESSARY. Then, thirdly, the conclusion follows that it is PROBABLE: the probability, when the Divine goodness and man's desire are taken into the account, reaching the point which only falls short of moral certainty. Now this chain of propositions may be established: the argument breaks down nowhere. But, for the reasons already given, it seems better to attain the same object by first of all examining the Revelation itself. Instead of arguing over the first proposition, the affirmation of which is contradicted by a certain school of philosophy, we must assume it to be true by appealing to the consciousness of all men, the doubters included. To conduct this argument without taking some revelation for granted is a thing impossible. And it is certain that it is more after the manner of the Bible to set out with the credentials of Revelation itself than to array a number of internal and presumptive evidences in its absence.

THE DESIRE OF THE HUMAN MIND.

**The Sense of God in Humanity.**

Divine revelation appeals to a preparation in the human spirit which it explains and accounts for: first, the instinctive and indestructible sense of dependence on a First Cause; secondly, the consciousness of responsibility to a Supreme Authority; and, thirdly, the union of these in the deep desire to know and have fellowship with the Source and End of life. This three-one fact in human nature revelation challenges; and here is its first credential. The instinct in man and the response from God meet. From the first word of the Scriptures to the last the Voice of the Creator speaks to the still small voice of His creature: the Voice of the All-sufficient answering the cry of dependence, of the Merciful

ful Judge dealing with guilt, and of the Eternal and Invisible conversing as Man with humanity. In the Bible, as completed by Christianity, there is not a possible question of human nature to which a response is not given. The positive strength of this plea will be considered when we come to establish the existence of God. Meanwhile, it may be necessary here to obviate two opposite objections which may be urged against this most mighty presumptive argument.

1. Atheistic philosophy of every order is content to assert that the sentiment in human nature is one of the fruits of its own imagination, begotten of fear or hope; and that it has invented a revelation to satisfy the demands of its own delusion: the imaginary revelation from heaven being, like heaven itself, its most consummate delusion. With such theories of the soul it is vain to argue: at least, they do not enter into the present discussion. Save, indeed, so far as they sometimes undertake to deny that what we may term this instinct is really universal in the constitution of man. This is simply an appeal to experience and induction. No race of humanity has ever been found which does not contradict this denial. Among the very lowest tribes there are traces of a certain sense of dependence on another world: the degraded feeling which looks with awe at some fetish symbol of the unknown is the same tribute at the one pole as the philosophical speculation of Agnosticism is at the opposite pole, to a sense in man of the Infinite. The finite instinct for the Infinite, which is faith, undergoes in them the same degradation which all their other mental and spiritual faculties have undergone: no more, no less. But of this more will be said hereafter.

Atheistic  
Explanation.

2. Deism has another and very different kind of counter-argument. It sometimes insists that these instinctive preparations for the voice of God are themselves the revelation of the Supreme, and that there can be no other: that is to say, a transcendental Deism refuses to allow that there can be any other authenticated revelation of the Infinite to the finite than that which is direct in the consciousness of those who receive it. But it forgets that the very highest religious sentiment in man is only a desire unsatisfied; and that, as every strong and universal instinct has its answer from without, so also must this the strongest and most universal

Deistic.

of all. But it may be denied that there is any longing of the human mind for an external revelation. Many who admit that the irrepressible yearning of the human soul towards the Infinite is an argument for the expectation of a secret revelation of God in the depths of the yearning spirit nevertheless refuse to admit the force of this appeal in favour of a revelation coming from above with all the external appendages that belong to the Christian Faith. It is sufficient to reply that this style of argument ignores the fact that the relation of man to God is such as to demand an external communication as well as an internal. If he were, as he should be, at peace with the Object he seeks, the communion with his Maker might be conducted altogether within. Yet even then not altogether within; for the whole universe around him would be full of symbols, the visible revelation of his Creator. But he is, by the very supposition, estranged from God. The original conditions have ceased to exist; and no argument can be based upon them. The unutterable longing to which Christianity responds is that of a guilty spirit; not only dependent on the Supreme, but trembling before Him. Man looks up to heaven—as his Greek name, *ἄνθρωπος* or *ὁ ἄνω ἄνθρωπος*, testifies; but he looks up to an outward Judge and not within to an interior God; and expects and hopes that the Supreme will appear to him and speak to him by some being, or voice, or token. And this is the germ of all revelation. Moreover, it is undeniable that in every age and in every region men have longed for and believed in an external expression of the Divine mind. In fact, Christianity is but one of many responses to man's groaning unutterable towards God. But this leads to a further stage in our credentials, to which what has been said is only introductory.

#### CORRECTION OF THE RELIGIONS OF MANKIND.

The  
Anticipation  
of  
Mankind.

Religion  
in the  
Race.

As Divine revelation responds to the spirit in man, so it explains and responds to the great Anticipation of the Human Race, as testified by its universal Religions. This also is a most mighty credential, which may be regarded under several aspects.

1. The Christian Religion explains the religiousness of mankind, and pays respect to the forms in which this has been

expressed. St. Paul, the amplest expositor of Natural Theology, preaches in the Acts, and teaches in the Epistle to the Romans, that the whole world has always been under a Divine education: drawn by God's works of creation to contemplate His power, and by the benefits of His providence to consider His goodness, in order that it might thus be prepared for a third revelation which should display both His power and His goodness in redemption. The Apostle, as the leading representative of this argument, professes only to DECARE or preach,—καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν—the UNKNOWN GOD Whom all the world had been ever consciously or unconsciously seeking: that world which is, as Tertullian said of the human spirit, naturaliter Christianus. He makes God Himself, in a certain sense, the universal *Teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity*, διδάσκαλος ἐθνῶν; and heathenism, like the law, a schoolmaster unto Christ. In other words, this representative of Christianity traces all forms of religious faith and practice among the nations to a yearning for revelation from heaven. And he in fact gives us the argument we now use: the strong presumption from the Consensus Gentium, the consent of all the world, in favour of a communication from God to mankind. For, Christianity, which is revelation made perfect, or rather the only true revelation, appeals to the anticipation it explains. Tracing to their ultimate cause both the truth and the error, it makes both subservient to its own credentials. It must be remembered that the New Testament is in this the successor and continuator of the Old. The whole Bible appeals from beginning to end, that is since the time that external religion began, to the common, tribal or national, instinct of the peoples of the earth. This argument we shall hereafter use in demonstration of the existence of a Divine Source of all things: namely, the very fact that the Bible regards it as already a secret thought, ready to be revealed, in the hearts of all men. Our present argument supposes that the being of God is admitted. And its strength is this, that that God has in every age been training the nations for a full disclosure of Himself. As it is written: *He correcteth the Gentiles*; or places them under discipline.

Acts xviii.  
23.

1 Tim. ii.  
7.

Ps. xciv.  
10.

2. All this has taken for granted that the forms of religion always existing in heathenism have possessed certain elements of

Elements  
of Truth



truth. Otherwise they would be worthless as evidence of a universal aspiration towards communion with heaven. Whatever strong assertions we may find in the Old and New Testaments of the doctrinal errors and moral abominations of heathenism, we discern everywhere an acknowledgment of something good lying at their root, of which they are only the perversions. Much truth is tacitly recognised in the sacred traditions of mankind, however waning and ready to perish : that is to say, much truth dispersed among them and variously represented, though no one system may be said to exhibit even the perversions of all truths. Perhaps almost all the great tribal or national expressions of the feeling after the Infinite have more or less paid their tribute to the unity and supremacy of the One Unknown God, with a dim perception of a plurality in that unity ; to the existence of intelligences higher than man, as it were between God and man, this notion being disguised in a thousand ways, from Polytheism down to the personification of all the forces of nature ; to the degradation of man himself through a fall, and the universality of sin as personal guilt and liability to punishment ; to a mysterious Deliverer desired of the nations ; to the sense of the necessity and acceptableness of worship by sacrifice ; in the ethical domain to the rights of the Right and the goodness of the Good ; to the inextinguishable hope of immortality, more distorted perhaps than almost any other truth. Now it is a credential of the Christian revelation that it acknowledges all this ; or rather that all this is true. Professing to be the supreme, the only direct, communication from God to man, it points to a universal consent among the nations that some such revelation was expected and was needed.

**Errors.**

3. But this leads to the further argument, that Christianity explains and corrects these errors while it confirms the truth underlying them all. It comes as the correction of every delusion into which it declares the Eternal had permitted the world to fall as the consequence of its resistance of His Spirit. It teaches the true doctrine concerning God, sweeping away the pantheism, the polytheism, the atheism of the nations ; it amends the doctrine of sin, by connecting it with redemption ; it substitutes the true Divine-human Sacrifice, its expiation cleansing the heathen temple, its gift of the Spirit supplying the need of the heathen philo-

**Rom. i.28.**

sophical schools; it reforms the whole economy of worship, by revealing a Mediator; it supplies the defects and reproves the corruptions of the world's ethical systems; and it brightens and simplifies its doctrine of the future state.

4. Such are the credentials of the Christian revelation: such are its claims to be heard. No further plea is at present urged than this. No other system, among the many candidates for acceptance, has ever made such pretensions as these. No ancient creed or religion, however missionary in its spirit, ever professed to come from God with the explanation and sure guidance of the world's spiritual desires. Christianity alone explains heathenism, with a solution at once gentle and stern. And it alone brings in the time of a universal reformation. This is, however, laid down only as its credential: as such it has all the force, although no more than the force, of a preliminary demand for profound respect and solemn attention to its appeals.

**Summary**

5. Objections to this credential, as such, and limited strictly to the present stage of the argument, may be noticed at once and disarmed in a few sentences. It will be said by the Atheist, or the Antitheist, that Christianity, in common with every other form of the religious sentiment among men, is no more than an invention of the human mind—or that subtle action of matter which is called the mind—and the most beautiful, though not always the most beautiful, evolution in man of those strange phenomena which in the lower orders of creation make man himself their object. All the history of religion, in every part of the world, and among all the tribes of mankind, is only the record of the evolution of something in man that has no name, no object, and apparently no meaning. We are not at present concerned with the Atheist; and may postpone further reference to this subject. Meanwhile, there is another form of the objection which cannot be thus summarily dismissed.

**Objections.**

(1.) It appears to many students of what may be called Comparative Theology that the existence of so many other religions, containing so many noble and uncontested truths, is a bar to the acceptance of Christianity as the one definitive revelation of God. They deny the distinction between natural religion and supernatural, between natural theology and revealed. They assert that

**Distinction Denied.**

all the faiths or mythologies of mankind are natural or supernatural alike, according as these words are understood. All are supernatural, in the sense that the Creator has lodged in the spirit of man a faculty for the Infinite, which has developed in a few great historical religions; just as the Creator gave man a supernatural endowment of language, which has been developed into a few great families of speech. All are natural, in the sense that all have their natural pedigree, and may be traced through the various nationalities as, equally with language and perhaps more than language, the foundation of race distinctions. Hence, the Science of Religion distinguishes in various ways the religions of mankind. There are the religions which should be traced to individual founders: such as Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tse, Christ, and Mohammed. And there are those which are national, and have never been connected with human names: the religions of the ancient Brahmins, the Greeks, Romans, Teutons, Slavs, and Celts. Again, we have the Faiths which have Sacred Books, and those which are without them: of the former eight being reckoned, Brahmanism and Buddhism among the Hindus; Zoroastrianism among the Persians; among the Hebrews, Mosaism and Christianity; among the Arabs, Mohammedanism; among the Chinese, Confucianism and the religion of Lao-tse. These distinctions rise at last into the division of two or three great families. First, the Aryan, subdivided into the Brahmanism of the Veda, Buddhism which sprang from it and revolted against it, and Zoroastrianism, which departed from the ancient Vedic faith. Secondly, the Semitic, with its Old and New Testament religions, the latter transferred, however, into Aryan soil; and Mohammedanism. These have played the most distinguished part in the history of the world hitherto; but a third must be added, the Turanian, to which the branches of Chinese religion belong. The argument deduced from the study of Comparative Theology is simply this: that there is not one religion which is of Divine right, and must needs be separated from all the rest. In plain words, whatever other distinctions there are—between Monotheistic and Polytheistic, Documentary and Traditional, Cultivated and Fetish—the distinction between true and false religions is not to be allowed

There is no final, definitive, supreme religion for mankind, any more than there is one universal language for mankind. This science, which is comparatively new, makes a fair show of zeal for all religions; and, indeed, most triumphantly vindicates the truth, depth, and universality of the Godward tendency in our nature. But this is at the expense of Christianity, however seemingly on its side. In fact, it takes away all the strength of the credential now under consideration, so far as it concerns Christianity, while leaving it in its full force so far as it concerns revelation generally, or the religion of nature. What then is to be said in defence of our argument?

(2.) First, and foremost, the Science of Religions pays too much honour to the Faiths of the World when it brings Christianity into conjunction or comparison with them. After allowing all that the catholic Apostle asserts as to the religiousness of mankind—our argument has done justice to that—we must not forget his dark testimony against the outward forms of that religiousness. *The world by wisdom knew not God.* Comparative Theology collects a number of sublime sayings about God to which Hindoo devotion gave birth; but it is undeniable that the system of Brahmanism was at almost all points a gigantic parody on the religion of supernatural revelation. Attempt after attempt from age to age was made to reform it; but its greatest reformation, that of Buddhism,—now one of the most extensively held faiths in the world—was and is in reality a religion without a God: the vastest waste of Atheism that has ever been known. Christianity is not one of the religions of the world: responding, like others, to the common instinct, only in bolder and sublimer terms. Once more, Christianity is not what the Science of Religions makes it: an offshoot from Mosaism, and an improvement on it, as Buddhism rose out of the old Vedic faith and put away its old gods. It is the one only religion that the world has ever received directly from heaven. In its present form, and with its present name, it originated in the midst of Judaism, at a certain epoch, and struggled for and won its ascendancy much after the manner of other religions. But Christianity as Divine Revelation is only the consummate form of a truth, or a system of truths, that has been in the world from the beginning of human history.

Chris-  
tianity  
and other  
Religions

1Cor. i. 21

But this will introduce another very important aspect of our credentials.

The Per-  
fecting of  
Revela-  
tion.

#### CHRISTIANITY THE PERFECTING OF FORMER REVELATIONS.

It is a continuation of the same argument to say that Christianity is itself an explanation of the preparatory disclosures of revealed truth, and the consummation of them all.

From the  
Beginning

1. This is, in fact, the crowning presumptive argument in its favour, that it is the end and completion of a revelation that has been going on from the beginning. It is not a religion that literally began in Judæa with the advent of Jesus. It does not profess to be the first supernatural communication to mankind: it is not the opening of the heavens for the first time. It finishes a testimony that began with the fall of man: in the best sense, it is therefore as old as the Creation. This last sentence has been made the watchword of English Infidelity: as if its being coeval with the human race were a disproof of its Divine original. But this is in fact its glory. It is the last accent of a Voice which spoke first at the gate of Paradise. That voice was the Primitive Revelation from the perversions of which all the innumerable forms of mythology arose. But that Voice awakened the desire of the human race to which all revelation has been a response, and has constantly deepened that desire whilst it responded to it. But only in a peculiar line, and within a limited area. On either side of that line, and beyond that area, men groped after the lost Creator and the forfeited Paradise in their own way: being dealt with both in justice and in mercy. The mercy of the Supreme has in every age guided the instincts of all the sincere. St. Peter is as catholic as St. Paul on this subject. Discerning in Cornelius the best religion of the Gentiles, he said: *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.* But justice abandoned the races as such to the consequences of their own perverseness: *because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* Thus the two Apostles agree: as to individuals the sincere have been guided towards an

Acts x.  
34, 35.

Rom. i 21.

unknown Saviour; as to the races the just Providence of God dealt with them according to their inventions. Meanwhile, there has been in every age a clear, distinct, though not voluminous announcement of the will of God, delivered to a chosen and faithful people. And the peculiarity of these preliminary revelations has been this, that every word has at once satisfied human aspiration and kindled it to higher desire. Christianity is the final answer to a continuous expectation kept up from age to age. It is the response to what may be called a third form of the great anticipation: besides the instinct in every human spirit, and in the human race as such, man has had, though all men have not had, an express testimony of the Mind of the Supreme, leading human hope onward to the perfect revelation of Christ. Christianity comes as the perfecting of its earlier Self: the final and sufficient response to the expectation it had kept up from the beginning. This is its supreme preparatory credential. It is the last of many words, and leaves nothing more to be desired in the present estate of mankind.

2. The force of this credential will be felt only by those who Mysteries already accept, or are disposed to accept, the revelation of Jesus. The more it is pondered the more satisfactory will it seem to all who take a large view of the dealings of Providence with man. There are, of course, unsearchable mysteries in the subject: mysteries so perplexing that they have driven some speculatists to the renunciation of a God. To those who do believe in God the gradual education of a world free and responsible is a thought to be accepted and reposed in. It is more tolerable at least than other thoughts which would displace it. It is more in harmony with every high conception of the Supreme to suppose that He has in every age been communicating His will with more and more clearness to mankind, having always in view a final and full disclosure, than to suppose that He planted a religious germ in man's heart which has been always developing with infinite variety in every variety of soils, no provision whatever being made for the survival of the best, without indeed allowing that there is or that there can be any best.

(1.) But the objection may be urged that it is below the dignity of a Divine revelation to keep the world so long in suspense. In Delay  
of Reve-  
lation.

answer to this we can only refer to the analogy of all the other dealings of God which come within our cognisance. The earth as man's abode, the history of all the creatures that it inherit, especially the progress of everything pertaining to its chief inhabitant, has been under a law of secular and slow evolution. Supposing the entire economy of things to be under the government of one Supreme Mind—that is to say, supposing the God of revelation to be the Author of nature—there can be, or there ought to be, no difficulties in the way of considering at least the claims of a revelation which professes to describe the methods of a gradual education of the human race. To the Theistic advocates of development this ought to be a strong recommendation of the Holy Scriptures, and of their final solution of all mysteries in Christianity. With its Materialistic or Positivist advocates of course we have nothing to do: there are no credentials which appeal to them. They must give up their delusion of Nescience or unintelligent and meaningless Law, and first be reconciled to a Personal Author of all things, before the Christian Revelation even looks their way. But those who admit that the laying of the material foundations of the superstructure of intelligent life required incalculable ages ought not to shrink from the preliminary announcement that God has at sundry times and in divers manners spoken to the human race, and finally consummated all His words in His Son.

Part of an  
Unlimited  
Scheme.

(2.) If, once more, it be pointed out—as it constantly is—that what professes to be the last revelation is after all only a partial response to the deep questions of mankind, this may be granted as a fact, but it is robbed of its force as an argument by the suggestion that even Christianity is only part of a scheme, understood only by the Infinite Mind, the first elements of which alone are brought within the range of our faculties. It will be shown hereafter that there is not a solitary question of the human spirit, on the answer to which its present peace and its probation for eternal happiness depend, which the Holy Oracles do not satisfy. More than that we have no right to expect. Had the revelation of Jesus professed to leave no mystery unexplained, that would have been a stronger plea against its Divinity than infidelity has ever yet been able to find.

SUMMARY.

The cumulative strength of these pleas, the line of which only **Summary.** has been indicated, is or should be irresistible. They have immense force as a moral demonstration of the claims of Christianity to be heard and weighed with the most profound solemnity. Not to listen to Christ is to be self-condemned. His words are the only response to the universal anticipation of the human race: as existing in the very constitution of the mind, as testified by the consent of nations, and as kept alive from the beginning by supernatural and gradual disclosures of the Divine will. Either God has thus finally spoken, or there is no God, and man is the incomprehensible creation of chance and the sport of the chance that created him.

THE EXHIBITION OF GOD AND OF HIS ATTRIBUTES IN  
REVELATION.

Another class of the credentials of revelation is found in its exhibition of the Divine attributes, displayed in the tokens of the presence of God generally, and particularly in the supernatural order of miracles, prophecy, and inspiration as including both, which everywhere reigns. These are not so much notes and qualities of revelation as the fabric of the revelation itself; and have always been, whether separately or combined, the strong enforcement of its claims upon attention and acceptance.

Divine  
Attributes  
in Reve-  
lation.

REVELATION SUPERNATURAL.

God is a Personal Presence in the whole economy of revealed truth. But He is not present in the same sense as that in which He is immanent in the world: revelation is, has ever been and must ever be, a supernatural order, blending with the natural, and moving on harmoniously with it in general, whilst exhibiting most essential differences. But here it is necessary to define terms, or rather to remind ourselves of their conventional relations.

The  
Super-  
natural  
Order.



Super-  
natural in  
Nature.

1. There is a sense in which the natural order of things—that is, the constitution of nature as governed by certain fixed physical and metaphysical laws—must always be touched if not pervaded by the supernatural, that is, by what is not matter of our constant experience. The invisible world, and all interventions from the spiritual world, are supernatural. Hence it follows that the introduction of man into this system of things was a supernatural intervention; and all revelations of the unseen in the constitution of his nature are supernatural; and all evidences of the presence and glory of God in the universe as seen by man are supernatural.

Miracle,  
Prophecy,  
Inspira-  
tion.

2. This then being granted, there is a sense also in which the great economy to which the Bible bears witness is in a pre-eminent sense supernatural. From beginning to end—that is, from the first intimation of a coming Redeemer to His final manifestation with final and eternal truth upon His lips—all has been beyond and above the nature of man's ordinary experience. All has been one vast and never-ceasing demonstration of God moving among men and supernaturally operating in human affairs. His wonderful works pervade the whole, though only on occasions bursting into what we call Miracle. They have displayed His presence in His own immediate acts, or in acts above nature performed by the instrumentality of His creatures. They have displayed His one design in the communication of knowledge concerning it to His ministers in Prophecy. They have displayed His wisdom in the preservation, through men raised up to be objects of Inspiration, of the continuous record of His revealed economy of salvation. Thus the laws of the supernatural operation have been threefold. MIRACLE is the intervention of the Supreme Power in the established course of nature. The Creator put all things under the control of general law, but *it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under it*. His personal authority is not a violation of law, nor a suspension of it, but the introduction of a new and sufficient cause of any effect He would produce. PROPHECY is the intervention of the supreme knowledge, imparted to man independently of the ordinary laws of knowing: whether for the purpose of uttering new truth, or of foretelling what, to all but God, is contingent in the future. INSPIRATION is that supernatural intervention of the Divine

1 Cor. xv.  
27.

wisdom by which the miracle of prophecy is made permanent in the organic unity of Scripture. Now these are all of the essence of revelation: they combine in every part of it. The Scriptures, or Revelation, or the Christian faith—these three are one—have exhibited one vast and permanent miracle, one great prophecy ever in course of fulfilment, and one great result of inspiration.

3. These three may be regarded as one great continuous Miracle, and one great body of credentials commending to us the Scriptures of revelation. But these credentials for faith must have their own evidences for reason. As they belong to the supernatural order they must be received by faith. They imply, indeed they assert, the being of God, and His intervention for objects, and in a manner, before which reason sinks confounded. But as facts recorded and humanly attested, they must be received on evidence which is trustworthy and amenable to the tests of trustworthiness. These two must combine; just as in all things pertaining to religion, faith and reason must unite: being reconciled when they differ, and blended into the harmony of certitude. In examining these several evidences of God in revelation each must be viewed as distinct. But, in considering them as credentials of one great scheme professedly the revelation of a God Whose existence is admitted, we are not under the necessity of examining at length the question which touches their abstract possibility in a philosophical point of view. We regard them as the internal demonstrations of Scripture, and have only to ask what their force and meaning are as credentials, and to prove that no condition of such credentials is wanting.

One  
Threefold  
Miracle.

#### THE CREDENTIAL OF MIRACLES.

Miracles

There are many and distinct terms used in Scripture to signify what we call miracles. They are called generally the *ἔργα*, or WORKS of God; sometimes these works are referred to as acts of the Divine power that effects them, and they are then MIRACLES or *δυνάμεις*; sometimes the purpose for which they are wrought is made emphatic in their designation, and they are SIGNS or *σημεία*. A third term, *τέρατα*, is occasionally connected with

these ; but, as it merely refers to the immediate effect produced on the minds of beholders, it has no theological importance. All that requires to be said as to the credentials of Miracle may be referred to these two words respectively.

**Works  
of God.**

**WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD.**

The former, the highest expression of which is in the Pentecostal word, *The wonderful works of God*, pervades the whole Scripture, which clearly distinguishes between the ordinary operations of Providence and these extraordinary tokens of the Divine presence. It makes miracle the special intervention of omnipotence : in this sense also there is no power but of God. Revelation shows us the Maker of the laws of the universe, which we understand only as the invariable sequence of cause and effect, introducing when He pleases a new cause : not violating His own laws, or suppressing, or arresting them ; not using the operation of more extensive laws than those known to exist, but simply bringing in new causes of new effects when He sees fit. Faith recognises the FINGER OF GOD ; and reason, admitting the existence of a Supreme Cause, assents to this. Its definition of Miracle is an act of the immediate power of God intervening in the connection of natural causes and effects. It does not argue with those who deny to the God of nature this power and freedom to use it. The preliminary objection against the possibility of miracle, and the value of any amount of evidence that might seek to establish its credibility, can never be met by any other argument than this first term. It is well that the Apologist of revelation should take a high stand here. If there is a Personal God, there can be no a priori reason why He should not interfere with His own laws. No continuity and unbroken order of sequence in cause and effect can be made an argument against the possibility of its being disturbed. The last word of philosophy on the subject is that our faith in the stability of nature is a primary law of human thought, as certainly bound up in our mental constitution as our consciousness of personal identity. Now we have an equally firm faith operating as a primary law of thought that an omnipotent Being can, if He

Ex. viii.  
19.  
Luke xi.  
20.

Acts ii. 11.

will, put forth His Finger and regulate in a new way laws the general order of which He does not violate. On this conviction rests all the evidence that miracles need as they are manifestations of a Divine presence.

SIGNS.

Signs.

The second term, *σημείον*, *τὸν*, theologically and in our present connection the more important, is never wanting in Scripture, though used with a more limited application. It indicates that God declares Himself present in certain particular miracles, and challenges attention to His own words or the words of His messenger thus authenticated. Now, revelation has not at its great epochs been without this credential. While the Wonderful Works are literally never absent in revelation,—always in course of procedure, open or secret, known or unknown, in miracles of nature and in miracles of grace, during the ages while the Volume was constructed and since it has been finished, for ever and ever throughout the whole economy of salvation,—the Signs have been occasionally given at certain great and important epochs, and in confirmation, both to believers and unbelievers, of messages from heaven. It is needless to ask whether it might have been otherwise: in His wisdom God has seen fit to accompany all supernatural communications by signs and infallible tokens. But, though needless, it is not unprofitable to consider how absolutely necessary such signs and tokens must be to authenticate tidings so amazing as those which the Scripture brings. Here a few distinctions may be useful.

1. The grandest miracles which are the credentials of revelation are in the substance of the revelation itself. Very many of the extraordinary interpositions it records are not bound up with the nature and purpose of the economy of God's redeeming will, but have been miraculous attestations of individual missions. When, however, we rise from its appendages, circumstances, and preliminaries to the Great Redemption itself, the case is different. Christ the Author of Christianity and its Substance and its End is the supreme Miracle, and everything connected with Him is miraculous. As soon as we come within the sphere of His sacred presence the definition of miracle

Miracle the substance of Revelation.

becomes enlarged: it is then an immediate act of Divine omnipotence which has its necessity, its reality, and its exhibition in the redeeming economy. To the central or final congregation of wonders in Him those of the Old Testament looked forward, and with them the great series virtually ended. The advent of Christ was a miracle; of which the entire history of His words and works, of His life and death, of His resurrection and ascension, is a continuation. Hence it is obvious that with regard to the Christian system as a whole miracle is essential to its demonstration. For without miracle there is no Christian revelation.

Miracles  
necessary

2. But, descending from this high level, we may confidently assert that the authentication of the human agents of the Divine will required such attestations from heaven as we call miracles. It may be going too far to say that the common instinct of mankind expects that if God sends a messenger He will excite attention by signs preceding and confirm His word by signs following. No founder of a human religion has ever failed to appeal to this general expectation. Confucius and Buddha and Mohammed are sometimes said to have been exceptions; but they were exceptions only to this extent, that they did not profess themselves to work miracles. Buddha was a strange anomaly in every respect. He appeared only as a reformer of an old religion, and did not found, or rather did not claim to found, a religion of his own. In other words, he needed no credentials, for he did not profess to come from God. Confucius brought no revelation: his honest task and his honest work was to revive and classify and perfect the religious literature of his people. Mohammed pretended to no power of working miracles: wisely declining to come into competition with the true prophets of God whose revelations he appropriated and perverted. But he did bring, or assume to bring, a new revelation; and accordingly he made his appeal to miraculous messages and communications which were in the place of the miracles he could not perform. But, apart from the question of universal expectation,—which is of some importance, though not decisive,—we find that from beginning to end the Author of revelation is represented as taking this expectation into account, and as always investing His ambassadors and heralds with the credentials of miracle. The

importance of these signs by which the Divine Being has authenticated the beginnings at least of every new economy of truth is sometimes undervalued. It is said to be more in harmony with heavenly decorum to communicate truth directly to the human mind; and more consistent with the dignity of truth itself that it should depend on its own intrinsic adaptation and fitness. But they who reason thus are needlessly jealous of the Divine prerogative and of human dignity. He who knows what is in man has never offered a revelation to the race without such signs and wonders as were sufficient to establish it in the world, leaving those inexcusable who should refuse to believe.

3. This leads to the nature of the credential itself, or the value of the miracle as it is a sign. Generally, and taking revelation as a whole, it appeals to the body of evidence that God has interposed in human affairs, in a manner transcendently extraordinary, as its plenary and abiding demonstration. That is to say, in few words, the Christian Faith rests its strong claim on this among other things, that there is a series of wonderful works and supernatural acts behind it, around it, and encompassing it, which no sincere and candid mind ought to be able to resist. More particularly, every messenger, the Supreme Messenger not excepted, coming with professed revelation from above, has invariably been authenticated by miraculous endowments which God Himself has deemed necessary and sufficient to vindicate His servants' mission. Lastly, the miracles which satisfied the generation receiving these credentials are, as will be hereafter seen, committed to the documents which hand down the truths they taught; and the miracles and the documents together with those truths become matter of historical testimony.

Value

4. Finally, it is obvious that the value of miracles as such, and apart from all other credentials, is to be found mainly in the authentication of the messengers to their own contemporaries. Their immediate effect on those who behold them is expressed by Nicodemus: *Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him*. Then follows profound attention to the messenger and the message. The Sign precedes the teaching. But to after generations there is a certain change. They have the message, and its

To the  
Same Ge-  
neration.

John iii. 2

full force as truth, before they consider the miraculous attestation. We in our day include the original miracles with all other branches of evidence which are to be received on trustworthy testimony such as no lapse of ages can invalidate. But this leads to a consideration of that testimony itself, or what may be called the credentials of this Credential.

**Tests.****EVIDENCES AND TESTS OF MIRACLE.**

The entire question of the trustworthiness of the testimony to the miraculous facts of revelation may be resolved into a statement of the criteria or tests to which these supposed facts may fairly be subjected.

**Worthy  
objects.**

1. Such Divine interventions must authenticate missions worthy of God. And it requires no argument to prove that the miracles to which the Christian revelation appeals have a cause behind them of supreme value. As a whole—from the miraculous attributes of the trees in the garden down to the ascension of the Incarnate Son of God and the Pentecostal opening of the heavens—they sustain the grand fabric of the Divine education of redeemed mankind. Here we must divert our attention from many isolated wonderful works and think only of the One Work of God upon earth. But, descending to particulars, and sending a general glance backward through all the economies, we see that the great assemblages of miracles were wrought at crises pregnant with importance to the Great Cause in the Old Testament. The ante-Mosaic miracles were authentications, not of God's messengers only, but of His own dread Name and attributes. At the introduction of the Mosaic institute there was reason for the glorious manifestations of the Divine power, rebuking the long-endured perverseness of Egypt, authenticating the Lawgiver so slowly accepted by His own people, proving the Divinity of what we call the Mosaic economy, and confirming that proof by signs following down to the miraculous entrance into Canaan. While the Theocracy lasted, every recorded wonder attested at the critical hour that Jehovah reigned. The miracles which cluster around the persons of Elijah and Elisha asserted His supremacy when the cause of God was at stake in the chosen

land. And, finally, after long comparative cessation, there was a great, and, in some respects, unexampled renewal of miracles to rescue the sinking faith of the people during their captivity. It scarcely needs to be pointed out that the New Testament yields the same analysis. The prolonged miracle of the Divine Person, Whose deep humiliation for mankind rendered necessary the vindication of His Godhead, stands out from all wonders of the Bible as one continuous Virtue from His Divine-human presence. The Resurrection, with its infallible signs, completed the education of the Apostles' faith, and laid the corner-stone of all evidences for ever. The miracles of the Acts are exhibited only on critical occasions, but always then: witness the minor renewals of Pentecost for the conversion of the Gentiles, for Samaria, and for the relicts of the Baptist's ministry; lessening, as it were, through these several phases, according to the importance of the occasion. Not always however were they lessened. The resurrection-miracles of St. Peter and St. Paul followed hard on the Saviour's highest acts: to demonstrate by the hand of two or three witnesses, after His rising, the fact of the victory over death which He had demonstrated most effectually by His rising itself. The abundance of St. Paul's miraculous gifts were *the signs of an Apostle* which his peculiar vocation demanded. And, finally, the miracles wrought in the early churches were enough and no more than enough to attest the reality of the Pentecost; being, so to speak, the same kind of confirmations of that great day as the few resurrections of the Acts were confirmations of that other day of the Resurrection proper. It must be remembered, however, that in conclusion the Supreme has not absolutely restricted His wonderful works to the great eras of revelation: the power of God, like the word of God, is not bound. We discern a certain law of miracles which seems to limit them to great epochs; but there is nothing in it which requires us to limit the Holy One, or to render it impossible that miraculous interventions have occurred since the full establishment of the organic Church in the world. Moreover, the occasional instances in which the wonders, or *répara*, have been wrought by the permitted agency of wicked men are so referred to in Scripture as to strengthen this credential of revelation. As Balaam in the Old Testament and Caiaphas in the New delivered

2 Cor. xii.  
12.



Acts xiii.

11.

Worthy  
Lessons.

2 Kings

vi. 6.

Josh. x.

13.

sublime predictions, so the magicians in the Old Testament wrought supernatural wonders under a Divine restraint; and Antichrist, to come with his lying wonders, is predicted in the New. But the true workers of miracles in the Scripture are its holiest men; and one of its closing records is the miracle that vindicates the sanctity of miraculous power upon Elymas.

2. It may be demanded that these wonders of the Finger of God should generally teach worthy lessons, besides asserting the power of God in the supernatural order of the world: in other words that they should be essential constituents of revelation itself, as well as being its credentials. We must not, indeed, presume to judge what in every case is the worthiness of the lesson taught: some miracles may seem too trivial, such as the recovery of the axe, others too stupendously great, such as the sun's standing still, for acceptance. With this reservation, it cannot be denied that the wonders of Scripture are most confessedly worthy of the cause they support. In all cases they pay respect to the very laws that they seem to supersede. They themselves effectually teach the lessons of the Divine will and illustrate the Divine perfections. Not a miracle in the whole Bible fails to demonstrate either the power or the fidelity, or the wisdom, or the justice, or the mercy of God. They are never, or very rarely, even liable to be regarded as merely portents. All are faithful to the character of God as otherwise revealed: mingling chastisement with mercy in both Testaments, the benevolence and mercy largely predominating in the New. As it respects the miracles of Christ, the supreme miraculous credentials, they are so ordered from the least to the greatest as to teach symbolically the whole mystery of His grace, and to give illustrations beforehand of the character of His future administration through the Holy Ghost. There are a few of His miracles which have been thought to militate against our canon, and to be merely portentous or evidences of capricious severity: for instance, the consignment of the swine to death, the withering of the fig-tree, and the vehement act of zealotry in the Temple. But, read in the light of the Divine providence in the world, these acts of Jesus will be seen not only to be in harmony with the zealous severity of the Divine justice but to be almost necessary for its illastra-

tion. Seeing that the gentle Redeemer so often predicted the desolation which impenitence would bring upon God's ancient people, it might be expected that some few of His symbolical miracles would confirm His prophecies. And these seemingly exceptional cases, in which He made inanimate and irrational creatures the vicarious symbols of His displeasure, are precisely of that character. But more of this when the character of the Lord Himself becomes our Credential.

3. It may be expected, further, that the miracles which bring the Supernatural Hand into human affairs shall, as credentials, allow of the application of fair criteria in the case of those who witnessed them, and further that they shall be supported by sufficient evidence for posterity.

**Criteria.**

(1.) As to the former, the demand may be as abundantly satisfied as the case admits. Many of the wonders recorded in the Bible are simply matters of record, and their circumstantialia are lost for ever. But these may claim the benefit of being blended with the mass of those which are as it were wrought before our eyes, in the midst of all their surroundings. If the question were of the integrity of Scripture these exceptional instances might be challenged, and must be defended. But for our present argument that is needless: it is enough to assert that the grand miraculous credentials of the two covenants were wrought openly, under the cognizance of men's senses, and amidst such circumstances as forbid the possibility of deception. The miracles which accompanied the advent and legislation of Moses were witnessed by large numbers; and the testimony of the rivals who used their enchantments is in evidence. Of course we have only the record of Scripture itself to guide us; but for our present argument that is enough. We have all the evidence the case allows that the Egyptians as well as the Israelites saw and believed things that were not done in a corner. We have not contemporary documents to which appeal can be made. But the entire history which flowed out of these miraculous interpositions speaks for them. From generation to generation the annals of the nation are full of allusions to what was steadfastly believed from the day of its occurrence. And the whole economy of Hebrew revelations was founded upon that faith. However, it is obvious

**For the extant Age.**

John  
xviii.  
20.

that this question touches the Gospel miracles more particularly. With regard to them our Saviour Himself may be asked for evidence. He admitted that publicity and openness and candid invitation of criticism were to be expected from anyone who claimed to bring a special message from heaven. And what He said as to His words held true of His miracles, which were His acted words: *I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.* Even the Resurrection—the miracle above every miracle—was amenable to the same tests with all others; although in the nature of the case the interior mystery must needs be hidden. It was a supernatural event which men might investigate and be assured of: which indeed would be investigated with the utmost diligence. But it ought to be remembered here that the wisdom of the advocate of Christianity is quietness and confidence in a defensive or negative position. He is not bound to do more than challenge the opponent to prove that with regard to any of the recorded miracles of the Gospels, or of the Old Testament, there is the slightest vestige of evidence that anything was done which could give any ground for suspicion. But this leads to something that is more positive.

Posterity. (2.) As to the latter: we are, as posterity, in a different position, and miracles are matter of historical evidence. There are no events in the past history of the human race, which have become matter of accepted history and are doubted by no sane person, more amply and circumstantially attested than the miraculous life and resurrection from death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: that is, the whole range of the central miracles of Christianity. They were not questioned at the time of their supposed occurrence; at least, the only challenge they underwent was of such a kind as to turn to their advantage. All kinds of spectators watched the more public miracles; and the only disparagement recorded was that of those who ascribed the Lord's works to Beelzebub, and His absence from the sepulchre to the cunning stratagem of His disciples. The resurrection of Jesus was the critical or crucial miracle the establishment of which would assure all the rest. Now that event was guaranteed to many hundreds of persons by many infallible proofs; it was

believed from the time by a large body of conscientious and credible witnesses, whose mental and moral character sustains every test, who, moreover, to the number of hundreds sealed their conviction by an entire consecration of life, and some of them by the sacrifice of life itself. Finally, the great miracles of revelation are connected with posterity by the existence of public monuments which owe their existence to a widespread and profound confidence in their genuineness. In ancient times the Passover attested the national faith in the deliverance from Egypt, and it has continued from generation to generation to declare the strength of the evidence based upon the faith of a whole people. Similarly, the Lord's Day has declared down to the present time the faith of an immense body of witnesses that the Saviour rose from the dead. And, in fact, the Christian Church as an institution vouches, if not for the reality of the miracle of Christ's life and death and resurrection, at least for the satisfaction with which the evidence of it was received from the earliest Christian generations. Supercilious scepticism may affirm that no amount of evidence can ever avail to enforce upon the mind the acceptance of facts which are contrary to the eternal laws of nature. The only reply which, at this stage, we can give is that this is quite true, if no God exists; but that, if a Personal Ruler of the universe is believed in, such supernatural facts are not incredible; and, finally, that these events were witnessed and relied upon by a very large number of trustworthy witnesses who have sent down their evidence signed and attested to posterity.

4. Once more, the dignity of eternal truth demands that it should not lay the main stress of its demonstration on miracles: certainly never on miracles alone. No one in all the records of revelation is represented as having made the validity of his mission depend on his works; though no one, thus authenticated, was ever known to decline producing this credential when challenged. There is no subject connected with the evidences of the Faith that requires more careful statement than this. Exaggeration on both sides is very frequent. Certainly, it might sometimes appear as if everything was staked upon miraculous intervention: for instance, the challenges of Moses and Elijah seem to confirm this notion, as also a few of the minor miracles

Miracles  
never  
alone.

of both Testaments. But it ought to be remembered that the wonderful works wrought in Egypt were not merely the credentials of Moses : they were also and chiefly marks of the Divine displeasure against the false gods of that land, and chastisements of the perverseness of those who refused to obey. The same may be said of the contest on Mount Carmel. The people were bidden to choose between the True God and the false gods before the tokens came from heaven ; and when these came, they took the form of chastisement, as in the case of Egypt. Merely as portents, to astonish the beholders and thus enchain their attention, miracles were never vouchsafed. But at all the great crises of revelation they have been given to enlist and pre-engage the hearers by tokens of Divine goodness and power. In fact, and on the whole, as they are the Hand of God demanding attention to His Voice, the relation of miracles to the doctrine of the Teacher who performs them is always most simply stated and guarded throughout the Scripture. The tokens when rejected are very soon withdrawn :

Mark viii. 12. *There shall no sign be given unto this generation* was not uttered until sign after sign had been rejected. Moreover, it is observable that the performance of miracles becomes very occasional where the Gospel is established ; and that by degrees they are taken up into the number of transitory and exceptional charisms, tokens of the Divine power for *them that believe not*, and instruments of usefulness to those who believed. When it is said that God confirmed the word of His servants *both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost* we must remember that the stress is laid upon the last clause. And our Lord's prediction and promise of the *greater works than these* to be wrought by His Apostles, and of the miraculous tokens to be expected by believers, were not intended to be understood of a permanent authentication of the Gospel by miraculous tokens. But this takes us back to the Supreme Witness Himself, Who has left many testimonies to the true place of miracles among the credentials of His Faith. Nothing is more certain than that He appealed to His works as fulfilment of prophecy, and as proofs of His own Divine power and authority. He also made them the vehicle of teaching His most impressive lessons, and of encouraging His servants' faith in the goodness of His heart. Our Lord also

Mark viii.  
12.

1 Cor. xiv.  
22.

Heb. ii. 4.

John xiv.  
12.

declared that His miracles rendered unbelief inexcusable: *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.* But the works include, if they do not mean, the words: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.* And accordingly His most solemn testimony as to the responsibility of His generation was: *the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day.* Finally, there are two other passages in St. John which will repay careful study. *Though ye believe not Me, believe the works:* this places the works in their due subordination, while giving them their value. Those who ought to believe because of the works, ought rather to have believed because of the virtue that proceeded from Himself. *The works which the Father hath given Me TO FINISH, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me that the Father hath sent Me:* this gives the glorious Gospel, as one whole finished in Christ, its supreme place as the final and consummate evidence of the truth of revelation.

John xv.  
24.

John xv.  
22.

John xii.  
48.

John x.  
38.

John v.  
36.

5. Lastly, there is a criterion or postulate which believers in revelation add to those already considered. The miracles of Scripture, in their wide variety and unbounded grandeur, are the economy of a SUPERNATURAL ORDER. As they must, therefore, be in many respects dimly apprehended by the limited faculties of men, it may be expected that there will be residual difficulties, remaining as the test of faith. Among these difficulties we do not reckon the supposed evidence of modern science in favour of a fixed and unalterable reign of law, any interference with which is in itself not to be conceived. Law implies a Lawgiver, and the Supreme Author of all laws may interpose when and how He will. Moreover, so long as man has the evidence of consciousness that he can control for a season the action of natural laws, the exercise of his own volition being independent of any previous merely natural cause, it will be impossible to persuade him that the Infinite Personal Will cannot interpose amidst the sequences of nature. But there are other difficulties. Such is the occasional want of seeming reason for a supreme intervention; concerning which, however, it is enough to say that we are not fit judges on this question. Again, the undeniable occurrence of prodigies such as witchcraft and necromancy and the performance of wonderful works through the agency of evil spirits, are sometimes

The  
Super-  
natu-  
al  
Order

a stumbling-block to faith: only however to a faith which does not admit, what the Scriptures everywhere testify, that such things as these have been permitted by God for reasons to a great extent incomprehensible to us. Finally, the question of the continuance of miraculous signs since the days of the Apostles presents a topic of difficulty. But the difficulty vanishes if it is honestly admitted that there is no reason why the Supreme should not still manifest His power in endowing His servants occasionally, whether with the gift of prophecy or with the gift of miracle. This granted, the question becomes then simply matter of evidence. All these and other seemingly unsolvable problems become to the believer in the supreme miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection no more and no less than trials of humility and intellectual submission and faith

#### Prophecy.

#### PROPHECY.

PROPHECY, as one of the credentials of revelation, is, like Miracle, bound up with its very fabric. It is the Divine law of the gradual disclosure of that system of truth which is ever expanding throughout the Scriptures from stage to stage unto perfection. As such, the term has two meanings: one wider, according to which it is the immediate declaration of the will of God through His servants, whether as to the past, or the present, or the future; and one more restricted, according to which it is the prediction of future events in connection with the great economy of revealed truth.

#### More General Meaning.

#### PROPHECY MORE GENERAL.

1. Prophecy is the utterance of Divine revelation; and a prophet is one raised up and sent to communicate God's truth. The meaning of **נָבִיא** is an Announcer; and that of **רֹאֶה** is Seer, the earlier name of the same office, or one who receives what he is to utter in visions. The visions were not universally characteristic of the office; but the office itself, and the employment of it throughout the whole economy of revelation, is one of the great credentials of the Bible, as pervasive as the miracle, with

which indeed it is indissolubly bound up, being only *one* aspect of a continuous Divine intervention in human affairs. The prophet was not an ordinary announcer of the will of Heaven, like the priest who might read and expound the law. He was an instrument of the Divine will raised up out of the order of nature, to receive communications which may be called supernatural, being imparted by an influence of the Holy Ghost sometimes called Vision, sometimes the Word of the Lord: for instance, *The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* Whether by exhibiting to the interior eye the scene, or by lodging the word in the thoughts, there can be no doubt that the Author of revelation performed what in another domain would have been a miracle, every time that the *Man of God* or the *Man of the Spirit* was sent forth with his burden of revelation.

2. The essence of this credential of Divine revelation is this, that it represents every communication from God as directly imparted by a Divine afflatus, the influence of which the prophet could not mistake, and the reality of which the people might test. This direct contact of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man is the pervading law and the pervading glory of the Divine revelation from Moses downward. There is nothing resembling it in the history of perverted religions. So far as the oracles, soothsayers, and diviners of heathenism offer any analogy, it is only as a foil to the grandeur of this credential. It is thus spoken of by the voice of Jehovah Himself. When Miriam and Aaron murmured against the superior dignity of Moses as the prophet of the Hebrews, they said: *Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?* and it is recorded that *Jehovah came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle; . . . and He said, Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?* Here we have, as it were, in epitome, the entire mystery of the prophetic gift and function; and in such a manner as to exhibit the strength of this credential most impressively. It is

1 Sam. iii.  
1.

Gen. xx.  
7.  
Hos. ix.  
7.  
Self-Evidencing.

Numb. xii.  
2—8.



- the Voice of Jehovah, jealous of His own honour and of the honour of His servants, at once describing and defending the prophetic law of revelation. We mark that there was to be a permanent order of these agents always ready—whether as a school of the prophets or still abiding in their callings—for the high service of the Kingdom. To one of them Jehovah would reveal Himself whether in a more extraordinary manner or otherwise, in such a way, however, that the receiver of the vision should have no doubt: *I the Lord will make MYSELF known unto him.* Yet the Supreme was not limited to any order of men or to any special method. Hence we find that, while the Seventy Elders received the Spirit and *prophesied and did not cease (or but not further)*, the same Spirit rested also upon Eldad and Medad *and they prophesied in the camp.* Above all minor ministries rises Moses supreme: with him Jehovah spoke face to face. Yet he was not strictly supreme: being only the type and precursor of that Prophet, like unto him yet greater than he, with whom in eternity the Father speaketh face to face: the SON *over His own house.* When this Son came, the ancient order of prophets ceased; for the Supreme Revealer made every one of His Apostles like Moses, and spoke to them face to face. Moses could never communicate the Spirit received by him; for we hear him say: *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them.* But our Lord Himself breathed on His Apostles His own Spirit. And thus the whole sum of revelation is under the sublime law of a direct manifestation of God to His people through His servants. This is the grand and glorious claim of revelation from beginning to end, from Moses to the Greater than Moses.
3. We find everywhere, however, the most careful provision for the vindication of this credential. The interior consciousness of the prophet was the guarantee to himself that the Lord was with him; this however could not be transferred to others, and is no argument to unbelievers who regard the entire mystery of the prophetic function as a delusion. But Jehovah gave His people tests by which they might verify the claims of these prophets. Those whom God sent could appeal to the fact that the honour of Jehovah was their supreme end. What our Saviour said concerning Himself was true of all who had come before Him, and of
- Numb. xii. 6.  
Numb. xi. 25, 26.  
Heb. iii. 6.  
Numb. xi. 29.  
Vindication.

all who should follow Him. *My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory.* This test may be applied to the company of the prophets, and, if applied with candour, will result in the conviction that such a body of men could never have imposed a series of delusions on their own people and on the whole world. But this is not all. These men were fortified by two other qualifications. They were sometimes armed with the power of working miracles, as in the case of Moses and Elijah. Sometimes also their credential was the utterance of prediction: *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.* This, however, leads to that second and more limited meaning of the word which has almost displaced the former.

John vii.  
16—18.

Deut.  
xviii. 22

#### PROPHETIC PREDICTION.

Predic-  
tion.

Prophecy is thus more specifically the impartation of a Divine knowledge of the future to man: that is, it embraces the prediction of future events. All revelation from the beginning has been prediction unfolding into prediction. This, we have seen, is its law; concerning which no more can be said than that the God of revelation has so willed it. We can imagine it otherwise: every generation might have been taught its lesson, as based upon the past, but not including the future. But we are shut up to the assumption that revelation is the progressive disclosure of one great event to which the eyes of all generations, as well before it as after it, were to be directed. Moreover, according to the testimony of Scripture itself the prediction of future events followed by the accomplishment of those predictions has always been one of the Divine methods of authenticating revelation. Here then we have the general laws of prophecy proper, and its criterion as a credential.

#### THE GENERAL LAWS OF PROPHETIC PREDICTION.

Laws of  
Prophecy.

There are a few general principles the study of which are of great importance in order to a right estimate of Scriptural prediction as a distinct and pervasive credential of revelation.

Christ its  
Object.  
Acts x.  
43.

John v.  
39.  
Rev. xix.  
10

Double  
sense.

1. The first is that CHRIST IS ITS SUPREME SUBJECT: the Object to Whom *give all the prophets witness*, directly or indirectly, from generation to generation, till He came; and for Whose return, now that He is gone, all the predictions of Scripture wait. The Redeemer Himself declared that the Scriptures were to be searched because they *testify of Me*: as if whatever else might be found in them this was their supreme matter. *The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy*. His Person, advent, and kingdom give to all the prophecies of Scripture their unity. The great catholic all-embracing predictions which pervade revelation concerning the accomplished redemption of mankind, from the Protevangelium, or first prediction with promise, downward, are everywhere found; each new cycle of the prophetic inspiration pays its tribute to that great design of the coming Deliverer. While no prophet is ever heard to foreannounce his successor, all conspire to foreannounce the Christ. We cannot always see the connection between the lesser predictions and that vast accomplishment; but we do see that the running superscription of prophetic revelation is the final kingdom of the Redeemer. All types, which are prophecies in act, and all predictions, which are prophecies in word, have a more or less obvious reference to the Gospel. To discover this we often have to apply what is called the Canon of a Double Sense; that is, a first accomplishment nearer at hand, which itself suggests a second and ulterior satisfying all requirements: a combination worthy of the Divine attributes, and resembling in the free domain of history the use of symbols in nature; the events to which the predictions first refer being themselves prophetic of Christ. In due time we must examine the predictions of the Old Testament more in detail. Meanwhile, all that is necessary here is to dwell on this law as stamping the credential character of prophecy. There are indeed predictions in the Old Testament—such as those minutely describing the destruction of some of the ancient cities of the world—the accomplishment of which is known and read of all men who study history. They must not be forgotten. But whoever examines the New Testament carefully will see that the whole strain of allusion to the Great Fulfilment of the fulness of time points to the coming and kingdom of Jesus as the one accomplish-

ment that guarantees all the rest. There is nothing more certain in the annals of mankind than that a series of predictions runs through the ancient literature of the Jews which has had a most exact fulfilment in the advent and work of Jesus. This is the supreme credential of prophecy in revelation.

2. Another unfailing evidence of the Divine presence in the prophetic Scripture is the peculiar law of PROGRESSION found to pervade them: a law which determines the steady development of the great doctrine of revelation according to certain fixed principles. Every age is under the sway of some governing prophecy the accomplishment of which introduces the government of a new order of prophetic expectation. The fulfilment of one prediction becomes the starting-point of another, with wider issues and a larger number of subordinate tributaries.

Progression.

(1.) It may be said that one transcendent prophecy begins the Scripture, commands the whole of revelation, and binds time and eternity in one: the first Gospel of a coming Redeemer. But even this illustrates, like all others, that largest application of the principle which divides the whole series into the Old-Testament predictions and those of the New. All the ancient prophets spoke of what Isaiah, in their name, calls the *Last Days*, or the great AFTERWARD, that indefinite period of Jacob's prophecy, בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, which began to be more definite in the opening vision of the evangelical Prophet, *It shall come to pass in the last days*. The coming of that glorious After Age, or the ends of the world, or the world to come, the Fulfilment, is the *fulness of time* generally. Particularly, it is stamped with perfection in the New Testament by three tokens: it is the time of the last days when God spoke His perfect revelation *by His Son*, and imperfect oracles were consummated by one Final Voice; secondly, when He who was *foreordained before the foundation of the world*, and *testified beforehand, was manifest in these last times*, as the spotless Lamb of the Finished Atonement; and, finally, the period of the last days when the prophecy was accomplished, *I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh*. These three events fill up the perfection of the Second Period of redemption: the Voice of the Son, the Atoning Blood, the Effusion of the Spirit. And with Christ, the supreme Fulfilment, begins a new order and range of prophecy.

The One Gospel.

Gen. xlii. 1.

Is. ii. 2.

Gal. iv. 4.

Heb. i. 2

1 Peter i. 11, 20.

Acts ii. 17.

What eternity is to time that His coming in the new economy is to the expectation of Him in the old. In fact, the very same language was adopted by the ancient Rabbins to distinguish these: the time of the Messiah was the WORLD TO COME, עולם הבא.

Subordi-  
nate  
Cycles.

(2.) The same principle may be traced in the subordinate cycles throughout Scripture. The patriarchal predictions, while always faithful to the first law and keeping the Messianic age in view, terminated in Canaan, to begin again with an altogether new order of prophecies. The predictions of the Jewish prophets, so far as they referred to the Captivity, found their accomplishment in that event, the first goal of the largest of all clusters of foreannouncement; but with that accomplishment another series emerged into prominence. Similarly, there are, in the New Testament, subordinate cycles of predictions out of the accomplishment of which other predictions arise. Over the Incarnation there was a large array of prophetic songs, pointing to the Advent but including also its ulterior results. Our Lord's own predictions referred to His death and resurrection and ascension; to the outpouring of His Spirit, the establishment of His kingdom, the destruction of Jerusalem, the final resurrection, and the end of the world: the largest and most comprehensive series of predictions delivered by any one Voice since prophecy began. The same law is latent in the Apocalypse, the last book of prophecy; but here our eyes are holden, and it is not given to those who now read to trace its operation otherwise than in broad outline. The more this general principle is studied, in its application to the entire mass of the predictions of Scripture, the more glorious will appear to all dispassionate students the economy of prophecy which the Omniscient Mind has ordered. Whatever it may be to those who are bent upon resisting all evidences that recommend the Word of God, to those who are OF THE TRUTH this law of foreannouncement will itself be a strong credential of revelation.

Reserve.

3. Once more, and pursuing the same topic a little further, all prophecy is under the law of RESERVE; a mysterious law which has been appointed in the Divine counsel, and has literally never been changed. In its absolute supremacy it governs the development of revelation: this being the difference between time and eternity, that in the latter alone will all restriction be done away.

Neither *What* nor *What manner of time* has ever been fully made clear until the day has declared it. It is evident that this might have been otherwise. The same Spirit Who foreannounced the Coming of the Christ could have so described His Person, so unfolded His work, and so defined the period of His advent, as to remove every vestige of uncertainty. But this was not His will. He so ordered every prediction, and every cycle of predictions, that, while enough was declared to encourage hope and excite desire, enough was concealed to shut up the heirs of prophecy to faith. Looking back upon the long series as irradiated by the light of Pentecost we see that every general and every more particular prediction had its determinate reference to the Great Fulfilment; but we can see also that not one of them was clear enough to preclude unbelief in the case of those who were disposed to murmur against Divine Providence. Every generation could rejoice in the fulfilment of the prophecies that had gone before concerning itself; but as to its own future it was under the sway of an indefinite hope. There is no exception to this law throughout the economy of prophecy. When it was approaching its Old-Testament close, it might appear as if the law was somewhat relaxed; for Daniel's predictions are exceedingly minute, and their specifications of the Seventy Weeks, and of the peculiarity of the last week of the Seventy, goes beyond the general indeterminateness of prophetic utterance; but his prophecies are no real exception, having been until the Messiah came almost as indeterminate as the date of the Millennium. The New Testament introduces the same law, and is everywhere faithful to it. Reserve begins again; and it reigns over the expectations of the Christian church at the present hour. Our Lord's foreannouncements of His passion were veiled in a certain obscurity; and it was not until after His resurrection that even the THIRD DAY was understood. Even when approaching the seventh of the weeks before Pentecost, and giving His disciples their last encouragement, the Saviour says only *Not many days hence*, though we might suppose that the tenth day would be certain to all. As soon as the Holy Ghost begins a new cycle of predictions concerning the coming again of Jesus, with all the subordinate fulfilments of prophecy connected with that event, we mark that we are under the same

1 Peter 1.  
11.

Acts 1. 5.

restrictions as the fathers were under. We have the immeasurable advantage of the accomplishment of the greatest prophecies concerning Him in the First Advent ; but the times and the seasons of the Return are still under a veil. We have, like the ancients, to inquire diligently *what or what manner of time the Spirit of the Christ did signify*. Nor have we a right to expect until the Lord comes a more clear and full revelation of the Millennial events than the fathers had of the Advent of the Redeemer. Now this law of a strict reserve is itself a glorious testimony to the wisdom and goodness of the God of revelation : especially when it is connected with those we have already referred to. For, to sum up, all prophecy points to One Supreme Person, like the needle to the pole, and with only the same tremulous variation ; all proceeds in the majestic march of a determinate counsel, but in spiral cycles ; and over all, including that under which we live, there is the same veil of heavenly mystery. Like every past generation, we also are in the hour of a great Expectation : an hour or a day which is rich with the inheritance of a vast fulfilment, but richer still, if possible, in the hope of a yet more abundant inheritance hereafter when the time of its perfect revelation and enjoyment shall have fully come.

1 Peter i.  
11.  
  
A Sign to  
every Ge-  
neration.

4. Finally, an important law of all prophetic announcements is that it has been constituted by the Holy Spirit a sign to every successive generation : in other words, like the miracle proper, and equally with the miracle, it has been a Divine credential of revelation. In the unlimited wisdom of the Supreme the prophetic office was ordained to subserve many purposes. It was the medium through which the supreme communications were, from time to time, made to the chosen people, of encouragement or warning to themselves, and of defiance and threatening against their enemies. Hence for a long series of ages it was the vehicle of the entire economy of Divine instruction : containing the doctrines and the ethics of the religion common to all dispensations, with a glorious prospective announcement of the Christian truth hereafter to be revealed. Hence the prophetic books, and the prophetic elements in all the other books, are to us an inexhaustible fund of instruction apart from their predictions of future events. But, all this being true, it is equally plain that

the whole system of foreannouncement was intended to be from generation to generation a standing and permanent credential. There is abundant evidence of this in all parts of the Old Testament. *And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the words which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.* Long afterwards we read: *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like Me. Declaring futurity from the former time, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.* To this our Lord gives His own sanction for the New Testament: *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe.*

Deut.  
xviii.  
21, 22.

Isa. xli.  
9, 10.

John xiv.  
29.

#### THE TESTS OF THE PROPHETIC CREDENTIAL.

THE TESTS of prophecy are very simple. They are, strictly speaking, not the moral character of the prophet, nor the worthiness of the matter, nor the preservation of the record, nor obvious connection with the Divine scheme: these are all implied characteristics which have been already dwelt on in another connection. But the prophecies which are the credentials of a revelation ought to be such as to satisfy their student that they can be accounted for only by Omniscience; they should be beyond the suspicion of a mere human fulfilment; and they must of course, in order to be prophecies, precede their accomplishment.

Tests of  
Prophecy

1. It is undeniable that the prediction of future events is the prerogative of Omniscience alone; and also that in the Scriptures God is represented as making it one great purpose in His commission of the prophets to establish clearly this claim. We may suppose therefore that the predictions of Scripture will generally, if not in all individual and isolated cases, have such a character as to be beyond the reach of human calculation. It may safely be granted that in some cases it is impossible to prove the event foreannounced to have been beyond the range of skilful foresight. But it must be remembered that the weight of the argument from prophecy does not rest upon isolated examples: it depends upon certain great and prominent and vast predictions

Possible  
only to  
Omnisci-  
ence.



such as only the Supreme Mind could have given to men, and the accomplishment of which is before our eyes. Beginning with these, and fortified by their undeniable strength, we have only afterwards to stand on the defensive with regard to the rest: nothing is necessary beyond establishing that the opposite conclusion cannot be proved. First, then, let this test be applied to that One Great Object of prophecy to Whom all the prophets bore witness. During a thousand years a perfect picture is gradually drawn, by more than a hundred distinct predictions, of One Person, and of Him as unique in the history of mankind: that distinct picture being the filling up of an outline which had been sketched thousands of years before, in fact from the very beginning of the world. Could the Deliverer of mankind have been foreseen in all the marvellous traits of His character, and in all the minute circumstances of His appearance and history and life and death and resurrection and reign, by the enthusiasm of national longing? Could the converging foresight of a series of prophets have drawn this most elaborate and most sacred Portrait? The same may be said as to the steadfast predictions of the fates of some of the leading nations of the world. After the Person of the Messiah, the Israel after the flesh which rejected Him takes the next rank in the historical perspective of prophecy. There is a similar wonderful unanimity in the predictions of their entire history whether as originally Hebrews, or afterwards Israelites, or in more modern times Jews. Their destiny as depicted in the Bible, that is in both Testaments, brings prophecy and fulfilment into such plain and undeniable harmony that no room ought to be left for infidelity. This is a topic that must be pursued through the whole Bible, which shows that the rejection and dispersal of the people was foretold when it was most prosperous, its elevation and dignity when it was most dejected. Moses, the founder of Hebrew greatness, foretold the dispersion of Israel as the result of their disobedience, and at the same time their preservation through all ages as distinct and unconfounded among the nations. Scarcely one of the later prophets but has repeated this wonderful prophecy, applicable to no other race. The nations among which they were scattered have disappeared, or are in course of disappearance: the ten tribes are wanderers over the

face of the earth still. They have survived the greatest revolutions of history : a standing proof that the Eye of the Supreme foresaw what His omnipotent Hand has accomplished. *Though I make an end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make an end of thee.* And, as to those other nations themselves, the prophetic Scriptures abound with predictions, more or less minute, the fulfilment of which has proved that the voice of God uttered them. It was foretold, again and again, that the covenant people should go into captivity : that the captives should be again set free, and those who spoiled them be themselves laid waste. A minute study of these prophecies will show, and the more minute the study the more effectually will it show, that Omniscience was in these predictions. Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah predicted that the kingdom of Israel and Jerusalem also would be scourged by Assyria ; and it was so. The fulfilment was exact as to the ravage of Samaria, and the restraining hand that saved Jerusalem from destruction. In the year 712 B.C. Nahum denounced ruin against the Assyrian oppressor and Nineveh : in the year 612 B.C., after a century which had given no signs of this, the destruction of Nineveh took place. Concerning Babylon also, the successor of Assyria, there were equally sure words of prophecy. No fact in human annals is more certain than that the Babylonian captivity was foretold by Isaiah, and also the deliverance of the people ; nor than that Micah, two hundred years before their accomplishment, predicted the same events. The burden of Tyre in Isaiah described its ruin by the Chaldeans in a manner so clear and explicit, and so fully confirmed by history, as to make it one of the triumphs of prophetic evidence. But for confirmation of the evidence the prophecies themselves must be carefully studied. This branch of the Apologetics of revelation is only glanced at in this general summary ; it will amply repay the most exhaustive examination.

Jer. xxx.  
11.

2. As the first test pays its tribute to the Omniscience of the God of revelation, so the second pays its tribute to the Omnipotence. Only He Who gave them could fulfil the predictions of Scripture. But it has been urged by the opponents of the Faith that many of those so-called vaticinations which undeniably are found in the rhapsodies of the prophets were really fulfilled ; but

Fulfilment  
required  
Omnipotence.

fulfilled through the determination of those who were interested in their accomplishment that they should be accomplished. It is pleaded with great subtilty that patriotic enthusiasts, gifted with keen foresight, gave hints of what they saw in the germ of probability; and that these hints fulfilled themselves. It is not a hopeless, nor is it even a difficult, task to vindicate the whole body of Old-Testament foreannouncements from this charge. But it most concerns us to examine it in its reference to the New Testament, where it is applied, with some show of plausibility, but with no real force, to the Supreme Fulfilment of all prophecy. The spirit of infidelity does not shrink from making the career of Christ a studied adaptation to Himself of the scattered prophetic hints of the ancient records. It seizes upon the Scriptural word, *that it might be fulfilled*; and boldly assumes that the entire history of our Lord and His kingdom in the New Testament was a *cunningly devised fable*, woven after the pattern given in the Old Testament. It is scarcely necessary to say that here lies the stress of the whole argument against the Christian revelation as resting upon the fulfilment of prophecy. We may remain for ever in doubt as to the precise relation of some of the obscurer predictions of the prophets to their fulfilment: the doubt is simply the result of our ignorance of many of the elements necessary to its solution. But it is a matter of vital importance, the very life of Christianity is in it, that our Lord's manifestation on earth should be a fulfilment of what was provided and foretold according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and not a studied assumption of a character and destiny sketched in the enthusiasm of national hope. Here we must needs argue in a circle: it is the first necessity, as will be hereafter seen, that, as we believe in God, we believe also in His Son. And He rests the whole issue of His mission, with all its boundless interests to mankind, upon the accomplishment of the entire prophetic word in Himself. He has appropriated all the leading foreannouncements of the Messiah to His own Person. But, in His own application, and in that of His Spirit in the Apostles, there is a distinction to be observed. While all the major prophecies are referred to as absolutely accomplished in His mission—beginning with His incarnation and ending with His final return—many of the minor

Matt. i.  
22.  
2 Peter i.  
16.

prophecies are said to be fulfilled in an accommodated sense. The formula *that it might be fulfilled* applies to some events which accomplish prophetic types : such as *Out of Egypt have I called My Son* : and, *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was a voice heard*. The same principle may be applied to many quotations from the ancient prophets : in Christ and His kingdom all types and predictions found as it were their natural and legitimate resting place. But it must be remembered that, if the Supreme Fulfilment is in Christ, His authority must protect all the prophets who wrote of Him : protect them, not only in their general authenticity, but also in the detail of these most obscure predictions. The two prophets against whose mission and specific prophecies infidelity has most vehemently excepted are Isaiah and Daniel ; and these are precisely the prophets whom Jesus and His Apostles most emphatically quote. They are safe therefore in our estimation for the Master's sake. But, speaking generally, they are safe in their own integrity. Their leading foreannouncements were such as could never have fulfilled themselves, nor have been fulfilled by those who artfully seize upon these hints. Have the nations and empires whose overthrow was predicted and accomplished, fulfilled the predictions by their own cunning ? Are the Jews executing on themselves the judgment written ? They are the most determined enemies of the Christian Fulfilment ; but they do not deny that the hand of God has been long against them. He has smitten them, they think, for the chastisement of the world's peace ; and wounded them for the transgressions of mankind ; but surely they have not smitten and wounded themselves in order to fulfil predictions bound up with their own disgrace.

Matt. i.  
22.  
Hos. xi. 1  
Matt. ii  
17, 18

3. The test of prophecy takes yet another form. It is very confidently asserted that some of the avowed predictions of Scripture were written **POST EVENTUM** : after the supposed accomplishment. To prove this in the case of any of the least of these predictions is a task which has not succeeded ; in the case of the greatest of them, that is of those on which the burden of the credential lies, it has been a hopeless failure. But the spirit of infidelity is very bold : as daring in its unholy attacks as the spirit of faith is daring in its acceptance of mysteries. From the

**Post  
Eventum.**

earliest assault on prophecy down to modern times the whole force of its attack has taken this direction. Disintegrating the Scriptures as a whole, utterly renouncing the traditions of ages, and attaching no weight to the testimony of Christ and His Apostles, of the Jewish and Christian churches from the beginning, it scruples not to make the Pentateuch a Mosaic tessellation of documents to which Moses has only given his name, which indeed belongs to a period subsequent to the Captivity; and the voices of the psalmists and prophets, from Samuel and David to Joel and Zechariah, are regarded as singing strains which turn history, past and present, into poetry with a prophetic form. The Book of Daniel is declared to have been written after the leading events which it records, these being mainly predictions concerning Antiochus Epiphanes; while its remarkable miracles are supposed to prove its unauthentic character as well as later origin. It has been seen that the Lord has thrown His shield around this prophet; He mentions him by name; receives from him His Messianic designation, Son of Man, and that of His kingdom, the kingdom of heaven; and generally protects him by anticipation against all assaults. The Lord's own apology is sustained by the best modern research; and, after the utmost critical sifting, its most vehement opponents have no argument to allege but the extreme minuteness of its prophecies and the supernatural hand in its events. The Holy Gospels contain predictions of the Supreme Prophet; and they also are therefore assigned, in spite of the strongest evidence of antiquity, to a period after the destruction of Jerusalem. In this case also our loyalty to the Lord almost forbids argument. If Christ Jesus be worthy of any confidence the main predictions of the Old and New Testaments must have been delivered before their fulfilment. As to a multitude of lesser prophecies, about which there may be contention, the application of our test, and the consequent vindication of the prophets in detail, will require the close study of prophetic Scripture as a distinct branch of theology. But that minute investigation is not necessary to show the triumph of this particular credential of revelation as such in its broad outlines. Doubtless the New Testament followed the Old, and the Old was not written after the event. The dispersion of the Jews, the spread of Christianity, the ruin

of the great empires whose burdens rest upon the prophets, the signs of Antichrist, the latter-day infidelity,—all are fulfilments of distinct prophecy, which assuredly was written before their accomplishment.

PROPHECY AND MIRACLE.

The evidence of Prophecy as a credential of revelation is of the highest order: whether taken by itself or in connection with miracle generally.

Nature  
of Cre-  
dential

1. In common with miracle proper it is a standing and perpetual token of the Divine presence in the whole sphere of revelation. He Himself appeals to both as His high prerogative in many of the sublimest passages of the prophets. *I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly and they came to pass.* It was the Voice Supernatural, beyond the ordinary methods of guiding man's inquiries, that declared all coming events from the beginning: nothing worth calling history has taken place without foreannouncement. And it was the Hand Supernatural, beyond the ordinary and quiet operation of Providence in nature, that SUDDENLY brought it to pass. The boundless variety and steadfast unity of these predictions give them an unspeakable grandeur; and the wonderful events in human history which are the direct fulfilment of prophecy are beyond all others great in all the elements of sublimity. In fact, if all the events which have been matter of fulfilment and of prophecy are eliminated from the current of human history there is not much that is left. The leading transactions of every age have been under a ruling prophecy; and we also, in our day, wait to see the end of the things that concern ourselves.

The  
Presence  
of God.

Isa. xlviii  
3.

2. Viewed apart, and by themselves, these prophecies are peculiarly cumulative in their demonstrative force. Unlike the miracles, the fulfilled predictions constantly enlarge the materials of their evidence. There is a sense indeed in which this observation, frequently made, is not true. The miracles recorded in Scripture are thought to be more feebly commended to the acceptance of every succeeding generation; as if the testimony

Cumula-  
tive.

on which they rest grows weaker as it recedes from the present. But that is not philosophically true. Moreover, the most evident and noblest miracles—if any such distinction may be made—are yet constantly performed; and the Finger and Hand of God are evermore at work in the hearts of men and in the heart of society. Still, the accumulating force of the prophetic credential is more conspicuous than that of the miracle. We live under a vaster amount of fulfilment than any former age; and he who shall take the historical prophecies of the Old Testament and trace their fulfilment in the course of Oriental history will have an irresistible demonstration of Christianity at his command.

Full of  
Instruction.

3. Finally, like the miracles, the prophecies are bound up with the teaching of the Bible; and, apart from their evidential force, yield an unlimited treasure of instruction in the ways of God, the work of Christ, and the destiny of man. Neither miracle nor prophecy can easily be over-estimated as the vehicle of Divine teaching: neither can be while time lasts exhausted.

Inspira-  
tion as  
a Creden-  
tial.

#### INSPIRATION, OR THE DIVINE HAND IN SCRIPTURE.

The specific doctrine of inspiration, as the ground of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, will be considered in its place. It may here be regarded very briefly as one of the credentials of revelation, on a level with Miracles and Prophecy and completing or consummating their evidence.

Law of  
Scripture.

2 Tim. iii.  
16.

1. Inspiration is a distinct element of the supernatural order of revealed truth: one of its laws and characteristic attributes. As such it simply means that the sacred documents are worthy of the Divine Author; and that they are not unworthily described as GOD-BREATHED. Strictly speaking only the writers are inspired; but the last word on the subject in the New Testament gives the epithet to Scripture itself: *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος*. What we have agreed to mean by inspiration is therefore the fact that God has interposed to keep a continuous and abiding record of truth in the world: this, throughout all the ages of the world's religious history, has been the Divine method of imparting and preserving the knowledge of God among men. The beginning of this interposition, so far as concerns the written

documents, is lost in the distance of ages ; but none of its fruits can be supposed to be lost. Inspiration is, in a certain sense, one with revelation, as meaning the Divine bestowment of knowledge that could not otherwise be acquired. It does not, however, entirely coincide with revelation : being either less or more : less, since much that has been revealed has not been transmitted ; more, since much is recorded and transmitted that was not given by direct revelation. But, whatever may be its limits, it indicates a specific intervention of God in human literature, through which there has always been in course of production, and has been finally produced, the permanent and authoritative revelation of His mind and will to man. And this may fairly be regarded as a credential of the whole system of revealed truth : it is worthy of the Divine wisdom, and what might have been, humanly speaking, expected, that He whose power has been known in miracle, and His knowledge in prophecy, should declare His wisdom and fidelity in giving revelation to mankind, and in making it an abiding heritage. Now revelation makes this its universal claim ; and appeals to the manifest evidences of the Presence of God, as its Author and Indwelling Spirit, in Holy Scripture. Such is the overwhelming demonstration of this, that the whole weight of the cause of Christianity might be made to rest upon it, if it be rightly stated and exhibited. The entire scope and contents of the volume of inspiration justify its pretension to have come direct from heaven. When the character of Jesus is introduced, and the moral and spiritual effects of His Gospel, we shall have to consider much that might be supposed to belong to this credential. But there remains a very interesting argument that may be briefly touched upon here.

2. Generally speaking, the records of revelation are worthy of their Divine authorship or of the Divine authorship which they claim. Dispassionately taking up the whole Bible, with the hypothesis in our thoughts that it was composed by writers under a special control of the Holy Spirit, we find nothing, or very little, to make us hesitate in admitting the claim ; but, on the contrary, perpetual demonstration that the several authors cannot have been left to themselves. The children of this Wisdom justify her on the whole ; and where they seem to do otherwise it is only

Scripture  
worthy of  
Divine  
Author-  
ship.



2 Cor. xi.  
23.  
Divine-  
human.

that we cannot penetrate the secret which makes any one of them say, in the language of St. Paul, *I speak as a fool*.

3. For, it must be remembered that the records of revelation exhibit a characteristic Divine-human excellence corresponding with the only sound theory of inspiration. They are worthy to be assigned to the authorship of the controlling Spirit: supposing that Spirit to employ human faculties and human editorship. They may not be at all points, in every line and every record, what we might expect from the immediate dictation of the Holy Ghost, or from the writing of His Finger on tables delivered to man. But, if they are below what God might be supposed to send down straight from heaven, they are certainly altogether beyond the unassisted ability of man, higher indeed than any ability of man, even assisted from above, could have produced: that is to say, there are disclosures in various parts of the Bible, and one in particular everywhere, which imply not the raising of earth to heaven but the descent of heaven to earth. We have only to contemplate their tranquil, authoritative solution of questions that no other books have attempted even to investigate; their profound and natural familiarity with God and the things of God; the simplicity and awfulness of their doctrine of sin; the supreme moral interest that everywhere reigns; and their universal, never-failing appeal to what is good in human nature, as if a Divine Voice were issuing from them for ever speaking to something in the human spirit that must hear. If God records His truth for man, this is just what He would write: whether we have respect to what is given or to what is withheld. There is a perfect Divine dignity and perfect human purity: it is both the Voice of God and the voice of man; combined in so marvellous a way as to make the claims of Inspiration rightly understood a most impressive credential of the Faith.

Supre-  
macy.

4. Hence the simple and undeniable fact of the supremacy of the Bible, as a collection of religious documents, may be appealed to as itself a mighty presumptive argument of its own truth and of the truth of the religion it propounds. There is nothing parallel, nothing similar, in human literature. Place it by the side of the most ancient religious books, the Indian Vedas, the Chinese Classics arranged by Confucius, and the other sacred writings of

the world at large, and comparison must soon give up its task. Soon give it up: not immediately; for there are undoubtedly certain outlines of primitive truth in the ancient writings of the East which show that they also were written not without a certain degree of the Divine afflatus. The Holy Ghost has ever been the Voice of One crying in the wilderness, and saying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. In the books which treat of the Science of Religion, and give us systems of Comparative Theology, more than justice is done to this element common to the sacred books of what we call heathenism and the Holy Scriptures: so far as mere justice is done, the advocate of Christianity heartily assents; but when the other holy writings are collated with the Christian at all points it is an exaggeration of justice that becomes most unjust. The Bible refuses to form one column of a great Biblical Polyglot. There is outside of the Christian Scriptures no document extant among men which really professes to have been written under the inspiration of God: and among those which may seem to make such a claim there is not one which does not in half its contents refute the claim, common sense being the judge. Again, there is no document of the kind extant for which it may be pleaded that, though as standing alone it has no divinity, it recovers its character when placed in a collection of sacred books. But there is not a book of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures which does not vindicate its own dignity and sanctity at all points when studied as belonging to the entire volume. This leads however to a distinct argument.

5. The Unity of the Scriptures of revelation is a very strong credential in its favour as professing to be from God. It is one great vision, and its interpretation one: beginning and ending with the same Paradise, with thousands of years of redeeming history between. It has been instinctively called, what it does not call itself, the Bible: one Book divided, if divided at all, into two parts. That the New Testament as fulfilment should so perfectly correspond with the Old Testament as prophecy is in itself the most wonderful phenomenon in literature: it is evidence as near demonstration as need be of the intervention of a Divine Hand. The Redeemer made manifest in the later Scriptures answers face to face and feature for feature to the Form predicted

**Unity.**

in the older Scriptures. But it is not merely that the Same Being is foreannounced in one book Who comes in another. He is the sole predominant subject of many books in both departments of the Bible. One idea runs through the whole: the kingdom of God set up or restored in His incarnate Son. To this idea authors of various ages and of various races contribute in a harmony which never could be the result of accident or mere coincidence. Only the Divine power could have made so many men, of different lands, concert, without concerting, such a scheme of literature. These men belonged to no school of consecutive writers: yet they seem as if they had been, before time was, in the counsel and council-chamber of Jehovah, and to have come forth each predestined to furnish his own contribution. If they had not asserted their inspiration of God, that hypothesis must have been invented to account for the facts and phenomena of their writings. But they have asserted it: the claim is bound up with every page of the word they have left behind them.

Unity in  
Develop-  
ment.

6. There is a special aspect of this argument which will be found of great importance by those who examine it from this point of view: that is, the unity of teaching which is maintained through a long and diversified course of development. The leading doctrines which distinguish Christianity from every other system of supposed religious truth are to be traced through the many books of the Bible in a line of everwidening and ever-deepening expansion. Each prominent article of our Faith may be traced upwards to its germ in the earliest Biblical documents, and downward again as it threads its way distinct from others until it finds its full expression. And all combined converge through the older Scriptures to a consummate harmony in the New Testament. These two facts are undoubted: they ought not, at least, to be doubted by anyone who is familiar with the history of doctrine in the Bible. The Holy Trinity, with the redeeming relation to mankind of the Second Person in that Trinity, and the relation to the universe of life sustained by the Third Person; the establishment in the world of a kingdom of grace destined finally to triumph; the acceptance of every penitent sinner by God on the ground of what is called a Righteousness of Faith; the essential difference between soul and body, with the transient

separation caused by physical death; the eternal issues of the present life of probation;—these are all doctrinal truths which run through the whole Bible, so that Christian preachers may take their proof-texts from almost every book; but which run through the Bible with always progressive clearness. The development of doctrine we have to study elsewhere. It is referred to now as a clear indication of the presence—perhaps it would be better to say of the very strong probability of the presence—of a Divine Hand in the construction of the Bible. The supreme truth—that of the Sacred Trinity in the Godhead—might be shown to bear up the pillars of this argument. There is not a single reference in the Old Testament to the Messiah as a Person near to Jehovah, or as Jehovah Himself, that is not perfectly consistent with the amazing secret concerning His being which the New Testament brings to light; nor is there a single reference, among multitudes, to the Spirit of God that is not perfectly in harmony with what the later Scriptures declare as to His relation to the Father and the Son. Such is the effect produced on the devout mind of a believer in Christianity by the consideration of this wonderful harmony that he is disposed to place it among the foremost evidences of the Faith. Most certainly it is one of its most emphatic and persuasive credentials.

7. It must be remembered that the argument based upon the presence of the Divine Hand in the construction of the Bible is not exhibited as final and demonstrative: it is, as has just been remarked, only a credential hard to resist. Here a few further observations may be made which will suggest hints to be followed out by the student himself to any extent.

(1.) There is in this no more demonstration than the analogical argument generally presents. Throughout the works of God—granted that the creation is a work of God—we perceive the universal sway of a law of evolution, qualified however by a subordinate law of occasional interventions that seem to break the former. Precisely what we find in nature and in providence we find in the gradual construction of Scripture. Why it should be so, it is vain to ask. That it is an absolutely valid proof of the Divinity or supreme authority of the Bible it is vain to assert. It might by the most wonderful of all coincidences have happened

Strength  
of the Ar-  
gument.

Ana-  
logical.

that such a Book should be composed at long intervals by authors independent of each other, and retain such a character of steady, uniform, evergrowing development. But the probabilities against this would have been exceedingly great.

Qualifica-  
tion.

(2.) Again, it must be borne in mind that the Divine influence and agency in Scripture is not asserted to be absolute and unqualified. What was said as to the miracles, and might have been said as to prophecy—that residual difficulties were to be expected in the nature of the case—may be said of the credentials of inspiration. Objectors frame hypotheses of miracle and prophecy with which the facts are not found to accord: and they are offended. So, also, they frame hypotheses of inspiration with which the records of revelation cannot be harmonised: and they turn away with suspicion. This subject will be more fully discussed when we come to the doctrine of inspiration. At present it is enough to say that there is in the human elements of the workmanship of Scripture nothing utterly inconsistent with the supposition of a Divine Hand overruling and controlling and even arranging the whole compass of sacred literature.

Summary.

#### SUMMARY.

These three credentials of Miracle, Prophecy, and Inspiration ought to be united: they mutually give and receive strength, and are strongest when they are combined. The miracle is of course most demonstrative to the extant generation of beholders, the prophecy is of course demonstrative only to the generations who come afterwards. The present generation in the midst of which miracles are wrought cannot hand down to us in the fullest degree the evidence of their senses; we who behold the fulfilment cannot send back to those who heard the prophecy our vision of accomplished prediction. Inspiration embraces the two in one: it records the fact of the miracle, and, as inspiration, makes it present to every age; while, as inspiration, its record of a prophecy makes the fulfilment as if it were already come or were already past to those who hear it. This may be made plainer by applying it to the narratives of our Lord's mission. Throughout the holy Gospels Jesus is found working miracles and uttering prophecies. When His works and His words were alike approaching their

close, He predicted the coming of a miraculous power which should provide for the permanent record of the whole: He promised the Spirit of inspiration Who was not only Himself to abide with His disciples but also to cause the Lord's words to abide with His Church. Certainly the Saviour when He gave this assurance uttered a prophecy, which was fulfilled from the Day of Pentecost onward; while the prophecy predicted a miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost Who was to be a Memory within the disciples' memory, and a special expositor of their Master's words. And the fulfilment of the prophecy was the Spirit of inspiration through Whose influence and superintendence the Four Gospels were written. But these three are more or less united throughout the history of the Bible: they have never been disjoined since the construction of the Biblical Library began. Strictly speaking, it was prophecy which commenced, miracle abundantly followed, and in due time inspiration provided one permanent record. The three have kept pace through all the ages of revealed truth; and they ended together, when their common work was done. Yet they have not ended. In the Bible miracle, and prophecy, and inspiration abide: but in some respects the greatest is inspiration; for it really absorbs the two others, and gives continuance and permanence to the whole.

#### THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST THE REVEALER.

Christ the  
Revealer.

The Person of Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of the Faith, is its highest and most sacred credential. This is true of our Lord's historical manifestation generally; but for our present purpose it will be sufficient to regard Him as the Founder of His own religion, and to mark the perfect consistency with which He supports His claim to be the Incarnate Revealer of all truth. The more closely we examine the Four Gospels the more clearly shall we perceive that He Himself in His Divine-human selfconsciousness rested upon this for the enforcement of His claims: not only in the case of those who were around

Him in the flesh, but also throughout all the future. The strength of this argument as such will be found to be only increased by the various explanations from time to time devised to resist it. There is no rational way of accounting for the Person and Work of Christ but that which accepts the Divine origin of Christianity.

#### THE SUPREME CLAIM.

**The Claim of Jesus.** Here we have reverently to consider the claim of Jesus, the Supreme Revealer, and the consistency of His teaching with His claim: both these being viewed as completely exhibited in the Christian revelation as a whole.

**Unparalleled.** 1. The Saviour's testimony to Himself is not to be gathered from any one of His assertions, but from the entire strain of the Gospels, as these are corroborated by the exposition of His Apostles. The sum is, that He came down from heaven as the Son of God, and appeared on earth while still in heaven as the Son of man, to reveal the words of His Father and to accomplish His Father's will, for human redemption. There is nothing parallel to the pretension of Jesus; nothing like it ever entered into the mind of man. The anticipation of mankind had never risen to such a conception: scarcely had the Old Testament itself prepared for it. Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God: this fact, or this claim, entirely rules the new dispensation. For the Christianity which does not bring this credential we do not plead: such a Christianity has descended to the level of other religions. It might almost be said that the very claim is a sufficient credential. That such a Being as Jesus of Nazareth undeniably was—so lowly and pure, so unselfish and reverent, so mighty in word and deed, with such irresistible power over all who approached Him—should declare Himself to have come down from heaven with the mysteries of eternity, with eternal truth in His words and eternal love in His heart, is itself something so new and transcendent that it might almost take our faith captive at its will. This is the thought of those who are already His. But it is a sublime credential which provokes the unbelief of the unregenerate reason, and must defend itself.

2. There is no more wonderful characteristic of our Lord's revealing mission, and no stronger assertion of its divinity, than the absence of everything that might place Him on a level with other teachers, or with men generally. From His first word to His mother in the temple down to His prayer before the cross, there is not a single expression uttered by Himself which, fairly interpreted, makes Him a member of the fellowship of the human teachers of mankind. Nor is there a single expression in the New Testament which, fairly interpreted, makes Him a member in common of the human race.

Soleneas  
of His  
Person.

(1.) It is true that on some few occasions Jesus spoke as a man, and seemed to ally Himself with the Rabbis around Him. To Nicodemus He said, *We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness*: thus contrasting himself with the *Master of Israel* as the teacher of a new doctrine, while in some sense identifying Himself with his order. But it must be remembered that He immediately added: *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man Which is in heaven*: thus, the very sentence which appears to conjoin the Redeemer with His own Apostles, in which He indeed uses almost the words that both St. Paul and St. John apply to themselves, is that which contains the very loftiest assertion of His Divine authority as a Teacher. It is the new Teacher Who says that He is **THE SON OF MAN WHICH IS IN HEAVEN**.

Not like  
other  
Teachers.  
John iii.  
10—13.

(2.) Further, and it is of great importance, our Lord never once allied Himself with mankind in any such way as would be inconsistent with the infinite peculiarity of His claim as His Father's Representative in the human race. The more deeply this fact is pondered the more wonderful will it appear, and the more mighty as a credential of the Christian Faith. Though His *delights were with the sons of men*, and He so identified Himself with the human family as to elect for His own lips the name **SON OF MAN**, yet in every variety of way He distinguished Himself from the descendants of Adam. If **YE, BEING EVIL**, is only one instance out of many with which the Gospels make us familiar. Whosoever studies the question in all its bearings will find that in this fact is one of the most effectual internal evidences of the truth of our holy religion.

2 Cor. iv.  
13.  
1 John i.  
1.

Not like  
other Men

Prov. viii.  
31.

Matt. vii.  
11.



The Claim  
justified.

#### ITS JUSTIFICATION.

The full exposition of the character of our Lord in all His offices must be reserved. But there are some reflections which arise from a general review of the history of His revelation of Himself, and of the truth in Him, which will set this sacred and central credential in its proper light.

Antici-  
pations of  
the Race.

1. Though it is undoubtedly true that nothing in human history runs parallel with this claim of the Redeemer, it is found to be in strict harmony with the profoundest desires and instincts of the race. Not indeed that the incarnation of the Son of God had ever been anticipated. The loftiest aspiration of the religious spirit in man had never aimed so high. The transcendental philosophy which makes the Infinite and the finite two necessary poles of thought finding their axis, as it were, in the union of the Absolute and the Conditioned in Christ could never have existed if the Gospel had not given it the idea. The difference between the modern and the ancient Pantheistic philosophy is to be traced to this : Hegel and the moderns have ploughed with the heifer of revelation, that is, of New-Testament revelation ; for scarcely did the Old Testament disclose this deepest secret of the counsel of God. Whatever approximations towards the idea of a personal union between God and man, exhibited in any one historic person, are to be found in the ancient or modern systems of religious philosophy lack, as close scrutiny proves, the essential element of the Christian incarnation. They never conceived, nor did they approach the conception, of a real and permanent union of the Divine and human in one personality. Yet the very distortions of the truth are profoundly suggestive. They are like the magicians' imitations of the miracles in Egypt : permitted exhibitions of what man's fantasy will do with Divine truth, when Satan is the teacher and not the Holy Ghost. But to return. The manifestation of our Lord among men—the Son of Man and the Son of God in one—was the pure and perfect realisation of the highest unconscious longing of human nature : that of seeing the Divinity reflected again in itself as a mirror. He was in that sense also *the Desire of all nations*.

Hagg. ii.  
7.

Personal  
Character.

2. Christ's personal character, if such language may be used,

is in precise harmony with the assumption of so unheard-of a relation. It is a character of which it must be said that it is neither altogether Divine nor altogether human: it is Divine-human; with the perfection of God in it, but exhibited in the life of a man. Human holiness has in Him its consummate ideal: judged indeed by a standard that He has set up; one however that our own reason approves. Following Him throughout His career, and forgetting so far as we can His Divinity, we mark that every act and word, and believe, are constrained to believe, that every thought also, is consistent with His assertion that Satan had NO PART IN HIM. When the Saviour was tested by the Enemy in the wilderness He neither asserted nor denied His sinlessness; but the answers He gave were precisely those which a perfect human nature would have uttered. *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* When He was maligned by His foes among men He simply challenged all accusers and defied them: *Which of you convinceth Me of sin?* As He approached the cross, where His atonement required His absolute sinlessness, He spoke most explicitly, *The prince of this world cometh, and hath NOTHING IN ME.* It is, of course, utterly impossible, in the nature of things, to demonstrate the absolute sinlessness of Jesus as man. None but God can pronounce upon that. But it must be remembered that, according to the assumption of the whole New Testament, Jesus was more than man. His holiness is essentially Divine holiness. That is, it is a holiness which is guaranteed by the Divinity of the Son of God. The miraculous conception insured the sanctity of the human nature; and the Divinity of the Son insured the permanent necessity of that sinlessness. Hence it was Divine sanctity. We see that it is not a holiness that has retrieved itself, that our Lord's resistance to temptation is not that of one who can fall, that He does not speak of law and of duty save as a God. In short, the religious character of the Saviour is Divine-human: it is what God, supposing Him also man, would exhibit; and that is all the argument requires.

John xiv  
30.

Matt. iv.  
4.

John viii.  
46.

John xiv.  
30.

3. The Incarnate mission of Jesus is conducted precisely under such restrictions as are consistent with the twofold nature of His one Person; and this alone we have a right to demand. All

Incarnate  
Mission.

His works and all His words are Divine. The universe is under His authority : there is a sense in which we see all things already put under Him. And nothing can be more certain than that our Lord claims to know everything pertaining at least to human destiny : as the impression produced in our mind is that supreme power is at the Saviour's command, so also we feel a conviction that He has unlimited knowledge. In Him are

**Col. ii. 3.** *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge :* hidden in the deepest sense of the term. Both these truths our Lord impresses in His own heavenly manner, not yet understood by those who heard :

**John v. 19.** *The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do : for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.* These words speak of what is an Eternal Vision, and of what is an Eternal Power. But there is a strange reserve in the Redeemer's assertion of both : yet not strange, however mysterious, to those who understand, or rather believe in, the Lord's wonderful relations to God and man. This power is, as it were, held by Him in trust and sometimes fettered by some transcendent restraint ; this knowledge is a hearing of the Father, first in eternity, and then gradually enlarging in human faculties. Of the unfathomable mystery that is here it is needless to speak : only of its consistency with the claim, amazing beyond all human conception, of the Founder of our faith.

**Style of Teaching.**

4. Christ's style of teaching exhibits the same harmony. It is, on the one hand, perfectly after the manner of men. He uses human documents, quotes them humanly, and adopts the purest arts of human rhetoric. His presentation of truth as a Teacher is simply the highest in human literature. But it is absolutely Divine : those who are drawn by the cords of a man, for instance, in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount must be constrained to own at the close that they have heard the voice of a God and not of a man. We feel that His dealing with the conscience is not that of a human witness, nor of a sanctified human teacher, but of a Judge, Who not only gives laws and administers them but also demands of all who hear Him an account of their conduct. No one can read carefully the Four Gospels without feeling that the Master of Christian doctrine and morals is more than man. It may be sometimes matter of doubt whether the Teacher is one to

whom in an extraordinary manner the Divine authority was delegated, or Himself the Divine Son of God. But there can be no doubt whether or not the Voice of Jesus speaks with the confidence of a final Revealer of doctrine and Arbiter of duty. And the very doubt to which reference has been made implies the pure humanness of His ministry. The two sides of His teaching character—the one expressed by the people's question, *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* and the other by our Lord's own self-revelation, *My Father hath taught Me*—are harmonised in the Redeemer's claim as avowed through His whole history, but on no other principle can they be reconciled.

John vii  
15; viii  
28

5. The end and consummation of the Saviour's whole work reveals this credential in its infinite clearness and force. The Founder of Christianity Himself lays the chief stress of His appeal to mankind on His redeeming mission, and His atoning death. It must be expected, therefore, that in the crisis and culmination of the incarnate history—that is, in the transactions connected with the death of the cross—the deep secret of our Lord's Divine-human nature would be exhibited in its most impressive way. Accordingly, we observe that in almost all the details of our Lord's suffering and death there is evidence that the Victim of manifest human violence and of hidden Divine justice is both human and Divine. He approaches His passion as a man: the *Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, is only a man of deeper sorrow and more profoundly acquainted with grief than other men. Looking at Him from our human position, we see that He advances to the end like any other martyr: He had His distant dread, His Gethsemane foretaste, and then the very bitterness of death itself. By those who looked at Him with only human eyes He was regarded naturally as the first of all confessors: perfect in meekness as towards enemies, perfect in lowliness of heart as before God, and perfect in self-sacrifice as bearing the witness of blood to His mission. But by those who beheld Him from heaven—He was *seen of angels*—it was regarded as a more than mortal passion. The Eternal Father had again and again declared that the Sufferer was His Eternal Son: as when He sent Him down from the mount of transfiguration, and when He acknowledged Him before the wondering crowd in the temple.

Consum-  
mation of  
His Life.

Is. liii. 3.

1 Tim. iii  
16.

So also the centurion near the cross, and the disciples who watched Him afar off, bore their witness. These testimonies, however, may not be accepted by all as the credentials of Christ: their value is felt only by those who accept the heavenly origin of the Gospels, and already believe in the Divine-human Person of the Son. But the naked strength of the argument is felt by those who watch the Great Sufferer of Christianity, and mark very carefully the union of Divinity and humanity in the Saviour's own sentiment, bearing, and words. According to His own sacrificial Prayer, His death was a voluntary self-sanctification: to be an offering the virtue of which should expiate the sin of the world, to reveal the Divine glory in the redemption of mankind, and through that revelation to secure His own return to the glory of God. No testimony borne by our Lord to Himself is plainer than that which declares Him to have died not as men die; but to have suffered as the Son of God, appointed in the Divine counsel to save the race by dying for it. The entire economy of Christianity is based upon this. It stands or falls with the security of this foundation. The Person Who claims the confidence of men, and demands that they entrust to Him their eternal destiny, asks their absolute submission only as their Divine-human Redeemer. His credentials are not perfect till they are delivered from the cross. And His apologists, who plead His cause, affirm that every incident and word of the history of the passion, like the great passion itself, is consistent with the Saviour's claim. There is a calm undertone of Divinity in all the human experience and testimony. The Lord declared beforehand the circumstances of His death, and after a certain period made His disciples familiar with that cross the sight of which afterwards appalled them so much. He spoke of His enemies as having no power against Him of themselves; of the hosts of angels as ready to defend Him if He should only call them to His aid; and of the whole passion generally as a foreordained event that nothing could avert from Him though He accepted it with perfect spontaneousness. It is profoundly true that the credentials of Christianity come in all their strength from the passion-week and the eve of the cross. Humanly speaking, and supposing the Sufferer to be only a perfect man, we may claim for the death of Jesus a dignity and a pathos

of which there are few examples in history and no rivals. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, knowing what awaited Him there ; and, though He might have escaped—for the leaders of the people evidently wished to give Him the opportunity—He deliberately arranged everything, down to the minutest particular, for His own end. His disciples' safety was in His thoughts, and provision for His mother, and for the daughters of Jerusalem only less dear to Him than she was, at the very time that He was meditating on the world's salvation. During the same hour that He was pouring out His triumphant prayer in the expectation of His glory, as if the suffering of death was over, He was in the profoundest anguish of Gethsemane, holding in His hand the cup which He drank with seemingly more fear than Socrates felt when his cup was in his hand. But an infinite difference is manifest between the cups. There was a bitterness in the Redeemer's agony which no man hath felt or could feel. It was the endurance of that curse on human sin which the Christian economy ascribes to Christ, and the absence of which makes the history of the end of Jesus unintelligible. We take the three Gospels and perpetually feel that there is something more than mortal in His sufferings. We add to them the fourth, and we perceive the secret of the mystery. To have invented such a combination of the suffering and triumphant Messiah was altogether beyond the power of such men as the Evangelists. It had been the labour of Jewish Rabbis for ages to disjoin the two: the interpretation of inspired men alone could unite them thus. The Spirit of Christ in the Prophets could only signify the passion and the glory that should follow. But the Spirit of Christ in the Evangelists teaches them to see the suffering and the glory blended in one hour, the hour and the power of redemption. That two such aspects of His death are found in the same Gospels requires the agency of the Spirit for its explanation ; and His explanation is that the Saviour was delivered up by the wicked counsel of men to the wicked hands of men, on the one hand, and that on the other, He died by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Meanwhile He, as at once God and man, yielded Himself up both to the will of man and to the will of God His Father. Here all is evident though incom-

prehensible consistency with that supreme claim on which all the stress is laid, and those who are of the truth must feel the force of this most sad and most glorious of all His credentials.

Pre-  
diction as  
to His  
Kingdom.

6. Once more, it must strike every thoughtful observer of Jesus, and hearer of His words, that the peculiar character of His predictions concerning the future of His cause upon earth is in strict harmony with His Divine-human claims. Almost from the outset of His manifestation it is obvious that the Teacher of Nazareth speaks of that future with two voices that are really one: that is to say, on many occasions it might seem as if He were sent to make a great experiment, the issue of which would depend upon His servants' fidelity; while, on many other occasions, He spoke in the full consciousness of the accomplishment of a Divine purpose the end of which was known to Him as clearly as the beginning. There can be no doubt that these two aspects of our

Luke  
xviii. 8.

Lord's prevision are manifest everywhere. *When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?* was His question to the disciples concerning a special kind of faith that He constantly inculcated, a faith, however, that He bids His disciples to regard as rare in every age, and probably—to them but not to Himself—to be rare at the last. This is only one specimen of many passages in which the Saviour seems to look out upon a vast contingency.

Matt. ix.  
37, 38.

*The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.* Here we have another. But there is a much larger number of His sayings in which there is no contingency expressed or implied. Such are all the purely eschatological discourses, where the programme of the future kingdom is sketched in its broad outlines with a firm hand. There is no more clear and definite history in the Bible than the future of the last day, evidently as present to the Divine Teacher in the Gospels as the day on which He speaks: whatever may be thought of the authority of the writers of the New Testament, it is certain that without a single exception they represent to us a Saviour Who beholds at once the sum of things, *declaring the end from the beginning*, and has before His eyes the whole panorama of human history. Certainly it was not His will to disclose all because, in the unfathomable mystery of life, what is present to

Isa. xlv.  
10.

the Supreme is to the creature a yet unformed future dependent on himself. Hence the Saviour's predictions of the events of the long interval—the times and the seasons—are given in general terms. That there was to be a long interval He always implied : especially in the kingdom-parables. That it was to be a diversified interval of struggle He showed also : *I am come to send fire on the earth ; and what will I if it be already kindled ?* The disciplinary furnace was already heated ; before its fiery process began among men it must begin at the house of God, and even with the Son in the house : *But I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !* His disciples might expect it to be otherwise : *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, Nay ; but rather division : for from henceforth—a term that always stretched from the present to the last future—there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three.* The two aspects of the future—that in which it is a fixed issue, and that in which it is a varied contingency—are strikingly combined in the Lord's reference to what He termed the day of His appearing. While in general the expression refers to the final advent, it is certain that the Lord Himself comprehended under it the entire space of the interval : the several critical events—such as the Pentecostal visitation and the destruction of Jerusalem, and the many indefinite crises indicated in the Apocalypse—were the day or the coming of Christ. This must be studied more fully in its proper place. Meanwhile, it is enough to point out in how wonderful a manner the Saviour's predictions of the future of His cause and kingdom confirm His claim to be the incarnate but Divine Revealer of the Father's will and Author of the Christian Faith.

Luke xii.  
49—52

7. This leads, however, to another view. The provision made by the Founder of Christianity for the continuance of His cause or kingdom on earth exhibits the same tokens of consistency with His Divine-human character. The human provisions are throughout perfect in their calm, deliberate foresight. The Seventy and the Twelve were carefully chosen : the former to prepare the Lord's own way in a transitory manner, and accordingly with rules for their guidance not adapted for permanence ; the latter to pave the way for His Gospel among all nations after His departure,

Provision  
for the  
Future.



and accordingly with a long-continued discipline the perfection of which appears throughout the Gospels. We see also that while the Lord speaks of a kingdom over men He is also preparing for a Church gathered from among men : its foundation is laid, and the Two Sacraments—the most wonderful expedients in all legislation—appointed for the initiation and abiding test of worthy membership. Besides these two fundamentals of ecclesiastical order many other regulations were made. In fact, nothing was left unprovided for : every hint and germ develops afterwards into profound significance, fitted into a perfect system. But the provision is at all points Divine ; and in truth its adaptation depended upon the Lord's own survival and victory as God over death and continuance in life. All was made to rest, further, upon a heavenly Substitute for His visible presence, Whose glorious descent from heaven, a Messenger from Himself, is as clearly before the Redeemer's mind as His own descent through death to the world of spirits. This argument—for it is really such—requires to be studied with care, especially in the light of the final discourses in St. John. Can anything be conceived more grand or sublime than the Saviour's tranquil committal of the interests of His kingdom to Another Divine Person, for Whose advent He had made all necessary preparation ? The idea of a divided function—His own in heaven and the Spirit's upon earth—is one with which we are so familiar that we are apt to lose our sense of its perfect uniqueness. If it did not come from above, it could not have come from below. If its origin was earth, then never did earth produce so strange a thought before. In other words, the great future is humanly provided for, but under Divine conditions, by one and the same Incarnate Head of our religion.

**Contrasts  
in Jesus.**

8. We might trace still further this marvellous chain of consistency, the links of which are the credentials of our Lord's mission. But the best apology of the Christian Religion for ever keeps the Person of its Founder in view and considers the combination in Him of Divine dignity and human humility. The claims of Jesus to the homage and devotion of men are at all points exactly what might be expected of Deity Incarnate, but to be accounted for on no other assumption. Without that great presupposal all is obscure and incomprehensible : that being admitted

all is harmonious and worthy of acceptance. In our Saviour's character as the Head of a religion are seen in marked distinctness the two sides. There is a series of records which represent Him as one of ourselves, and even as claiming to be the Refuge of the weary because He could say, *I am meek and lowly in heart*; and such a most tender human atmosphere the history breathes to the end. But this same Jesus everywhere claims, both from His foes and from His friends, all that God might exact: the former He threatens with His own displeasure, as if there could be no fear beyond that; while from the latter He demands perfect love and creaturely consecration. There is nothing like this in the history of mankind. Such a twofold relation of One to others—of a human Head to the members of His community—is absolutely alone in human affairs. The purest, gentlest, and most abstracted of men, whose deep devotion to heaven and unselfish spirituality cannot be for a moment even brought in question, nevertheless addresses those who seem to be His fellows as their God and their Judge. On the one hand, He displaces Moses, who was the meekest man on earth, and becomes Himself the pattern of humility. On the other hand, His holy wrath surpasses the jealous anger of Moses who rebuked the people and died for his impatience. The Woes of Jesus are as historical as His Benedictions. But, after all, the noblest argument for the consistency and truth of the Saviour's claims is the calmness with which He asks for the undivided homage of every heart. He Himself makes the sum of religion the perfect love of God; and then claims perfect love for Himself: here upon earth as there in heaven it holds good that **I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE**.

9. We complete the chain, thus feebly held and traced, when we point to the inexpressible influence of the Saviour's character, both while He was upon earth and since He has gone into heaven. If He came down to this world, the Eternal Son in the flesh, and delivered these credentials of power and goodness, and died for us as the Incarnate Lover of our souls, we might expect that His Divine-human ascendancy over men would be supreme and permanent. No one can read the four Gospels without feeling that the sway of Jesus of Nazareth over those who came within the sphere of His influence was strictly answerable to our hypotesis.

Matt. xi.  
29.

Numb. xii.  
3.  
Numb. xx.  
10.

Matt. v.  
and  
Matt. xxi

John x.  
30.

The Influence of  
Jesus.

To none was He an object of indifference ; no one ever crossed His path, or exchanged words with Him, who was not thenceforward a different man. It is impossible to account for His supremacy over all on any human principle. The narratives that record it are too artless and simple to be suspected of depicting a mere human hero : they have no air of embellishment, and rather understate than exaggerate. There is not a sentence in them that calls attention to the character or works of Jesus as their subject. They simply record facts, and leave those facts to produce their own impression. We follow the steps of the Redeemer ; and mark that His influence on all men is precisely what the influence of God incarnate would be. If the recorders of His life had purposed to describe such a Being, supposing them able to form the conception and to execute it, they could not have better accomplished their task. The scene with the doctors and His parents in the Temple, the conclusion of the discourse on the mountain, the testimony of those sent to entangle Him, the various accounts of His colloquies with His disciples, occasional intercourse with individual strangers, and controversies with the malignant Jews, with the solemn pathos of awe which He inspired into every person who had to do with His death, all conspire to prove that the Jesus of the Gospels is always consistent with His claims to be the Incarnate Son of God. *Never man spake like this Man / never man was loved, revered, adored like this Man !* The sentiments inspired by this Son of the Blessed are to those who love Him testimony to the Divinity of His claims. And it has been permanent. There is nothing possible to the Supreme that the name of Jesus has not accomplished during the Christian ages. His name through faith in His name has evoked a stronger and a purer enthusiasm than any other ; and it is the only one that has evoked it among all races alike. Wherever the Gospel is preached and received Jesus is accepted as the Son of man Who is the Son of God : accepted with a fervour and confidence which no human qualities could account for. No mere man ever was or could be received with such an equal devotion : with that kind of catholic recognition which regards Him not as a Jew or an Oriental but as the Man Who belongs to all men. But the vast majority of those who have received Him have received Him as

John vii.  
46

their God : the exceptions have always been few. He has received a Divine devotion through all generations from His own people ; and been hated as only Divine excellence can be hated. He is still God *manifest in the flesh* : by far the most influential power that has ever been known in the affairs of mankind.

1 Tim. iii  
16.

#### HYPOTHESES EXPLAINING THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST.

Many have been the attempts to give an account to human reason of the most wonderful phenomenon in all human history : that is, to parry the force of this argument, the most precious and the most effectual of all that Christianity has to bring forward. It has been felt by friends and enemies alike, that this is the inmost stronghold ; and consequently both the most determined assaults and the most resolute defence have been found here. A few remarks may be made on the methods adopted by infidelity : the student will perceive that the consideration of these methods will tend only to strengthen our position.

Objections.

1. It is remarkable that the Gospels, which contain predictions of the entire future of the Redeemer's kingdom, very accurately predict, both by word and in act, the kind of assault that would be directed against the name of Jesus. During our Lord's sojourn on earth the representatives of every subsequent speculation spent their surmise and questioning upon Him, and the representatives of every subsequent attack are found confronting Him. The colloquy between the Master and the disciples at Cæsarea Philippi throws much light on the divided opinions of the generation. *Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am ?* was a question once asked and still continued from age to age. It teaches significantly that the opposition excited among His contemporaries took the form of hypothesis concerning His Person. His enemies pondered rather Who He was than What He was. Although sometimes they strove to impeach His moral character, as one who broke the Sabbath, or who stirred up the people, or who was too familiar with sinners, generally they aimed at the mystery of His relation to the Father : either avowedly pointing to His known Nazareth family, or darkly hinting at a supposed compact with Satan. Anyone who should collate and study the opinions of His contemporaries

One with many Varieties.

Matt. xvi.  
13.

concerning Him will find the germs of all subsequent opinions and treatment. From that day Jesus has riveted on Himself the regards of the whole civilised world. And it may be safely affirmed that all speculation on the Founder of Christianity has had reference, expressed or unexpressed, to the mystery of His Incarnate Person. This most strange phenomenon—the Form that seems so much like the Son of God—has to be accounted for in some way by those who reject Christianity. They must confront and salute this Figure: it may be with fear or with scorn or with reasoning doubt; but never with indifference.

Methods  
of In-  
fidelity.

2. The methods of infidel resistance to the claims of Christ have been very various; but usually they have wavered between two sides of an alternative: while all accept the reality and in a certain sense the truth of the Record, some have laboured to find flaws in this Image of holiness, or, if they have not disparaged the Lord's character, have aimed to prove that it exhibits nothing beyond human attainment; while others, despairing of this, and leaving His character untouched, have made it a picture drawn by the enthusiasm of His disciples vying with each other in laying on the Picture touches of perfection. What more has to be said definitely on these points will be only briefly indicated: reverence imposes a restraint as to the former class; and future discussion of the Person of Christ will introduce much that might otherwise be said on the latter.

#### THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF JESUS.

The  
Character  
of Jesus.

Our Lord's personal character, whether in itself or in relation to His mission, has been brought into controversy from the beginning; but with very different subordinate objects, and on very different principles. Generally, the assault has been negative or positive: either the absolute sinlessness of Jesus has been denied, or some positive moral impeachment has been ventured on.

Sinless-  
ness ques-  
tioned.

1. Negatively, it has been asserted that the sinlessness which Christianity imputes to its Founder is simply and absolutely an impossibility. Concerning this assertion it is enough to say that it pays an unconscious tribute of high importance to the fact that our Saviour's claim to be, in virtue of His Divine personality, eternally

and essentially what His servant calls Him, *Separate from sinners*. It is felt by most sincere opponents of the Christian revelation that Jesus is presented to us by His Evangelists, and by Himself through their record, as One in Whom there neither is nor could be any taint. St. John gathers up all testimonies in one Indefinite Present: *In Him is no sin*. Some there are who do not admit that such a claim is made: many sincere Christians, for instance, think it necessary to the perfection of our Lord's human nature that it was possible for Him, under pressure of temptation, to have fallen; and many unbelievers suppose that Jesus went no further than a challenge to His enemies to prove against Him any moral evil. In either case, they take it for granted that He shared the common infirmity of mankind, and make their comments accordingly. Some, at whose head stand the French Encyclopædists, and the German author of the "Wolfenbüttel Fragments," regard him as an impostor who made piety a mask: having failed to secure the empire of Judaism he changed his note, and said that his kingdom was not of this world. Others suppose that he was only the first and greatest of Christian enthusiasts who have mistaken ardent zeal and high devotion for sinlessness. Later infidelity has been more respectful than the earlier, and has been content to allege that the exemption of Christ from sin is fatal to the claims of Christianity: since He was truly man, and all men are sinners. The Christian theology which meets such an argument by saying that Christ might have sinned but did not sin plays into the enemies' hands. The best, and indeed the only, reply is that the Head of the Christian Faith was tempted of evil in His human nature, which was conceived and born without sin; and that He was incapable of falling because His human nature had no personality independent of His Divine nature, which rendered sin impossible.

Heb vii.  
26.

1 John iii.  
6.

2. Positively, the elements of our Lord's character have been analysed, and found to be wanting in some attributes essential to perfection. This is a chapter in our Apologetics which the Christian mourns to approach, and would fain make very brief. He can see no spot in the Lamb of God; and the more he studies the character of his Master the more fully persuaded is he that it embodies all perfection. But many who say that they are dis-

Fault  
found in  
Him.

passionate critics come to a different conclusion. The Saviour's asperity against His enemies; His avowed indifference to ascetic practices, and disrespect to the conventional morality which would separate a Rabbi from convivial assemblies and prevent his numbering women among his disciples; His recoil from sufferings and from death; His vacillation during the last days of His life; the bitterness of the final Woes uttered before He left His people; these are features in which—by recent English Infidelity, to its disgrace—He has been counted less great than some of His own disciples. But there is no difficulty in answering these objections. As to the Lord's indifference to the conventional ethics of the time, it is enough that we adopt His own defence. As the Lord of the Sabbath He relaxed the prescriptive observances which had clustered around the day; as the Lord of the Temple He acted there as men did not generally act; and as the Lord of all proprieties He made Himself the Friend of publicans and sinners. Moreover, as His morals were well known to be strict in principle to the verge of rigour, it was His good pleasure to show in practice that the wisdom which cometh from above is justified of all her children: that her severity is not asceticism and her abstractedness from created things is not indifference to the welfare of mankind. The Saviour did indeed bow under the burden of His unfathomable Messianic sorrows, and His human part shrank from the bitterness of that death which was prepared for Him. But to shrink from death is not necessarily to fear it: the Redeemer only paid a tribute of salutation to the enemy whom He came to destroy. Moreover, his eyes must be holden indeed who does not perceive that in Gethsemane, as distinguished from Calvary, the question was of something infinitely more than death. On the cross, in the presence of multitudes of witnesses, no infirmity is betrayed for a moment: in the garden before the cross there is a most mysterious and incomprehensible struggle of the Incarnate Redeemer which points to the sacrificial endurance of the visitation of Divine justice for the sins of the world. This was not the sinful fear of dying: witness the words, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!* UNTO DEATH! Here there were only three human witnesses—if indeed in all senses witnesses—and the record of the exceeding bitter Gethsemane cry might have

Matt.  
xxvi. 38.

been withheld, if the Evangelists had written with the fear of enemies before their eyes. As to the last impeachment, our Lord is the perfect Counterpart and Representative of the Old-Testament Jehovah. As He said, *Ye believe in God, believe also in Me*, John xiv. 1. so we may say: those who disbelieve in Jesus because of His severity and wrath against hypocrites and reprobate sinners must disbelieve in the God of the ancient Scriptures. In the Gospels we see and hear and feel the very Jehovah of the older revelation, as He is described from Paradise to the Return from Captivity.

#### HYPOTHESES AS TO JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY.

As it respects the public appearance and work of the Founder of Christianity, the argument is turned against our Faith in many ways. It may be well to glance rapidly at the stages through which the assault generally travels, or rather at the various resting-places where the spirit of unbelief halts.

1. The first hypothesis reduces Jesus to the level of the other great reformers of mankind, assigning Him it may be the first place: PRIMUS INTER PARES, as they said of Him in Galilee that He was *One of the prophets*. At the right juncture he arose and fascinated the world by a mysterious influence which it could not resist, and so swayed the minds of his followers that he became for ages the Lord of human thought and destiny. Every great power in human affairs has had its secret. Every man who has moved his own nation in his own time, and many nations afterwards, has had some peculiar element of success: a great doctrine, or the offer of something longed for by all men, or irresistible force of arms. So it is said that Jesus had his secret, though no one ventures to say what it was. Suffice that he led captive the whole world at his will; and for some unexplained reason was more successful than any before him had ever been. The peculiarity of this hypothesis is that it treats the Founder of Christianity with great respect, and in fact has been accepted by many who accept the Christian revelation as from God: a Divine economy but without a Divine Head. But it is utterly inadequate to explain the Saviour's own testimony to the nature of His mission; and is therefore at best a great unreality. He Himself utterly disavowed

As to the Christ.

Primus  
inter  
Pares.

Matt. xvi.  
14.



John x. 8.

it. From the beginning to the end of His public teaching He separated Himself from other human teachers as summarily as He separated Himself from other children of Adam. Although the words *all that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers* had another meaning as spoken to the Jews, they were intended also to signify that no Messiah professing to have come with a revelation for the race could substantiate his claims. He Who spoke was Himself from the beginning to the end of the world the only Revealer. Neither does Christ nor do His Apostles rest the weight of the Christian religion upon the human excellence of its Founder in comparison of other prophets of mankind.

Fanat-  
cism.

2. A second hypothesis makes Jesus a Jewish fanatic, who was inspired by an intense study of the ancient documents and legends of Judaism, formed during his silent youth the amazing scheme out of which Christianity sprang, kindled his own enthusiasm in the hearts of a few others whose natures he could read as he read Simon's, came to believe in himself as the creation of his own enthusiasm, cast all upon the hazard of a great experiment, and at length paid the penalty of his daring. But a single glance at the awful tranquillity and reasonableness of the Lord's character at once dispels this illusion. An enthusiast He was, beyond any that ever lived: He was the second Adam, hungering and thirsting for what the first Adam had lost; both His anger and sorrow at the effect of sin, and His eagerness to redeem the world, sprang from His supreme charity. All the glorious enterprises of Christian love of souls have been only rills from the ocean in Him. But a fanatic He was not, nor is there one trace of fanaticism in all the narratives concerning Him. Those who read the Gospels in the light of the Old Testament, and with sufficient knowledge of Hebrew customs, will see no traces of religious frenzy in the acts of Jesus. It was no more than a meet tribute to His own honour and the honour of His own Father that He cleansed the Temple: that is, the outer court and approaches of it, where alone the guilty traffic took place, and where such an act of zealotry as His would require only authority to sanction it: *By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?* When He turned water into wine He did the precise opposite of what a fanatic would have essayed to do. When He

Fanatic  
in the  
Fanum.  
Matt xxi  
23

seemed to renounce His mother and His brethren, it was only to teach that He was of no race or lineage, but the Son of man : that lesson taught, He never treated His mother or His kindred with anything but love. As to those who profess to believe that He was a conscious impostor, though they hear Him ask, *How can Satan cast out Satan?* it is superfluous to say a word. That an impostor should spend his life in exposing hypocrisy, and in sacrificing self for the good of others, as Jesus confessedly did, His enemies of every age being witness, is what no sane reasoner ever alleged. Modern infidelity has outgrown that charge, and is or ought to be ashamed of having made it.

Mark iii.  
23.

3. So far we have been considering what arguments may be urged against the Divine origin of Christianity as represented by its Head. But these have had little success. Accordingly, the attack has been more generally directed against the documents of the Faith : and elaborate theories have been devised to account for the Author of Christianity without any special reference to Himself or His own character. These are sometimes dignified by high-sounding names, and have had much more attention than they deserved. By whatever names known they are simply variations on the central theme that the Christian religion is a remarkable development under favouring circumstances of a fortunate germ. This germ could not, however, have developed without the help of the early adherents of Jesus, who are supposed, in every form of the hypothesis, to have raised the superstructure—for the figure must now be changed—of the Christian system on the foundation of the name of Jesus : that name being supposed by some to have been merely the centre of legendary accretions, by others the symbol or expression of a national Messianic myth, and again by others as the watchword of opposite parties in the early church in the interests of which the Gospels were invented, thus creating a Christendom that forgot the true meaning of the name Jesus, being the expression only of theories or tendencies.

Docu-  
ments at-  
tacked.

(1.) First comes what may be called the Legendary Hypothesis of Christianity. It simply assigns to it an origin which requires no more than a slight nucleus of reality in the person of Jesus and His personal influence of word and work : the industrious enthusiasm of His followers invented all the rest. This method

Legen-  
dary  
Origin

of accounting for the Christian economy is applied to it in common with the whole scheme of revelation and all the supernatural events and wonderful histories of the Bible. In fact, it is the normal and necessary argument of unbelief in the Divine conduct of the universe generally, and of human affairs in particular. It is based on a philosophy, falsely so called, which makes the religious sentiment merely an accident of human nature, either its embellishment or its disease as the case may be. It supposes that the universal instincts, traditions, and religious records of mankind are merely the produce of imagination under a special influence, for which no account can be given. In particular, it assumes that the entire fabric of the Bible is a tissue of the national legends of a people smitten more than most others with the religious phantasy. With the application of the notion of legend and invention to the Bible generally we have not now to do: save so far as its utter futility in the case of the Gospels discredits its value in regard to all revelation. As to the history of Jesus it is hard, inexpressibly hard, to believe that so compact, affecting, and heavenly a narrative could have been made up of the floating traditions of Galilee and Judæa. It is enough to point to the inexpressible air of reality suffused over the accounts, their pure and childlike simplicity, the self-forgetfulness of the writers, their impartiality in recording what showed the weakness as well as what showed the strength of the great Hero of their narrative, the transcendent Picture drawn so absolutely beyond invention, and the natural flow of the narrative into the current of later history which cannot be assigned to legend.

Mythical  
Hypo-  
thesis.

(2.) The Mythical Hypothesis is but a modification of the former: more seemingly dignified but not more rational. The myth may be defined as the vesture in which great national ideas have, from generation to generation, clothed themselves by a certain necessity of human development, and without the concurrence of any conscious legendary invention. Undoubtedly the myth, *μῦθος*, means the product of fancy but not the product of falsehood. Every race has had its great illusion. The hope of a coming deliverer has been bright in the expectation of every people, especially of every people whose history has been, like that of the Jews, calamitous. The Messiah had been for ages predicted

and expected among them, especially since the Captivity. The Messianic idea was the great myth which was realised from time to time. When the Roman oppression was at the worst the idea took form in many persons ; but that of Jesus was the fairest. He was only the resultant of many forces springing from the common expectation. His disciples made him the centre of their unconscious but necessary creations ; and thus only embodied the supreme Judaic fiction. This hypothesis hardly merits refutation. It is utterly inconsistent with the facts. The Jesus of Christianity and the Christianity of Jesus did not spring up in poetry by which a nation expressed its hopes : the nation as such disavowed the whole. It was undeniably a very small company who were responsible for the form of the new revelation. The hypothesis must be applied to the plain, straightforward, and earnest circle of the Apostles. On the one hand, it in some sense lowers them to the level of childish dreamers ; on the other, it ascribes too much to their mythologic and creative faculty, which is thus supposed to have invented one of the most elaborate systems of belief known to man. The four Gospels and the Acts and the Epistles are not composed of the stuff that myths are made of. They are, or profess to be, clear history, and doctrine based upon the history ; with reasoning of the severest kind binding the whole together. Legends and myths are after all impalpable things : Christ and Christianity are hard realities.

(3.) The most popular theory among philosophical opponents of Christianity in its perfect form makes it the result of conflict among various parties in the Christian Church. Those who hold it may or may not accept the idea of a mission assigned by Providence to Christ : they may or may not believe in God. Generally they leave that matter undetermined. But there are two parties at two opposite extremes who have their specific notions as to the person of Jesus. The one hold Him to be the temporary expression of the eternal incarnation by which the Pantheistic God is for ever evolved in consciousness ; the other hold Him to be the simple expression of a human ideal. But all agree that the system contained in the New Testament sprang up from a union of many opposite, or of two chief, tendencies : hence it is sometimes called the hypothesis of Tendency. It

Tübingen  
Theory  
of Tendencies.

Paul the  
Founder  
of Chris-  
tianity.

would be scarcely necessary to examine this were it not that it has been by far the most influential theory in the attempt to harmonise the various books of the New Testament. It assumes that Jesus lived and taught and died ; but that no record of His history was thought of until far into the second century. Then arose gospels or memoirs with many aims or designs. Those which merely gratified an unsanctified curiosity found no permanent credit, and are now preserved only as relics. Some, however, were written in the interest of a Judaic Gospel, and of them St. Matthew takes the lead : some sentences preserved by him, and by him alone, might seem to make Jesus no more than a zealous assertor of the perpetuity of Judaism. Others were written in the interest of a Gospel for all the world, and of these St. Luke takes the lead : some of the most touching parts of his work introduce the heathen as receiving the glad tidings. Meanwhile, the hand of the partisan is to be found here and there and everywhere cunningly interpolating his own view : making the author whom he transcribes and whose text he corrupts speak a language inconsistent with his views. Accordingly, critics of this school have a reason to give for every various reading, and their only perfect text is that in which all writers absolutely agree. But there is another and more interesting application of the hypothesis, which might with more propriety be termed the PAULINE ; for it really makes Paul the founder of the Christian system. Different schools contended both over the body and the spirit of Jesus : over His resurrection from the dead in the flesh, and the resurrection of the spirit of Judaism in Him : there was a broad distinction between the Jewish and the Gentile, the bond and the free, the Petrine Christianity and the Pauline. The writings of the New Testament were composed or at least finished, some with the one tendency, others with the other ; but both were exquisitely combined in the Acts, which Peter and Paul divide between them with about equal pre-eminence. Paul, however, finally triumphed ; his Jesus spoiled the best of the Rabbis or Prophets ; prevented Judaism from putting on its perfection in the teaching of the Master on the Mount ; and gave the character of Christ a colouring of his own that it has permanently retained. The careful study of the New-Testament writings refutes this

most elaborate hypothesis, which arose from a superficial study of them. He who collates the four Gospels will find that they agree with each other, and with the later Epistles in representing Christ to have abrogated the Law as an institution for one people, and to have fulfilled its meaning in every sense. There is not a page of the New Testament where may not be found, either in letter or in spirit, the evangelisation of the world. The simplicity of the history, both of the coincidence and of the divergence of Christianity and Judaism, forbids the acceptance of this notion that the idea of Jesus was perverted by Paul. The Pauline Christ does not differ from the Petrine or the Johannæan. It is St. Paul who calls Him a *Minister of the circumcision*; and it is St. Peter who says that Christians are built up a *spiritual house*, and it is St. John who, in the name of all the Apostles, announces: *That which was from the beginning . . . declare we unto you.* All tendencies run one way, and that way is Christ: a Christ Who is not divided, but one. It is true that the Form of the Blessed One does not rise at once in full perfection upon the records of the New Testament: it is developed, as the word is, or gradually fashioned into its fulness and integrity. But the several writers conspire to this; and, after all that they have done, it is Christ Who remains and not they. Not I, each says, but Christ liveth in me. St. Paul especially deprecates this theory by anticipation in the beginning of the Corinthian Epistle. And, while we are observing the interminable phases through which it passes in this voluminous school of destructive critics, we hear always a voice: *Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?*

Rom. xv  
8.  
1 Pet. ii.  
5.  
1 John i.  
1, 3.

1 Cor. i.  
13.

SUMMARY.

1. Our Lord in delivering to His people the Faith delivers it, so to speak, with His own hand, and His own Person is His highest credential. He is the *Author and Finisher of the Faith*. Prophets before Him and Apostles after Him look, and bid us look, only to Him; or, as the writer who strengthens the faith of the wavering Hebrews says, to *Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession*: no man falters long whose eye is singly and supremely fixed on Christ Jesus. Revelation reflects the glory of His Person: that

Summary

Heb. xii.  
2.

Heb. iii.  
1.

- is, His Divine-human perfection. It is hard to demonstrate the truth of our Religion on the assumption that Christ was as other men; the Christianity of that postulate is not Christianity, and the character of Christ is the greatest possible embarrassment to its principles: the conclusion is too vast for its premisses. No man ever paid the person and words of Jesus the tribute of sincere, unprejudiced, thoughtful attention without feeling the irresistible power of this argument. *Every one that is of the truth*
- John xviii. 37. *heareth My voice*: these words are a sublime explanation and rebuke of the inmost spirit of infidelity. After all that He had said and done He would at the end give no further sign: *Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.* He still makes the same calm and unbending appeal: we have Moses and the prophets, we have Christ and the Apostles; but in them all He speaks of Whom the Father said, *Hear ye Him!* There is the immortal strength of the credentials or evidences of Christianity. If we believe in Jesus, all other apologetics are comparatively needless: if we doubt about or reject Him, all other evidence will be comparatively superfluous. It is impossible to read deeply into the Gospels without perceiving that the Saviour always appeals to something behind and below and beyond all other evidences. Whether present in the flesh or absent in heaven He looks for faith in Himself as a principle or sentiment or energy that ought to be awakened by His own manifestation and word. If that faith is not found a revelation from heaven is resisted: *Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.* Wherever and to whomsoever Jesus speaks there is an influence accompanying His words that must lead to faith, unless moral obstacles interfere. On that day when our Lord first opened to His disciples the secret of His Messiahship, and Simon Peter uttered the great confession, He pronounced the confessor blessed because he was taught of God; and yet it is most manifest that Simon only uttered the sentiment that the appeal of his Master naturally evoked. *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven.* We mark that our Lord sometimes points to His miracles, sometimes to the fulfilment of prophecy in Himself; but sometimes He seems to disparage both
- John v. 40.
- Matt. xvi. 17.

these. The evidence that radiated from His own Person, the virtue to vanquish unbelief that flowed from Himself, He never disparaged. Jesus is His own Interpreter, and His own Apologist: the Sun in the moral firmament that needs no other proof than that it is a pleasant thing to see the light. This great argument should be the helmet and breastplate of the Christian, especially of the Christian minister. It gives immense corroboration to all other defences; abates the strength of every form of opposition; and consummates and crowns the whole system of Christian apology. Other series of evidences may convince the judgment, but this central one gives rest to the heart. *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, was the language of our Lord at the time when He mourned over the unbelief of the wise and the prudent from whom His truth was hid, and offered His thanksgiving that to babes were revealed all things that were delivered unto Him of the Father.

Matt. xi.  
28—30.

2. Doubtless, this appeal—which as a whole is unique in the Gospels—was not limited to those whose minds were troubled with perplexities as to the truth. But certainly they were included. We find the Saviour often referring to the embarrassments of the age in which men's thoughts were directed to the great Messianic expectation and they mused in themselves. Himself being the Christ, and knowing full well the thoughts of all hearts, He felt the most profound sympathy with the struggles of those who came to Him for the solution of their doubts. We may be sure that His promise of rest was given to such men as were feeling their way to Himself through a multitude of prejudices and difficulties which it is hard for us to estimate. We are apt to forget that He was not only the Friend of publicans and sinners, but the Friend of doubters also. The more carefully we examine the accounts of His intercourse with men, the more certainly we find that the difficulties in the way of their faith were always present to His thoughts. We plainly see and hear how solicitous He was to vanquish unbelief and win the hearts of all. But this great apostrophe to disquieted minds and the great promise of rest teaches us that He Himself has no argument more mighty and more influential than the study and emulation of His own character: *That I am meek and lowly of heart*.

The Lord's  
Regard for  
Doubters.

Matt. xi.  
29.



Effects  
of Chris-  
tianity.

### THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity in the world is its own permanent apology. Its credentials have been presented to mankind from the beginning in the slow but sure accomplishment of the Divine purpose which it proclaims. To this it made its appeal in Apostolic days, and to this it makes its appeal now: what religion should accomplish in the free spirit of man personal or individual and social or collective the Christian religion has done and is doing. In one sense this is the most plain and palpable among the evidences of the Faith; in another sense it is one of the most difficult, inasmuch as the many obvious and reasonable objections which arise and demand to be considered are not always easily to be refuted. The best method of exhibiting this line of argument is, to state clearly what the claims of Christianity, as a power, are, and what they are not; then to point to the proof that it has answered and is answering its ends, notwithstanding the facts that may be urged to the contrary; and to show that every opposing or rival system has either been utterly powerless, or is slowly confessing its defeat.

Object  
of Chris-  
tianity.

### THE AVOWED AIM OF CHRISTIANITY.

1 Cor. I.  
24.

The key-note of this method of demonstrating the truth of Christianity is found in St. Paul's assurance that Christ in His Gospel is *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*. After challenging the whole world to gainsay what he affirms, and reducing its glorying to nought by showing the impotence of its wisdom, he

sums up: *That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.* The chapter, ending thus, is really a chapter of Apologetics; and these words which close it place the Redeemer, as the Author of Christianity, in the midst: with the world at its best on one side, reduced to silence and hopelessness, while on the other, the believers in Jesus have their glorying restored in Him Whom the Father hath made the very author of their new life, Whom He hath set forth more particularly to be the sole fountain of wisdom for the teaching of mankind, of salvation from sin for individual man, and of redemption for the entire race.

1 Cor. i.  
29—31.

1. The Gospel, making foolish the wisdom of this world, professes to impart perfect truth. The wisdom in St. Paul's sentence is what our Saviour meant when He said, *I am the Way, THE TRUTH, and the Life*, where the three testimonies must be united: in Jesus is the whole truth concerning the way of life; nor is there any other truth than as it is in Jesus. Now it may be observed that the Gospel really limits truth to the things which concern man's relation to God: there may be many verities in other matters, but there is only one truth, and that is the foundation of religion. When therefore we estimate the nature of the claim of Christianity it must be remembered that the claim is limited to religious truth only, and that as taught of the Holy Ghost. If the documents of the Faith are challenged on innumerable other questions, and judged by their relation to all branches of human knowledge, and tested by their conformity or otherwise with universal science, then their Author says, by the mouth of the same Apostle: *not the wisdom of this world.*

Wisdom.  
John xiv  
6.

Eph. iv.  
21.

2. Again, the system of Christianity proclaims that it brings to mankind generally, which of course in this matter is also mankind individually, deliverance from spiritual evil: that is, from the consequences of transgression by a provision for righteousness, and from the consequences of separation from God by a provision for sanctification to Him and His service. These two, it will be observed, are very closely conjoined, so as to form one idea: *δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἀγίασμός.* This is the wonderful claim of the

1 Cor. ii.  
6.  
Deliverance from Sin.

1 Cor. i.  
30

religion of Christ, that it professes to put away sin, by a method that at once sets the conscience right with God and His holy law, and delivers the consciousness of man from the sense of impurity and consequent estrangement from Him : both the CONSCIENCE and the CONSCIOUSNESS of sin being in the design of grace removed. The provision for this is the grand secret of the Gospel and the design of the mystery of the Incarnation. God hath provided in His incarnate Son the means of putting away human evil. Jesus Christ is at once man and God : His mediation on behalf of the human race is that of One in Whom God meets man on a new ground and in a new relation. In Christ all sin is atoned for by man : for He is man absolutely. In Christ God accepts the Atonement, and unites man to Himself notwithstanding his sin : satisfaction being presented to justice, and satisfaction guaranteed to holiness that the pardoned sin shall be also abolished. But here again it must be remembered that Christianity does not promise to rid individuals of evil by virtue of an act external. There must be a personal union with Jesus by faith, even as there is already a collective union of the whole race without faith. The individual is delivered only on certain conditions : through the penitent acceptance of the Atonement, and a sanctifying Spirit provided for all but administered only to the soul united with the Lord. If the infidel spirit asks how sin should reign in spite of an atonement that has put away sin, the answer is twofold : first, evil does not absolutely reign in the world, as will be hereafter shown ; and, secondly, the claim of the Gospel is not to deliver every man by a physical necessity or despotic application of power, but everyone who uses its provisions as an infallible remedy abundantly supplied.

Redemp-  
tion of  
World.  
Rev. xxii.  
2.

3. The religion of Jesus professes to redeem the world of mankind or the race of Adam from all its evil : to be set for *the healing of the nations*. This is everywhere its unlimited promise. It is not to be denied that redemption from all kinds of calamity is announced : a redemption in which not only man rejoices, but, in a certain sense, the whole creation around rejoices with him. The Old Testament bids the earth and the heavens be glad because of the coming of the Universal Deliverer ; and when He came Whom the earth and the nations desired it was declared of

Isa. ii.  
Ps. xvi.  
Ps. c.  
passim.

Him by Himself, in the first words He uttered concerning His mission when He assumed His office in Nazareth: *He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me [to heal the brokenhearted], to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* But here again we must be careful to note that the Saviour of our race never professes to have come with an absolute, unconditional, and universal deliverance from all the effects of transgression. How this should be, why it should be, that the Redeemer of the world does not, notwithstanding His name, put an end for ever to the evil of the world, is a question to which no answer can be given: no other answer, that is, than that the redemption of mankind is a probationary redemption, and takes effect only through the spread of a spiritual kingdom, as a process that acts with moral, slow, and not in every respect irresistible, force.

Luke iv.  
18.

4. Such are the claims, and with such qualifications, for which alone the religion of Jesus is answerable. In an argument which pleads its effects and results we are bound to take Christianity according to its own profession. It does not claim to be an instrument in the hand of absolute omnipotence: providing a heavenly Man or a Divinity in man who should first instruct the race in duty, then go down to the pit where its past generations were gathered, and rescue them; then send forth His influence to abolish sin, either in this world by moral teaching or in the next by purgatorial discipline; and, finally, put an end to all the evil that could not otherwise be removed. Neither is that the Gospel which Christ preaches, nor could we well apologise for it if it were. Be that as it may, the Christianity which it is our business to defend by showing its own credentials is of a very different character. It professes to be the sole instructor of mankind: but only in religious truth, and only through a word which a Divine Interpreter must explain. It promises to save men from their sins: but only through such an atoning provision on behalf of all as each must appropriate for himself. It engages to emancipate our world from all its evils; but only as that world is created anew in Christ, and made up of individuals who receive His salvation. If the opponents of Christianity forget the free-

Summary  
of Claim.

dom of man's will, and the moral character of the influence religion brings to bear upon it, then they contend against a religion which we are not anxious to defend.

#### CHRISTIANITY HAS FULFILLED ITS MISSION.

**Its Claim Sustained.** It may be confidently asserted that the Christian Faith has made good its glorying, whether we look generally at its influence in the world, or at its specific triumphs under the several heads already adverted to as the substance of Apostolical apology.

#### THE DIVINE WISDOM IN THE GOSPEL.

**Christian Doctrine compared with Others.** That Christianity has introduced into the world a system of doctrine worthy to be called Divine is the plea itself sets up, and one that may be sustained : in fact, it alone has a system of doctrine. All must admit that its exhibition of truth is at least the most compact and perfect the world has ever known : this must be allowed even by those who demur to many of its individual dogmas. Remembering that the Christian Religion means both its Testaments, that which it received and that which it created, we may say that it presents a body of professedly authoritative teaching on all subjects of interest to mankind,—ranging from heaven to earth, from earth to things under the earth, and thence back to heaven again,—in comparison of which all other teaching that belongs to the race is but as legend and fable. It is no exaggeration to affirm that whatever great fundamental truths are found in other systems come in a nobler form and in a more consistent connection from the lips of Jesus and His Apostles. There are doubtless many great spiritual ideas held by the Eastern Religions especially in common with the Gospel. But in the Gospel they are released from those appendages which almost distort them out of recognition ; and, what is more than that, they are taught as parts of one vast and literally infinite circle of truth the centre of which is God. Although the outermost circumference of this circle is nowhere, its inner circumference, which comprehends strictly human doctrines, is clearly defined and traceable all round, without any arc of indistinctness. It is

the compactness, completeness, and consistency of the Evangelical system of truth that sustains its claim to be the wisdom of God. But the argument—so far as it is argument—will be better exhibited by considering what may be said in opposition.

1. It would hardly be a fair objection to the Christian system of teaching that it is, as a whole, beyond the grasp of the human intelligence. Man's faculties are limited, and cannot expect to understand all the mysteries of religion. We know that we are encompassed about with innumerable worlds, which are but parts of the universe; but beyond our own planet we know little even of physical nature: how can we expect to understand the things that pertain to spirit and the God of spirits? Whatever truth is, it must at all points transcend our capacity. But it may be urged that many of the doctrines of Christianity are inconsistent with reason, or opposed to its primary laws of thinking: indeed, this is even charged against all the fundamental and peculiarly Christian revelations of truth. The Holy Trinity, that in the necessary unity or soleness of the Divine essence there are three Personal Subsistences; the creation of the physical universe and the beginning of limited existence; the probation and fall of spirits for ever unsaved and of redeemed mankind, as involving the dependence of an Infinite Being on contingent events; the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God, one Person in two natures as distinct as Infinite and finite can be; and the vicarious sacrifice of that Divine-human Person for the race of man; the vast contrast between this insignificant world and the price of its redemption; the doctrine of original sin as infecting the race, and yet virtually atoned for at the beginning or before it began its course, as actually after many ages expiated at the cross, and nevertheless eternally punished in many:—these are but specimens of doctrine absolutely essential to the Christian system which are said to militate against the first principles of human thought. Similarly, the entire record of the providential government of the world with which these doctrines are bound up, especially some of the more wonderful facts of Scripture, such as the series of stern Divine interventions and judgments in the old world and the prophecies in the New Testament of yet sterner to come, excite the rebellion of

**Mysteries  
Objected.**

human thought, which measures the unknown God by a standard of its own. Against this class of objections to Christianity there is no other argument than that which Christianity itself uses in the Scriptures of the New Testament. Both the Master and His Apostles speak as perfectly aware that they announce things utterly beyond human comprehension and things which seem to contradict reason. Their reply to every objection is, that the whole system of Divine truth is beyond and above mere human criticism; in fact requiring a special faculty, and that faculty to be specially illumined from above. Here was the force of our Lord's appeal to Nicodemus, who was perplexed by one of the seeming paradoxes of the new religion: *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things.* This is a word of great importance: our Lord's figure suggests that He had mysteries to disclose, not so much Himself as by His Apostles, which were as far above ordinary doctrine hitherto familiar as heaven is above earth. The Apostle Paul also again and again speaks of *the wisdom of God in a mystery*: in mystery unsearchable. The apologist may and must attempt to conciliate human reason by showing that the most difficult doctrines introduced by Christianity are rather above man's thinking power than contrary to the laws of thought; that some faint adumbrations of the highest of them all, the Holy Trinity, are found in nature and in the human constitution and some gropings after it in most of the traditions of nations. He may also point to the perfect unity of the system which stands or falls with its awful doctrine of sin: a doctrine confirmed by all the facts of human experience and the instincts of the human consciousness. If so much stress is laid upon the invasion and suppression of our instinctive principles, then it is lawful to point to them when they are in favour of Christian doctrine. Undoubtedly the tenour of the teaching concerning sin is in harmony with the profoundest thoughts of the human heart. He may also appeal to the instinctive hope of an equalising and reconciling hereafter and that future solution which is reserved for the vindication of the ways of Providence. But, after all that may be said, those who defend the Faith must be content to use an argument which man in his irrational pride despises: the argument that

John iii.  
12.

1 Cor. ii. 7.

imitates the Bible and refuses to argue with one who will not accept more than he can understand. Christianity imposes a doctrinal as well as an ethical cross. In many cases, the burden of the Faith is the chief ethical cross: that of which our Lord said, speaking of the mysteries committed unto Himself for babes: *Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me!* His elect ones in every age have bowed down; and, though this is not itself an argument, it must be remembered that very many of the greatest intellects among men have thought it wisdom to bear that cross, and have found in bearing it their rest. This rest must be sought and found.

The  
Doctrinal  
Cross.

Matt. xi.  
29.

2. The history of heresy in Christendom, the manifold perversions of doctrine within the Church, and the endless diversities of opinion among believers themselves, are pleas of which much use has been made. It cannot be denied that every truth has been perverted, and that almost every truth has been denied, among the communities professing to hold the Head; and, moreover, that the same documents have been and are still made the standard of appeal by maintainers of very opposite opinions on some most important points. But this undoubted fact is, on the whole, rather in favour of the Christian system than to its prejudice. Religious truth is not like truth mathematical. It is probationary, and does not command assent. Had it been otherwise it might have banished every error from the world in the course of one age. But it has the entire strength of sin and sinful prejudice against it; and those whose lives it cannot reform would fain reform its teaching. The Wisdom of God in the Gospel has ever waged, according to its own prediction, a double conflict: against errors in the world without, and against the foes of its own household. To obviate the argument that might and would be found in the unfaithfulness of the professors of His religion, our Lord has left on record His own testimony that *many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many*. So also St. Paul predicted the greater and lesser apostasies, and that *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*. And St. John summed up the strain: declaring that prophecy had already become fact: *Even now are there many Antichrists*. Moreover, he turns the existence and abounding of these opponents of Christ and His doctrine into an argument in favour

Heresy  
Objected

Matt.  
xxiv. 11.  
2 Tim. iii.  
13.

1 John ii.  
18, 19.



- of the religion from which they declined. Meanwhile the heresies  
 1 Peter i. pass away, but the truth *endureth for ever*.  
 25.

#### THE RELIGIOUS POWER OF PERSONAL CHRISTIANITY.

Personal  
Religious  
Power.

The effects of Christianity upon the character of him who heartily embraces it, and yields to its personal discipline, most abundantly confirm its claim to be a religion provided by God for man. It offers, through the atoning mediation of Christ accepted by faith, a perfect deliverance from the sense of guilt, and a perfect system of education for holiness. These are the elements of a salvation needed, and equally needed, by all mankind: the universal cravings of the race have been known to seek them as long as the history of man has been known. On these two great necessities hang all the obligations of religion. It must meet these, or it is useless; and, if it truly meets these, then it leaves nothing wanting. Now Christianity in all its doctrinal and ethical teaching keeps those two supreme demands in view. It makes everything, as it were, subordinate to them. It professes to show every man living the Way of Peace and the Way of Holiness: the method by which he may obtain knowledge of the remission of his sins, and full deliverance from the sinfulness of his nature. It promises to every believer a conscious union with his God: the power of a Divine life within making him happy and holy and fit for fellowship with the company of heaven. The testimonies of Scripture on these subjects are confirmed by a cloud of innumerable witnesses in the history of mankind, beginning with the Biblical records and continued to this day. Against this evidence of the truth of Christianity as against every other many things may be urged.

Objections.

1. It may be said that this kind of argument is altogether subjective, and begs the question. That the Christian religion makes such a claim is evident, and also that many have supposed themselves to be living witnesses of its truth; but that all such supposed experience is or may be the result of delusion, or of imagination, or of strong faith in an idea which goes far towards accomplishing its own will. Now the effects produced by the Gospel in those who have entirely surrendered themselves to its

sway have been such as no imagination could produce. Multitudes have felt relief from the burden of a guilty conscience, either gradually or suddenly imparted, which has been to them as if, in the language of Jesus, they had *passed from death unto life*; and they have consciously known, as they have been taught by St. Paul, *the power of God unto salvation*. They have been persuaded—as they think by the Holy Ghost—that their sins were blotted out; and they have felt a strength supernatural in doing right, in bearing affliction, in vanquishing self, and in suffering for God, the source of which they have confidently ascribed to the same Spirit. But this kind of evidence the New Testament itself is not eager to press on the unbeliever. It is reserved for the sure encouragement of those who receive it.

1 John  
iii. 14.  
Rom. i. 16

2. It may be said further that the average lives of professors of the Faith from the beginning have not sustained this argument: that the Gospel failed when it was first sent, accompanied by miraculous aids; that it then elevated only a very select number; and that its spiritual transformations and triumphs have been comparatively few from the very first, so few that they are fitly named the elect. Here again the apologist has little to say. He must admit that our religion has waged war against a strong power in human nature, and that this has been often a wavering or a failing war, even among its best professors. But if we grant that the influence of Christianity is moral only and not physical, there is no argument as against its own Divinity in its comparative failure. The earliest prophecies in the New Testament predicted precisely what has taken place; while they also assure us that the triumph of the Gospel shall prove hereafter to have been exceedingly great: much greater indeed in every age than the eye of man could discern.

The  
Failure  
of Chris-  
tianity.

3. But the plea most earnestly urged against this argument is this, that the best effects of Christianity have been produced by other systems either independent of it or contrary to it. Almost all the so-called natural religions of older or of more recent times have names to present which are thought not to suffer in comparison with the saints of Christendom. The Eastern faiths have a wonderful catalogue both of ascetic and of mystic devotees; and the Greek and Roman philosophies,—which have gloried in such

Com-  
parison  
with  
Others.

men as Socrates, Seneca, Marcus Antoninus,—are not behind them. This is a plea that it is not hard to set aside, although the method of doing so may seem somewhat bigoted. First, no true advocates of our Faith deny that godliness has existed outside of direct revelation. The early apologists of the Faith were wont to dwell much upon what they called the LOGOS SPERMATICUS, or the pre-incarnate Son of God at the root of human nature, or as a seminal inspiration of truth among the heathen, or the influence of the light of THE WORD everywhere diffused among men, as the New Testament declares. The effort to find Him after Whom the Gentiles groped has produced some of the noblest fruits of the tree of human morality. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold*, our Lord Himself said; and we may suppose Him to have wondered at the faith of many, before and besides the Syrophœnician and the Centurion, who put to shame the children of revelation. But this plea is sometimes carried too far. It may be denied that, apart from Christianity, any mortal has ever rejoiced in forgiveness and perfect victory over sin. On the contrary, the highest ethics taught and exemplified in heathenism have lacked the very qualities and prerogatives on which Christian teaching lays the utmost stress. Not only have they lacked these qualities, but they have despaired of the possibility of reaching them. The Heathen atonements were never regarded by those who offered them as securing forgiveness from heaven; and Heathen philosophy never pretended to bring to more than a few, and to them only in a limited degree, the thorough purification of the nature.

The Logos  
Sperma-  
ticus.

John i. 9.

John x.  
16.

Petitio  
Principii.

4. Finally, it is said, as already intimated, that this is an argument in a circle. We assume that Christianity is true because it produces certain effects which itself only declares to be Divine. Nor can we altogether disavow this. The evidences of the Faith are of necessity deeply infected with the *Petitio Principii*. From beginning to end the New Testament refers to the effects of its own proclamation of the Gospel as being produced by God. It accustoms the individual believer—and to the individual reference is now made—to look for and to be content with the testimony of the Divine Spirit, concerning Whom and His influence it asserts, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*. If it be asked, How is he to know that secret influence to be the Holy

1 John v.  
10.

Ghost ! the answer is, that the Holy Ghost also says, IT IS I !  
And, after all, the final refuge of the humble Christian must be in  
the Divine authentication of the Faith within himself.

Matt. xiv.  
27.

CHRISTIANITY RENOVATING THE WORLD.

The world is under a manifest process of deliverance from all the evils that weigh upon it as the fruit of sin. The pledge given by our Lord in that first sermon at Nazareth has so far been redeemed that we may with confidence predict that it will be redeemed in full. No power at all comparable to Christianity has ever been at work in the world : indeed, no power save the Gospel can be said ever to have been at work at all in the world of humanity at large. Judaism was Christianity within a limited sphere, and with only the hope of the Christ Who has come. But from the day of Pentecost the Faith of Jesus has been leavening the entire race of mankind. Negatively, it has been steadily raising the tone of universal morality, and abolishing the worst evils of human society : even beyond the limits of its own fellowship it has been an influence for good wherever it has been found. It has waged exterminating warfare against every vice that has ever been condemned by man's instinct or laws : mitigating on the way the evils that it is bent on destroying though unable at once to destroy. It may be boldly affirmed that wherever genuine Christianity has been admitted it has discountenanced and weakened and in due time abolished every practice that corrupts the fellowship of mankind as such. Positively, it has introduced benevolence in a thousand forms unknown to antiquity, and charities hitherto without a name ; it has raised and dignified all the nations that have received it ; and it may fairly claim as its own the civilisation of the modern world. Objections here also only too readily rise : objections confessedly hard to deal with.

Christian-  
ity brings  
Universal  
Redemp-  
tion.  
Luke iv.  
21—27.

1. It is, alas, a too obvious plea that the organisation of Christianity itself has been to a very great extent flagrantly corrupt. Very soon—to put the counterplea in its worst aspect—the religion of Christ, or rather the outward form of it in the world, fell under temptation. Errors crept in which were all the more perilous, and all the more humiliating, because they sprang from corruption

Its own  
Corrup-  
tions  
Objected.

2 Tim. ii.  
19.

of the noblest principles of the faith. It is not necessary to enumerate, what it is impossible to deny, that the Church which should reform the world seemed unable to keep herself pure. This plea cannot be answered without humiliation that it should be so, and thankfulness for the confidence we have that *the foundation of God standeth sure*. As to the answer itself it is simple enough. As it is no valid argument against individual religion that the godly may fall, so it is no disparagement of Christianity as a system that it is liable to perversion. The causes of that perversion are very obvious; the body corporate was not protected against them by any defence that should interfere with the laws of historical development; and both our Lord and His Apostles foretold the very apostasies and declensions that took place. Moreover, the evils and corruptions which have encumbered the cause of Christ have never altogether suppressed its saving influence in the world. And, finally, a steady reformation has long been going on within the Church which will issue, according to prophecy, in making it a yet more effectual power for the conversion of the nations.

Slow  
Develop-  
ment.

2. But a still more serious difficulty here arises. It is urged, and has been urged in all ages, that the supposed remedial economy of the Gospel is either, on the one hand, arbitrarily under the sovereign and elective control of God, or, on the other, dependent on the free agency of man: in either case, too slow and partial to be a real and effectual relief of the miseries of mankind as such. Perhaps no objection to the Christian scheme has weighed more with thoughtful minds than this. It seems hard that a Divine scheme for the rescue of a world should in any sense suffer defeat, or be slow in its processes and partial in its operation. Of mere human systems this might be expected; but surely not of the system which is said to declare both the wisdom and the power of God. The facts themselves are to the most cursory consideration very embarrassing. The countless multitudes of the descendants of Adam have been only slightly touched by the Gospel: comparatively few have even seen the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and still fewer have put forth their hands to it. What can be said to these things? Scarcely anything but what the Scripture itself says on this very subject.

The delay of Christianity to accomplish its mission, while the dying generations of men wait for it, is indeed a mystery unfathomable; but it is no argument against the Christian Faith to those who remember that it is one branch of an infinite scheme, every department of which is oppressed or glorified by the same mystery. And those who believe that the Creator works by a law of evolution that required numberless ages for the preparation of the earth, and in a long series of developments before man was reached, ought not to rebel against the slow process of man's redemption. There is no reply but the appeal to the unfathomable mystery that surrounds our being on every conceivable hypothesis. Those who reject Christianity because it does not search to the bottom and expound the enigma of life are not wise: it at least goes immeasurably farther than any other philosophy. We cannot with our present faculties, or at any rate with our faculties in their present stage of discipline, reconcile the inscrutable counsel of God, on the one hand, and the profound abyss, on the other, of human control over human destiny. Meanwhile the Christian economy is most certainly accomplishing the redemption of the human family; there is no other force in the world that even aims at this. We may predict that it will make an end of sins, and bring in everlasting righteousness for the race as such. We may be sure that the time will come when all miseries and evils that grace can vanquish will be vanquished and be forgotten; and that the wisdom of God will hereafter give account of everything that seems to impeach His goodness. As to the multitudes of individuals whom the Gospel seems to forget or fail to save by the way, they must be left with God and His Christ. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* But this eternal Judge of all the earth in the counsel of redemption committed all judgment unto the Son; and He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

Gen. xviii.  
25.

John v.  
22.

John v.  
27.

#### THE PERSISTENCE AND PERMANENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity has sustained its other credentials, and added a new one, in the fact of its early spread, its enduring life, and its

Persist-  
ence of  
Chris-  
tianity.

outliving every form of opposition. Its triumph over all the assaults of its foes as well as all the contingencies of time was predicted by our Lord for the encouragement of His disciples, when He first announced the foundation and destiny of His Church. The earliest use of the term is very suggestive in this light: *Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* It is both His defiance and His prophecy.

Matt. xvi.  
18.

#### THE EARLY SPREAD OF THE FAITH.

Early  
Spread of  
Chris-  
tianity.

Gal. iii. 15.

1 Cor. i.  
23.

The history of the early victories of Christianity is a strong enforcement of its claims. As a religion it had everything against it: so decisively against it that, on the supposition of its being one more new cultus introduced by a human innovator, or, as St. Paul says, *but a man's covenant*, every method of accounting for its swift diffusion and sway is baffled. Nothing in its relation to Judaism was favourable: the new Gospel was a miserable disappointment to the Jewish people: its proclamation of a crucified Messiah was *unto the Jews a stumblingblock*. It had few elements of affinity with the philosophical systems of mankind, and made no appeal to the pride of the human intellect: it preached a fundamental doctrine that was *unto the Greeks foolishness*, and even that doctrine it preached foolishly. It did not, in fact, come with any formal doctrine at all; but simply enforced at first the old truths of natural religion as taught by a new Teacher Who must be accepted before His mysteries were unfolded. It is true that the Person presented was supreme in excellence; but the Gentile disputers did not know this at first, and all they knew was that he suffered a death of infamy. If he was accepted it must be as one who in defiance of every law of nature had left his tomb, but did not, as might be expected, come back to live among men. Moreover, the men who proclaimed the Gospel could not be acceptable to the Jews, not being Rabbis; nor to the Greeks, not being philosophers; nor to the common people generally, not bringing a popular doctrine. Their Gospel inculcated ethics of the grandest character; but such virtues as spiritual-mindedness, unlimited forgiveness, meekness, self-sacrifice, contempt for this world, abjuration of all good in man, were not

likely to win attention. It introduced its adherents to a society that had no attraction but its simplicity, no rewards but persecution in this life. Yet in a few decades it shook the world, and in a few centuries subjugated it.

1. Against this it is urged that the power of a great idea fitly represented has, in every age, swayed mightily the minds of men, and that Christianity was only one more instance and not really more influential than some others. Something in the state of the world predisposed it for the peculiar idea of redemption introduced by Jesus and His Apostles; nor is it necessary—the argument runs—that we should know the peculiar secret. But it may be absolutely denied that any system of religious thought has ever commanded all kinds of people and excited such a perfect devotion. Brahminism and Buddhism and the other Eastern religions never even pretended to be forces for the world; and though they have long existed they are tending towards extinction, and the Nirvana of one of them is written on all. Mohammedanism has lived by the truth it borrowed from the Bible, and been spread only by secular force: it has indeed ruled a large portion of the globe; but it has long ago lost its missionary character. Christianity in all respects stands alone. Of course, there is no demonstrative force in the mere argument of success; nor would there be, if success had been much greater. But at least it may be said that in connection with other pleas this has great force: apart from a Divine power, there is no mystery in the religion of the Christ greater than its early triumphs.

2. But, although there was much external might to oppose the spread of Christianity, it has been argued that there was much within it naturally to further its diffusion. A subtle case has been made out of the concurrence of fortunate circumstances: such as the pure and vehement zeal of the Christians, their new doctrine of a future life, the miraculous powers attributed to them, their austere morals, the union and discipline and vigour of the commonwealth. But it is obvious that this style of argument does in reality pay a high tribute to the new Faith, while it has little force as a human explanation of its triumphs. The reasoning unconsciously points to that very Finger of God which it aims to withdraw from human affairs, if not to abolish altogether.

Objection  
that other  
Systems  
have suc-  
ceeded.

Its In-  
terior Ad-  
vantage.

Gibbon,  
ch. xv.



## Judaism.

## THE CONFLICT WITH JUDAISM.

Peculiar-  
ity of  
Jewish  
Opposi-  
tion.

John i.  
11.

Matt. x.  
36.

Acts vi. 7.

Acts  
xxviii.  
25—28.

Early  
Comprom-  
ise.

1. Judaism was the first enemy that Christianity encountered, and has been in all ages the most virulent if not the most formidable. Its opposition had this peculiarity, that it was manifested against the Founder of the Faith : in fact, it was the only human and visible opponent that He met upon earth. *He came unto His own and His own received Him not.* Throughout the whole course of His ministry, but especially towards its close when His claim to be the Messiah became known, He was persecuted by the representatives of Judaism. This gave a peculiar emphasis to His saying : *A man's foes shall be they of his own household.* Jesus arose in the midst of our race as a member of the Jewish household, to perfect and glorify the ancient religion. His brethren according to the flesh by their malice and blindness brought about in a way they never contemplated the consummation and end of their own national religion and law. And the result of their enmity in the death of the Messiah was a most wonderful fulfilment of prophecy and evidence of the truth of His claims. When we enter the Acts, we find that the first contest of the Gospel was everywhere with the Jews ; and that in most places, though not in all, the cause of Jesus was triumphant. It was not in Jerusalem alone that *a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* But neither in the Gospels nor in the Acts is the triumph of Christianity over Judaism so described as to make it an argument of the Divinity of the Christian religion. Rather it might seem as if the persistent enmity of the Jews was made such an argument, being so directly a fulfilment of prediction : *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.*

2. During the early ages there was a fierce polemic kept up between the Christians and the Jews. At first it seemed as if a compromise would be effected. A considerable body of Jewish converts received Jesus as the Messiah, but only as the greatest of the prophets, and as raised up for the ancient people : others being admitted to these privileges only by complying with their

rite of initiation, and by binding themselves to keep the law. But when that expedient failed, and the Christianity which had its final expression in St. Paul's writings gained the ascendancy, it was bitterly opposed by the ancient people, and all the more bitterly because they ascribed to Jesus and His religion the ruin of their polity. But Judaism the mother declined, and Christianity the daughter triumphed. From generation to generation there has been a ceaseless enmity between the Israel after the flesh and the true Christian Israel after the Spirit ; but, applying any fitting test whatever, we must be persuaded that the Christian Messiah has gotten to Himself the victory. His renewed, enlarged, baptised, and perfected Judaism lives on earth : the Judaism which still clings to the law, and still looks for Another, lives indeed, but is dead while it lives. It has had its schools of learning, and names of high excellence. It has also displayed marvellous virtue in its charities, in its indestructible patience of hope—though a hope that must make ashamed—and in its meek endurance of unexampled wrongs, often from Christian hands. But it is, as a system, dead, twice dead ; and never can be revived. Moreover, it is remarkable that the greatest intellects produced by modern Judaism—Maimonides and Spinoza, the latter especially,—have done much to unsettle the religious ideas of mankind.

Increase  
and  
Decrease.

8. But the affecting and unnatural conflict between Christianity and Judaism is itself, and apart from any great success, a strong argument in favour of the Christian cause. Both systems are world-wide in their extent ; both pervade, or bid fair to pervade, the whole earth ; but how entirely different are the issues of their progress respectively ! The one is advancing on a career of beneficence, in the course of which it sweeps away all systems of idolatry, cruelty, and wrong. The other simply overspreads the earth without any mission or pretence of a mission : in obedience, as it were, to some fate or absolute compulsion. Why the Jews are diffused among the nations, more or less dishonoured of all, and in spite of the enlightened views of the present day never able to throw off the universal ban that is upon them, is a mystery that can be solved only by their own Scriptures, now become not theirs but ours. In them, as interpreted by the New Testament, the reason is given so plainly that he may run who

The Argument.

- Deut. iv. 27. readeth it. It goes back to their very origin : *The Lord shall scatter you among the nations.* And a second date it has, which is the turning point of the history of mankind : *His blood be on us, and on our children.* Moses predicted that, if they should *do evil in the sight of the Lord*, they should cease from the enjoyment of their inheritance : *Ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it ; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.* Utter destruction is never in the Divine threatenings annihilation. His ancient people have gone out of the presence of God, like Cain ; and a mark has been set upon them, that they should not be exterminated, but remain as an enduring demonstration of the truth of their rejected
- Deut. iv. 25. *Messiah, Whose cutting off—BUT NOT FOR HIMSELF—was their greatest EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD.*
- Dan. ix. 26.

#### Heathen- ism.

#### The Early Struggle.

#### THE CONFLICT WITH HEATHENISM.

1. When Christianity appeared, the Gentile religions were both at their best and at their worst : they had reached the highest result of their wisdom and art ; but they had also descended to the lowest point of their moral impotence. The world was never so highly cultivated, and never so ethically vile. But both the strength and the weakness of heathenism were armed against the new faith, which was the object of the converging attacks of all the forces of the Gentile world. Christianity during the first three centuries was of course aggressive as well as persecuted. The ten imperial persecutions were only a reaction of heathenism against a spiritual persecution which itself had to endure from a religion that spared none of its weaknesses and poured contempt on all its errors. That religion prospered in spite of every attack ; and drove the mightiest mythology the world had known into the villages, whence it derived the name of PAGANISM. That which had been branded as an *Exitiabilis Superstitio* compelled before the fourth century the homage of all civilised nations of the empire. An attempt was made to revive heathenism under Julian the Apostate ; but it signally failed. The great Apologies of the second century were never answered. And when, somewhat later, the advocates of the ancient and effete

religions charged upon Christianity the decay and ruin of the empire, Augustine's treatise *De Civitate* and other similar writings, silenced the argument of heathenism for ever. Although many extraneous causes conspired to aid the Christian Religion in gaining ascendancy, the dispassionate verdict of history must be that its own internal power gave it the victory. And that power was the Holy Ghost leading it *in triumph in Christ*.

2. This triumph of Christianity is all the more remarkable because as conquering it was itself infected by many of the errors it displaced. Scarcely a form of superstition was overcome which did not contribute its measure of corruption to the faith of Jesus. The earlier and later heresies were to a great extent results of the infusion of the old leaven of Oriental and Classical modes of thought. Gentile philosophy was vanquished; but its Parthian arrows left their poison, and the final superiority of orthodox Christianity over the subtle errors of Gnosticism, Manichæism, Pantheistic mysticism, with the superstitions of materialistic sacramentalism in later days, manifested its eternal power not less than its original suppression of heathen error. If we take a broad and catholic view of Christian history in its doctrinal development we shall see that there has been a steady, continuous victory of truth over all forms of the Gentile lie whether without or within the Church. No weapon formed against it, however often reappearing, has finally prospered.

3. No species of heathenism has ever effectually withstood the power of the Christian religion. Not always has its mode of assault been in harmony with its own precepts. Too often has its war with the old idolatries and superstitions been in harmony with that spirit which the Lord condemned in His *sons of thunder*. Sometimes it has imitated the violent methods of Mohammedanism or employed the cunning wiles of the great deceiver. But there has never been wanting an honest and true propagandism. And the result has always accorded with the high aim and pretension of the Gospel. It has supplanted one system after another in the South, and the West, and the North. The Eastern superstitions alone have seemed to defy its power. But these are slowly and surely yielding. They are the most ancient forces of heathenism, and in seemingly immovable tran-

2 Cor. ii.

14.  
Victory  
over the  
Heathen-  
ism that  
corrupted  
Christi-  
anity.

Over all  
Heathen-  
ism.

Lu. ix. 55

Mark iii.  
17.

Matt. xix.  
30.

Its Final  
Supre-  
macy.

quillity have survived the fall of a multitude of other systems; but they are surely succumbing to the truth which was earlier than they, and are fulfilling the predictions which make certain the universal spread of the Gospel. In them the word shall have its double truth: *many that are first shall be last* in yielding; and *the last shall be first* in demonstration of the glory of our Lord.

4. On the whole, a calm survey of the state of the world under the influence of the Christian religion will lead every philosophic student of history to the conclusion that the Head of the Church will surely become the Master of the whole earth. Human prophecy, guided by the lights of the past and the analogy of the present, must concur with prophecy Divine in predicting this. In the struggle for existence—if we condescend to use current phraseology—the survival will be on the side of Christianity. Give it time enough and it will, even apart from supreme interpositions of the Spirit, displace every other system. It has annihilated many; it has transformed some; it has touched all with the earnest of a fundamental change. The mystery of its slow development is in some respects unfathomable. But its ultimate supremacy is to human calculation the highest possible probability: to faith in the word of revelation it is as certain as the being of God. And its past, present, and future triumph is its irresistible credential.

Natural  
Religion.  
Not in the  
Beginning

#### THE CONFLICT WITH NATURAL RELIGIONS.

1. It has been already seen that the teaching of Christ is as much a republication of the original principles of natural religion as it is an expansion of the religion of Judaism. It rests upon these two as its pillars, so far as it is a religion: that is, a system of observances and morality and worship, which is all that religion or *θρησκεία* means. Christianity is, however, a great revelation, an unveiling of the supernatural world or order of things; and against all that it brings over and above the teaching of nature there has been from the beginning a protest. In fact, the early Apologies abound with arguments vindicating the religion of Jesus against those who asserted the sufficiency of the light of nature. But the victory over opponents of this class was then easy, as the world had been long accustomed to the thought of heavenly

interventions. Antiquity, which really had nothing but the traditions of a lost revelation, or what is called natural religion, was never without a strong conviction that it had at the same time something much better. It would hardly have understood the force of any argument against a revelation as such.

2. Perhaps the first, certainly the most influential, development of opposition to Christianity proceeding on this line of thought was DEISM, the form assumed by English Infidelity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this continuous assault on the Faith many elements combined: it was an application to theology, never intended by Bacon, of the new philosophy of induction and experience, as also an application of the sensational philosophy never intended by Locke; but it was mainly an attempt to show that the principles of natural religion render a supernatural revelation superfluous, that the documents and evidences of the supposed supernatural revelation are contradictory to the light of nature, and also that these documents are in themselves unworthy of confidence. As it regards this last point, in which the English Deists were followed by the destructive critics of France and Germany, more must be said when the documents are under consideration. The Rationalism also that underlies the entire system of attack must be examined elsewhere. Meanwhile, it is enough to say that the Christian revelation has not only survived, it has vanquished, Infidelity or Deism. The strength of this system—its theistic belief in God and adherence to the principles of natural theology—proved its weakness. The argument of Analogy was triumphantly applied to show that the believer in a God Who controls the course and constitution of nature ought not to reject the revelation of the Bible, which introduces only a wider extension or larger view of the same scheme of the same God. It silenced all rational opposition to the Christian Faith; and the silencing of opposition is in this case victory. As our Saviour said: *Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.*

Deism.

John xiv  
1.

#### THE CONFLICT WITH SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT.

1. Generally speaking, there has never been any opposition between Christianity and true science. For Christianity pro-

Christian-  
ity and  
True  
Science.

1 Tim. vi.  
20.

fesses to be, and is, a scientific presentation of the largest and broadest philosophy ever expounded to mankind. Hence St. Paul speaks of *oppositions of science falsely so called*. True science, or disciplined and formulated knowledge, must needs respect the system of thought which has commanded the homage of so influential a portion of mankind. It is not too much to say that no principle of thinking deserves to be called philosophy, and no results of thinking deserve to be called science, which can despise the Christian Faith. On this subject, however, enough will be found elsewhere. Meanwhile, it is one of the evidences of the truth of our religion that it has survived the attack of many systems of false science. It has in every past age received the homage of the best intellects and most earnest cultivators of both physical and metaphysical truth. This is true of the present age also. And it may be safely said that true Christianity is accepted by a far larger number of rigorous and sound thinkers than is to be found in the service of any one particular department of scientific opposition or perhaps in all departments of scientific opposition put together.

Science  
and False  
Christi-  
anity.

2. This being true, it may be granted that it is true only of genuine Christianity. There has been in all Christian ages an unsound development of certain doctrines against which sound science has successfully protested. The Christian Faith ought not to be held responsible for the additions of men; and there can be no doubt that it has pleased God to rebuke by the ministry of human learning many errors which have dimmed or perverted the Faith. During the Middle Ages the authority of the Church was armed in favour of false interpretations of Scripture, and science came to the aid of the simplicity of truth. Christendom has had much to unlearn and much to learn through its contact with scientific criticism and research. It may have something yet both to unlearn and to learn: many most important helps for the solution of difficulties, the removal of obstacles, and the reconciliation of apparent contradictions in the exegesis of Scripture, may and indeed certainly will be afforded by the investigations of scholars and physicists. Science furnished the key to open some of the dark chambers of cosmogony. And as the origin of things is better understood since modern geology sprang up, so also the origin of

man is and will be better understood when the chaos of modern anthropology is reduced to shape. If it should seem in any case that a clear result of inductive science clashes with Scripture or the Christian religion, it will be found, as it has been found in times past, that the contradiction is not real: either the Scripture and the particular truth concerned has been misunderstood, or the scientific induction may itself have to be corrected, or some yet unknown mediatorial fact must be waited for. There is much ground common to science and the Faith in the archæology, chronology, anthropology, and history of Scripture, not yet fully explored. Meanwhile, science in this relation is comparatively young, and Christianity is absolutely old. The foundation of the eternal verities that make up the relations of God and man has never been shaken by sound human learning and research. On many contested points there is doubtless much controversy. But religion has nothing to fear; and it is a consolation, though a subordinate one, that this is the firm conviction of many who are at once the most profound students of modern science and the most humble disciples of Holy Scripture.

3. There is, however, a false science, a *ψευδώνυμος γνώσις*, which has absolutely withstood Christianity from the beginning; and, with peculiar critical keenness opposes it now. This also it has vanquished in the past; and, though the issue is still pending, it will be victorious now. This science is one with many forms; and it may be called false, for its fundamental principles are unscientific, as destroying the foundations of all human knowledge. If science at all it is the science of nescience: a contradiction in terms. Scepticism, or suspended judgment on many points, may be tolerated; though universal scepticism is utterly alien from the spirit of the Bible, which appeals to the common sense of mankind against the chaos both of universal scepticism and universal nescience. The same may be said of Pantheistic science: though based on a principle which has commanded the homage of much human thought in all ages, it is not scientific; for it annihilates the distinctness, or at least the permanent distinctness of the thinking subject, whose fleeting phenomena cannot constitute knowledge. Christianity has overcome Pantheism: by the very fact that the noblest Pantheists, the mediæval, mystical, and

False  
Science.

1 Tim. vi  
20.



the German transcendental philosophers, have aimed to Christianise their system, and, in fact, have held it as Christians. Where it has not leaned on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity it has had no semblance of scientific precision : Spinoza's mathematical system died with himself. Positivism is the supreme delusion of the nineteenth century : professing to be sure and absolute science in every department, it leaves out the endless phenomena which revelation has taught the world, and that with the general consent of all true science, to call spiritual. Materialism is the modern form of Atheism which seems to threaten the hold of religion on men's minds. It is the last and most uncompromising of its enemies : never during earlier ages having risen with anything like strength, it seems now to be encouraged to assault the Faith by the aid of physical science. But sound science must, sooner or later, utterly disavow a system that abolishes the notions of cause and effect, of all final causes and ends, and asserts, in the face of evidence most absolute, the spontaneous origin of life. Most of these forms of the falsely called science will be considered in their appropriate place. Here it is enough to say that they have opposed Christianity in vain. The religion of Christ, with its earlier and later documents, gives a grand and consistent, though at some points most mysterious and unsearchable, explanation of all things. It may be said to have already vanquished all systems and hypotheses which are destructive only and have no positive principles or explanations of their own to substitute for what they take away.

Demon-  
stration of  
the Holy  
Spirit.

#### THE HOLY GHOST THE LAST CREDENTIAL

No view of the credentials of Divine Revelation is complete which omits a distinct reference to the Holy Ghost, Whose special influence accompanies the Truth as its seal, demonstration, and assurance. This has been of necessity referred to already, and will in due course be more fully exhibited under other aspects and relations. Here it is sufficient to lay down this principle as the sum and conclusion of the whole matter : the Spirit of God and of Christ

alone gives to all evidences their force, and imparts to those who sincerely consider them both the faith that believes and the confirmation of that faith. Moreover, though it may seem a hard saying, the secret of an unbelieving rejection of the Christian Revelation must be traced to an implicit or explicit resistance of His never-failing and impartial testimony. The presence of the Holy Ghost, promised and pledged and bestowed, is the last and crowning credential of the Faith.

THIS CREDENTIAL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It will be necessary only to indicate the force of the testimonies of Scripture on this subject : testimonies forming an unbroken series, the course of which may be easily traced by the following leading instances of their use and application.

1. Our Lord, laying the foundation of the Faith, declares that *the Spirit of the truth* should convict the unbelief of the world : *of sin, because they believe not on Me*. Moreover, He promised that same Spirit as *the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you*, by which His Apostles should be competent witnesses of Himself. It is most evident that to the Spirit is assigned by the Head of the Faith the function of enforcing its credentials. The Lord could not more expressly have said that the cause of Christianity was to be pleaded for ever by this Advocate or Paraclete. Accordingly, the first preachers of the Gospel appealed to this credential, or relied on this Advocate. St. Peter says of the facts, *We all are witnesses* ; but he then points to the testimony of the Holy Ghost : *He hat' shed forth this which ye now see and hear*. And, at a later time more expressly : *We are His witnesses of these things ; and so is also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him*. The Apostles speak with the consciousness of a higher Witness behind their own, to Whose effectual energy they look for the demonstration of their words. The entire Apostolic ministry illustrates the same truth. The human witnesses do their best, setting forth, as St. John says, events undeniable : *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our*

Appeal  
to this in  
the New  
Testa-  
ment.

Testi-  
mony of  
Jesus.  
John xvi.  
8, 9, 13.  
Acts i. 8.

Acts ii 32.

Acts ii 33.

Acts v. 32.

1 John i.  
1.

eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life. But they never rely only on that. There is

1 John v. 9. a concurrent evidence: *The witness of God is greater*, the same Apostle declares; and, with plain allusion to the Master's words,

1 John v. 6. adds, *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth*: καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια, as if the Spirit were Himself the witness that He Him-

self is the truth; or, as the Vulgate has it, quoniam Christus est Veritas. Thus the New Testament closes, in St. John's Epistle, with the great truth that the Holy Ghost, given by the Father, is the permanent and, as it were, official proof in the world that

1 John v. 10. God hath given His Son. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself*. Outside of himself, and objectively, there

1 John v. 6. is the Saviour *that came by water and blood*: the believer receives the external evidences of the mission of Jesus, both in its commencement by Baptism and at its consummation on the cross. But the Spirit is the supreme Witness within the witness.

Reason of Unbelief. 2. It is very important, in connection with this, to remember that the actual presence of unbelief in the Christian revelation is

referred by St. Paul plainly and unambiguously to the rejection of the Spirit: he tells the Corinthians, after reminding them *that*

1 Cor. xii. 2, 3. *ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led*, that *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*,

words which follow their counterpart, *No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed*. Above he had already said

1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. *that faith standeth in the power of God*, that is, *in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. These passages confirm the principle

laid down generally in the New Testament, that there is a sense in which faith in the Christian revelation is the gift of God: a gift, that is, bestowed in connection with the prudent and prayerful use of our own faculties. Hence St. John ratifies the whole

at the close of Scripture, by saying that every true Christian *that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself*: hath, that

1 John v. 10. is, both the testimony and Him that beareth it within his own

1 John v. 6. soul, as a permanent source of assurance. *It is the Spirit that beareth witness*, not merely to subjective personal acceptance, but

1 John v. 5. also to the great objective truth which is the ground of that acceptance, to wit, *that Jesus is the Son of God*. As the anointing

of the Holy Ghost was the Father's seal on His Son's mission—for *Him hath God the Father sealed*—so THE SAME ANOINTING, descending from Him *to the skirts of His garments*, is the seal that assures to us the truth of His mission and the reality of our interest in Him. St. John therefore says with confidence: *ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*: all things, that is, concerning the eternal difference between Christ and Antichrist. That unction of the Holy One, the Revealer, may not instruct in all mysteries, whether of nature or of grace, but if received in humble faith it serves two purposes: it makes the believer confident in Him Whom he trusts as a Saviour; and it enables him to detect the *liar that denieth that Jesus is the Christ*.

John vi.  
27.

Psalm  
cxxxiii  
2.

1 John ii.  
27, 20.

1 John ii.  
22.

#### ITS PRACTICAL VALUE.

Value  
of this  
Evidence.

This is the bare outline of a doctrine concerning the objective and subjective testimony of the Divine Spirit which the entire New Testament fills up. A careful consideration of the current of its teaching on this subject will convince all, whether students or preachers or defenders of Christianity, that an appeal to the never-absent demonstration of the Holy Ghost is their sheet-anchor for themselves and their last appeal for others.

1. As apologists for the Religion we believe in we must remember for our encouragement the limits of our own obligation. St. Peter instructs the early Christians who had, like us their descendants, to defend their creed, that it was their duty to be *ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*. We are bound to provide the very best arguments for the Great Hope that our learning and diligence can supply. This is most certainly demanded of us; but nothing more. After all, the Faith is not in our keeping, but in that of the Holy Ghost. If we happily succeed in disarming opposition or securing attention or exciting the beginnings of trust, the glory is God's: *Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts*. If we fail, and our opponents harden their hearts, we must not give way to *Jonah-like despondency*, and fall into the snare of our own ill-success:

Limits  
of Obliga-  
tion.

1 Peter iii.  
15.

Zech. iv.  
6.

- we must remember that our Master will see to it, and show in His time *whose words shall stand, Mine or theirs.*
- Jer. xliv. 28. **Preaching**  
Isa. xxx. 15. 2. As preachers also *in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.* We must cultivate an absolute reliance on a certain secret Divine testimony which is infallibly given to every truth that we declare: however weakly we proclaim it, provided only we proclaim it faithfully. Here we have the example of the Apostles, who with great fervour argue and persuade, but with the utmost calmness leave the result to God: *but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* But we have a higher example than that of the Apostles. Our Lord Himself, the Supreme Apologist of His own religion, committed His failing cause to His Father. He said, John vii. 16. *My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me;* and when they murmured against Him and His words, He answered their murmurings and said: *No man can come to Me, except the Father Which hath sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.* This seems like a tranquil reference of the contest to the arbitration of Heaven, leaving His opponents to their own responsibility. We may humbly copy His example. Our doctrine is not our own, but His Who has sent us; we must leave to His Spirit the responsibility and the justification of the tremendous mysteries we are commissioned to unfold.
- John vi. 44, 45. 3. As Christian men, we have to take care that we find our own full assurance of faith in the conscious influence of the Spirit of Christ. No theologian, in these days of doubt and despair of truth, can keep his soul in peace who does not so live that his mind may be the temple of the Holy Ghost, giving him *the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, which is summed up in one word, Christ.* A beclouded faith may be traced to many causes; but there is one secret of protection or cure: *He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness.*
- John viii. 12. **Personal Assurance**
- Col. ii. 2. **Summary.**

## SUMMARY.

Thus far we have only sketched the course that Apologetics may take in presenting the Credentials of the Christian Revela-

tion generally and as such; and as distinct from the evidences necessary to establish particular doctrines and particular documents. When we have to discuss the Canon, and proceed with the separate topics of theology, we shall find ourselves always obliged to maintain a defensive position. The contest is prepared at every point. The Christian system is everywhere militant; and some of the best evidences of the Faith are those which arise under the several heads of its individual dogmas, each of which has its own cause to defend. Meanwhile the general credentials of Christianity prepare the way for those more detailed evidences and add force by anticipation to the arguments introduced to sustain both the books and the doctrines. When the glorious revelation as a whole is accepted, that acceptance renders the mind more accessible to persuasion on subordinate points, and disarms captious criticism of documents and minor difficulties of every kind. When the objective Christian Faith is subjectively received by the faith of man accepting its credentials—credentials adapted to our probation, and amply sufficient, as sealed by the Holy Ghost—then it becomes comparatively easy to proceed to the specific methods by which that Faith has been communicated. The consideration of those methods connects this topic with that which now follows: in which we descend from revelation as objective, universal and one, to the form it assumes in holy books.

Inspira-  
tion.

## INSPIRATION.

The term Divine in the general proposition that the Bible is the Divine Rule of Faith suggests the inspiration and infallible authority of the Sacred Records. Inspiration, distinguished from Revelation as we have employed the term, denotes the specific agency of the Holy Ghost in the creation and construction of Holy Scripture: this is the Biblical conventional use of the word which strictly limits its meaning. The theological treatment of the doctrine requires us to examine, first, the testimony of the Bible itself to its own inspiration; secondly, the history of the dogma in the universal Church; and, thirdly, the dogmatic results that may be regarded as fully expressing the truth on this subject.

Revela-  
tion and  
Inspira-  
tion.

The distinction between the terms Revelation and Inspiration depends, to a great extent, upon their conventional signification. In the Bible we do not trace the distinction found necessary in dogmatic theology, and so elaborately discussed in treatises on the subject. These are hints, however, that justify us in assigning to each word its particular province

In Scrip-  
ture.

Heb i. 1

Heb. i. 2.

1. Scripture uses them interchangeably; or, rather, adopts the same forms of expression to exhibit the methods of both. God *at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets*: this includes at once the revelation of all truth to the minds of the prophets, and the inspiration by which they received and administered that truth. The Voice of God pervades the Old Testament; and in the New it still speaketh in *His Son*. The *divers manners* include visions, whether in dream or ecstasy, by the medium of which the Holy Ghost presented, with or without symbols, new forms of truth to the mind, or what is

always called the Word of the Lord; and also communications to the waking faculties, conscious of all their own exercises and controlling them. The *sundry times* cannot well be understood unless we regard them as including the successive stages by which the ancient people were entrusted with the written oracles. Thus the inspiration and the revelation are one. St. Paul unites them when he says, *I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord*: a sentence in which all ancient methods are reduced to two, and these are shown to be continued in the New Testament, though no longer so general and characteristic as they formerly had been.

2 Cor. xii.  
1.

2. On the other hand, the Scripture authorises the conventional phraseology which distinguishes between revelation of truth and inspiration to record it. The Son, in the unity of the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the Revealer. The Spirit, in the unity of the Father and the Son, is the Inspirer. The Son is the living and eternal Word in Whom the eternal ideas of all truth existed, before they were made known; but *the Spirit did signify* its meaning to the prophets, who *spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. The word Revelation is generally used of THE LORD; the only instance of the use of Inspiration refers it to the Scripture as the result. The disclosure of the mind of God to man is revelation when viewed in relation to the Truth unveiled, and inspiration when viewed in relation to the methods of its impartation and transmission to posterity. And, as revelation must in its highest meaning be limited to the unfolding of the scheme of redemption, so inspiration is limited to that one kind of contact or intercourse between the Holy Spirit and the spirit in man which produced the written Word for all ages and generations.

Conven-  
tional Dis-  
tinction.

1 Peter i.  
11.  
2 Peter i.  
21.  
2 Cor. xii.  
1.  
2 Tim. iii.  
16.

#### THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE ITSELF.

Scriptural  
Testi-  
mony.

The Scripture presents the credentials of its own inspiration. Hence, remembering that in things Divine credentials are always first, and are, if necessary, to be sustained by their own evidences, it is not arguing in a circle to receive the witness of the Bible concerning itself: we must study the whole subject with the Book in our



hands. The Old Testament yields its testimony in a manner accordant with its preliminary stage of development; but, though only preliminary, that testimony will be found to include every essential element of the doctrine. Christ, the Revealer, gives His supreme attestation to the authority of the ancient Scriptures: such an attestation, considering His claims, was absolutely necessary; it is expressly given, and of course it is sufficient. He has also with equal expressness, though in a different manner, declared by anticipation the plenary Divine authority of the writings of the New Testament. After exhibiting the evidence of this, we shall descend to the Apostles' testimony concerning the inspiration of the Old Testament and their own; and then may be in a position to sum up the evidence of the Holy Oracles concerning themselves as one united whole.

Old  
Testament.

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Deut.  
xxxiv.  
10.

1. The Old Testament does not lay down the distinction between Revelation and Inspiration; but it furnishes the evidence by which the distinction may be established. Communications of the Divine will were given in various ways to various men, few of whom, comparatively speaking, were educated and commissioned to write the permanent records of that will. The Patriarchs received revelations, and recorded some of them; but their records were not officially made Scripture by themselves. It was the special prerogative of Moses that he was the immediate organ of Jehovah, the Logos-Angel: *There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom Jehovah knew face to face.* Of him it is not recorded that the Spirit made him an instrument: a distinction which was afterwards perverted as we shall see. Of all the inspired agents of Jehovah who testified concerning Christ Moses approached most nearly to the Person Whom he predicted, or rather was brought into closest analogy with Him. After the Uncreated Angel withdrew as the immediate Revealer, phrases

are introduced which had not been known before but are used now in great variety. We read of *the Spirit of God*, or of *Jehovah*, coming down on men; of *the Hand of the Lord* moving upon one and another; of *the Word of the Lord* coming to them.

2. But, running through all, there is a constant commission to write: from Moses, through Samuel's schools of the prophets, down to the end of the Old Testament. *The Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book.* A large number of references to writing may be collected in the ancient records: to the men appointed to write *by the commandment of the Lord*; to God as Himself the Writer, *I have written to him the great things of My law*; to the manner in which the prophetic records especially were arranged and preserved, *and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah*; and to the general designation of the whole as Scripture, *I will show thee that which is noted in the SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.* It will be seen by a collation of the multitudes of passages of which these are specimens, that the Old Testament gives all the materials for the full doctrine which is presupposed, sanctioned, and unfolded in the New.

OUR LORD'S TESTIMONY.

Our Lord's witness to the inspiration of both Testaments is, to those who believe in Him, the sum of all reasoning. Not indeed that it renders the most careful examination of the documents needless; but a steadfast confidence in the Supreme Authority ought to precede, accompany, and follow every consideration of evidence. Certainly His testimony should more than outweigh all the objections which derive their strength from our ignorance. But that is not all. The Saviour's assurances not only confirm the results of inspiration, but throw a clear light upon its nature.

I. In many ways this supreme testimony is given by the Redeemer to the Old Canon as a completed whole.

1. First, by His absolute ascription to its writings of a Divine authority. It was the one thing common to Him and His Jewish opponents that the Scriptures, the same to Him and to them, were admitted to be in all parts the Word and the Writings of God. He asked them: *Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition*, but said nothing of adding to or diminishing

Numb.  
xxiv. 2.  
1 Sam. x.  
6.  
2 Chron.  
xv. 1.  
Ezek.  
xxxvii. 1.  
Ex. xvii.  
14.

Numb.  
xxxiii.  
2.  
Hos. viii.  
12.  
Jer. xxxvi.  
1—4.  
Dan. x.  
21.

Testi-  
mony of  
Jesus.

To the Old  
Testa-  
ment.  
His  
Appeal  
to it.

Matt xv.  
3, 6.

the holy books. They made tradition and that was their fault ; but they are not condemned as making or unmaking Scripture. While sweeping away their enfeebling glosses, and giving His own spiritual interpretation, our Lord expressly declared that the least ordinance and the least commandment in the Old Testament was Divine, and must have its fulfilment. Such is the meaning of *one jot or one tittle*, as connected with what follows.

Matt. v.

18.

Terms He

Used.

Matt. iv.

7.

John v.

39.

Luke iv.

21.

Matt. v.

17

Luke

xxiv. 44,

45.

Luke

xxiv. 27.

John x.

35.

Matt.

xxiv. 35 ;

v. 19.

Himself  
in it.

Matt. xxi.

42.

Rev. xix.

10.

2. He attested the entire Old Testament, secondly, by the terms He was wont to use in speaking of the older oracles. He quotes them as SCRIPTURE generally, and as individual SCRIPTURES. *It is written* was His answer to the Tempter in the wilderness. *Search the Scriptures* He said to the Jews and to all men : the solitary instance taken (indicatively) of the commandment : a commandment with promise, *They testify of Me*. And He began His own prophetic office in the synagogue by proclaiming, *This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears*. The ancient collection of holy documents He distinguishes according to the current division as *the law or the prophets* : commandment and promise. *In the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me*. But He unites them all again as *the Scriptures* in that last unrecorded exposition of the Old Covenant that He gave to His disciples. He once calls an ancient oracle the *Word of God*, and adds, *the Scripture cannot be broken*. With this it is instructive to connect our Lord's saying concerning Himself, *My words shall not pass away* ; which asserts at the end of His ministry the same eternal authority for His own teaching which, at the beginning, He had asserted for the law.

3. The Redeemer never fails to refer to the old Scripture as one testimony, given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, concerning Himself. *How then doth David in Spirit call Him Lord?* this is the one instance in which the Spirit's inspiration is directly referred to, and it is a special prophecy concerning David's Lord, uttered by David himself, as a solitary exception to his usual style, and quoted exceptionally by our Saviour : in fact, it may be said that the entire Old Testament was represented ; it CALLETH HIM LORD. Hence the *testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy* : this is a dictum which may also be inverted : the Spirit in the whole company of the prophets is the testimony of Jesus.

For all the ancient seers both saw and spoke under the influence of the *Spirit of Christ which was in them*.

4. Thus the Saviour's witness to the Old Testament is simply perfect in every element that Christian faith can demand. He began and ended His earthly life by declaring its Divine authority and the necessity of its most minute fulfilment. He gave His testimony, not in accommodation to a current notion of the times, but as the Revealer of all truth. And the force of this is specially strengthened by the fact that He sanctions the whole body of holy writers as One who is above them all. What He said of the Baptist was still more applicable to Himself: He is *much more than a Prophet*. He does not speak, however, as Himself inspired. Though a Prophet, and endued with the Spirit from on high, He never claims for Himself a limited and specific inspiration of the Holy Ghost: in this eternally separated from all the Spirit's agents. As the Son of God incarnate He re-utters the entire Old Testament as His own ancient oracles made new; they as it were died in Him to their transitory meaning, and rose with Him to be the power of an endless life.

II. It is of the utmost importance to ask in what sense the Redeemer assures to us a continuation of these authoritative oracles in His own New Testament. We may boldly say that the Great Fulfilment necessarily implied a continuation of Scripture, both as Word and as Writing.

1. Generally, our Lord testified, *My words shall not pass away*, which is an echo of the sublimest assertions of the Old Testament concerning the Divine oracle. All His sayings on every subject, whether recorded or not, were the words of God. Concerning the whole sum of His teaching He could bear witness, *I have given them Thy word*. This being so, can we suppose that such a deposit would die with those who first received it? Their Master made provision that His words should, so far as they were to abide, be preserved in their memory. The promise indeed is very comprehensive, embracing all that the Lord had said. On the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples were bidden to *hear Him*, and that in the presence of Moses and Elias. In strict harmony with this is the fact that at the close of His ministry Jesus, more expressly than ever before, made His own sayings the sum of Scripture. It

1 Peter i  
11.  
The  
Lord's  
Testi-  
mony.

Luke vii.  
26.

Continua-  
tion of  
Scripture

New  
Words.  
Matt.  
xxiv. 35.

John xvii.  
14.

Luke ix  
35.

is remarkable that He does not impress upon His disciples the solemn importance of remembering the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It was His own word,—*all things whatsoever I have commanded you*,—that He left as a legacy. Surely what He said of the sacramental cup may be applied in another way: this is the New Testament IN MY WORDS. The teaching of the Lord was the new Bible; and we feel instinctively how true is the phrase of St. Paul: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*. The word of Christ is no other than the word of God.

Matt.  
xxviii. 20.

Col. iii.  
16

New  
Scriptures

Ex. xvii.  
14.

Rev. i. 19.  
John xx.  
31.

Ex. iv. 12.

Isa lix. 21.

Jer. i. 7, 9.

Luke xii.  
12.

Mark xiii.

11.

John xiv.

26.

John xvi.

13.

2. He has also, both directly and indirectly, guaranteed to us new Scriptural writings. Though the Divine decorum forbade His leaving anything from His own hand, He did not reverse the ancient law that revelation should be gradually developed in the volume of a book. As Moses was commanded to write the beginning, so St. John was commanded to write the end, of that volume, to finish it as it had been begun. To be more particular: the new Scripture is prepared for and produced by the same Spirit of inspiration Who gave the old records. Precisely the same law of procedure which we have seen in the creation of the earlier documents we see governing the Saviour's arrangements for the later. It is as plain as if He had said: By My Spirit I give you new Scriptures. But this He did not declare: all grows out of His words without His saying so. Reserving revelation for Himself, He assigned inspiration to the Holy Ghost, though without giving Him the name of Inspirer; and so described His influence as to make it precisely like that which rested on the ancient writers.

In old time, it was said to Moses: *Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say*; and to Jeremiah: *Behold I have put My words in thy mouth, and Say not, I am a child*. Here a special inspiration for special need is promised, over and above the general inspiration for office. Compare the words of our Lord to His Apostles, promising the very same special influence: *The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost*. These are promises in the Synoptists; St. John adds the final and supplementary threefold assurance: the same Spirit will bring all things to your remembrance, *whatsoever I have said unto you*; further, *He will show you the things to come*; and, generally, *He will guide you into all*

*truth.* Connecting this special assurance with the Old Testament, the Lord afterwards said, *I send the Promise of My Father upon you*: as if it were a new function of the Ancient Inspirer that He would impress on their minds. When that promise was fulfilled, they were, like Jeremiah, children no longer, but men in understanding. Now with reference to the three departments of the promise in St. John, the fulfilment required, and therefore included, writing. Let this be carefully considered with regard to each. *These are written that ye might believe*, for the first. *Write the things which thou hast seen*, for the second. And the Apostolical Epistles, containing the development of the truth in its manifold applications, is the fulfilment of the third.

Luke  
xxiv. 43

John xx.  
31.  
Rev. i. 19

3. From all this we may assuredly gather that the Mediator of the New Covenant purposed to add another volume to the Scriptures of truth: without plainly saying so, any more than in Genesis He foreannounced the entire Old Testament. The facts declare this without any express declaration. The New Testament is constructed before our eyes exactly as the Old was. The same laws and methods continue in the new economy that were observed in the old. There is the same direct personal teaching, and the Apostles see the Oracle face to face as Moses saw Him. There are the same dreams and ecstasies; and there is the same overruling direction of the Holy Ghost in the compilation of documents. This only great difference exists, that the final truth is communicated by the perfectly revealed Son through the perfectly revealed Spirit; and therefore long times and seasons are in the swift consummation needless. All was accomplished in a single age. The Preparations occupied many centuries; the Fulfilment glorified one.

A New  
Volume.

#### THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.

Apostolic  
Testimony

The Apostolic testimony, both to the fact and to the nature of Inspiration, is most ample: the full development of this as of other doctrines is committed to the Apostles.

I. As to the Scriptures generally, or particular Scriptures of the Old Testament, their tribute is explicit and clear.

To the  
Old Test-  
ament.  
St Peter.

1. St. Peter, as Preacher and Writer, is perhaps the pre-eminent witness: in the Acts, to the Jews; in his Epistles, to

- the Church of Jews and Gentiles; in both, to future generations. On the eve of Pentecost he gives what may be called a classical text: *ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἣν προεῖπε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ στόματος Δάβιδ*. This is the Pentecostal witness once for all: in a form more complete than anywhere else, as it were a general definition. *The Holy Ghost spake*; using the *mouth of David* an instrument, also that of Joel; and the result was *Scripture* in one particular expression of it: whether as uttered or as written it is identical. Nor is St. Stephen less clear: he says that Moses received *λόγια ζῶντα*, *living oracles*; *δοῦναι ἡμῖν*, to transmit to posterity, here again the spoken and the written oracles being identical. St. Peter's Epistles contain important evidence. *No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation*—*ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως*, referring to the prophet's own knowledge—but *men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost*. As to the Biblical writings in particular, there is much weight in his expression, *the other Scriptures*, when viewed on all sides. A shorter phrase in the first Epistle adds to the words and the writings of the prophets the element of their authority: *if any man speak, speaking as if the oracles of God*, which are supposed to be the standard of all truth in doctrine and in ethics.
2. The Epistle to the Hebrews furnishes the most ample series of testimonies to be found in the New Testament. The force of these is to be felt only by an examination of the texture of the whole composition, which literally regards the ancient Scriptures as oracles spoken by the Holy Ghost, and preserved for the Christian Church in a book to be quoted from as infallible. It is remarkable that the same expression is throughout used to indicate the testimony of the Spirit and that of the writer whom He employs: *The Holy Ghost testifieth the terms of the great covenant in Jeremiah*; and *One in a certain place testified*, meaning the Psalmist. While in this document God absolutely is the Revealer, and the Son the supreme medium of revelation, the Spirit is specially connected with the written Scripture. It may be added, that *the first principles of the oracles* are represented as the same in the Old Testament and in the New: the rudiments which these Christians needed to be taught again were *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*; and, as these had been
- Acts i. 16.  
Acts i. 16.  
Acts vii. 38.  
2 Peter i. 20, 21.  
2 Pet. iii. 16.  
1 Pet. iv. 11.  
Epistle to the Hebrews.  
Heb. x. 15.  
Heb. ii. 6.  
Heb. v. 12.  
Heb. vi. 1.

taught in the Christian writings, these writings were also THE DIVINE ORACLES.

3. St. Paul also, both as Preacher and Writer, lives and moves in the ancient Scriptures. He quotes them constantly, and always as containing the Voice and the Writings of God. His manner of introducing individual texts shows plainly the importance he attached to the very words used by the Holy Ghost. For instance: *He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* He uses a wide variety of epithets, such as *The Prophetic Scriptures, Holy Scriptures, Sacred Writings, and Scripture given by inspiration of God.* The last two contain his final testimony to Timothy; and they together declare that the *Hallowed* or *Sacred writings* applied by faith in Christ impart saving wisdom; and that *all Scripture is Divinely inspired.* The term *θεόπνευστος*, as a predicate of *γραφή*, has given the theological word Inspiration its Scriptural ground, sanctioning also the extension of the term to the writings as well as the words and the persons of the inspired men. St. Peter's great testimony signalises the impulse of the Spirit on the minds of the prophets: they were *φερόμενοι*, led or borne along. St. Paul supplements this by making emphatic the result in the written Word in its widest extent, embracing much more than the word of prophecy. The former leans rather to the revelation, the latter to the inspiration, of the ancient documents; but both include the collected oracles, and their saving power to the believing recipient. Together, they condense into two short sentences the entire Biblical doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture: that is, primarily though not only, of Old-Testament Scripture.

II. It is most important to collect the Apostles' testimony to their own inspiration. But it must be remembered that, though always conscious of the Spirit's special influence, they would only on defensive occasions be likely to refer to it. In fact, the service of the Gospel required them on very many occasions to abstain from urging their highest claim.

1. St. John is the Apostle who gives the faintest expression to the specific gift of inspiration, while he is, perhaps, the most earnest in the assertion of the authority that resulted from it. Yet in the Apocalypse he says that he was, when he received his

St. Paul

Gal. iii.

16.

Rom. xvi

26.

Rom. i. 2.

2 Tim. iii.

15, 16.

The  
Apostles'  
Own In-  
spiration.

St. John.



- Rev. i. 10. prophetic communications, *in the Spirit*, the very term applied by our Lord to the inspiration of David: no prophet was ever more effectually *moved by the Holy Ghost* than he. He speaks of those sayings as *faithful and true* which he wrote to the churches by commandment of the Lord, as if they were his own; and the fearful words that end this book, if not the Bible, declare its inviolable Divine authority. In his First Epistle he seems to make the *unction from the Holy One* a privilege of all Christians; but a close examination will give reason to think that he referred primarily to the Apostolic *χρίσμα* or anointing, which was also a *χάρισμα* or gift, not limited to himself, and therefore not made prominent as his own, but his in the unity of the whole Apostolate. Supposing, however, that the anointing is spoken of as belonging to all regenerate believers, we fall back upon the tone of superhuman authority which is impressed upon this document, as upon the two lesser Epistles accompanying it.
- St. Peter. 2. St. Peter speaks of the writings of St. Paul as co-ordinate, on the same level, with the *other Scriptures*: a slight hint of an understood and current way of thinking has the force of a strong argument. It must be remembered that he had just before been referring to his reason for writing a second Epistle: *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour*. Hence there can be no question that he placed the apostolical company by the side of the prophetic; and that he regarded himself, as well as his beloved brother Paul, as representatives, in their writings and words, of the supreme authority of the common Master. For it is well known that Words and Writings are in Scripture often used interchangeably. In their ministry, applying his own language, *we have also a more sure word of prophecy*.
- 2 Peter i. 19. St. Paul. 3. As to St. Paul himself, there can be no question of his claiming the authority of inspiration. Not being numbered with those who had companied with the Lord and received His great promise on the eve of the Passion, it was necessary that he should dwell more on the prerogatives of his irregular investiture. He speaks specially for himself, though as the representative of all, when he claims so often to wield, both in presence and by letters,

the very authority of Christ. His reference to matters not given of *commandment* must not be misunderstood. He does not mean that he wrote merely on his own authority; but that in these particular cases he could not and did not appeal to any distinct and specific utterance of Christ. Yet it is observable that he is never more peremptory than in giving the decisions which are not settled by the precedents of the Supreme Master Himself. St. Paul does not separate between his personal life and character *as a man* and his official relation to the churches; though he distinguishes between Christ revealed IN him, and the new Faith revealed UNTO him, and the Gospel fully known BY him; these three filling up the whole compass of his new life. He ascribes his revelations to Christ as the Revealer, but to inspiration the *words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. In short, had he been present in the paschal upper room, he could not more abundantly have asserted his possession of the privileges of the Apostolic company. His letters were to be read in the churches as the very Word of the Lord, and for his least counsels he can say, *I think also that I have the Spirit of God*: a style of speaking sometimes regarded as meaning no more than the common Christian privilege, but never in the New Testament so used. The Apostle's habitual thought was moulded by the Old Testament, where such language is reserved for the organs of inspiration; for instance, *the spiritual man* of the prophet is literally *the man of the Spirit*.

4. The two historical Evangelists, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who shared not directly the great promise given to the Apostles, shared it indirectly. St. Mark and St. Luke had for their special province those subjects concerning which the promise was given by the Saviour, and under the direction of St. Peter and St. Paul. No writings bear more undeniably the *signs of an Apostle* than these: and St. Luke's especially are most essential to the living organism of the New Testament. But the consideration of their contributions belongs to the study of the Canon.

5. To sum up all. The writers of the New Testament form a body of men, united in the unfolding of Christian doctrine, who always deliver their message as from God their Saviour by His Holy Spirit. They do not often assert their inspiration: but it is everywhere implied by themselves and supposed to be under-

1 Cor. vii  
6, 12.

Rom. iii. 5.

Gal. i. 16.

Eph. iii. 3.

2 Tim. iv.

17.

1 Cor. ii.

13.

1 Cor. vii.  
40.

Hos. ix. 7.

St. Mark  
and  
St. Luke.

2 Cor. xii.  
12.

Summary

stood by their hearers and readers. In this they occupy precisely the same position as their predecessors in the Old Testament. Like them, they stand before the people of God with infallible teaching from which there is no appeal; like them, they occasionally declare themselves, when their authority is resisted, to be organs of the Spirit. In a word, they simply take the place in the New Temple of the prophets in the Old: continuing their office and ministration by a commission the credentials of which were known and read of all men.

**Dogmatic****DOGMATIC.**

Dogmatic Theology has a clear account to give of Inspiration. The Scriptures, fairly compared and interpreted, declare it to be that special influence of the Holy Ghost on the minds of holy men, selected for the purpose, which qualified them to communicate, from age to age, an infallible record of Divine truth concerning the redeeming will of God. This is the conventional meaning attached to the term both in earlier and later Christian times. Save with this meaning the word inspiration becomes comparatively vague and valueless. Here we have to consider the Inspiring Spirit; then the Inspired Organs; and lastly the Scriptures of Inspiration.

**The  
Inspirer.****THE HOLY GHOST THE INSPIRER.**

The Holy Ghost, in the Mediatorial Trinity, is, and is alone, the Author of inspiration. This is His personal honour, and implies perfection in His work.

**The  
Trinity.**

To the ground of this office in the Absolute Trinity we cannot penetrate any more than we can penetrate to the ground of the revealing function of the Word; enough, that as the Revealing Son is the Eternal Word, so the Inspiring Spirit, eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the supreme and sole medium of communication to the spirit of man. Whatever the

Son is to the creature the Spirit COMMUNICATES. In the Mediatorial Trinity the Holy Ghost presides over the impartation of truth. This may be illustrated by His relation to the Person of the Revealer generally, and particularly by the terms employed in the phraseology of Scripture on the subject.

1. It is true, throughout the entire economy of redemption, that the Spirit reveals the Son as the Son reveals the Father. The preparations for Christ in the former times, whether in natural or in supernatural revelation, were under His control; and especially the latter. *The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy*; and it was the *Spirit of Christ which was in them* that signified through the prophets that future redemption which is the sum of revealed truth. The New Testament fully discloses both the Revealer and His interpreting Spirit: the One as much as the Other. As all truth comes through the Son Who revealeth what He hath *heard of My Father*, so the inspiration of the Spirit has always made man capable of receiving the revelation. The Holy Ghost fulfils Christ's Divine word: *He shall not speak of Himself*. And, precisely as the work of Christ was fully made known when He appeared among men, so the office of the Spirit as the Inspirer of the permanent records of that work was fully known only after His Pentecostal coming.

2. The phraseology of Scripture has been seen to be faithful to this truth. There is a gradual unfolding of it from the beginning. The Spirit is dimly, though less and less dimly, alluded to in the Old Testament as the Inspirer: in the songs of the neutral ground between the Old and the New Testaments He is more clearly spoken of; until after Pentecost He becomes the representative of all the revelations of the Holy Trinity. This principle must regulate our interpretation of certain passages that might seem to speak otherwise: that is, with less distinctive reference to the Holy Ghost as the Inspirer. God is said to have spoken or done what is spoken or done by each Person in the Trinity: a canon this of great importance generally. It was *the Lord, the God of Israel who hath visited and redeemed His people*; but the Son was the Redeemer. *God sent His Son*: but St. John's testimony goes on that *the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*. So it is said that *God spake unto the fathers by the prophets*; but *holy men of God spake*

The  
Spirit of  
Christ.

Rev. xix.  
10.  
1 Peter i.  
11.

John xv.  
15.

John xvi.  
13.

Phraseo-  
logy of  
Scripture.

Luke i. 68.

1 John iv.  
10, 14.

Heb. i. 1.

- as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*. The Scripture is *God-inspired*, θεόπνευστος, but only the Spirit is the Inspiring God.
- 2 Peter i. 21. 3. Hence special honour is due and should be paid to the Holy Ghost in His office and province: He is the God of Scripture. In this domain He is supreme; according to the Nicene Confession, which introduces this Divine work into the highest act of worship: WHO SPAKE BY THE PROPHETS. It is therefore not to be wondered at or condemned that we pay also a certain homage to the Scriptures as His finished work. What is wrongly charged upon this submission as Bibliolatry is a becoming sentiment of reverence for the Spirit in His word. Of Him also it may be said, *His work is perfect*, despite any supposed appearances to the contrary. As creation and providence and redemption are finished and complete severally, so also is the organisation of the Scripture: perhaps all the more perfect because of some things which we in our ignorance count imperfection.
- 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Honour of the Spirit.
- Deut. xxxii. 4.

## THE ORGANS OF INSPIRATION.

**The Inspired.** The men chosen of the Holy Ghost to be the organs of inspiration were by Him sanctified through the truth for their office; their faculties were prepared by His influence for the special province of inspiration assigned to them individually; and He superintended and controlled the exercise of those faculties for the accomplishment of His own end in the construction of Scripture.

- Holy Men** 1. St. Peter, referring to the prophetic Word, says of the prophets: *men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost*. It may be affirmed of all the instruments used for this high function that they were under the common sanctifying inspiration or influence of the Spirit. It is true that revelations were given—that is, disclosures of truth, and visions of the future—both in the Old Testament and in the New to men who were raised up to this end, but were personally unsanctified: but Balaam and Caiaphas, though they received a transitory inspiration, were not employed to perpetuate or hand down their predictions. They were used
- 2 Peter i. 21.

for a purpose, and their enforced ministry was taken up, like Pharaoh's, into the Divine plan. Similarly, certain writings, not themselves written by inspired men, are incorporated into the fabric of Scripture. These were all exceptions to the general rule, that only those who are in harmony with truth and under its sanctifying influence received its higher revelations.

2. But the Spirit used His instruments as men: their sanctity, or special consecration to their task, was the sanctification of their natural endowments, acquisitions, and study. They were not passive in the writing of Scripture, even to that degree in which they were passive in receiving revelation. They wrote, sometimes after long interval, what they had received; and always according to the characteristics of their individual genius, style of thoughts, and diction. But their faculties were raised, invigorated, and strengthened to their highest pitch. What has been termed the DYNAMICAL theory of inspiration,—namely, that its influence acted upon and through the faculties of the inspired person,—is proved to be true by all the phenomena of the several books. From the record of the most transcendent visions down to the simplest private letter, the writer in Scripture is true to himself. No individual author in the classical literature of Greece or Rome differs more from every other than every writer in Scripture differs from his fellow, Chronicler from Chronicler, Prophet from Prophet, Evangelist from Evangelist, Apostle from Apostle.

Human  
Instru-  
ments.

3. Inspiration proper is then the specific influence on the mind, after these pre-requisites are provided for. And, although no distinctions in degree are alluded to in Scripture, the evidence may be found there that the one and the selfsame Spirit, *dividing to every man severally as He will*, regulated His inspiring influence by the need.

Nature  
of In-  
fluence.

1 Cor. xii  
11.

(1.) There are some portions of the Holy Writings in which pure revelation and inspiration coincide; where the inspiring Spirit would suggest the truth, and also the words in which to clothe it; in fact, use His instruments almost mechanically to subserve His purpose. It may not be easy to distinguish in every case the results of the VERBAL inspiration; and the fact that the autographs of the Bible have disappeared proves that the Holy Ghost has allowed nothing vital to depend on such a distinction.

Verbal

John xiv.  
26.

The most sacred words of our Lord are reproduced with slight variations by those to whose remembrance they were recalled; but we observe that His promise ran: *He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, πάντα ἃ, whatsoever I have said unto you.* The fluctuation of the expressions used by the several reporters does not invalidate the assumption that in much of Scripture there is the inspiration of SUGGESTION, especially of the things and sometimes of the very words.

Logical  
Argument

(2.) Many parts of the Bible, especially of the New Testament, are the logical development and formal arrangement of doctrine. St. Paul in his Epistles reasons from the Old Testament in assertion and defence of New-Testament truth; just as he and the other preachers of the Gospel proved from Scripture that Jesus was Christ. It is most obvious that in the conduct of his argument he uses his faculties according to the discipline of his youth.

1 Cor. ii.  
13.

But he himself tells us that he also used *words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, and enjoyed that special inspiration of the Spirit which

John xvi.  
13.

was promised by our Lord: *He will guide you into all truth, δδηγύσει, He shall guide you in the way of reflection, argument, and sound exposition.* All the Apostles received for the Church and the world what the Two received on the morning of the resurrection, and the Eleven afterwards: *Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.*

Luke  
xxiv.45.

Independent  
Testimony

(3.) A large portion of Scripture is testimony to fact, of various kinds; and no theory of inspiration of witnesses can be accepted which should destroy their independent character as witnesses. They were inspired or moved to deliver their independent and faithful testimony. Sometimes they have to register facts, or supposed facts, which they gather from public records; sometimes to record traditions, legends, current opinions, or uninspired predictions handed down by tradition: in these cases they are only witnesses of what they found. Sometimes they have to narrate events in which they had taken part to a greater or less extent: in this case they are directed to chronicle the result of their own investigations, each according to his own lights. Occasionally they are concurrent witnesses of transactions which they observed from different points of view: under such circumstances there is no previous harmonising of the testimonies, but each gives his own

faithful witness, according to his Divinely aided remembrance, the Divine aid, however, not necessarily rectifying the original defect or incompleteness of observation. Hence arise certain differences of presentation which the free Spirit has permitted : differences which are just enough to show that the witnesses are sent to give their evidence as independent, never enough to betray the supreme cause of truth.

(4.) Once more, much of the Scripture is the result of what **Editorial** would be called among men editorial arrangement. This extends over a considerable portion of the Old Testament, and is what St. Luke, for instance, in the New claims for his own function. Now the presiding and controlling influence of the Spirit was as much needed for this as for any other department of the economy of revelation ; but His inspiration was of a different character. He taught His instruments to distinguish in Hebrew literature what was His own and what was not ; He superintended the arrangement of the Psalms ; He taught the Evangelists to sift the oral traditions which were rich with the deposits and memorials of the Sacred Life ; and, generally, He watched over and directed the construction of organic Holy Writ as one great body of Literature, in many human respects like all other literature, but Divinely distinguished from every other.

THE SCRIPTURES OF INSPIRATION.

The Scriptures themselves may be said to be inspired as containing the permanent mind of the Spirit, and being the organ of His abiding and living influence. Hence this attribute in many ways distinguishes them from all other literature, sacred and secular.

**The  
Scriptures**

TITLES.

The names given to the collection of Books confirm all that has been said of them : whether those names are found in the Bible itself, or are the reverent invention of later times. The writers themselves use the very highest appellatives ; and never refer to the contents of the volume as a whole, or to any the least frag-

**Titles.**



- ment of it, without some expression of deep reverence. This habit was not confined to the Jews, ancient or modern whose well-known reverence approached superstition: it is shared by the disciples whom their Lord forbade to call any man master on earth, who had brought them a new law, and most certainly would not have suffered them to give such titles to any but the writings of God. In this, too, they had His example.
- 2 Tim. iii. 15. They are the SACRED WRITINGS, τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα. Thus St. Paul speaks of the Old Testament, and in a connection which shows that the things which Timothy received through faith in Christ Jesus were of equal authority, and therefore that the New was to be included. Scripture everywhere, they are in this closing page HOLY SCRIPTURE: The Writings pre-eminently, which refer not to the passing phenomena of time, but to the things of eternity. This is the only title they receive as a whole. They are the WORD OF GOD, however, in the estimation of Christians, as enshrining the Evangelical record of the work of Christ *which liveth and abideth for ever*; also, as containing the compendium of all the distinct revelations which are called individually the Words of God; and finally as suggesting, what indeed they do not express, the close connection between the inspired Word and the Word Incarnate. It is in some cases difficult to decide exegetically whether the term *Λόγος* refers to the Eternal Word or to the word spoken.
- 1 Peter i. 23.
- Heb. iv. 12, 13

## AUTHORITY.

In the  
Church.

1. Its plenary inspiration makes Holy Scripture the absolute and final authority, all-sufficient as the supreme Standard of Faith, Directory of Morals, and Charter of Privileges to the Church of God. Of course, the Book of Divine revelations cannot contain anything untrue; but its infallibility is by itself especially connected with religious truth. It constitutes, as will be hereafter seen, the absolute Canon or Book of Faith. It is comparatively silent as to human science; it has its own laws of grammar and rhetoric; it quotes traditions and admits records as testimony without pledging itself to their exactness. It does not profess to be Divine in any such sense as should remove it from human literature: a Bible of that kind would be something very different from

what we have. It is, after all, a Divine-human collection of documents: the precise relation of the human to the Divine is a problem which has engaged much attention, and has not yet been, though it may yet be, adequately solved. But in the domain of religious truth, and the kingdom of God among men, its claim to authority and sufficiency is absolute.

2. The evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures belongs rather to the historical review which will follow. It is sufficient to say here that it is found in its own testimony, confirmed by its effects. Here once more we must needs argue in what seems to be a circle. In fact, there are no evidences to be brought to the question from without: only credentials from within. The Book may be said to be inspired. St. Paul uses that expression, not of the writers, but of what they write; and points to its profitable uses for the proof. His words, already quoted, may be quoted again as the last authoritative assertion on the subject which the Scriptures themselves contain. *Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* This was St. Paul's final testimony, one of his Faithful Sayings: uttered when all his own writings were in the world, concerning which St. Peter used the same term *Γραφάς*, classing them with the other Scriptures. When he thus spoke to Timothy, he was himself giving him instruction which the older Scriptures could not give: hence the New Testament is included with the Old in the general declaration. The power of the holy oracles in the souls of all who study them has mostly been recognised as its supreme credential. The Holy Ghost lives in the Word; and His testimony to that Word, as the organ of His grace, is irresistible to the believer. To the unbeliever as such the inspiration of the Bible cannot be proved.

Credentials.

2 Tim. iii. 16.

2 Peter iii. 16.

#### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.

Historical

The subject of Inspiration occupies a large place in the history of religious thought and ecclesiastical polemics; which is not to be wondered at, considering the vast issues at stake. On the question whether God has given to His

people an authoritative revelation of His will hangs every interest of truth, assurance, and certitude of faith. If the Bible is what our doctrine of inspiration asserts it to be, many great questions of controversy among the Churches are, or ought to be, at once settled by it. This gives harmony where all else is confusion. But the doctrine has been and is impugned; and we must consider well the attacks upon a position so vital. Hence a general view of its development is very important in the settlement of the doctrine. In order to make the survey complete, it is well to consider the universal tradition of mankind, the judgment of the Jewish Church, the ecclesiastical dogmas in Christendom, and the present state of opinion and controversy as to the nature and effect of inspiration.

**Heathen.****HEATHENISM.**

In common with every doctrine of the Faith, this one had its distorted shadow in the heathen world; but the distinction we establish between Revelation and Inspiration is not here to be expected. Generally, a sentence of Cicero may speak for all:

De Div. i.  
1. *Vetus opinio est, jam usque ab heroicis ducta temporibus, eaque et populi Romani et OMNIUM GENTIUM firmata consensu, versari quandam inter homines divinationem. More particularly, the *μάντις* or Prophets, announcing their frenzied oracles; the Poets, feigning or not feigning a special influence on their minds; and the Lawgivers, of whom Numa is only a representative, correspond, in a certain sense, to the Prophecy, to the Hagiographa or Psalms, and to the Law, of the Jewish doctrine of inspiration. In a certain sense only, however: for heathenism knew nothing, nor pretended to know anything, of a great system of supernatural truth revealed to the minds of men.*

**JUDAISM.****Judaic.**

The JEWISH CHURCH, before the Old-Testament Canon closed, had an absolute faith in the inspiration of Moses and the Prophets,

and the authors of the other Holy Writings. They inherited a large miscellaneous literature, but carefully distinguished and held sacred that portion which was given them directly from above; and that distinction guided, as will be hereafter seen, the settlement of the Canon. The Judaism of the Interval retained, with scarcely perceptible diminution of intensity, the same faith. The apocryphal authors assert the essential difference between human and Divine writings. In the book which Baruch wrote in Babylon, God is appealed to in these terms: *As Thou spakest by Thy servant Moses in the day when Thou didst command him to write Thy law.* Tobit also instructs his son to *depart out of Nineveh, because that those things which the prophet Jonas spake shall surely come to pass.* In Ecclesiasticus we read of many prophets by name, and of Isaiah who *saw by an excellent Spirit what was to come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion.* Jonathan, seeking the friendship of the Lacedemonians, professes nevertheless not to need it, *for that we have the holy books of Scripture in our hands to comfort us.* The book of Ecclesiasticus in its occasional high prophetic tone seems to claim inspiration; but its claim was never admitted; and it prays indeed for the restoration of lost prophecy, from the cessation of which events were dated: *raise up prophets that have been in Thy Name;* as we read also in Maccabees, *So there was a great affliction in Israel, the like whereof was not since the time that a prophet was not seen among them.* Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, betrays the influence of Greek thought; but he has a high theory of inspiration, and declares that the prophets are Divine Interpreters, God making use of them as organs to manifest His will, suggesting what they must say. Josephus represents the purer Palestinian belief: "It is implanted in every Jew from the hour of his birth to esteem these writings as the ordinances of God, and to stand by them; in defence of them, if need be, cheerfully to die." He, like Philo, includes the historical books among the records of inspiration; and assigns an equal value to all inspired utterances. With later Judaism we need not much concern ourselves. It has lost its authority as a witness, in consequence of its opposition to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity Whom Christianity has honoured as the Inspirer. Moses Maimonides, in the twelfth century, was the first to devise three

Baruch ii.  
28.

Tob.xiv.8

Eccclus.  
xlviii.24

1 Macc.  
xii. 9

Eccclus.  
xxxvi.15  
1 Macc.  
ix. 27

Cont.  
Apion. i  
6—8.

stages of inspiration : the MOSAIC, without dream, fearless, face to face, constant, in which none shared the prerogative of Moses ; the PROPHEMIC, in which the pure truth was simply unveiled ; and that of the KETHUBIM, or Hagiographa, given by the Holy Spirit disclosing part of the truth in dreams or otherwise. Maimonides is the master genius of modern orthodox Judaism : "A Mose ad Mosem non surrexit sicut Moses" is a saying that expresses its method of rejecting the Prophet greater than Moses. But, apart from these philosophical notions of modern Judaism, the residuary and obsolete Jewish Church—if it may be so called—has always been faithful to its original and high doctrine of inspiration.

## Christian

## THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

In the Christian Church the dogma has had an important process of development, or rather of variations in theological opinion.

## Patristic.

## PATRISTIC.

1. The Patristic age furnishes no definition of inspiration, but a very high doctrine was maintained. The Apostolical Fathers quote the Old Testament exactly as the Apostles do : with the same reverent trust, and also with the same freedom. Clemens Romanus, the first uninspired Christian writer, assigns to the Scriptures of both Testaments the fullest inspiration ; they are "the true sayings of the Holy Ghost." Polycarp quotes the Apostles' words as being words of Scripture ; and St. Paul in particular is by more than one said to write as *πνευματικῶς* or *divinitus inspiratus*. Generally these earliest authorities make the Two Testaments One Scripture. The Apologists unanimously teach, or rather exhibit, almost a mechanical idea of it ; some of them, however, limiting its range to religious truth. They adopt the figure of the Lyre on which the Holy Ghost discoursed. Justin Martyr used this figure in what may be regarded as the first theological definition : *Οὕτε φύσει οὕτε ἀνθρωπίνῃ ἐννοίᾳ* could men know such great and heavenly things, but by a gift, *δωρεᾷ*, coming down on them . . . *πλήκτρον, ὡς περ δργάνῳ κιθάρας τινὸς ἢ λύρας χρωόμενον*. Tertullian, who invented many theological terms, first used that of *INSPIRATIO*. The early

Cohort.  
c. 8.

Fathers generally and as a body maintained the same high view Origen, erring on many other points, held on this the highest theory. Chrysostom and Augustine make the prophets the Mouth and the Hand of God: the latter speaks of the venerabilem *stylum Sanctæ Scripturæ*. The NICENE CREED includes the Apostles when it confesses to the Holy Ghost WHO SPAKE BY THE PROPHETS; this was the witness of the early and undivided Church to the inspiration of the Old Testament through the agency of the Personal Spirit, τὸ λαλήσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν. In harmony with this the Holy Ghost was called THE PROPHETIC SPIRIT: Πνεῦμά τε τὸ προφητικὸν σεβόμεθα καὶ προσκυνούμεν. On the whole, the Patristic Church was faithful to the doctrine which the last of the early Fathers, Gregory the Great, represented when he said: "It is needless to ask what writer wrote, as the Holy Ghost was the only author: it is superfluous to inquire with what pen an author writes." An appeal to the words of the Old or the New Testament, of either or of both, was an end of all controversy in those days as it is in our own.

Jwt. Mar.  
Apol. i.

2. Withal there were, as might be expected, the germs of later freedom and indeed laxity. The Montanist heresy, which assumed a series of Pentecosts and administrations of the inspiring Spirit, was wholly rejected; but it has had its modern representatives. The Alexandrian doctors, generally sound, here and there allude to an inspiration common to the prophecies of heathenism and Scriptural prophecies. Tertullian sometimes spoke, as others have spoken since, of an inspiration of all edifying books. Origen and Augustine seem to have admitted that some portions of the Bible were given without inspiration, or by inspiration of a limited degree. Some authors, even more than they, laid stress upon the subjective or human element. And this was carried in the Antiochene school, represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia, to an extreme: the writers were mirrors reflecting according to their polish. Theodore was condemned by the Fifth Œcumenical Council for surrendering certain books of the Old Testament and of the New. But, like Luther, who followed him in this, he held a high doctrine as to the inspiration of what he accepted; though, like Luther, applying a subjective canon of his own to determine what ought to be Scripture or what ought to be excluded.

Germs of  
Laxity.

## Mediæval.

## MEDIÆVAL.

Sess. IV.  
Dec. de  
Can. Sc

In the Mediæval Church, the doctrine of inspiration was obscured by the gradual elevation of Tradition into a co-ordinate rank: in fact, the notion of two inspirations—that of the Spirit in the Bible, and of the Spirit in the Church—was gradually established. But the theory did not otherwise suffer: the words of Scripture were still regarded as having a normal authority of their own. Fredegisus of Tours (804) even laid down a most rigorous mechanical statement on the subject. But he was opposed by freer theories, which in the rationalist treatment of Abelard and the subtle disquisitions of Thomas Aquinas anticipated later distinctions of the Spirit's inspiring influence. The Mystics, who in this age were mostly Pantheistic in their tendencies, gave up any definite doctrine of inspiration, making it common to all saints in their intuition of Divine things; and they thus provoked in some of the precursors of the Reformation a recoil to the most rigid possible views. Meanwhile the co-ordination of oral tradition steadily advanced, until it was formulated at the Council of Trent thus: Sanctus Synodus, hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens, ut sublati erroribus puritas ipsa evangelii in ecclesia conservetur, perspicienque hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quæ ex ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptæ, aut ab ipsis Apostolis S. S. dictante, quasi per manus traditæ ad nos usque pervenerunt, orthodoxorum patrum exempla secuta omnes libros tam V. quam N. T., cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, necnon traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem quum ad mores pertinentes, tanquam vel ore tenus a Christo vel a S. S. dictatas et continua successione in Ecclesia Catholica conservatas, PARI PIETATIS AFFECTU AC REVERENTIA suscipit et veneratur. Si quis autem traditiones prædictas sciens et prudens contemserit, anathema sit.

## The Reformation.

## THE REFORMATION.

The Reformation began in earnest the discussion of the dogma, as bound up with its cardinal principle, of the sufficiency of Scripture for all things pertaining to human salvation.

1. Its leaders were lax in their first decisions. Luther insisted on a material inspiration, as to doctrine, and a formal, as to the manner, which was of less importance: he subjected the books of the New Testament to the criterion of his own judgment as to their Evangelical character, and rejected, for instance, the Epistle of St. James. Calvin went also very far in the admission of the human peculiarities. Hence, their Romish opponents found in this laxity a strong argument in favour of Tradition. The Formularies of the two branches of the Reformation varied. The Augsburg Confession is content with the absolute regulative authority of Scripture: "*Regulam autem habemus, ut verbum Dei condant articulos fidei.*" The Reformed Confessions were stronger: the "*Formula Consensus Helvetici*" says: "*Hebraicus codex V. T., tum quoad consonas, tum quoad vocalia, sive puncta ipsa sive punctorum saltem potestatem, et tum quoad res tum quoad verba, θεόπνευστος.*" This was directed against Luther, who asserted that wood, hay, and stubble might be in the propheta, though the substance was there that could not be burned. The Anglican Articles are like the Lutheran more negative, the Westminster Confession more rigid. But the dogmatic divines of the new Churches tended gradually to the very highest rigour, as expressed in the Helvetic Formulary: thus Buxtorf maintained, irrationally, that the very vowel points of the Hebrew were inspired. In harmony with this, they asserted that the *TESTIMONIUM SPIRITUS SANCTI* was the sole ground of assurance as to the Divine authority of Scripture, while the *Affectiones Scripturæ* vindicated it to human faith and commended it to human acceptance: two incontrovertible truths, which, however, needed not the mechanical or Rabbinical doctrine.

The  
Leaders  
and Con-  
fessions.

2. The recoil from this extreme was to be expected. The reaction commenced with the early ARMINIAN divines, who reserved the direct action of the Spirit for matters of faith, leaving historical research and memory to do their part. Thus Grotius says: *A Spiritu Sancto dictari historias non opus fuit; satis fuit scriptorem memoria valere, aut diligentia in describendis veterum commentariis.* The later Lutherans introduced grades of inspiration: Calixtus, those of Revelation and Assistance; Pfaff, those of Revelation, Direction as to dogma, and Permission

Frear  
Theories.  
Arminian



Prælect.  
Theol.  
ii. 2.

as to all else. Witsius, however, in Holland, revived and maintained the more rigid view. The Jesuits, in the sixteenth century, introduced a convenient theory of POSTSPIRATIO, which should retrospectively elevate such books as the Maccabees into Scripture. This was protested against by the University of Louvain (1588), and left undecided by Sixtus V. The Romish Church has never gone beyond Perrone, one of its living representatives: "Diximus saltem QUOD RES ET SENTENTIAS, quia cum noluerit Ecclesia definire, seu dirimere quæstionem inter scholasticos agitatam, utrum præterea Deus verba ipsa dictaverit, nexumque verborum et periodorum, ideo ne controversiam domesticam cum ecclesiæ doctrina temere permisceremus, coarctavimus propositionis sensum ad rei substantiam, sine qua vera Inspiratio Divina neque est neque intelligi quidem potest." Meanwhile modern Mysticism has made the Internal Light co-ordinate with inspiration, just as Romanism has made Tradition. The highest Mystics, of all communions, rose sublimely above the written Word. The Pietists, however, such as Arndt, Spener, and the Bengel school, paid full honour to the written Scripture, maintaining, however, the supremacy of the Living Spirit. The Quakers in their formularies—for they have them—give ambiguous statements: Barclay supposes that the Scripture only guides the Christian's internal standard. The early Socinians believed in inspiration: without the specific Personal Inspirer, though as a specific influence. The Racovian Catechism indicates traces of the truth from which modern Unitarianism has declined, as it has receded from many of the other higher doctrines of Socinianism.

#### MORE MODERN HYPOTHESES.

Modern  
Theories.

1. Most orthodox churches have more recently endeavoured to maintain a doctrine of Plenary inspiration in harmony with the notion of different DEGREES. Rejecting the terms MECHANICAL and VERBAL, as both inconsistent with the human element, they have sometimes used DYNAMICAL, as indicating that the inspiring influence was not so much UPON as IN and THROUGH the writers: the result, however, being the infallible Rule of Faith delivered by the instrumentality of men acted upon according to the laws

of their own nature. This has required the distinction of SUGGESTION, the direct revelation of things otherwise unknown; ELEVATION, providing for the due preparation of the instruments; and SUPERINTENDENCY, as guarding the processes from the intrusion of error. The second of these is by many, naturally enough, thought superfluous. The Inspiration is PLENARY, as making the Holy Spirit responsible for the truth of all the matter; but not VERBAL, as if He dictated the very words, which in some cases are lost with the autographs of Scripture. Those who reject all such theories of distinction are wont to attribute them to the influence of Maimonides: but unjustly, for they are held by some of the most eminent and orthodox writers on the subject in all churches; and in some form must be accepted by every dispassionate student as nowhere contradicted by Scripture.

2. This view of the co-ordination of the Divine and Human undoubtedly lies at the foundation of the true doctrine; but its dogmatic definition is difficult and as dangerous as difficult.

Dynamical Inspiration.

(1.) The least error here leads to an annihilation of the essential distinction between the action of the Spirit of God on Apostles and Prophets and His general influence in purifying the regenerate faculties for the apprehension of truth. The notion of an analogy between this unity of Divine and human and the Divine and human nature in Christ is liable to the same errors which have beset the doctrine of our Lord's own Person. The Divine element has been and is still by many carried to an extreme in the view of inspiration that makes the human faculties absolutely passive: the Eutychian perversion, so to speak, according to which there is no humanity or human agency left. This has been sufficiently referred to, and is indeed self-convicted. But the reaction is more important in its consequences: the Nestorian perversion, on the other hand, which assigns to the human element such a distinctness and such an ascendancy as leaves no room for a distinct inspiring influence of the Holy Ghost.

Divine and Human.

(2.) Schleiermacher has given the tone to much modern English thought on this and other subjects. Coleridge, Morell, Maurice, and others regard the inspiring energy as only the impartation of clear intuitions of spiritual truth by extraordinary means: namely, the raising of the faculties of the mind to a higher potency of

School of Schleiermacher.

what all good men possess. Their notion makes inspiration simply a sympathy with the revealing mind of Christ, the Apostles having had it only in a higher degree than ourselves. The apostrophe of Moses, *Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!* loses its meaning. There is on this assumption no special prerogative of inspiration: all believers are inspired according to the measure of their union with the Lord. If the mechanical theory swallowed up the men in the Inspirer this loses the Inspirer in the men: both errors are equally to be avoided.

Truth in the Aggregate (3.) Again, great numbers of orthodox theologians follow Rothe, Martensen, and others, in regarding each writer as contributing his independent portion of what is perfect truth only when the aggregate is received. However much this principle may be condemned in the form it commonly assumes, there is in it much truth. The Bible is one organic whole. Truth is in every part; the whole truth, however, is only in the complete Bible. The writers of the Old Testament were inspired in anticipation of the New; and the writers of the New Testament were inspired to supplement the Old. The Synoptic Evangelists do not give the full mind of the Spirit as to the Person of Christ; but St. John's presentation of it requires theirs as a background. So, descending into details, every writer in the New Testament adds some fruit of inspiration which is not found in any other. There is hardly a recorded event in the Lord's life which is not transmitted by the Holy Ghost with various shades of difference in the several Evangelists, and to be understood fully only when the different recorders are collected. But it is obvious that all this touches the results of inspiration, and not inspiration itself.

Human Infirmities. (4.) There is a strong disposition to unite two things which are incompatible: the belief in an Inspiring Spirit responsible for all spiritual truth with the hypothesis that the human element is liable to all the common infirmities of human composition. When the analogy of our Lord's one Person in two natures is pressed into the service of this theory, it ought not to be forgotten that the human nature of our Lord was sinless and incapable of sin. If its upholders allow that the human element in the Bible is unsusceptible of real error, however affected by infirmity, their

doctrine may be made safe, and, if safe, it is deeply interesting and instructive. But that is not generally the view of those to whom we refer. They would indeed limit the possible incorrectness of our present form of Scripture to things entirely unconnected with faith; and account for it in various ways. Some of these methods are consistent with the dignity of the Word of God: they are such as have been hinted at already. Others are vain and needless devices, and surrender the principle of inspiration to vagueness and uncertainty.

#### THE APOLOGY OF INSPIRATION.

Modern assaults on the inspiration of Scripture are of two kinds: they either deny its possibility on abstract grounds, as they deny the possibility of revelation generally, or they seek to resist the evidences of its inspiration as a concrete book.

Assaults  
and Evi-  
dences.

#### PHILOSOPHY AND NATURALISM.

1. Spinoza, in the seventeenth century, united the two methods of attack. He rejected, on Pantheistic principles, the idea of any independent action of God, and was the first in later times to accumulate objections against the dogma derived from the text itself. He has not been followed by many in his extreme Pantheism; but Deism in England, and Rationalism or Illuminism in Germany and France, joined with Pantheistic philosophy in refusing to admit any Divine inspiration which should supplement the religion of nature as based on the intuitional consciousness of the human mind and its inherent perception of truth. But the defence of revelation generally is the defence of the method of imparting it. The possibility of inspiration consistently denied by Pantheism is inconsistently denied by Deism; for, with the assumption of a personal God Who is not transcendent but reveals Himself, all their arguments fall. Apart, however, from such denials of revelation generally, this specific doctrine is philosophically opposed by many on psychological grounds. The views of Schleiermacher, and many who echo him, have already been referred to as introducing a false notion of the doctrine. They do in fact really lead to a denial of it altogether. It is thought

Philosophy.

that religious knowledge, like all knowledge, is only the intuitional consciousness gazing upon realities ; and, therefore, that it is unphilosophical to distinguish between the inspiration of the writers of Scripture and the general Christian consciousness. But this notion undermines the foundations of a supernatural disclosure of the mind of God to man. Some seek to make a compromise. They think, with Coleridge, that in old time God did supernaturally communicate to men knowledge by the Law and the Prophets ; but that in these latter and freer days He makes common His revelations through the grace of enlightenment given to all. Hence, so far as the Christian revelation is concerned, there is no infallible authority beyond the testimonies of fallible consciousness. The more thoroughly the objections to a specific influence on the mind from without are considered, the more baseless will they appear. One human spirit can influence, and, as it were, inspire another. But here we have to do with the Creator of the human spirit, Who can not only move upon it but lodge His truth within it. There is literally no philosophical argument of any value against the Christian doctrine of a special inspiring influence of the Holy Ghost.

#### Discrepancies.

#### INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES AND DISCREPANCIES.

From very early times the industry of scepticism has been busy with the internal inconsistencies of Scripture, of which a very formidable list has been made out. Infidels early learned to use this weapon : it did not escape them that the Biblical library abounds, literally abounds, with the materials for their task ; the enemies of the Bible they have thought to find in its own household. But it will be seen by the student who gives the records of revelation the advantage of being supposed consistent, unless positive proof of inconsistency is found, that there are only such difficulties in the Scriptures as might be expected in such a book, written as it was written, and for the disciplinary, educational purpose which it has in view. Very much is done in the way of answering objections thus urged by simply analysing them. Such an analysis, however, to be of any value must be complete ; and the examination it requires belongs to the departments of Biblical Introduction and Hermeneutics. All that is possible in our

dogmatic system is to indicate some general principles that must be remembered in conducting it, and to point out the bearing of the question on our present doctrine.

1. Many discrepancies are, or at least may be, the result of copying and translation. We have not the Originals; there is not a solitary autograph of Prophet or Apostle extant; and many errors of transcription may be admitted, and indeed must be admitted, by every candid student of the text: the inspiring Spirit has watched over the vicissitudes incident to the transmission of human literature without superseding them. The consideration of this question, however, belongs to Biblical Criticism. It is enough here to say, that there are few portions of Holy Scripture of which we can be sure that they lie before us precisely as they left the hand of the first writers. The process of copying the Hebrew of the Old Testament was peculiarly liable to danger: from the similarity of the letters, generally, and specifically from the ancient habit of representing numbers by letters of the alphabet, the difference between units and hundreds and thousands being marked by the addition of points to the units. This is a fact generally conceded. Dr. Kennicott says, "That the Jewish transcribers did frequently express the Bible numbers in the original by single letters is well known to the learned." And Winer: "In expressing numbers, the Jews, in the period after the Captivity, employed the letters of the alphabet, as is evident from the inscriptions of the so-called Samaritan coins; and it is not improbable that the Old Hebrews did the same, just as the Greeks, who derived their alphabet from the Phœnicians, from the earliest ages expressed their numbers by letters. From the confounding of similarly shaped letters when used for numerals, and from the subsequent writing out the same in words, can be explained satisfactorily in part the enormous sums in the Old-Testament books, and the contradictions in their statement of numbers; yet caution is necessary here." A very large number of the contradictory historical statements detected by comparing the Chronicles with the Kings, and Ezra with Nehemiah, and the Genealogical Tables one with another, may fairly be thus explained. Nor should any weight be attached to these, though numbered by hundreds: each of them must be care-

Auto-  
graphs not  
Preserved.

Errors of  
Transcrip-  
tion.

1 Kings  
vii. 26.  
2 Chron.  
iv. 5.

2 Sam.  
viii. 4.  
1 Chron.  
xviii. 4

Rom. iii.  
2.

fully sifted, and the result will generally be satisfactory. When it is not so, we are bound to believe that errors have crept in through the operation of causes that we cannot now trace. For instance, we read in one account that the molten sea *contained two thousand baths*; in another, *and it received and held three thousand baths*. Now here we have an instance that may stand for many. Either 2, 2000, has been confounded with 3, 3000—the more probable solution—or the words *received and held* suggest that it was capable of containing the larger number. This is the first example that occurs: nothing but want of space prevents reference to many others. In this case we need not absolutely resort to a corruption of the text; but there are others in which there is no other hypothesis open. When we read *seven hundred horsemen* in one account, and *seven thousand horsemen* in another, we must suppose that 7 has been miswritten for 7, an easy mistake. In multitudes of texts we must accept such errors; steadfastly believing, however, that they are thus to be accounted for. And that, because we are equally bound to believe that the Scriptures of the Old Testament which St. Paul calls *the Oracles of God* were originally written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The New Testament has not been shielded from the errors of transcription: mistakes sometimes arising from carelessness, sometimes from design, but in neither case obviated by any continuous miracle. In the New Testament we have some early manuscripts that supply a standard of judgment; but it cannot be absolutely asserted that there are not errors now appearing even in all of them; and one or two seeming misstatements in historical allusion may be among the number. Here the only question that concerns us is, not how to reconcile inspiration with error in the Bible, but inspiration with a Bible liable to corruption in the text. That is a question not hard of solution. It is enough to the believer to accept the fact, and to admit all its consequences into his theory of inspiration. The holy men who wrote these books were inspired; but their inspiration left no protective virtue in these documents themselves. All we can say is, that it has not pleased God to bind up His eternal truth absolutely and inseparably for good and evil with documents that perish in the using. The truth of the Bible is not staked upon the truth of every sentence that may be found in our

copies of it. Meanwhile, it may be affirmed, on the other hand, that so far as concerns that *Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*, no corruptions of the written text have been suffered to interfere with its perfect presentation. Not one of all the multitude of various readings in the margins of both Testaments affects in the slightest degree the foundation of the doctrine on which man's salvation depends.

1 Pet. i.  
23.

2. Many of the arguments urged against the inspiration of Scripture are really directed against a false or exaggerated notion of its verbal character, and consequently fall away before a freer theory. That many words and sentences were given or suggested to the writers cannot be doubted by anyone who considers the solemn importance of some of the leading terms of Scripture. But to assert that every word was put into the mind of every writer on every subject is to lay on our doctrine a burden too heavy to be borne. It is hard to suppose that the very words in that case would not have been protected for ever. And such inspiration would have been too mechanical to harmonise with the obvious and undeniable range given to the human faculties. But the chief point is that this notion furnishes ground of opposition which it is difficult to resist. Very many instances occur in the Gospels of variation in the reports of our Lord's words, on the most solemn occasions, which in no case affect their sacred spirit and eternal meaning, but are absolutely incompatible with verbal inspiration. Our Lord could not have spoken the several exact words placed in His lips: what they severally mean He did speak. To take only one example, and that of the highest possible solemnity, we read the following accounts. *Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for (περὶ) many, for remission of sins.* Again: *This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for (ὑπὲρ) many.* Again: *This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for (ὑπὲρ) you.* Once more: *This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of Me.* Not to speak of variations in the historical scenery of the first institution of the Lord's supper, transpositions, derangements, and omissions, there is evidence here that much is left to the human instrument, and that the thing signified is alone supreme. But there is no evidence in this, or in the multitude of cases of

Verbal Inspiration.

Matt.  
xxvi. 28

Mark xiv.

24.

Luke xxii.

21.

1 Cor. xi.

25.



which this is an example, against the fact of the plenary inspiration and absolute authority of the records. The three recorders and St. Paul—who here supplements the Evangelists even as he supplemented the Apostolic company—issued their authoritative accounts from the selfsame Spirit, dividing to each severally as He would.

Science  
and  
Ethics.

3. Objections urged against the inspiration of Scripture on the ground of its science, its religious doctrine, its miraculous element, its ethics, and generally its inconsistency with itself or with the preconceived notions of men, are on the whole easily met. The Holy Ghost never delivers to man as science what science contradicts: to human science as such the Bible does not profess to contribute anything. Strong in our conviction that this book, or library of books, is the record of that Providential government for the sake of which the world exists, we may be sure that it will not be contradicted in fundamental points by anything that the records of nature, or the authentic annals of history, will disclose. There are unsearchable mysteries in the field of science as there are in the field of revelation: it is our wisdom to submit to them in both, waiting for the final reconciliation. But on this subject enough has been said elsewhere. As to the long array of doctrinal objections, they are literally not to be heard as against inspiration. The teaching of the Bible, as a whole, is absolutely self-consistent, supposing the idea of development to be introduced: admitting that idea, the gradual evolution of truth as to God and as to man, and as to the Incarnation uniting God and man, is precisely at all points worthy of the controlling Spirit, and such as only the controlling Spirit could have conducted. Particular instances of discord, as for instance between St. Paul and St. James, are in every single case such as a superficial glance discovers and a deeper meditation explains. There is much more force in the allegation that the ethical principles of the Scripture are not equable and uniform. But here also nothing but a calm investigation will do justice to all the elements of the question. Everywhere in the composition of the Bible the human element largely remains. As men are used as witnesses giving their testimony according to their best lights—true as testimony, but stating what the Spirit may use other witnesses to supplement—so human

passions enter without receiving Divine approval. The human documents and human compositions are sometimes quoted, without express Divine approval of their spirit or confirmation of their statements. There are many anomalies and difficulties which will never be cleared up, it may be, because we have lost the key to their solution: certain it is, that many of the stumbling-blocks of modern criticism gave no trouble to the early Church, better informed than we are. It is equally certain that many supposed flaws in the Bible which are regarded as negating its plenary inspiration disappear before profound investigation; and that many of them are flaws only when regarded in the light of a false theory of the doctrine. Men of God in both economies have all their faults described; and sometimes those faults are taken up into the order of Providence; but in no solitary instance is there any doubt about the fact that the Holy God loveth righteousness. Everyone allows that the Scriptures, as a whole, have one end, the establishment of holiness in man: then this admission should bar the possibility of misinterpreting passages that might seem to look the other way. That there are minor collisions in the ethics is certain; but we must remember that in every such case there is a reason given. But the heaviest impeachment leaves all else behind and attacks the conduct of God Himself in His dealing with sinful men. Now this is a question of Theodicy and not of inspiration. The Bible does reveal a wrath of God displayed in most mysterious ways in the present world; and foretells its display in the world to come. We see enough around to make us hesitate about refusing acceptance to the strange events recorded in Scripture, where miracle is one of the present powers of the world. But, in any case, they are no argument against the inspiration of Holy Writ: what force they have is on the side of Atheism.

4. It must always be remembered that the Bible is a book adapted to man's probationary estate. Our probation is conducted in a world of the mysteries of which we know but little. The world of revelation has also its unsolved secrets. We know, indeed, much about the fabric of Scripture; but there is much concealed from us. The Holy Ghost never defines inspiration as applied to the whole body of Scripture. We have to construct

Probationary  
Character.

our theory from the facts ; and our theory must take those indisputable facts as it finds them. As a whole, the Bible shines upon the spirit of man as the sun in the firmament : not less clear, not less self-evidencing. The difficulties are for the trial of our faith, our diligence, our humility ; and for the exercise of our souls in dependence, not upon the letter but upon the spirit. As Bishop Butler says : " We are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge it were to be expected God would give mankind by revelation, upon supposition of His affording one ; or how far, or in what way, He would interpose miraculously to qualify them, to whom He should originally make the revelation, for communicating the knowledge given by it ; and to secure its being transmitted to posterity."

**Azal ii.**  
**3.**

**Authority**  
**of Christ.**

5. Lastly, there is a high ground to be taken by a believer in the Christian revelation, that is by one who trusts in Jesus, which being taken must not be left for a moment. To this we have referred again and again : it is the conclusion of the whole matter. He came up out of the Old Testament with the Old Testament in His hand ; and made the voices of Moses and the ancient prophets His own voice. Long after the representatives of the old economy vanished on the Mount, leaving Him alone Whom all must hear, He expressly summed up their testimony as borne to Himself from first to last : *beginning at Moses and at all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* He made no exception, and no reservation. The framework of our living Saviour is the Holy Bible : He is set in it. The believer in Christ, the eternal Oracle of God, receives the Scriptures from His hands as clothed with a Divine authority ; if it were not so, if the Divine unction failed to descend upon any part of them, He would have told us. He has no doubt, he must have no doubt, that the inspiring Spirit has deposited in the Church a true testimony of the history of redemption. Whilst the attack and the defence are going on, it is his wisdom to wait in tranquil confidence. He must not take alarm, and capitulate. He must not abandon the outworks, nor intrench himself in the supposed Bible within the Bible, in the supposed Spirit in the letter. He must not do this, because the Christian revelation is bound up with its Two Testaments ; and he may be sure that the Holy Ghost will support him and honour him in his fidelity to the Records of his Faith.

**Luke xxiv.**  
**27.**

## THE CANON AS THE RULE OF FAITH.

Canon as  
Rule of  
Faith.

Having considered the Faith as the revelation of God in Christ accepted by man, and the Divinity of its records as insured by their inspiration, it remains that we complete the discussion of the subject by making prominent the specific character of the Bible as the Canon or authoritative Rule of Christian doctrine and practice. Two different uses of the term will suggest a division. Objectively, the body of sacred writings was determined, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, by the application of a Canon, or rule, to which they were found to be conformed: here we shall have the Canonical Scriptures. Subjectively, under the illumination of the same Spirit, these tested Scriptures became the absolute and final standard within the Christian Church: here we shall have to consider The Rule of Faith and its interpretation as a Sacred Text.

The word *Karón* signifies literally a straight rod; and metaphorically a testing rule or the organ of the critical faculty in ethics, or art, or language. It is also, in a passive sense, used to denote that which has been measured and determined. St. Paul applies the term both actively and passively in the only passages where it occurs in the New Testament. In the Patristic writings it is employed with reference to the Rule of the Church, the Rule of Faith, and the Rule of Truth; and the decisions of synods were called Canons. The derivatives of Canon were applied to the Scriptures before the term itself: they were Canonized Books, *Libri Canonizati*. Amphilochius, in a catalogue of the Scriptures (cir. 380), first adopted the word to signify the rule, or criterion, or standard, by which the contents of the Bible must be settled. From the time of Jerome it has been current and established in both senses, the one dependent on the other.

Gal. vi.  
16.  
2 Cor. x.  
13—16

**Objective  
Canon.****THE CANON.**

The objective Canon is the collection of all the sacred writings of the two dispensations. The Christian Church received the Canon of the Old Testament in its integrity from the Jewish, and that of the New from the Apostles, the Saviour's authority being the guarantee of both. It will be necessary first to establish these points by Scripture itself, and then to review the history of the formation of the entire Canon: examining briefly the subsequent variations of opinion as to its exact limits: both, however, only so far as they affect the Christian Rule of Faith.

**Scriptural  
Testimony.****SCRIPTURAL.**

The Canon of the Old Testament is ratified in the New, as containing the infallible and sufficient Oracles of God for the older dispensation: thus the Hebrew Scriptures, precisely as we now receive and hold them, are authenticated, and the so-called Apocryphal books are excluded. The collection of writings now called the New Testament also give indications of what might naturally be expected, that they would in due time constitute a new and supplementary Canon consummating the former.

**Old-Testament  
Canon.****THE OLD-TESTAMENT CANON.**

We have the fullest assurance that the Old Testament, as we hold it, was accepted by our Lord. He refers to the ancient distinction of The Law, *תּוֹרָה*, containing the Pentateuch: The Prophets, *נְבִיאִים*; and The Writings or The Psalms, *כְּתוּבִים*, the Hagiographa. The demarcations of these three departments were not precisely defined; but sufficiently to identify our present Hebrew volume as the same which Jesus had in His hand and

hade His disciples study. The importance of such a supreme testimony cannot be exaggerated : it may be placed, and sometimes we must place it, in the stead of many other arguments.

1. This testimony excludes the apocryphal books : the three-fold arrangement is, in fact, recognised and admitted by some of these writings themselves, which shows that they were avowedly excluded from the Canon. The term APOCRYPHA came into use in the second Christian century, to designate books of hidden origin (*occulta origo*), or perhaps secret authority (*secreta auctoritas*) ; and certainly with the further meaning of spurious and heretical in opposition to the accepted writings of the Church. Whatever was the precise application of the plain Greek word, it implied an absolute authority in the collection from which they were excluded, and the reason for their exclusion. The New Testament never quotes or alludes to these books. It may be said that this is not a decisive argument, as several books of the Old Testament are equally unrecognised : but it must be remembered that when the Law, or the Prophets, or the Psalms are quoted, all is authenticated that these conventional divisions were known to include. It may be urged also that the Lord does not, any more than His Apostles, specify the exact number of books contained in these divisions : especially in the last, which was the most undetermined. But we have the sufficient evidence of contemporary Hebrews to supply that deficiency. Josephus says : " We have only twenty-two books which are to be trusted as having Divine authority, of which five are the books of Moses. From his death to the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, the prophets, who were the successors of Moses, have written in thirteen books. The remaining four contain hymns to God, and documents of life for human edification." But thus we are led to the next point.

2. This division seems to set its seal on the means by which the Old-Testament Canon had been arranged and ratified. Our Lord assumed, what St. Paul expressed, that to the Jews, as a people, *were committed the oracles of God*. By accepting these Scriptures, with their extant divisions, He silently confirmed a long history, most of the details of which are lost. It is evident in the current of Biblical history that there had been a gradual collection from the beginning. The *Book of the Law* was deposited

The Apo-  
crypha.

Cont. Ap.  
I.

Our Lord's  
Confirmation of the  
Old Canon  
Rom. iii.  
2.

Deut.  
xxxii. 26.

in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord. This original was to be copied by every future king: *and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.* Nevertheless, Josiah had not seen it when *Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord; though we know not in how many hands copies might have been found. For it had been enlarged by other writings, and autographs may have been circulated by Joshua, of whom it is said that he wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and Samuel, who told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord.* Hence Jehoshaphat sent out his Levites who taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. Proverbs also were collected; as we read of the *proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.* One general Book seems to have been authoritative, of which the prophet spoke, *Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read.* But, until the Captivity, there was no distinction in the classes of writings. It was one volume that Daniel quoted, and Ezra and Nehemiah read before the people *from morning until mid-day.* When the Jewish polity was reorganised there was a final revision. The universal tradition of the ancient Church assigned to Ezra, and the Great Synagogue, the function of arranging their Scriptures in their present form; the persecution of Antiochus, and the proscription of the sacred books, having given occasion to the fixing of the Canon. This question, however, must be studied in its appropriate literature. It may be admitted that the supposed Synagogue of Jewish tradition represents a succession of pious men from Ezra to Simon the Just, who was high priest after the death of Alexander the Great. The final revision and collection was not, on this supposition, finished in the time of Ezra. But the Saviour's authority gives a retrospective sanction to the final authentication, however it was accomplished.

#### New- Testament Canon.

#### THE NEW-TESTAMENT CANON.

There is no plain declaration in the New Testament that the ancient Canon was to be supplemented by another collection of

book: not only is there no plain declaration, but an almost total silence on the subject. When we remember how often the Old Testament refers to the Volume which was, from age to age, in course of enlargement, it seems an anomaly that there should be no similar reference in the New. We read of the *Word of truth*: of the truth as *truth is in Jesus*; of the *new or better Covenant*; never of new Scriptures, certainly never of a new volume or collection of inspired documents. But there are not wanting indications, to which reference has already been made under the Doctrine of Inspiration, that the design of the Holy Ghost included the formation of a new Canon.

The New Testament Canon.

Eph. i. 13.  
Eph. iv. 21.  
Heb. viii. 8.

1. Though the several terms by which the New-Testament writers were accustomed to describe their enlarged message do not expressly refer to a new Bible, they are such as to lay the foundation for it in due time. And it is certain that the individual writings of the Apostles were held in the congregations which received them to have equal authority with the ancient and accepted Oracles of God, and that the Catholic Church addressed by St. Peter reckoned St. Paul's writings as co-ordinate with the other Scriptures. It is remarkable, further, that almost every writer gives somewhere or other a distant hint, and even more than that, of the permanent authority of his own contribution. This needs no further illustration than it has received already. Looking back now, after the Canon has been ratified, we are bound to admit that these sayings are precisely what they might be expected to have used on the supposition that they calculated on their writings being consolidated into the unity of Scripture.

Testimony

2 Peter iii. 16.

2. No argument, however, is needed beyond that of analogy. A new covenant would require new oracles; the entire economy of the New Testament was only a resumption and continuation of the ancient plan. Christ came to fulfil the Law and the prophets, and to fulfil them by supplementing both their words and their writings. He Himself was in the new economy what He had been in the Old: the universal and omnipresent Revealer by His Spirit in His servants, the Spirit of the Christ Which was in them. But He raised up a series of agents and writers who were the representatives and reproductions of those who formed the Old Testament, though with other names. They were Chroniclers,

Analogy.

1 Peter i. 11



Prophets, and Lawgivers, just as of old time. There is a perfect continuity in the history of revealed truth; had its method been changed in the end of the world, the Saviour would have told us of the change. The silence of the New Testament, or its partial silence, as to any change of the Holy Spirit's plan, has the force of a confirmation of the established method. As in old time the volume of the book was gradually enlarged, and not finally ratified until inspiration had ceased, so we might expect it to be with the new economy. The New-Testament Scriptures were circulated among the churches as the standard of their faith long before the Spirit led the Church to set on them the seal of what we call canonization: to them, as to the Old Testament, all parties, orthodox and heretical, made their appeal.

**History.****HISTORICAL.**

The history of the completed Canon includes its gradual settlement during the first centuries, and the fluctuations of opinion in later ages. A fair consideration of these two subjects will lead to the conclusion that the same Spirit Who gave the Scriptures has watched over them, and secured their integrity.

**Ancient.**

The formation of the Canon runs through the entire ante-Nicene age. The fourth century closed before the faith and critical faculty of the Christian communities added our present New Testament in its integrity to the Old, the last lingering doubt as to any of the books having finally disappeared.

The  
Church.  
Rom ii.  
2.

1. The first thing to be noted is the prerogative of the Church in regard to this. The Apostle tells us that unto the ancient people as such *were committed the oracles of God*: a distinct testimony of great importance, if we mark the force of the term *ἐπιστεύθησαν*, and the *πρῶτον* which introduces the sentence. There was a close analogy between the gradual acceptance of the new body of Scripture and that of the old. The ancient Canon was not fixed until the Spirit of inspiration had retired; it was the office of the Jewish Fathers to distinguish between the autho-

ritative books and all others; the tests by which they determined the difference were, so far as we know them, the names and known inspiration of the writers, and the traditional consent of past ages. The final ratification was brought about by the pressure of persecution directed against the sacred writings; but there ought to be no doubt that this was under the special supervision of the Holy Ghost. The parallel is so far complete. But there were some peculiarities in the case of the new collection. The Gospel was diffused over the world, and every church was the guardian of its own holy books, while every province of early Christendom had its own special selection of Scriptures; there were also numberless heresies, multiplying their spurious productions. These two circumstances tended to make the concurrence of the Christian Church in the final acceptance of the New Testament writings a more remarkable fact than the unanimity of the Jewish Church in regard to the Old Testament. When the set time was fully come the same Spirit who closed the Old Testament volume closed also the New.

2. The tests applied to the books circulated among the Christian congregations were very simple. The main criterion was their Apostolic origin or authorization, that being the guarantee of their inspired character. In case of residual doubt, the common *Regula Fidei*, or rule of faith, was brought to bear, as also the testimony of the churches that held the several documents in question. It was the sure belief of the primitive Christians that the Lord gave to the Apostles alone authority to direct the faith of His Church, both by their words and by their written communications. Apostolic authorship or Apostolic authorization was all they demanded in the sacred writings: they looked simply for the signs of an Apostle, τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου. Hence the writings of St. Mark and St. Luke were never even classed among the doubtful books: they were understood to have been written under the sanction of St. Peter and St. Paul. Of the genuineness of those which claimed to be directly Apostolic, and of the validity of such as claimed indirect sanction, their harmony with the common Rule of Faith, and the testimony of the individual churches, were subordinate and sufficient tests.

3. The result was the early division of the sacred books into

Tests  
Applied.

2 Cor. xii.  
12.

Early  
Division.

two classes : those which were universally acknowledged as Divinely inspired, and those which were not at first generally received. The former, the *HOMOLOGOUMENA*, were, before the second century closed, the four Gospels and Acts, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, the first Epistle of St. Peter, and the first Epistle of St. John. The *ANTILEGOMENA* were seven : not, indeed, rejected, but doubted about, and not at once received. The reasons for this suspended judgment are evident. Some were without the names of the writers, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some were written to the Christian community in general, and were current at large, under the protection of no particular church. Others were addressed to individual men, and on that account incurred suspicion. A few were opposed to the views of some portions of the Church : such as the Apocalypse and the Epistle of St. James. It must be remembered that they were not spoken against, as the term *Antilegomena* might seem to indicate, but held in doubt only. In later times they have been termed *DEUTERO-CANONICAL*, their authority being counted less than that of the other books.

Writings  
of Apo-  
stolic  
Fathers.

4. There were a few small treatises that were very generally received in early times with a peculiar veneration : written, it was thought, by Apostolical men, or companions of the Apostles, such as Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, and Hermas. They were publicly read in some churches, and were copied into the earliest Codices, where they are still found, though only as appendages at the end. Their pretensions did not long survive the jealous ordeal.

The Apo-  
cryphal  
New  
Testament

5. In an altogether different class must be placed the many writings that make up the *APOCRYPHAL* Christian Books. Some of these were written in the interests of a Judaising Christianity, others with a precisely opposite tendency, and the remainder for the gratification of legend-loving curiosity. There were apocryphal gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses ; but not one of them was ever found in any private or public catalogue of the sacred writings. It may be added that the apocryphal shadows of the New Testament are far inferior in ethical character to those of the Old, some of which are of the highest merit. The former, in fact, are either worthless or utterly unchristian.

Ancient  
Cata-  
logues.

6. Successive synodical decisions approximated more and more closely to the catalogue of holy books which we hold. They

culminated at the Council of Hippo, and, four years afterwards, at the Third Council of Carthage, then under the influence of Augustine, in the Canon of the present New Testament. The persecution of Diocletian, in the beginning of the fourth century, led to the more careful scrutiny of what had, during the whole of the century previous, been called the "Evangelicum Instrumentum," a term used by Tertullian, who also described the whole Bible as "Totum Instrumentum utriusque Testamenti." Only the pressing claims of other doctrinal discussions and decisions prevented the Council of Nicæa from accomplishing what was already virtually done: the task, that is, of defining the authoritative Canon of Holy Scripture.

A. D. 393  
A. D. 397.

7. The Old-Testament Canon was accepted and confirmed, as we now hold it, by many catalogues in the fourth and fifth centuries. The Alexandrian Church, represented by Athanasius, gives exactly our list of books: a remarkable fact, when we remember that the Greek version made in Alexandria had first given currency to the Apocrypha. But the study of Hebrew had declined: the Christian Church was contented with the Septuagint, enlarged as it was by apocryphal additions. The Hebrew Scriptures were too much left to the Masorites. Hence the New-Testament Canon was earlier and more unanimously settled in Christian faith and acceptance than the Old: even the Council of Carthage admitted, though with reservation, the Old-Testament Apocrypha.

The Old-  
Testament  
Canon.

#### LATER HISTORY OF THE CANON.

Later opinion as to the Canon may be studied with advantage and for warning. Its outline, which should be filled up by a careful study of the literature of the subject, is as follows:

Modern  
History

1. The question of the Canon was long an open one in the mediæval Church. The Council of Trent, in a decree passed by a few divines in 1546, followed an example set by the Council of Florence in 1441, and included nearly all the Apocrypha among the books of Scripture: a decree contrary to the former catalogues, which therefore many later Romanist divines have attempted to soften by distinguishing in common with many of the Reformers, between a higher and a lower canonical authority.

Trent.

**Greek Church.**

2. The later Greek Church has always fluctuated in opinion on this question. After many attempts to mark off the Apocrypha from the Scripture proper, it coincided with the Tridentine decision at a Jerusalem Synod held under Dositheus, in 1672.

**The Reformation.**

3. The divines of the Reformation erred greatly on the side of laxity. Luther rejected the apocryphal books from the Canon, though he admitted them for edification. He separated the Antilegomena, especially Hebrews, Jude, James, and the Apocalypse, from the rest: applying to them a subjective standard, "their treatment of Christ," in which he pronounced them faulty; while the residue contained, in his judgment, "the kernel of Christianity." The Swiss Reformers more rigorously rejected the Apocrypha; and in this they have been followed by their formularies and the Westminster Confession. The Arminians received the Scriptures in full, though free in their judgments as to authorship. The English Church in this, as in many other things, was guided by a spirit of conciliation. Its Sixth Article defines Scripture as "those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church;" it does not enumerate the books of the New Testament, and admits the public reading of some parts of the Apocrypha: "the other books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." The Methodist communities everywhere reject the Apocrypha altogether, in common with the many bodies that accept the Westminster Confession.

**Evidences**

#### ASSAULTS AND EVIDENCES.

Modern assaults upon the Canon are, to a certain extent, bound up with opposition to the Christian revelation generally; though they also originate a distinct branch of critical inquiry. The determination of what constitutes the canonical collection involves many questions, relating chiefly to the genuineness, integrity, and authenticity of certain particular books; the defence of which is of great importance, as the faith of the Church of Christ rests upon the unity of the Scriptures as one organic whole.

## THE QUESTIONS INVOLVED.

1. The broader question as to the existence of any authoritative Canon is not here involved. That is settled by the acceptance of the doctrine of inspiration : we are bound to admit the great mass of the Scriptures of both Testaments as given by God to His Church. The question is not of the Bible generally, and as a whole ; only of its limits. But both in the New Testament and in the Old there are some books which, as we have seen, have not always had an undisputed place. With reference to these especially, and as to one of the points in dispute with reference to all Scripture, the preliminary question must be asked and answered. First, it must be settled that the documents we hold are from the writers and times to which they profess to belong. This is a question of their GENUINENESS ; and it concerns only the documents themselves. It asks, with regard to all the books, and especially the contested ones, whether they were written by the authors whose names they bear. Then arises the important point of their INTEGRITY : making due allowance, that is, for the petty changes and interpolations of text to which all books are liable in course of transcription. Lastly comes the question of their AUTHENTICITY. This concerns the origin of the documents, as professedly from inspired men, and containing the oracles of God. It asks whether their claims are supported by those external and internal evidences or credentials which alone can sustain so high a pretension. It is obvious that these questions run into each other : hence, the term Authenticity, and the questions which hang upon it, may be reasonably made to cover the whole ground.

Authenticity and Integrity.

Genuineness.

Authenticity.

2. The study of this branch of theology involves the ordinary historical investigation by which literary claims are sifted. But it is not limited to this : the Holy Spirit approves the books which are "generally received in the Church" by the impress of His secret and yet evident stamp. On the principles which we consider fundamental, these two must control each other, but the testimony of Christ and His Spirit must be supreme.

Tests.

(1.) Whether as it respects the Old Testament or the New, every book and every fragment of every book must undergo the ordeal. This constitutes a distinct department of study, that of

Historical Criticism.

Historical Criticism: one of extreme difficulty, and not to be undertaken by any student who has not the means of prosecuting it thoroughly. Whatever confidence we have in our Lord's authentication of the Old Testament, and in the Church's settlement of the New-Testament Canon, the defence of every integral portion of the Bible is a necessity bound upon the theologian by the assaults of infidelity. It is not too much to say that every man set for the defence of the Gospel ought to have at command the arguments which prove the genuineness and authenticity of every book; or, which is the same thing, the arguments which defend it against attack. Works known as Introductions to the Bible, or Biblical Dictionaries, or Histories of the Canon, furnish these in abundance, with all the argumentation for and against. But it must be remembered that, while every book requires its defence, the leading questions in dispute are really limited to a few vital points as to each Testament.

Limita-  
tions.

(2.) Nothing is more important than to conduct any such inquiries with a clear sense of its limitations. These are of two kinds. First, the inquiry into the genesis and gradual construction of the various parts of Scripture, especially of the Old Testament, is beset with the most formidable difficulties. Very much of the material for judgment is gone past recovery. Hence the hopeless contradictions and confusions, the helpless chaos of ever-shifting hypotheses, which are found in the writings of the modern disintegrators of the Bible. The field is to them literally one of boundless conjecture; and very often conjecture and evidence are to them interchangeable terms. Hence, also, it is evident that the defender of the Bible must not expect to be able to determine many of these questions and must be content to leave them unsettled. Secondly, we are not required, we are indeed not permitted, to engage in these inquiries as if the life of Christianity were in them. The authenticity of the Bible as a whole—which is, after all, inextricably bound up with its genuineness—involves the *TESTIMONIUM SPIRITUS SANCTI*, or that inward witness which it bears, and which witnesses with our spirits who read any part of it. Hence, it may be laid down as a canon for the regulation of our confidence in the Canon that the Spirit of Inspiration is Himself the Divine

Witness. As our Lord has ratified to us the older Scriptures, so the Holy Ghost has ratified us, in the Church and through the Church, the new Scriptures and the Bible as a whole. Criticism must bring its human evidence; but the supreme evidence is His. When it is said, however, that the Holy Ghost bears His witness to the Bible AS A WHOLE, this must not be misunderstood. He has in a remarkable way set His seal to the individual books, and especially to those which are most contradicted. The most vulnerable parts seem most amply defended. For instance, the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch is very fully attested by the Saviour and the Apostles: if we collect the quotations and references in the New Testament we shall find that the leading outlines of the history of the Five Books can be traced there. The events before Moses are referred to on his authority. And his account of the lawgiving, the wilderness, and all its events, the ritual economy of the tabernacle, the entrance into Canaan, and in fact the entire contents of the Pentateuch are accepted as of the Mosaic age and that of Joshua. The authenticity of Daniel has been assailed, the later part of Isaiah has been given to an anonymous author, the very heart of Zechariah has been taken from his prophecies: now these are the three portions of the Old Testament which the Saviour has protected, next to Deuteronomy, with the utmost care. Among the books of the New Testament there are a few which criticism keenly assails; denying their apostolic origin and their inspired or authoritative character. It would not be true to say that these give in every case more abundant internal evidence for themselves; but certainly the Holy Ghost speaks through them to every rightly disposed heart. Who can resist the appeal of St. John's Gospel, the Pastoral Epistles, the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Second Epistle of St. Peter? This last document was perhaps most slowly of all admitted, for reasons easily traced; but no devout mind can read its first chapter without feeling that the writer is full of the Holy Ghost and not a forger assuming the Apostle's name, and pretending that he had been on the mount of transfiguration. Of course, this argument may be abused. But to us it is supreme as to the entire Bible which the Spirit gave to the Church.



## THE CANON AS RULE OF FAITH.

Rule of  
Faith.

The Canon of Scripture, as the accepted collection of sacred writings, may be objectively viewed as the Rule of Faith to the Christian Church, or the final and infallible standard of what is to be believed as necessary either to personal salvation or to the integrity of the Christian faith; and subjectively as a body of Divine documents which is to be studied with all human appliances under the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

## THE RULE OF FAITH : SCRIPTURAL.

Scripture.

The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures implies their supreme authority, in every possible court, and at the same time justifies our appealing to their own testimony as to the bearings and extent of that authority. They everywhere speak as the final oracle of faith, duty, and hope, and reject every kind of co-ordinate standard. This high assertion of their claims is so set forth as to harmonise with the subordinate rules of faith or confessions adopted by the several branches of the witnessing Church, and with the exercise of private judgment: the supreme safeguard of the doctrine being the presence of the Holy Spirit as the effectual and sufficient Guardian of His Word.

Standard  
of Faith.

1. Generally, the New Testament declares itself, as the consummation of Scripture, to be the STANDARD OF FAITH. Absorbing the Old Testament, or rather co-ordinating itself with the Old Testament, it declares by the testimony of one of the last and greatest writers that *Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for TEACHING . . . that the man of God may be perfect.* The *man of God* is here the Christian teacher, of whom it is said that his knowledge of the ancient oracles made him *wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* The Apostles were
- 2 Tim. iii.  
16. 17.
- 2 Tim. iii.  
15.

to be guided into all the Truth ; into the whole compass of truth, as the truth is in Jesus. Hence the closing testimony in St. Jude is to the Faith which was once delivered unto the saints : redelivered by its Supreme Authority to His new and perfect Church. The doctrine of our Lord is the RULE AND CRITERION OF MORALITY, and of all human duty. The Christian faith is the Christian law, and the Christian law is the Christian faith : *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness ; and His whole economy has for its design that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life : the truth being here in the centre. He summed up the Apostles' future teaching as *all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* St. Paul knows no other ethics than what had been received and heard from himself, and bids his converts walk by the same rule, or κανών, as the infallible directory and test of all obligation. And the book of truth and duty is also the CHARTER OF PRIVILEGES. It was with the widest possible meaning that Jesus said, *All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you :* the whole compass of the blessings dilated on in the Acts and Epistles is only the expansion of germs given in His promise. The New Testament is the book of the covenants of promise : of the new covenant between the Triune God and His people, ratified by the blood of Christ, announced in His promise, and conferred by His Spirit.

2. The Scripture everywhere appeals to itself for an end of all controversy. *To the law and to the testimony!* was the ancient word in Israel. *How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?* By these words our Saviour makes the Scriptures concerning Himself absolute in their authority. Apollos, like the Apostles, proved by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. The Bereans were therefore more noble-minded than they of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. The peril of neglecting the great salvation hangs upon its having been spoken by the Lord, and confirmed unto us by them that heard Him. There is a perpetual appeal from one part of Scripture to another part of Scripture : sometimes to reason, sometimes to heathen authors, sometimes to traditions ; but always the Cæsar to which it finally appeals is itself. The Saviour

John xvi.  
13.Eph. iv.  
21.Jude 3.  
Morals.

Rom. x. 4.

Rom. viii.  
4.John xiv.  
6.Matt.  
xxviii.  
20.Phil. iii.  
16.

Gal. vi. 16.

John xv.  
15.Eph. ii.  
12.Appeal to  
Itself.

Is. viii. 20.

Matt.  
xxvi. 54.Acts xviii.  
28.Acts xvi.  
11.

Heb. ii. 3

refers to the Old Testament ; the Apostles to Him and to them ; St. Paul, in addition, to himself ; and St. Peter to St. Paul. This has the force of a universal law within the Bible. And it cannot be denied that throughout the history of the Church from the very beginning all parties have implicitly or explicitly made the Word of God their last court of decision.

**Other Appeal Condemned.**  
**Matt. xv. 9.**  
**Mark xii. 24.**  
**Subordinate Standards**

8. Every other final authority is absolutely or by implication interdicted. Nothing can be more clear than that our Lord regarded the whole sum of religion as vitiated by infidelity to Scripture. *In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* : where the Pharisees are a mirror in which later traditionalists are reflected. And again, *Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures ?*

4. The supreme authority sanctions, however, other inferior standards in the form of creeds. Those Rules of Faith which were constructed from the beginning were based upon the formulas of Scripture itself : expressing in compendium the belief of the Church. But of these, in all their forms, earlier and later, the Bible is the test : the court to which they must finally be brought. This applies to creeds, catechisms, standards, and formularies of every description : of which more will be said hereafter.

**Private Judgment**  
**2 Peter i. 20.**  
**1 Thess. v. 21.**

5. The Rule also presupposes and harmonises, as subordinate to itself, Public Ministerial Instruction and Private Judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures are the text-book of a living continuous teaching which is an ordinance of God in the congregation : this may be and has been perverted ; but it is nevertheless the appointed means in the Church for the continuation of the Apostle's doctrine. Moreover, the privilege, duty, and responsibility of private judgment are everywhere declared. The prophecies of God's Word are, indeed, not of *private interpretation*, are not solved by themselves or any private solution—*ἰδίᾳ ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεσθαι*—and this is true of all Scripture, which is not left without the interpretation of the Spirit Who gave it. Yet all believers must *prove all things* : not only the Bereans, in process of conversion, but all Christians are responsible for the gift of reason, regenerate and sanctified to its highest use. Both, however, require the presence of the Supreme Interpreter. He still guides the living Church into the truth, notwithstanding all

appearances to the contrary ; He is the teaching *unction from the Holy One* imparted to every Christian ; and the combination of the three—the sanctified individual judgment, the didactic ministry, and the Holy Spirit—gives its perfection to the whole theory of the Rule of Faith, which is one in the unity of these three. Revelation, Inspiration, Canon are also three-one in the unity of the ever-present and ever-living *Spirit of the Truth*.

1 John ii.  
20.

John xvi.  
13.

#### RATIONALISM AND TRADITIONALISM.

Opposing  
Principles

There are two errors on this subject which are more or less prevalent. Rationalism, on the one hand, undermines the authority of God's Word : either by rejecting it as an external revelation, or by accepting it and making human reason the sole arbiter of its meaning. Traditionalism, on the other, makes the Scripture only a standard parallel with the living tradition of the Church. Both, though in opposite ways, take from the Bible its dignity as the Rule of Christian Faith, and sever it from its connection with the Holy Spirit as it is the supreme instrument of His operation in things spiritual for ever.

#### RATIONALISM.

Reason.

The Rationalist method either makes human reason the substance of revealed truth, or the measure and arbiter of the meaning of Scripture. For, it is of two kinds : one renounces external and independent revelation altogether ; another, that to which we now more particularly refer, accepts the Bible, but only as a republication of the oracles of natural religion, and makes the human understanding the sole, and, as it were, undirected instrument of its interpretation.

1. To the former the Scriptures are simply an historical record and register of the gradual development of the world's religious instincts. Evolution governs all things in the spiritual as in the physical domain ; and the Old and New Testaments only mark the stages through which the spiritual faculties of earlier races

Extreme  
Ration-  
alism.

had passed. In Jesus and His Apostles the religious consciousness of mankind reached a high point, but not the highest which it has to reach. The ever-developing reason of man must make their doctrine, has in all ages made it, the starting point for further evolutions; and the end is not yet. This theory for ever vacillates between Theism and Atheism, and has no place save among the enemies of the Christian Faith. Of this enough has already been said when discussing the evidences of revelation.

**Rationalism Proper.**

2. Rationalism proper accepts the supremacy of the Word as given by God for the regulation of the Church's doctrine, but insists that the human reason is the sole judge of its meaning. This spirit more or less pervades the Christian communities which have surrendered the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the holy oracles. It has many shades and varieties of definition and expression; but these all unite in the view that the application of an honest and enlightened reason is alone required by Scripture when it teaches authoritative doctrine, enforces moral obligation, and promises privilege to the hope of believers.

**Its Fault.**

3. It is obvious that this principle proceeds on a wrong estimate of the function of the human understanding, especially in relation to the Divine Spirit, its guide: supposing a Divine supervision of man to be admitted. It unduly elevates the power of reason, reason itself being witness. It is unreasonable to accept truth concerning the Infinite Being, and eternal interests, under the condition that it can be fathomed and perfectly understood: on this condition some of the most elementary facts of internal consciousness and external science must be rejected, for they are equally unfathomable. Hence, declining to accept heavenly guidance in an unknown region, the rationalist spirit must needs renounce the best, because the profoundest, parts of revelation. It forgets the true and noble function of reason: to be the minister of faith, which in all things knowable is in a certain important sense supreme. Reason must weigh the evidences presented for faith, and deduce consequences from what faith accepts; it must guard the result from the assaults of the spirit of rebellious and undisciplined unbelief, as well as from the perversions of over-belief and superstition. Carrying the subject into the region of Scriptural testimony, we find that the spirit of

what we now call rationalism is constantly condemned. The same Word which from beginning to end honours reason by calmly reasoning with it, by appealing to its indestructible convictions and instincts, is most peremptory in defining the limits beyond which its province does not extend. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* And even to the spiritual discernment itself there is a limit: *For now we see through a glass, darkly.* Our utmost knowledge is partial: in the present life *we know in part, ἐκ μέρους.*

1 Cor. ii.  
14.

1 Cor. xiii.  
12.  
1 Cor. xiii.  
9.

## TRADITION.

## Tradition.

The true doctrine opposes every notion of a co-ordinate authority in Tradition. This has a legitimate office which must be vindicated, while its perversion is condemned.

1. Tradition is *παράδοσις*, either oral or written. And it is obvious that it holds an important place in the economy of Divine revelation. St. Paul commands the believers at the outset of his writings to *hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle*; and not walking by these is walking *disorderly*. Hence it includes in its original use the delivery of all truth through human instrumentality to man. We owe to it the Scriptures, with that sacred traditional interpretation of their leading doctrines which we call the Analogy of the Faith; and we owe to it the preservation of many usages and practices which are not absolutely ruled in the Bible. Theology has never rejected or despised authentic and rightly understood tradition.

Legitimate.

2 Thessa.  
ii. 15;  
iii. 6

2. But the abuse of Tradition has always been the bane of doctrine, especially of all Christian doctrine. Reduced to an ecclesiastical theory, it has then two elements: Scripture and the oral tradition of the Church constitute a double Rule of Faith; and this necessarily requires as its final arbiter an infallible regulative authority in the Church itself.

Abuse.

(1.) The co-ordinate Rule is that of Oral Tradition, adding doctrines not contained in Scripture; or Development, expanding those revealed in germ. It has never been authoritatively settled what is the "*Verbum Dei non scriptum*," or what constitute the APOSTOLICAL TRADITIONS; but some of the leading Articles of

Development.

Faith and practice are generally included. The hypothesis of DEVELOPMENT is only itself a modern development of the theory of Tradition: the principle by the operation of which the great distinctive errors of Romanism have been constructed into Articles DE FIDE and made binding. The "Ecclesia Docens" decides, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, when the hour has come for opinion to become dogma. 'The infallible Church is the Episcopate lineally descended from the Apostles; the Universal Church expressing its mind by councils; and latterly, as the last development of dogma, the voice of the Successor of St. Peter, speaking "ex cathedra," has been made the final arbiter of truth. This is the doctrine of Tradition as held in the Roman Catholic Church. Modifications of it are held elsewhere. The Eastern Church maintains the Church's concurrent endowment of inspiration, but supposes that this was limited to the first ages: according to its teaching the double rule, Scripture and Tradition, was complete when its earliest and only Creed was authenticated. In a vague and indefinite form the same principle is inconsistently held by many divines in communions which owed their origin to a protest against ecclesiastical tradition as unduly paralleled with Scripture.

Its  
Condem-  
nation.

Eph. ii.  
20.

(2.) This theory loses sight of the true and most important office of Tradition, which is simply the human witness and guardianship of the Divine oracles; it dishonours the prerogative of the inspired writers, and builds, not *upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*, but on the Church as their interpreter; it assigns to the visible community the functions of the invisible; it affects the Faith with a character of changeableness, of which the fabric of Mediæval dogmas gives ample proof; and, lastly, it is the object of our Saviour's warning denunciation, as represented in the Rabbinical traditions of His time. The tone and the terms in which our Lord invariably spoke of this superaddition to the one Rule of Faith ought to have secured His Church for ever against it. The Jewish Talmud was constructed on this principle; and there has been in long process of construction a corresponding Christian Talmud. The teachings of the Faith have been in it undergoing a process of steady transformation. The doctrine of the Atonement has been violated in the dogma of Transubstantia

tion, that of Original Sin in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and that of the Spirit's supreme jurisdiction in the dogma of Pontifical Infallibility. This theory, in its modern form of Development, is hurtful to the simplicity and integrity of the truth; perilous to *the Faith once delivered unto the saints*: τῇ ἀπαράσφακτοι τοῖς ἁγίοις πιστεῖ. Within the ages of the Spirit's inspiring administration there was development on the grandest scale, and extending to all the leading doctrines of revelation: that principle is nothing less than an absolute law. But the province of development outside of the Bible is limited to non-essentials and the construction of dogmatic system: in fact, the term in this case is altogether misapplied. Only in Scripture is there, strictly speaking, development of doctrine proper.

Jude 2.

## THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CANON.

Interpretation.

The Bible, as the Rule of Faith, is the foundation of theology. It requires to be studied as a collection of documents, both Divine and human, containing the materials and the directory of theological science. The departments of this study are various. Biblical Criticism is that branch of general criticism which makes the determination of the Text its object. The province of Biblical Introduction embraces the substance and contents of the Scriptures as a collection of Divine-human literature. Sacred Philology has to do with the original languages in which revelation was given. Hermeneutics deals with the Bible as a text to be exegetically and theologically expounded. The general principles of these several branches of study must be briefly sketched, as laying the basis of the doctrinal system of Christianity; but they are here referred to so far only as they concern the fundamentals of the study of theology.

## BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

Biblical Criticism.

The term Criticism means the art and exercise of judgment, and has a wide application in regard to Scripture generally. But



Biblical Criticism does not extend its range beyond the judgment exercised upon the verity of the text. Its aim is to give or restore the nearest possible approximation to the original words of the Scriptural Autographs, not one of which remains or has been the subject of direct historical testimony. In accomplishing this object Criticism is guided by certain objective aids and subjective canons more or less unanimously accepted.

**MSS. and Versions.** 1. Its external materials are the Manuscripts which remain and the earlier Versions, especially the former. The MSS. of the Old Testament are not ancient, dating no earlier than the twelfth century. The criticism of the Hebrew text is therefore limited in its scope; it has to depend much upon the early care of those to whom these Oracles were committed. But it has still a wide range, and has made great progress of late. The MSS. of the Greek Testament are more abundant, better authenticated, and in more perfect preservation than those of any ancient classics: including the Uncial, copies in Greek capital letters, and the Cursives in smaller type, they amount to nearly sixteen hundred. The earliest of these are Uncials, and are of inestimable value in the archives of the Christian Church as the most venerable representatives of its holy books. The Alexandrian Codex, known as A, and now in the British Museum, dates probably about the beginning of the fifth century, and contains the whole of the Two Testaments, save the greater part of St. Matthew and a few leaves wanting elsewhere. The Vatican, or B, is the basis of the Vulgate, authoritative in Romanism; it is a century older than A, but is not so nearly complete in the New Testament. The Codex Ephraemi, or C, is a Palimpsest—that is, a manuscript written on a manuscript: two-thirds of the New Testament have been found underlying certain other writings on this parchment. The Codex Bezae, D, now at Cambridge, is probably of the sixth century, and contains only the Gospels and Acts. But Divine Providence has reserved for this age the discovery of an Uncial which is probably one of the oldest, certainly the most complete, of the early copies of Scripture. It is known as the Codex Sinaiticus, or N, and contains the complete New Testament. After these the Manuscripts, in the form of more or less complete copies used in various churches and of lectionaries, rapidly increase.

Multitudes of these are lineally descended, as it were, from copies made in the first centuries but now lost; and it always remains a question whether they are not in many cases as fair representatives of the early text as those Uncials of antiquity which still remain. The tendency has been entirely to disparage them in comparison of the earliest Codices; but for this there seems no just ground. The early Versions are of great importance in Criticism. The Septuagint of the Old Testament is, on many accounts, the most important, as being so much used in the New Testament; but it is not the only one. Each century from the second to the seventh produced a remarkable version of the New Testament, appeal to which, especially to the Peshito, or Syriac, of the fourth century, affords valuable aid in the determination of the Text. The innumerable Quotations found in the Fathers of the first five centuries belong also to this branch, as they are very often free translations, or loose paraphrases of translations.

2. These manuscripts multiplied, and, more or less sinking in authority as centuries passed, are collated and thrown into Families or Recensions, according to the leading districts of early Christendom from which they sprang: a distinction, however, that has more historical than critical importance. Biblical Critics, by the use of certain canons the application of which requires the rarest judgment and experience, seek by their aid mainly to restore the text to its original state. They have to consider the probable causes of the Various Readings themselves: whether they have arisen through accident or by design. In the latter case, which is often to be suspected, they have to track the changes in the text to theological or other motives, and to estimate them accordingly. It is their task to weigh an endless variety of evidence in this sacred critical court; and, in coming to their decision on any controverted passage, they have to meet a multitude of conditions which demand attention. There are a few plain and reasonable principles which decide the great majority of cases: though their value is much contested among critics themselves; and their application to some residual difficulties is unsatisfactory. These canons are, for instance, that the shorter reading is more likely to be the right than one more diffuse, "*brevis lectio præferenda verbosiori*;" that the harder

Critical  
Canons.

or rougher is more probably authentic than the smoother, "*proclivi lectioni præstat ardua*;" that a text is suspicious which manifestly favours orthodox dogmas. None of these canons is unexceptionable. And it remains that the settlement of the text is a task that demands the application of the keenest critical faculty under the guidance of a most sober judgment. It is the business or prerogative of only a rare order of scholars, but the results achieved by their labours are of universal interest and value.

**Results.**

3. The theological bearing of this science is obvious. Nothing is more important than the purity of the common standard of appeal in dogmatic discussions and decisions. And, apart from that, it is the instinctive desire of all who love the Scriptures to read them in their integrity: every evidence of sure advancement towards a unanimously accepted text is matter of deep joy to one who knows how much depends on the issues.

**Nothing  
Vital  
Involved.**

(1.) This must not be exaggerated. It may be assumed that the eternal verities of revelation have not been permitted by the Holy Ghost to depend upon any isolated passage of His own word, nor upon the absolute integrity of the text generally. The majority of the contested passages, interpolations, and varieties of reading are of no doctrinal weight. Not one of them affects the sole fundamental proof of any article of faith: for the reason that no article of faith rests upon the evidence of any one single text. Hence, though the variations in the leading MSS. amount to scores of thousands—including all, from changes in letters up to whole paragraphs inserted or omitted,—they involve no question vital to Christian doctrine. We may hope to see a text which humanly speaking, shall be perfect or near perfection: known and read of all men. But no thought about the guarantees or the stability of the Faith need be bound up with our hope.

**Contested  
Texts.**

(2.) Still, there are some variations in the text of the New Testament which are of profound interest. These, amounting to some twenty or thirty, ought to be carefully considered by every student; for, though no vital doctrine depends upon them, their evidence has a peculiar weight, and the secret history, so to speak, of the variations involves questions of deep theological import. For instance, modern criticism very generally agrees to give up "The Heavenly Witnesses," in opposition to the Vulgate and the

1 John v.  
7.

Roman Catholic decision ; but the study of the question will show how clear and full was the doctrine of the Trinity when such an interpolation could be made current. The same may be said as to the question whether instead of GOD *was manifest in the flesh* we must read WHO *was manifest*, and whether we must retain *the church of GOD which He hath purchased with His own blood* or *the church of THE LORD*. With this is closely connected the most striking of all variations : *the God Only-begotten* instead of *the Only-begotten Son* in St. John's Prologue. Other questions, such as the omission or retention of the Doxology in St. Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, have also their deep interest : as to this one in particular, there is good reason why we should incline to favour the cause of its retention, resting as it does on very strong arguments.

1 Tim. ii.  
16.  
Acts xx.  
28.  
John i. 18

(3.) The Student may acquire sufficient skill to weigh well the arguments on both sides of these and similar leading points in the settlement of the text ; and to come to a humble decision of his own. The peculiar and technical knowledge required in this study, and the variety of conditions that must meet in those who exercise authoritative judgment as to the Text, limit Biblical Criticism, so far as its processes go, to a select number. The results, however, as affecting theology, are open to everyone. All may weigh the evidences which others collect, and appreciate the judgments they themselves could not independently form.

Working  
Know-  
ledge.

#### THE FABRIC OF THE BIBLE.

Fabric of  
Scripture

BIBLICAL INTRODUCTION includes in its wide compass all that pertains to a knowledge of the Bible as made up of literary documents and particularly as a collection of human literature. A certain amount of acquaintance, familiar acquaintance—the more intimate the better—with the fabric of Scripture is an obligation on the student of theology, especially the ministerial student.

1. The Bible as a whole is the history, the only history, of Religion, or of the relations between God and man, in the world. It contains the Chronicles of the One Kingdom, which has had three manifestations, ante-Mosaic, Hebrew, and Messianic ; and of a fourth and final manifestation it contains an all-pervasive series of predictions. This is the bond of its unity, as one great

Organic  
Unity.

Record of Prophecy and Fulfilment. The study of the volume, as unfolding one vast accomplishment now in process, and pointing to another not yet revealed, regards it as a complete organic unity, the bond of its perfectness being Christ and His kingdom.

**Divisions.**

**2 Cor. iii.  
14.**

2. But this organic unity may be resolved into subordinate Divisions. First, we have the several Great Dispensations already alluded to, and hereafter to be exhibited. These may be regarded in another form as the relation of the Two Testaments. The Old Testament—a name by which St. Paul almost seems to denominate the ancient volume, *in the reading of the Old Testament*—divides into the Law, or the historical basis; the Prophets, or the transition from the Law to the Gospel; the Psalms, or the devotional element for all ages. The New Testament is distributed into the Evangelicum or Four Gospels, the Apostolicum or Acts and Epistles, and the Apocalypticum or Revelation. In more modern times, the Gospels are distinguished as Synoptical, or the Three which unite in one general synopsis of the Lord's ministry, and Johannæan; the Acts are regarded as transitional to the Epistles, and the several types of doctrine in the Apostolical Epistles and the Apocalypse are compared with the rest of Scripture. All these will be referred to in due course more fully.

**Literature  
of every  
Book.**

3. But every book has its own appropriate field of inquiry. This includes the writer, date, circumstances, and design of each document; especially the analysis in relation to its connection with its predecessors and successors. The theological importance of this is great: an accurate knowledge, however general, of the scope of every document will generally furnish its best defence against attacks; it will throw light on its doctrinal character and bearings, and thus locate it in the system of Biblical theology. A clear view of the literary and other peculiarities of every book in the Bible is indispensable to the student: it is one of the elementary requisites in theological education; but, perhaps on that very account, there is nothing which is more neglected. No young minister, no candidate for the ministry, should think he *has* acquired the rudiments of his profession until he has established in his mind a nucleus of information concerning all the individual documents: a nucleus around which additional knowledge shall continually gather, until there is no part left in obscurity.

## BIBLICAL HISTORY.

Sacred  
History.

1. The Bible must be studied as from beginning to end historical. This is the law of its construction in all parts, even the prophetic. Strictly speaking, its history as such is that of the Chosen People alone, as the pre-ordained race in which God would manifest Himself in the Incarnate Son; and the methodical study of that history is one of the first theological obligations. As contained in Scripture, and confirmed by secular historians, it is the most trustworthy series of national annals, as it is in relation to the history of redemption the most important. From Abraham to Moses, or the Bondage in Egypt, we have the Patriarchal Age; from the Desert to Canaan, or from Moses to Samuel, the foundation of the Theocracy; from the times of Judges and Kings, the Division of the Nation, the Captivity, the period of the glory of Old-Testament Israel. After the close of the inspired history of the old covenant comes the great Interval of four hundred years, ending with the Incarnation, the Appearance, Ministry, and Rejection of the Redeemer, and the Dispersion of the Tribes among the nations of the earth as the consequence. These are the critical facts in that sacred history which may be regarded as in a certain sense the central stream of all history.

2. These salient points regulate the Scriptural Chronology, which, as a science, is perhaps the most abstruse and difficult connected with the interpretation of Scripture. It involves a consideration of the several systems which are adopted for the arrangement of Scriptural dates, especially in the Old Testament: the Septuagint differing from the Hebrew, and the Rabbinical from both; while the principles which regulated the sacred writers are not yet precisely determined. The solution of many chronological difficulties may be sought in errors of transcription; but there is an uncertainty as to the use of numerals which still has to be cleared up: the key has yet to be discovered for the scheme of Moses and the earlier historical writers. If it should appear that the longer system in which the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch agree is the correct one, it will not be difficult to harmonise the Biblical Chronology of early times with all that sound science, the authentic annals of other nations, and even their traditions.

Chrono-  
logy.

require. When we descend lower in the stream of history the chronology becomes more simple. There are a few prominent epochs, the dates of which may be regarded as fixed : the Exodus, the Building of the Temple, the Deportations, the Birth of Christ, the Pentecost, the Death of Herod, the Destruction of Jerusalem. It must be remembered that the Art of Verifying Dates is comparatively modern ; and time must be allowed for the settlement of many questions. Meanwhile, and with regard to some epochs, a latitude must be allowed, the limits of which are not defined.

Geography.

3. The Biblical Geography includes almost the whole earth, but more particularly that part of it which is the sphere of sacred history : the Holy Land, originally Canaan, which became the Land of Immanuel. This is not only very interesting in itself, but bound up inseparably with the interpretation of Scripture.

Archæology.

4. The Archæology of the Bible is a peculiar department of its history : including the entire fabric of the ancient Economy, viewed as past and apart from its relation to the Gospel. There is a sense in which no jot or tittle is really obsolete ; as it may be asserted that almost everything Judaic has outlived the changes of time. But with this we have not here to do. The Antiquities of Scripture have two ranges : one of greater importance, including the civil and political and religious constitution of Hebraism, as lying under and around the very foundations of Christianity ; and the other pertaining to the people as a mere branch of the Semitic race, with social and religious usages that may be compared with those of other nations.

Hebraism.

(1.) With reference to the former, the more essentially sacred of the antiquities of Hebraism, theological study has a wide scope. It includes the national tokens of severance from the world : the Covenant Signs, Circumcision, the Passover ; with the earlier Tabernacle and the later Temple, and its interior symbolical structure as the dwelling-place of God among His people. Also the ceremonial of worship : the Levitical order ; the High-priesthood, with the relation of all other functions to it ; the service and system of Sacrifice, the sin-offerings and thank-offerings, with their varieties ; the Three Feasts, their history and meaning and typical significance ; the One Fast ; the Sabbaths and Sabbatic cycles ; the New Moons ; the voice of Prophecy, never absent ;

and the several methods of revelation, from Urim and Thummim, through symbols and visions, down to the Bath-kol which forms the transition to the next department.

(2.) There is also a post-Hebraic Archæology belonging to the Judaism of the Interval, or, rather, to the time when Hebraism was passing into Judaism. In some respects the ancient Church appeared to greatest advantage after the Captivity: it inherited the past, by the lessons of which its chastisement prepared it to profit; it gave rise to many new institutions, some of which, specially sanctioned by our Lord, contained the germs of much that was incorporated into the Christian Church. It is hardly possible to study too carefully the annals of this Interval: for instance, the rise and history of the Sanhedrim; the constitution of the Synagogue and its order; the gradual ascendancy of Scribes, Rabbis, and other guardians of the law; the separation of the people into Pharisees and Sadducees and Essenes; and the new Festivals, such as the Purim, which our Lord approved, though not of direct Divine institution. A deep and peculiar theological interest attaches to this portion of the history of the great Preparations. The study of this period, as will be hereafter seen, never fails to be most amply repaid.

(3.) Many topics of Archæology are subordinate, though such only in a relative sense. The interpretation of the New Testament requires an accurate and seasonably applied knowledge of the manners and customs of the ancient people: their mode of life, domestic architecture, merchandise, agriculture, festal and funeral rites, social habits, music, literary methods, style of writing, and forms of public and private instruction. The Commentaries furnish generally such information as the expositor or preacher requires; but the student should not be entirely dependent on incidental reinforcements of his memory. He should aim to be well read and at home in all these branches of sacred knowledge.

5. The Natural History of the Bible includes all that remains: that is, the world of nature in which Scripture lives and moves. It has its own comprehensive range, not to be studied as in the light of modern physical science, but not without its interest even in this respect. The Fauna and Flora of the Biblical

Judaism.

Manners  
and  
Customs.Natural  
History.



records, as very faithfully depicted in the best Introductions and Monographs, have a theological as well as a general value: almost every fact will, somewhere or other, be found to affect the interpretation or illustration of New-Testament doctrine; and the importance of everything must be measured by its subservience to this object.

### Philology.

#### BIBLICAL PHILOLOGY.

The study of Scripture in its original languages lies at the foundation of theology. The text of revelation is in two tongues, each of which has its varieties and peculiarities. A certain knowledge of these is indispensable to the finished theologian, though neither his practical knowledge of the Bible nor the value of his pastoral ministry is dependent on a minute and thorough acquaintance with them.

**Hebrew.** 1. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew, with the exception of certain Chaldee fragments. There has always been, and still is, much discussion as to its relation to the original speech of the one undivided race of mankind; as also with regard to its affinities with what is inexactly called the Semitic stock of languages: the Aramæan, divided into Syriac and Chaldee; the Samaritan, a mixture apparently of Hebrew and Aramæan; and the Arabic, with its cognate Ethiopic. The profound study of the Old Testament requires that these Semitic dialects should be included: the Aramæan branches, because of the Chaldee portions of the Old Testament and the vernacular speech of our Saviour's time which glimmers occasionally in the Gospels, and the important Peshito-Syriac version; the Arabic, because of its value in the determination of many Hebrew roots. But after all it is the pure Hebrew which is indispensable: not only for the sake of the Old Testament itself, but also because the New Testament is so much coloured by direct quotations and indirect tones of speech.

**Greek.** 2. The Greek in which it has pleased the Holy Ghost to enshrine the New-Testament Scriptures is the later classical dialect, the *Koinê*. This is its foundation; but it is deeply affected by the Jewish-Hellenistic dialect, with more or less infusion of Hebraisms in style and words: in some parts being no other than Hebrew thought in Greek clothing. The Alexan-

drian age was the link between the Oriental and the Western style; hence the Septuagint Version, the Apocrypha and Philo, are important helps for the study of sacred Greek. To this must be added a certain new and peculiar phraseology and turn of expression which the new ideas of Christianity introduced. Taking all these things into account, we may say that the language of the New Testament is a distinct study, requiring its own apparatus of philological appliances and aids.

3. The two sacred languages, as they may be called, are in our days better understood, and the aids to their acquisition are more abundant, than in any former age. The Lexicons, Grammars, and Concordances of the Hebrew and the Greek are so accommodated to the student's necessity, that he may with ordinary diligence acquire at least a practical and working knowledge of the original Scriptures. A profound knowledge is possible only to few; but none who lay early their foundations need be without such an expertness in the use of the instruments of sacred philology as will enable them to appreciate the exposition of guides more learned than themselves. It is of great importance to be clear on this point. The noblest results of modern learning are found in Commentaries on the Bible. These are often in conflict on some critical points of exposition; and the reader is necessarily thrown on his own judgment. And that judgment he will be able to form if he habitually makes the originals his study, according to his best lights. And, apart from this, a very moderate acquaintance with the Greek Testament especially will bring the words of the Holy Ghost much nearer than any translation even the best can possibly do.

Aids.

## HERMENEUTICS.

There is a distinct science of Hermeneutics: that is, of the principles which are applied in Exegesis, the exposition and interpretation of Scripture. The science is an exceedingly extensive one, but its theological application rests on a few general principles, as simple as they are important.

Hermeneutics.

I. The history of Biblical Hermeneutics in the Christian Church may be studied with advantage. There have not been successive schools; but the several schools have been marked by

History.

the preponderance of the allegorical or mystical, the ecclesiastical or traditional, the literal or purely historical and rational principles more or less marked in every age. The earliest principle of interpretation that affected theology was that of the Alexandrian school, which always tended to the allegorising method, as inherited from the Jewish Cabbala. It did not altogether neglect the grammatical interpretation of the "body" of Scripture, but paid more attention to the moral exhibition of its "soul," and most of all to mystical or anagogical uses for the initiated or *τῶλειοι*. It is obvious that no definite or coherent system of dogmatic theology can be based on this principle of exposition, however rich it may be in results when duly controlled. During the Middle Ages this method more or less continued; but it was still more characteristic of those times that the exposition of Scripture was fettered by ecclesiastical bonds: first the *Regula Fidei*, or rather the Rule of the Church, directed it; independent research was checked; and Commentaries mostly took the form of *Catenæ*, or Synopses of Patristic exposition, down to the Council of Trent. Meanwhile a free, historical method had here and there always existed: especially in the early school of Antioch, and among the rationalist Schoolmen, such as Abelard. This has never been absent as a protest of learning against the excesses of the two other principles. Since the Reformation these tendencies have been perhaps more marked than before: the last, especially, has found its expression in the Rationalist exposition of modern times. It is now the highest aim of this science to combine the three: giving the profound spiritual sense, the traditional interpretation of the Church, and the scientific study of the text, their respective rights.

#### Methods.

1. Hence we may reproduce these several methods and apply them to the general laws of Hermeneutics. The grammatical study of the plain text answers to all that was sound in the historical school; the observance of the analogy of faith displaces the ecclesiastical principle, the analogy being to a great extent the internal Biblical tradition itself as maintained in the purest traditions and exegesis of the Christian community; and dependence on the Holy Ghost, the interior Teacher, preserves the best secret of the allegorical or mystical school without its errors.

2. At the root of all lies the grammatical or literal interpretation : what is meant when it is said that the Bible must be interpreted like any other book. The Lexicons give the meaning of the words ; the Grammar, their right construction ; and the Concordance, the several writers' distinctive phraseology. The student of Scripture, like the student of any ancient classics, has the key which enables him to understand what the Bible says, and what it means so far as the literal meaning goes.

Text  
Literal  
and  
Figurative

3. It may be safely said that a very large proportion of the difficulties, harshnesses, and even apparent discrepancies of the Bible vanish before an exact application of the rules of grammar as to cases, prepositions, moods and tenses, especially of the Greek. Very much depends upon the simple grammatical meaning of the Aorist in those two correlative passages : *Even so death passed upon all men, because all sinned* ; and *If One died for all, then all died*. Modern commentaries yield ample evidence of this ; as also the gradual improvement of our translations of Scripture. Further illustrations need not be given here : they will constantly occur in the development of our doctrine. But the fact cannot be too emphatically stated, that a grammatical and minute interpretation of the plain text is a great step in the understanding of the far larger portion of the Word of God.

Import-  
ance of  
Grammar.

Rom. v.  
12.  
2 Cor. v.  
14.

4. The peculiarity and abundance of the figurative character of that text makes no essential difference : it belongs to universal grammar ; and, though Biblical figure has its peculiar laws, obviously it also is amenable to a simple literal interpretation. The simpler tropes—by which, as the word *τρόπος* signifies, words or extended terms are merely turned from their natural meaning according to a general habit of mankind—abound in the Bible, as in all Oriental books. The Simile, or pure comparison ; the Metaphor, which is the simile without the link of comparison ; and the Metonymy, or Synecdoche, which describes an object by some of its relations or parts, all have the same meaning as in other literature : this is true even of such metaphors as *I am the true Vine*, or *The Lord God is a sun and shield* ; and of the metonymy in *They have Moses and the Prophets*, or *We are the Circumcision*. The Scriptures, in fact, adopt these figures into their ordinary language to a very large extent. In some instances,

Figurative  
Language.

John xv. 1  
Psalm  
lxxxiv  
11.  
Luke xvi.  
29.  
Phil. iii. 2.

Luke xxii.  
19, 20.

Ps. lxxx.  
Gal. iv.

it is undoubtedly important to distinguish between the figure as to be understood literally, and the figure as to be figuratively understood: a distinction on which hangs much theological discussion, as, for instance, in relation to the institution of the Eucharist. In the words *This is My body which is given for you*, and *This cup is the New Testament in My blood*, we have metaphor and metonymy or synecdoche united. And, however true it is that something infinitely beyond grammatical interpretation is needed here, still the simple grammar itself goes far towards the right meaning. The same may be said of the more extended tropes, such as Allegory, Parable, and Symbol, which must have, whatever else they have, their natural interpretation. Allegory, as the expansion of Metaphor, has always a real history at its basis: as in that of the Vine brought out of Egypt and St. Paul's allusion to Agar and Sarah. The relations between the history and the veil that hides it require careful study in the light of analogy hereafter to be considered. But, supposing the key necessary to its theological solution found afterwards, the simple grammatical exposition of the trope remains. So of the Parable,—our Lord's peculiar, affecting, and, it may be said, unshared method of teaching,—which is the Simile expanded. It has its one great point of resemblance, and always its subordinate accessories; but the relation between these must be carefully studied first as a mere parable before higher principles are brought in. The Symbol, which is an indefinite trope that pervades Scripture, ranging from a word or a number up to actions with complicated scenery, has its own laws, which form a deeply interesting and important branch of sacred Hermeneutics; but these laws do not in any case dispense with the literal meaning.

Analogy

II. The Analogy of Faith suggests a second canon of interpretation which applies to Scripture as different from all other writings. This is a wide term, and includes, in fact, three ranges of application: first, the close observation not only of the writer's context but of his general strain of teaching, as he is one representative of the inspired doctrine; in connection with that, perpetual reference to the universal harmony of Scriptural truth, as given by one inspiring Spirit; and, finally, the appeal to the principles of the Faith as held by the Catholic Church from the beginning.

1. Each inspired writer has his Charisma or Gift, his own style of phraseology and of theological thought. For instance, while the inspired Apostles can have but one doctrine of Christian Righteousness, St. Paul and St. James are instructed to present it under a different aspect; as each also employs the term Law with his own distinct shades of meaning. Now it must be a canon that the interpretation of both be harmonised by understanding each according to the analogy of his own general teaching. The rule applies with great force to the New Testament: St. Paul uses many elect words, such as Grace, Law, Reckon, in his own way; St. John has his terms also, such as Heart for Conscience; and the law of analogy requires that this key be applied to every discussion of the meaning of these writers respectively.

Individual  
Writer.

2. The same holds good throughout the Bible, whether of the Old Testament or of the New. There is an analogy of Scripture: a rule or standard of doctrine, pervading the entire oracles of God; and all exposition must be faithful to it. This must govern the interpretation of the Divine Word as being a gradual development of one harmonious Truth: there is one doctrine of the Trinity, of the Person of Christ, of Sin, of Redemption, of Faith and Works, of the Holy Spirit's influence, of Immortality; and all these are in harmony with the one keynote of the whole, the Reconciliation of God and Man in Christ. The application of this canon is in one sense exceedingly difficult, in another it is exceedingly easy. But, difficult or easy, it is an inexorable law, that the exegesis of every sentence of Scripture must accord with its own supreme Rule of Faith. Christ is everywhere. And, although the searching of the Scriptures in order to find the testimony of Jesus in them may be and has been carried to excess, it has been so only in the case of those who have not qualified this canon or guarded it by the direct application of the others.

Analogy  
of Scrip-  
ture.  
Rom. xii  
6.

3. Once more, there is what may be termed, adopting St. Paul's expression, the Analogy of the Faith—*κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως*—which is really the analogy of Scripture as confirmed in the catholic belief of the best ages and of the purest confessions of the Church of Christ. This canon is of great importance, if rightly applied and duly guarded in the application. It regulates, of course, only the exegesis of passages which involve fidelity

Analogy  
of Faith.  
Rom. xii  
6.

or unfaithfulness to the leading principles of the Gospel: these have been held in every age by the Catholic Body, and their interpretation ought to have great weight with us. The earliest creeds declare their belief in the leading doctrines; their almost unanimous exposition of these has come down in a pure tradition; and he is the wiser as well as the more modest interpreter who gives their testimony some weight at least. This, however, leads at once to the third canon, on which finally depend the life, truth, and security of Biblical Hermeneutics.

The Holy Spirit.

III. The Holy Spirit's immediate presence in Holy Scripture—both as its Defender and as its Interpreter—is in this science both a law and a guide of interpretation: as such it is the corrective of the subjective spirit, whether mystical or allegorical or rationalistic. The Inspiration of the Bible is its Guardian also.

In Scripture itself.

1. He is the Expositor within the Scripture itself; He expounds the Old Testament by the New; type by antitype; and ancient text by new style and form of quotation. Nothing is more profitable to the human commentator than to follow in the steps of the Divine: marking diligently how He expounds the ancient oracles in the new ones, and faithfully making His methods theirs for the exposition of both.

In the Church.

2. He continues His interpretation in the Christian Church, and to the minds of all who steadfastly believe in the reality of His presence and guidance. He preserves the regenerate spirit in its true and deep sympathy with the written Word; or, in His own better language, gives the spiritual sense and discernment on which the right understanding of Scripture depends. Its truths are spiritually discerned. *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.* Moreover, it is not fanaticism to believe that He answers every suppliant, especially every minister responsible for the teaching of His people, who consults the Oracle in simple prayer. In ancient times the Lord gave counsel to the leaders of the congregation who inquired at the high priest's *breastplate of judgment*. The Christian Revelation has abolished the typical symbols of Urim and Thummim; but it has given us the reality of their Doctrine et Veritas, their *Revelation and Truth*. And none ever sought or shall ever seek this Oracle in vain. For our encouragement it is written: *Ye have an unction from the Holy One.*

Cor. ii.  
14, 15.

Numb.  
xxvii.  
21.

Ex. xxviii.  
30.

1 John ii.  
20.

## EXEGESIS AND THEOLOGY.

The result of all these is Exegesis, either pure exposition of the text or applied in the pastoral teaching of the ministerial functions; Biblical Theology, or the systematic construction of Scriptural doctrine, as such, and in its purely Scriptural forms and arrangements; and Dogmatic Theology, containing the analysed results of all later definitions and developments.

Exegesis  
Pure and  
Applied.

I. Exegetical theology is the fruit of the application of Hermeneutics in particular, and generally of all Biblical study, to the theological interpretation of the text. Of course, there are commentaries which deal only with its grammatical rendering; but with such we have nothing to do: the very word, in its Greek form of exegesis or in its Latin form of exposition, signifies more than that. It is the drawing out and presentation of the sense.

Exegetical  
Theology.

1. As such it occupies a large and abundant place in Christian literature: ranging from monographs on detached passages and paragraphs, through expositions of the several books, up to commentaries on the whole of Scripture. There cannot be much doubt that the best and purest exhibition of Christian truths is to be found in books devoted to the direct exposition of the Sacred Word; but the value of these books is generally in the ratio of their concentration, and the richest products of modern exegesis are the result of earnest and learned labour on individual documents or on the writings of individual men.

Commen-  
taries.

2. Exegesis is applied in Practical Theology: the most important being that which takes form in the ministry of the Word, or the pastoral teaching of the congregation. The principles that govern the application of Hermeneutics to preaching belong to Homiletics: which in modern times has been made a distinct science, aiming to guide the Christian Pastor in the best methods of unfolding the mysteries of the Faith to his flock, and of preaching the Gospel to those who are without.

Scripture  
Systema-  
tised

II. Biblical theology is the noblest superstructure erected on the foundation of Hermeneutical science proper.

Biblical  
Theology.

1. It arranges systematically, and in its unity, the boundless variety of truth which in Scripture is presented under a process of development, *at sundry times and in divers manners*. Its sys

Every-  
where pre-  
sented.  
Heb. 1



tematic arrangement, however, aims rather to exhibit the stages of development than the final results: though not excluding the latter. It is occupied with the relations between the theology of the Old Testament and that of the New: a subject of ever growing interest. It deals also with the various schools of teaching and thought into which the inspired writers may be distributed. Hence it is dispensational theology: exhibiting the doctrines of every economy as it expanded the heritage of truth dispensed to its predecessor. Especially in the New Testament it has an ample field: showing the variations and harmonies that may be observed among the various writers. Hence it presents the development of Christian Doctrine in its course of various but orderly disclosure from Genesis to Revelation.

Dogmatic  
Theology.

2. Biblical theology lies at the foundation of Dogmatic, giving it its security and its strength. From age to age Scriptural doctrine has assumed in the Christian Church new forms or statement, arrangement, definition, and terminology. When the development of Divine doctrine ceased, the development of human dogma began. Doubtless ~~one~~ and the selfsame Spirit has presided over both though His presuency has not been of the same kind. But the sole guarantee for the soundness of our Systematic Theology, through all its branches, is its fidelity to the exposition of the Word of God as the only standard of truth, the only **RULE OF FAITH.**

**G O D.**



## GOD.

God.

GOD is ALL IN ALL throughout the whole compass of Theology: everywhere both its Subject and its Object and the unity of these. But there is a specific doctrine of God which falls into two branches: first, the existence of the Supreme Being as an object generally of human thought and knowledge; and, secondly, the more specific revelation of His nature and attributes. It is obvious that these two cannot be kept entirely distinct: each involves the other to a certain extent; but they may be usefully distinguished as God's revelation of Himself IN man and TO man as consummated in Holy Scripture.

### THE EXISTENCE AND NOTION OF GOD.

Being and  
Notion  
of God.

The existence of God may be regarded either as an innate assurance or conviction of the human mind that needs no proof, or as a verity that demonstrates itself to reason by its credentials. According to the former view (this eternal truth, the sum of all truth, is a necessary element in man's consciousness, as created in the Divine image. But, in consequence of the disturbance of human reason, it is necessary that theology should be prepared to arrange the elements of this consciousness into a formal

system of arguments in defence of His existence. With this are inseparably bound up the reality and measure of the knowledge of God possible to man.

Existence  
of God.

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

The Being of a God is at once an innate idea and a truth demonstrable and to be demonstrated. Here we use popular language which will receive its more full and sufficient explanation in due course.

Innate  
Idea of  
God.

### INNATE.

The existence of God God alone can reveal. He has wrought this supreme truth into the constitution of human nature as its Creator. Scripture, which never proves the being of the Supreme, appeals to this consciousness; it also gives the reason of its disturbance, and thus by anticipation obviates the force of every argument against it. The history of the human race demonstrates, by the very perversions of the idea of God to which it bears witness, the fact that His existence needs no demonstration. And there is no sound philosophical or psychological reasoning which can withstand this principle, rightly understood and adequately guarded.

Testimony  
of  
Scripture.

I. The Scriptures, as addressed to man universal, assume that in his nature there is a consciousness of a Supreme Being, on Whom he depends, and to Whom he is responsible.

Every-  
where pre-  
supposed.  
Rom. ii.  
15.

1. It gives the grounds of the sublime presupposition, of the knowledge which from Genesis to Revelation, speaking to Jews and Gentiles and the whole human creation of God, it everywhere takes for granted. It appeals to the *law written in their hearts*, which implies a Lawgiver; and to the sense of dependence which feels after the Source of all existence, *if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him*: find Him, Who is already known, in order to the relief of its fears and the satisfaction of its desires. But it goes

Acts xvii.  
27.

even higher than this, and everywhere teaches that *in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him*, which has never been lost: *for in Him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.* And, although we must not press this testimony too far, it most certainly declares this at least, that the very life of the dependent creature is bound up with the idea of its Independent Source, the very thought of God in man's mind—to anticipate a future argument—assumes that God is. It goes higher still, if possible. It declares that the eternal Logos or Word is *the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* And this precedes, in order of time and of thought, that higher revelation which follows: *No man hath seen God at any time; the Onlybegotten[*Son*], Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.* He is Himself the manifestation of the invisible God, but only as revealing Himself to a preparatory consciousness in mankind. *Ἐκείνος ἐξηγήσατο*: He hath expounded in a final exegesis the original text implanted in universal human nature.

Gen. v. 1.

Acts xvii.  
2d.

John i. 9.

John i. 18.

2. Every objection that may be urged against the universality of this consciousness it obviates by showing that two reasons have obscured the truth in human nature: through sin men *did not like to retain God in their knowledge*: and therefore *God gave them over to a reprobate mind*, or a mind void of judgment. The only atheism that the Scripture admits is practical atheism: that which *the fool hath said in his heart.* St. Paul speaks of the Gentiles as *ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, *atheists in the world.* But this is opposed to being *in Christ*; and signifies rather forsaken of God than either denying Him or entirely ignorant of Him, though these cannot be altogether excluded from the text.

The only  
Atheism.

Rom. i.  
28.

Ps. xiv.  
1.  
Eph. ii.  
12.

3. Hence the general proposition that the existence of the Supreme is innate and connate. This does not mean that this full knowledge is formed in every mind as an object of consciousness, but that the constitution of human nature is such that it naturally develops a consciousness of God when God presents Himself, even as it grows up into a consciousness of self and of the outer world. That consciousness of the Infinite Being may be morally perverted, even as the consciousness of self, and of the external world, may be intellectually perverted by a false philo-

Innate  
and  
Connate.

sophy. It may assume a thousand forms, from the blind fetish of object superstition, through all the variations of Polytheism up to Pantheism, or the materialistic theories that unwittingly make the eternal evolutions of unintelligent law into the very Being Whom they reject. This leads at once to the theological arguments in proof of this fundamental truth.

**Demonstrations.**

**DEMONSTRABLE.**

All processes of this argument rest finally on the analysis of that original consciousness of God which is the birthright of man as a creature: hence they are derived, first, from an appeal to the nature of the human spirit itself; secondly, from a consideration of the relation of the human mind to the phenomena of the universe: and, thirdly, from the universal Theism of the race as the result of both. These arguments serve to show the groundlessness of all atheistic theories, whether they negatively exclude God, or positively assert His non existence. But there is a limit to their demonstrative force as human evidences: they require the enforcement of the Holy Spirit's influence as Divine credentials; and must in every case derive their strength from the further revelation of God as to His own essence and perfections.

**In Human Nature.**

**THE CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN NATURE.**

The first and best credentials of the existence of a Supreme Being are found in the elements of human nature itself.

1. The simplest form of the argument is to be sought in the moral constitution of man, which in reason or conscience proclaims the existence of a Supreme Lawgiver, and in its desires and aspirations the existence of a Supreme Object for communion with Whom it was made. These are elements of our nature and not the result of education; they are primary, intuitive, and universal; refusing at the outset all argument upon their origin. If conscience is the moral consciousness—its only sound defini-

tion—it as much implies a spiritual world into which man is born as consciousness generally implies the natural world. If it is the reason or heart or central personality of man it gives a testimony, supreme in the soul, to a Power Who rules in righteousness and hates iniquity. The rational law of our nature is its moral law. It points to a Holy Governor, Whom it suggests or to Whom it appeals, above the visible world nothing in which is capable of exciting its emotions. And the universal feeling of dependence on a Being or a Person higher than ourselves reinforces this argument: the same heart in man which trembles before an authority above him yearns to be able to trust in Him. This may be called the MORAL demonstration.

2. This argument is known and read of all men. Another line of reasoning, also based upon the constitution of our nature, is not, however so obvious or not so immediately obvious to all minds. It is that there is in the spirit or reason of man a clear idea of a Perfect Being: there must be an objective reality corresponding to this. The argument is put in a variety of forms: for instance, we cannot conceive the non-existence of space and time: there must be an Infinite Substance, of Whom these are the accidents or Who must be at the ground of these. The ideas of infinity, eternity, absoluteness must have a reality somewhere: many who have denied the being of God have been obliged to invest matter or the world with some of these qualities. They are primary laws of thought; and strongly suggest what they may not be able to prove. They at any rate silently protest against Anti-theism in every form. To this class belong all these impressive, and to some orders of mind most cogent, arguments derived from it, the ideas of infinite goodness and of unchangeable truths in the soul; these must have their ultimate ground in a Being of absolute and essential goodness and truth. The Platonic Ideas, essential and not phenomenal, must be eternally inherent in a Perfect Supreme. Multitudes of arguments have been reasoned out which are only variations on this. They show both their strength and their weakness in the position of Descartes that the thought of God implies the existence of God. Such reasoning is called ONTOLOGICAL, and sometimes by abuse of the term A PRIORI. It is too abstract for common use, and as usually put

Onto-  
logical



its reasoning is really *À POSTERIORI*: it infers a Divine Being, from premisses already within; and strictly speaking belongs to the next department of our demonstration.

In the  
Universe.

#### THE EXTERNAL UNIVERSE.

Arguments from the phenomena of the universe are divided into two closely related and in some sense identical branches.

Cosmo-  
logical.

Conf. x. 6.

1. First, the COSMOLOGICAL reasoning demands a sufficient cause for every effect; and is therefore sometimes called the *Ætiological* argument, from *αἰτία*, cause. It has been used in every age, both within and without the sphere of revelation. Augustine gave it noble expression when he said: *Interrogavi mundi molem de Deo meo, et respondit mihi: non ego sum, sed ipse me fecit.* But the first words of the Bible respond by anticipation to the appeal for a sufficient reason of all things, a permanent Cause of all phenomenal and transitory existence. The idea of causation is a primary law of thought: not arising from the observation of sequence in things. The mind of man demands a cause of his own being, of the universe around him: the Eternal First Cause is an absolute necessity of thought. Discussions as to the nature of causality, and the origin of our notion of it, have been many. All they have done is to help us by urging that we have no right to assume that all existence must have what we call a cause. They cannot overturn our conviction that every event and every effect with a known origin must have a reason for its existence or occurrence. The material creation is a universe: we only know it as such; as such science demonstrates that it had a beginning and a law. There is nothing absolutely permanent in matter as we know it; we cannot track it beyond its arrangements; its ultimate constitution is a composition of atoms. And of the universe as we know it there must have been a Cause of supernatural Power and Wisdom. This holds good of every combination of molecules and of the stupendous universe itself. No subordinate cause can be a cause properly speaking. The mind never rests but in a Cause uncaused: free, intelligent, and, we may perhaps add, omnipotent.

Teleo-  
logical.

2. Secondly, the TELEOLOGICAL form of this argument—from *τέλος*, the end,—observes the infinite proofs of a designing Mind

in the laws and arrangements of the universe. This is not a question of Final Causes, to which the human mind is incompetent to ascend: that is of final in the sense of ultimate. It is a question of the adaptations of everything to an end in itself, also of all things to ends in relation to other things united in one aggregate or unity. This physico-theological argument derives its materials from the creation everywhere, as well as from the adaptation of man's mental and spiritual faculties to the world around. Hence the field in which it expatiates is literally boundless. All the physical sciences unconsciously provide the argument with its premisses; and no sound science, physical or metaphysical, rejects the conclusion. Mathematics, the alphabet of physical science, only detects the quantitative laws of the universe. And every science without exception shows that the order and adaptation and harmonies of nature are such as make the chances no less than infinite against the supposition of Chaos, or the absence of our designing intelligence. Newton's words concerning astronomy are true of all regions of science: *Elegantissima hæc compages solis, planetarum, et cometarum et stellarum non nisi consilio et dominio entis cujusdam potentis et intelligentis oriri potuit*. And all that is said as to the adaptations of inorganic and organic nature may be said of the relation of the human mind to the whole. The cumulative argument is literally irresistible to all but those who deny final causes altogether, and with that denial make everything the result of chance.

Physico-  
Theo-  
logical.

#### THE CONSENSUS GENTIUM.

These two classes of arguments, separately or in combination, consciously or unconsciously, have largely swayed the general thought of mankind. The world has been more or less THEISTIC from the beginning: the idea of a supernatural world and supernatural beings has never been absent. This is the testimony of Scripture; universal history consents; and the fact is itself a strong subordinate auxiliary to all other reasoning. The modern science, so called, of Comparative Religions has done good service in showing that even the forms of the perversion of Theism bear witness to the truth: Polytheism and Pantheism, which are only

Universal  
Belief.

distortions of the one great idea, and have, for the most part, divided mankind, are evidences almost universal of the force of the conclusions drawn from the constitution of human nature and the evidences of inferior powers controlled by the Supreme Power in the universe. Natural religion is at once proof of the irresistible force of these arguments and itself an additional argument.

#### LIMIT OF ALL ARGUMENT.

**Limitations.**

This leads to a consideration of the value or sufficiency of argumentation on this subject: in other words, of the question whether the existence of God can be demonstrated at all. There is a limitation which may be referred to the great question itself, as also one that may be referred to the mind of him who disbelieves.

**In the Unbelieving Mind.**

1. It cannot be denied that the perversion of the human intellect under evil influence is such that it may refuse to accept, or be incapable of perceiving, the evidence of the being of such a Being as these arguments demonstrate. Man may sink into such a state as to think himself an atheist: indeed, he may suppress the idea of God in his nature altogether. Although, generally speaking, pure atheism is rare, and still rarer anti-theism, or the revolt against the possibility of the existence of a One Ruler of the universe, yet both are to be found among men of unquestionable strength of intellect. This is a phenomenon of which a good account may be given. It may be fairly said that the idea of God is generally rejected only in the sense of being disguised. The unknown and unknowable Force of the philosophy of Nescience, or the Pantheistic Absolute evolving itself in all things, is only the Christian Creator under a most unworthy name. The modern Materialist whose creed is, Matter I know, and force I know, but what is God? is unconsciously asserting the Power he denies: he belongs to the class of *men who hold the truth in unrighteousness*. Their unrighteousness may not be deliberate defiance of the eternal laws of morality; but it is most certainly injustice to the clearest and most explicit demands of their own nature which cries out for the Living God.

**Rom. i. 18.**

**In the Argument Itself.**

2. But the argument that arises to prove the being of the Supreme is undoubtedly beset with many difficulties. These are found mainly

in the anomalies of the moral world as under the will of a supposed Divine Providence: anomalies which are as it were reflected in the physical world as the sphere of that Providence. These difficulties we have to meet hereafter at many points where they specially press. Meanwhile it is enough to say that such obstacles to faith produce different effects on different minds. Some they lead to pure ATHEISM: that is, the simple omission of the notion of God from the sum of things, nothing being left but a material universe the highest form of whose blind and undirected and causeless energy is thought. But this may take a sceptical form, and decline to pronounce on the non-existence of God. It may object to the system of MATERIALISM or POSITIVISM as unphilosophically positive, and content itself with the assertion of NESCIENCE. But it may so brood over the obliquities of the known universe as to reach the point of a desolate and bold ANTITHEISM, pronouncing the existence of One Supreme, at once all-powerful and infinitely loving, an impossibility.

3. One secret of this antitheistic sentiment among men is the failure to weigh well the whole argument all round. No one demonstration is sufficient of itself. Each gives and receives strength when viewed as one element in a reasoning which has unbounded resources. A narrow view of things, fixing its thought upon some one fascinating discord, may lead to the rejection of God: a large and wide view of the whole, as by a necessity of thought under the supremacy of some vast unity of government, can never accept either Atheism or Antitheism. But another secret is that the disturbance of sin has rendered a Divine assertion of God Himself necessary. Man may refuse to believe and argue himself into what is very much like the ridding and baring his mind of all idea of Divinity. Hence, secondly, all the demonstrations usually given of the existence of the Supreme are simply the preliminaries to the revelation of the Divine nature by the Eternal Word and the Eternal Spirit. In fact, and to speak holdly, they are rather for those who believe already than for those who believe not. At any rate, the very best exhibition of arguments in favour of the existence of the Deity leaves the subject imperfect, until the revelation of His nature and name and attributes gives the demonstration its crown and completeness.

Secret of  
Anti-  
theism.

Notion  
of God.

### THE NOTION OF GOD.

Revelation is in the highest sense Theology, or the science of the knowledge of God. This knowledge must be considered, first, as possible to man, and then as imparted to him. The former involves the question in what sense man may know the Supreme and Absolute Being; and the latter in what way this Being has revealed His essence and His attributes to His creature capable of that knowledge. The conception of the Divine nature which is possible to man is of necessity partial and limited; but it is true knowledge, as corresponding to reality in its Object; and, for the regulation of man's life of faith, it is sufficient. The establishment of these propositions will show the harmony between all sound philosophy and Divine revelation.

#### THE NOTION OF GOD PARTIAL BUT REAL AND SUFFICIENT.

Know-  
ledge of  
God  
Limited.  
1 Tim. vi.  
16.

I. When Scripture speaks of God as *dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, Whom no man hath seen nor can see*, it means what philosophy means when it says that we cannot define in our thought the Infinite. We cannot comprehend God in the sense of understanding Him in His essence, attributes, and universal relations. *Deus cognosci potest, comprehendi non potest.* We cannot search and find Him out unto perfection. He is and must be to every created faculty, and that for ever, in some sense an UNKNOWN GOD. None but the Infinite can know the Infinite. St. Paul's testimony, as given above, may be said to close the long array of Scriptural testimonies on this subject. After an endless abundance of revelations, in which man's knowledge of God is asserted with almost every variation of the term knowledge, it declares that in some sense He still remains incomprehensible. Something has been said on this subject when Revelation was in question, and something will be said under the Divine Attributes; it will be needful now only to show that the Biblical doctrine of

the unknowableness of God mediates between two extremes of philosophical thought. On the one hand, it corrects the error that there can be no knowledge of the Divine Being as an object of faith; and, on the other, it corrects the error that the Divine Being is or can be perfectly revealed in the reason of man.

1. However paradoxical it may seem, it is true that theology has to defend the doctrine of the unsearchableness of Deity. There is a Pantheistic and transcendental philosophy which in some sense makes man the measure of God, and boasts that the human reason is capable of the knowledge of the Supreme in the same sense and to the same extent as it is capable of any other knowledge. This error may be viewed in two lights.

God unsearchable

(1.) It exaggerates the prerogative of reason as an organ of truth. By reason is here meant that transcendental faculty which is supposed intuitively to take cognizance of the Infinite. According to Hegel, who with all his obscurity is the best representative of this Pantheistic philosophy, God knows Himself in man, the human consciousness of Him is His own consciousness finding expression in human thought more or less distinct according to the measure of intellect, but always a clear intuition of the Infinite. There is an infinite, impersonal, and Divine reason in mankind of which each individual has his share; and in short man's knowledge of God is simply God knowing Himself in him. Hence God is man in miniature, and man is a fragment of God.

Reason.

(2.) This error makes man the measure of Deity, and reduces the Supreme essence to a subjective creation of man's own mind. The Infinite and Absolute One is brought within the limits of human thought, being only the negation of the finite or its correlative: the finite and the infinite being each a distinct conception and finding their unity in the term God. But from this negative or negation to the positive nothing of the older Pantheistic mystics there is but a step. This philosophy, professing to make God simply what He is to us and in us, really removes Him to a measureless distance: He is *ἐπέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας*, the superessential being which is of course no being at all. Thus extremes meet: the Divinity Who is contracted within the limits of human thought, and brought too close at hand, is really sent afar off. Such an adventurous theory of a perfect cognizance of the Infinite by a

Man not the Measure of God.

Jer. xxiii 22.

human faculty which is God Himself within us really destroys the knowledge of the Infinite and Eternal Being altogether.

**Limita-  
tion.**

(3.) Hence we must impress upon our minds the fact that all our knowledge of God is limited: limited in us for ever as we are creatures, limited in its impartation to us as we are creatures whose faculties of knowledge are in themselves under the limitations of time and space, and limited still further as our faculties are impaired and disturbed by sin.

**God not  
unknow-  
able.**

2. Modern religious philosophy has betrayed a tendency to go to the opposite extreme, and to exaggerate the unthinkableness and the unknowableness of God. The limits of religious thought are defined by too narrow a theory, which postulates three things: that there can be no knowledge of the Absolute whatever as a Person, an absolute unconditioned personality being inconceivable and incogitable; that what of God we cannot know we may nevertheless and must believe in, despite of reason; and that consequently all our knowledge of God is Regulative Knowledge simply, not answering to truth in Him but given us in this life for the direction of our thoughts and lives. On this theory a few remarks may be made, preparatory to the next principle that our knowledge of God is so far as it goes real.

**Petitio  
Principii.**

(1.) It begs the question throughout. It assumes to know that very Absolute and Infinite which it professes not to know. It is itself thinking the unthinkable and conceiving the inconceivable. How does it know that the Infinite cannot be a Person, that infinity and personality are contradictory terms? How does it know that personality is essentially a limitation and a relation? It is so in a finite creature; but who that knows not the Infinite Being can dare to say that it is so with HIM or with IT? Here the entire subject might be left: this perilous hypothesis is at all points a glaring petitio principii.

**Dishonour  
to both  
Reason  
and Faith.**

(2.) It dishonours both the reason that it disparages and the faith which it dignifies. It makes reason pronounce that an infinite consciousness is a contradiction, that there cannot be an absolute cause of anything not itself; and, at the same time, demands that faith should accept what reason absolutely denies. This brings reason and faith into a most incongruous and mutually degrading conflict. Were the position this, that reason is the

faculty judging according to sense, and faith the faculty that carries reason into the region of spiritual existence, correcting its error and supplementing its defects, we might understand and accept it. But that faith is obliged to accept what is not merely above reason but directly contradicted by it, that faith is directed to an Object utterly unknown and utterly unknowable, is an assumption that undermines the foundations of truth.

3. This theory leads to very dangerous issues as it teaches the doctrine of a merely regulative knowledge. The very word regulative indicates the peril: our knowledge of God is given us for the direction not only of our thoughts but of our lives also. If our thoughts of Him do not correspond to the reality, the Author of our mental constitution forces us to believe what is not true. But God who cannot err cannot deceive us. If our conscience and sense of responsibility to a Judge, if our desires for communion with a Personal Father, have no corresponding realities, where is our religion and where the Gospel on which it rests? We cannot exaggerate the importance of what is at stake here.

Regulative  
Know-  
ledge.

II. But the knowledge we have of God is, therefore, a real knowledge. There are many ways in which it pleases the Supreme to reveal Himself: but they all imply that He gives us a true perception of His own nature so far as it goes. He does not deceive us as to His being; and the mental conception of Himself to which He trains us corresponds to the reality: thus our knowledge is real as in us and real as of Him.

Real and  
True.

1. All here depends on the meaning and extent of the term knowledge; and again much also depends on the distinction between knowledge generally and the specific knowledge which in Scripture is appropriated for our use concerning the Deity.

Know-  
ledge.

(1.) Knowledge is the true and right relation of the knowing mind to the object known. God is the absolute truth, and when our conceptions are conformable to that object we know God. Now, it is of the essence of the Infinite that it passeth knowledge; and the conception of a Being who cannot be fully comprehended in His eternal nature is a true knowledge of Him, a knowledge in us conformed to the truth in Him. The conception of the general term for God is true to His nature. It is part of its truth that it does not profess to perceive by immediate presentation

Relation  
of subject  
and  
object.



His very essence. In no sense does it assume to see God. But it is a true knowledge we have of Him, just as it is a true knowledge which we have of our souls which we do not see, of the existence of matter which we do not see, and of all other objects of our cognizance, so far as concerns their nature in themselves and apart from their secondary properties. There is no definition of knowledge which does not admit of our truly knowing God.

Higher  
Know-  
ledge of  
Faith.

(2.) But it must be remembered that the Scriptures distinguish the knowledge which is allied with true faith from every other kind of knowledge. It admits that the Gentiles knew God; and their knowledge was in a certain sense connected with their faith in the testimony of their own consciousness and of the external world. That faith reached a very high point in some of the most enlightened of the heathen; as for instance in Plato, whose definition of God has never been surpassed in sublimity: Light is the shadow of the Deity, *Lumen est umbra Dei, et Deus est Lumen luminis*. Nor need we doubt that the influences of the Divine Spirit glowed in the minds of many of the ancient philosophers to whom, as Jamblichus said, *Esse nostrum est Deum cognoscere*, to know God is our very being. We must not, however, forget that since we have *seen the Father* in Christ, both faith and knowledge have put on their perfection. Faith in Jesus has become strengthened to behold more directly than before its Eternal Object; our dim conception has been transfigured into the certitude of knowledge: *γνώσις* has become, so to speak, *ἐπίγνωσις*. Man's notion of the Divine Being has undergone its final change in this world; and the reality of our knowledge has become more real. It may be said that the most emphatic terms that could be used are used to describe our possible acquaintance with the Divine Being.

John xiv.  
9.

Ens reale  
and Ens  
rationis.

2. It is the true knowledge of a reality in God, of that ENS REALE which answers to the ENS RATIONIS in the human mind. Here we must remember that we are not left to ontological or metaphysical speculation. The assumption of our theology is that God reveals Himself to man as made in His own image, and permits him to infer the perfection in his Maker of what in himself is imperfect. The entire course of Scripture sanctions and encourages this view. What is called ANTHROPOMORPHISM is

the style adopted by the Almighty when He speaks and acts as a man. This is the prevalent method of the Bible; where God speaks to man as the finite copy of His infinite Self. He says, *My thoughts are not your thoughts*, but only in the sense of being nobler; and, *neither are your ways My ways*, but only in the sense of being better. We are not deceived by Him when we are encouraged to think that the same things are true in Him and in us. Personality, power, goodness, truth, love, are reflections in us of His image; realities in us corresponding to realities in Him. *He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?* This is the poetry of Anthropomorphism; but it teaches the profound truth that we are transcripts from an eternal Archetype, after which we are refashioned by being conformed to the *Image of the invisible God*, the Son of God incarnate, the *Firstborn of every creature*. The Incarnation is the pledge that human nature may have a true knowledge of the Divine.

III. The knowledge of which man is capable, and which he receives, is sufficient: sufficient for the purpose of probation in his present estate, where he only waits, at the threshold of eternal knowledge, for the more direct vision of God.

1. There is an important sense in which the modern expression Regulative Knowledge is strictly appropriate, and may be rescued from its misapplication. It is a disclosure adapted to our probationary condition; and as such is sufficient for our worship and our duty, for our hope and our fear, for our contemplation and our desire. For the present we have a reflected presentation *from a glass darkly, we know in part*. But it must be remembered that the Saviour, the Only Revealer, has assured us how high is this regulative and imperfect knowledge. It is that indeed, but much more than that: it is the *light of life*. He makes it most emphatically a continuation and bestowment of His own Divine-human knowledge: *Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him*. The Being Whom the New Testament reveals is very different from the abstract and inconceivable form of being which, rather than whom, modern philosophy would substitute. Such a God, without form and void, neither the knowledge of the understanding nor the knowledge of the heart will be content to receive.

Anthropo-  
morphism.

Isa. lv. 8.

1 John ii.  
8.

Ps. xciv.  
9.

Col. i. 15

Sufficient

Regula-  
tive in  
true sense.

1 Cor. xiii.  
12.

John viii.  
12.

Mat. xi.  
27.

Theology  
of the  
Way.

(Cor.xiii.  
12.

! Cor.xiii.  
8.

2. Divines formerly distinguished between a THEOLOGIA VIATORUM and a THEOLOGIA BEATORUM: the theology of the pilgrims and the theology of the beatified. Of the future notion of God of which the beatific vision will be the medium the Scripture tells us that it will be that which we now have made perfect. Then shall we KNOW even as we ARE KNOWN: the knowledge in *part* shall not be exchanged for a truer knowledge, only for a knowledge more full. The one knowledge is the preparation for the other, and will *vanish away*: vanish only as encumbered with symbols and images and innumerable restrictions of the flesh which weighs down the incorruptible spirit; vanish only as the old law vanished when it disappeared and yet reappeared in a new law, the law of the everlasting Gospel.

Essence  
and At-  
tributes.

### THE DIVINE ESSENCE AND ATTRIBUTES.

God's revelation of Himself is given in names which declare His nature and His perfections. Some of those names refer rather to the eternal Essence in itself as the one and only real being, some to the Divine Existence and nature as disclosed or revealed in His works, and some present God as the Substance clothed with its attributes. From these, as progressively unfolded throughout the Scriptures, we may humanly define the Essence of God, and arrange in reverent order the Divine perfections.

The  
Divine  
Nature.

! Pet. i. 4.

1. The phrase in most common use, and the only one used in Scripture, is THE DIVINE NATURE. This, according to its derivation, is scarcely applicable in any other than an accommodated and conventional sense to God: indeed, the only instance of its use in Scripture refers to our being *made partakers of the Divine nature*, meaning either the moral excellence of God or the Divine-human spiritual life given in Christ. Neither the idea of φύσις, from φύω, nor that of Natura, from Nascor, comports with the unproduced and undeveloping absoluteness of God. Even Pantheism, which has introduced the two correlative ideas of NATURA NATURANS, or the sum of all things as producing, and NATURA NATURATA, the sum of all things as produced, nevertheless finds

these ideas inconsistent with its high conception of the absolute ALL, and prefers the term SUBSTANCE. The Scripture, however, knows no such abstract terms as Essence or Substance. I AM is BEING, indeed, in contradistinction to all phenomena; but it is Being concrete in an Eternal Person. SUBSTANCE, Substantia, which is the hidden reality that underlies attributes, is equally absent from Divine revelation. In theology the word Nature is generally referred equally to the eternal essence and to the moral character of God; the words Substance and Essence, however, are more appropriate to the former. It may be added, though apparently a refinement in thought, that being is a deeper word than existence—which by its derivation includes the EX, the coming out of being into definite manifestations,—and is therefore strictly the representative of the absolute essence of the Deity.

2. Though the Divine names are alone mentioned, it must be remembered that there are other methods by which it has pleased God to present Himself to the thought of His creatures. Some Scriptural references to His being are neither names nor attributes: as when it is said that GOD IS SPIRIT; that GOD IS LIGHT; and that GOD IS LOVE. But those definitions, mediating between essence and attribute, will find their appropriate place in a later department of theology.

Divine  
Names.

John iv.  
24.  
1 John i.  
5.  
1 John iv  
16.

### THE ESSENTIAL NAMES OF GOD.

The names which represent the unsearchable mystery of the Eternal have been progressively revealed. Two of them, Elohim and Jehovah, in their Old-Testament unity, declare that God is at once absolute and necessary being, and the personal Source and Giver of all Divine life: these are supreme among many other names running through the older revelation. They are continued in the New Testament and consummated by the disclosure of a Name without a name, that of the Triune God made known through the Incarnate Son: the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Trinity.

Names  
of God.

Elohim  
and  
Jehovah.

# ELOHIM AND JEHOVAH.

These two essential and personal names pervade the Scriptures as distinct, and as related to each other, and as combined with other names. They convey to the mind a representative idea of the Divine Being which, though standing for a reality unsearchable in itself, effectually defends it from every perversion of the notion of God.

**Elohim.** 1. The former אֱלֹהִים, is the first and the pervading name of the Supreme Being in the early revelations, and in this form limited to it. Its derivation, whether traced to אֵל, the more primitive type, signifying power, or to its singular אֱלֹהֶיךָ, signifying the effect of power in fear, is of secondary importance: probably in its simplest root it is underived. Occurring sometimes poetically in the singular, it is generally in the plural: thus expressing the abundance, fullness, and glory of the powers of the Divine nature: as it were intensive, or a plural of majesty; though, as always joined with the singular verb, it is not consistent with such an abstract Monotheism as would leave no place for the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity.

**Jehovah.** 2. The latter, יְהוָה, denotes essential and absolute being, uniting what to man is past, present, and future in one eternal existence. This name is explained by God Himself: HE WHO IS, or

**Ex. iii. 14.** HE WHO IS WHAT HE IS: uniting as it were the abstract idea of pure Being with the process of continual becoming through revelation to His people. He is eternally steadfast in the perpetual revelation of His nature and relations. It is of importance to remember that Jehovah, no less than Elohim, lays the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The historical development of the nature of God in Scripture is always connected with it: the Theophanies and Anthropomorphisms are always those of Jehovah.

1 Tim. iii. 16. And Jesus the God *manifest in the flesh* is Jehovah, the *Angel of Jehovah* in the Old Testament, even as He said of Himself, *Before Abraham was I AM*, in the New Testament.

**The Lord God.** 3. These appellatives are united from the very beginning of Scripture; and their combination, *the Lord God* and *God the Lord*, declares the truth that the Elohim or God Who created the

universe is the personal Jehovah or God of His creatures: therefore, when the fuller revelation was made through Moses, of the God of a special covenant, the personal relations of Jehovah Who had been known indeed from the beginning were made prominent over those of the Almighty God Whom the fathers had formerly known. When they are united, Elohim is rather the abstract and generic name, which might be given to false gods; but Jehovah is the proper name that indicates absolute unity, personality, and saving relation to His people and to individuals.

4. These are the two supreme names—given by Himself and not derived from heathenism—of the Divine Being in the Bible. All others are variations on them, or these with additional appellatives that link them with the attributes of the Godhead. For instance: אֱלֹהֵי שֶׁדַּי, *God Almighty*, or *Shaddai* alone; אֱלֹהֵי, *the Living God*; אֱלֹהֵי עֲלִיּוֹן, *the Most High*; יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת, *the Lord*, or *the Lord God, of Hosts*. There is one name which occupies a peculiar place: the plural אֲדֹנָי, *Adonai*, joined with Elohim and Jehovah. This name of God denotes His dominion as Lord, which Jehovah does not. The Jews mostly used the vowel points of this word in writing and pronouncing the Name to them above every name, which they thus veiled in reverence: hence it coalesced with the latter when it was translated and passed into the New Testament as *Kýrios*. The testimony of Thomas to the Divinity of Christ, *My Lord and my God*, unites this with an echo of *Adonai Elohai* in the Psalms. St. John in the New Testament gives two new definitions of the nature of God, both, however, including His attributes, like those to which we have referred in the Old Testament: *God is light* and *God is love*. The same final witness records the last revelation of God in the words of Christ which sums up all the Divine names in one remarkable verse: Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἀλφά καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ Παντοκράτωρ. Here are all the Greek representatives of the Hebrew names Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai, Shaddai; with their meaning as absolute and personal being. And they form the transition, as our Lord Jesus Christ utters them, to the second branch of our subject, the final and full revelation of the Triune Name.

#### Other Names.

Gen. xvii.  
1.  
Job v. 17.  
Gen. xiv.  
18.  
Jer. v. 14.  
Isa. xl. 10.  
Dan. ix.  
18.

John xx.  
28.  
Ps. xxxv.  
23;  
xxxviii.  
15.  
1 John i.  
5; iv. 16.

Rev. i. 8.  
(Tisch.)

## Errors.

## PROTEST OF THESE NAMES AGAINST ERROR.

The two great perversions of thought concerning the Divine nature which have been found wherever men have been left to their own devices—Polytheism and Pantheism in all their forms—are by these names explained at once and condemned

**Gods**  
**Many**

1. POLYTHEISM is the human corruption of these Divine truths : Elohim, the God of unbounded internal fullness of life and external manifestations of creative wealth, becomes in heathenism a universe of deified and worshipped powers ; Jehovah in heathenism degenerates into the special and local imaginary god of each worshipping nation. Or, in the Eastern systems of Dualism, Elohim was perverted into the creative forces of darkness and evil, Jehovah into the co-eternal God of light and goodness. Holy Scripture distinctly refers to these corruptions of the truth ; but only as corruptions. From beginning to end the Bible contains no acknowledgment of the reality of other gods. It is true that we read *Jehovah is greater than all gods*, as the testimony of Jethro, a heathen, and *who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods?* in the song of Moses : as if declaring that no Elohim was above the Jewish Jehovah. But throughout Scripture the *other gods* are *Vanities* or *Nothings*. It can hardly be denied however that according to the testimony of St. Paul, the Gentiles *sacrifice to devils*, *δαίμονious*, the **דְּמוֹנִים** of the Old Testament, and therefore that evil spirits ruled over the empire of idolatry. But St. Paul, like all the ancient prophets, makes the false gods and their idols identical : both being *nothing in the world*. *The Lord our God is one Lord*, and *His name one*, and *the only true God*. This is the sublime testimony of the opening of Genesis, and it is confirmed throughout revelation. The Pantheon of heathenism has its altar ; but that altar is erected to **לֹא־אֱלֹהִים**, *that which is not god*.

**Pan**  
**theism.**

2. PANTHEISM has in every age—in the East and West, in ancient and in modern times—been the prevalent error of the philosophical intelligence in its speculations on this high subject. Unlike Polytheism, it has aimed to simplify the idea of the Supreme ; but its simplification reduces Him to the ALL, τὸ πᾶν καὶ τὸ ἓν, the unity of the world, or the UNIVERSE. As such Pantheism makes God the sum of things in the sense of

elevating Him above personality. The ancient Pantheism, as introduced into the modern world by Spinoza, regards the All as one substance, having mind and extension as its modes or attributes. There is no becoming; all is pure being; and phenomena are only the modifications of that being. Whatever the transcendental philosophy has superinduced on this notion, resolving pure being finally into the unmodified NOTHING, of which no limiting attribute can be predicated, has no element in common with Biblical theology. Modern Materialism unconsciously adopts a Pantheistic character. Its unknown and unknowable Force or Law is the irrational expression of the same thought; it only gives matter the pre-eminence in its philosophy of Nescience.

3. ELOHIM-JEHOVAH is the Scriptural doctrine, expressed in symbolical names, which protests against both perversions. However difficult it may be to receive it, God is the one Absolute Personality. This is the teaching of both names, especially in their union. Each denotes the soleness, the necessity, the infinity of the Divine Being as a Spiritus Independens; and each is connected with man and the creature in such a way as not only to permit, but to demand, the most definite personality, or self-determining relation to the beings whom He calls into existence. This double name expresses clearly all that Pantheism has laboured in vain to express during the course of its many evolutions; but for ever precludes the error into which Pantheism has fallen. It avows an infinite fullness of life and possibility in the eternal essence; but assigns all to the controlling will of a Person. The Scripture scarcely ever approaches the notion of an abstract entity; it invariably makes both Elohim and Jehovah the subjects of endless predicates and predicative ascriptions. *In Him we live, and move, and have our being*: in Him, a Person to be sought unto and found. In fact, the personality of God, as a Spirit of self-conscious and self-determining and independent individuality, is as deeply stamped upon His revelation of Himself as is His existence. We are created in His image: our Archetype has in eternal reality the being which we possess as shadows of Him; He has in eternal truth the personality which we know to be our own characteristic, though we hold it in fealty from Him. THY GOD is the Divine word; MY GOD, the human response, through

Protest of  
these  
Names.

Acts xvii.  
28.



the pages of revelation. No subtilty of modern philosophy has ever equalled the definition of the absolute I AM; the English words give the right meaning of the original only when it lays the stress upon the AM for the essential being, and the I for the personality of that being.

In their  
several  
uses.

4. The same correction may be traced throughout the long succession of names which are given to the Deity in the Old Testament: the gradual development seems to show that the error, in both its forms, but especially the Polytheistic, was confronted more and more fully from age to age. The variations which were gradually introduced are all connected with appendages that guard the majesty of the one God. When the name Jehovah was made prominent as the covenant-name for His own people, certain peculiarities in its use taught important lessons. Neither the people nor any individual might say MY Jehovah: it was enough to say MY Elohim, or Jehovah, my Lord. Nor do we ever read of THE Jehovah, as if He were or might be one of many. The Scripture often speaks of the *living God*, as if in opposition to the gods which are dead *nothings*. But it never speaks of the living Jehovah; though it is very frequent to make the eternal life of Jehovah the highest oath: *as the Lord liveth!* Very much importance has been attached to the laws which regulate the use of Elohim and Jehovah respectively; and one of these laws will be found by careful observation to be the assertion of the unity of the God of the whole earth, and His peculiar relation to the entire race of mankind as the God of a covenant of redemption yet to be revealed. After all, the profound and glorious rebuke of all Polytheistic and Pantheistic errors is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. And this Jehovah-Elohim prepares for in many ways. The plural Elohim name lays the indefinite and mysterious foundation for a plurality of Persons in the Godhead; while the singular Jehovah for ever guards the unity of God. The absolute soleness of Deity is maintained by the immutable name Jehovah; while, at the same time, it is that very name which is linked with every Old-Testament manifestation of the Three Persons, and is continued in the New-Testament revelation of the Three-One Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Josh. iii.  
10.

Num. xiv.  
21.

## THE TRIUNE NAME.

The  
Triune  
Name.

The perfect revelation of the Divine Name or Essence is that which is given by our Lord Himself in the Baptismal Formula of dedication to God and admission into His kingdom. This final testimony of the Revealer declares that the supreme Object of Christian Faith is one, yet existing in a threefold internal personality. As a testimony, it closes a long series of progressive developments of doctrine, all pointing to a Trinity of personal subsistences in the Godhead; and commences a revelation of God which connects Three Divine Persons with the creation of all things, the redemption of the world, and the administration of grace in the Church. Hence, **a doctrinal distinction may be suggested between the Absolute or Immanent Trinity and the Trinity Economical or Redemptional. The latter must be reserved for a future stage. It is with the former that we have now to do**; and it will be sufficient to establish from Scripture the essential Unity, the essential Trinity, and the essential Triunity of the Divine Being. This will lead finally to a further illustration of the doctrine by a reference to the controversies through which it has passed, and the dogmatic definitions to which these have given rise.

## THE DIVINE UNITY.

Unity.

It is impossible to define the Unity of God: the word unity in human language gives no adequate notion, barely serving to defend the doctrine from every opposite error. Hence it is our wisdom to study it in the light of its exhibition in Scripture: marking the uses to which the doctrine

is applied, the Scriptural method of stating it, and the confirmations of the truths which may be everywhere found in the one and uniform economy of nature.

## Scripture.

## DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE.

Consulting God's own revelation of His unity it is very instructive to observe the forms the doctrine assumes there.

- One God.  
Deut. vi.  
4. 5. 1. It is set forth as the basis of all worship: of devotion and obedience and fear. *Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* This demands a perfect consecration which by the very terms only One Object can claim.
- Deut. iv.  
39, 40. *Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes.* Here supreme obedience is exacted to one sole Authority which can have no rival.
- Deut.  
xxxii.  
39, 40. *There is no God with Me: I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.* There is only one Judge to be revered and feared for time and for eternity.
- As a  
Protest. 2. It is often urged as the protest of the Supreme against false views of His nature; especially in those parts of Scripture where Divine revelation comes into collision with heathenism. Against the polytheistic creed and idolatrous practice of the nations the one
- Isa. xlv. 8 (et passim). God appeals: *Is there a God beside Me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.* Everywhere, down to St. Paul's testimony, *We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but One, the One Being,* Who asserts, but does not prove, His own existence, asserts without proving His absolute unity. Against Dualism, the belief, not known by name in Scripture, which has taken refuge in the notion of two co-eternal elements of being, passively co-existent or struggling for mastery, the Eternal more than once commands His prophets to deliver His own testimony. Having its origin in Persia, this notion passed through later Judaism into the heretical sects of Gnosticism, and spent itself out in Manichæism. The God of Israel condescends to utter His protest against this, perhaps the most natural and widespread of all errors: *I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and*
- 1 Cor. viii.  
4.
- Isa. xlv.  
6, 7.

*create darkness.* Here the very terminology of earlier and later Dualism is used ; but it is only to declare that no independent origin of evil must be conceived. It may be impossible for the human mind to understand how He in Whom *there is no darkness at all* could nevertheless create darkness. The only answer is, *There is none else.* But darkness and light are also to be understood by what follows, *I make peace, and create evil.* The One God is the Abolisher of sin by His peace, and its Punisher by His evil. Against Pantheism, which perverts the doctrine of the Divine unity by making God the sum of all personalities and forces, but not Himself a distinct personality, the Supreme testified : *He that planted the ear, shall He not hear ? He that formed the eye, shall He not see ?* This is an apostrophe to the ungodly in the form of an appeal to the One Judge ; but it is the Lord's own refutation of Pantheism in all its future or possible forms. Still more expressly, however, is the true unity of God opposed to this system of false unity in all those passages which speak of the One Creator of all things : *I am the Lord that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself.*

3. In real consistency with all this, though in seeming discord, is the undeniable fact that in many references to the Divine unity there is an undertone of mysterious allusion to a plurality of Persons within the Godhead. St. Paul, in the Epistle which declares the mystery of God *manifest in the flesh*, proclaims that *there is One God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, or Jesus Christ, man.* And, in the final revelations of our Lord, He asserts His Divinity in the very words which bespeak in the Old Testament the unity of God : *I am the First and I am the Last* : we may add here also, *Beside Me, there is no God.* This is more fully seen when we go back to the ancient words : *Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of Hosts ; I am the First, and I am the Last ; and beside Me there is no God.* That the oneness or soleness of the Divine essence is consistent with an interior intercommunion of persons is a truth which faith must receive. Human reason is unable to grasp it. It is the *mystery of God*, parallel with the *mystery of Christ.* Christianity is not in conflict with Judaism in this essential principle of the earliest revelation. Even in this it is Monotheistic.

1 John i.  
5.

Isa. xlv. 6,  
7.

Psalms  
xciv. 9.

Isa. xlv.  
24.

Allusion  
to  
Plurality.

1 Tim. iii.  
16 ; ii. 5.

Rev. i. 17.

Isa. xlv. 6

Col. ii. 2.  
Eph. iii. 4.

- Unity in Trinity.** 4. Lastly, it is asserted in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity, a combination of the utmost importance. When our Lord has unfolded in His paschal discourse the relations of the Three Persons, and immediately before He asks for *the glory which I had with Thee before the world was*, He declares *This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God*. He gives the abiding formula of the Faith in Three Persons as baptism into the ONE NAME.
- John xvii. 3—5.**
- Matt. xxviii. 19.**

**Outside of Scripture.**

#### EXTRA-SCRIPTURAL.

It might seem, after what has been said, superfluous to appeal for confirmation to arguments extra-Biblical: especially as it is almost impossible to abstract ourselves for a moment from the prepossessions which the Scripture has interwoven into all our habitual notions of the Divine Being.

- Only one Absolute.** 1. The human mind is so constituted as to be unable to conceive of more than one Absolute Being. The same sure instinct of man, or constitution of his nature, which prepares him for the disclosure of God is unable to endure more gods than one: the foundation or source of all being cannot, without contradiction, be multiplied. Unity is not an attribute of Deity, not a quality of essence so much as a condition of relation: the Supreme is related to His interior Self, and to His creatures, but, as God, is unrelated. The primary law of thought that predicates the Infinite and the Absolute of the Divine Being demands His eternal unity as a necessary postulate.

- What is Unity?** 2. The term is used only by analogy. Though there is one Divine nature, the unity of God is not a unity of kind, because there are not individuals of the same species; and, therefore, as for other reasons, the word is inapplicable to the Divinity. Of all other objects of thought we can imagine fellows or reproductions. But in God there is absolute soleness, *SOLEITAS*; though what lies hidden in the mystery of this essential *ONENESS* we know but partially. It is wrong to dogmatise upon the nature of a unity to which we have no parallel, and which we cannot define by comparison or illustration.

- Nature.** 3. The constitution of nature, both physical and moral, confirms this doctrine by innumerable evidences. Unity is stamped

upon the entire creation: so clearly that the whole system of science is based upon this presupposition; its latest conclusions pointing to some one primitive and central force, which some in their blind enthusiasm almost deify as the unknown God. And, as it is in earthly things, so it is in things spiritual and heavenly. There is one conscience in man, suggesting one law and one Law-giver. There is evil, as there is good; but they both pay homage to the supreme Will behind them, which is their equal standard. Hence, the erring philosophy of the world, in the better tendencies of its error, has seldom been Polytheistic or Dualistic: its universal tendency towards Pantheism declares its indestructible conviction of the Unity of God. This has been its snare, to carry the principle to the extreme of denying all personality or creaturely existence outside of the One and the All.

## THE TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD.

Trinity

The Christian faith receives and adores the mystery that the One Divine Essence exists in a Trinity of coequal, personal Subsistences: related as the Father, the eternal Son of the Father, and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

In the baptismal formula our Lord has presented to Faith the name and nature of God in its perfect revelation. The commission of the Apostles was to convert all nations from idolatry, and to bring them to the Gospel salvation: that salvation was to be obtained in the economy of redemption, through faith in the One Name *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, to which all worship must henceforth be offered. Christian baptism is to be administered *into the Name, εις τὸ ὄνομα*, into the NEW NAME: not names as of many, but Name as of One. Yet the repeated *kai, and of*, declares a spiritual distinction in the Godhead as the Object of faith, trust, hope and full devotion: for baptism meant all this and nothing less. Men were not to be called to believe in God and two subordinate gods: that would have been only the introduction of a new form of Polytheism.

The Baptismal Formula.

Matt.  
xxviii  
19.

Yet not in God, and a Mediator, and an Influence: the ~~ames~~ Son and Holy Ghost are not, the former especially, simply ~~names~~ of office. But this great text, though central and fundamental, does not stand alone. It must be viewed as the consummation of preliminary and imperfect disclosures; as involving and ~~sealing~~ the Scriptural doctrine, otherwise revealed, of the Deity of the Two Persons called the Son and the Holy Spirit; and as the standard for the interpretation of later Trinitarian passages in the New Testament: that is, it must be viewed first as looking backward to a long development, then in itself and its own meaning, and finally as looking forward to the later Apostolical Scriptures.

#### DEVELOPMENT IN SCRIPTURE.

Develop-  
ment.

The doctrine of the Trinity, like every other, had, in the mystery of the Divine education of the Church, its slow development. Remembering the law, that the progress of Old-Testament doctrine must be traced in the light of the New Testament, we can discern throughout the ancient records a **pre-intimation of the Three-One, ready to be revealed in the last time.** No word in the ancient records is to be studied as standing alone; but according to the analogy of faith, which is no other than the one truth that reigns in the organic whole of Scripture.

1 Peter i.  
5.

Gen. i. 26.

John i. 3.

Gen. i. 1, 2.

Gen. xviii.

1, 2.

Benedic-  
tion and  
Doxology.

1. The first distant hint of plurality, *Let Us make man*, is the plurality of Three: *God*, and *the Word* by Whom *all things were made*, and *the Spirit of God* Who *moved on the face of the waters*, brooding over the Chaos. The occasional triple manifestations to the Patriarchs, as when *the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and, lo, three men stood by him*, also yield their suggestions, if no more

2. But there is more than mere suggestion in the Benediction and the Doxology of the ancient Temple: the former literal, the latter symbolical, both belonging to God alone by the very terms. Blessing may be bestowed by a creature as the agent or instrument of Him Who alone can bless; but whenever the word is thus used in Scripture there is plain indication that it is only ministerial. It is the highest prerogative of the Supreme to pronounce blessings upon His people. So also tributes of honour **may** be paid to exalted creatures; but God alone is the object of

doxology. The former of these distinctions is illustrated by the Levitical office of benediction. The priests were commanded to *put THE NAME of Jehovah upon the people and bless them*, in the utterance of a three-one benediction which, as we shall see, the Apostolic form echoes in the New Temple and expounds. So the response of the Doxology in the mystical temple, by the angelic choir if not by man, cries *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts* ! Behind the veil the Divine glory disparts into three, while all the disparted rays blend again into one.

3. The prophecies concerning the Mediatorial Ministry assume a form explicable only by the New-Testament doctrine : *My mouth it hath commanded, and His Spirit it hath gathered them*. He who proclaimed *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*, cries once more : *Hear ye this : I have not spoken in secret from the beginning,—though My full Name hath not been known—from the time that it was, there am I : and now—anticipating the fulness of time—the LORD GOD and His SPIRIT hath sent ME*. Of Whom doth the Prophet, or rather the voice of God Himself, speak this ? Prophecy could not retain its veiled and mystic character, and speak more plainly than in such terms as these. The same mysterious Trinity may be traced elsewhere in the prophets.

4. When the Old Testament blends with the New in the preliminaries of the Incarnation, both the songs that herald it and the Incarnation itself declare the Triune God : the Holy Ghost Who is the *Power of the Highest* overshadows the mother of our Lord ; and His Incarnation-name is *Immanuel, God with us*, Who should be, and should be called *the Son of God*.

5. Until the Resurrection permitted the full unsealing of the revelation of our Lord's relations to His Father, His teaching generally was intermediate between the two Testaments : a principle that is not enough remembered in Biblical theology. His exposition of every doctrine which was afterwards distinctive in the New Faith illustrates this. We must, however, limit our view to that of the Holy Trinity. This Jesus taught by degrees most fully and clearly : partly as manifested in His personal history, and partly by His express words. At the beginning of His ministry the Sacred Three are revealed around His own Person in connection with His Baptism ; and in His farewell discourse on

Numb. vi.  
27.

2 Cor. xiii.  
14.

Isa. vi. 3.

Prophe-  
cies.  
Isa. xxxiv.  
16.

Deut. vi.  
4.

Isa. xlviii.  
16.

Incarna-  
tion  
Songs.

Luke i. 35.

Matt. i. 23.

The  
Saviour's  
prelimi-  
nary  
Teaching.



the eve of His passion He expanded the full significance of that revelation of which He had been the centre. The former introduces the Father, acknowledging the Son and sealing Him by the Spirit symbolically, prelude to the baptism ordained for His people. The latter is the Saviour's complete doctrine of the Trinity, showing that the future Presence of God in His Church, collectively and in its individual members, would be the inhabitation of the Father, His Son, and His personal Spirit. This was the final preparation for the baptismal formula.

**The Baptismal Formula**

**THE BAPTISMAL FORMULA.**

This fundamental text, which knows of no variations of reading, unites two Persons with the Father in a manner of which there is no example elsewhere in Scripture. It is unique and alone: a dignity becoming the Revealer of the new Name, the revelation of the mystery itself, and the transcendent solemnity of its relation to the Christian economy. This, therefore, is the place for the consideration of what these names import in relation to the Holy Trinity. It must be shown briefly that these Three Persons, or rather the Second and Third, are in this Formula truly Divine; and the best method of accomplishing this will be once more to regard these words as dividing between a past imperfect revelation and the fuller revelation given in Christ concerning Himself and His Spirit in the unity of the Father.

**The Son and the Spirit in the Old Testament.**

**THE SECOND AND THIRD PERSONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

The Older Revelation contains references to the Son and the Spirit of God which, when the light of the New Testament is shed upon them, plainly declare the distinct Divine personality of both in the unity of the Godhead. We need not pause to ask why the name Father is not given to the Deity in the Old Testament. It is not unknown there. Almost the last appeal of Jehovah against His people—His *son* whom He *called out of Egypt*—was: *If I then be a Father, where is Mine honour?* But it was reserved to be brought out in its depth and fulness by His Eternal Son.

**The Son**

1. The Second Person is almost as familiar a Presence in the

Old Testament as in the New : that is, when it is searched in the light of His own testimony concerning its witness to Himself. *At sundry times and in divers manners* He appeared ; but always in such a form as rejects every interpretation but that of His equality with Jehovah, as being God and not a creation of God. His manifestations were precisely consistent with His twofold relation, pretemporal and incarnate, to the Trinity. As the Eternal Image of His Father's Person, He is Jehovah Himself, yet distinct from Jehovah : in sublime consistency with His true nature. But, as anticipating His mediatorial character, He is the ANGEL OF JEHOVAH, or the ANGEL OF ELOHIM, from the earliest dawn down to Malachi, where He is the ANGEL OF THE COVENANT. *By Myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah . . . that in blessing I will bless thee.* JEHOVAH-JIREH who gave to Abraham the great Benediction was the *Angel of the Lord*. The Angel who wrestled with Jacob was to him *God face to face* ; as He was also to Hosea : *He found him in Bethel, and there He spake with us ; even Jehovah, God of Hosts ; Jehovah is His memorial*. One other testimony must stand for a long series : *Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not : for He will not pardon your transgressions ; for MY NAME IS IN HIM*. Who can fail to think of the Coming Redeemer, so like this Old-Testament Joshua, and as the New-Testament Jesus so unlike ! Throughout the Gospels, from Gabriel's testimony to the Angel greater than he downwards, there is no question that the Jehovah-Angel is Jehovah Himself, and that Jehovah Himself reappears in the name LORD, very often though not exclusively. Not Esaias alone, but all the Old-Testament writers, *saw His glory and spake of Him*. But the uncreated Minister of Jehovah's will is not generally in the Old Testament foreannounced as the Son, any more than Jehovah is revealed as the Father. This, however, is not quite wanting. The link that connects the ANGEL OF THE FACE in the ancient with THE SON in the later Scripture is threefold. He is in Psalms and Prophecy termed THE SON expressly, the WORD or ORACLE of God or hypostatized WISDOM ; and He is called ADONAI or LORD, the MIGHTY GOD. But these more occasional testimonies flow into a general representation of the future

Heb i. 1

The Un-  
created  
Angel.  
Gen. xxii.  
16, 17.Gen.  
xxxii.  
30.  
Hos. xii.  
4, 5.Ex xxiii  
20, 21.John xii.  
41.Ps. ii. 7  
Prov. viii.  
23.  
Ps. cx. 5.  
Isaiah vii  
14 ; ix. 6

Messiah; and as such they must be reserved for the fuller exhibition of the Mediatorial Trinity, and the Person of Christ.

**The Spirit  
in the Old  
Testa-  
ment.**

Gen. i. 2.

Psalm

xxxiii

6.

Job

xxxiii.

4.

Gen. vi. 3.

Ps. li. 11.

Gen. xli.

38.

Numb. xi.

25.

Judg. xiv.

6.

2 Sam.

xxiii. 2.

Psalm

cxix.

7.

Micah ii.

7.

Isaiah

xlvi.

16.

Joel ii. 28.

2. The presence of the Third Person equally pervades the Old Testament, as one with God and yet personally distinct in the mystery of the Divine essence. The *Spirit of God* is active with the Word in creation: *By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth. The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me life.* He is no less active in providence: *My Spirit shall not always strive with [or rule in] man; in whose renewed heart he dwells: take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.* His energy was felt in the inspiration of the prophets. Joseph was, by Pharaoh's testimony, *a man in whom the Spirit of God is.* And when the Spirit of God rested upon them they prophesied. Upon Samson, and many others, it is said that the Spirit of the Lord came mightily. David bore witness: *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me.* He is omnipresent and omniscient: *Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?* The presence of God is the presence of the Holy Ghost. And yet He is distinguished from the Lord Himself, as One whom He hath sent and will send to man: *Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? The Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent Me.* As the Messiah is promised to the world, so also is the Spirit. *I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.* And in the New Testament, the fulfilment of the Promise of the Father is an event equal in glory with the Incarnation. As the Angel of the past becomes now the Incarnate Son, so the Spirit of the past becomes the personal Holy Ghost. The hour of Both Persons is fully come.

**In the  
New Tes-  
tament.**

#### THE SON AND THE SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

In the New-Testament testimonies to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, these, the names of Divine and eternal Persons, are so related to each other and to the Father as to establish, by the fullest and most abundant evidence, the doctrine which has received the dogmatic definition of THE HOLY TRINITY.

**The  
Father.**

1. There is nothing in the Saviour's revelation more clear, nothing more interwoven with all His teaching, than His annunciation of the new name of FATHER as related to Himself in a

sense unshared : unto MY FATHER, and your Father. This has its highest expression in the baptismal formula where He is eternally related to the Father as His Son. He is the ONLY-BEGOTTEN, ὁ Μονογενὴς Υἱός. This is first declared by St. John, in express relation to His absolute existence in THE FATHER : ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ Πατρὸς, which is in the bosom of the Father, and παρὰ Πατρός, of or from the Father, to be compared with πρὸς τὸν θεόν, said of the Son as the WORD or LOGOS. These three prepositions, πρὸς, παρὰ, εἰς, are one in their only true meaning : a trinity of particles carefully chosen to express an unfathomable mystery, which they cannot explain, though they may serve to protect it from perversion. Afterwards our Lord proves to us that this eternal name, though retained in His incarnation, was not derived from His incarnation : God GAVE His Only-begotten Son, which, in the only other instance of the use of the term, is strengthened by the express connection with it of ἀπέστειλε ; God SENT His Only-begotten Son. The Jews understood Jesus to be making Himself equal with God when He said that God was His proper and peculiar Father, πατέρα ἰδίον. The Holy Spirit gave this same word to St. Paul : He spared not His own Son, τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ. Of this Son, the Son of His love, it is said that He is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn before every creature, πρωτότοκος, not πρωτόκτιστος, not first-created but first-begotten : before all things, and by Him all things consist. He is the Brightness of His glory, and the Express Image of His person. Our Lord's last prayer sums up the whole argument : And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self—παρὰ σεαυτῆ, in express contradistinction from the world or earth in which His mission was—with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was, παρὰ σοί. Here are all the elements of the doctrine of the ETERNAL SONSHIP, which is sufficient to establish the relation of the Son to the Father as the Second Person in the Holy Trinity.

2. THE HOLY GHOST is a DIVINE PERSON, distinct from the Father and the Son. To establish this, we need only to examine our Lord's words, and collate with them the ample and various testimonies of the entire New Testament.

(1.) The Son is the Revealer of the Third Person, as well as of the Father. His final Trinitarian Discourse—for such is the

John xx.  
17.

The Son  
in the  
New  
Testa-  
ment.  
John i. 14  
18.

John iii.  
16.

1 John iv.  
9.  
John v.  
18.

Rom. viii.  
32.  
Col. i. 13  
—15,  
—16, 17.

Heb. i. 3.

John xvii.  
5.

The  
Eternal  
Sonship.

The Holy  
Ghost in  
the New  
Testa-  
ment.  
Testi-  
mony of  
Jesus.

- character of the Paschal Farewell—has left no question on this subject unsolved: before He was glorified by the Spirit, He glorified the Spirit Himself, by establishing the first principles of His personality, Divinity, and eternal relations in the Godhead.
- John xvi. 13; xiv. 16, 17. The pronoun HE, Ἐκεῖνος, is applied to One who is *another Comforter*. The PERSONALITY of the Holy Ghost governs the Lord's entire strain, and must interpret those many passages in which by metonymy the influences of the Spirit's operation are identified with Himself. It is impossible to read carefully in their context these sayings concerning the Coming Spirit without feeling that the idea of a personification is a most hopeless expedient. Whether Divine or not, a Person was foreannounced, as certainly as it was a Person whom Moses predicted as the coming prophet. But the DEITY of the Third Person is declared as that of an eternal procession from the Father. *When the Comforter is come WHOM I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, HE shall testify of Me.* Here the TEMPORAL MISSION is clearly distinguished from the ETERNAL PROCESSION. Between the two futures, marked by WHOM and HE, the pronoun *which* enters as a parenthetical reference to the essential eternal relation, ὁ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται: PROCEEDETH, not shall proceed, in an ETERNAL PRESENT, the παρὰ being precisely the same as the παρὰ Πατρός of the Only-begotten, while the neuter ὃ is parallel with ὃ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, spoken of the
- John i. 14. Eternal Son, *that Which was from the beginning.* These parallels must not be passed lightly over, but carefully pondered. The Saviour does not say that this procession is from the Son as well as from the Father. But, reading on, we mark these memorable
- 1 John i. 1. words: *All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* The Spirit's glorification of Christ extends to His Person as well as to His work, indeed, rather to His Person than His work; and it was
- John xvi. 22. from His sacred Person that the Lord *breathed on* the Apostles the Holy Ghost. Hence this *supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* is
- Phil i. 19. imparted in the symbol of a personal spiration or breathing; and the name SPIRIT may be regarded as sanctioning the faith that the Third Person PROCEEDETH FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON, —to anticipate the language of the early Creeds and later Confes-

sions of Christendom—though the Son in His humiliation mentions only the Father. But on this topic more hereafter.

(2.) Reserving for a future section the operations and influences of the Holy Ghost, we have only to indicate that the whole of the New Testament is true to the Revealer's teaching on this subject. The Personality and Deity of the Spirit shine everywhere through the veil of the Mediatorial work, which to a certain extent hides the Trinitarian relations of the Second and the Third Persons alike. The humiliation of the Son Incarnate has its parallel, though after another manner, in the humiliation of the Holy Ghost. While we hear, *He hath shed forth THIS*, we read also that *the Holy Ghost said, Separate ME Barnabas and Saul*. The first hypocrites in the Acts are said to have lied *to the Holy Ghost*, and therefore to have lied *not unto men but to God*. In the Epistles to the Corinthians, which dwell so much on the dispensation of the Spirit, St. Paul declares that *we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God*: where *ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ* varies the phrase in a very significant manner, as it were expressly distinguishing between the evil spiritual influence breathed by the world and the Substantial Spirit coming out from the Deity. That same Spirit *searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*; thus being essentially personal and Divine. These testimonies are enough for our present purpose, which is to show the relation of the Third, as well as of the Second Person, to the ONE NAME into which Christians are baptised.

New Testament generally.

Acts ii. 33.

Acts xiii. 2.

Acts v. 3, 4.

1 Cor. ii 12

1 Cor. ii 10.

#### APOSTOLICAL TESTIMONIES.

The later testimonies to the Holy Trinity literally pervade the New Testament. They will require to be considered when we come to the Mediatorial Ministry, and the peculiar aspect in which it places our doctrine. Meanwhile, it is sufficient to indicate generally the bearing of these testimonies, illustrating them by leading examples. It must be premised, however, first, that here also there is a certain development in the revelation, and, secondly, that they are introduced not so much to explain the Trinity Economical as to point out the proof of an Absolute Trinity underlying this as its necessary foundation.

Apostolical Testimonies.

1. In the Acts the publication of the Gospel is connected with

**The Acts.** the Holy Trinity, though under an aspect suited to the times of preparation. For, there is still evidence after Pentecost of the same law of gradual development which reigned before. The doctrine in this historical book is not fully revealed to those who were not yet prepared to receive it: at least, not until they were fully prepared. When we read St. Peter's testimony before the Council, and St. Paul's in his several missionary discourses, we must remember that the Three Persons whom they invariably introduce are the same of Whom the Lord had spoken before He departed, and of Whom these Preachers afterwards more clearly wrote in their Epistles.

Acts v.  
Acts xiii.

**Mediatorial Economy.** 2. The Mediatorial Economy, that is, the entire system of man's return to fellowship with God, is always described in harmony with this doctrine. *For through Him we both have access*

**Eph. ii. 18.** *by one Spirit unto the Father:* this great word is the key to the general strain of the Epistles, and, if pursued into its consequences, is sufficient to establish the Divinity of each Person. It is utterly inconceivable that admission to the presence and knowledge and acceptance of God could be given by any creatures as such. But this will be made more emphatic when we consider that the mediatorial economy leads to union with the Deity, which, whether regarded as our being in God, or God being in us, is the highest blessedness of the creature. To be *filled unto all the fulness of God* is in the Ephesian prayer the result of being *strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith.* Here, to the believing eye at least, is the INDWELLING TRINITY. Nor can any candid mind resist this conclusion when other passages which do not unite the

**Eph. iii.**  
16—19.

**Col. i. 27.** Three Persons are collated: those namely which speak of *Christ in you, the hope of glory*; of our bodies being *the temple of the Holy Ghost Which is in you*; and many others which will be referred to more fully when the Economical Trinity is the subject. Suffice now to observe that it is the prerogative of God alone to dwell in His creatures; that to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit distinctively and equally this prerogative is assigned; and that to no other beings or persons is it ascribed throughout the Scriptures. No principle is more universal than this.

**1 Cor. vi.**  
19.

**Dispensation of Grace.**

3. The impartation of the Divine influences on which personal

salvation and the work of the Gospel depend is invariably connected with the Three Persons. Generally it is invoked from God in the unity of this Trinity: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.* This clearly answers to the priestly benediction, with its general blessing, the grace of mercy and the effect of peace; though the order is changed under the dispensation of the Son and Spirit. But all benediction, like all power, is OF GOD. More particularly we see the same relation to the Trinity in the dispensation of the special gifts: their diversities are of *the same Spirit*; their administration is of *the same Lord*; their operation of *the same God*. It must be remembered that the graces and gifts of the Gospel are besought in prayer; and are, especially throughout St. Paul's prayers, so besought as to show that the appeal is to each Person in the Trinity in the unity of the God-head. These examples introduce the Three Persons; but they may be confirmed by some others, though their number is not great, which seek grace from each Person respectively.

4. The Apocalypse in its symbolical imagery closes the New Testament with its peculiar but evident tribute to the Holy Trinity. The Incarnate Son, Whose grace is invoked, is *the First and the Last*, and the *Lamb in the midst of the throne*: there is no honour paid the Eternal which He does not share. The *Seven Spirits before the throne*, in the midst of which is the Incarnate Lamb—like no other among the ministering sevens—are or is invoked also as the Giver of Grace. The unity of the Holy Trinity has no clearer expression in Scripture. This Sevenfold or all-holy Spirit is distinct from the Lamb, yet one with Him; and one also with God. And the perfect homage of this book, disguised as it is in symbols, returns in its form and language to the mystical worship of the ancient Temple. It is the adoration of the Triune God: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come*; and thus indicates the profound truth that the supreme praise of Paradise, though not forgetting the distinction of Persons, needs no mention of their Personal names. And here we have an illustration of the profound word of the Apostle, used in relation to the end of the Mediatorial ministry, but inexhaustible in its meaning, that *God may be all in all*.

Invoca-  
tions.

2 Cor. xiii  
14.

Rom. xiii.  
1.

1 Cor. xii.  
4—6.

The Apo-  
calypse.

Rev. i. 17;  
vii. 17.

Rev. i. 4.

Rev. v. 6

Rev. iv. 8

1 Cor. xv.  
28.



**Trinity.****THE DIVINE TRIUNITY.**

Neither the term Trinity, nor any that expresses the notion of Triunity, is contained in Scripture. But the mysterious truth that these words represent is stamped upon the entire revelation of God, which, implicitly in the Old Testament, and explicitly in the New, bears witness to a Divine Triad. The Lord our God is one Lord; yet there are Three that bear witness in heaven, and these Three are One: words which we can use for our purpose, though they may be excluded from the text of Holy Scripture. The term Triunity we might make the verbal symbol of our faith. It guards us—and in this case there is no more that words can do—against the perversions to which the true doctrine is liable. These perversions are manifold. The unity may be so emphasised as to reduce the Trinity to three manifestations of the One God, successive but in different modes. Or the Trinity may be so incautiously apprehended as to commit the thought to the notion of three independent Divine Beings. Or, the Godhead being wrongly regarded as the unknown essence behind the Persons, four Gods may be the consequence. Or a compromise may be effected by introducing the notion of One God, the Fountain of Deity, and two beings of the same nature derived from Him. The transition is then easy to the notion of two inferior beings issuing from the Divinity, with not only a derived and subordinate, but also a created, Deity. These various errors are known in theology by the names of Sabellianism, Tritheism, Tetratheism, Subordinationism, and Arianism respectively. They will be exhibited briefly in the following historical review; but it may be premised that the first and the last are the two salient forms of heresy or of heretical speculation on this subject; that is, concerning the Godhead regarded as a Trinity. It may be added, moreover, that they do not occur in modern systems always with these names: being often disguised, and that in the most subtle manner. The first especially enters into many modes of theological thought which know nothing of the name Sabellian. The second colours much theology which is not conscious of its own tendency. The third, Tetratheism, has hardly ever existed, save as the logical inference from other errors. Subordinationism may be made consistent with the truth.

**Errors.**

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.

Ecclesiastical.

It may be said that the history of all human opinion concerning the Supreme has been, in some sense, a record of the struggles of speculation towards this adorable mystery, or of its endeavours to grasp and formulate it as revealed. Pantheism and Dualism both tended towards it in the East; and no form of Polytheism has been altogether without some trace of it. But this is emphatically true of the history of the doctrine concerning God as developed in the Christian Church.

## ANTE-NICENE.

Ante-Nicene.

The ante-Nicene Church held the doctrine of the Divine Trinity, though in an undogmatic form. The advocates of a permanent ecclesiastical authority deciding the doctrines of the Faith, whether by tradition or development, have joined the Rationalists and anti-Trinitarians in exaggerating the indefiniteness of the early statements of this truth. But the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, and of the Apologists, at least faithfully reproduce the tone of the New Testament; and a catena of their testimonies may be given which will prove that they made a large advance towards later definitions. All forms of the early Creeds direct Christian faith to Three Persons. Their doxologies bear clear witness: as that of Polycarp, "I glorify Thee, through the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, through Whom be glory to Thee with Him in the Holy Ghost, both now and for ever." Athenagoras asks, "Why are we called atheists, speaking as we do of the Father as God, and the Holy Ghost; showing both Their power in unity and Their distinction in order?" and says again, "The Father and the Son are One: the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, by the unity and power of the Spirit." Theophilus of Antioch gives us the term "Triad, God, His Word, and His Wisdom," a term used after him by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, and by Tertullian and Novatian changed

into Trinitas. Tertullian's language is very expressive: "All Three are One by unity of substance, and the unity is developed into a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" and "We never suffer 'Two Gods' or 'Two Lords' to pass our lips, though the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and Each is God." Many more might be given; but we may close with Origen, whose relation to the subsequent development of the doctrine is very important. His testimony also is worthy to close: "When I speak of the omnipotence of God, of His invisibility and eternity, my words are lofty; when I speak of the co-eternity of His Only-begotten Son, and His other mysteries, my words are lofty; when I deal with the mightiness of the Holy Ghost, my words are lofty; as to these only it is allowed to use lofty words. After these Three, henceforth speak nothing loftily, for all things are mean and low, compared with the height of the Trinity. Let not then your high words be many, except concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." It is clearly an error to date the unfolded dogma of the Trinity from the fourth century. It is found throughout the ante-Nicene age. But it cannot be denied that the germ, and gradual growth, of these tendencies towards error are soon apparent after the departure of the Apostles. All sprang from a vain attempt humanly to reconcile the Trinity with the essential unity of the Godhead; and what may be called MONARCHIANISM was the watchword of each.

Unitari-  
anism.

#### SABELLIANISM.

Monar-  
chian  
Sabel-  
lianism.

The first class rejected the distinction of Divine Hypostases or Persons. Their watchword was the eternal supremacy of the *Monás*, or the hidden God; it admitted, in the term *Τριάς*, that God was revealed in three *πρόσωπα* or faces or semblances, according to the dispensations of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. As this doctrine was taught by Praxeas (160—180) and others, it was at once rejected as abolishing the distinction between the Father and the Son Who suffered; and they who held it were on that account named PATRIPASSIANS. But Sabellius of Ptolemais, A.D. 250, more fully developed the error, which from him has taken the name of SABELLIANISM; and from his peculiar theory that of

**MODALISM** or the manifestation of the Deity in three personal Modes. Its philosophical principle was Pantheistic; the same God who is the Father evolving Himself in the Son and Spirit. Modern speculations have constantly reproduced this conception. More popularly stated, the doctrine simply assumes that the One God appeared first as Jehovah, then more clearly to the creature as the Son, then more fully and spiritually as the Holy Ghost.

#### SUBORDINATIONISM AND THE PRINCIPATUS OF THE FATHER.

The general idea of **SUBORDINATIONISM**, or the introduction of a gradation in the Three Persons, took various forms. Its beginnings were simply the result of indistinctness in phrase. So Justin writes of the Son as *ἐν δευτέρῃ χώρῃ*, and of the Spirit as *ἐν τρίτῃ τάξει*. It was aided by the gradual development of a Logos-doctrine, which distinguished between the *Λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος*, eternal but impersonal reason in God, and the *Λόγος προφορικός*, a personal existence begotten in the Divine essence as the First-born of Creation and its Archetype. Opposition to Sabellianism stimulated speculation of this kind to the utmost. Clement of Alexandria, and still more Origen, did much to displace from the controversy the theological term Logos, and to substitute that of the Son: a change which was pregnant with important consequences. **Origen established the Eternal Sonship:** *est namque ita æterna, ac sempiterna generatio, sicut splendor generativa a luce*, almost the very language of the Nicene Creed. It has been said that he laid too much stress upon the origination of the Hypostases in the Eternal will. But this is hardly consistent with his constant affirmation that "the Onlybegotten was ever coexisting with God," and his interpretation of the day in which the Son was begotten as the everpresent Now of eternity, and his protest against the Arian formula "Once the Son was not" by anticipation. **His followers certainly perverted his words,** and have done much to connect his name with that error. On the whole, **both the ante-Nicene and post-Nicene teachers laboured with all their skill to preserve the Monarchia, or Unity of the Divine essence, by representing the Father as the Fountain of the Deity and its representative:** so interpreting the eternal Gift of

**Subordi-  
nationism**

life in Himself to the Son, and the Eternal Procession of the Spirit. They laid great stress on the mystery of the derived but eternally derived Divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, as rendering easy the descent of thought to the subordination of Both Persons in redemption. But the term Subordination came into use at a later time, as also that of the Principatus of the Father. The latter is not quite unobjectionable: the former is obviously perilous, from the difficulty of admitting a subordination in any sense which does not include inferiority. But of this more hereafter when Arminianism is before us.

#### Arianism.

#### ARIANISM.

It was the doctrine of Arius that the Son was a pure creature, and Son only by adoption, the perfection and origin of creation; made out of nothing, produced before all worlds: the link or medium between God and the universe. This heresy was condemned by the first Œcumenical Council at Nicæa, A.D. 325. But a modification known as Semi-Arianism arose and obtained prevalence as the result of a certain indefiniteness in the language of the Nicene Council. The orthodox watchword, *ὁμοούσιος*, OR THE SAME SUBSTANCE, was opposed, even by some of the orthodox, as tending to Sabellianism. Changing it into *ὁμοιούσιος*, OR LIKE SUBSTANCE, some attempted to effect a compromise; but in vain, as between consubstantiality with God and mere likeness to the Divine nature there is an immeasurable gulf. The undue subordination of the Spirit had not been taught by the earlier Fathers; though they were sometimes lax in the figures they used, following a certain freedom in the Scripture. It has been represented that they sometimes identified Him with the Son; but it must be remembered that Theophilus, who is charged with this, speaks of the *Τριάς*, preceding Tertullian's Latinised Trinitas in the second century. Origen's teaching had erred more against the Spirit than it had against the Son. Arius, of necessity, having reduced the Son to a Divine creature, taught that the Spirit was the first creation of that Firstborn creature; though he maintained that the Son and the Holy Ghost, both persons, were much more intimately near to God than to the created universe. Semi-Arianism, which had gone as far as it could in making

the Son the unchangeable Image of the Father, was not quite so solicitous to maintain the dignity of the Spirit. Macedonius, one of that party, has connected his name with the sect called that of the Pneumatomachoi or Enemies of the Spirit; which, after much private controversy, was condemned at the second (Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, A.D. 381. But this council, though it established or defended the Personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost, did not determine His specific relation to the Father and the Son. It was not until A.D. 594. at a synod held in Toledo, that the term **FILIOQUE** was added to the Nicene Creed, defining that the Spirit proceeded from the Father **AND THE SON** by an Eternal Spiratio<sup>n</sup> corresponding to the Eternal Generation. The assertion of this conjunction of the Son with the Father as the Eternal Origin of the Spirit was one main cause of the permanent rupture between the Western Church which held, and the Eastern Church which rejected, the Double Procession of the Third Person of the Trinity.

Filioque

## DECISIONS AND CREEDS.

Defini-  
tions.

The œcumenical definition of the doctrine, as against heresy, was the chief theological labour of the fourth century. The decisions expressed in the Creeds gave birth to a discussion that settled the leading theological terms which protect them.

## THE COUNCILS.

Councils

The Councils of **NICÆA**, A.D. 325, and of **CONSTANTINOPLE**, A.D. 381—the first universal or œcumenical—vindicated for ever the doctrine of the Trinity: the former in relation to the Son, the latter in relation to the Holy Ghost. The former, the history of which should be carefully studied, was summoned mainly for the condemnation of Arius, who maintained that the Son, “before He was begotten or created, had no being; that He was brought into existence by the will of God before the world: *ἦν πρὸ θεοῦ οὐκ ἦν, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἰστίον*, there was a time when He was not, and He was produced from nothing; being not of the same substance with the Father, but as a creature mutable,” and of course there-

fore liable to fall. The answer of the Synod determined that the Son was *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, γεννηθεὶς οὐ ποιηθεὶς, ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ*. This last term, the *Homoûsion*, became the watchword of orthodoxy: the Son was of the same essence or substance with the Father. After the honour of the Second Person was vindicated, occasion soon arose for the like vindication of the Holy Ghost. The teaching of Macedonius was to the Third Person what that of Arius was to the Second. He called Him *διάκονος καὶ ὑπηρέτης*, but not in the sense of the New Testament. The second or Constantinopolitan Council asserted that He was "the Lord, the *ζωοποιόν*, or Lifegiver, worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son." His *ἐκπορεύσις*, or Procession, was from the Father; but, as we have seen, two centuries later *FILIOQUE*, from the Son, was added.

#### The Three Creeds.

#### THE THREE CREEDS.

The THREE CREEDS may be regarded as the final and permanent expression of these œcumenical decisions.

#### Nicene.

1. The NICENE, or, as enlarged at Constantinople, the NICÆNO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN symbol, is the chief of these, as having a more definite theological character than the Apostles', and, unlike the Athanasian, being accepted by universal Christendom, the Greek Church excepting only one clause. It defines, as including the Toledan Filioque, the eternal generation of the Son, GOD OF GOD, and the eternal Procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son: thus establishing the true doctrine of Subordination against Tritheism and Arianism. It declares the equal worship due to the Three: thus establishing the true doctrine of the Unity against Sabellianism.

#### Apostles'.

2. The APOSTLES' CREED, or *Symbolum Apostolicum*, was not finished in its present form until after the Nicene; but, so far as concerns the doctrine of the Three Persons, was the earliest, being simply an expansion of the Baptismal Formula. The assertion of the Triune Name is limited to its historical revelation in the creating and the redeeming work. The dogmatic definition of the Trinity, whether absolute or economical, is absent.

#### Athanasian.

3. The ATHANASIAN CREED, or *Symbolum Quicunque*, from its

first word, was never œcumenically adopted, being a private document of unknown origin: probably of the sixth century, and of the school of Augustine. It contains the most elaborate statement of the dogmatic relations of the One Divine Nature and the Three Persons of the Triad, as well as of the Two Natures and the One Person in Christ, that is to be found, and is an exquisite study of orthodox logical distinctions. But its damnatory clauses are alien to the spirit of a profession of faith; and, moreover, its doctrine of the Trinity, like that of the other two, does not give due prominence to its redemptional aspect.

## TERMINOLOGY.

Terminology.

There can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit watched over these decisions; but it would be presumptuous to assert the same special Providence for the endless dogmatic controversies that followed. It is impossible to summarise the history; but the result may be given in the conventional application of a certain vocabulary which has had a fixed place in subsequent theology.

1. The terms *Οὐσία* in the Greek, and *Essentia* or *Substantia* in the Latin, with *Θεότης*, were reserved for the essential Godhead, or what may be called the Nature of Deity. The terms *ὑπόστασις*, *ἰδιότης*, and *πρόσωπον*, were limited to the distinction of the Persons: the first, which really means substantial reality, was adopted in preference to the last, which, as meaning a form or presentation, might bear a Sabellian construction. *Persona* in the Latin, was exposed to the same objection; but it has triumphed, and has ever since shared with the Latinised term *Hypostasis* the function of expressing the reality of the Godhead of each *Suppositum Intelligens*, or selfconscious Agent, in the Holy Trinity. While the Modalist or Sabellian danger was thus avoided—*ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος*, not *ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο*,—the Fathers of that age, of whom Athanasius was the leader in the East, and afterwards Augustine in the West, did not teach that the Three Persons represented a common nature as three men represent the common humanity. They held that the unity was numerical; and that, in a sense unsearchable, the entire Godhead is in each Person. To express this, they used the word *περιχώρησις*, which

Substance and Person.



is sufficiently explained by the Latin equivalents, *Interactio*, or *Interexistentia*, or *Intercommunio*.

**Subordi-  
nation.** 2. The question of Subordination was at the heart of every discussion; but neither Greek nor Latin gave a watchword for this. **The same divines, however, who laid stress on the numerical unity of the Divine essence, zealously maintained the eternal derivation of the Son, quoad Son, from the Father:** thus teaching a subordination of relation, without involving inferiority of essence. The following words of Augustine express the thought of antiquity on this subject, which, nevertheless, as he admits, passeth knowledge: "*Pater quod est a nullo est: quod autem Pater est, propter Filium est. Filius vero et quod Filius est, propter Patrem est; et quod est, a Patre est.*" But another sentence, following hard on the former, shows the poverty of all thinking on this dread mystery: "*Filius non tantum ut sit Filius, quod relative dicitur, sed omnino ut sit, ipsam substantiam nascendo habet.*" In one sentence the Person only of the Son is of the Father; in the other the essence, as well as the Filial Property, is begotten. The latter seems to have been the general strain of antiquity in its method of treating this inscrutable question.

**Medi-  
æval.**

#### MEDIÆVAL.

The Mediæval Schoolmen exhausted their subtilty on this profound subject; but added nothing of permanent value.

**Nominal-  
ism and  
Realism.** 1. Their speculations tended to Tritheism or Sabellianism in the measure of their leaning towards NOMINALISM or REALISM respectively. The Nominalist philosophy, which allowed nothing but nominal existence to the essence or general nature represented by the individual as a specimen, obviously though unintentionally led to Tritheism. The Realist philosophy, which asserted the reality of the nature behind the individual, was more faithful to the Trinity in Unity. The controversy between Roscellinus the Nominalist, and Anselm the Realist, was an important chapter in the history of an endless controversy, which spread into a number of side-issues, embracing almost every point that has ever been raised. It will be at once perceived that the opposite extremes would naturally suggest to some minds a compromise: the realist Essence and the nominalist Three Persons, each both

essence and individual, would naturally lead to TETRATHEISM. Damian of Alexandria, and some others, fell into the snare of a fourfold Divinity. But the general soundness of the Schoolmen may be gathered from the terminology they established in their analysis: they introduced into the expression of the dogma those distinctions of paternity, filiation, community of nature, and relations, and properties which we shall find reasserted in a better form by the Reformation divines.

2. Both the mysticism and the dialectics of the Middle Ages freely explored the analogies by which the mystery of the doctrine might be reconciled with human reason. This style of argument or meditation they inherited from the early Fathers, and transmitted to modern philosophy after exhausting it themselves. Analogies were derived from many regions. The light, radiance, and heat of the sun, which is neither of the three alone, but one in their trinity; the fountain, flux, and stream; the root, the stem, the flower; the intellect, will, and feeling of human nature, as also its body, soul, spirit; thesis, analysis, synthesis in the order of the one thought, or the subject, object, and identity of the two:—all these were then brought into the service of an unconscious Rationalism and are in its service still.

Philosophical Analogies

3. The last of these trios suggests the modern semi-philosophical, semi-Christian, views of the Trinity, which have lately carried the circle of human thinking back to the speculations of the earliest Pantheism. The so-called Science of Religion shows and proves that most if not all of the Theistic conceptions of antiquity took the form of a Pantheistic Triad; feeling after if haply they might find the Trinity, and so paying an important though unintentional tribute to eternal truth. Thus the Hindoo Brahman was the essential Being; Vishnu, as revealed in the universe; Siva, as returning into Being again. Buddhism wanders from this in the direction of the Persian Dualism. Greek philosophy, as represented by Plato, was cast in the same mould; so much so that the Christian doctrine has been represented as a Neo-Platonist importation into Christianity of Plato's three Principles, derived from Parmenides: the first, τὸ ὄν, the Cause of all things; the second, the λόγος, the Reason and Ruler of all things produced into existence; the third, the ψυχὴ κόσμου, or the soul

Pantheistic Trinity.

of the world. Nothing can be more certain than that the Trinity of personal hypostases glimmered in the writings of Plato; and that his speculations exerted much influence upon ante-Nicene Christian thought and language, as they were interpreted by the aid of Philo, and formed into a system by Ammonius Saccas. But it requires only a very slight comparison to show that the doctrine of the Trinity which the New Testament most clearly contains is in its very fundamental principles a new revelation, and not merely an ancient speculation disencumbered of some of its tributaries. Modern Pantheism has reproduced the old thoughts in a new phraseology which is as baffling to the understanding as it is opposed to Scripture. It is impossible to put into other words than their own their speculations. But they are all variations on the notion of Hegel that the Trinity is the formal expression of the movement of the Absolute Spirit, Who becomes another in the universe and as Spirit knows Himself and returns into His own being. Whatever change modern Pantheism has introduced into the older system of thought is altogether in favour of the Christian doctrine, though the Christian doctrine must utterly disavow its method of presenting it.

#### THE REFORMATION.

**The  
Reforma-  
tion.**

The communities of the Reformation retained the Three Creeds of antiquity, and were generally faithful to the doctrine of the Trinity, as in its absolute so also and especially in its Redemptional or Evangelical aspect.

**Lutheran  
and Re-  
formed.**

1. The Lutheran and Reformed formularies contain nothing entirely new, but their dogmatic standards in particular abound in careful analysis, the sum of which is as follows. One Divine Essence subsists in Three Persons: the unity is numerical, the plurality is hypostatical. The distinction is connected and harmonized with the unity by the term *Περίχώρησις* (Circulation or Inter-action), which signifies generally that in the Eternal Trinity the whole Godhead must be regarded as in each Person, whether it respects nature or operation. The hypostatic character of each Person may be referred to the essence or the relation to each other. The internal properties of the Persons are five: to the

Father belong the words unbegotten (*ἀγεννησία*) and paternity; to the Father and the Son, spiration; to the Son, filiation; to the Spirit, procession. The internal Acts are two: generation and spiration. These are distinctive; but the external acts are three, creation, redemption, sanctification, and these are common to the Three Persons. All the elements of the dogmatic study of the doctrine are here: the legitimate extension of the Athanasian Creed. But there is this difference in favour of the dogmatics of the Reformation: their exhibition of the Absolute Trinity has always interwoven with it an Evangelical reference to the Redemptional aspect of the doctrine.

2. After the Reformation most of the ancient types of error reappeared in various forms adapted to altered circumstances. Christian theology, which then took a new departure, had to pursue its way through the same course of controversy. But it may be said that the doctrine of the Trinity was now not so much directly opposed as indirectly. It was not at first the object of curious speculation in itself. Its enemies were now more pronounced; and, departing from the truth in every form, appeared as Socinian Unitarians: denying the Divinity of Christ with the Personality of the Holy Ghost, and thus reviving a form of error which had long been unknown. The theological ground shifts to that of the Person of Christ. But, in process of time, the ancient Sabellianism returned in a tone of speculation and phraseology which has infected many communities, but never formed a distinct community for itself. Modern Sabellianism assumed its philosophical and mystical character in Schleiermacher's theology; its almost equally influential and scarcely less mystical expression in Swedenborgianism.

Revival of  
Ancient  
Heresies.

Sabelli-  
anism.

Sweden-  
borg.

(1.) The fundamental principle of the philosophy of Emmanuel Swedenborg was the unity of all things in the duality of physical and spiritual existence: these two being, as it were, conjugates or counterparts, in perfect correspondence with each other and eternally related. Pantheism reduced all to the unity of matter and spirit; but Swedenborg, who was no Pantheist, simply made the phenomenal universe the visible expression of spiritual realities, man being in communion with the other world, or capable of communion with it, through a certain spiritual body belonging to

Swed.  
True Chr.  
Rel., No.  
163.

his nature which religion reveals to him though religion does not create it. The theology based on this principle, which Swedenborg professed to receive as a new revelation, affects every point of Christian doctrine, and of course that of the Trinity. The Supreme Being also has form as well as spirit, and His form is that which we know in ourselves as human. In Him is a trinity of principles, but not of personal subsistences. As the twofold body of man is one body with a spirit energizing outwardly, so the distinction popularly called that of Father and Son is only the distinction of the Eternal God-man and the Same taking a human body in the Virgin to make it operative through the Holy Ghost. "Before the creation of the world this Trinity did not exist, but it was provided and made since the creation, when God became incarnate, and then centred in the Lord God." In Jesus this outward body was, unlike ours, glorified into an infinite spirituality. Swedenborg's speculations, the most remarkable of modern times, are, as touching our present doctrine, Sabellian. And every argument against that ancient system of thought is valid against this modern representative of it.

Schleier-  
macher.

(2.) The system of Schleiermacher is more Pantheistic than this, but it is a Sabellianised Pantheism. Like Swedenborg, though on different principles, he held Christ to be the only God: the Father in Himself or in the universe is the Son in Jesus, the Ideal or Pattern man, and the Spirit is the same God in Nature and in the Church. The introduction of the Divine life into humanity in or through Christ makes God man and man God. There is no preexistence of the Son or of the Holy Ghost. Translating all this into the language of philosophy, Deity as the Absolute Being is the Father, He comes to consciousness of Himself in the Son, and returns to Himself in the Spirit. In its simplest form this runs back into the speculations of the Schoolmen and indeed of most deep thinkers from the beginning: from Augustine and Anselm to Melancthon, Leibnitz and Martensen. On the ground that man is created in the image of God this style of thought conceives of the Supreme according to the analogy of human nature. God cannot, any more than man, be eternally self-conscious without being objective to Himself and knowing the identity. In man the objective Ego is ideal, and

the same person as the subjective. But in the infinity of the Divine Essence this analogy fails: He must as Trinity be Three Persons. But it is plain that whatever service the analogy renders—and it has satisfied or seemed to satisfy some of the profoundest intellects—it leads to a Sabellian conception.

(3.) It enters here only because the early Arian and Semi-Arian teachers laid so much stress on the *Θεότητα* or Divinity of the two subordinate Beings. They were regarded as the bond, or rather the intermediary links, between the Absolute and the conditioned, the Infinite and the finite: looking toward the creature they were firstborn or rather firstcreated before the worlds; but looking Godward they were more directly emanations of the Monad than the creature. The doctrine was a speculative substitution for the Gnostic errors of æonic emanation. It was and is wherever held a refuge in which philosophical thought, always striving to reach unity, concinnity, and the solution of mystery, dreams of explaining a God with triple gradation linking continuously the Finite and the infinite, the Absolute and the conditioned.

Pantheology.

3. The early Arianism also has been sporadic. It has moulded opinion very extensively in later Christendom: never shaping a formulary or founding a sect, but influencing the thoughts of many thinkers and colouring the sentiments of poetry, and infusing itself into the devotions of many who are almost unconscious of their error. The history of Arian tendency in England is an important and instructive one: it brings in some great names in our philosophical and theological literature; but it shows that the healthy common sense of readers of the Scripture has never and never will accept this compromise. Either the New Testament must be rejected as a final authority and the Deistic Rationalism of Unitarianism accepted, or, the Scriptures being received as the Rule of Faith, the FULNESS OF THE GOD-HEAD must be adored in the incarnate Son. This subject also belongs rather to Christology or the Person of Christ.

Arian Tendencies.

Col. ii. 9

4. Subordinationism was exaggerated by the Remonstrant divines, especially those of the later age of Arminianism. The difference between the true doctrine on this subject, as already exhibited, and the error into which it easily declines, may be marked in the following words of Episcopius: "Patri soli proprie

Arminian

Inst. Theol.  
iv. 33.  
25.

Theol.  
Chr. ii.  
17, 25.

divinitatis perfectionem seu ἀκμὴν competere, quod eam a se ipso, hoc est, a nullo alio habeat. Unde consequitur, Patrem sic esse primum ut etiam summus sit, TUM ORDINE, TUM DIGNITATE, TUM POTESTATE." And, with less offence, in those of Limborch: "Dignius siquidem est generare quam generari, spirare quam spirari." It is well known that the tone of Arminian thought on this incomprehensible subject glided downwards by sure though imperceptible degrees towards Unitarianism.

Practical  
Con-  
clusion.

#### PRACTICAL CONCLUSION.

A close study of the variations in opinion on this topic, following the bare outlines thus given, will lead to some important practical conclusions.

Funda-  
mental.

1. **The doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity is essential to Christianity: there is no Theology, there is no Christology without it.** That the one Divine essence exists in three eternal, coequal, personal subsistences is the foundation of the Christian Faith. This has been the catholic belief, as the catholic interpretation of Scripture. Whatever exception may be taken to dogmatic definitions, the eternal underlying truth is the life of the Christian revelation. **What will be hereafter exhibited as the Mediatorial Trinity is only the mystery of the Absolute Trinity as revealed in the salvation of man.**

True  
Subordin-  
ation-  
alism.

2. Again, it cannot be denied that the best and purest teaching on this subject has laid emphasis on **the mystery of an eternal subordination, in the Scriptural sense of the term, in the interior relations of the Two Persons of the Trinity to the First.** The simple statement of the Nicene Creed which asserts ONE GOD at the outset, and that the Eternal Son is GOD OF GOD, expresses the faith of the Church. But it is difficult to draw the line, either in thought or by word, between truth and error here. Our Lord gives us a revelation in words which suggests its defence, though they cannot reveal to the human intellect the full conception of the truth. *As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to THE SON to have life in Himself.* These words refer to the Eternal Son. His authority in time and human things follows with a change in the expression: *and hath given Him authority to execute*

John v.  
26, 27

*judgment also, because He is THE SON OF MAN. And these together constitute the ground of an equal Divine reverence: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father Which hath sent Him.*

John v.  
23.

**This subject, however, must be remitted to the doctrine of the Person of Christ, where it will be seen that the Eternal Generation of the Second Person is the sacred though most incomprehensible link connecting Him with the Incarnation and our new sonship derived from that.** We may object to the language of earlier theology which ventured to speak of the **Father as the *Αυτόθεος*, the Fons, Origo, and Principium of the Divinity;** as well as to that interpretation of *My Father is greater than I*, assigning an inferiority to the Eternal Son, which Hilary thus expresses: "Et quis non Patrem potius confitebitur, ut ingenitum a genito, ut patrem a filio, ut eum qui miserit ab eo qui missus est, ut volentem ab ipso qui obediat? Et ipse nobis erit testis: Pater major me est. Hæc ita ut sunt, intelligenda sunt, sed cavendum est, ne apud imperitos gloriam Filii honor Patris infirmet." This last clause is the sheet-anchor of our security. And, always remembering this, **we may give the ETERNAL SONSHIP and the ETERNAL PROCESSION their place in our silent thought as an infinite solution of what is still an infinite mystery,** and accept the words of Bishop Pearson: "It is no diminution to the Son, to say He is from Another, for His very name imports as much; but it were a diminution to the Father to speak so of Him; and **there must be some preeminence, where there is no place for derogation.** What the Father is He is from None; what the Son is, He is from Him; what the first is He giveth; what the second is, He receiveth. The first is Father indeed by reason of His Son, but He is not God by reason of Him; whereas the Son is not so only in regard of the Father, but also God by reason of the same."

John xiv.  
28.  
De Trin.  
iii.

On the  
Creed.  
Art. ii.

3. While it is obvious, on the one hand, that no human language can utter this mystery, Theology, both scientific and practical, demands that the Trinitarian phraseology should be ordered with careful precision as at least guarding the truth against the approach of error. After all that may be said as to the inadequacy of human words, and the absence of definitions from Scripture,

Careful  
Phrase-  
ology.



it still remains true that many others besides those of the New Testament must be used both in teaching and in worship. As it regards the scientific terminology of the doctrine it is well to be familiar with the terms that express the relations of the One to the Three-in-One. No thoughtful student will either discard or undervalue them. The Deity is the Divine ESSENCE or SUBSTANCE or NATURE; the Three are SUBSISTENCES, HYPOSTASES, and PERSONS: the last words of these counterpart series are philosophically the least exact, but they are the conventional and sacred language of the teaching, preaching, and worshipping Church. So also with regard to our practical and ordinary language. Nowhere is precision more necessary than in the ordering of the phraseology of worship. The mind and the tongue must be so educated as to recoil from such language as is tinctured with either the Tritheistic, or the Sabellian, or the Arian error. One of the results of careful and reverent study will be the discipline that shall make every word faithful to the equal honour of each of the Three Adorable Persons in the unity of the Other Two, and in the unity of the Godhead: adoring and praying to each with this sacred reservation. But, after all, we must remember what the ancient Church was never weary of enforcing in relation to this subject: the Nature of God is ἀρρητος, INEFFABILIS, unsearchable and unspeakable; the Godhead can be known only by him who is Θεοδιδακτος, taught of God; and that knowledge itself is and will eternally be only ἐκ μέρους, IN PART.

## THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Attri-  
butes.

By the Divine Attributes are to be understood the full assemblage of those Perfections which God ascribes to Himself in His Word : partly as the fuller expansion of His Names, and partly as designed to regulate our conception of His character. They are to be distinguished from the Properties of the Triune Essence, on the one hand ; and, on the other, from the Acts by which His relations to His creatures are made known. Hence dogmatic Theology regards them, first in their unity as Perfections manifesting the Divine Nature, and, secondly, in their variety as Attributes capable of systematic arrangement.

## RELATION TO THE DIVINE ESSENCE.

Relation  
to the  
Divine  
Essence.

As related to the essence of God, their unity in variety is only the full revelation of the Divine nature in itself ; their variety in unity is the real, authoritative, and adequate revelation of it to man. They are one in God, yet many to us.

1. No being or essence is conceivable apart from its attributes and qualities. It is a primary law of thought that all phenomena whether of mind or matter are manifestations of some underlying substance thus only known to us. What is true of all other objects of our knowledge is true also of the Highest. Save in His qualities and attributes God is not revealed to His creatures. The Eternal unclothed in these is not a definite object of thought at all ; that pure unmodified being which Pantheistic mysticism presented as its highest conception of God is reduced to nothing. Such superessential existence has no place either in Scripture or in human reason. On the other hand, the entire Divine essence is made known in the assemblage of His qualities predicated of it. The Bible never distinguishes between the Being of God and the NAME or Names that reveal His being. Its nearest approach

Substance  
and Attri-  
butes.

2 Thess.  
ii. 4.

to a distinction is in the constant use of the term **GLORY**, which is the effulgence of the manifestation of the hidden essence ; and therefore by no means a synonym of the Divine attributes, as is sometimes said. The Divine attributes may exist without their glory : a truth which lies at the basis of the condescension and humiliation of the Incarnate Son. Theology adopts the word **Perfections**, as they are attributed by God to Himself ; **Attributes**, as His creatures, Divinely instructed, assign them to Him. Moreover, these attributes belong to **ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD** : that is, to the Triune Essence, and each of the Persons of the Godhead. Hence it is well that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity should have preceded the present subject. But, as referred to the Trinity, the attributes must not be confounded with the Divine **PROPERTIES**, which is one of the terms used to express the characteristics of the interior relation of the Godhead, the **Three Divine Hypostases**, **Subsistences**, or **Persons**.

**Reality.**

2. The variety of the attributes corresponds to a reality in the Eternal, Who reveals Himself as He is, neither leaving His character to the conjectures of His creatures, nor putting into their minds notions of that character which are fictitious and unreal. To make the several qualities of the Divine nature depend only on our conceptions of them is to lose the Divine nature altogether: it is to substitute for the only true God an imaginary Being incapable of definition. The interminable discussions of the Schoolmen on this subject, which have been continued in later times and revived of late with special reference to the knowableness of God, are not without a profound interest. The **Nominalists**, who regarded general terms as merely names of abstractions formed in our minds, effaced the real distinction in the Divine attributes: to them God was in the simplicity of His essence **ACTUS PURUS**, thought and act, or act and power, being one in Him, and the perfections of the Divine nature existing only in our thoughts, in which we assign to God something that is the cause of what we find in ourselves. The **Realists**, on the other hand, who regarded general terms as representing real objective existences, clung to the reality in God both of the Triune Persons and of the various perfections He assumes. In every age those who hold with them think of God as essential personality, as really

invested with His attributes in perfection as His creatures are invested with them imperfectly. But here our safeguard is to remember that in the simplicity of the eternal essence there can be nothing composite: the whole essence is in each attribute: God is All in all, All in each. Accordingly it follows that we can think of no such accidental attribute as may be and is in everything that is not God; as man, for instance, may or may not have wisdom. There is no perfection in the Supreme that is not of His essence. Thus, while we reject what may be called the Sabellian theology of the Divine attributes—each is distinct in the unity of the supreme nature—in the Glory of God all the several components of His nature blend into one.

3. Hence it may be said that only through the way of the Divine attributes can we reach a definition of the Divine nature. There is a sense indeed in which the being of God is absolutely undefinable, because absolutely incomprehensible. But, as to define is rather to separate or distinguish from everything else than to explain what is thus defined or marked off, there is nothing more amenable to definition than the nature of God. Of course, to think of genus and species is here out of the question. But we may speak of God as a subject with all good predicates, and with these in their infinite perfection: of no other object of knowledge can we speak with equal confidence. In His essence He is the Being of beings: the Source, Sustainer, and End of all things that are. But this already expresses His difference from all that is not Himself. To express that difference fully is to enumerate the perfections of His nature. We cannot sanctify Him in our hearts from every other object without thinking of or naming His attributes. The moment definition begins these are absolutely necessary. Indeed, we have no notion of Deity which does not connote some idea which severs the conception from all other conceptions. Every thought of God involves the thought of His attributes: without these He is verily and indeed an unknown and an unknowable God.

Essential  
to Defini-  
tion.

#### CLASSIFICATION.

In systematic theology the attributes require classification. Our best guide, the Scripture, gives hints and specimens of an

Principles  
of Classifi-  
cation.

arrangement of its abundant materials ; and such an arrangement tends, as will be seen, to elucidate their connection with the various branches of the system of revelation. To exhibit them merely in an orderly series involves too great a sacrifice to simplicity. But it is as difficult as it is important to determine the guiding principles of such a classification.

Twofold  
Cor-  
relatives.

1. The favourite method has been to make a division into two counterpart classes. Hence they are distributed as natural and moral by a distinction which the meaning of neither of these words will allow : both are inappropriate to the Deity, and the harshness is not removed if metaphysical and ethical are substituted. The instinctive objection we feel to these terms is not felt to the correlatives of absolute and relative, immanent and transitive, internal and external : these distinctions furnish the right clue and are sound so far as they go ; but they do not suggest those special manifestations of God which give their peculiar glory to Christian theology. It is dangerous to speak of positive and negative attributes ; for while there is no positive excellence in Deity which does not imply negation or its opposite, the negative ideas of infinity and so forth are really and truly positive. Lastly, when they are classed as communicable and incommunicable, it must be remembered that, as attributes, all are alike incommunicable to the creature.

Method of  
reaching  
them.

2. Secondly, the names and perfections of God have been ordered with reference to the method by which we attain, or may be supposed to attain, our conceptions of them. The Mediæval doctors taught that we arrive at adequate notions of the Divine perfections, first, "*viâ negationis*:" by the instinctive denial of limitation and defect to the Supreme ; secondly, "*viâ eminentiæ*:" by ascribing to Him the most eminent possession of what in us or in our idea is good ; thirdly, "*viâ causalitatis*," by making Him the actual, virtual, or permissive cause of every effect observable in the economy of things. This scholastic method has always commended itself by its simplicity, though it is liable to some of the objections that render the former method doubtful : especially it fails in its application to the attributes which are concerned with human redemption.

From  
Human  
Nature.

3. Thirdly, it has been sought to make our own nature the

basis of the distribution of His attributes in Whose image we were created: "Qualis homo, talis Deus." Man is conscious of his own substantial being and identity through all changes: this suggests that God exists, apart from all phenomena. But man is conscious of three orders of self-manifestation or modes of consciousness: the three constituents of his existence are intellect, sensibility, will. Hence a threefold classification of the Divine attributes, so far as they are distinguished from His eternal essence. In modern times, and especially by the followers of Schleiermacher, the demands of man's religious need have been the regulator: a sense of dependence implying the absolute attributes, a sense of sin the moral perfections, and the whole being consummated by the revelation of love in Christ. Here, then, is undoubtedly a ground of truth. Every rational human thought of God springs from man's knowledge of himself. This is the grand prerogative of human nature that it is a reflection of the Divine. We either ascribe to our Maker the perfection of what is imperfect in ourselves, or we deny to Him what in ourselves we count evil. But it is obvious that there are relations of the Infinite to the finite, of the Creator to the creature, and of the Holy God to sinners, which forbid the carrying out of this principle of classification. It is enough to say concerning these methods that they have too much tendency to make man the measure of the Deity.

4. Guided by these principles of analysis, though not bound to any of them, we shall, first, consider the attributes pertaining to God as an absolute or unrelated Being; then, those arising out of the relation between the Supreme and the creature, which indeed require the creature for their manifestation; and, finally, those which belong to the relation between God and moral beings under His government, with special reference to man. The justification of this arrangement will appear in due course.

**Analysis.**

#### ATTRIBUTES OF THE ABSOLUTE ESSENCE

**Attributes  
of the  
Absolute.**

The Divine essence, or the Absolute, regarded in itself and in itself alone, is to be conceived as pure spirit, unlimited by time or space, independent of all other existence,

in its perfect self knowing no change or process of development. As these are the attributes of a personal Being they may be summed up as spirituality, infinity, eternity, immensity, necessary selfsufficiency, unchangeableness, and perfection. These great words, carefully examined, are or suggest all the attributes of God which are immanent, independent of the creature, and essential to a right conception of His nature.

Spirituality.

#### THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

John iv.  
24.

Spirituality is the attribute which most nearly and fully expresses the very essence of God as the one eternal substance in which all other attributes inhere. Hence the Scripture does not tell us that the Divine nature is spiritual; but our Lord, the only Revealer, declares that Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός, GOD IS SPIRIT: the only definition He ever gave. This may be understood in two ways: first, positively, as the perfection of all that we know of spirit in our own consciousness; and, negatively, as excluding all that is inconsistent with our conception of pure spirit.

Personal.  
Heb. xii. 9

1. The human spirit was created in the image of God. By the testimony of our consciousness the *Father of spirits* is a real, substantial Person, Whose personal selfconsciousness is that of a thinking or intelligent selfdetermining Agent. The Scriptures abound with testimonies, pervading their whole structure, that He holds intercourse with man as a Spirit with spirit. This is and ought to be accepted as the foundation of all religion.

Why  
Revealed.

2. This attribute is not generally asserted of God in an abstract manner, or as defining His nature. It is appealed to for two purposes: to guard our conceptions of the Object of our worship from everything that would debase it; and, to impress upon us a sense of the dignity of our origin and the grandeur of our vocation as worshippers of the One, Triune, Eternal Spirit.

Pure  
Spirit.

(1.) Of what pure spirit is we can form no notion. The word gives little help, as it simply expresses the breathing forth which in its influence is πνεῦμα: an invisible energy, known by its effects. All pure being, especially spiritual being, as underlying its pheno-

mena, is beyond our grasp. But, in thinking of the highest Spirit, we put away every idea of the limitations which belong to our own spirit. The attribute gives us the simplicity and unity of the Divine uncompounded nature; its immateriality, immortality, and invisibility. Therefore the term is, after all, the predicate of a personal God, distinct from the material and created universe. Pantheism has always seemed in words to deny this: seldom in reality. Some of the greatest leaders of Pantheistic thought have been better than their creed: filled with the idea of a universal directing Spirit, but forgetting that He is and can be in His own nature only Spirit.

(2.) Of that God in His Triune essence, and of each Person in the unity of the Godhead, as the object of worship, spirituality is predicated. This attribute belongs to the absolute Godhead as before all creaturely existence. But it is brought into relation with the economy of redemption. Of the Father in that economy, it is said, *Whom no man hath seen nor can see!* Of the Son: *to the King eternal* (of the worlds and dispensations, *τῶν αἰώνων*), *immortal, invisible!* *The Lord is Spirit.* The Holy Ghost, holy in His function and relation to redemption, is by His very name *τὸ Πνεῦμα*. Hence the worship of God must be spiritual: not indeed as formless and void and without material aids, but as the homage of spirit to Spirit: *They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* The Apostle Paul teaches the Gentiles, through their own teachers, that *we are also His offspring*; and the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of that God as *the Father of spirits*. In the former passage the inference is a remarkable one: from the spiritual essence in man to the spirituality of God and of His perfect service. In the latter, which echoes the words of the Old Testament, *The God of the spirits of all flesh*, the duty of subjection and the privilege of LIFE in the fullest sense are connected with it. God *only hath immortality*—that is, the essential incorruptibility of Spirit—and of His incorruptible immortality the indivisibility and indestructibility of the human spirit is an image and a gift.

The  
Triune  
Object of  
Worship

1 Tim. i.  
17.  
2 Cor. iii.  
17.  
John iv.  
24.  
Deut. iv.  
15—19.  
John iv.  
24.  
Isa. xl. 18,  
25.  
Acts xvii.  
28.  
Heb. xii.  
9.

Numb.  
xvi. 22;  
xxvii.  
16.  
1 Tim. vi.  
16.

#### THE INFINITY OF GOD.

Infinity.

There is no idea concerning God more necessary to the human mind than that He is Infinite in His being and perfections and



all that is His : that whatever is to be predicated of Him is to be infinitely predicated, or without limitation. But while this is an indispensable requisite of every thought concerning the Supreme, it is, at the same time, an idea that must for ever overwhelm the finite mind which must nevertheless entertain it.

Only in  
God.

1. The notion of the Infinite belongs only to God, to Whom alone of all objects of thought it is, strictly speaking, applicable. No other subject of this predicate has or can have a real existence. There is no meaning in the terms "infinite space" and "infinite duration:" space is nothing save as occupied, but what occupies it must be limited ; and duration implies some limited thing that endures. It is only when it is made the attribute of a Being, and one Being, that the word has, strictly speaking, any meaning.

Positive  
and  
Negative.

2. Infinity is a positive notion in a negative form : that it is a mere negation of limits springs from the finite nature of our own understanding ; that it is a positive judgment or affirmation of our minds, and in our own indestructible conviction something more than mere negation, is a tribute to the essential nobleness of the human intellect. When we say that we ourselves are finite we mean more than a mere denial of our infinity : we express a real judgment concerning our own and every creaturely existence to which the standard of infinity is applied. So when we say that God is infinite we express the sacred thought that He is beyond the circumscription and the comprehension of our understanding.

Care in  
using it.

3. It is important to remember that the word infinite is one of our own making, and not employed in Scripture. It must be narrowly watched and guarded in its application to the Supreme. It belongs to Him not as abstract essence but as a Personal Spirit. Nothing but confusion can arise from applying it to the nature of God as if that were capable of diffusion and its expansion regarded as going on to infinity. The human mind is not capable of thinking save under the conditions of time and space. The Infinite is revealed to faith as above the condition of time, and of this Eternity is the expression ; as above the conditions of space, and of this Immensity is the expression. Infinity in philosophical precision has nothing to do with God's relation to the economy of created things ; nor is it right to ask how anything can exist which is not God if God be infinite. This term belongs

Eternity.  
Immen-  
sity.

rather to His attributes than to Himself. An infinite Spirit is infinite in the attributes of spirit: in knowledge, in power, and in what we call in human language resources. If it is urged that an unlimited Being must include all being, the only answer—besides the unfailing acknowledgment of our utter incapacity to argue on such subjects—is that an infinite Spirit must by the very term be able to create finite existences.

## THE IMMENSITY OF GOD.

Immen-  
sity.

1. The Immensity of God is only once declared in Scripture; but when it is said that *Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee*, a formula is used which expresses the universal sentiment of revelation and precisely defines the supremacy of the Eternal Spirit over all conditions of space. It is not that He fills immensity with His presence: He is the only Immensity, all things created being measurable and limited. The universe CANNOT CONTAIN Him: not because His essence stretches beyond the confines of created things, but because His eternal Spirit transcends and is inconsistent with all notions of space. Space is born out of His immensity, as time out of His eternity: but none can declare the generation of either. This incomprehensible attribute of the pure and absolute Divine essence is the ground of His omnipresence, hereafter to be considered. Because, while above and independent of all space, He can, when space and all that it inherit come into existence at His fiat, fill all with His presence. It can hardly be said that the Immensity of God is the negative of which His ubiquity is the positive. Both are positive conceptions; strictly related to each other and yet very different. ! The former lifts our thought to the overwhelming contemplation of a Being above all created existence; the latter teaches us to draw the necessary inference that the Creator of all things is present to every creature, or, putting this in a better form, that every creature throughout space is present to Him.

2 Chron.  
vi. 18.

2. This eternal attribute is in Scripture appealed to for two purposes: first, to bring near the thought of the Divine omnipresence; secondly, and chiefly, to guard us against unduly localising our conception of the Object of worship. *In Him we live and move and have our being*: as our time is enfolded by the

Why  
RevealedActs xvi.  
28.

- Divine eternity, so our place is in the bosom of the Divine immensity. *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.*
- Jer. xxxiii. 23, 24.
- The response is that of holy fear: *Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from Thy presence? and of holy confidence: Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.* But when the Temple was dedicated, in which Jehovah would dwell with His people, the Holy Ghost inspired Solomon's sublime appeal already quoted: *But who is able to build Him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? It is not enough for us in our worship to remember that our God is everywhere present, that He is our Father in heaven; we must remember also that He is beyond and above even the heavens: Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.*
- Psalms cxxxix. 7.  
Psalm xvi. 8.
- 2 Chron. ii. 6.
- Is. lxvi. 1.
- It is a high flight to the thought of a Being Who is everywhere present; it is a still higher thought that we are in the presence of One Who is above all space and time.

## Eternity.

## THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

1. What the Divine immensity is to space the Divine eternity is to time. That God is eternal is the constant declaration of Scripture: in fact this is a predicate more habitual than any other, being the first revelation of Himself to His people, I AM THAT I AM, and continued in a variety of other forms down to the end, when it returns to the first, *Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty.* It must be remembered, however, that very few of the passages which introduce the word assign the absolute attribute we are now considering to God. The Name which declares His essential, necessary, underived being sufficiently sustains the doctrine of the Divine eternity.
- Ex. iii. 14.
- Rev. i. 8.
- Gen. xxi. 33.
- Is. xl. 28.
- In one memorable passage it is said that *Abraham called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God, or THE GOD OF ETERNITY, יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים*, which once more occurs in the prophet: *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord—יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם, the God of eternity, Jehovah—the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?*

Undoubtedly in these, and some other passages, the word eternal has its profound meaning of time HIDDEN in the abyss of eternity. But it will be found that all the terms generally used carry with them the notion of successive duration indefinitely extended, and therefore fall short of the pure conception of eternal. Hence they are explained with that meaning by many paraphrases: such as, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God*, where duration to come and duration past are alike unlimited; and mean, though they do not say, that Jehovah is above all time,  $\text{עַלְיוֹן}$ , the *Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity*. The variations are very sublime on the idea of duration lost in timelessness, before and after creation: *I am the First and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God*, where still the idea of duration enters. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*: here duration is all but gone. St. Paul calls God *the King eternal, immortal, invisible*: here it is the *King of ages*, just as it is said that *He made the ages* or worlds. From all this it is plain that, while the abstract idea is wanting in Scriptural expression, it is not wanting in the Scriptural doctrine. Eternity is expressed in finite terms.

2. But the perfect idea of eternity, as it is in the human mind, cannot tolerate duration or succession of thoughts as necessary to the Divine consciousness. And this is the deep perplexity of our human intellect, which however must accept the profound meaning of the name I AM, as teaching an eternal now enfolding and surrounding the successive existence of time. The personal Jehovah once and once only declared His pure eternity. His name is the only word which human language affords in its poverty to express that thought: such terms as eternal and everlasting have temporal notions clinging to them; and all our phrases go no further than that the Supreme fills all space and time, and that He was before them, the very word before carrying duration with it. But I AM—before Time or Space was, I AM—has in it all the strength of eternity. It is literally the assertion of pure existence, without distinction of past and present and future: that is, of past and present and future as measured in time and regulated by motion in space. We must

Psaln x.  
2.

Is. lvii. 15.

Is. xlv. 6.

2 Pet. iii.  
8.

1 Tim. i.  
17.  
Heb. i. 2.

Eternal  
Now.

accept this doctrine of God in all its incomprehensibleness, as the only one that satisfies the mind. The Eternal in Himself knows no succession of time any more than He knows circumscription of space; and, when He created all things, His being remains as independent of duration as it is independent of locality. No attribute, however, has given rise to more discussion than this. The deepest thinkers of all ages have consented to annihilate in the Divine essence all that we mean by time and succession of thought. They have agreed to speak of a *Duratio tota simul*, of an *Æternitas* in which *fuisse et futurum esse non est sed SOLUM ESSE*. And the name Jehovah—the Name of God and of each of the Three Persons in the Godhead—demands and sanctions this. It is utterly vain to attempt to penetrate this abyss of mystery: it is equally fruitless either to fight against it or to illustrate it.

Discussion  
of this  
subject.

3. Opponents of this truth deny that there can be duration without succession; but duration is succession; both words are equally inappropriate to the Eternal who simply is. They insist also that to take from a personal being the act and operations of successive thinking is to destroy its personality. But that is simply arguing from our finite nature—which cannot think but under conditions of time and space—to the Infinite which by the very definition knows no such limits. The only answer possible to all such objections is the common apology required everywhere by this subject: we cannot search out the Divine Being unto perfection; though the perfection in which we are lost allows no past to recede before God and no future to rise before Him. When the argument takes another form, and we are pointed to the tenor of Scriptural representations that speak of the Eternal as having purposes which have been fulfilled and are in course of fulfilment, our reply must be cautiously and yet boldly

Heb. 1. 2.

given. Time is the creation of the Eternal God, Who *made the ages*. It is, with all its endless phenomena and laws, a reality to Him Who brought it into being; and all its succession unfolds in His presence as past and present and future. Our only difficulty is to hold fast the truth that He sustains two relations to time. As the abiding Eternal One He views it in its place, Himself absolutely unconnected with it. As the God who works out for the creature and with the creature His own purposes He beholds,

directs, and controls all things as under the law to time. This is of course a deep mystery to human thought: that is, to conceive of eternal willing and temporal acting, of a timeless and successionless Agent working out and watching the evolution of His plans. But the mystery, such as it is, is only that of the Incarnation anticipated; and, as we receive this, we may receive that. We may dare to say that the Eternal inhabits eternity; and yet that in the Son, the Firstborn before every creature, He inhabits time also. As in the incarnation God is manifest in the flesh, so in the creation God is manifest in time. And as God will be for ever manifest in His incarnate Son, so will He for ever have in and through His Son, the Vicegerent of created things, a manifestation in time: that is to say, in plain words, eternity and time will henceforward and for ever coexist. Something pertaining to time will cease: its change and probation and opportunity. In this sense χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται; but in no other sense than this.

Analogy  
with the  
Incarna-  
tion.

4. Illustrations are on this subject of no great value. And yet they are not utterly worthless. One has just been used, the analogy with the Incarnation. No exception can be taken to this: as the Son thinks and feels and acts as a man while still the Eternal God, so the Eternal God thinks and feels and acts amidst the creaturely conditions of time. The phenomenal universe is a rehearsal of the Incarnation. But in this case the illustration is as unfathomable as the thing illustrated. Other illustrations are frequently suggested which involve a disguised Pantheism, and should therefore be steadily avoided. For instance, when it is said that time is the shadow of eternity, or the element of continuity amidst changing phenomena, the successional existence of God is made eternal. Pantheism asks nothing more than this. There is indeed a dim and fleeting but an impressive adumbration of the sublime idea nearer home, in the very constitution of our nature. An apocryphal writer has told us that God *made man in the image of His own eternity*. And the canonical Preacher, after describing all the ordinances and arrangements of time in their season, adds in a mysterious sentence: *He hath made everything beautiful in his time. Also He hath set eternity in their heart*, אֶת הָעוֹלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם, *so that no man can find out the work that God worketh from the beginning to the end*. The thought or the instinct or the

Rev. x. 6

Eternity  
in our  
Nature.

Eccles.  
iii. 11

desire of eternity for ever points the worker in time to an unfathomable mystery of the Divine purpose beyond time. Man knows or feels that he is linked with eternity and surrounded by it. This deep mystery in his inmost soul gives him desires and anticipations that transcend time and space. Sometimes this sense of the infinite or of the eternal seems for a season to annihilate the succession of his thoughts, and his contemplation of God raises him above all limitation. From this sublime ecstasy, however, he evermore awakes; but not without a dim presentiment of what time will be when it is swallowed up, without being lost, in the abyss of eternity.

Selfsufficiency.

#### THE SELFSUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

No notion we can form of God is more important in its meaning and in its issues than that He is selfsufficient, or that of His necessary eternal *αἰτάρκεια*.

Causa  
Sui.

1. We use our own feeble words when we say that it is a necessity of thought that the Being who is the ground of all existence should be Himself an eternal necessity. All things have their cause and their end in Him: He can have no cause nor end out of Himself. He is the one, sole, selforiginated, independent, unconditioned and absolute Being. Here the eternal name

- Ex. iii. 14. JEHOVAH, I AM, again comes in. The idea of causation carries us to One Essential Existence; but cannot go behind that. It is a very loose employment of the term to add that He is Causa Sui, His own cause: He simply, purely, and eternally is. *Before Me there was no God formed!* To all the best thoughts and instincts of our created nature He may say: *Ye are even My witnesses, Is there a God beside Me? I am the First, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God!*

All Possibilities.

2. Although this immanent and absolute attribute by its very name shuts out the creature, and points to a Being Who needs nothing to complement or complete His perfection, it nevertheless implies that in the infinity of His resources are all the possibilities and potentialities of the created universe. When we exchange the terms Necessary, Independent, Selfexistent, for that of Allsufficient, we begin to think of the eternal resources that

are in the Deity; of *His eternal power and Godhead*. The word *Nothing* vanishes before both His essence and His power. His sufficiency knows no limit but what He Himself by word or act assigns to it. Of an eternal creation we dare not think; but we may speak of the eternal possibilities of creation: of which more hereafter. *From the creation of the world His invisible things have been clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made: these postulate an infinity of the invisible things behind.* Rom. i. 20.

3. By selfsufficiency we understand all that philosophy means by the notions of the Absolute and the Unconditioned. No relation in which the Supreme may place Himself—He only becomes the Supreme by relation—throws any limitation around His being. No relation is a necessary relation: in saying this we say all that is needful. Some current definitions of the Absolute have literally no meaning. The philosophy which admits that the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite, yet asserts that the Infinite cannot be a Person, cannot be conscious of a self, because it cannot have an object over against itself as subject, is philosophy falsely so called. It must issue either in Pantheism or in Atheism. It has never been proved, it can never be proved, that selfconsciousness necessarily implies consciousness of something not self. Even granted that it is so in the creature, the leap in the inference from the creature to the Creator is as unreasonable as it is certainly unscriptural. The Divine I and Thou are heard both in eternity and in time. But this leads to the next consideration.

The  
Absolute.

4. The selfsufficiency of the Eternal is not fully acknowledged unless we bear in mind that within the dread sphere of His being there is a plurality of Persons. The personal Subsistences in the Godhead are eternally related to each other: and this of itself banishes the term Unconditioned. The distinction of I and Thou goes up to and enters the original Fountain of life. And here emerges the central and most glorious application of the term all-sufficiency. The Infinite Being is not the vast and unrelieved monotony of existence that Pantheistic mysticism defined as the abstract Nothing. It has in it infinite life, and, if such language be lawful, infinite variety of life, in the mutual knowledge, love, and communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It was so—to use human words—before the creature existed; and

The  
Interior  
Trinity.



John xvii. 21. it is so now that the creature exists: to this our Lord bears witness when He says, *As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee!* And when He adds *that they also may be one in us*, He raises our minds to the thought that the communion of the creature with the Creator is the reflection in time of that communion which subsists among the Persons of the Godhead in eternity.

Majesty and Blessedness. 5. Here, then, we locate the attributes which, when creatures begin to exist to name them, we call Majesty and Blessedness. By the former we ascribe to Deity the glory of perfections which are essentially above the creaturely excellence: not placing Him at the summit, but above all; as Michael, the highest creature, by his very name cries, *Who is like unto God?* By the latter we ascribe to Him the most absolute freedom from all that can impair well-being and the infinity of that which by its communication makes the creature blessed. *Who is over all, God blessed for ever!* expresses both, assigning most emphatically both to the Second Person in the Unity of the Three.

Immutability.

#### THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

After what has been said few words are necessary on the unchangeableness of the Divine essence. The Word of God makes few references to it save as it is implied in the eternal name: its allusions to the subject are generally connected with the steadfast perpetuity of the Divine counsels, and will be considered elsewhere. But there are some points of theological importance arising out of it for which this is the appropriate place.

Being and Phenomena.

1. There are sublime passages which lift our contemplation to the thought of the unchangeableness of the Eternal as contrasted with the fleeting phenomena of the universe; and therefore must be interpreted of the absolute Divine essence. These combine the infinity, eternity, and immutability of God in their glorious aggregate. One only need be quoted, the peculiarity of which is twofold: first, that it most expressly marks the beginning or the very earliest foundations of all created phenomena; and, secondly, that it is quoted from the Old Testament in the New and assigned to the Son of God Who became incarnate. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are*

Heb. i. 10,  
11, 12.

*the works of Thine hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.*

2. This attribute excludes all process of becoming, or development, and whatever is meant by change, or the possibility of change. In His essence and in all the attributes of His essential being, God is for ever the same. And of Him alone can this be predicated: any creature, whether spirit or matter, or a union of the two, becomes what it was not, and reaches a fixed state only by the Divine will: if indeed development does not belong to it for ever. And the interior mystery of the Triune Personality does not affect this truth, which is consistent with an eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Spirit, in the interior essence of Deity.

No Development

3. In the incomprehensibility of the Divine nature, this attribute is also to be reconciled with unbounded activity or mobility when it is brought into relation to the creature; and, in relation to the moral creature, with the changeable manifestation of an eternal purpose. As to the former, more will be said on the Freedom of the Creator; and, as to the latter, we meet the immutability of the Moral Governor in His Fidelity to His own fixed decrees, whether of judgment or of mercy. That philosophical theology which loses the personal God in the abstract Absolute has greatly erred in its conception of this attribute. As the Eternal conducts the creaturely universe through an economy of time, in which His eternity is reflected, so also He conducts it through an economy of change, behind and below and above the variations of which He can say: *I am Jehovah, I change not.* Argument is utterly useless here. It is the highest reason to submit to this necessary antinomy or paradox.

Not Im-mobility.

Mal. iii. 6.

4. Though there is no process of development in the essence of the Godhead, it must be remembered that the profoundest and most awful mystery of the Faith proclaims an evolution of the Divine nature as manifested in redemption: To return once more to the essential Name, I AM THAT I AM means also I AM WHAT I WILL TO BE, and forbids our limiting in any way the possibilities of Divine manifestation as exhibited in the Media-

Immutability and Incarnation.

Ex. iii. 14.

torial Trinity, and especially in the exinanition of the Son. Concerning Him, Jehovah-Jesus, it is said that He is *the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*. But He *emptied Himself* before He took upon Him the form of a servant: He changed before the Incarnation, or in the Incarnation, the mode of His existence and surrendered the glory of attributes which were nevertheless immutably His. The unchangeableness of the Divine nature is not affected even by this; though no created intelligence can fathom the secret. The eternal generation of the Son becomes another generation in time: *This day have I begotten Thee* in human nature was said to Him in His human existence of Whom in His Divine eternity it is said *Thou art My Son!*

Heb. xiii.

8.

Phil. ii. 7.

Psal. ii.  
7.

The  
Perfection  
of God.

#### THE PERFECTION OF GOD.

We sum up all when in our own speech we say that the Divine Nature is Perfect. As God is the Being of beings, His supreme perfection is the perfection of all perfections. This attribute consummates and harmonizes all the rest; representing, as it were, the undivided glory of the several rays of the Divine character. The perfection we reverently ascribe to God is unique and employs the term in a sense applicable to no other being. It is absolute, not relative; it is one, and not the result of the combination of qualities; it is necessary, and excludes the possibility of defect; it is supreme and immutable, not the finish of a process; it is the ground and standard and source of all other perfection. By these poor sentences we labour to express the essential difference between the perfectness of God and the perfectness of the creature. But the importance of this attribute is found in its use as a reverent defence of the adorable nature from all that would dishonour it in our thoughts or in our theological systems. If we sacrifice any one attribute to any other we derogate from the perfection of God Who is the Being in Whom every attribute has its supreme existence and manifestation. As it belongs essentially to God in Himself, so it impresses its stamp on all the Divine works, and must give the law to all our theological views of His character. Holy Scripture, which dwells so much on the absolute perfections of the Godhead, does not often,

perhaps never does, call Him in His eternal essence perfect. This needs no assertion, nor does it need demonstration. The only passage in which the attribute is given Him is one of the very few instances in which the Incarnate Son assigns anything like a specific character to His Father and our Father: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect.* Matt. v. 48.

## OBSERVATIONS.

Observations.

Before leaving this class of Divine essential perfections, we must impress upon our minds the following observations:

1. They are all and alike incomprehensible and unfathomable, though each conveys a definite notion both to reason and to faith or rather to that consummate reason which is faith. In studying out these absolute attributes we are in the presence of a God Whom we strive to think of as existing in the awful solitude of His own essential being; and of Him we must needs say, with more than the prophet's meaning: *Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.* Here, if anywhere, we move in the region of pure thought; and of thought which is more passive than active. We use certain terms, but when we strive to shape them into concepts we are utterly baffled. We speak of infinity, eternity, immensity or spacelessness, immutability; but our words return upon us without the exact ideas they define. By no possibility can we grasp their meaning. And yet it is the glory of our created intellect—stamped with the image of God—that we still persist in believing that our ideas of Deity are sound and true: that there is a Being of Whom all this may and must be said. Our reason is our faith; for we believe in the indestructible convictions of our consciousness of God. Our faith is our reason; for every argument leads to the conclusion that such a Being must be. This is the valid inference we deduce from our own finiteness, which is strictly speaking nothing but a negation of the Infinite: not the converse. Our very idea of limitation implies an Unlimited with which we compare ourselves. Every thought of finite imperfection implies a standard of infinite perfection: what other meaning can these words have? Unsearchableness of these Ideas. Isa. xlv. 15.

Their Truth.

2. But, whenever we think of God as the perfection of what in

Personal  
Attributes.

ourselves is imperfect, we think as persons, and must needs think of Him as a Personal Being. Here we find a special difficulty : though it may be said that the difficulty is self-created, or rather that it springs very much from the poverty of our words. All these attributes of the eternal essence of God are described by terms that are not very appropriate as referred to personal spirit. Thus when we speak of the immensity or of the immutability of the eternal God we are applying language derived from the relations of material things to One Who is a pure spirit ; and the impropriety of the terms reflects its difficulty on the doctrine. The material notion inhering suggests the thought of a vast monotonous essence extending beyond all limit that we can assign, and undergoing no process of living development. If we change the terms we get rid of this anomaly. God is a Personal Spirit, infinite and eternal, ever the same in His nature and mode of being, and not thinking or acting of necessity under the limitations of time and space. Reference has been again and again made to the difficulties of speculation which wonders at the idea of the Absolute or Infinite being defined off from all that is not Himself by personality ; but without the Infinite I speaking to the finite Thou there can be no science of God and no religion. Theology at least should have no difficulty here. It must either renounce itself and abdicate, or accept a personal God, of Whom these absolute attributes are to be predicated only as they are made consistent with His personality. The vain attempt to reconcile an impersonal Absolute with a personal thinker about it must be left to philosophy ; though all philosophy worthy of the name rejects and disdains the task. The question will for ever return upon it : How can personality, conscious of itself and of its origin from something not itself, spring from impersonality ?

The  
Absolute  
versus  
Person-  
ality.

Belonging  
to Three  
Persons.

3. Once more, it is an observable fact that this class of attributes, which we predicate of the absolute Deity, as yet unrelated to any creature, is brought into very express and clear connection with the Triune God as such. It has been seen, and we need now only to impress the fact again, that the Scriptures plainly declare the Personal Son to be eternal and immutable ; and the Third Person to be an eternal spiritual essence, the Holy Spirit ; reeminently. To us there is no Deity but the Triune ; and

Heb. i. 2,  
10; xiii.  
8.

these absolute attributes are predicated of all that is in God. It would be hardly too much to say that they are as often and as distinctly referred to the Son as to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit as to the Son. No one can carefully read the Scriptures without seeing that the supreme Name which binds this class of primary perfections into one is given to the Three Persons distinctively and in their unity. The one Jehovah—the Eternal, Infinite, Immutable Spirit—is the Three-one God. Proofs have already been given of this most fundamental truth, on which hangs the whole fabric of the Christian revelation. And, in harmony with it, we have done well to study the doctrine of the Trinity before entering on that of the Divine attributes.

4. They are the basis on which rest, or the source from which spring, all our other ascriptions to the Divine Being as related to the universe. In other words, the perfections to which we next pass are these in another form and application: not other perfections, but the same as exhibited towards the creature. In dwelling upon the attributes of the Divine essence, as they are brought within the range of their finite operation, it must always be remembered that the essential, immanent, incomprehensible prerogatives form the awful background of every representation. If the Divine Being gives His character and works a human exhibition—if, by what is called anthropomorphic language, He speaks *AS A MAN*, or adopts creaturely language—His eternal and infinite nature is behind as the standard and regulator of all: a truth of boundless importance, too often forgotten.

Basis of  
all other  
Attri-  
butes.

#### ATTRIBUTES RELATED TO THE CREATURE.

The attributes which connect the Supreme Being with the created universe, or which derive their new names and applications from that connection, are such as may be understood by the terms Freedom, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Wisdom, and Goodness. To blend them all in one proposition: The God of the universe is a self-determining Agent, using unbounded power, which is everywhere operative, is guided by infinite knowledge,

Relative  
Attri-  
butes.

displayed in perfect wisdom, under the law of never-failing benevolence. It must be remembered that, while including all and excluding nothing that may be regarded as belonging to the perfections of the Supreme revealed in His works, we keep as yet out of view the modifications of some of these attributes, especially of the first and last, which are introduced in the relation of God to moral agents in probation as such.

## Freedom.

## THE FREEDOM OF GOD.

We cannot pass from the absolute God to the God of the universe without paying our homage to the Freedom of the Divine will as assigning the sufficient reason why anything not God exists at all. This is the anti-Pantheistic attribute.

Will in  
God.

1. When we ascribe to God a will, we begin at once, as we have not done before, to study His spiritual nature in the light of our own, as created after His image. Whatever else we regard as characteristic of an intelligent spirit, we cannot exclude from it self-determination, implying a faculty of willing or deciding its own course of conduct, the exercise of the will as expressed by purpose, and the result in act. These are summed up and assigned to God in one saying of the Apostle: *Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*, where we have the θέλημα, or will in exercise, the βουλή, or determination of that will, and the issue as the act of the ἐνεργούντος. St. Paul makes all things absolutely the result of this will in the Deity, and he only sums up in one remarkable expression the unanimous testimonies of all Scripture. It is important to remember that we speak here of a will in God in the strictest sense of the term, not including the other attributes of God which may be more or less closely connected with it: such as His power and His complacency or love.

Ephes. i  
11.Freedom  
of Divine  
Will.

2. The freedom of the Divine will might seem to need no proof. But, in regard to an attribute which forms as it were the link between the absolute perfections and the perfections related to the creature, this needs to be correctly understood. It means that the reason of the purpose and act of God going towards the

creature is to be sought only in Himself: the will indeed is in the necessity of His essence, like the attributes already considered, but it is itself under no necessity. We may think indeed of a freedom in the eternal essence which is absolute necessity; and of an absolute necessity which is perfect freedom. So it is sometimes said that God wills Himself necessarily. This is an expression which is capable of a sound interpretation; but only if the will includes complacency. A perfect spirit must have a perfect will, and in a sense will its own perfection; but it is not, strictly speaking, more true to say that God wills Himself than to say that He is His own cause or CAUSA SUI

3. Though the cause of all things not God is to be sought in His free will, in the eternal purpose of the Holy Trinity as an absolute essence, we cannot even speak of the freedom of that will without descending at once into the creaturely universe, the result of His free volition. There could be no necessity to create; no necessity to create what is created; no necessity to uphold. The existence of all things according to the infinite variety of their constitution, in parts and as a whole, is a display of the freedom of the Divine Artificer. The necessity of the laws of nature is the freedom of the God of nature.

Requires  
the  
Creatura

4. Although the relation of this attribute to moral beings will have to be considered again hereafter when the Divine perfections are viewed in the light of redemption, yet it is right to view it here in relation to the moral government of God over His creatures as such. Here once more we must observe that absolute necessity is perfect freedom; and we cannot conceive otherwise than that all intelligent beings are created under the obligation of obedience to a law of holiness. His moral will is the free expression of His holy nature. The ground of our obligation to goodness is simply the ground of our obligation to obey that will which is God Himself. But we dare not say with equal confidence that all moral intelligences are created by a free necessity which must make them probationary beings. Here comes in the liberty of the Divine will in another and more unrestricted sense. It has pleased Him to make His creatures free; and to suspend their ultimate destiny on the right use of freedom. From this it follows that, in the mystery of the eternal will, its own liberty is

Moral  
Govern-  
ment.



bound up with that of the creatures. As it is no disparagement to the Divine power that it cannot do what cannot be done, nor to the Divine Omniscience that it knows contingent things as contingent, so it is not inconsistent with the absoluteness of the Divine will that its decrees are sometimes adapted to the conditionality of events. However derogatory it may seem to what is called the Sovereignty of God, the freedom of the supreme will is linked with conditional events, and is conditional with them. The entire Scripture proclaims this from beginning to end, and the history of all the dealings of Heaven with men confirms it. That God, *Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*, nevertheless does not actually save all men. Probation would cease to be probation were not the freedom of the Divine will adjusted to the freedom of the human. False views of the absolute and unconditioned pervade the philosophy of religion; and they are nowhere more obnoxious than here.

1 Tim. ii.  
4.

The Free-  
dom of  
Right-  
eousness.

5. Lastly, this attribute of God as presiding over the creaturely universe is the attribute of a perfect Being; and we may be sure that what would be contrary to morality in our own use of the will ought never to be imputed to the Author of our nature. It is possible to make the Divine freedom conflict with some other equally necessary attributes which we have yet to mention. His liberty cannot be His creatures' bondage: His freedom cannot be their necessity. There is a sense in which absolute sovereignty in God is not only consistent with His perfection, but essential to it. He is free to appoint the conditions and circumstances of the probation of every human or intelligent being; to reveal when He will, and according to what measures, His hidden purposes, or His decreative will, or good pleasure, as distinguished from His preceptive will or command. His preceptive will itself is under the government of freedom: positive precepts may be given or withheld, may be appointed and withdrawn, may be modified or relaxed, or suppressed altogether. But the freedom of God cannot decree the unconditional misery of any creature that He has formed, even for the manifestation or supposed manifestation of what may be called the glory of His justice.

Panthe-  
ism.

6. Finally, leaving these reflections, which belong to a later stage, let us return to the more immediate application of this

attribute. It is placed first in the order of perfections which connote the created universe because it is really the first in the order of our thought. Without it the formula God and the universe has no meaning. It translates the Eternal from the region of abstract necessity and uniformity of existence into the reality of a Personal Spirit acting with free intelligence. It accounts for all things as they have been, as they are, and as they will be. Before it the *Μοίρα*, or Fate, of eternal necessity binding the universe vanishes. Before it Pantheism flies, which allows no personal will either in God or in what seems, but seems only, to be His creation. Before it also, when rightly interpreted, recedes, or ought to recede, every system that makes the probation of intelligent creatures only the circuitous evolution of a fixed purpose called the sovereign will of God.

Christian  
Panthe-  
ism.

## OMNIPOTENCE.

Omnipotence.

The Divine Omnipotence follows hard on the Divine Freedom : indeed it is but the expansion of the result of will in effect ; in this case its expansion to infinity. It is the attribution to God of power to do all that He wills to do ; according to the simple formula of the prophet : *There is nothing too hard for Thee. He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.* He can do all that He wills to do ; He wills to do all that He does. *Potest quod vult*, in its application to the Deity, is sound theology ; though the converse, that He wills all that He can, is to be rejected. Proceeding from this principle, we may dwell on a few important inferences.

Jer. xxxii.  
17.  
Ps. cxv. 3

1. The omnipotence of God is the ground and secret of all efficiency, or what we call causality. No argument, however specious, can rob us of the indestructible conviction that there is such a power in the nature of things as we call cause : that there is a connection between events which is more than mere sequence. As in regard to almost every attribute of God, but in this case with more than usual distinctness, we perceive in ourselves the finite reflection of the Infinite. We are conscious of producing effects as ourselves their cause. From that, remembering two things, we rise to the Divine Omnipotence. First, the range of our direct causation is exceedingly limited : very decisive so far as it extends,

Causality.

it soon reaches its term. In the interior economy of our spiritual nature it is comparatively great; in the government of our bodily constitution less; in our action upon others it has decreased rapidly; and in our action upon external nature it is gone. To the Supreme there is no limit: *with God all things are possible* follows, in our Lord's words, *with men this is impossible*, and may have the largest application. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places. Jehovah spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.* Secondly, all power in us is derived from Him: He is the absolute source of all causation. It is not simply that He can do all things; but all things that are done are done by the operation of causes that owe their efficiency to Him, though in many cases the efficiency is contrary to His will. But this leads to another view: the necessary limitation or condition—if such language may be used—of the Divine omnipotence.

Matt. xix.  
26.  
Psalm  
cxxxv 6.  
Psalm  
xxxiii. 9.

Limita-  
tion ?

2. As to the display of Almighty power, it is and must be, if the Divine freedom is maintained, for ever restricted. It is not indeed a limitation that omnipotence cannot accomplish the impossible: the impossible is impossible because His nature makes it so; even as it is inconceivable that His holiness should tolerate evil. It is more important to bear in mind that the Infinite Cause can never exhaust itself: the actual must always fall short of the possible: *Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him!* Were it otherwise, the Divine freedom would be gone, and Pantheism reign in its stead. To assume that the sum of finite things is the full expression of the Divine Almightyness is to confound the faculty with its exercise: that which is irrational in relation to man is equally irrational in relation to God. This error is really based upon a notion of the Absolute which is impatient of admitting that it can have any project which requires means for its accomplishment and thus involve the thought that God is equal, so to speak, to the production of what He wills. Holy Scripture assents to what is true in this: it is everywhere faithful to the original declaration: *Let there be light, and there was light.* It may be granted that the will of God is His act, that is, when He wills that it should be so; but the converse is equally certain, that He may will not to act, and

Job xxvi.  
14.

Gen. i 3.

infinite varieties of being are not in existence that might be. Nothing is gained by transcendental speculations as to the identity in God of will and act. Such speculations simply trifle with words; if will means will and act means act, they fall to the ground. The same remark as to dishonest or unreal use of words is in other respects of wide application.

3. Once more, the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme conditionate His omnipotence. Here, then, is a twofold range of suggestion: one more simple and comprehensible; the other bringing us to the threshold of unfathomable mystery. It is not difficult to understand that in the providential arrangements of the universe omnipotent agency is limited by wisdom. There is a definite and clear distinction between what is sometimes called the *POTESTAS ABSOLUTA*, or the absolute power that creates all at first, and places it under the government of secondary laws which represent the *POTESTAS ORDINATA*. This distinction between the supreme and the economical omnipotence of the Creator is important in many applications. It does justice to the regular, orderly, uninterrupted process of created things, in which occasional interventions are rare, and indeed no more than exceptions to general rule. But it gives room for these interventions in creation itself, and in the miracles which sometimes introduce a new creation into the old. The one idea of the Divine Omnipotence reconciles the two and harmonises with both. But there is another aspect of the subject before which the human mind must bow down in amazement. In the infinite wisdom of God things contrary to His will in one sense are permitted by His will in another. This leads us up to the original mystery that the Almighty created beings capable of falling from Him; and down again to the present mystery that omnipotence sustains in being creatures opposing His authority; and then forward to the same mystery in its consummate form that omnipotence will preserve in being, not indeed active rebels against His authority, but spirits separated from Himself. It is the solemn peculiarity of this attribute, in common with wisdom and goodness, as we shall see, that it is traversed and thwarted, so to speak, by the creatures that owe to it their origin. But the same three attributes are conspicuous in the redeeming economy: of which more hereafter.

Condi-  
tions of  
Omni-  
potence.

Potestas  
Absoluta  
and  
Ordinata

Omni-  
presence.

# THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

The Omnipresence of God is no other than His Immensity referred to the creature, and restricted, so to speak, within the universe. There are three ways in which we may regard this attribute, as we find it everywhere presented in Scripture.

God every-  
where  
Present.  
Jer. xliii:  
24.

1. It is the actual presence of the Deity in every part of created nature. *Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.* This is one aspect; and it asserts that the Divine Essence, though not extended nor diffused, is to be regarded as present to every portion of the universe, whether more material or more spiritual. God is not present by circumscription of space; nor by the occupation of any one locality rather than any other. He is present in every force or energy of created things; nor can He be absent from any region of the universe or any act of the beings He has created. This, with all its inevitable consequences, may be called His absolute, or, so to speak, natural omnipresence.

All Pre-  
sence to  
Him  
Acts xvii.  
28.

2. But there is another view of the matter which we may profitably take. *In Him we live, and move, and have our being,* which makes God's omnipresence the presence of every creature to Him. The relation is rather of the creature to Him than His relation to the creature. Before His perfect Divinity, not extended but in its one and unextended perfection, every creature stands and moves and runs its course; every thought is conceived, every word is spoken, and every deed is done. It is this aspect of the attribute that the Word of God constantly bids us remember.

The Pre-  
sence of  
His Power  
Psalm  
cxxxix.  
7—12.

3. And there is yet another, which connects it specially with the Divine omnipotence. *Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.* This makes the God of the universe present wherever the special operation of His power is. Thus we may speak of Him as present in the mightiest and in the gentlest forces of nature, which no physical science can account for or explain without this fundamental supposition. Thus also we may speak of His special

presence in places set apart for the manifestation of His glory or of His grace: *The Lord is in this place. Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.* And thus also we believe in a presence peculiar to heaven, and in a presence in the humble spirit of the soul that trembles at His word: the saints are *filled into all the fulness of God.*

4. All these must be combined in our reverent study of this attribute. God is in all things; all things are present to Him; and His energy is everywhere felt, though not everywhere alike felt. Thus the attribute is protected from Pantheism on the one hand, and from every limitation of the Divine Essence on the other. But this subject will be more fully treated under the next.

Gen. xxviii. 16.  
Matt. xviii. 20  
Eph. iii. 19.  
United.

## THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

Omni-  
science.

The attribute of Omniscience assigns to God the perfection of that which in us is knowledge, the intellectual apprehension of things in their truth: *His understanding is infinite.* We must consider the plain Scriptural presentation of it; then our necessary theological distinctions, and the collision of omniscience generally with certain philosophical notions.

Ps. cxlvii. 5.  
Connected  
with  
Omni-  
presence.

I. This perfection is closely allied with that of the Divine omnipresence: *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good:* He knows all things as they are, because all things are present to Him. *Sheol and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?* This, so far as things present go, gives a most simple and clear view of the subject. What to man his consciousness is, and what the testimony of his senses tells him, all things in the universe are to Him Who is a present witness of all. *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.* It is the taking knowledge, or the marking of the procession of events, especially in this world the thoughts and conduct of men. *Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.* But it leaves that attribute behind when it includes what is to us the past and the future as well as the present. Scripture ascribes to His infinite mind the intuitive, simultaneous, and perfect knowledge of all that can ever be the

Prov. xv. 3, 11.  
Heb. iv. 13.  
Ezek. xi. 5.

- object of knowledge : embracing in one eternal cognisance the actual, the possible, the contingent : *Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.* In our apprehension and interpretation of it, the Divine omniscience is the knowledge of the past as past, of the developing present as present, and of the future as future. Particularly, as to the future, it is Foreknowledge, which must however be carefully kept distinct from predestination : between these there is no necessary connection.
- Acts xv. 18. *Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.* This foreknowledge of persons extends also to all events, not only known from the beginning of the world, but to the end of it. Prophecy is a constant element of revelation ; and, whereas prediction might be supposed to refer to certain events of signal importance predetermined in the Divine counsel, the insight into all futurity is expressly assigned to God.
- Fore-  
know-  
ledge.
- Rom. viii. 29. *Jehovah, confounding the false god, cries : Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.* On the other hand, He appeals to His own foreknowledge as absolute : *Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare ; before they spring forth I tell you of them.* He sees the thoughts of men very far off, even to the end of time. What is wanting in express declaration on this subject is implied in the whole current of testimony concerning the infinity of the Divine understanding, and His inhabiting eternity, and seeing *the end from the beginning.*
- Isa. xli. 23. *As to the past, becoming the past, it is the infallible storing of the deeds of His creatures in what we may call, though Scripture does not, the infinite memory of God.* And this leads to a final observation, that the attribute of omniscience is, for the most part, brought into relation with the Divine moral government, as a large number of passages might be brought from Scripture to prove. Indeed, this is the predominant purpose for which this perfection is appealed to throughout revelation.
- Isa. xlii. 9. *II. No attribute of God occupies a more important critical place in theology than this of the Divine omniscience. Its systematic presentation in dogmatic systems varies of course with the systems themselves. We may reduce all to two questions, relating respectively to the reality of knowledge generally in God,*
- Isa. xli. 10. *Theological Importance.*

and to the relation between the Divine foreknowledge and the Divine predestination.

1. Pantheism, and all theological speculation tinged with Pantheism, tends to the denial of any knowledge in God properly so called. Knowledge in man is the intellectual apprehension of an objective thing known by a subject knowing it. Even when the object is the subject, as in the knowledge of consciousness, this distinction between subject and object must be maintained. But, on any supposition, the God of Pantheism cannot know with an infinite knowledge. He is conscious only in the consciousness of finite creatures; and that can never be infinite. In fact, there is no personal Being into whose one distinct consciousness may be gathered up the many consciousnesses of all creatures; and as to all phenomena that are not spiritual they are not known at all, save in finite parcels by the creature. But as soon as we accept the fact that the Infinite Creator has made intelligences reflecting His own personality, they must become objects to Him the Subject knowing. The same may be said of all material things. Meanwhile, the Infinite is eternally the Object known to Himself. And thus we have all the elements of the Divine omniscience.

Opposed  
to Pan-  
theism.

True  
Know-  
ledge in  
God.

2. The Predestinarian view of the Christian Faith has required the entire removal of any distinction between foreknowledge and foreordination. If from eternity God has foreknown all that is to be, it seems hard to separate this from an immutable destiny appointed for all things. Whatever is foreknown truly must come to pass as it is foreknown. But—granting the unsearchable mystery that to the Divine mind all processes are already results—we may be bold to say that logically there is no ground for such a conclusion. It is not the Divine foreknowledge that conditions what takes place, but what takes place conditions the Divine foreknowledge. We have seen again and again that the God of eternity has condescended to be also the God of time, with its past, and present, and future. Instead of saying with the Schoolmen that to God there is only an eternal now, it were better to say that to God as absolute essence there is the eternal now, and also to God as related to the creature there is the process of succession. Predestination must have its rights: all that God wills to do is foredetermined. But what human freedom accomplishes

Foreknow-  
ledge and  
Foreordi-  
nation.



God can only foreknow: otherwise freedom is no longer freedom. The other or determinist view is only Pantheism Augustinianised. St. Augustine says: "What is prescience but the knowledge of future things? But what can be future to God, who transcends all time? But of the knowledge God has of things themselves, they are not to Him future, but present, and consequently it cannot be called prescience but only knowledge." This is not Pantheism, but only Pantheism could teach it. The same humble submission we pay to the union of Infinite and finite in the Incarnation must be offered to the mystery of our Infinite knowledge which, not in words only, but in very deed is voluntarily subjected to finite forms. The analogy is perfect.

Relation  
to Predesti-  
narian-  
ism.

3. We have some theological and philosophical compromises on this subject which demand brief attention.

Scientia  
media.

(1.) The Lutheran divines formulated the whole subject with their wonted skill in analysis. They distinguished in relation to the objects of the Divine omniscience between His necessary knowledge of Himself and of all things possible as determined by Himself, and His free knowledge of all things conditionally dependent on His will: the former was the *Scientia necessaria vel naturalis*; the latter *Scientia libera vel visionis*. But this left room for another division, due to the sagacity of the Jesuit divines, opponents of Jansenist Predestinarianism. This they termed *Scientia media*, and it has been generally held by all anti-Predestinarian theologians. It is the Divine knowledge of the hypothetical or conditional as such: *scientia eorum quæ neque facta neque futura sunt, sed sub conditionibus quibusdam vel fuissent vel forent*. There is not so much importance in this distinction as is sometimes ascribed to it. If of the *Fuissent* and the *Forent* we take the latter, then we have simply the foreknowledge of men's acts on certain conditions: that such and such men will embrace the terms of salvation when presented to them. If we take the former, we are led to a subtle speculation which seems to some without much profit in it. When our Lord says, in His apostrophe to Capernaum, *If the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day*, this, if the Saviour used more than merely figurative or hypothetical language, is an instance of *Scientia media*, or

Matt. xi.  
23, 24.

intermediate knowledge. He knew what would have been but never was. But, when He goes on to say, *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee*, we cannot but feel that this middle or conditional knowledge may have a most important influence on the destinies of men. At any rate, it constitutes a most important element in the Divine omniscience.

(2) The Socinians, on the other hand, boldly denied that free or contingent acts can be known beforehand, or known at all as such. They were misled by a false analogy with the omnipotence of God : as He does not accomplish all that He could accomplish, so He voluntarily wills not to know what is contingent : in other words, He knows things knowable as He performs things possible. Here we see the importance of the distinction already introduced : between the absolute attributes of God and the same attributes as related to the creature. The Divine allsufficiency is the power of doing what He will ; the Divine omnipotence is the power to do all that His creation and sustentation of the universe demands, and no more. So the Divine eternity embraces in perfect knowledge all that has been, is, or may be ; but the Divine omniscience knows according to the conditions of time, and all things future as what we call contingent. The free acts of His creatures are known to Him as certain though He foreknows them as free and not as dependent on His own will. Nothing can be imagined more derogatory to the perfection of God than that He should be made ignorant of contingent events. To Him they cannot be contingent : contingency is altogether a creaturely term. The notion is incompatible with any foreknowledge of human acts ; for in a certain sense every one of them is contingent. Even shortsighted man can be all but certain of some contingent events lying in the immediate future. In God the memory of the past, the vision of the present, the prescience of the future, are alike perfect : the very fact of creation involves all this.

Prescience  
and Con-  
tingency.

#### THE WISDOM OF GOD.

Wisdom.

No attribute is more abundantly ascribed to the God of the universe than Wisdom. This, in human affairs, is intimately connected with knowledge : in man there can be no wisdom without knowledge, though there may be knowledge without wisdom.

Rom. xvi. 27. The analogy is only a faint one: yet we may speak of *God only wise*, who applies His infinite knowledge with infinite skill to the accomplishment of the highest ends by the best means.

Human  
Wisdom.

1. The analogy of the human artificer wisely adapting his resources must not be pressed too far. The human agent has means at his disposal which he prudently uses to help his own weakness, and the highest skill is shown in achieving the greatest results by the smallest instrumentality. But in the case of the Supreme both the end and the means are created; and, while a final cause must be assumed for all, every arrangement in nature is a final end with reference to some most important purpose. The means are ends while the ends are means. The fundamental objection urged by many Christian philosophers against this attribute falls away when this is steadfastly remembered. It can never be said of this or that particular law of nature that it is used by the Supreme for the accomplishment of a certain purpose: it is itself, whatever it may be, a display of omnipotence and a final end of some kind. That ten thousand times ten thousand ends converge to one supreme and ultimate purpose displays wisdom indeed, but not the weakness and patience of wisdom humanly so called. As the attribute is sometimes described, some ground is given for the assault of a philosophy which counts it derogatory to the Supreme to have need of means. Every, the slightest, part of the infinite economy of means is a display of the Divine glory, and as such cannot be degraded to the level of mere expedient. There is no experiment in the wisdom of God.

The  
Divine  
Artificer.

2. The Word of God abounds in every possible strain of expatiation on the wisdom of God in the construction of the universe, in its variety of adaptations to intelligent creatures. Whatever objection we may instinctively feel to making the Omnipotent a skilful artificer, His own Word delights in the representation.

JOB xii.  
12, 13.

*With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding.* This, true of man, is applied to God: *With Him is wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding.* Very much of the praise of Jehovah in the Old Testament is only a variation in the theme: *O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou*

Ps. civ. 24.

*made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.* But if we note carefully, we shall find that it is everywhere taken for granted that

what appears like the adjustment of means to ends is no other than the evolution of an infinite series of ends all expanding and converging to an ulterior and perfect end in eternity.

3. Hence, while in the Old Testament the economy of nature is the sphere of the Divine wisdom, in the New it is the economy of grace in which it most gloriously reigns. In the provisions of redemption for the accomplishment of His supreme end we have the *wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world began*. Here is wisdom in the deepest sense: the very *foolishness of God is wiser than men*. The attribute, studied in the light of the Cross, puts on its highest perfection. It is now far beyond the adjustment of means to an end: it is that, but it is infinitely more than that. It is the infinite knowledge of the abysses of His own Triune Being, and of the possibilities of reconciliation with the sinner through the resources of His own essence, brought into exhibition in a counsel of infinite wisdom. Hence this attribute has given its name both to the Gospel and to the Lord of the Gospel: *Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God*. Here, however, we are going beyond the strict limits of the present class of attributes; and further enlargement on this subject must be postponed.

In the  
Gospel.

Eph. i. 8;  
iii. 10.

1 Cor. ii. 7.

1 Cor. i.  
25.

1 Cor.  
i. 24;  
ii. 6, 7.

#### THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

Goodness

Goodness, as the last of this series of attributes, expresses the Divine sentiment which wills the good of all creatures as such.

1. It is not His excellence in Himself, which is ascribed to Him in other forms; but His benevolence in willing good and His beneficence in doing good to every work of His hands in need of both. The Fountain of life is the fountain also of loving-kindness: *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. His tender mercies are over all His works*. It is no less than a law of the Divine nature to make the universe minister to the happiness of its inhabitants, and to communicate happiness to all creatures capable of it. This is demanded by the ascription of goodness to God as a perfection of His nature in its relation to the creature. To this relation we now limit ourselves; and may boldly say, guided by the Word of God, that His diffusive goodness is every-

Bene-  
volence.

Ps. xxxiii.  
5.  
Ps. cxlv. 2

Gen. i. 31. where illustrated in creation as such. As such *God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good*: in all things, man included, there was the happiness that responded to His beneficent design in the original creation.

**Existence of Evil.** 2. Here we might pause, as we are treating of the Divine perfections related to the created universe. But the tremendous difficulty arises that evil exists. The goodness of God is the attribute which this fact most directly confronts: not His love, which does not emerge in its glory from the ground of His loving-kindness until sin already exists; not His holiness, which likewise implies the existence of what He for ever rejects; not His wisdom, which has its grandest illustration in its making evil subservient to His designs. But it is for ever argued that a Creator of unbounded benevolence and power must, or might, or ought to have prevented the origination of evil. There are only two possible solutions of this profound difficulty. Either the desperate expedient must be adopted of renouncing a Supreme God altogether: a solution this which is really no solution, for atheism solves nothing but dissolves all. Or, accepting the testimony of God Himself, we must bow down before an unfathomable mystery, and seek our refuge in the harmony of the Divine attributes. On this subject more will be said in the next department of the perfections of God, now waiting to be revealed; as also when the doctrine of Sin comes formally before us.

**Com-promises.** 3. Meanwhile, it may be well to consider briefly some compromises or palliatives which are current, and, after considering their strength and weakness, make a few closing reflections.

**Evil not good Disguised.** (1.) So far as concerns our present subject, it is enough to impress the following considerations. First, we must be bold to reject every theory that makes evil and its development a form of the manifestation of Divine goodness: to that goodness evil is an unsearchable mystery of opposition. It might seem impossible that such a notion should be entertained: it has not only been entertained, but has been defended by very plausible arguments. Some have gone so far as to deny the objective reality of evil, and even of sin the cause of it. They make it the necessary form of limited nature: which, created by Divine power guided by benevolence, is under a law of development through sin and guilt and

evil to a predestined perfection that will leave all stages of wandering behind, swallowed up in the eternal realisation of the Divine good pleasure. The final end of the creation being the happiness of being, we are bound to believe—they tell us—that a Perfect Creator has so ordered it that what we call sin and misery should subserve in this best possible universe the purposes of His goodness more fully than a world without misery could have done. But the sufficient answer to all this is—for those at least who hold the Bible in their hands—that sin is the abominable thing that God hateth. It cannot be a designed and appointed element in the display of His goodness. Moreover, supposing it granted that for those who are ultimately delivered from sin the process will result in greater happiness than if it had not existed, this is no argument for the unsaved portion of the race.

(2.) Nor does it much help us when Predestinarian divines, abhorring this method of vindication, set up another very much like that which they condemn. They tell us that the Divine glory is the only end of creation, and NOT the happiness of the creature: instead of saying, as they ought, the Divine glory IN the happiness of the creature. They affirm, consistently, that sin is permitted in order that the justice of God might be made known in its punishment, and His grace in its pardon and removal. But we venture boldly to affirm by anticipation that both the justice and the grace of the Eternal are alike, so to speak, sublapsarian in their relation to sin. These attributes were not to be illustrated by the permission of evil; but, evil being permitted, are illustrated in contending with it. When we all say alike EVIL BEING PERMITTED, we must alike confess that an absolute solution is not by the finite creature to be found. But we cannot agree to relieve the difficulty by regarding sin as either permitted or ordained to glorify God. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that there is something inherently selfish in this argument, in whatever form put. It leaves out of view the inferior races of the creature, and all their innumerable calamities: calamities suffered also on account of the sin of man.

Evil for  
the Divine  
glory.

(3.) Meanwhile, we must submit to the clear and tranquil teaching of Scripture that the Divine benevolence is in all its manifestations controlling the evil of sin: this is the law of all His

Evil controlled.

**Matt. v**  
**45.**

**Ps. lii. 1.**

dispensations. Not indeed that He purposes to abolish it for ever; not that He has so controlled it in other parts of the universe as to save the fallen spirits from it. We have only to do with our own province of the created universe; and for ourselves we know that the lovingkindness of God is still over all His works. *He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good:* both His natural sun, as the symbol of His universal benevolence, and His spiritual Sun, the Friend of publicans and sinners. The history of this world is the history of unwearied benevolence for ever bringing good out of evil. However perilous it may be to speak of the ultimate happiness of the universe being heightened by the remembrance of the evil through which it has been reached, it is safe to say that the sin of man has given scope for the display of the Divine lovingkindness in forms and in resources which otherwise would never have been known. It is the glory of faith to believe that, in spite of the woful results of the Fall, *the goodness of God endureth continually.*

**Observa-  
tions.**

#### OBSERVATIONS.

The attributes thus summarily exhibited are here regarded as intermediate between the first series, which belong to God regarded as Alone or without the creature, and a third order, to which we shall presently proceed. A few remarks will be appropriate at this point upon their relation to both.

**Related  
to the  
Creature.**

**Omni-  
Attributes.**

1. They must be understood to bring the absolute perfections of the Eternal Being into relation with the universe, and, in fact, to derive their character and name from that relation. Three illustrate this by the composition of the terms that define them: they are the OMNI-attributes, and imply the existence of all things to which they refer. The omniscience and omnipresence of the Deity especially have no meaning on any other supposition. But we must be careful not to assume that every absolute attribute has its creaturely form. The Divine all-sufficiency becomes omnipotence in the universe; but the infinity and eternity of God have no attributes of finite and temporal to correspond with them. On the other hand, when we speak of the lovingkindness and wisdom of the Creator, we cannot point to any absolute per-

fection on which these are founded, unless indeed we base them upon the perfection of the Divine Being generally.

2. Those attributes make prominent the personality of the Supreme: not indeed that the personality of God is in any sense originated by His relation to creatures whom He calls into a quasi-independent existence. There is no sound philosophical reason why the Eternal Spirit, contemplated before and apart from the creaturely universe, should not be a Person. With such a Being, however, we never have had, and never can have, to do in the nature of things. But every one of the attributes which we ascribe to the Creator, Director, and End of the universe belongs to a Person of Whose personality we may think as we think of our own limited and imperfect selves: saving, of course, the difference between a finite and an infinite subject.

Person-  
ality.

3. It may seem arbitrary to separate this order of Divine attributes from a third having relation to moral beings. The distinction is not perhaps so clear as that between the former orders: still it serves an important purpose. With those which we have just considered the enumeration would cease were there no law of probationary trial, and no fall among the facts of the universe. Had evil not entered into the creation here the display of the Divine attributes would have closed. Wisdom and goodness would have provided for the eternal blessedness of all the intelligent worshippers of God. But the moral government of the Lord of all gives a new aspect, and in some respects a new name, with an application most affectingly enlarged, to these attributes. Our study must now be conducted in the light of redemption.

Relation  
to Moral  
Attri-  
butes.

#### ATTRIBUTES RELATED TO MORAL GOVERNMENT.

Moral At-  
tributes.

There are some attributes, hitherto unmentioned, which belong to the Divine Being as He is the Moral Governor of intelligent creatures. These are revealed especially in connection with the economy of redemption, and derive their names and characteristics mainly from that connection: though they are displayed in the relations of God to His probationary creatures universally, they must



be viewed by us especially in the light of the mediation of Christ, and in their aspect towards mankind. All the perfections of which we speak may be said to hang upon two, Holiness and Love, the mutual relations, harmony and unity of which are bound up with the clear apprehension of the mystery of the Gospel. These supreme central attributes stand at the head, respectively, of many others which spring from them, or may be regarded as pertaining to the same family. Holiness is the name which defines the essential perfection of God as opposed to all that is not in harmony with it, and therefore counotes the actuality or the possibility of sin. Its first representative in the moral government of God is Justice, which, as Righteousness, enters distinctively into the redeeming economy of that government and gives it one of its names. This is itself represented and supported by the attributes of Truth and Fidelity. The essential Love of God, by virtue of which He communicates Himself to His creature, capable of blessedness in union with Him, is most perfectly displayed in the revelation of Jesus. It is represented by Grace, as the favour which rests upon the undeserving; and this in the varieties of its display gives many attributes to the Triune God of redemption, such as Compassion, Longsuffering, and Mercy.

**Now First  
a Moral  
Region**

#### THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

In the two former series of perfections we have had no reason to consider their relation to moral goodness: whatever has been introduced as bearing that aspect has entered only by anticipation. But now we are altogether in a moral region: every attribute has reference to the assertion and maintenance of ethical goodness. We find that the Supreme assumes the glory of all moral excellence; that He ascribes to Himself the absolute perfection of every quality that He requires in us. We find, moreover, that

the Lord of all appears before us in His word as often in His moral attributes, perhaps oftener, than in His absolute perfections. Are we to regard all this as unreality, and suppose that the God of our life is giving us an imaginary picture of Himself? We know that He sometimes speaks as if He had our bodily organisation; and sometimes as if He were the subject of passions and affections of which we know Him to be incapable. May it be that the entire moral presentation of the Deity from beginning to end bears the same anthropopathic character? Does some unknown Being educate mankind according to certain principles which He has made binding; and, in order to carry on the process, teach by example as well as by precept? by an example, however, altogether fictitious? This question has been discussed already in the notion of God possible to man; but a few observations may be made here on its relation to this class of attributes.

1. Every objection to the ascription to God of a moral character rests upon that false and unreal idea of the Absolute which saps the foundations of all theology. Carried out to its legitimate conclusion this would rob the Deity of every attribute, and reduce or elevate Him or It to an abstraction incapable of definition: the very term definition, or distinguishing from what it is not, being treason to the majesty of the unconditioned Entity. But, however inexorable may seem the logic that establishes such a notion of the Divine, it vanishes at the touch of common sense: at any rate, before the common sense of the man who listens to conscience within his heart, and has the Bible in his hand, and believes in the incarnation of the Son of God. With Atheists, Antitheists, and Pantheists we have not here to do: to them all and alike the attributes of God are nonentity. But it is necessary to warn believers in revelation against the mischief of refining away the reality in God Himself of those eternal qualities of right which His nature and His will unite to make binding on every creature. If God is manifest in the flesh, then He brought with Him those principles of holiness which are the glory of His human manifestation: He did not create the eternal principles that underlie morality, nor learn the first elements of morals from His creature.

2. It may be argued that all morals suppose a free submission to an external authority or law, with the possibility of doing

The  
Absolute  
and  
Morality.

God not  
Respon-  
sible.

wrong. This is perfectly true of the ethical relations of probationary creatures. It is not true in the abstract: it is not true of God. The Supreme Governor of the universe is a moral being, but He is not responsible to any behind Himself. He is the foundation of all law, Himself its eternal embodiment. Nor can it be established that morality implies the possibility of evil. We are accustomed to such a thought, being ourselves what we are; but a little consideration will show that perfect liberty and perfect necessity may be and are one in the moral character of God. Necessity has two meanings: it may be compulsion from without; and it may be compulsion from within, which is hardly to be distinguished from the absolute certainty of an immutable principle. This is the highest necessity of the highest liberty in God. This also was the character of the moral development of the Son of God incarnate, Who descended to the region of our human morals with the spontaneous obedience of a will that was incapable of sin: sinless, as born in the flesh by miraculous generation; impeccable, because He was the Son of God.

Passions  
and  
Emotions  
in God.

3. But the fundamental and more obvious difficulty here is to understand how the Immutable God can be capable of impressions from without, which the idea of passions and emotions requires. Part of this difficulty is obviated by remembering that after all much of the Biblical language on this subject is anthropopathic, an accommodation to human infirmity. Thus the unchangeable God represents Himself as hoping and fearing, uttering and suspending His wrath, vacillating in suspense, and repenting of His purposes. It is not difficult to understand all this. *Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem!* is the expression of a holy wrath that suspends its execution. *Wilt thou not be made clean?* is the offer of mercy in consistency with that holy wrath, the intervention of a Redeemer being supposed. *When shall it once be?* is the language of a seeming suspense between hope and fear. The Psalmist says: *Who is a Rock save our God? As for God His way is perfect.* He is unchangeable in His perfection. But he also says: *With the merciful Thou wilt shew Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt shew Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt shew Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself froward.* As it were all things to all men; but we must not misunderstand the word

Jer. xiii.  
27.

Ps. xviii.  
81, 30,  
25, 26.

*show Thyself.* As to the so frequent repentance of God, Samuel the prophet gives us a typical example. He also says: *The Strength, or the Rock, of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man that He should repent.* But he afterwards, using the same words, says: *And the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.* But we must be careful not to carry this explanation too far. There is a real, and not merely a conventional, difference between the attributes of the absolute Godhead and the attributes created, or the manifestation of which is created, by the creation itself and with it. We cannot understand this; nor can we understand the Incarnation. We cannot fathom the mystery that the *God of eternity*, *אל עליון*, inhabits time also, and waits on its processes as the *God of patience*; nor can we fathom the mystery that the impassible God should mourn and rejoice, and be angry. It is a relief to us to see that in His Son incarnate God does tabernacle with us, and rejoice with us who rejoice, and weep with us who weep. The Old-Testament anthropopathy may be an anticipation of the New-Testament reality. Or—and perhaps it is better to say this—the New-Testament exhibition of a God clothed with human morality, and of like sinless passions with ourselves, may be only the manifestation unto perfection of a mystery that was before unmanifested.

1 Sam. xv  
29, 36.

Gen. xxi.  
33.  
Rom. xv.  
5.

#### HOLINESS AND LOVE THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

Holiness  
and Love

The manifestation of God in His moral government has in every age made prominent two classes of attributes which have for their root and principle respectively the holiness and the love of the Supreme: His holiness, which separates Him from us, and His love, which nevertheless communicates itself to the sinner. The Nevertheless here points to the most essential and profound mystery of the Atonement.

1. Throughout the Old Testament we mark the ascendancy of these two perfections in their mysterious, and as yet not fully explained, union and harmony. The beginning of revelation displays the righteous anger of God against sin, and His gracious dealings with the sinner; but it was not until the Jehovah of the covenant-people laid the foundations of the Theocracy, the formal

Old Testa-  
ment.

- preparative for the full redeeming economy, that the two leading attributes were placed in their correlative position. The first reference to the Divine holiness is in connection with the giving of the Law. He is never the Holy One in Genesis; but at the very commencement of His redeeming relation to the typical people, He is *glorious in holiness*. But the holiness of the *jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, is blended with the love of the same God *showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments*. When Jehovah renewed His covenant, after the first violation of it, the two leading attributes are again made prominent in His revelation of His name and glory. But the love now comes first. *The LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.*
- Ex. xx. 11.  
Ex. xx. 5, 6. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. LORD *passed by before him, and proclaimed, the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.*
- Ex. xxxiv. 14. What this meant was then further explained: *Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is JEALOUS, is a jealous God.* Throughout the remainder of the Old-Testament economy the two great families of attributes belong respectively to Him of
- Josh. xxiv. 19. Whom Joshua said *He is an holy God; He is a jealous God*, and, to the Lord God, *merciful and gracious*. Sometimes the families of attributes are kept apart; sometimes they are united, and their union, through the propitiation typified in the Temple, distinguishes
- Ps. ciii. 1. the Psalms and the prophets who anticipate the Gospel. *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His HOLY NAME:*
- Ps. ciii. 8. this leads the way in the Psalm; but mercy takes up the strain and continues it to the end. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* This may represent the psalmists: let Hosea stand for the prophets. *Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee.* It will be observed that the holiness and the mercy are so blended in these passages, and others like them, that it might seem as if they crossed hands: the holiness forgiving the sin and not the mercy. This has misled many theologians who forget that the union of the two attributes, and not their confusion, is the glory of redemp-

tion. Apart from this, however, it is plain that throughout the Old Testament the holiness and the mercy of God are supreme: on these two hang all the redeeming attributes.

2. Assuredly it is the same in the New Testament. To illustrate this would anticipate the whole doctrine of the Atonement. Suffice that our Lord and His Apostles gave the same pre-eminence to the two attributes. In St. John's Gospel the Saviour begins by *God so loved the world* and ends with *Holy Father!* St. Paul makes *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, the God of holiness, and the free offer of His *grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, the keynotes of the whole Evangelical system. St. John, in his First Epistle, which is the last revelation of the Bible, singles out the two Divine perfections, Holiness and Love, for the definition of what may be called the moral nature of God. These two are the only terms which unite in one the attributes and the essence of God. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that GOD IS LIGHT, and in Him is no darkness at all.* The revelation of the Word incarnate is the supreme Holiness of God: He is Himself the glory of all goodness, and the negation of all that is not good. A second revelation of the Word is this: GOD IS LOVE. Never before in all the Scriptures had this attribute been identified with the very being of God: prophets and apostles, and the Son Himself, had approached this truth, but had not spoken it; but St. John here gives the bold and blessed interpretation of their meaning. These two perfections we may then consider in the true order which the Apostle indicates, and show their harmony in redemption.

New Testament.

John iii  
16  
John xvii.  
11.  
Rom. ii. 5.  
Rom. iii.  
24.  
Attributes  
in Re-  
demption.  
1 John i.  
5.

1 John  
iv. 8

#### THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

Holiness

That absolute perfection which belongs to God in His eternal essence is, in His moral relations with creatures in whom sin is possible or present, who are to be kept from sin or saved from it, Holiness: His nature is the sum and the standard of all goodness; and it is eternally opposed to all that is not good in the creature. Thus the term unites the positive and negative ideas: always with latent or

avowed reference to what is or may be contrary to the Divine will.

Separation from  
Creaturely  
Evil.

1. That God is holy expresses the perfection of moral excellence as existing in Him alone, the emphasis lying on the alone, whence it follows that every approach to Him must be marked by reverence and awe.

Ex. xv.  
11.

(1.) The first time the attribute is given to Him this idea appears: *Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?* And

Rev. xv.  
4.

also the last time: *Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy!* Through a multitude of intermediate passages there runs the invariable meaning that God by His holiness is marked off from every human being: alone in His moral perfection, in the presence of which all faces gather blackness and all creatures are convicted of impurity. This meaning of the word as referred to God is too often forgotten: holiness is regarded as synonymous with perfection generally, without the concomitant of separation from evil; or it is by some, in the interest of a special theology, made to mean the opposite of what it really means, the communicative goodness of the Deity.

Ground  
of Adora-  
tion.

(2.) Hence, that God is קָדוֹשׁ, resplendent in the glory of unshared holiness, and ἅγιος, fearful in His sanctity, is the special ground of the peculiar adoration of the creature, especially of the sinful creature. *Holy and reverend is His name!* His name in the worship of His people is the *Holy One of Israel*. It is this attribute which surrounds with awful glory God in His temple, whether the heavens or the temple of earth. Righteousness attends Him in His judicial court; but holiness belongeth to His house, which is therefore His sanctuary, the Holy place; where He takes refuge from all unholiness, while He provides the expiatory means by virtue of which the unholy may approach Him. It is emphatically seen in the trisagion of Isaiah's mystical temple; in the dread which seized the heart of the worshipper; and in the purifying of his lips that he might join in the worship of the angels. This leads us to notice that it is the attribute of the Triune as an object of worship: *Holy, holy, holy*.

Ps. cxi. 9.  
Ps. lxxi.  
22.

Isa. vi. 3.

*is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory!* to which the New-Testament echo is: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come!* Hence it is obvious to observe how strong confirmation this gives to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: this is the only thrice-uttered perfection. Neither this nor any other perfection is reserved from the second and third Persons: holiness, however, is in a peculiar and pre-eminent sense ascribed to them in common. The Son addresses the *Holy Father*; He is Himself as Incarnate the *Holy Child*; while the Spirit of God is the *Holy Ghost* pre-eminently.

John xvii.  
11.  
Acts iv.  
30.  
John xiv.  
26.  
Strictly  
Related  
to the  
Creature.

2. All this implies that this attribute is always, directly or indirectly, related to the creature; and, as such, is the standard of goodness and the expression of the Divine abhorrence of evil. It cannot be denied that it severs God from the creaturely nature, apart from its evil. But even in that case there is silent reference to the pollution of sin which has entered the universe, of which all the worshippers, whether of heaven or earth, are conscious. In the direct reference of the attribute to mankind, however, there can be no question that the holiness of God is displayed always on the dark background of sin. It is the law and obligation of all ethical good; it is the eternal repulsion of all ethical evil.

(1.) It is the nature of God that declares what is morally good; that is the only Nature of Things which we dare think of. After all that has been said as to the foundation of goodness and the reason why good is good, we are shut up to one only view. God alone is holy: not because He submits to a law binding on Him and on all; but because holiness has its eternal standard and sanction in Him. It is of no moment to ask whether the Divine nature or the Divine will is the ground of moral obligation. *Be ye holy; for I am holy!* is the only answer. As every intelligent moral agent is created in the image of God, the Divine nature is the only ground of his obligation to be holy: he knows of nothing behind the nature of his God. As he is a subject of the moral government of the Supreme, the Divine will is the ground of his obligation to be holy: he knows nothing behind the will of his God. But these two aspects are really one.

Standard  
of all  
Holiness.

1 Peter i.  
16.

(2.) Hence, as the Divine holiness is the standard of goodness, it is the eternal opposite and the eternal condemnation of sin.

Condem-  
nation of  
all Sin.



- Hab. i. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.* This attribute cannot be separated from the idea of its  
 1 Sam. vi. 20. inviolableness and assertion of its own rights. *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* The conscience, which in the guilty is faithful in its response to the Divine holiness, cries in  
 Isa. vi. 5. every sinner: *Woe is me, for I am undone!* The whole tenor of Scripture—not less the New Testament than the Old—is faithful to the conception of this attribute, which makes it not merely retire before unholiness, but also turn against it with abiding displeasure. It not only admits no fellowship with evil, but is eternally repelling, rejecting, and condemning it. *Our God is a consuming fire.* As the thought of the sin from which it is for ever defended is always latent in the ascription of holiness to God, so also is the thought of His abiding wrath against it.

Holiness  
 Communi-  
 cative.

3. We should not, however, do justice to this attribute were we not to point out that it is revealed towards men only through an economy of grace which renders it possible that sinners, trembling before the Holy God, may become *partakers of His holiness.* Throughout the entire Scripture there runs one perpetual strain: *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* The ancient people heard it in this form: *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep My statutes and do them: I am the Lord Which sanctify you.* And it was promised to them: *Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.* The awful holiness of Jehovah was revealed, and for ever kept prominent by every token and symbol; and yet a sinful people might be sanctified from the world and from sin to a peculiar fellowship with the Holy One. The God whose glory filled the Temple, and revealed only the unholiness of all who approached Him, nevertheless bade the unholy draw near to be sanctified. Was it then by the rays of His holiness shining upon and around them? Most assuredly not. The mystery of this paradox, that the attribute which separated God from sinners is nevertheless the bond of union between sinners and Himself, is solved only by the system of sacrificial expiation typifying the great Atonement, which through a satisfaction offered to the Divine righteousness opened the fellowship of love between God and man. But this leads to the next attribute, or another exhibition of holiness.
- Heb. xii. 10.  
 1 Peter i. 16.  
 Lev. xx. 7, 8.  
 Ex. xix. 6.

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OR JUSTICE OF GOD.

Right-  
eousness.

The Justice or Righteousness of God is the Divine holiness applied in moral government and the domain of law. As an attribute of God it is united with His holiness as being essential in His nature; it is legislative or rectoral, as He is the righteous Governor of all His creatures; and it is administrative or judicial, as He is the just Dispenser of rewards and punishments. Under these three heads may be distributed all that the Scripture teaches us on this most important subject.

I. The *Justitia Interna*, or essential righteousness of the God of holiness, need not be dwelt upon at great length.

Essential  
Righte-  
ousness.  
Internal.

1. It is His holiness regarded as subject to test; also as exhibited in His dealings with man; moreover, and lastly, it is rather the positive expression of what in holiness is negative separation from evil. All is said in that first ascription to Jehovah in the Song of Moses. *I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.* The last words are *יְהוָה יָשָׁר דָּרֹא*, in the Septuagint *δικαιος καὶ ὁσιος*, and in the Vulgate, *justus et rectus*. The Hebrew words mean nearly the same thing: straightness and rightness, when measured by the standard of perfection. Very frequently the Holy One condescends to let men apply the standard, and then the attribute of righteousness is always vindicated. After every test it is faultless, and far above human censure or rivalry: *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains: as much above man's as heaven is above earth.*

Deut.  
xxxii. 3, 4.Ps. xxxvi.  
6.

2. But it is, like the holiness of God, to be imparted to man. When we come down to the psalms and prophets, we find the righteousness of God almost taking the place of His holiness, as the attribute for the revelation of which the ages wait. When we so often read, *I bring near My righteousness*; or *My righteousness is near*; or *My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed*, we must understand more than that God's faithfulness to His covenant would be approved in the latter day. The coming of the Lord our Righteousness would bring in the everlasting

Communi-  
cated.Isa. xlv.  
13.  
Isa. li. 5.  
Isa. lvi. 1.  
Jer. xxiii.  
6.  
Dan ix.  
24.

*righteousness* of His saints made righteous through Him in the possession of *the righteousness of God*, the imputation and impartation of a righteous character in God's own way. Hence, as the great Atonement was to be a glorious manifestation of the Divine holiness in the expiation of sin, so also it would be a glorious manifestation of God's righteousness given in free mercy to those who were ungodly, and a *perverse and crooked generation*.

Deut.  
xxxii. 5.  
Rectoral  
Right-  
ousness.

II. The Legislative or Rectoral Righteousness of God is the attribute that stamps perfectness on all the laws by which He carries on the government of the universe, whether in other worlds or in this; and whether His laws are revealed in the constitution of man's heart, or in the written revelation of His will. What the ancient people rejoiced to remember, in their distresses, the whole world may rejoice in: *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us*. The entire rectoral administration of man's affairs has been conducted with reference to the great salvation gradually revealed; and this must be remembered in every estimate of the moral administration of

Isa. xxxiii.  
22.

Jehovah. We are required to believe that His law is *perfect*: perfect as the expression of the Divine holiness; perfect therefore as the standard of right; perfect in its universal adaptation; perfect in its requirements; perfect in its sanctions. All this is summed into one sentence by St. Paul: *The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*. Returning back, however, to the attribute of the Lawgiver, we are bound to believe that all ordinances are righteous: first, with regard to the constitution and nature of His subjects; and, secondly, as answering strictly to His own Divine aim, whether understood or not. To believe these two things is by anticipation to answer every objection.

Rom. vii.  
12.

Ps. cxix.  
142.

*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth*. Because He is righteous, His law is true both to Himself and to the nature of His creatures.

Right as  
to the  
Creature.

1. It is necessary to believe that under a righteous Lawgiver no living creature is overburdened with obligation: in other words, whether we discern it or not, God is a righteous Lawgiver in every department where He reveals His law. Upon every rational spirit He creates He imprints the law of obedience and love perfect and supreme; and that law is in strict harmony with

creaturely nature: it is the Creator's right and it is right to the creature. But He is pleased as the Moral Governor of the universe to ordain for each a term of probation: in His righteousness He makes dependence upon His Spirit the law of continued obedience and happiness; and the penalty of separation from His will, or sin, is separation from His presence. And, apart from the commentary upon this which history gives, every creature must say Amen: *even so, Lord God almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.* Nothing is imposed upon creaturely duty, or demanded of the creaturely will, that is beyond the creature's capacity and obligation.

Rev. xv.  
7

2. The righteousness of Divine laws implies also that they are conformed to His aim and purpose, and in this sense right. It is well to believe that they are equal and just in their relation to the creaturely nature. But that is not all. They must be measured by another standard: they are right in their perfect adaptation to the Divine plans. Here comes in our apology for the Divine Lawgiver: His own supreme Theodicy, or vindication of Himself. It is not given to us to understand the mysteries of the hidden rectoral administration of God. We must believe now that it is righteous; as we shall certainly one day know that it is. *Clouds and darkness are round about Him:* unbelief forms out of these clouds, and writes upon this darkness, innumerable matters of questioning. But *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne:* behind, all is clear, steadfast, and perfect right. This must terminate human strife with the Divine Lawgiver. This must settle all our disputes about the difference between legislation for angels and legislation for man; the law of Paradise with its sanctions; the gradual and slow revelation of the Divine will to the world; the eternal enactments of Sinai and the special and limited enactment for the Theocracy, with its occasional *statutes that were not good*, not good, that is, for permanent application. Ten thousand difficulties are swept away, rather are obviated, if we remember that the righteousness of God's moral government is to be measured, not only by the creature's nature,—it will always bear to be thus measured,—but by the design and final end of the economy of His will.

Right by  
a Divine  
Standard

Ps. xcvii.  
2

Ezekiel  
xx. 25.

III. The judicial administration of His own laws demands this

Judicial

Right-  
ousness.

attribute of righteousness in the equal bestowment of reward and punishment. This is called, in human affairs, Distributive Justice: Remunerative, on the one hand, and Punitive on the other.

Heb. xii.  
23.  
The  
Judge.

1. The Administration of *God the Judge of all* takes up the sanctions of His law as imposed upon moral beings in probation, and cannot be separated from its relation to sin. It indeed gives the Supreme the new office of JUDGE, even as His love gives Him the new name of Saviour. It is Judicial righteousness as it assures us of the eternal rectitude of the administration: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* This appeal of Abraham, in the beginning of history, expresses as a question the faith of all who believe in God to the end of time, and will be confirmed for ever at the close of history. Reverence accepts this necessary truth and commits to it with confidence the destinies of all that exist. But the idea of God's judicial righteousness must be analysed into some of its applications.

Gen xviii.  
25.

Person-  
ality.

2. This is the attribute of a Personal Judge; and all that His personality demands must be remembered. Those who deny that the Absolute Being can think, and feel, and will, and judge, renounce the God of the Bible. Even if they take refuge in the thought that He hath committed all judgment to the Son, the very committal to the Son is a personal act. Or if they fall back upon the notion that justice in the Judge means only the law according to which sin is made its own punishment and goodness its own reward they gain nothing by this. It is a personal Judge Who ordains this connection and sees that it is not interrupted. There is but a step between this idea and that which makes God and the universe, physical and ethical, subject to the eternal law of the fitness of things. This reduces the Supreme to the position of an administrator of a law higher than Himself, after the manner of a human judge. But the very expression "Nature or Fitness of Things," betrays its own inconsistency. Admitted difficulties swell into contradictory absurdities and even blasphemies, if we forget that the Administrator of His own laws is a Judge. He does not merely watch the current that sets in for righteousness, and guide it; nor watch the current that sets in for evil, and restrain it. He is a personal Divider between good and evil: in the perfection of that principle which human nature acknowledges

in itself and never can be robbed of, that every good and every evil deserves its reward or punishment, and that justice requires every man to have his own.

3. God is the righteous Judge in His constant administration in the present world. This introduces us at once to the question: How can a personal Ruler of strict righteousness administer His holy laws and yet permit sinners to live? The answer is given by the blessed truth to which all the attributes converge, that the mediation and sacrifice of Christ secures His righteousness in the administration of mercy. He is just in the punishment of all sin; His incarnate Son was *made sin for us*; and the infinite worthiness of the sacrificial obedience unto death of *Jesus Christ the Righteous* is the *propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, to the end of time. He is just in the pardon of sin; for the atonement of Christ belongs to everyone who makes it his by faith: *That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; Faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Moreover, He is just during the present dispensation in mingling the punishment of sin with that corrective and disciplinary chastisement of offenders which still labours for their reformation, and so deters them from ruin. The intercession of the Most Holy Son of God, so precious to His Father, has its unbounded rights; and justice to them is the secret of that mingled mercy and judgment which makes up the Divine government of the present world. But the absolute righteousness of the Judge has its rights also; and those who resist and reject the Atonement perish. But these are topics which belong to a later stage.

4. The judicial righteousness of God waits for its final manifestation until the great day, the solemn characteristic of which will be its vindication of the absolute justice of the Supreme in retribution of reward and punishment. The subject of the Future Judgment is far in advance. But we may here consider its relation to this attribute of the Judge.

(1.) Generally, the justice of God will then, as it must now, be maintained in its awful consistency with itself. We have all along regarded it as looking with equal eye on the good and on the evil; assigning to each its right. So will it be on the great

Under an  
Economy  
of Grace.

2 Cor. v.  
21.

1 John i.  
2.

Rom. iii.  
26.

1 John i.  
9.

Final  
Display

Just Dis-  
tribution.

day. The anomalies of the present dispensation will be corrected, and shown to have been only the apparent confusion which prepared for perfect harmony. Justice will be clear when it judges finally; and from its decision there will be no appeal. As an attribute of God, it will assert its reality and integrity. Two mistakes are often made on this subject. One is, to regard justice as dealing only with the sin of man. Now, it is true that one branch of the whole family of terms belonging to this attribute has been almost entirely appropriated to punishment and doom. But God is the just Judge in His rewards as well as in His displeasure. Another is, on the contrary, to merge justice in benevolence: as if the righteous displeasure of God against sin, restrained by His mercy, was limited to the reformation of the offender, the fatherly correction of his fault, the prevention of sin in others, and so forth. Up to a certain stage it is true that mercy and judgment work together so unitedly, so inseparably—both rejoicing while the gentler attribute has the richer joy—that it might appear as if God had forgotten to be angry with sin. Until the blow finally falls in this world, and not always even then, we know not if the punishment has not been only correction. But at the great day there will be no longer doubt.

**Matt. xxii**  
13, 14

*Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.* The unclothed sinner is not cast out for reformation here. We avoid both errors when we hold fast distributive righteousness. *There is no respect of persons with God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds.*

**Rom. ii.**  
6, 11.

**Righteous  
Retribu-  
tion.**

(2.) There is a profound and awful reality in the vindicatory, retributive justice of God. The specific nature of final punishment we have not now to do with: only with its righteous character. In that attribute let all who are oppressed by the dread of the prospect rejoice: let them feel its strong consolation. Be the doctrine what it may, and the language in which it is announced be clothed with whatsoever terror, still it remains that all the multitudes of the creatures whom God shall judge will fall into Righteous Hands. But theological speculation finds it hard to repose in this. It strives to take from the notion of justice what is of its essence; and would make it only goodness tempered by

wisdom. "In justitia punitiva bonitas cum sapientia administratur; notio justitiæ resolvitur in notionem sapientiæ et bonitatis." This idea has played a great part in modern theology, though its first clear expression was Origen's: "Ex quibus constat, anum eundemque esse justum et bonum legis et evangeliorum Deum, et benefacere cum justitia et cum bonitate punire." Again let it be said that prevention of sin and correction or amendment of the sinner are not of the essence of justice: this idea is imported into it by the definition. It required the awful sacrifice of the Son of God to unite justice and mercy; but no new definition of either is introduced by the Atonement. Within the range of the cross the definition may be accepted on certain terms. But the cross is not within the view of either God or man for ever. Those who project its benefit into the intermediate world have no Scriptural ground for their charity. But the whole strain of Scripture is against those who deny that there is, in the strictest sense of the term, a *Justitia Retributiva et Rependens* at the day of final and eternal judgment.

(3.) The rewards of a righteous judgment are always dispensed to those who merit them. But it is obvious that here we are on ground which must be carefully ventured on. The righteousness of the Judge in acknowledging all that is good in man is as abundantly asserted as His righteousness in the awards of punishment. But whatever of praiseworthy there can be found in human nature is of God, whether as the effect of His preventing grace or the fruit of His renewing Spirit; while the evil within him is his own. There can be no mention of merit in any case, save as the word is used in the Divine condescension. He Who only crowns the work of His own hands in glorifying the sanctified believer, nevertheless speaks of his own works of faith as matter of reward. *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.* This term *ἀδικος* is used once more concerning God the Judge: *Is God unrighteous Who taketh vengeance (I speak as a man)? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?* In both cases the impossibility of any injustice in God, whether as *ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν*, or as being capable *ἐπιλατῆσθαι τοῦ ἔργου ἡμῶν*, is left to the natural inference of every reason. He cannot, in the nature of things, that is in harmony with His

Righteous-  
ness in  
Rewards

Heb. vi.  
10.

Rom. iii  
5, 6.



own nature, be unjust in either respect. The rewards of the distributive righteousness of God are reckoned not of debt but *of grace*; and the whole tenor of Scripture proclaims that the allotments of the last day will be measured out according to the strictest rule of right: ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ. St. Paul calls the last day the revelation of the *righteous judgment of God*, δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ Θεοῦ, the only instance of this impressive word. He teaches here as elsewhere that, as the punishment of evil-doers will be the fruit of their own doings, and also the direct infliction of judgment, so likewise the reward of the blessed will be the righteous decision of judgment, as well as the harvest of their own sowing.

## Truth.

## THE TRUTH OR FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

These attributes—which are really one under two aspects—are, as it were, the supporters and guarantees of the Divine Justice. It may be affirmed that they are never referred to save in connection with that supreme economy which reveals the Righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

In His  
Revela-  
tions.

1. Truth as a Divine perfection represents the absolute correspondence of all His revelations with the reality; and it may be referred to His representations of His own nature, to His revelation of the great system of grace under which He governs the world, and to His word of revelation generally whether in whole or in part.

1 John v.  
20.  
John x vii.  
3.

(1.) *God is the true God, and the only true God.* It is observable that in both these passages, which are unique, the revelation of God is connected with the Son. He is the only veritable God, in opposition to every fictitious being; and He is the God of veracity in thus revealing Himself. We have here a sublime petitio principii: our God is the only real God, because He Who is true declares it. But the attribute is not here objective: it is rather the subjective Divine veracity in all His revelations of Himself. As to His nature, His Triune essence, His attributes, our relations to Him and His to us, and all that concerns the essentials of our theology, we are dependent on the truth of the Creator, Who hath formed us in His image and implanted those instincts and that consciousness of

Him which cannot deceive us. Our faith in universal religion is bound up with our faith in the veracity of God Who speaks the truth to us concerning Himself and our own relations to Him.

(2.) The truth of God is pledged to the stability and eternity of the redeeming economy as a whole. This is His absolute immutability translated into the sphere of His saving revelations. One great purpose for the good of mankind is announced from generation to generation; and to that the Eternal declares Himself true, uttering every variety of appeal to His own steadfastness from age to age. In early times the universal purpose seemed limited to one people; and to them He represents His truth. *He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.* As the great system is further disclosed in the psalms and prophets, the coming salvation is pledged with ever-increasing strength: *The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.* When it is consummated, it is by Him who is THE TRUTH; and it is confirmed by the oath of an immutable counsel in which *it was impossible for God to lie.* Hence it may be said that the attribute of truth is assigned to God mainly as the God of the one eternal covenant in Christ.

(3.) But it is also referred to His spoken and written revelations generally, which are declared to contain only the truth of God. Speaking to His Father, He Who is the Truth said *Thy word is truth.* There is no doubt that the Old Testament, which was then the Bible, was regarded by all who read it as containing the infallible sayings of the undeceiving God of truth. The truth of Scripture we are not now, however, pleading: only for the attribute in the Supreme that insures the absolute correspondence of every word spoken by Him with the essential reality of things.

2. The Faithfulness of God has a more limited application than His truth. It is the attribute that pledges to man in infinite condescension—for it is the most anthropopathic of all the attributes—the fulfilment of every specific promise based upon the economy of His righteousness. Appeals to His own fidelity on the part of Jehovah, and responses to the appeal on the part of man, crowd the Scriptures. It may suffice here to refer to three most interesting illustrations of it in the economy of grace. Sinners

Faithful-  
ness to  
Redem-  
ption.

Deut.  
xxxii. 4.

Ps. c. 5.

John xiv.  
6.  
Heb. vi.  
18.

In the  
Word.

John xvii.  
17.

Faithful-  
ness  
Proper.

- 1 John i. 9. repenting of their sin, and confessing it, are assured that *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*. Believers oppressed by the weariness of the way, and their own instability, are reminded that *The Lord is faithful, Who shall stablish you, and guard you from the evil one*. We are encouraged to aspire to perfect holiness of body and soul and spirit, are assured that *faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it*. These passages carry the Divine fidelity into the entire process of personal salvation from beginning to end. It is remarkable that this attribute is never expressly connected with the fulfilment of the Divine threatenings, though equally applicable to them. Hence, though we have located it in the family of Righteousness or justice, it forms the transition to the other and more gracious family of Love.
- 2 Thess. iii. 3.  
1 Thess. v. 24.

## Love.

## THE LOVE OF GOD.

Like His holiness, the love of God has its most direct and express relation to the creature, and especially to the intelligences under the moral government of God. But love has in this the pre-eminence, that it has an eternal and essential seat in the Triune Essence.

- In the Divine Essence.  
1 John iv. 16.
1. Hence we read that GOD IS LOVE: in the secret of the Divine Self-sufficiency and Blessedness we have already seen the mysterious intercommunion of Three Persons whose mutual love gives God one of His Names and defines His nature. If in the created universe it for ever seeks to impart itself to all who are capable of receiving it, and delights both in giving and receiving, that is because in the ever-blessed Trinity love is, as in all who reflect the Divine image, the *bond of perfectness*. We may, we must, transfer our finite feeling to the Infinite, and believe, not that the Triune God was, but that He is, existing in an eternal sphere of love, into the fellowship of which the finite and creaturely universe is received. *Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*: if these words are connected with those which immediately precede, *and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me*; and these again with the assurance, *as the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you*; and these once more with the command, *That ye love one another*,
- Col. iii. 14.  
John xvii. 23, 24.  
John xv. 9.  
John xiii. 34.

as I have loved you, it will appear how perfect is the identity in kind between finite and infinite love, between the reflection among us and the reality in the essential Trinity, and how profound is the meaning of those words, *Love is of God*: ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν, a form of expression used of no other grace. The Son is ever—not was, ὁ ὢν—in the bosom of the Father: in the unity of the Holy Ghost one Spirit with the Father even as *he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit* with Him. Thus we may boldly repeat that more glorious things are spoken of the Divine perfection of Love than of any other. It is not said that God is holiness: for, in His eternal Triune Essence, there is no room, there is no reason, for the attribute that sets up the standard of good and eternally repels evil. As soon as we think of holiness we think of the creature on the way from evil to good, or on the way from perfection to still higher perfection. But GOD IS LOVE; and this attribute, which is both nature and attribute, forms the link between the absolute Godhead and the manifestations of God to His intelligent creatures. The Divine holiness springs, as it were, out of His perfection to meet the creature; and is in a most important sense created with it. But love is of God, and is in the Divine relation to the universe only a hidden mystery revealed.

2. The love of God rested upon the world also from its foundation: upon every intelligent creature as the love that communicates itself and takes complacency in its object. But the book of revelation, which is the record of the Divine dealings with a redeemed race,—redeemed in the very act of its fall,—reserves the attribute for redemption. It does not indeed speak of it familiarly, scarcely speaks of it at all, until its last expression in Christ is ready. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.* This sentiment or feeling in God, originating and directing the economy of redemption, was not fully revealed until the Lord Himself revealed it. And, when revealed, it is reserved for one service: to preside over the Cross and the Recovery of mankind. No record or register of the Divine perfections, related to the created universe as such, contains that of love. His goodness and His loving-kindness are often alluded to as the nearest approach to the attribute that is never turned towards any but the objects of redemption.

1 John iv  
7.

John i. 18

1 Cor. vi.  
17.

1 John iv.  
8, 16.

Reserved  
for Re-  
demption.

1 John iv  
10.

- ing love. But at length the set time came for the new revelation, or at least the fuller revelation, of the attribute that governs all the rest: that which, to adopt St. James's word, is the νόμος βασιλικός, the *royal law* in God as in man. But love when it is revealed takes many names, or rather is the mother of a new and blessed family of attributes.
- Jas. ii. 8.** *Common to God and Man.* 3. But, whatever other manifestations love may take, or whatever other name it may bear, it is the moral attribute in God which is His most blessed gift to the individual soul: in the administration of the Holy Ghost it is the bond between God and the redeemed, as it were their common ethical principle. We are said to be made *partakers of the Divine nature* generally, and with special reference to the two great moral attributes of holiness and love. We are *partakers of His holiness* as being purified from sin and sanctified to His service. But a stronger word is used about our participation of His love. St. John points our thought to the invisible essence of God, *No man hath seen God at any time*, but only that he may tell us in what sense we become one with the Invisible: *If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is fulfilled in us*. Soon afterwards he utters the profoundest word the Bible contains as to the relations and privilege of the saints: *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. It may be added here in conclusion that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is the real bond of fellowship between God and the believer: *He that is joined unto the Lord is One Spirit*. Our partaking of the Divine holiness is the *sanctification of the Spirit*; and our partaking of the Divine love is explained to be *because He hath given us of His Spirit*.
- 1 John iv. 12.**
- 1 John iv. 16.**
- 1 Cor. vi. 17.**
- 1 Peter i. 2.**
- 1 John iv. 13.**

## Grace.

## GRACE AND ITS RELATED ATTRIBUTES.

What the righteousness is to the holiness of God, that His *grace* is to His love: the firstborn of its strength and its minister in the things pertaining to salvation. Love retains its distinction to define both the nature and the attribute. The supreme principle or feeling, governing the Divine dealings with sinners, is in the Christian dispensation *grace*.

Born of the Gospel.  
Ps lxxxvi. 15

1. This word is in some respects a creation of the Gospel. God was, in the Old Testament, *a God full of compassion, and gracious*,

*longsuffering and plenteous in mercy and truth*; but there is something in the Evangelical term that surpasses all these. In the New Testament this unwearied agent of Love appears as the *Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*, which is only another form of the *love of God*, and this again only another form of the *communion of the Holy Ghost*. The love of the Triune God is communicated by the Spirit through the redeeming grace of Christ. As holiness comes upon the scene of atoning administration under the aspect of justice, so love comes under the aspect of grace, which is the Divine love with an emphasis upon the ill desert and utter impotence of those who receive it. *Not that we loved God, but that He loved us*: this is the best interpreter of the grace that represents in the active work of redemption the love of God which provided the redemption itself. It may be added in conclusion, that as an attribute of God each Person of the Holy Trinity shares it. We read of *the grace of our God*, AND *the Lord Jesus Christ*, and of *the Spirit of grace*.

2. It is needless to enumerate the other attributes or modifications of grace with which God in Christ, *reconciling the world unto Himself*, is clothed in the whole of Scripture, and specially in the Gospel. They are as many as the aspects of sin and the need of sinners. Here practical theology may multiply its epithets: gathering from the abundance of the Bible, or framing them anew according to Biblical analogy or precedent. The grace that seeks the well-being of the whole race is the Divine *philanthropy* or *kindness* to humankind. That which looks upon man in his sin and misery and waits to be gracious is Compassion and Pity. The Grace that waits for the sinner's return and submission, restraining the deserved judgment upon evil, is Forbearance, or Longsuffering. That which forgives him when he comes is Mercy. It is well seen that in the *exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus* God invests Himself with every attribute that is sanctified to the service of lovingkindness generally, and that there is not much exact discrimination in their use. Finally, the grace that rejoices over the recovered and renewed spirit with delight and complacency has no name, but returns again to the source of all these perfections, the Divine and original love of our Father in heaven.

2 Cor. xiii  
14.1 John iv  
10.2 Thess. i  
12.  
Heb. x. 29.  
Other  
Names.  
2 Cor. v.  
19

Tit. iii. 4.

Eph. ii. 7.

## Harmony.

## HOLINESS AND LOVE AS COMBINED IN REDEMPTION.

These two attributes preside over the redeeming economy; their harmony in the Atonement, whether in the decree of heaven or in the ministry of Christ on earth, will hereafter appear. Mean while some prospective observations are here demanded as it respects that harmony, which is the topic of most importance. The word must be taken in its strictest meaning, and without fear of any consequences: this is a question on which the light of Scripture is so clear that we ought not to speak timorously.

In God  
Himself.

1. These attributes must need, or must have needed, what we in our human speech call reconciliation in God Himself. But we should be careful how we understand and use the term. It is necessary here to carry up our thoughts into the nature of the Triune God, Who, in relation to the world as sinful, foreordained the Incarnation as the provision or expedient both of holy justice and of merciful love. Redemption is said to have been the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus, and therefore eternal redemption: before the ages in its virtual accomplishment and after the ages in its results. The Lamb was slain *from the foundation of the world*: more than that, *before the foundation of the world*. Therefore whatever exhibition of wrath against sin and love to the sinner we now read in the cross must be only the expression of the same wrath and love in the mind of the Holy Trinity before the world was. Nothing has been added, nothing has been taken away from it, since. The whole matter or word of redemption was *settled in heaven*. The actuality of sin has not aggravated or intensified the holiness that for ever burns against evil; nor has the actuality of human misery deepened in any sense the tenderness of the Divine benevolence. If there was a reconciliation or harmonising of wrath and mercy at the cross, there was precisely the same in the heart of the God Who would create man. All that the Atonement means was transacted in the bosom of the Deity before the world was. Then it was a reality. We dare not think other wise, however hard it may be even to seem to disturb the eternal rest of the Divine nature. There is great danger to many minds of being tempted to soften this away: in fact, to render to heaven all the love of the Atonement, and to make the wrath the offspring

Rev. xiii.  
8.  
1 Pet i  
20

Ps. cxix.  
89

of earth ; to regard love as the one only attribute in eternity, and justice as an invention or accommodation of time.

2. But the fact that the Atonement was settled in heaven—the pattern in the Mount of all that was wrought out below—teaches us what is meant by harmony : it is not the reconciliation after contest, nor the agreement after stipulation, nor the accordance on certain conditions, that is meant ; but the perfect concurrence of two eternal principles of the Divine perfection,—which as to a creaturely universe are called wrath and love,—in the mission of the incarnate Son and His union with the guilty world. The purpose of the Atonement was one purpose, which did not require, as we should say, two thoughts : successive, reconciled, and finally one. Hence, in speaking of holiness and love, we must be careful not to assign priority or pre-eminence to either. If God is Love, God also is Light, as has been seen, and that Light even a *consuming fire*. If it was the love of God that sent the only-begotten Son, it was His holiness that demanded the sacrifice. Hence the co-ordination of the two attributes in St. John's words : *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son the Propitiation for our sins* : love sent Him already the expiation required by holiness. Hence also the fact that Righteousness and Grace—the two forms that Holiness and Love assume in redemption—give their names severally to the atoning work of Christ : it is *the Grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men*, and it is also *the Righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*.

3. But here again arises the necessity of yet another qualification. However perfectly one in their harmony, these attributes or principles of action in the Divine nature are to be kept apart in our thoughts. There is a real distinction between the two. They are not merely, as many have attempted to prove, diverse presentations of the same attribute. It is very common to say that holiness is love guarding the majesty of the Divine nature, and love the same holiness communicating itself ; while justice or righteousness is a combination of the two : as, to quote an illustration, the Apostle following the Septuagint makes *the sure mercies of David* into *the holy things, τὰ ὁσίων, of David*. Some, who find an unreality in this, give love the pre-eminence as expressing the nature of God, and regard holiness as its opposite pole : wrath

Revealed  
in Time.

Heb. xii.  
29.

1 John iv.  
10.

Rom. iii.  
21.  
Tit. ii. 11.  
Rom. i.  
17.

Real Dis-  
tinction.

Acts xiii  
34.  
Isa. lv. 3.



Rom. i.  
18.  
Eph. ii.  
3, 4.

is the love of the holy Deity for all that is good in its energy as opposed to all that is evil. There is a sense in which this is perfectly true; but it is a truth which is very liable to be perverted. It is well to remember that each of these perfections is kept distinct in the redemptional language of Scripture, and that we do not find there any justification for this habit of thinking and speaking. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven: not the love of God manifesting its wrath. We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. BUT God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us.* The strongest argument, however, against this absolute unification of the two attributes is the fact that everywhere in Scripture the Atonement is referred to neither alone. Where the one is the other is not far off: so to speak as its necessary counterpart or qualification. Certainly it would be wrong to say that this truth is ever matter of argument in the New Testament. It does not amount to that. But it is abundantly shown, nevertheless, that neither of these attributes alone would have secured the salvation of mankind. Certainly not holiness in itself, which is a consuming fire; nor as righteousness, which would not be just in passing by transgression; nor in faithfulness, which must fulfil its threatening; nor in any form that any of its family of attributes might assume. And love would have been equally powerless; for it is as vehement as holiness itself in chastising its object for his good, and no disciplinary correction could have met the case of sin against God. Hence whenever in revelation we find either of these supreme attributes connected with the Atonement the other is sure to be near at hand. There is no exception to this; no exception, that is, where the atoning work of Christ is mentioned. Take the passage which might seem more than any other to give love the sole honour: *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* It follows immediately: *Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* An earlier passage might seem to give the pre-eminence to the justice that required propitiation: *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in His blood, to declare His righteousness.* This is, however, preceded by *being justified freely by His grace.* Some of our Lord's earlier words

Rom. v. 8,  
9.

Rom. iii.  
25, 24.

might appear to make the Father's love the one spring of mercy in His own mission. But we must remember that as He approached the cross He paid the most solemn tribute to the will of the righteous judgment which rested upon Him instead of sinful man. The last attribute He ever gave His Father was **RIGHTEOUS**.

4. But after all there is a most blessed sense in which love must have the pre-eminence. It has been seen that in the records of that accomplished redemption there is undoubtedly an ascendancy given to the love of God which no worthy theological interest is concerned to deny. In a sense the origination of our recovery is ascribed to the Divine charity: *God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son*. It is true that God so hated sin that He sent His Son, the Propitiation: this, however, is never said, however profoundly true. *Walk in love*, St. Paul says, *as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice*: he does not anywhere otherwise than indirectly tell us that Christ so hated sin that He gave Himself. This also is the truth: *He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity*; and, *Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows*. But it is rather His love of sinners than His love of righteousness that is appealed to and magnified throughout the New Testament. GOD IS LOVE; and we must, in our homage to this perfection, reverently think that it was not the holiness which asked, in the eternal counsel, what love could do, but the love which offered the unspeakable gift: *Χάρις τῷ Θεῷ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγίτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ*. And, as in the origination of the redeeming economy, so also in the process and final issues of it, love has the pre-eminence. It is everywhere magnified by God the Father and His incarnate Son; and we must magnify it. Mercy and judgment are on either side of the cross; they co-operate in all the administration of the Gospel; and they will preside at the final day. But evermore judgment executes the will of mercy, or love, *the royal law*; even when justice may seem to use the ministry of love. Our theology, like David, must *sing of mercy and judgment*. But still *Mercy rejoiceth against judgment*: exults or triumphs not OVER it, indeed, but yet AGAINST it. The same Moralist among the Apostles who made love the law, says: *κατακαυχᾶται ἔλεος κρείσσων*.

John xvii  
25  
Love Pre-  
eminent

John iii  
16.

Eph. i. 2

Tit ii. 14.

Heb. i. 9.

2 Cor. ix.  
15.

Jas ii. 8.

Ps. ci. 1.

Jas. ii. 13

## Summary.

## HOLINESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND LOVE.

Harmony  
in Ad-  
ministra-  
tion.

Finally, we may consider the union of these attributes in the Atonement as administered in the Gospel. That administration is mediatorial: while the attributes are the perfections of each Person in the Godhead, they are generally regarded as displayed by the Father, through the intercession of the Son, by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. And they are displayed in three departments of the economy of grace. The Supreme Judge presides in the mediatorial court where righteousness reigns; as a Father He dispenses grace in the household and family of His adopted and regenerate children; and as God in His temple He sanctifies His worshippers to Himself: all through the mediation of the incarnate Son, and the influences of the Holy Spirit. To the first answers *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*; to the second *the love of God*; and to the third *the communion of the Holy Ghost*.

2 Cor. xiii.  
14.In the  
Court of  
Law.

1. In what we have termed the Mediatorial Court, God's relations to man, or rather man's relations to God, are altogether those of law. God is the Judge; there reigns His righteousness; the Atonement is a satisfaction to justice; Jesus Christ the Righteous is the Advocate; sin is transgression; repentance is conviction; acceptance with God is the righteousness of faith, imputed and imparted; and the whole Christian system is the new law of faith. Now in this Evangelical court, all the Divine moral perfections which cluster around or arise out of His justice have their manifestation, and are glorified.

In the  
Temple.

2. In the temple of Christianity the presiding attribute is holiness. There the holy God reigns over the propitiatory, sprinkled with the blood of expiation. There the Redeemer is the High-priest of our profession. Sinners polluted approach the altar and are sanctified, purified, consecrated to the Divine possession, fellowship, and service. The Christian system is the consecration of a holy life, and Christians partake of the Divine holiness. Over a large variety of terms describing the Evangelical privilege this most awful attribute presides, uniting God and His saints in one most holy communion.

In the  
House.

3. Midway between these, and yet as the crown and consum-

mation of both, is the household and family of God, where He dwells as a Father in the midst of His adopted and regenerate children, united to Him in His Son the *Firstborn among many brethren*. There His love supremely reigns. It reigns, indeed, in the court and the temple; but here it supremely reigns, glorified in the face of the Incarnate, and from it shining upon all His children. The Christian system becomes now a family discipline: the sons of God are imitators of Christ, and keep the commandments as children obeying their Father's voice in love. Here we may reverently say is the perfection of the Christian economy as a display of the perfections of God in Christ. The Atonement—an expiation in the temple, and a satisfaction in the court—is the reconciliation: the reconciliation of the Father and His prodigals in the Son incarnate. Through this reconciliation, and the indwelling of the Spirit of the Son, believers are restored to the image of Him Who is the Image of the Father: *changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord*, and thus reaching the goal of their destiny, whom He did *predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son*.

R. m. viii.  
29.

4. But, though we thus decompose and distribute the Divine attributes in redemption, they combine into one harmonious glory of grace. The three are one; and the bond of their perfectness is Love. To this subject we return in due time when the administration of redemption is our subject.

2 Cor. iii.  
18.

Rom. viii.  
29.

Unity.

#### SUMMARY.

Summary.

A few closing remarks may be made, both dogmatic and practical, on this inexhaustible subject.

1. The meditation and study of the Divine Attributes lies at the foundation of theology, which is by the very term the doctrine of God contemplated in Himself and in His universal relations, or in the universal relation of all things to Him. The whole superstructure of this holy science might be reared upon the several names and perfections of the Most High; and, whether formally aiming at it or not, our divinity is sound only in proportion as it is remembered. There is not a single truth of our dogmatics or ethics which might not be assigned as it were to its

Founda-  
tion of  
Theology

natural place under the several heads of the preceding distribution. But the attempt to do this, as it would overtax in many respects our ability, so it would not on the whole conduce to our advantage as students of systematic theology. Hence we must be content to make the Divine nature and perfections part only instead of the whole. But, for this very reason, a treatment of the various attributes, more elaborate and comprehensive than that which has been attempted, is needless at the outset: just as their rays are diffused and blended throughout the Scripture, so are they, as it will be found, more or less interwoven with all the topics we shall hereafter discuss.

Import-  
ance of  
their Har-  
mony.

2. As the consistent and universal exhibition of the Divine perfections in their harmony is the glory of our science, so all its confusion, and dimness, and vexation have been due to the errors of men's conception of them: the history of the heresies, major and minor, of the Christian dogma is little more than the history of the systematisation of such unworthy apprehensions of those perfections. Hence, their equal honour and perfect harmony should be the standard of our aspiration in every step that we take: abstaining from the invention of attributes that God has never given to Himself, we must evermore seek to do full justice to all and to each of those which He has revealed. The safeguard of truth is in this harmony. It is a standard to which by the help of the Scripture, nowhere more rich than on this subject, we may constantly and safely bring our views of Divine things. For instance, an attribute of Sovereignty, or Absolute Sovereignty, is sometimes assigned to the Divine Being in a peculiar meaning for which the Scriptures give no warrant. Most assuredly the Supreme is, by the evidence of this very name, high above all restraint, the uncontrolled Disposer of all events. He is the *Only Potentate*. There is a sense of course in which all things that are to take place may be traced to the Divine will, which we may reverently term absolute if we desire. Moreover, with reference to some events, and some providential arrangements, the Word of God does sometimes represent Him as pointing to His sovereign pleasure, from which there is no appeal, and into the reasons of which no mortal must seek to penetrate. But it may be denied that any such attribute as that of Sovereignty is to be found mentioned in Scripture; certainly that

1 Tim vi.  
16.

it is placed, where much human theology places it, at the head of all the attributes, alone sternly ruling the whole economy of revelation. At any rate God is pleased to order His wisdom and His love, and His grace which is the expression of both, in most affecting juxtaposition with His uncontrolled and uncontrollable will: He Who is the Only Potentate, is also the *Only wise God*, and *God is love*. On the other hand, this last attribute of love itself has sometimes assigned to it an absolute sovereignty of its own which dissipates the gloom of the other system by a light not borrowed from heaven. This we have sufficiently seen. And it may be enough generally to repeat, what cannot be too profoundly pondered, that the Holy Spirit has displayed the economy of the Divine perfections in such a way as to forbid every exaggeration of any one of them, and to encourage us to harmonise the whole.

3. Once more, the study of the Divine perfections should be conducted habitually, reverently, and most devoutly, with reference to our own edification. The benefit of this is literally incalculable and inexhaustible, if we contemplate them with a never-failing reference to our soul's good: either endeavouring to rise to them or bringing them down to ourselves. We cannot indeed reach them; they are high and they are deep. But the very contemplation of perfections which oppress the mind strengthens the mind which it oppresses. To be amazed, and confounded, and baffled by our thoughts of God is the noblest discipline of the human regenerate spirit. But, though we cannot attain to them, we may—in the right sense of the word, however—bring them down to us. What this means is best taught by Scriptural examples. Let two stand for an endless series. Mark Job's struggle and submission in the presence of the Divine Omniscience. His consolation is that, though God is inscrutable to His creature, His creature is perfectly known to Him: *Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him. But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.* And David's more tranquil and equally sublime reduction to himself of the Divine Omnipresence. Meditating upon the presence of God which fills the universe, from which nothing is or can be

1 Tim. vi  
15.  
Jude 25.  
1 John iv.  
16.

Practical  
Study.

Job xxiii.  
8—10.

concealed, he cries : *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me : it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* He despairs of pursuing this track ; and we all despair with him. But his meditation regards God as thinking of his own poor destiny and interests : *How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them ! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. when I awake, I am still with Thee.* And then he places the secrets of his own spirit in the light of that omniscience. He brings that awful attribute to bear upon himself. *Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

In Jesus  
Christ.

4. But the way everlasting suggests a truth which every Christian theologian should remember : that the Divine perfections must be contemplated as they are manifested and made incarnate in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the sum of Divine attributes in human nature. In Him the infinite and the finite are everlastingly one. The Incarnation is an eternal fact : in purpose before time was, in reality now and for ever. We are not called to study the absolute and immanent perfections in themselves, nor in Himself the Being Who is invested with them. We have as men no God Who is not revealed in Jesus ; nor need we ever contemplate Him apart from our own nature in Christ. We shall never see and never know God save as revealed in the face of His incarnate Son. In Him we see these attributes which connect the Supreme with the creature under a most blessed and peculiar aspect ; especially those of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence : the omni-attributes. In Him, reflected from His face, and reflected through His work, we see the glory of the perfections that bring the Divine into relation with human redemption from sin. *But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* It may be supposed that what is primarily meant here is our common reflection of the moral image of God exhibited in the human virtue of the Son's holiness. But we have no right to limit our view rigidly to this. One with the Son—*He that is joined unto the Lord is One Spirit*—we are, in a certain sense, in Him one with the Holy Trinity, and made partakers of the Divine nature. In the likeness of the Triune

Ps.  
cxxxix.  
6.

Ps.  
cxxxix.  
17, 18,  
23, 24.

2 Cor. iii.  
18.

1 Cor. vi.  
17.

2 Peter i.  
4.

we were originally formed. The finest dust of the material universe contributed the body which connected us with the other orders of the Creature ; but it was the Spirit of God Who gave us the higher essence on which was stamped the Divine image. In our perfection in Christ we shall be restored to the most consummate reflection of every attribute of the Creator which is possible to the creature. As to the absolute attributes, and our reflection of them, there is a mystery at present unfathomable. But as to the attributes which depend on the holiness and love of the Divine nature, we must study them not only in the volume which reveals the Supreme but in the Person and Work of the Son. In His work they have their atoning aspect ; and there we study them as the ground of our redemption and hope. In His Person they have their passive and active exhibition as the perfect example of human holiness. Beholding and reflecting the glory of the Divine-human character of Christ, we study the attributes of God where alone we can study them unto perfection. No department of Scriptural Theology, as such, is so abundant as that which trains our minds to contemplate the perfections of the Supreme, and to dwell upon the works and ways of God as manifestations of His character, or of His glory. The several attributes are constantly set before us, some for our adoring wonder, and some for our imitation ; and they are blended into the unity which is the glory of that Divine nature of which we may be partakers.

5. Finally, though the incarnate Son has fully revealed the Father as such, and the Triune secret of the Divine essence, He has introduced no change in the exhibition of the Divine attributes generally. There is nothing more remarkable in the Bible as a whole than the substantial unity and identity of the Being Whom it describes in a series of revelations running through thousands of years. The consistency of the Holy Scriptures in this respect is one of its most glorious characteristics, and one of its strongest credentials. There is nothing in all the religious literature of mankind—and that literature is very large—which can be brought even into comparison, much less into competition, with them. This is true of the Scriptural names of the Deity ; but it is more abundantly true of the perfections in which those names are enshrined. The noblest conceptions of the Godhead

Harmony  
of Scrip-  
tural  
Representations  
of God.



to be found outside of the Bible are found connected with the most degrading ; nor is there one hymn, or one meditation, in all Gentile theology which gives a presentation of the Divine character either perfectly honourable to God Himself or perfectly satisfying to the soul of man. But from the beginning to the end of the revelation which we accept as Divine there is not one discordant note ; the Being Whom it presents may not be at all points what human fear or hope could in its diversified moods desire ; but He is ever the Same, a Being in whose presence unholiness is rebuked and all goodness or tendency to goodness is encouraged and quickened into life. From that almost the first announcement to a personal worshipper, *I am the Almighty God ; walk before Me and be thou perfect*, through all the annals of Scripture, there is the same God Whose character is the standard of perfection, Whose almightiness or all-sufficiency is the source of strength, and Whose manifested Presence is the light and joy of life. Everywhere we find the great quaternion of names which combine His essence and His attributes. God is JEHOVAH, the absolute Being ; He is SPIRIT, the personal object of worship ; He is LIGHT, repelling all impurity ; He is LOVE, diffusing His goodness as grace for ever.

Gen. xvii.

1.

Ex. vi. 3.

Jno. iv. 24.

1 Jno. i. 5.

1 John iv.

8.

# **GOD AND THE CREATURE**

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**CREATION.**

**PROVIDENCE.**



## GOD AND THE CREATURE.

God and  
Crea-  
turely Ex-  
istence.

THE discussion of the Divine Attributes has prepared us for a universe that is not God, but brought into existence by His power, and the object of His providential conservation, care, and government. The two departments of our present subject are, therefore, the Creature and Providence. The former will include all the several orders of created nature; and the latter, the general principles which are revealed as controlling their destiny: in other words, the What and the Why of the universal Creation of God.

Creation  
and Provi-  
dence.

### THE CREATURE.

The  
Creature.

The creaturely universe, embracing immaterial intelligences or angels, the world of material elements, and man uniting the two in himself, owes its being to the act of the Triune God, Whose will called it into existence. The revelations of Scripture on this subject may be distributed under the two heads of the Creator in regard to the act of creation, and the several orders of the creatures as the result of His creating act.

### THE CREATOR.

The  
Creator.

Creation is in Scripture assigned to the One Almighty

God, in the Trinity of His essence: the Son and the Holy Spirit having the same special relation to the production of all things which they afterwards bear to the redemption of the world. The creating act displays the glory of the Divine attributes, but freely as an act of will, and with the diffusion of happiness as one end attained by the resources of infinite wisdom. Absolute creation is the effect of omnipotence; but the origination of creaturely existence is a mystery which is revealed for adoration only, no other account being given or possible but the all-sufficiency of the Creator. Secondary creation, or the Formation of the material part of the universe into order, exhibits Divine wisdom also and love as preparing the scene of Providence for all living creatures, of probation for all moral intelligences, and of redemption for fallen man.

God as  
Creator.

#### THE TRINITY IN CREATION.

Allusion has been already made to the Redemptional Trinity as the manifestation of the Eternal Triune One in the salvation of man. Between these may be interposed an Economical Trinity, in some sense mediatorial, but not redemptional: the revelation, that is, of Three Persons after a special manner and order in the production of the universe.

The  
Trinity.

John v.  
17, 19.

John i. 3.

1. Each Person is in Scripture plainly connected with the act of creation: plainly, that is, according to the universal law of gradual development that has been so often referred to. The Old Testament dimly but not uncertainly gives its evidence, when its words are interpreted in the light of the New. *My Father worketh hitherto*, is our Lord's testimony, *and I work*: not so much indicating successive stages as claiming for Himself all Divine acts, and making them His own: *the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do*. The Father here is the eternal Father; for, the eternal Second Person, both as *The Word* and as *The Son*, is expressly asserted to be the author of creation. *All things were made by Him*. St. John's witness is repeated and con-

firmed by St. Paul, *All things were created by Him*; and this in a passage which declares that *the Son of His love was the Firstborn of every creature*: *ἡρωτότοκος*, begotten before all creaturely existence. These passages in their combination lead our minds to our Lord's only other reference to creation: *Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*. To this give all the Scriptures witness. Carrying the evidence back now to the Old Testament we find that it renders to the Spirit the same tribute which the New renders to the Son. *Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created*; and, before the words *Let us make man*, we read that *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*. The doctrine of the Essential Trinity gives harmony and consistency to the whole. Without it the entire fabric of Scripture is unintelligible: it ceases to be a fabric; it is itself without form and void, and darkness rests upon its entire face.

Col. i. 15, 16.

John xvii. 24.

Is. civ. 30.  
Gen. i. 26, 2.

2. But there is evidently an Economical Trinity here, the foreshadowing of the Redemptional. What man's word is to his act, the expression of his will, the Eternal Word was in creation: *By Whom also He made the worlds*, where the Word is *the Son* who is the Mediator of the creation of the *αἰῶνες*, or orders of worlds, which He sustains by the word, *τῷ ῥήματι*, of His power. His omnipotence as God and His mediatorship as the Word in the created universe are one. The *διά*, generally used, also indicates this. He is the Mind and Will and Act of His Father. This economical relation does not so expressly extend to the Holy Spirit; but we have seen that of Him also as of the Son it may be said, *without Him was not anything made that was made*. All this is revealed for the suppression of the notion that matter, or the substance of the visible universe, is eternal; or, supposing it created, that any inferior Demiurgus was employed in the creation; also for the establishment of our faith in the worthiness of all created things; and, finally, to show that the scene of creation was prepared as to be in due time the scene of redemption also.

Economic Trinity

Heb. i. 2.

John i. 3.

#### THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES IN CREATION.

We have already anticipated our present subject when considering the Divine Attributes in relation to the creature. It is enough

Divine Attributes.

to say here that the omnipotence of God, as the outward manifestation of His interior all-sufficiency, is enough for the original production of matter in what may be called absolute creation; that His wisdom and power are seen in the secondary creation or formation of matter into worlds; and that the end of all is the expression of the Divine perfections or their reflection in the works of His hands.

**Primary  
Creation.**

**CREATION PROPER.**

- It is only in the Divine All-sufficiency that we can find the ground of the origin of all things that exist not being God Himself. In this we must be content to seek the possibility of all forms of being, spiritual or material; known to us or unknown: our own universe, so far as we may call it ours, and other universes that may be behind it, with others that may follow it.
- Matt xix. 26.** The utmost that human thought can rise to is this, that *with God all things are possible*: that is, all things possible may, at His will, become actual. In one sense there is no NIHIL to infinite resources, and the maxim "*Ex nihilo nihil fit*" must either be converted into "*In nihilo omnia fiunt*," or limited to created agents, with regard to whom it is undoubtedly true. It is the uniform testimony of Scripture, and its fundamental error in the opinion of modern Pantheists, that the Eternal and only Being by His will and word brought all things that are not Himself into an existence which in no ultimate elements they had before. The testimony to this supreme truth is positive and negative
- Gen. i. 1** 1. Positively, the beginning of revelation asserts this: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* These words concerning the old creation are repeated when the new creation is introduced: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him.* In that beginning, which baffles human thought to apprehend, the Son already is as God, and all things BECOME or are made. Hence the same revealing voice which declares the Divinity of the Son declares in contrast the origination in time or with time of all things. We may pass over the many passages which assert the Divine origin of the ordered
- J. hn i. 1-3.**

Cosmos : they might be supposed consistent with the existence of a substance out of which it was arranged. But the incarnate Saviour prays, *Glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was* : where *παρὰ σοί* corresponds with *the glory as of the Onlybegotten παρὰ Πατρός*. And in this light the many testimonies to the creation of all things must mean the bringing them into existence proper. *By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him : and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist*. The contrast between the essential being of the Son in the Father, and the created existence of all things else, could not be more clearly laid down. In a very remarkable passage St. Paul declares the possibilities of God to be τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, *the invisible things of Him*. What He in the freedom of His omnipotence brings into visible existence proclaims His eternal Power and Godhead : the δύναμις here preceding, and measuring, and, as it were, determining the θεϊότης, while, on the other hand, the θεϊότης, or divineness of God, is the substratum of that δύναμις, the resources of which are infinite. What has been *clearly seen from the creation of the world* is but the manifestation of an invisible infinity of power behind. But there is a still nearer approach to the calling all things out of nothing in another word of St. Paul concerning God *Who quickeneth us dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were* : τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα. Hence we may accept our very term "*ex nihilo*" from the Vulgate : "*Peto, nate, ut aspicias ad cœlum, et terræ, et ad omnia quæ in eis sunt ; et intelligas quia ex nihilo fecit illa Deus, et hominum genus ;*" thus rendering a passage which the Apostle might have in view, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ Θεός. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the first article of the faith is the primitive creation as distinguished from the formation of all things. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear* : εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλέπομενον γεγονέναι. The construction and the absolute origination of all things seen are, in fact, separated, and then united. The creating word of God is set over against both : all things were formed by the Divine word in order that

John xvii  
5.

John i. 14.

Col. i. 16,  
17.Rom. i.  
20.Rom. iv.  
17.2 Mac.  
vii. 28.

Heb. xi. 3.



**Heb. xi.  
27.**

**No other  
Doctrine  
allowed.**

faith might lay hold of the truth, which reason cannot penetrate, that the created universe did not spring by development from things previously existing, but from the invisible creating power of One afterwards referred to as τὸν Ἀόρατον, *Him Who is invisible*. With this the revelation of Scripture has spoken its last word, after which the first word of science must begin.

2. Negatively, the Scripture precludes any other doctrine than that of an absolute creation of all things by the direct act of the Divine will. It omits any allusion to pre-existing forms of matter, animate or inanimate, out of which the present universe was through long periods developed. Physico-theological speculation may interpose universe after universe, or rather universe before universe, to carry up the continuity of cause and effect nearer to the final source; but at length it must come to the unsearchable chasm between phenomenal things and the eternal essence. Platonic ontology may go farther and contrast phenomena as they are made to appear with the eternal ideas appearing only to God Himself; but the κόσμος νοητός in the Divine mind is not creation, and it is of creation we now speak. The negative argument is found in all those many passages which bring the Jehovah-name into relation with created things. This is the Scriptural method of proclaiming the infinite and to us unthinkable chasm between necessary being and existence phenomenal. The Bible does not say, in philosophical language, that the Unconditioned One remains the Unconditioned while He creates the conditioned, or that the one Necessary Being cannot have other necessary existence, co-eternal with Himself, which He forms into the universe. But it simply says, in Nehemiah's language, which is the language also of psalm and prophet: *Thou, even Thou, ART JEHOVAH ALONE; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all.* Its doctrine is everywhere that the Eternal can clothe Himself with what garments visible He will; in modern language, it teaches that the creating act is the finite expression of the Infinite. The creation is referred to as its free exercise: all things requiring God as their First Cause, but the First Cause not requiring the creation by any necessity of His nature. Speculations as to the necessary connection of power and act in the

**Nehem.  
ix. 6.**

Immutable Being, and therefore as to the necessity of an eternal creation—speculations which forget the difference between the infinite and the finite, a difference which is to us at once conceivable and inconceivable—are utterly unknown in Scripture.

#### THEORIES CONTRADICTING THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION.

**Error**

It is at this point that we are met by those hypotheses which flatly contradict the doctrine thus laid down as Scriptural, and as alone consistent with the true notion of God and His universe. These have been alluded to in their relation to the doctrine of God Himself; but briefly, as the present is their proper place. It may be boldly asserted that Pantheism and Materialism, with a third class of intermediate theories that are composed of elements derived from both, owe their origin not to an anti-Theistic sentiment, but to the difficulty of accepting God as the Creator, primarily and absolutely, of anything that is not God. What is here said about them will be confined to a brief consideration of their bearing on the subject of creation.

#### PANTHEISM.

**Pan-  
theism.**

Many definitions may be given of this system of thought, which has had the longest, the most diversified, and the most persistent sway in the annals of human error. But no definition does justice to it which forgets that it is a theory of the universe making God supreme in it without being its Creator: identifying, in fact, God with the universe, or the universe with God: τὸ πᾶν Θεὸς ἔστι. But there are two kinds of Pantheism, which are not perhaps distinguished as they should be in reviews of its history. All Pantheism is not the same Pantheism.

1. It cannot be said of the ancient Indian philosophies that they made God and the universe one. What to the Hindoo in every age—as long before the Christian era as since—has been the Supreme God, or the abstract Brahm without predicate, exists without a necessary finite created system. This eternal, infinite, immutable Being is sublimely above all creaturely nature. When the repose of incalculable ages is broken, He or It comes as to the creature into existence, is developed to creaturely thought in mani-

**Hindoo  
Pan-  
theism.**

fold forms for long ages, and then withdraws into Himself or Itself the whole panorama of phenomenal being to be remembered in their forms no more. Now in this wonderful system of thought the essential idea of creation cannot be concealed or suppressed. The Hindoo Trinity itself, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, is only a representative personification of the Supreme in acts which are not far wide of the Scriptural ideas of creation, preservation, and destruction, at least as far as the two former are concerned; all the phenomena of the universe, on the way to nothing, are surely supposed to be brought into separate existence that the Infinite may appear in them before they go hence; and that separate existence, as separate, they lose when they cease to be. It is true that the entire system may be called, in modern language, pantheistic. But there is a vast difference between its view of the supremacy of the Original of all things which He again withdraws from being and the pure Pantheism that identifies and makes one whole God and the universe.

Greek  
Philosophy.

2. No form of ancient Greek philosophy was Pantheistic in the fullest and deepest sense of the word. From Thales through Plato down to the last of the Stoics the philosophers were occupied with the origin of things. Some denied creation, but they denied also God: such were the earliest of the Ionic school, who strove to find the unity of all phenomena, whether in water, or in air, or in fire; but whatever they called the soul of the world, animating and controlling the endless flux of things, it was not the god of Pantheism. Their system was Materialism in disguise. Others, as those whose names are the glory of the Socratic school, laid too much stress on the supremacy of the all-controlling mind to be counted Pantheists: moreover, they were always haunted by the notion of an eternal ὕλη, or matter, as it were something mediatory between matter, as we know it, and pure spiritual being. What they called the Soul of the World, the active principle, namely, which frames and forms and fashions all things, could never be detached from the Stoic conception of matter, and so far their system might be called Pantheistic. But their *Natura naturans*, or ἡ φύσις τεχνική, was, by the term, an operative mind, as Cicero says: "*Natura, non artificiosa solum, sed plane ARTIFEX ab eodem Zenone dicitur; consultrix, et provida utilitatum oppor-*

De Nat.  
Deor.

tantitatemque omnium. Censet enim artis maxime proprium est creare et gignere, quodque in operibus nostrarum artium manus efficiat, id multo artificiosius naturam efficere." The Natura naturalis, or living *Kóσμος*, was indeed identified with the former, and nature became god. This theory of the universe has been called **HYLOZOISM**, and has played a conspicuous part in every age. It is really the theory of that class of modern materialists who yield to the evidence of purpose in nature, though only as **IMMANENT DESIGN**, which is a contradiction in thought, or a refuge from the conception of an external Designer that has no meaning. But design in any form is foreign to the strict notion of Pantheism.

**Hylo-  
zoism.**

3. Pure Pantheism, as an account of the existence of the universe, assumed its final and only consistent development in Christian times, and in a philosophy that has been in avowed opposition to Christianity from the beginning.

**Modern  
Panthe-  
ism.**

(1.) Its new foundations were laid in Neo-Platonism, an eclectic system which strove to combine all that had been taught in previous schools of philosophy concerning the relation of being to phenomena. It pronounced more boldly than it had ever been pronounced before, that one only indescribable Being exists Who reveals Himself in all things, in the soul of the world, in the universal reason, and in the spirit of man: all seemingly independent things being only transient phenomena, and all personalities being destined for reabsorption into God. While the Fathers of the Christian Church were establishing against early heresy the doctrine of the Trinity, the Second Person being the Firstbegotten before every creature, and the *Ἀρχή*, or source of the creation brought into existence by the energy of the Third Person, Plotinus and Porphyry and Proclus were establishing another trinity: the One absolute, its manifestation in the universe, and its thinking itself in universal reason. Their ideas found their best expositor in John Scotus Erigena, the idealistic Pantheist of the ninth century. His book "*De Divisione Naturæ*" was the first manifesto of the modern system. It makes God "that which neither creates nor is created." "With God being, thought, and creating are identical." "In God it is one and the same thing to know what He makes before it is made, and to make what He knows. Therefore to know and to do is one in Him." "Man is

**Neo-Pla-  
tonism.**

**Scotus  
Erig. De  
Div. Nat**

a certain intellectual notion in the Divine mind eternally created. This is his most approved and most true definition : and it is not so only of man, but of all things which, in the Divine wisdom, were made. The entire visible and invisible creature is a Theophany : it may be called, that is, a Divine apparition." According to this conception the thought must not linger on the existence of anything apart from God ; for while we think of it it has changed, and of it at any moment existence cannot be predicated. The spirit of man is on the same phenomenal way to its home. The tendency of this system, as of Pantheism in every form, is to abolish sin and responsibility. But that tendency took two directions. In the one it degenerated into the worst mystical antinomianism of the Middle Ages. In the other it was counteracted by better principles ; and, with strange inconsistency, the men whose theory made their soul only a spark on its way to a necessary extinction in God were absorbed in the most strenuous endeavours by perfect self-renunciation to bring themselves into a most blessed union with their Maker. But we have here to do only with theories of creation.

#### Spinoza

(2.) Spinoza, in the seventeenth century, carried the wavering dialectics of his predecessors to their legitimate conclusion. He made the principle of Descartes, that the consciousness of our existence is the first and only certainty, his starting-point. But, whereas the founder of Cartesianism argued to the real existence of a universe and a God, the founder of modern Pantheism argued in the opposite direction. He fell back upon the assured consciousness of one only substance, besides which there could be nothing. That substance may have attributes and modes ; but the attributes and modes of that infinite substance, including the entire universe of mind and extension, are not reality but phenomena. Of these phenomena, including ourselves, we may predicate attributes ; but not of the infinite All. According to the favourite adage of the system, which is a profound untruth, "Omnis determinatio est negatio ;" and to speak of the Infinite as being this or that, is to make Him less, or It less, than infinite. To assert that God creates or is a Creator, is to deny Him His Deity : in diametrical opposition to St. Paul's testimony that phenomenal things from the creation of the world declare His eternal power and Godhead. What in

the Christian teaching—and in the Christian teaching alone—is creation, is in Pantheism an eternal and necessary evolution of the One Sum of things: everything and every person is but a mode of the existence of Being absolute; everything in its manifestation, and every person in his act, is determined by the necessity of the Divine nature, if such a term may be used at all. "Without the world no God; and no God without the world." Spinoza's mathematically systematised Pantheism has been idealised in the philosophy of Germany, the keynote of which is that the Infinite is for ever coming to consciousness in the finite, the absolute which in itself is nothing coming to true objective existence in the creature, by an eternal movement which the thinking mind of man requires for the explanation of all being, and in which it finds rest. God is not Himself personal, but He is the sum of all personalities. This system strives to make itself Christian by terming Christ the mediator or reconciler of the Infinite and the finite in Whom God is the universe and the universe is God: the synthesis of all possible opposites.

(3.) With the endless evolutions of modern Pantheistic thought we have not to do. Suffice that it proves one thing most clearly, that the Christian doctrine of creation lies at the basis of all religion. Although the derivation of the word from *Religare*, to bind to, or to restrain from, be etymologically insecure, that idea is nevertheless rooted in it; and the terms *Lex*, or law, and *Obligation* are not far off. But Pantheism knows no bond between Creator and creature, because these terms are gone. Sin is no longer sin: freedom has eternally vanished from the whole economy of things. Immortality is the loss of what seemed personality, and absorption into the abyss of being, without that consciousness of absorption and rest which was the blissful dream of the best mystics, whether in the East or in the West. The universe is not the sphere in which a Creator moves, but the form in which He, by an eternal necessity, evolves Himself. The world of man cannot be the domain of Providence or redemption in which a personal God holds fellowship with His creatures. There are no creatures, nor is God He; for all the terms of personality ought to disappear, if they do not, from the system. Man is part of God's existence—if we may return to the name God,—but God is equally part of

Conclu-  
sions.

Spin.  
Ethics,  
Part II.

man's existence. There is no pre-eminence on His part, nor is there inferiority in His creature, if we may call man such. Spinoza says: "Hence it follows that the human mind is part of the infinite intelligence of God: and, forsooth, when we say that the mind of man perceives this or that, we only say no more than that God, not as He is infinite but as far as He is unfolded by the nature of man, or as far as He constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea." "Accordingly in the human mind there is no absolute or free will. The mind is a sure and determined method of thinking, and therefore cannot possibly be the free cause of its own actions." The only sin the system allows is imperfection on its way to perfectness: it is the loss of that which is the only good, that is, of being. In the evolution of God there is a struggle, and the transient survival of the fittest.

Idem. iv.  
Prop. xx.

"By how much the more anyone can preserve his share of being the greater is the virtue with which he is endowed; conversely, so far as anyone neglects to conserve his being he is impotent." Spinoza, like many other devout Pantheists, had exalted notions of the deification of man in God as His transient representative in the process of His eternal incarnation. But at the point of his highest elevation into union with the Deity, finite man is in this system lost in the infinite. There is no Christian glorification of the creature in God, but only reabsorption into the source whence his fleeting personality came. This is pure Pantheism, creationless, and therefore without a Creator. Man has no distinct existence for ever, because he and his home, and all that is his, must be drawn back again into the ocean that other similar waves of existence may follow. Ancient Hinduism went near to this; but it may be doubted whether it ever went so far. "I am Brahman," was the language that expressed in it the highest consummation of unity with Real Being; but still the I remained. Pantheism proper has no I, either for God or for man.

Systems  
not  
directly  
Pan-  
theistic.

#### SUB-PANTHEISTIC SYSTEMS.

It cannot be said that all the errors of mankind as to the created universe in its relation to the Creator may be summed up as Pantheism and Materialism. These are the extreme poles, but

there are zones between of great importance in which we find the most abundant development of human speculation and practice. These can only be alluded to here, and that for two reasons: first, they do not enter into theology proper; and, secondly, they are not now predominant errors against which theology as such has to contend.

## POLYTHEISM.

Poly-  
theism.

Holy Scripture, which is the revelation of the absolute religion, does not trace the history of man's descent from the worship of one God to the worship of gods many; nor does it shed much light upon the various forms which Polytheistic idolatry has gradually assumed. But there is nothing in the Word of God inconsistent with the following two truths: that Polytheism sprang out of a Pantheistic perversion of the feeling of mankind after one Supreme in nature and yet over nature; that it has always coexisted with a more or less indefinite sense of one Deity; and has in its best forms worked towards the absolute supremacy of the only and true one God.

I. The modern Science of Religion aims to trace the development of the instinct or faculty in man for the infinite and eternal through all the records of the races: starting generally from the principle that began by investing the visible and invisible forces of nature with supernatural attributes, and then, as that religion became more dialectic, gradually emerging into Monotheism or Pantheism, in many cases drifting into Atheism by the way. Some of these teachers of Comparative Theology proceed on the theory of evolution. Taking man from the hands of the physical evolutionist, as having been slowly developed into a sentient, moral, and even religious creature, they then carry onward the principle into all the phenomena of what may be called the spiritual history of mankind. Others take up the theory without its tremendous preliminary assumptions.

Origin of  
Poly-  
theism.

1. The testimony of Scripture is explicit here. We might infer from its early records that the successive heads of mankind, and founders of the nations, carried everywhere with them the knowledge or tradition of one Creator; and the tendency of the whole of the record supports that inference. But the New Testament,

Scriptural



which in the fullness of time clears up the mysteries of earlier revelation, gives us a clear account of the origin of Polytheism and idolatry. St. Paul, directly dealing with this subject, speaks of the heathen as of *men who hold the truth in unrighteousness*. He expressly says, that the created universe carried with it to the mind of man a revelation of its one Creator; that their heart was darkened and they became fools; their folly being their idolatry: *they changed the glory of the incorruptible God to an image like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things*. Here we have a kind of programme in brief of all the Polytheistic systems of antiquity. Returning from the moral corruption of the Gentiles to their idolatry, the Apostle says that *they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen*. Every word here is significant. They changed,—for this was their own and their fathers' act—the truth of God, the reality of the One God, or the true revelation He had given of Himself, into the Lie, the one lie of Polytheism, and worshipped in their perverted sentiments, and served in their outward idolatry, the creature besides, or above, or instead of the Creator: *παρὰ τὸν Κτίσαντα*. It may be insisted on that this *παρά*, interpreted by the context, shuts out the service of the Creator altogether; but the sacred writer would have found a more forcible way of asserting that. The essence of idolatry throughout Scripture is not the absolute exclusion of the thought of one Supreme; but the giving imaginary representatives of Him the glory due to His one name. That was the idolatry charged against the covenant people themselves; and that, in principle at least, is the idolatry of which superstitious Christendom is found guilty. It is that identification of the Creator with the creature which is the soul of Pantheism. The Holy God does not count His created universe sinful in itself; but in His holiness He is eternally separate from the creature, and will be honoured as such. Hence the Scripture warrants our introduction of this subject into the relations between God and the creature.

History  
of Poly-  
theism.

2. The history of Polytheism confirms all this. Men early lost the supremacy of faith and were surrendered to sense. But the faith only lost its supremacy, and sense was not wholly sense.

They never lost that within them which verified three things, let modern philosophy say what it will: the reality of their own dependent existence; the reality of an outer universe not themselves; and the reality of an Infinite Something, Being or Person, beyond that. But the distinctness of these was lost. Their perfect confusion was pure Pantheism; which, however, was the growth of later ages. At first, the self was distinct; but God and the creature were blended. The One Being was everywhere felt and seen, but not as one being: His energies were distributed, and Naturism, or nature-worship, was the result: the term worship being here conventionally used. The two extremes lie before us in the history of mankind. There is Fetichism, a term invented in the last century to describe the abject superstition which attaches to an endless variety of objects a mysterious connection with supernatural powers, making them symbols of spiritual influences haunting all nature. This takes its most grotesque form in Western Africa, but has pervaded all ages and races, from the Teraphim of Mesopotamia to the Shamanism of Tartary. At the opposite pole is the dread magnificence of the Oriental Greek and Scandinavian Mythologies, where Fetichism is expanded, etherealised, and developed into its grandest proportions. But everywhere, and in all its forms, it is the idolatry of the creature which loses the Creator: in multiplicity forgetting the unity, though the unity was never far off. From that mankind had wandered, and to that must they, after long wanderings, return.

Fetichism.

II. The history of the religious beliefs of mankind bears witness that there never was a national or tribal Polytheism which did not, more or less, consciously give the supremacy to one, and only one being.

Tending to one God.

1. The most wonderful, certainly the earliest system of mythology—if such a name may be allowed—is that of the primitive Aryana, whose strong religious feeling deified all the forces of nature. Every object in which they felt the presence of the invisible and the infinite was raised into something supernatural, into a Deva, bright being; Asura, a living thing; and Amartya, an immortal. By degrees, the multitude of gods approximated to a deification of universal nature; but by degrees also the strong tendency of the Indian religion was to find its refuge in a

Aryana.

kind of Atheism which was really a protest in favour of one God, or in aspirations after one God by name.

Aryan  
striving  
after  
Unity.

(1.) As the Aryan theology is the grandest outside of the Bible—how entirely outside of it we shall see—a few illustrations may be derived from it of the principle we are considering, that the One Creator has been always unconsciously groped for in every system. In the Indian religion we may see in epitome, though in a vast epitome, the entire evolution: so absolutely the entire evolution, that it may be selected to represent the whole. We cannot determine what thought concerning the Supreme was behind the earliest Vedic worship; it may have been that the early hymns to Aditi, the boundless or the infinite One, were remembrances of a primitive Monotheistic religion. But certainly in process of ages the whole tide of Hindoo thought and feeling set in towards One Highest God, in the noblest, if not the most beautiful, monarchical form of Polytheism. The supreme sway of the Unknown God, however, was of no avail, so long as He had crowds of representatives nearer than He. The time of reformation came; but it led to a philosophical Atheism, or to Buddhism and Pantheism. The only religion that India never knew until Christianity brought it near is Monotheism. To that there has always, however, been a steady tendency; though, neither in India, nor in any part of the world, will Polytheism give place to the worship of one God until that God is accepted in the Holy Trinity.

Hibbert  
Lect. p.  
260.

(2.) Professor Max Müller has invented a new word to express a certain peculiarity, as he deems it, in the evolution of Indian thought concerning God: his own description will be given, especially as it is almost applicable to all the more enlightened nations of heathenism. "If we must have a general name for the earliest form of religion among the Vedic Indians, it can be neither Monotheism, nor Polytheism, but only Henotheism, that is, a belief and worship of those single objects, whether semi-tangible or intangible, in which man first suspected the presence of the invisible and the infinite, each of which as we saw was raised into something more than finite, more than natural, more than conceivable." . . . "This is the peculiar character of the ancient Vedic religion which I have tried to characterise as

**HENOTHEISM** or **KATHENOTHEISM**, a successive belief in single supreme gods, in order to keep it distinct from that phase of religious thought which we commonly call Polytheism, in which the many gods are already subordinated to one supreme God, and by which therefore the craving after the one without a second has been more fully satisfied. In the Veda one god after another is invoked. For the time being all that can be said of a divine being is ascribed to him. The poet, while addressing him, seems scarcely to know of any other gods. But in the same collection of hymns, sometimes even in the same hymn, other gods are mentioned, and they also are truly divine, truly independent, or, it may be, supreme. . . . But what interests us at present is how that intention was realised; by how many steps, by how many names, the infinite was grasped, the unknown named, and at last the Divine reached. Those beings who are called DEVAS in the Veda are in many places not yet even the same as the Greek *θεοί*; for the Greeks, even so early as the time of Homer, had begun to suspect that, whatever the number and nature of the so-called gods might be, there must be something supreme, whether a god or a fate, there must be at least ONE Father of gods and men. In some portions of the Veda, too, the same idea breaks through, and we imagine that as in Greece, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere, so in India also, the religious craving after the one would have been satisfied by a monarchical Polytheism. But the Indian mind soon went, and we shall see how in the end it was driven, to a denial of all the devas or gods, and a search for something higher than all the devas, Dyaus himself, or Varuna, or Indra, or Prajāpati not excluded. . . The process which we have been watching in the case of the sun, we can watch, again and again, with regard to most of the Vedic deities. Not, however, with regard to all. The so-called semi-deities, the rivers, the mountains, the clouds, the sea, others also, such as the dawn, the night, the wind, or the storm, never rise to the rank of supreme deity; but of Agni, the fire, of Varuna, the covering sky, of Indra, Vishnu, Rudra, Soma, Parganya, and others, epithets are used, and whole descriptions given, which, to our mind, would be appropriate to a supreme Deity only."

**Hen-**  
**otheism.**

(3.) There was another stage of development. "First of all, we

**Dual**  
**Deities**

find that several of these single deities, having sprung from one and the same source, have a tendency, after a very short career of their own, to run together. Dyaus was the sky as the ever-present light. Varuna was the sky as the all-embracing. Mitra was the sky as lighted up by the sun of the morning. Sûrya was the sun as shining in the sky. Savitri was the sun as bringing light and life. Vishnu was the sun as striding with three steps across the sky; Indra appeared in the sky as the giver of rain; Rudra and the Maruts passed along the sky in thunderstorms; Vâta and Vâyu were the winds of the air; Agni was fire and light, wherever it could be perceived, whether as rising out of darkness in the morning, or sinking in the darkness in the evening. The same applies to several of the minor deities. Hence it constantly happened that what was told of one deity could be told of another likewise; the same epithets are shared by many, the same stories are told of different gods." "Another expedient adopted by the ancient poets, and which seems quite peculiar to the Veda, is the formation of dual deities." "A third expedient was to comprehend all the gods by one common name, to call them VISVE Devas, the all-gods, and to address prayers and sacrifices to them in their collective capacity."

One  
Supreme  
God.

(4.) "Lastly, there was that other expedient, which to us seems the most natural of all, in order to bring the craving for one god into harmony with the existence of many gods, viz. the expedient, adopted by the Greeks and Romans, of making one of the gods supreme above all the rest: thus satisfying the desire for a supreme power, the *εἰς κοῖνον ἔστω*, and not breaking entirely with the traditions of the past, and the worship paid to individual manifestations of the divine in nature, such as were Apollon and Athena, or Poseidon and Hades, by the side of Zeus." . . . Here we have an almost universal phenomenon, and one that pays a deep homage to the truth of the Scriptures, and the revelation of the one only Creator: the peculiarity of the homage being that every such unconscious homage to the one Supreme was paid to Him as the Originator of all things. There was among the Vedic Aryans the same tendency to establish a supremacy among the gods, a one Creating God, as we find in the mythologies not only of Greece and of Rome, but of Germany and Scandinavia. "There are a few hymns addressed to Visvakarman, the creator, and

**Pragâpati**, the lord, in which there are but small traces left of the solar germ from whence they sprang. Some of them remind us of the language of the Psalms ; and one imagines that a deity such as **Pragâpati** or **Visvakarman** would really have satisfied the monotheistic yearnings, and constituted the last goal in the growth of the religious sentiment of the ancient Aryans of **Indra**. But this, as we shall see, was not to be." This was not to be ; because men having lost their faith in the one supreme Creator could not return to Him until they were taught to abandon their false gods, forsake their Pantheon, and give back to the True God the glory due to His name. Meanwhile, in evidence that Polytheism has always struggled unconsciously towards the truth, we may quote the Vedic hymn referred to : "He the One God, whose eyes are everywhere, whose mouth, whose arms, whose feet are everywhere ; he, when producing heaven and earth, forges them together with his arms and with the wings." "Beyond the sky, beyond the earth, beyond the **Devas** and the **Asuras**, what was the first germ which the waters bore, wherein all gods were seen ?" "You will never know him who created these things ; something else stands between you and him. Enveloped in mist, and with faltering voice, the poets walk along rejoicing in life." There are a few such tributes to the creator dispersed in the **Rig-Veda**, which, notwithstanding that they are addressed to different beings, are proofs that the true God never left Himself without a witness. To quote **Max Müller** once more : "With such ideas as these springing up in the minds of the Vedic poets, we should have thought that the natural development of their old religion would have been towards Monotheism, towards the worship of one personal God, and that thus in **Indra** also the highest form would have been reached which man feels inclined to give to the Infinite, after all other forms and names have failed."

2. These extracts have been given as illustrating the most interesting and affecting phenomenon in the history of the race : its struggles to return from its wanderings to God. On a smaller scale the same evolution has been going on, and, alas, is still going on, throughout the earth. And the science which makes this history the basis of some great generalisations is called the Science of Religion or Comparative Theology. The study is of great

Comparative Religion.

importance, and yields great advantage to the Christian Cause, though it is generally prosecuted in a spirit of opposition to the exclusive claims of Christianity.

Testi-  
mony to  
Man's  
universal  
sense of  
God.

(1.) It brings boundless evidence from every corner of the earth and from every tribe of humanity that it is of the very nature of man to inquire after the Creator of the world he lives in. The entire sphere of sensible objects around him, and of perceptible forces above him, have been deified only in the service of a higher and nobler desire to penetrate through all these to the One beyond : appealing to Him always as Creator, or at least thinking of Him and addressing Him as the Author and Disposer of all things. As the ancient Vedic poets perpetually uttered their protests against the Devic idolatry, so all the bards and prophets of every religion have shown their sense of something behind the crowded sphere of their lower divinities. Either as the Great Spirit of the far West, or the Aditi, the Infinite, of the far East, or the Moira, Destiny, of the Greeks, or the Jupiter Optimus Maximus of the Romans, there is in every religion or mythology some name that stands as a symbol of the One Supreme as yet unknown. There are thought to be a few exceptions : in the early religion of the Chinese and of the Germans it may be hard to trace these tendencies to Monotheism. But this is mainly because the archives are wanting to complete the evidence. And certain it is that the process of time and of reformation has brought out the latent tendency. This last point is of importance : almost every ancient form of religion has had its eras of reform ; and most of those reforms have been Monotheistic in the long run, if not immediately so. China might seem to deny this ; it was in the earliest ages more Pantheistic than any other nation, and, after receiving the reformation of Confucius, fell under the influence of Buddhism. But through all Chinese philosophy there runs the idea of the Primitive Force, Yang, and primitive matter, Ju. Ischuh in due time rose above this dualism and regarded these as the two faces of one sole primitive being, Tai-Ky. This seems pure Pantheism ; but Pantheism, whether in East or West, has been the refuge of the minds of men from many gods in one Eternal Self of the universe, its one Cause if not its Creator.

(2.) The study tends greatly to serve the cause of the Christian

religion by showing the incomparable superiority of the records of revelation. The Bible is the sole book of the so-called sacred books of the world which contains one, and one only, and one consistent account of the origin of all things. The difference between that account and every other extant in literature is not simply one of degree: the degree cannot be estimated. In every other document, even the noblest fragments of the Veda not excepted, the hints are obscure and inconsistent, the tributes are paid to different beings, or to the same being under different names, and sometimes there are most incongruous associations introduced. But in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments there is one most heavenly hymn to the Creator which has no single discordant note from the first verse of Genesis *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* down to the last hymn of revelation: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they were and were created.*

Superiority of the Christian System.

Gen. i. 1.

Rev. iv. 11.

#### DUALISM.

Dualism.

This generic word embraces all those systems of antiquity which strove to explain the contradictions manifest in the universe by tracing all things up to two irreconcilable principles: In respect to creation, it assigned to matter in some form an eternal independent existence, or, if not an existence independent, at least an existence as necessary to human thought as that of the Eternal Energy that moulds it. This is its differential element in relation to Pantheism. The one says that God IS in all things, or that all things are God; the other says that God MOVES in all things, either as their soul in their harmony or as their controller in their discords. Hence the distinction is a sound one that has termed Pantheism MONISM, and the system we now consider DUALISM. But we have many subdivisions of Dualism.

1. There is a sense in which the notion of a perpetual conflict pervaded all the religious ideas of antiquity. The sovereignty of one God not being firmly held, there was no settled theory either as to creation or as to the supremacy of one Being in the midst of its disharmonies. Even in the best philosophies the world was

In one sense Universal.



the theatre of a mysterious struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, and the step was easy from this to a contest between powers above visible nature, and the evil that was manifest in nature itself. Running through all species of ancient Pantheism and Polytheism there is a stream of Dualism that cannot be hid. There is hardly a form of ancient mythology which did not, more or less distinctly, set over against each other two opposite forces, and distribute its higher powers accordingly; though sometimes introducing a mysterious synthesis of the two by a profound instinct of the truth. We may go farther, and say that this idea unconsciously plays its part in almost every system of thought, Pantheistic or Polytheistic, in ancient and modern times.

**Persian  
Dualism.**

2. The most remarkable expression of the principle, in itself the most elaborate and in its influences the most lasting, was that of Zoroaster, the reformer of Persian Dualism. Before his time Iranian religion was Polytheistic, with a tendency to divide all spiritual powers into two conflicting orders, good and evil; his reform, about twelve hundred years B.C., aimed to bring back a more Monotheistic view, by making both Ormuzd and Alhrinan spring from a higher existence, Zeruane Akerene, the infinite and timeless existence, and by teaching the future annihilation of evil. But, whatever the secret philosophy of this Persian religion might be, its open teaching and practical developments were Dualistic. How far its principles touched the question of the eternity of matter has been much questioned: probably that part of the system was derived rather from Buddhistic and Grecian speculation.

**Gnostic-  
ism.**

3. Certainly the Dualism which we meet with in the Gnostic heresies of the early Christian ages was not more nearly related to Zoroastrianism than to the later speculations of Greek philosophy. From the former it derived the idea of an eternal opposition of light and darkness; and of the Divine operation conceived as the emanation of rays or æons of existence decreasing in intensity until they reach the darkness of matter, where all evil is. From the latter it derived its philosophical idea of matter, as a certain indeterminate and undefinable principle, existent, and yet not existing, having in it the possibility of all things, not personal, without intelligence, and the material out of which

phenomena are woven. The creation in the Gnostic systems was not the work of the Eternal God. Nor was it eternal in any sense, save as spiritual existences for ever flow from the source of light. As matter it was already eternal, in the shape of the *κένωμα*, or empty void, outside of the *πλήρωμα*, constituting the perfect revelation of the God of true existence. The bridge between the Abyss or *βύθος* of substantial being and the material visible world was the fall of the last of the emanations into matter, and producing the Demiurgus (or Earth-former), or soul of the world. The infinite varieties of the Gnostic systems were efforts to account for the contact between the Eternal Spirit and matter, the seal of all darkness and source of all evil. The result was a Creator, who, first conceived of as unconsciously carrying out the Divine purposes, is at last made the diametrical opposite of God. The history of Gnosticism, in which the Dualist idea sought to Christianise itself, but in vain, which the Christian Church cast out, stage after stage, until its final overthrow as Manichæism, is worthy of profound study. But a few remarks in relation to our present subject are all that is necessary here.

(1.) The whole system was a vast and bewildering attempt to bridge over the impassable gulf between the Infinite and the finite. It was one contribution towards solving a problem that has taxed the human mind and baffled it from the beginning. Starting from a principle, the origin of which no man knows, that matter is inherently evil, the question was to account for its existence without disparaging the Supreme. It was assumed that the Eternal Being permitted an æon from Himself to transgress the *ὄρος*, or boundary of His own essence, and produce from matter, either by creating it, as some said, or quickening it as others, all creaturely existence. In human souls good and evil elements were mixed; and to undo the work of the Demiurge or creator of this confusion was the work of redemption. The task of the Christ, a new æon sent forth to assume the docetic semblance of matter, was to bring back the stray emanations that had become imprisoned in the world, to release man therefore from the body, his resurrection being "past already," and either to annihilate matter absolutely or to leave it to its empty chaos. The wildness of these systems was only equalled by their inconsistency. They

Its aim  
to link  
the In-  
finite and  
the Finite.

left the impassable ὅρος where they found it. They sought to trace what, in modern times, would be called the law of continuity from the creation upwards to the Deity, or from the Creator downwards to the creation. And they thought they found it in the gradual attenuation of the light emanations until they passed over the boundary, and mixed with the darkness of matter beyond. But they were for ever vexed by two great anomalies. First, the Divine Pleroma was supposed to give out æons urged by love and desire which degraded the eternal essence down to the point of lusting after the material void. And, secondly, they either regarded that material void as eternally existing, or they supposed that the Supreme permitted the Demiurge to create it as the element of all future evil.

The  
Christian  
Scheme.

(2.) The sublime doctrine of the relation of the Eternal Son to the creature is the only secret of the continuity which is taught, the only bridge between the Creator and the creature. He is the Mediator—if such a use of the term may be allowed—between the Infinite and the finite, between God and the creature. With their eyes on the rising Gnosticism that was to disturb the Church St. Paul and St. John often use expressions which cannot be well understood but as laying down the truth concerning the Son, as the Ἀρχηγός τῆς ζωῆς and the Ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως, which the dualistic heretics perverted. St John taught that *God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*; but he also taught that *Jesus was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, not, however, as an æon or emanation; for *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Every word of this last sentence of St. Paul contradicts the Gnostic speculations as to the Demiurgus: the entire πλήρωμα of the Godhead, and not an emanation, dwelt in Him and did not descend upon Him bodily, and not in semblance. And He Who was the *Firstbegotten before every creature*, was such as the Ἀρχή, or Beginning, in Whom and through Whom creation began. *By Him were all things created*: as if in Him the Absolute God, or the Father, originated the creaturely existence, upholds it and administers it; by an incarnation before the Incarnation. We cannot conceive how the creaturely universe should have this specific relation to the Son, and how in Him the Infinite became finite, before God became flesh; but we must receive the mystery

Acts iii.  
16.

1 John i.  
5.

John i. 9.

Col. ii. 9.

Col. i.

15—20.

and adore it. Our Lord was the Firstborn of the new creation when He began its life in Himself; and He is the Firstbegotten, or the Beginning of the creation of God, which had its origin in Him.

#### MATERIALISTIC ATHEISM.

Materialism.

At the opposite pole of Pantheism stands Materialism as the philosophical or scientific antagonist of the Scriptural doctrine of the Creator and creation : opposite poles, however, of one and the same sphere of thought. Pantheism gives the notion of God the pre-eminence, all things phenomenal being His eternal but ever-changing vesture ; Materialism gives matter the pre-eminence, as the only substance that is, and regards what men call God as the unknown law by which that substance is governed in all its evolutions. Strictly speaking, Materialism proper has no place here. It is simply a question of science and scientific speculation ; being, as touching the created universe, a pure negative, that can neither prove itself nor disprove anything else.

#### COMMON PRINCIPLES.

Principles

Certain fundamental principles are common to the Materialism of all ages. Denying the distinction of matter and spirit it denies the existence of spirit altogether ; and soul or spirit, being only one particular form of the existence or function of matter, is immortal only in the sense that matter is indestructible and in some form or other will for ever go on producing the same phenomena. Religion has no place in this system. It makes that the strange fantasy which it is the unaccountable habit of the brain of man almost universally to beget : all its hopes and fears and aspirations perish with the organism that gave them birth. Discarding religion, it nevertheless has always prided itself on being a philosophy. As such, it must of necessity investigate the origin of things. One of the eccentricities of what we call thought is that matter must seek to know its own beginning, and the reason of its existence. Its futile speculations perish, like its religion, with every individual thinker's brain ; yet, like its religion, these are transmitted from age to age. But its questions are never answered.

Thinking matter can only say of itself that it must always have existed since it now exists; that it knows nothing about any power that could have brought it into being; that it has no explanation whatever of the difference between itself as inanimate, and itself as endowed with life; and, in short, that it can only say, unconsciously echoing the eternal truth which it will not receive, "I am that I am." If it is not its own creator it at least will know of no other. But the very word creation is abhorrent to the system from beginning to end.

### History

#### HISTORY OF MATERIALISM.

These fundamental principles, however, have been variously moulded, from generation to generation. There is a history of Materialism as there is a history of Pantheism and Dualism. With that theology has nothing directly to do, but it may be of indirect advantage to indicate the lines of development as they have been directed consciously or unconsciously by opposition to revealed truth. All the principles of Materialism were laid down by ancient heathenism; they have been asserted in direct opposition to Christianity as a revelation of God; and, lastly, they are now sought to be established in the interests of pure science, which answers every Christian suggestion by either perfect indifference or an appeal to universal nescience. A few words on each of these points in its order.

#### ANTIQUITY.

Ancient  
Mate-  
rialism.

The Materialism of ancient times was atheistic; and, as such, it professed antagonism to the predominant schools of thought, Eastern and Western. Epicurus, an Athenian philosopher of the fourth century before Christ, is sometimes regarded as its founder.

Epicurus.

From the remains handed down to us we gather that his system contained most of the ideas which rule modern thought on this question. He set out with the principle which Lucretius, his disciple, has thus formulated: *Ex nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti*. The universe he regarded as infinite: infinite in the number of bodies, infinite in the space that holds them. The elements of which all bodies are constituted are indivisible, *ἄτομα*, and unchangeable, *ἀμετάβλητα*. These atoms, endowed from

eternity with movement which makes them meet, combine into aggregates, whether smaller or larger as in the celestial spaces. As to this world, τὸ πᾶν ἐστὶ σῶμα. What we know we know through our senses; and when the organs perish the functions perish. Epicurus entirely dismissed the idea of Providence. If he admitted the existence of gods, it was only in the interest of prudence, the one criterion of his morals. "All is false that is commonly said about the gods: there is no truth in the chastisements they are supposed to inflict on men, nor in the rewards they assign to the good." "There are gods, and the knowledge we have of them is certain; but they are not what the vulgar suppose. The impious man is not he who refuses to believe in the gods of the common people, but he who accepts them as they do." His was an Atheism disguised, as Cicero says: "Video nonnullis videri Epicurum, ne in offensionem Atheniensium caderet, verbis reliquisse deos, re sustulisse." Thus Epicurus gathered up the fragments of Leucippus and Democritus, and gave them through Lucretius a form ready for future science. And, as his physical system anticipated much that modern times have more fully formulated, so his moral system was a favourable sketch of the highest ethics of Materialism. With him virtue is only the means, the prudential means, to the end of peace and tranquillity. While Plato sought the sovereign good in resemblance to God, and Zeno in conformity with universal law, Epicurus went no farther than the attainment of as near an approach as possible to the tranquil rest of nature, and the utmost enjoyment of life. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*, is St. Paul's account of the ethics down to which this system surely descends or gravitates by its own inherent tendency. 1 Cor. xv. 32.

## ATHEISM OR ANTITHEISM.

## Atheism.

When we speak of Atheism proper, we speak of a phase of the controversy touching a great First Cause of creation, which has, for reasons hereafter to be given, almost passed away. The word is not in favour; it is renounced even by those whose reasonings naturally lead to it; let other terms be used and they have no objection to a disguised god, either nameless or with the name

they prefer ; but Atheism they reject as unphilosophical. But, before reaching this more modern phase of the scientific Materialistic form of it, we must make some remarks on Atheism proper, which has aimed to rid the creation of a Creator and of a God.

Is  
Atheism  
possible?

Job xxi.  
14.  
Ps. liii. 1.

1. The question may be fairly asked. Is blank Atheism or Antitheism possible to the human mind? And the answer must be finally given that it is not. The appeal may be made to Scripture: an appeal which ought to be allowed, whether for the conclusion of all strife or not, since it is undeniable that the Bible contains the largest and noblest collection of the world's religious thoughts. Throughout the whole of this book, which gives its testimony to the whole variety of human error, there is no single allusion to men from whose minds the thought of God is erased. The book demonstrates everything about the Deity but His existence: it never descends to argue with an Atheist, for it never supposes that it speaks to such a man. Besides the wicked who say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways*, it singles out the fool who *hath said in his heart, there is no God*; but these are evidently, as the context proves, the same persons. The theoretical Atheist is not in the Bible. Nor will a believer in revelation allow that he exists in the world at large. Wherever the word of revelation is sent its mission is to proclaim, not the existence of God, but the sin of man, the need of a Deliverer, and a Deliverer provided. All nations are supposed to require only that the Unknown God, Whom they ignorantly worship, be declared unto them. And in every part of the world that faculty to receive the supernatural has been found, which is, if not the belief in God, yet at least the denial of Atheism. The appeal must be made to fact and the testimony of history, past and present: "What people is there," said Cicero, "or what race of men, which has not, without traditional teaching, some presentiment of the existence of gods?" That nations may have been found in the past, and tribes of savages now, which have no clear notion of one Supreme Being, and no worship of any kind, may be admitted. But the very lowest waifs and strays of humanity have always manifested the existence of that hidden mystery of its origin which owns affinity with the supernatural. And that is all our present argument requires.

De Nat.  
Deor. i. 16.

2. Atheism proper, as distinguished from other forms of the error that goes astray from God, has mostly sprung from moral causes, and denotes therefore a system of thought which the healthiest instinct of mankind has always abhorred. The early history of our race bears witness that the Atheist was counted unworthy of any respect. The denial of the existence of the gods was proscribed and punished. Even those systems of thought which tended to the removal of faith were careful to disguise their attack on the gods. Epicurus in words acknowledged their possible existence. After the appearance of our Lord professed atheism was very rare, until the general corruption of society in the last century. And, in fact, the term in theology is reserved for a state of feeling produced by many diversified moral causes, which culminated in the excesses of the French Revolution.

Reasons of  
Atheism.

3. Since that time Atheism has been scientific, philosophical, and generally disguised under the name of AGNOSTICISM: certainly the most refined of all its forms, and that which most directly mocks and insults the dignity of human nature. It shrinks from avowed Atheism; and will not dare to say there is no God. It shrinks from Materialism, and will not dare to say that the forces of matter account for all phenomena. It simply declares the impossibility of knowing what the tremendous FORCE is that controls all things. There is no more deadly form of the great error of mankind than this which undermines every foundation.

Agnosticism.

4. There may be said to be a modern ANTI-THEISM, that is not content with throwing off the fetters of a Deity, but must needs argue against the possibility of the existence of such a God as the Scriptures present. Atheism is content with the privative particle, Antitheism is active and aggressive. There is, however, a restraint upon the minds of men, and a decency in society, which forbid the explosion of this kind of sentiment. When it does appear it is at best, or at worst, little other than a modern Manichæism or Dualism. The existence of God is not blankly denied; but the evil that exists is made an argument that, if a God is, He must be limited in many respects, and not by any means the Being Whom we reverence and adore. There is much latent Manichæism in society and in literature; many fall back upon two deities who are hardly conscious of doing so. However, the God Whom the

Anti-  
Theism



- LEM. xlv.** Scriptures reveal must be accepted as He is, even though He says,  
**6, 7.** *I form the light and create darkness.*

**Scientific  
 Mate-  
 rialism.**

**SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM.**

If what has been said is true, then Materialism makes **matter** its god. There must be absolute existence: matter is eternal, self-sufficient, infinite, necessary, and the only being. Scientific Materialism, strictly so called, is based upon two principles which it sometimes postulates, though unreasonably, and sometimes seeks to prove, but unsuccessfully. One of them is negative, that there is nothing but matter in existence; and the other is positive, that matter in its combinations and modes of existence is an adequate cause of all phenomena. It may be objected that this is inverting the order of materialistic argument, which first proves that nothing but the laws of matter are needed to give a reason for all that exists, and then by the principle of the "sufficient reason" renounces all other existence. Yielding to this objection, though denying its truth, let us glance at the principles of the positive argument, and then at the negative conclusion: abstaining, however, from scientific controversy, which is generally not within our compass.

**Correla-  
 tion of  
 Physical  
 and  
 Spiritual  
 Forces.**

1. We need only mention two necessary demonstrations at which Materialism aims, in which, however, it signally fails: the correlation of physical and vital forces, and the correlation of these with mental, and what we call spiritual forces. Here are the stumbling-blocks of Materialism, over which it has hitherto fallen, and must for ever fall. Until these are established this system has no claim to be considered as based on inductive science. For simplification, we may drop the last link, that of the mental forces; and then the question becomes this: Is life one mode of the motion of that force which is supposed to be one, persistent and indestructible in the universe of material atoms? Scientific Materialism has at length, though not without diffidence and many haltings, come to the conclusion that it is so. Taking the material sun for its god—for every theory, like every man, must have a god—it finds in it the original force, potential everywhere and kinetic everywhere, of every movement in the sum of human things. Of the power

beyond that made the sun what it is—the god behind the god—it has nothing to say. Now, so long as this law is limited to physical changes, it may be accepted: it has to fight its own battle. But when it carries the law into the sphere of life, it not only denies the truth of Scripture, but ceases to have even that measure of probability which the theory of the interchangeableness of physical forces has. For a considerable time the argument from analogy was relied on. It was thought unphilosophic to stop short, after having discovered the one secret up to the limits of vital force: at any rate, the temptation was very strong to include the forces of life and thought under the one law. But the phenomena rebelled. It has been found utterly impossible to carry it into this other region. Life and thought have never submitted to measurement and quantification. Dead matter has never been changed into living. It is idle to speak of the correlation of physical and living or mental force, until the latter can be measured by the same standard as the former. The entrance of life into the sphere of matter is the annihilation of Materialism. It cannot explain that secret whereby something in the individual appropriates dead matter, suitable to its own type of existence. Materialists themselves acknowledge that this secret is hid from them; and vainly disguise their impotence by adopting such terms as “directive agency,” or “architectonic principle,” or “formative impulse.” Whence comes this principle of eternal difference between dead and living matter? Though denying it in words, Materialism touches, nevertheless, in reality the interaction of another set of forces besides those which reign in physics. This it will be driven finally to acknowledge. Materialists have done service by fixing attention upon the deep truth that there is a correlation between these forces; a most mysterious and wonderful interaction between the phenomena of physical and spiritual life. Well for them if they would learn, on their side, to distinguish things that differ.

2. Meanwhile, the system is chargeable with the utmost possible outrage upon the rational convictions of mankind. It is essentially atheistic in its tendency, if all who espouse these principles are not Atheists. There is a large number of those who bind up with matter and molecular action all kinds of life and thought

**Atheistic  
Tendency**

while they admit the possibility of an inscrutable force behind or above all this ; but they either deny the possibility of knowing anything about this unknown power, or they absolutely limit it to a force which has no operation save through matter. It may be safely affirmed that those who adopt the leading principles of Materialism either are or soon become Atheists. And, renouncing God, everything that confers dignity on man or worthiness on life is gone. The system denies the existence of anything beyond matter : it takes away from man his spirit, his immortality, his all. It ought to deny him the consciousness of personal identity ; its principles lead that way ; for if man is only material, and the particles of his physical self are every moment changing, and undergo a total change in the course of a few years, what can be the substratum of his identity ? It dares not take that away ; but it takes away all that makes it important. Materialism is the most irrational error that ever misled the human mind ; and to the holder of it, if to any, applies the Apostle's apostrophe, *ἄφρον!* Yet we have now to see this made into a philosophy.

1 Cor. xv.  
36.

### Positivism

### POSITIVISM.

Positivism has been dignified by the name of a philosophy. Its founder, Auguste Comte, was a legacy of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, and of French Encyclopædism and St. Simonianism to modern science. The result of his labours is a philosophy of the physical sciences which is almost entirely limited to induction, renouncing all thought of the causes of things, tracing simply the sequences of nature, and so ascertaining its laws, with a professed rejection of everything that is merely speculative or probable, and stern limitation of knowledge to what can be demonstrated beyond doubt, and is therefore Positive. To construct such a philosophy certain fundamental principles were adopted, which, however, are far from being positively determined : such as that nothing exists of which our senses do not assure us ; that there is nothing existent but matter ; that all phenomena are subject to invariable laws which it is the business of science to register, and only to register ; that these laws are simply relations of succession and resemblance ; that in the cerebral phenomena of

mind they are as absolutely physical in their necessary sequence as any other observed phenomena, only that they require greater care in observation ; and that the highest aim of science should be to forecast by scientific prevision the certain future of human actions, just as the courses of the planets may be predicted. Hence the Positive Philosophy, interpreting the possible future by the past, and the necessary laws of human action which it has discovered, exults in the ambition to reduce the infinite complications of human freewill and congregated action to the exactness of a physical science. "I will venture to say that sociological science, though only established by this book, already rivals mathematical science itself, not in precision and fecundity, but in positivity and rationality." This assertion of Comte was not empty declamation. Both he and his followers have surveyed the history of the world on this principle, and are full of confidence that by mastering the laws of human action they will provide the ordained rulers of the world's social fabric. But Sociology is never far from Religion ; and the Positive Philosophy is no exception to the universal rule that every system of thought that commands human attention must deserve it by at least attempting to account for the principles that men call their faith. What then is the relation of this philosophy to Religion ?

1. First, Positivism has its method of accounting for the religions that now are, before it substitutes its own. It sets out with the broad generalisation that the human race passes through three stages of intellectual evolution. First comes that in which the supernatural haunts the thought, seeking for causes of things, and inventing a Deity with all His court to account for them : this theological stage works itself slowly upwards from abject superstition, such as Fetichism, through the Polytheistic and Pantheistic systems, up to Christianity. Secondly comes the Metaphysical stage, which is only a modification of the first : that in which the ideas of abstract forces, or occult powers, are introduced to account for the phenomena of the universe by those who have rejected the idea of a Creator. Thirdly and lastly, comes the Positive stage, in which the mind, ashamed of its superstitions, and wearied of its ontological researches, limits itself to the arrangement of phenomena. When this generalisation is examined it explodes imme-

The  
Positivist  
Account  
of  
Religion.

The Three  
Stages.

diately. It is not true historically ; nor has it any right to govern a philosophy of history. It is undoubtedly correct as an explanation of the history of many individual minds, which have passed through the phases of simple faith in God, and metaphysical, pantheistic, or dualistic subtilties which have been substituted for it, ending in a dreary determination to accept only what is, and to leave the rest to nescience. The celebrated "three stages" have not the slightest value, save as registering the progress of faith through scepticism to unbelief.

The  
Positive  
Religion.

2. The Positive Philosophy has its religion. For, in its fidelity to the observation and record of positive facts, it finds nothing more positive than the universal aspiration of mankind towards the unseen and the all but universal practice of some kind of worship. Now these facts must not be accounted for theologically or metaphysically : that is to say, there must be no God ; nor must any force, making for what it may, be substituted. It is a positive fact which must be dealt with philosophically and socially. But, looked at in either light, the Positivist way of treating man's religion is a gigantic inconsistency.

False to  
Induc-  
tion.

(1.) This last development of the scientific spirit refuses to carry the inductive principle into the region of the mental and emotional and active phenomena of mankind. It observes and notes these things ; but with the foregone conclusion that they are the result of a certain combination of material atoms, and development of these forces not yet perfectly accounted for. Forced by its hypothesis to exclude all metaphysical or occult causes on the one hand, and swayed, on the other hand, by the despotism of the desire to find the unity of all things, it notes and registers all the mental and spiritual phenomena of mankind, the thoughts that penetrate the lowest depths, and the aspirations that shrink not from the highest heights, as so many new facts concerning matter. Now here is the deep inconsistency of the whole system. The innumerable phenomena of thought, feeling, and will are as much facts as gravitation, cohesion, and molecular motion. The same consciousness guarantees both : the one as belonging to self, and the other as belonging to not-self. The testimony of conscience asserts that the continuity is broken between these ; that they go together up to a certain point, and

then separate; not taking two paths, however, for there is an illimitable gulf between. The world of concepts, imaginations, feelings, and emotions, absolutely unallied with matter, is a real world, and ought to be dealt with as such. Positivism shuts its eyes to the positive fact that this ideal world governs the other material world, and is not governed by it.

(2.) Socially, Positivism uses, or would use, the religious instincts—by whatever name known—of mankind for the good of the body corporate. It must have its objective creed; and the only positive thing to believe in, venerate, and worship is Humanity: "The Great Collective Life of which human beings are the individuals. It must be conceived as having an existence apart from human beings, just as we conceive each human being to have an existence apart from, though dependent on, the individual cells of which his organism is composed. This Collective Life is, in Comte's system, the *Etre Suprême*; the only one we can know, therefore the only one we can worship." This being the first article of the New Creed, its last, as the substitute for Resurrection and Immortality, is "Living in the remembrance" of survivors. Here, it must strike everyone, is another proof of a fact that has forced itself upon us everywhere, that no system is without its god: the human mind can no more think without that condition than without the conditions of time and space. Positivism must have its something beyond, and above, and surviving its material nature. What is its abstract humanity but the creature worshipped *κατὰ τὸν Κρίσιν*, instead of the Creator?

Worship  
of Hu-  
manity.

Lewes'  
Princ. of  
Pos. Phil.

#### SECONDARY CREATION, OR COSMOGONY.

The Wisdom of God, accompanying His Power, presides over Creation as secondary, that is, as Formation. It is necessary to establish a distinction between the first production of matter and its subsequent elaboration, if such a term may be used, into the Cosmos, which brings us into the region of Cosmogony or Cosmology. It is important to consider whether the terms used by the inspired writer permit the distinction. Generally, it may be said that *בְּרָא* and *עָשָׂה* and *יָצַר* in the Hebrew, are used interchangeably for both, answering to *κτίω* in the Greek, and that

Formation  
or Cosmo-  
gony.

they do not distinguish between the first creation and the second : each being equally the act of omnipotence. But the double expression *Created and Made* seems significantly to indicate a distinction which is not clearly defined ; and a careful examination of later passages in which they are used together or separately will confirm this supposition. It must be remembered, however, that this secondary creation, or continuous formation, is in the truest sense production into being, as the infusion into the primitive matter of new forms and types of life, from the lowest trace of it scarcely discernible by science up to the soul of man. Hence the gradual construction of which the Scriptural Cosmogony speaks at length is in reality creation proper to us.

The  
Mosaic  
Cosmo-  
gony.

#### THE MOSAIC COSMOGONY.

The authoritative account of Creation found in Genesis is not, of course, what in modern language would be called scientific. It is given in the form of an express revelation from God Himself, before man or his science existed : given as the basis of all subsequent revelation to Israel, for the Hebrew observance of the sabbath is essentially bound up with it ; but given also for all mankind, the Genesis out of which all human history sprang. Receiving it as such, we have first to consider its own teaching : its relation to other systems is a subordinate matter, but must be looked at also in its place.

All Crea-  
tion in  
Six Days.

Ex. xxxi.  
17.

1. It is important to remember that it furnishes an account of all creation, whether primary or secondary : but with special reference to the latter, in the preparation of the earth for the history of man and redemption. Strictly speaking, there is no distinction between these ; the six days' work, we are told subsequently, included the universe : *In six days the Lord made heaven and the earth.* However the days are interpreted they embrace the sum of things. What basis of truth there is in the general theory of evolution, which, as working in the great cosmical forces of inanimate nature, takes the form or many forms of the Nebular Hypothesis, and, as working in animated nature, takes the form or many forms of Development, must be made consistent with this doctrine of creation. But the Scriptural Cosmogony makes

the will of God, expressed in fact, first the origin of all things, and then the Law behind these other laws. Before our Biblical Chaos and above it and around it there was a steadfast and tranquil cosmical system, the result of secondary creation acting through the natural laws which it fixed: it was only the earth that was *without form and void*. And the six days of our account exhibit this truth with special reference to our economy. There was a development from term to term, but each stage marks a new creation in this development. When this evolution of species ended, and all types were consummated in Man, creation closed, and God *rested and was refreshed*; but only to begin again, in a third sabbatic economy, the continuous uncreating regulation of all minor evolutions: *My Father worketh hitherto*. The record in Genesis thus includes both primary and secondary creation. Its opening words alone declare the former: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*. Between that beginning and the chaos of the second verse, when *the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*, some have interposed a space, giving the widest possible or necessary latitude for the geological ages demanded by modern science. On this principle of interpretation the second verse itself leaves the operation of the forming and fashioning Spirit indeterminate. The light of revelation has risen only with dimness as yet upon the scene. The record has not for its object the details of creation as such; but only so far as they concern the coming history of mankind. This is thought to be obvious from the distinction between heaven and earth in the first verse, and the suppression of heaven in the second. The silence that reigns after the first great declaration is regarded as at once a warning and an encouragement both to theology and to geology: only there can the reconciliation be sought, and there it may be found. But, whatever of truth there may be in this, it still remains that the six days' work of creation blends the primary and secondary in one: the sabbatic commandment in the Decalogue being witness.

2. The interpretation of the days must conform to this truth. Accordingly, we may understand the sublime description to mean that the enormous cycles of creative activity, the epochs of God

Gen. i. 2.

Ex. xxxi.  
17.John v.  
17.

Gen. i. 1.

Gen. i. 2.

The Days



Secular  
Days and  
Natural  
Days  
United.

Gen. i 31.

whose periods are not as ours, are presented to us in our history as human epochs. There is then a double series of days, an upper and a lower, the one corresponding to the other. The upper and heavenly are the great cycles of creation which ended in the sabbatic cycle of the reconstructed economy with man at its head. The lower and earthly are the form they take to us in the representation of literal days, ending on the seventh day, hallowed for ever: each of our working days being used to symbolise its own term in the secondary creation of God, and our literal sabbath His rest. The first day is the most comprehensive, including all down to the production of light: one period of untold duration which it pleased God to call a human day, with its evening and morning. The last day is the long sabbatic rest with God, with man it is the hallowed day of rest. It is quite consistent with this that the record of the first day is left in such obscurity. It is in harmony with the simplicity of the early record to leave the unwritten history of the primitive earth to the researches of science, for which the Spirit of revelation has reserved this honour; and to regard the narrative as specially limiting the *HEXAMERON*, or six-days' work, to the fashioning of the earth as the future abode of man. While the days of the Scriptural Cosmogony are creative days, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, they throw the emphasis on the periods of a new creation, or of a new formation, superimposed each on an earlier and, as it were, perished order of things. In the final creation all was *very good*; hence every trace of the rapine and death which, through some unknown cause, had existed in its earlier epochal stages, were removed, to be detected, nowever, afterwards, and to be explained. It must be remembered that in this record every day of formation was a day also of absolute creation. No theory of evolution or development that seems to trace a regular succession of forms through which organic existence has passed, in obedience to a plastic law originally impressed upon matter, can be made consistent with Scripture. The days of the first chapter of Genesis are creative days: they spent their cycles and ended, the cycles being shorter and shorter, but each having on earth its memorial day. The last in which creation ceased is running its course now, and will run on to the new creation.

3. The glory of the Mosaic Cosmogony is its testimony to God, Who reigns supreme in it from beginning to end, whether as the Elohim of the first chapter, or the Jehovah-Elohim of the second. He is the Absolute Creator of a universe which is not Himself, evolved according to laws which in this record are exhibited as successively communicated by a series of fiats or impulses. The beginning of each great development is marked, and nothing more. So long as we hold fast this principle we shall find the original document unassailable: if we attempt to harmonise the order of the days with the exact results of scientific discovery we undertake a needless and a doubtful task. Science has nothing to object against a Creator of matter and of life: it knows no other origin of existence phenomenal. Whether, and at what points, the creating impulse infused new energies into the order of nature, science is utterly powerless to say. But the Bible distinctly, most distinctly, gives its answer: what science may call permanent causes were necessarily introduced: no induction has ever proved the contrary, however sometimes longing to do so. The reign of law is a favourite scientific notion: the adaptation of everything to its specific function, and the invariable submission of all things to its rule. The Scripture is no less precise: *He commanded and they were created; He hath also established them for ever and ever; He hath made a decree which shall not pass.* The beautiful idea of Development has also full justice done to it in Scripture: a development that proceeds through its evenings and mornings, each good but leading to that which is finally very good in the consummation of man, and followed by a rest of creative activity which science admits, but admits sometimes to pervert. At this point we are met by two different classes of objection: one to the order of the development as given by Moses; the other to the general principle of successive impulses.

Natural  
Theology  
and  
Science.

Ps. cxlviii.  
5, 6.

#### THE ORDER OF THE MOSAIC CREATION.

Order of  
Creation

1. The record of Genesis divides the creation into two parts: the inorganic and the organic. Each begins by the creation of light: on the first day, light cosmical, the radiating force of light and heat, with its medium of ether; on the fourth day, light as con-

nected for man with visible light-bearers. No valid objection arises here: science knows nothing of the amazing quantity of light which is dispersed from the sun and stars, an infinitesimal portion only of which is intercepted by attendant planets; nor can it give any account of the origination of light and heat in the sun. On the second day, the earth was individualised as such, by the creation of its atmosphere: against this also there is no scientific argument. On the third day the earth's surface was constituted, and vegetation began. The Biblical relation of land to sea is in harmony with geological conclusions. But the question is, whether all the previous conditions of the terrestrial economy were sufficient to bring plants into existence without a creative fiat. Science admits a VITAL force in the plant: how many forms or types were created we are not told; herbs and trees are distinguished, but what *after his kind* may include we cannot determine. In the order of nature, as well as in that of Scripture, plants, the food of all animals, must precede the animal creation. Geology has failed to prove that the fossil representations of the vegetable world are not, in some parts of the earth, below the remains of any animals. With the fifth day animal life began, for which the partial organic life of the vegetable prepared the way; and on the sixth day the inhabitants of the earth were formed, including man, but created according to a larger variety of types. The whole account is in the simplest form of words; but bears witness to a profound method. Each era preludes that which follows; each day is prophetic of the next; and while man is included among the mammalia his pre-eminence is asserted, as we shall hereafter see. The whole bears precisely the relation to science which we should expect in a record dated before science was known: giving the great outline which He alone could furnish Who was there from the beginning, and which He gave to a chosen people to be the first fragment of revelation.

Gen. i. 1)

Omission  
in the  
Record.

2. He alone was there from the beginning; but as the days moved on in their slow procession His works were watched by other intelligences whose creation belonged to the first day; though of that the record gives no distinct account, being intended for man alone. What the book of Genesis may be in other worlds

we know not. Our record is limited to ourselves. But we mark the chasms in it which we cannot supply : or which we can supply only by dangerous speculation. The great convulsion in the spiritual world is omitted : the fall of the angels, and its possible connection with the destiny of our earth. It has been a favourite hypothesis to assume that between the first verse and the second there is a break ; that the words *the earth was without form and void* indicate a disorganisation and ruin which had come upon all things for reasons unknown ; that the six days were periods of readjustment, or of a first restitution of all things answering to that *restitution of all things* which will take place at the end. But *תהו* does not necessarily mean ruin : *He created it not in ruin, תהו, He formed it to be inhabited.* Moreover, this theory does not solve, it only evades, our great difficulties. In the strata of the earth's crust there lie the remains of animals which had lived under the dominion of disease, and rapine, and death : a prelude of human history which is as deep a mystery, and must remain so, as that other prelude, the sin of angels.

Gen. i. 2

Acts iii.  
21.  
Isa. xlv.  
18.

## EXTRA-BIBLICAL COSMOGONIES.

Gentile  
Cosmo-  
gonies

In almost all the religious annals of mankind there are to be found traditions of the creation, which, for the most part, are entirely independent of the Hebrew Scriptures as to their origin, while their form is often strikingly parallel with the Mosaic account. They are found among nations to which the Hebrew Scriptures could never have penetrated, from the ancient Aryan tribes to the islands of the Pacific. Yet a few points, common to all, seem to indicate one primeval Cosmogony, of which, as we believe, the Biblical is the genuine text. In the Indian Vedas the Eternal One thought "I will create worlds," and water came into existence, with the germs of all life ; but we read of the original chaos, the formless mist in which being was mirrored, and the creative word. In the Persian Zendavesta, Ormuzd, the god of light, as well as Ahriman, the god of darkness, arose out of the abyss of primitive being ; the former fashioned the world in six long successive periods, a remarkable parallel with the account in Genesis. With this agrees most strangely the Etruscan cosmogony from quite a

different quarter. In the Egyptian, as handed down by Diodorus Siculus, the moving wind separated heaven and earth out of chaos, and the successive periods of formation followed. In the Phœnician the origin of all was a dark, windy chaos, on which the Spirit rested; producing the original matter of creation. Hesiod's Theogony begins with the universal void, and goes on with an order of production that strangely accords with our record, though many of the details are inverted. Not unlike this is the Latin, according to Ovid's version. In all these the chaos, the brooding spirit, and the successive separations and creations of Genesis, appear in some form or other. But there the parallel mostly ends. The grotesque and utterly extravagant conceits from which every instinct recoils, and of which the imagination is ashamed,—the "world-egg" playing a prominent part from China to the South Seas—place a great gulf between all the cosmogonies of the world and the sublime simplicity of the record in which faith hears the voice of God and nought beside.

#### Evolution.

#### EVOLUTION.

With the modern, or rather the revived, theories of Evolution, the Cosmogony of science, we have nothing to do save as they are related to theology. They are considered at this point, because they are not necessarily to be placed among Pantheistic, Dualistic, or Materialist errors. Undoubtedly, they are propounded by many in these three several interests, or rather in the interests of the first and last of the three. But it cannot be too distinctly remembered that their entire terminology, almost from beginning to end, implies that they are describing the production of all things phenomenal out of things that do not appear through the operation of some laws which necessarily connote a power guiding the law. Evolution is either the law by which that power constructs the inorganic universe, or that by which it orders the development of life in all its manifestations.

#### Cosmical.

#### COSMICAL EVOLUTION.

Bold hypothesis, sustained by mathematical science, has assumed that elementary matter existed in a highly attenuated state, for the expression of which every material word is too gross. This nebula, fire-mist, or dust of creation had in it or received all the power

and potentialities of the vast future. Some flash of energy threw this silent depository of all known laws into eternal activity. Rotation, radiation, cooling, produce centrifugal force which detaches the nucleus of future planets, and these by known laws necessarily seeking their origin again are thrown into orbits, meanwhile throwing off in their turn, during the process, attendants of their own. On the vastest scale this is the universe; on a smaller scale the solar system; on the smallest scale our little earth with its endless molecular, chemical, and dynamical laws. But the central fires are not lighted to burn for ever. The dissipation of heat must sometime bring all motion to a standstill; for that heat, so far as science knows, does not return to its place. Systems must therefore collapse, to engender heat for other great evolutions into system. But this cannot go on for ever. The beginning of any system can be calculated; so can its end. This rough sketch of the Nebular Hypothesis gives us a Cosmogony which is not inconsistent with the Scriptural Genesis as to its beginning; nor is it inconsistent with the prophecies of Scripture as to its end. But the gigantic fallacy is that such mathematicians as Laplace should think that they have no need of the hypothesis of a God; and that such philosophers as Hegel should say that the final cause of the universe is only its inward nature. Whence the forces residing in matter? Whence the beautiful order into which it falls? Whence the variety of elementary substances with all their endowments of gravitation, chemical affinity, and magnetic attraction? And how could these evolve the minds that make them all objective, and, by becoming their historians, show that they are themselves of another and a higher order?

#### ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT.

One of the most remarkable evolutions of modern science is the attempt to account for the phenomena by assuming the principle that from one primordial germ all the infinite varieties of organic life have been developed through a very long series of ages. Perhaps, it would be more fair to say that students of natural history have thought themselves justified, by a great number of observations, in supposing this to be the law of the living universe. But whether they work downwards from a bold hypothesis, or

Con-  
tinuum  
Develop-  
ment.

work upwards by bold generalisations, the fact remains the same, that this is what the theory known as the Darwinian aims at. If, however, the law is not absolute, if there are exceptions anywhere, the simplicity of their cosmogony is gone, and the principle of the Mosaic creation must be conceded. The theory is most exacting. It is held by pantheistic Positivists, who imagine they believe in immanent final causes, and undirected evolution; it is held also by the Agnostic thinkers, who muse over the unknowable force that displays such cunning; and it is held by men who assume that the Eternal Creator simply appointed this method of evolving His universe. These last believe that Heredity, the inscrutable power of transmitting peculiarities; Natural Selection, or the survival of nature's best types; and, lastly, a Law Unknown in human knowledge, conduct the great development under the eye of the Eternal Whose rest, as the Creator of all, began not on the seventh day but on the first.

Broken in  
Introduc-  
tion of  
Life.

1. The continuity of this development suffers a fatal breach at the outset: it has no link between the inorganic and the organic worlds. The Mosaic Genesis has that link; it tells us that the Creator has prepared the material world by progressive stages to be the habitation of life. And the New-Testament Genesis tells us that the development is yet proceeding towards a consummation when all things will again be made new. The modern hypothesis desires that this should be left an open question: it may hereafter appear that under certain conditions inorganic matter may be formed into cells containing the germ of life, in which case the continuity would be complete. Meanwhile, the doctrine of Biogenesis, that all life comes from life, holds the field against all experiment, or rather in the strength of all experiment. Spontaneous generation has never yet been attested. But that is not the only gap. The genesis of a new species of any kind, whether of plant or animal, has never been observed by man: has the universe come to its consummation, and reached its sabbatic rest? Again, it is the opinion of the majority of those competent to speak that there are absolute limits to the variability of species; that many fossil transitional forms are utterly and most conspicuously absent. And, most fatal gap of all, the leap from the highest approximate to the appearance of man himself is one over

And  
other  
wise.

a great gulf as fixed as that between Paradise and the lower Hades. But of Man we must speak hereafter.

2. As held by its best advocates this theory pays a high tribute to the truth against which it seems to contend. No writings have done so much, certainly none have done more, to open men's eyes to the infinite variety, and beauty, and wonderfulness of the adjustments of the vegetable and animal worlds, than those which are written in opposition to the doctrine of occasional Divine interventions in the economy of things. Moreover, they have called attention to some truths that are too generally neglected as to the degree in which it has pleased the Creator to use the principle which they so much dishonour by exaggeration. He has committed much to development. Within certain limits the fauna and the flora of our earth are replenished and beautified by manifold variations, through which, however, His original types are clearly seen by every unbiassed eye. They have also taught us to appreciate the wonderful relation in which man is placed to the creatures whose all is bound up with the earth; that, as created out of the dust, he is a development of older physical types, a final development on which evolution has spent itself, found worthy at last to be the receptacle of an immortal spirit. By tracing so elaborately the dim and impersonal reflections of our mental and moral characteristics in the lower creatures, it has read us some important lessons: pre-eminently, the necessity of accurately distinguishing between instinct and reason; between the only "unconscious cerebration" of which we ought to speak and the thought of a personal thinker; between the animal soul, which, using a physical brain, may have its resemblances in the brutes that have brains also, and the immortal spirit whose consciousness and conscience and feeling for the infinite can have nothing resembling them in the lower economy. But, when this theory of long, slow, cyclical development is burdened with the production of all things, the growth of moral and spiritual sentiments included, it has two unrelenting opponents: Science cannot allow time enough since the calculated beginning of the solar system; and Religion protests in the name of God, and for the honour of His incarnate Son, and for the dignity of man himself, the descendant of Adam, *Which was the Son of God.*

Estimate  
of Evolu-  
tion.

Luke III.  
38.



**The End  
of the  
Creation.**

**THE MOTIVE AND END OF THE CREATION.**

Supposing the Scriptural doctrine of creation established against Pantheism, Dualism, and Materialism, and as the free act of an Infinite Spirit, it remains to ask concerning the purpose of God in the production of finite nature. As soon as we are disencumbered of the pantheistic and materialistic notion of an immanent necessity of all things being as they are, and separate the finite from the Infinite, we are compelled by the constitution of our nature to ask the Why of creaturely existence. We must seek and cannot rest till we find a cause of all things before they are, and a reason of all things when they are. The question of the final cause is as urgent in the human spirit as the question of the originating cause. The latter is easily answered, and we have been satisfied as to that. But the former, the final cause of all things, is not so easily answered. It might be reserved for the doctrine of Providence, to which it strictly belongs. But it cannot be altogether omitted here. To the humble reader of Scripture nothing seems more obvious than at once to answer: The universe was brought into being for the display of the Divine glory in the diffusion of His communicative goodness. But, simple as this solution seems, each branch of it is burdened with difficulties, and the whole must be supplemented by another clause: according to a design the issues of which are to human reason now, and possibly may be for ever, unfathomable.

**Manifestation of  
Divine  
Glory.**

1. No reverent mind can doubt that the manifestation of the Divine glory is a worthy end of all things. But it must be remembered that the Scriptures, our only guide, do not make this the only end: they speak of the glory of God as being proclaimed, and of all creatures as brought into being for His pleasure, and for Himself; but they do not, in express terms, assert that the final cause of creaturely existence is the display of the Divine attributes. We can hardly sever from such a thought the idea of a necessary manifestation: His glory must be revealed, and ought not to be made subject even in appearance to the law of design and final causes. And, to speak with reverence, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that, if the manifestation of Deity is the final end of creation, creation must be made eternal. But the free determina-

tion of a personal Spirit to bring a universe into being must have some place in its design for that love which neither in God nor in man seeks only its own things. Hence the true heart of all catholic theology has added the second clause : in the diffusion of His communicative goodness.

2. On the other hand, while a motive of creation was undoubtedly the communicative goodness of God, which brought numberless beings into existence to rejoice in them and make them blessed, the mind cannot rest satisfied in this alone; for the world was created in the foreknowledge of its evil. Men who make Divine benevolence the supreme motive in the creation are tempted to reduce the evil of sin by making this, as Leibnitz did, the best possible world, on the whole, for the ultimate diffusion of happiness. This is termed OPTIMISM, and is harmonised with Christianity by assuming that the great Restoration in Christ will make the evil subserve an infinitely greater good. Moreover, those who insist that, the nature of God being love, the creation of objects of that love was a necessity in the Divine Being Himself, forget that in the Infinite essence love has its own interior satisfaction eternally in the intercommunion of the Three Persons.

3. The only sufficient answer, therefore, is that the ultimate final cause of creation is unfathomable. The supreme design is a secret not yet unveiled. When our Lord said, in reply to a question which closely bordered on the origin of evil, *that the works of God should be made manifest*, He suggested the display of all God's perfections, including His love, but put His answer in such a form as to shut out any further human inquiry. The Creator has given being to a finite universe for the display of all His perfections, for the glory of His name. But we are limited to our own portion of it. To us the universe is our own world; and we know that creation and redemption are bound up in one. He Who created mankind was the Same Who redeemed the race; He Who redeemed it created it for redemption. And we believe and are sure, though the mystery is unfathomable, that God's name will be glorified for ever in the issue of redemption, under the sovereign ascendancy of love. So, with regard to the wider universe of creation generally, we must repose in the assurance that it is the sphere of the manifestation of Divine perfections, under the sovereign

Not only  
for  
Diffusion  
of Good-  
ness.

Optimism.

Ultimate  
Design  
Un-  
fathom-  
able.  
John ix. 3

ascendency of His goodness, but with an ulterior end transcending all finite thought. For the rest, this subject links Creation with Providence, and will return upon us.

The  
Created  
Universe.

### THE CREATED UNIVERSE.

Sundry comprehensive terms are used in Scripture to embrace and describe the sum of creaturely existence. The most convenient theological distribution of the entire Creation for our present purpose is that which divides it into the Spiritual World, the Material Universe, and Man as uniting both in himself.

- The Old Testament begins its announcement of the creation of all things by saying that *God created* THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH, and retains that designation throughout its whole compass to the end. The New Testament adds many other general descriptive definitions: Πάντα and τὰ Πάντα, *all things*, modified as all things *visible and invisible*; ἡ Κτίσις, *the creation of God*; ὁ Κόσμος, *the world* in its vast order; οἱ Αἰῶνες, *the worlds*, in their sæcular succession. These expressions approach very nearly the classical τὸ Πάν of ancient philosophy, the Universum, or the modern term Universe as the system of created things.
- Gen. i. 1.  
John. i. 3.  
Col. i. 16.  
Rev. iii. 14.  
John xvii. 5.  
Heb. i. 2.

Angelo-  
logy.

### ANGELS AND SPIRITS.

Revelation gives a large place to an order of intelligences higher than man: the history of creation, the records of providence, and the economy of redemption, connect them with mankind in various ways. We now consider them simply as part of the creation of God, and as to their place in the economy of things. They are everywhere designated Spirits and Angels. Being Spirits they are represented as, to a certain extent, independent of matter; highly exalted in their faculties; diversified in their range of existence; under a law of probation; and, as a result of that probation, distributed into two classes

of good and evil. As Angels, they are represented as attendants on the Supreme, employed in the service of His providence; and especially as connected for good or evil with the history of the Divine purpose in redemption, from its origin upon earth throughout all its processes to its close at the final judgment.

## SPIRITS.

## Spirits.

The name Spirits is given to these creatures of God to denote their specific nature, concerning which we are of necessity shut up entirely to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

1. They occupy a sphere of existence less closely connected with the material universe than that of man in his present estate. Their spirituality, however, must not be misunderstood. It seems to be synonymous with invisibility in the only passage which directly links them with the creaturely universe, or records their creation: by Christ *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible*. God alone is pure essential Spirit: these created spirits are clothed upon with ethereal vestures, such as Paul describes when he says, *There is a spiritual body*. Thus our Lord tells us that the *children of the resurrection* are *ισάγγελοι, equal unto the angels*. Having a more subtle organisation than man, they are at present higher in their range of faculties: *greater in power and might and angels that excel in strength*. But what their faculties are, what organs they use, and what is the bond between their psychology and our own, we know not. They were created at once and in a wide variety of grades. Though the description *thrones, dominions, principalities, powers*, partly refers to their ministerial offices, there are other indications of a boundless range of existence in the super-terrestrial world, answering to the abundance and diversity of life upon earth; but without the law of species, and admitting of no increase by generation or development: they are all and individually, as created at once one by one, *sons of God* by direct filiation. Hence the revelation of Scripture discloses precisely such a continuation upwards of the scale of being as analogy would suggest: as in the lower orders the species is all and the individual nothing, as in man the species

Relation  
to Matter.

Col. i. 16.

1 Cor. xv.

44.

Lu. xx. 36.

2 Pet. ii

11.

Ps. ciii.

20.

Col. i. 6

Job i. 6.

and the individual are blended, so in the upper world the species is lost, and each is apart and alone before God : all, however, being marshalled and distributed into orders of the laws of which we know nothing save that they do not include species and generation.

Probation  
and Fall.  
Jude 6.

2. All spirits were created in the image of God : and their *first estate* was probationary : this law of the moral government of the Most High seems to be universal. In the constitution of their nature lay the possibility of falling from their allegiance. The issue of probation was the fall of a portion of these spirits, with One as their head. These, sharing his rebellion, were condemned

1 Tim. iii.  
6.

with him. We read once of *the condemnation of the devil* : a remarkable expression, which can have but one meaning, as no created being has the authority to condemn. Hence we gather that Satan, before a tribunal of which we have no record, was convicted of pride and cast out of his high place ; doomed to a degradation commensurate with the height of his former dignity. Many fell into his apostasy, and were condemned to the same ruin : how many we need not ask, though it is observable that all the notes of multitude which the Scripture uses are employed to swell the numbers of the good spirits. On the other side we hear one say, *My name is Legion*, and that they constituted *the third part of the stars of heaven* : words on which we cannot lay any stress. But their sentence is for mysterious reasons not yet fully executed : they are reserved for a last judgment and sentence : *know ye not that we shall judge angels* ? The great majority—not of *the angels that sinned*—were confirmed in their state of holiness for ever :

Mark v.  
9.  
Rev. xii.  
4.

1 Cor. vi.  
3.  
2 Pet. ii. 4.

1 Tim. v.  
21.

Deut.  
xxxiii.  
2.

they are, therefore, *elect angels* ; elect, as in the case of man, not through pre-ordination, but through approval and separation from the doomed of their own order. Hence, they are also termed Saints : *He came with ten thousands of saints*. The whole economy of the angel world as known to man is divided into two orders, retaining severally their orderly ranks, as a good and an evil hierarchy. The Epistle to the Ephesians, which gives in compensation to those who burned their books of curious arts the most explicit revelation touching the spiritual world, refers in the beginning to the ranks of the better class, and in the end to the ranks of the fallen. But it must be observed that the evil are generally designated spirits, the good are almost invariably angels :

Ch. i.

Ch. vi

the exceptions on either side are few. The spirits of evil are pre-eminently Satan or the Devil, and dæmons, or *unclean spirits*; Satan the first sinner, the first tempter, the true Antichrist, and, retaining one of his archangel names, the *prince* or *god of this world*; and devils, *δαίμονια*, who in great numbers troubled the bodies and souls of men while their Head assailed the Redeemer. When we reach the doctrine of Sin it will be necessary to introduce these higher intelligences again.

Mark i 27  
Zech. xiii.  
2.  
John xiv.  
30.

3. While the good and unfallen spirits are generally the Holy Angels, and the evil spirits of Scripture are not generally termed by that name, yet these are also represented as subserving the purposes of the Supreme. Even if they are the servants of their prince, both they and he alike must directly or indirectly, by command or by permission, do the behest of the only Supreme Will. In the mystery of that will they are left in the free restraint or the restrained freedom of the sphere of the redeeming economy. Satan is the *prince of the power of the air*, and his hosts are *spiritual wickedness in high places*; but both the air and the high places are within the Saviour's domain: His authority compasses our world, and no line limits it outward. Still more strange is it that both in ancient and in modern revelation the ministers of evil are exhibited as in the upper spiritual world: a true *wonder in heaven*. But the term is used here symbolically for the spiritual sphere only. It may be noted, finally, that while the Divine Being uses the good spirits to chastise wickedness, almost always the evil spirits are used to discipline the offending righteous.

Good and  
Evil.

Eph ii.  
2.  
Eph vi.  
12.

Rev. xii.  
3.

## ANGELS.

## Angels.

The denomination Angels, which runs through the Scriptures as pervadingly as the name of God Himself, before Whom they stand, is used with reference to their ministerial service; as the Hebrew *מַלְאָכִים* and the Greek *ἄγγελος* signify. With the exception of some few passages, such as *the Devil and his angels*; *Messenger*, or *angel, of Satan*; *the Dragon fought and his angels*—which do not use the term in an official sense, and are therefore scarcely exceptions,—the angels are the attendants on God and ministers of His will

Matt xxv.  
41.

2 Cor. xii.  
7.  
Rev. xii 7

throughout all the economies of His government. This gives them their glory and their grace in the Bible.

1. There can be no higher description of them than that they wait upon God. The Lord is the *Lord of hosts*, and the holy angels are His *sons*: *all the sons of God shouted for joy*. Their joy is the joy of worship: they sing the doxology to the Holy Trinity—to man as yet unrevealed, but revealed to them—in Isaiah's mystical temple; they receive the commandment, which they were quick to obey, to worship the Son when He was *brought into the world*; and they descend to sympathise with, if indeed they do not join in, the devotion of the Church of God among men. So near are they to the manifested Divine glory, and so do they reflect it, that they are called gods:—*worship Him, all ye gods!* though this, as in the case of human judges, receiving the same designation, may refer rather to their representative character as executing their functions in the Divine name. In this character they are known as Cherubim: forms which are symbolical, rather than descriptive, and signify the forces of the created universe, attendant upon God, but not God Himself; and Seraphim, also representing the creature before God and extolling His perfections, as unslumbering *Watchers*, burning with Divine love. But the highest honour conferred upon them is this, that the Supreme unites them with Himself as His court:—*Let us go down!* includes them, though the *US* points to another mystery. Throughout the Old Testament the Lord is *in the assembly of His saints*; into which even the representative of evil spirits might enter, before Christ came to cast them out finally: *and Satan came also among them*. But this leads to the ministry of these blessed spirits of heaven.
2. They are called *ministering spirits*, *λειτουργικά πνεύματα*: ministering to God, that is, in His general government of the universe, in the economy of redemption, and in His providence over the saints. As to the first, we have no power to determine the extent of their operation in the physical universe; but we read of such occasional interventions—for instance, the slaying of the Assyrian host, the phenomena at Mount Sinai—as forbid any doubt concerning their rare and occasional ministry in this domain: if, indeed, rare and occasional, of which there is no
- Divine Court.  
Isa. xlviii. 4.  
Job i. 6.  
Job xxxviii. 7.  
Isa. vi.  
Heb. i. 6.  
1 Cor. xi. 10.  
Ps xcvi. 7.  
Gen. iii. 24.  
Ps xlviii. 10.  
Ezek. i. 10.  
Rev. ix. 7.  
Dan. iv. 17.  
Gen. i. 26; xi. 7.  
Ps lxxxix. 7.  
Job i. 6;  
Zech. iii. 1.  
1 Kings xxii. 19.  
Heb. i. 14.  
Ministering Spirits.  
2 Kings xix. 35.  
Gal. iii. 19.  
Deut. xxxiii. 2.

proof. But in the history of redemption they appear as statedly and fixedly as Prophets and Apostles themselves : especially at the great crises, the Creation, the Lawgiving, the History of the Incarnate Lord, *seen of angels*, and the dread solemnities of the Last Day. In this high service they seem to have always acted in the order of a hierarchy. For the loftiest functions—for the guardianship of Israel in the old economy, the announcement of Christ and the protection of His kingdom in the new—there are Archangels, though so called only in the New Testament. First Michael, *Who is like God?* whose name declares that he, the highest in the scale of created beings, the first-born OF every creature as Christ is the *First-born BEFORE every creature*, for ever remembers his finite creatureliness. He accordingly vindicates Monotheism in the Old Testament and is the conqueror of Satan in the New : *Who is like God?* Then Gabriel, *Hero of God*, the supreme representative in the heavenly host of God's executive will, who in both the Old and the New Testaments announces the coming of the Christ : the angelic Forerunner, as the Baptist was the human. It is probable that Satan, then Lucifer, or known by some name that he has lost, was the third in this angelic trinity. Daniel's *princes* of Grecia and Persia may without violence be interpreted of human potentates. The highest angels seem alone in the Old Testament to have been employed in human service : always, however, in subordination to One Who, called an angel, is the Lord Himself. He, as will hereafter be seen, was the Angel Jehovah, or the Angel of Jehovah, the Angel of the Covenant, a Divine Person Who, before He became man, appeared in human form, taking the name though He never took the nature of angels. Always distinguished from Him are the pre-eminent ministers from the spiritual world in the Old-Testament economy, who were thus prepared for the higher service of ministering to the Lord when He came, Whose entire incarnate life was *seen of angels*. Especially they drew near to Him in His sorrow : absent at the Transfiguration, but necessary to Gethsemane. They do not attend the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost : they are comparatively lost in His higher dispensation, and their absence on that day preludes their absence now. Not that they are wholly absent : they still and ever are *ministers*

1 Tim. iii.  
16

Dan. x. 13.

Col. i. 15.  
Jude 9  
Rev. xii. 7.  
Dan. viii.  
16.  
Lu. i. 19,  
26.

Dan. x. 20.

1 Tim. iii.  
16



- Heb. i. 14. *for them who shall be heirs of salvation.* Not as **GUARDIAN ANGELS** in the strict sense of the word ; it is rather *for the sake of the heirs of salvation* that they minister. *Their angels* are not the guardians of children individually, any more than Peter's *angel* was his specific guardian. Hence while the tenor of the Word of God permits us to include angel-ministry among the *all things which work together for good*, it is careful so to describe and define their service to mankind as to render both unreasonable and sinful every form of the *worshipping of angels*.
- Acts xii. 15.
- Rom. viii. 28.
- Col. ii. 18.

His-  
torical.

#### HISTORICAL.

Whatever else of theological interest belongs to Angelology may be touched upon in a brief notice of its historical aspects : with reference, first to Superstition, and secondly to Infidelity.

Super-  
stition.

1. The Jewish and the Christian Churches have their respective developments of superstition on this subject, the former being the basis of the latter. After the Captivity Jewish theology betrayed to some extent the infection of its contact with foreign speculations, especially in Persia : the Apocrypha abounds with evidences of a departure from the simple teaching of the Old Testament, as that takes its last form in Daniel. During the interval before the final settlement of the New-Testament canon there appears a tendency in the Christian Church to honour the angels unduly. The seventh Œcumenical Council at Nicæa, A.D. 787, concedes to them *προσκύνησις*, though not the Divine *λατρεία*. The Nicene Creed, issuing from an earlier and better Council, had declared that they were created ; and Irenæus had protested against invocation of angels. But the evil made steady progress in the general corruption of Christian doctrine, and received its final confirmation at Trent. There is no error more distinctly guarded against in Scripture : *ὄρα μὴ, See thou do it not . . . worship God*. Superstition has made the world of evil angels also its domain. Forgetting the great change that the coming of Christ has effected, and that the influence of evil spirits has been more effectually controlled than it was before, the Christian Church during almost its entire history down to the Reformation was haunted by an unevangelical idea of their operation in all regions of the Divine Government, physical and spiritual. Hence

Rev. xix.  
10.

the place given to Satan, as having a right to the redemption price, in the doctrine of the Atonement; hence the elaborate ceremonials of exorcism; hence the abject dread of the powers of malign spirits in the infliction of the natural calamities of life: hence the notion of personal contacts with the Evil One; and hence, lastly, the judicial treatment of witchcraft and sorcery down to a recent time.

2. But infidelity sweeps away, not only the superstitious appendages of the revealed truth concerning angels, but the revealed truth itself. In its more reckless form it has renounced the whole economy of the angel world. Though the Biblical revelation only confirms the inferences of analogical reasoning and the universal instinct of mankind, scepticism not only doubts but denies the existence of beings superior to man: thus rejecting in fact the whole Bible with the very fabric of which this revelation is interwoven. It specially argues against the personality of Satan: either returning to the Manichæan delusion of an independent power *αὐτοφύης* and *ἀγέννητος*, or making him merely the personification of evil which undeniably exists. But here Rationalistic Christian theology joins the infidel. It is enough to say that the person of the Enemy of Christ is as distinctly presented in the history of revelation, though not so fully described, nor so constantly present, as the Person of the Lord Himself. There is nothing more remarkable, nothing more worthy of study, than the parallel development of the representative of sin and the Redeemer from sin throughout the Bible. In the same way the argument against demoniacal possession may be met. Though Scripture allows that suffering, as part of the penalty of sin, is, like death itself, in some respect in the ministry of Satan, it makes a distinction between all trouble or wickedness arising from within, and the torment inflicted by evil spirits from without. There are in the New Testament *δαμονιζόμενοι*, persons *dæmonised*, who, in body and soul, if not in spirit, are under the special influence of *dæmons*. That this was a reality, and not a style of language accommodated to Jewish notions, is evident from the combination of healing diseases and casting out devils in the Saviour's commission, as also from His habitually addressing Himself to personal beings when He cast them out. There is a

Infidelity.

Luke xiii.  
16.  
2 Cor. xii.  
7.

John xii.  
31.

grand consistency in the Scriptural revelation on this subject. The Old Testament gives some distant indications of such possession; when our Lord appears there is an outbreak of these powers on earth: but the chief enemy is always pre-eminent, as appears in the fact that the last Evangelist withdraws his attention from all besides him, never mentioning the dæmons. And it is an illustration of the same consistency that their full force in human affairs has never been felt since the Conqueror said: *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* How far they are still permitted to seduce men, and what part they play in the modern devices of so-called spiritualistic science, which professes to call them in as evidence of another world, we need not now inquire.

Their  
Place in  
Theology.

3. This last observation will apply to the whole topic which is here closed: the angels have retreated from their high pre-eminence. The doctrine concerning them belongs to the entire scheme of revelation, as in course of delivery, and pervades every part of it. The angel world is around us everywhere in Biblical theology, and we must prepare ourselves by a firm faith at the outset for the reappearance of its representatives as we proceed through the several doctrines. It has been viewed here only or chiefly in its relation to the universe as created, but at every stage in our future course it will meet us again. Meanwhile, it may be well to observe at this point that the ANGELOLOGY of the Bible is always subordinated to human interests; and, saving as they are connected with redemption wrought out and administered, spirits good and evil, or rather spirits and angels, need not and should not be too curiously investigated. *Why askest thou thus after My name?* said One in the Old Testament. *Seeing it is secret,* He added, doubtless for a higher reason than what is here suggested: His name was as yet concealed, and in a certain sense is concealed for ever. But the caution is generally appropriate. The student, and the preacher especially, should in this matter limit himself to the clear testimonies of the Oracle, not keeping back the truth from the sceptic, but not pandering to a false Spiritualism, as the modern word is. Both evil spirits and angels may, on these conditions, most fruitfully and profitably enter into practical theology, even as they necessarily occupy a large and important place in dogmatics.

Judges  
xiii. 18.

## THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE.

The  
Material  
Universe

The material universe as such occupies a considerable place in revelation, which establishes a few cardinal principles of great importance to theology. Matter is declared to have been created by God, though no name is given to it; fashioned into the orderly arrangement of systems, it is the Kosmos; these are the result of successive creations, which are indicated by the term worlds. We are taught that the universe of matter was ordained to be the scene of life, passing through its several stages up to life spiritual; but the inhabitation of other worlds, and their relations to redemption, are questions which have little light thrown upon them in the Word of God. Lastly, as the revelation of Scripture concerns only that part of the universe which belongs to man, we cannot draw any certain conclusion as to the final destiny of the universe of matter from the testimony of prophecy concerning the end of our heaven and earth: we are left to the inferences of analogy. These general principles may be usefully applied to many current theories and cosmical speculations.

## MATTER.

Matter

Matter, or  $\epsilon\lambda\eta$ , has no name in Scripture: it is indicated there generally as having been at first without form and void, diffused, unorganised, and lifeless. Science is left free to discover and give its own names to the primary elements. The atoms of the universe and their molecular arrangements are never once alluded to: they are left to man's discovery. But the same God Who is the Father of spirits was the Creator of pure matter. He impressed their unchangeable properties upon all the particles of the universe, created, in their number and potentialities, like the angels, at once. Before this truth Materialism, ancient and modern, in its variety of forms as a theory, vanishes. In ancient

Idealism  
and  
Realism.

philosophy it was the *anima mundi*, or soul of the world, or *natura naturans* that took the place of God. Modern Materialism, through all its phases down to Positivism, makes everything, including the phenomena of mind, physical; and, while acknowledging that it is as yet far from being able to account for the facts, and that the molecular laws of mind, feeling, and will are perhaps undiscernable, it nevertheless asserts that they are the results of changes in matter and governed by invariable laws, directed by something inscrutable and unknowable behind. Materialism has been the same in every age: modern science has not advanced one step beyond ancient philosophy; except in this, that it gives up that vestige of instinct towards God that Pantheism exhibited. The ancient theorists thought of a plastic soul in things: pan-Theism. The modern theorists think only of matter as the vehicle of energy: pan-Materialism. One of its tendencies is to resolve matter into a congregation of forces; by which it unconsciously argues itself in a circle back to God. Scripture, which asserts that the beginning of the living creature was a new Divine act, vindicates the reality of matter from the philosophy which would resolve it into nothing. Idealism and Realism preside over the whole range of speculation on this subject respectively. The former as represented by Berkeley denies the existence, or the possibility of proving the existence, of any substance behind the phenomena which affect our senses: these senses being ordained to see either in God Himself, or according to some unknown laws, what seems to be matter. But, however that notion may be qualified, it falls before the early testimony which tells us that the material universe was formed before there were any creatures to receive its impressions. So all the more recent theories of force which would annihilate objective substance as the vehicle of energy must yield to the evidence of a creation which preceded all life. This hypothesis seems to breathe into the inorganic universe a kind of life, called force, which preceded its organic forms; but it has no support. It would seem, like Berkeley's theory, to be a useful ally of the theologian, in as far as it saves us from the necessity of believing in a creation apart from God; but the testimony of Genesis confirms the universal realistic instinct of man, that there is a substance behind the phenomena of matter. As it regards the scientific

theories of the persistence of force, the conservation of energy, and the correlation of its physical manifestations, they do not in the slightest degree affect theology, until they penetrate the region of life. When it is affirmed that physical and vital forces are correlated and convertible—in other words, that all the phenomena of thought, and feeling, and will, are only transformed forces of matter—sound reasoning is violated as well as Scripture. It may be said that the material basis of animal and vegetable life is something in the molecular arrangement of its particles; and this may be called protoplasm. But it cannot be shown that anything but living matter communicates or feeds life. Spontaneous generation is a figment that Materialists have made their as yet unknown God. The true God giveth *life, and breath, and all things*. But, as man's body was created for the instant inhabitation of his living soul, so the matter of the universe was intended to be the instant abode of life. That life was breathed into it by the Spirit Who brooded over our chaos: He is the Lord and Giver of life in every manifestation of it, from the most elementary protoplasm up to that which beholds the face of God.

Acts xvii  
26.

## OTHER WORLDS.

Other  
Worlds.

The testimony of Revelation to the universe of other worlds than ours is limited. But what we have is consistent with every discovery and every rational hypothesis of modern science. The heavens have their host: to us an ambiguous word, which refers either to the worlds or to the inhabitants of those worlds, but is in the Scripture limited to the physical universe. As ordered in systems the universe is a *κόσμος*, as in our Lord's words, *before the foundation of the world*: the ancient use of the term to signify the ordered whole of the heavenly bodies is retained in the New Testament, though the common use limits it to man's world. Hence it is *τὸ πᾶν*, the universe; which, however, is never a unity in the Bible, heaven and earth being sundered. Viewed in the orderly succession of its creations the universe is made up of the *αἰῶνες*. *By Whom also He made the worlds*, that is, the worlds which fill the ages of so-called past eternity. One of the first exercises of faith is said to embrace the fact that these worlds were framed, *κατηρτίσθαι*, as the phenomenal, or in their present

John xvii.  
24.  
Eph. i. 4.

Heb. i. 2.

Heb. xi. 3

- appearance, τὰ βλεπόμενα. The silence of the Scripture as to the inhabitants of these worlds is unbroken. But there is nothing either in its words or in its silence that forbids the reasonable inferences of analogy. The one point at which the vast extent of the peopled realms of the universe touches theological faith is the immeasurable dignity conferred on man's insignificance by the Incarnation. More than once the ancient Scripture seems to be oppressed though not overwhelmed by this truth. We can interpret our meaning, at least, into those passages which so often bid the children of the earth to lift up their eyes and behold the innumerable hosts of heaven. *What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?* But in the Creator's relations to His creatures there is no great and small, no greater and less : the transcendent mystery of the Divine condescension must be regarded in itself, and without the most distant reference to the insignificance of man in relation to the universe. The Old Testament derives a lesson from the contemplation that knows no doubt or dismay or fear : its faith is strengthened rather than endangered by every view of the steadfast and unviolated ordinances of heaven. *Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number : He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power ; not one faileth.* All are equally great in His sight : NOT ONE FAILETH ; each has the burden of its own glorious destiny.
- Ps. viii.  
4.
- Ia. xl 26.

Compa-  
rative  
Value.

#### THEIR COMPARATIVE INSIGNIFICANCE.

- There is no grander truth revealed than the comparative insignificance of the creature as material. All the constellations of systems in the universe—or, as the Scripture says, the heavens—are the work of the Divine hand, which *all shall wax old as doth a garment*. They are of less value in all their awful extent and grandeur than one immortal spirit. And with the utmost tranquillity it is said that all the phenomena of creation will pass away, be *dissolved*. In the spirit of Jonah we take pity upon the great works of man which are to be destroyed. But the greater works of God are destroyed, and it costs the Supreme no thought ! As to the substance behind the phenomena, and its reconstruction, more will be said hereafter.
- Heb. i. 12.
- 2 Pet. iii.  
11.

## MAN.

## Man.

Man, or mankind, occupies the noblest and most ample section in the history of creation as revealed in Scripture. This is in harmony with the central place which he occupies in Divine revelation generally, as the object around whom all revolves. His pre-eminence as a creature is noted in the circumstantial of dignity attending his origin ; and in the relations he bears to the other orders of the creature. But it is chiefly seen in the constituent elements of his nature, reflecting the Divine Image in which he was formed, this being the basis of his dignity and prerogatives as the head of the earthly creation ; in the organic unity of man as constituting one species ; and the connection between the original estate, fall, and redemption of mankind as he was a probationary creature.

This department is sometimes called ANTHROPOLOGY, a term which in science means the zoological and biological study of human nature. Not including formally, though not absolutely excluding, the physical, physiological, and psychological study of our species, it is its theological bearing that we mainly keep in view. This, however, must not be too narrowly limited ; such topics as the Original State of Man, the Image of God in Man, Man before the Fall, do not exhaust it. It is better to regard the whole as a wide field of which these subjects are only sections.

## Anthropology.

## THE NATURE OF MAN.

## Elements of Man's Nature.

The Divine record represents to us our first father, Adam, as the end and consummation of all creating acts, and gives his twofold nature a peculiar relation to both the spiritual and the material worlds. In the unity of body and soul, the one taken from the earth and the



other breathed into him by his Maker, he is the link between these two great spheres.

- His Creation. Gen. i. 26. 1. The bringing of man into the world is in Genesis the result of a special design. *And God said, Let Us make man*: the first intimation in Scripture of the Divine counsel preceding the act. Gen. i. 20. Of the other creatures it is said, *Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life. . . . Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind*; but every word touching the origin of the human race indicates the issue of all former purposes: the creation of A NEW THING. Hence the emphatic double account of man's beginning: generally in Genesis i. the introduction of the race with its pre-eminent dignity into the system of things, and, particularly, in Genesis ii. the physical details of his origin with specific intervention for the formation of the Mother of all living. Hence also the clause in the second account which returns to the creating act to show that the body of the first man was immediately fashioned out of the dust, and that the origin of his life was the breathing into him of a living soul. Gen. ii. 7. The same Divine act produced both body and soul, without any interval. This is said of no other creature; though the real distinction between man and the lower creation is not in Gen. i. 26. the words of this verse, but in the first note of man's origin: *Let Us make man in Our image*.
- Job xxxii. 8. 2. This gives *breath of lives* a higher meaning: *there is a spirit in man*, as well as an animal life. And the high distinction of human nature is that in its constitution it is a union of the two worlds of spirit and matter, a reflection of spiritual intelligences in the material creation. The immaterial principle is the soul or *ψυχή* as connected with matter through the body, and the spirit or *πνεῦμα* as connected with the higher world. There is in the original record a clear statement as to the two elements of human nature. Man derives his name from the word earth, one of the constituents of which his body was formed: אָדָם connected with Gen. ii. 7. אֲדָמָה earth. But this was not as yet, though it afterwards became, a name of humiliation, for the inbreathing of life or lives gave him his essential dignity; this Adam, or Man, the person

and the nature he represented, became a *living soul*, נִפְשׁ חַיָּה, Gen. ii. 7. Though the same word is used concerning other creatures, which have the abortive rudiments of intellectual life, it is here used with a special emphasis. His name is Man, from the earth; his nature is that he is a living soul, which is also an immortal spirit. But it must be remembered that the two substances are distinct. The Bible confirms the instinctive belief in the difference between mind and matter: the unsearchable mystery of the nature of the union between soul and body, and the secret of the action of the one on the other, or rather of their mutual action, are left unsolved. Whether the term soul or the term spirit be used, there is throughout Scripture the most emphatic testimony to the unity and dignity of the higher element of human nature. This Dichotomy is quite consistent with a certain measure of truth in the theory of Trichotomy which separates between soul and spirit. It will hereafter be seen that St. Paul adopts that distinction for practical purposes: when he does so, the soul and spirit are distinguished as one the immaterial principle in relation to the world of sense and the other in relation to a world of spiritual realities; just as the flesh as the material and the body as the organisation are distinguished when occasion demands.

Dichotomy and Trichotomy.

#### THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

The Image of God is made the first note and attribute of human nature: the first revealed truth concerning our race declares the peculiarity of man as a new thing in creation to be this, that he should bear in himself the likeness of his Creator. It was the Divine purpose, spoken before the creating fiat was executed, that this should be his distinction from every other creature. Hence this image must belong to his inmost creaturely constitution. As such it was Essential and Indestructible: the self-conscious and self-determining personality of man, as a spirit bearing the stamp of likeness to God and capable of immortality, was the reflection in the creature of the Divine nature. While all creatures up to man

Divine Image in Man.

reflect the perfections of their Creator, it is man's distinction, made emphatic in the act of his creation, that he alone should bear His image. This therefore is the ground of his dignity, and, while that dignity belongs to his nature as a whole, it necessarily is found in that part of his nature which is not material and therefore imperishable. From beginning to end the holy record regards this image as uneffaced and ineffaceable, and still existing in every human being. But it also speaks of the renewal or restoration of that image in its moral lineaments. There is a sense then in which it was also Accidental and Amissible: the free spirit of man reflected the Divine holiness in a perfect conformity of mind, feeling, and will, which was lost through sin: not utterly lost only because redemption intervened. The Image of God was, according to the sacred narrative, concreated in man: it was in his nature, and no part of it was super-added after his creation. Finally, as the Eternal Son is, in the supremest sense, Himself the Image of God, Adam as the representative of mankind was created in or after that Image. And, thus in his creation related to the Second Person of the Trinity, he was also united to the Triune by the gift of the Holy Ghost, that breath of God which gave him life eternal.

Natural  
and  
Moral.

1. It is usual to distinguish between the Natural or permanent and the Moral or accidental image of God in man: it must be remembered, however, that the moral image in a true sense was also natural, and that in the creation there could be no distinction. But the distinction between the image that was indestructible and that which might be lost has an unqualified and necessary truth. It lies in the very notion of a created free personality: the freedom of the created spirit is the purest reflection of the Divine nature, but that same freedom involves the possibility of its excellence being lost. That which is its

highest glory contains the secret of the possibility of its deepest degradation. Theology cannot take a second step unless this is admitted in its full force.

2 The distinction runs through the entire fabric of Scripture. It is in the New Testament, however, that we find the elements of the complete doctrine on this subject as on every other connected with the original and the restored condition of mankind. It speaks of the renewal of the regenerate into the image of the Creator as that consisted in Original Righteousness, or the moral image. The two cardinal passages which must regulate our views are in the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians. In the former the Apostle speaks of believers as having *put on the new man, which is renewed* (or in process of renewal) *in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*. In the latter the description becomes an exhortation: *be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*. These passages must be united and carefully compared, as they supplement each other. They both distinguish between the first creation and the second in Christ, between the *κρίζεν* and the *ἀνανεοῦσθαι*. The latter verb refers to the restoration of what the former describes as originally given but lost. Both passages make the knowledge of God—that is, the spiritual knowledge of God—the object of the restoration. This the latter and more amplified passage unfolds as righteousness and holiness: the first man knew the Creator's law, his will was conformed to it, and he was righteous in principle; he knew the Creator's holiness, loved Him as holy, and was holy himself in principle. Thus the moral image of the Creator lost in the Fall is restored through the putting on of the same image as presented in Jesus Christ, the eternal Image of God manifested in human nature. Each of the passages speaks of putting off the old man, which is the fallen and corrupt nature as derived from Adam. In the former, the process is regarded as gradual; in the latter, the new image was stamped upon the soul in its regeneration. But the second passage adds what the former omits, that the Holy Spirit Who was the conservator of the holy image in Paradise is the agent of its renewal in redemption: *be renewed in the Spirit, the seat of whose working is in the mind*. Hence

New  
Testament

Col. ii.  
10.

Eph. iv.  
23, 24

- the New Testament never speaks of a renewal of the Divine image in man's nature as he is man: only in his fallen nature. The indestructible image is in both Testaments always referred to as existing still in man universal. *Men which are made after the similitude of God* is the language of St. James. And St. Paul, referring to the heathen, and quoting the testimony of their own poets with approval, *For we are also His offspring*, goes on most expressly to argue from the likeness of the children of men to their Creator that their thoughts of God ought to be altogether spiritual: rebuking idolatry as contrary to the instinct of the Divine image within us. So, also, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts with the utmost generality that God is *The Father of spirits*. And this is in harmony with the Old Testament. After the Flood there is a most impressive remembrancer of the abiding and permanent dignity of the chastised race. The waters had not washed away the original image; nor was it created anew in those who were saved. No clearer evidence of the indestructibility of the Divine likeness could be given than that of the sanction thrown around human life; it is inviolate, *for in the image of God made He man*. Of course this does not decide the question whether or not immortality was part of the indestructible image, though it might seem that we affirm it by using the term indestructible. We are told by St. Paul, in one of the few passages which speak of *ἀθάνασία*, that it is God *Who only hath immortality*, but He Who is the life hath given to man in His Son to have life in himself.

3. It is of great importance to remember that whatever is meant by the image of God was at once concreated in man. In the Middle Ages a distinction was established between the Image and the Likeness, between the two Hebrew terms *צֶלֶם* and *דְּמוּת*. This was formulated by the catechism of the Council of Trent thus: *Tum originalis justitiæ donum addidit*. The doctrine of Rome is that immunity from concupiscence or victory over it was a supernatural and added gift, like immortality; that over and above his "pura naturalia" there was a righteousness in which Adam was "constitutus." Hence all that he lost or could lose was the gift of his original righteousness, which left the natural conflict between flesh and spirit without the restraint of the added

**gift.** Man has still all that in which he was created as such. The effect of this view will be hereafter seen when we reach the doctrine of Original Sin. Meanwhile, it is sufficient now to assert the Scriptural doctrine that whatever belonged to his likeness to God was stamped upon man in his original character: he received both the image and its superscription.

4. The doctrine of this Divine image is carried to its highest point, and beyond the Old Testament record, when it is connected with the Eternal Son as the original, absolute, archetypal Image of God. This description of the Second Person in the Trinity is next to that of Son the most common in the New Testament: it almost becomes a proper name. He is the *Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the IMAGE OF GOD, as the outbeaming of all the Divine glories and the full expression of the Divine nature towards the creature, regarded as possible or as actual. In the image of that Image was man created. Both in his first and in his second creation the Son was the archetype and pattern. It was this specific relation of the Son that made it possible, becoming, and appropriate, that He should be the Redeemer of the fallen race: a truth that may be pondered profitably, if it is not perverted into the doubtful notion of a necessary incarnation, apart from sin, of the Second Person.

The  
Image  
of the  
Eternal  
Son.

2 Cor. iv.  
4.  
Heb. i. 3

5 But this doctrine is incomplete without the addition of the supernatural gift of the Holy Ghost: if that may be called supernatural which belonged to the union of God with this His Elect Creature. The Holy Trinity must be connected with every stage of the history of mankind. As the Protoplast was formed in the image of the eternal Image—a *son of God*, after the likeness of the ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON—so he was under the spiritual and natural government of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. He Who brooded over the chaos, presided over all the successive dispensations of life in its advancing stages towards perfection, and was the supreme life inbreathed into the highest creature, took full possession of that new creature. He did not add the moral image, but He guided the principles of action of man's soul created in that image. This solves the difficulty sometimes expressed as to the creation of a character which, it is said, must of necessity be formed by him

The Holy  
Ghost.

Luke iii  
38.

**Gal. v. 18.** who bears it. Man was *led of the Spirit*, Who was the power of love in his soul, already in his first estate as now in his last estate. How long this holy discipline lasted we are not given to know; but we do know that the Fall was its departure as a free and perfect education. This explains also the wonderful endowments of Adam, who reasoned and formed his language, and understood and gave names to his fellow-creatures below him. The LORD GOD of the garden was the Holy Ghost in the human soul. The Spirit in man's spirit must not, however, be confounded with the image of God as such: the gift was distinct, but the true complement and perfection of every other gift. This is, as will be afterwards seen, the secret of the trichotomy of body, soul, and spirit in human nature.

Large  
Meaning.

6. From all this it appears that the expression Image of God, in relation to the original constitution of Adam, is a very broad one. A few particulars are not enough for its statement. It includes the whole sum of man's dignity and prerogative, and it brings all that belongs to God into some relation with this His highest reflection in the creature. There is nothing Divine that is not reflected in some most wonderful sense: the Holy Trinity, and all the Attributes, in the unity of light and love.

Adamic  
Headship.

#### THE NATURAL AND FEDERAL UNITY OF THE RACE.

Adam was created as the head of a race, to descend from him by natural generation. He represented that race in his supremacy over the lower world; as also in his subjection to a probationary law. Thus he was, in a certain sense, both the natural and the federal head of mankind: in him both the natural and the spiritual development and destiny of the human species were decided.

Image  
Propa-  
gated.  
**Gen. v. 3.**  
**Gen. v. 1.**

1. As one of the laws of man's combination of spirit and matter, he propagates his species in the integrity of its individual members. Adam *begat a son in his own likeness, after his image*. This sentence, following on the account of the creation, and connected with it, proves that there were not two or more simul-

aneous creations of man, or creative centres: the lines of Cain, Abel, and Seth meet in Adam. It shows also that immediate creation, as in the case of angels, was no longer the law. It seems to favour what is known as the theory of Traducianism, the propagation of the entire being of man by natural generation though it does not preclude the theory of Creationism, which regards the individual spirit as in every case created by God, *the Father of spirits*. Both theories must be in a certain sense true, but the secret of their unity is past our finding out. The doctrine of the Pre-existence of human souls, which, after a fall in a supersensible state, were sent for punishment, trial, or expiation, into human bodies, is altogether contrary to the record of Genesis.

Traducianism.

Heb. xii. 9.

2. The human race in Adam was invested with supreme prerogatives over the lower creation. The first man was the representative of God upon earth. It yielded its secrets to his knowledge, its fruits sprang from his cultivation, and its inhabitants were consigned to his government. It is difficult now to estimate the dignity of this prerogative: it was not the image itself, but was its necessary consequence. Much of the miseries of our race is due to its forfeiture. The history of science and civilisation is the history of the struggles of mankind to repair the loss. The remembrance of it as a vanished estate and the anticipation of its return unite in the poetry of the nations. The poetry of the Bible finds the same expression in Psalm viii., specially as touching the past; and the Epistle to the Hebrews expatiates upon it in reference to the future, when the second Head of mankind shall restore to the race what it has lost.

Prerogative of Lordship

Ps. viii.

6.  
Heb. ii. 8.  
1 Cor. xv: 27.

3 The first man was in a certain sense the federal representative of his race as placed in a state or condition of trial with two sides of a tremendous alternative before him. Hereafter we must consider this more fully: suffice now that the record in Genesis, interpreted by St. Paul to the Romans, represents the dealings of God with our first parents as regarding their posterity in them. Adam was in a state of probation, and man was in a state of probation: that is, the garden was a scene of test to the whole estate of mankind. The failure of man was foreseen; but it was permitted, because of the new creation and new probation which a second Adam would introduce: here is the profoundest

Federal Head.



2 Cor. v.  
14.

problem of our origin and destiny. With all this, however, we have not yet to do. Enough that the entire human race was as one organic unity represented in Adam, even as it was as one organic unity represented by Christ. *If one died for all, then were all dead or all died*: this is equally true of the first and of the Second Adam.

Redemption  
Anticipated.

1 Cor. xv.  
45—49.

4. It might seem as if God, in the creation of man, took account of his coming fall and decreed redemption. The dust was ready to receive him when he returned to his earth, and the spirit to return to the God Who gave it. In the New Testament St. Paul tells us that the *first man was of the earth, earthy*, and that in him the *natural body* was given to man; adding further that the *Second Man is the Lord from heaven, made a quickening Spirit*, whereas Adam was made a *living soul*. The comparison of Genesis with St. Paul's comment shows that there was a development of being, as it were, purposed and suspended in Adam: that he was to have enjoyed immortality through the gradual or sudden spiritualisation of his bodily frame; but that it required the *Last Adam* to come to accomplish the design of creation. Through the Fall, the first Adam became to us all the father of a dying nature: he bereft himself and us of the quickening Spirit Who would have rendered the resurrection needless. But this glance into the coming mystery of the Cross is anticipating.

Human  
Hypotheses.

#### HUMAN HYPOTHESES.

This Divine account of man's origin displaces every other devised by man's science. Accepting the testimony, as we believe it, of the Creator Himself, we have only to stand on the defensive. "Neganti incumbit probatio." And it may safely be said that no other hypothesis of the production of mankind has yet proved its case. Those which deny the general principles of creation have been already considered, as also those which have given other accounts of the origin of our race. One thing it settles definitively: that it has not been produced by any development of the principle of life in matter, whether the theory takes its earliest rude form that man is terrigena, autochthon, a production of the soil, or the scientific evolutionary form of later days; that his history has not been a gradual ascent from the savage state, but

that the savage condition is a descent from his original ; and that he was created in one type, the representative of a single species. The slightest doubt on any of these points is inconsistent, not only with the subsequent matter of theology, but with the primitive record, the only one we possess, of the creation of mankind. According to the principle we adopt, and must adopt, it is not directly necessary to examine the hypotheses of scientific Anthropology ; for science has no generally accepted hypothesis which fundamentally contradicts Scripture. On all the points just mentioned, and especially the unity of the race, the best representatives of science are on our own side.

## THE ORIGIN OF MAN.

Origin of  
Man.

Speculations as to the Origin of Man upon the earth have been more or less bound up with those on the origination of life generally. Antiquity had its vague theories, half poetry, half science, of the necessary evolution of all forms of life from the soil. Men were *αἰρώχθονες*, terrigenæ, born of the earth. The Pantheism of every age has held the same idea, but dignified it by the supposition of an internal source of life which moulds matter into forms innumerable, and that of man among the rest : assuming its highest known immaterial expression in the human subject. Materialism inverts the process, and makes man an organism in which matter exhibits its perfection in the phenomena of thought and conscious personality. Modern speculations on this subject differ generally from the ancient, in consequence of their being constructed on a theory that does not necessarily exclude a personal God, the origin of all life. Placing Him at the ultimate point where life originated, they regard the evolution of all the forms of life as the operation of forces impressed upon matter, or constituting matter itself : some making the long time up to man, and his high intelligence, a continuous advance of nature upon itself, naturally selecting and making permanent its best types ; others regarding the original law as having provided for a series of leaps from species to species : but all, whether they intend it or not, practically denying the creation of the human soul or spirit as a substance distinct from matter. It is impossible

Antiquity.

Modern.

so to state the theory of evolution as to preserve the integrity of the higher element in man's nature. But the true theory of that nature requires that something was superadded to the physical and immaterial life that lay behind it in the history of the creation. The Scriptural account is plain and express: man was created in *the Image of God*. This was the formal character of his nature as new in the Divine economy: and modern science will never find rest until it is acknowledged.

Unity of  
the Race.

UNITY OF THE RACE.

The UNITY of the race, or the human species, is a subject which brings much modern science into collision with Scripture.

Scripture.

1. The holy record declares that the species of man is one, and that it sprang from one common ancestor: Adam being the personal name of the first man, and the generic name of mankind. This truth is the common foundation of the doctrines of sin and redemption. *By one man sin entered into the world*; and death the consequence of that has passed upon *all men*. There was no other

Rom.v.12.

Acts xvii.  
26.

centre of the same species: God *hath made of one blood all nations of men*. Christ is the Son of Man: and He the One died for all. The entire history of Revelation, and the whole economy of human development as that of sin and recovery from sin, is based on this assumption.

Science.

2. No results of modern science disprove, or even render doubtful, this truth. On the contrary, evidences converge from all quarters to confirm it. Whatever criteria are applied to test the unity of species—whether physiological or psychological—the human subject sustains. And the history of the race furnishes a multitude of corroborations. In two lines especially, those of language and religion, the argument, if argument it may be called, gathers its endless materials. Comparative philology and comparative theology, the science of language and the science of religion, both throw wonderful light upon the past of mankind; but upon no truth does that light fall more brightly than upon the unity of the human race. Meanwhile, the sacred record gives a clear account both of the central unity and of the manifold diversity of the languages of men; both of the fundamental unity and endless variations of their religious beliefs.

## ANTIQUITY OF MAN.

The antiquity of man on the earth is simply a chronological question. Christ came at the *end of the world* and in *the fulness of the time*; but over how long a series of ages the preparations for His coming extended is not expressly declared. Provided the unity of the race be maintained, the length of its past continuance on earth is a subordinate matter. If longer, it only enlarges the number of the Redeemer's subjects, though of course it deepens the mystery of His long delay. Whatever is now, however, or may hereafter be, absolutely proved as to the antiquity of the human species in this world, Christian theology is prepared to receive. But it is impossible to forget that with this question is bound up a congeries of hypotheses most degrading to the dignity of our race as such, and most perilous to the doctrine of its unity. This chronological inquiry takes several forms. One weighs the evidence derived from the early remains of mankind; another estimates the time requisite for the gradual formation of their various race distinctions. And the question remains whether the chronology of the Bible, so far as it contains a chronology, meets the reasonable demands of the results of both investigations.

1. It cannot be denied that the tendency of modern scientific opinion is in favour of a very long past history of the race of man upon earth. But it is equally undeniable that the induction of evidence is of the most precarious character; that its elements are not only composite, but mutually inconsistent; and that all the value it has is bound up with the assumption that man began his history at the first remove from the mere animal life. The most substantial evidence would, of course, be the discovery of human remains—whether the bones of man or his instruments—in juxtaposition with those of extinct races of animals. But that evidence is contradicted by some of the best observers: geology has no peremptory law for the rate of deposition, on the one hand; and, on the other, the methods of accounting for the collocation of human remains in connection with other remains in caverns are not exhausted. Moreover, the inferences defeat themselves. They require, for example, at least a hundred

Antiquity  
of Man.  
Heb ix.  
26.  
Gal. iv. 4

Scientific  
Hypo-  
thesis.

thousand years for the existence of man on the earth; but the known laws of population would account for the present numbers of the race in six or seven thousand years; while, on the other hand, even supposing him to have risen from a state of *savageism*, there is no reasonable account to be given of his remaining so stationary during so many tens of thousands of historical years. Linguistic arguments are equally precarious. Languages without a literature change very swiftly. As to the requirements of ethnological variety, we have no means of judging how soon the early varieties would receive from surrounding circumstances their final impress: under our own eyes a very few generations suffice to produce great changes and make them permanent. But we must take higher ground. We doubt not that in due time scientific researches will answer many of the scruples of science; and the Holy Record gives us reason to believe that many special interpositions of Providence account for much that we cannot quite harmonise. Though the God of creation rested, the God of providence worketh hitherto; and we do not know all the secrets of man's gradual descent to the present term of his life, of the Flood, of the extraordinary impress upon the second originals of the race, the phenomena of Babel, and the dispersion of the nations.

Biblical  
Chrono-  
logy.

2. The received chronology of our earliest sacred books is not rigorous. Estimates perfectly orthodox have added to the commonly received term of the duration of human life upon earth a sufficient number of centuries to allow time enough for all race and linguistic variations. The question has theological interest only as affecting the truth of Scripture; and, before the Scriptural chronology is attacked, both friends and foes must agree as to what it teaches. But it is no disparagement to the Old Testament to say that we have not yet a certain key to its dates. That they do not harmonise with Egyptian, and Chinese, and Indian chronology is of no importance: no reliance can be placed upon the latter, when they go back beyond about three millennia B.C. But the laws of reckoning generations in the Book of Genesis are not clearly determined; nor on what principles we are to reconcile the Hebrew original and the Septuagint, which latter allows nearly two thousand years more. The genealogies for the most part mark the descent, and not always the regular succession. Hence

there are multitudes of estimates given by Jewish and Christian chronologists of the period elapsing between Adam and Christ. The longest of them would allow all the latitude we need.

#### THE ELEMENTS OF HUMAN NATURE.

1. Discussions have never been wanting as to the constituents of human nature. The early Christian Church inherited the ancient philosophical Trichotomy, as expounded by Plato. The soul was regarded as the principle of animal life, common to man and the lower orders, and the spirit as added by the Divine inbreathing to be man's special prerogative: whether as a new substance or a new qualification of the soul was never determined. But this distinction, which is adopted for practical purposes by St. Paul, was perverted to heretical ends. The Gnostics taught that the spirit in man was an emanation from the essence of God, and therefore incapable of being defiled by matter: thus undermining the true doctrine of the fall, and the very foundation of redemption. Apollinaris availed himself of it to rob the person of Christ of the human spirit: the Lord's sensitive soul being a sufficient vehicle for the Divine Logos. In later times the doctrine of original sin was embarrassed by this distinction: a theory was very prevalent, and still is, which limited the transmission of sinful bias to the sensitive nature only. Hence the healthier tone of Christian teaching, especially in the West, found it needful to hold fast the Dichotomy of human nature: body and soul, flesh and spirit, being interchangeable expressions for the dual nature of man. It will be obvious, however, to those who weigh well the utterances of Scripture, that, provided the original constituent elements of human nature are only two, the whole religious history of man requires a certain distinction between soul and spirit: his one personality being connected by his soul with the world of sense, and by his spirit with the world of faith. Yet soul and spirit make up one person.

2. There is a modern theology, orthodox in all other respects, which assumes that the spirit in man is the prerogative of the regenerate only: an attempt to reconcile the two theories which Scripture does not sanction. It is true that in the Old Testament

The  
Elements  
of Human  
Nature.

Trichotomy.

Dichotomy.

The Spirit  
in Man.

Eccl. iii.  
21.

1 Cor. xv.  
45.

Realistic  
Human  
Nature.

Jas. iii. 7.

the terms נֶפֶשׁ, רִיחַ, and נְשָׁמָה, answering to ψυχή, soul, and πνεῦμα, spirit, are used both of men and animals; but in the fuller revelation certainly the πνεῦμα is never given to the beast, and never denied to man. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?* is a question which would be put in the New Testament into different terms. The Ego of man is now pre-eminently the spirit, inasmuch as that is the sphere in which the Holy Spirit dwells pre-eminently; but it must not be forgotten that the person of man is below and behind all these: the body, and soul, and spirit are his as a personality embracing all. It is true also that St. Paul says that *the first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the Last Adam was made a quickening Spirit*. But the Apostle speaks here only with reference to the resurrection; and leaves out of view the fact, that the first man was in another sense also made a possessor of the quickening Spirit. Most certainly when the personality of man is crowned in regeneration with the Holy Ghost fully restored his soul becomes, in a sense in which it was not before, the Godward principle in his compound nature.

3. Adam was generic humanity as well as the personal Adam: that name in the Hebrew never knows inflection. Scripture uses no such abstract term as human nature; though St. James speaks of every φύσις of beasts *that hath been tamed τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ*: the bestial nature is under the human nature, or *mankind*. In the ancient discussion between the Realists and Nominalists the question arose whether there is not in the Divine mind, and in human thought reflecting the Divine mind, a reality of human nature, of which every living man is an expression and representative. As there is an abstract θεϊότης, of which the Three Persons are representatives, so there is a human nature which the Second Person represented in the Incarnation, rather than as becoming a personal individual man. Granting the truth of this mysterious principle—not the less true because we cannot fathom it—every man descended of Adam presents his own personal individualisation of a generic character impressed by its Creator on mankind; and receives into himself the generic evil of original sin, which is the sin of the race in Adam. But this is anticipating.

## PROVIDENCE.

Provi-  
dence.

The Triune God of Creation is the God also of Providence. This term, in its widest meaning, signifies the Divine presence in the world as sustaining, controlling, and guiding to their destination all things that are made. The will of God determines the end for which all orders of creaturely being exist. His Wisdom and His Goodness appoint the infinite variety of means by which that one end is attained: in the Conservation of the frame of nature, both spiritual and material; in the Care of all creatures that are the subjects of want; in the Government especially of intelligent and probationary beings. And His Power insures the accomplishment of every design or end for which they exist. The doctrine of Providence may be studied, therefore, in its connection with the Divine Being and the Divine attributes; then in relation to the objects and characteristics of its exercise.

### THE GOD OF PROVIDENCE.

The  
God of  
Provi-  
dence.

God absolutely, and God in the Trinity of Persons, is the God of Providence. While His Wisdom and His Power are especially exhibited, it is only by connecting Providence with all the Divine attributes which have been seen to be related to the creature that we can form a true conception of its range.

### GOD.

God  
generally.

Scripture furnishes all the elements of the doctrine in its relation to God; and this is its only method of teaching it. In collecting the substance of that teaching we must of necessity repeat much of what the preceding sections have enlarged upon; and also omit much of what they have anticipated.

1. The God of revelation is represented, generally, as at once



Transcendence  
and  
Immanence.  
Pantheism.

present IN universal creaturely existence, as presiding OVER it, and as accomplishing THROUGH it His own designs. The combination of these three elements both explains the doctrine and defends it.

2. Pantheism takes the first to be the only truth : the universe is one ever-varying manifestation of one substance which is God. But by the idea of Providence that notion of God in the world is excluded. The Creator is a Personal Being Who has a design and carries it on through all the processes of nature. In philosophical language this is expressed by the term TRANSCENDENCE. The language of Scripture simply attributes to the Supreme an end which He keeps ever in view in the relation to Himself of all things that exist. This is the leading idea in the word PROVIDENCE, which in its derivation connotes the following conceptions, all present in the New Testament. To God is ascribed *πρόνοια*, or what, speaking after the manner of men, is making PROVISION for the accomplishment of a PURPOSE or *πρόθεσις*; and, as purpose and accomplishment are one to the Divine knowledge, His provision and plan are one with His *πρόγνωσις*, or foreknowledge. Whatever else the word includes, this is its first meaning: the system of things as under Providence, that is, the supervision of a Being Who is using it for an end. *For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, εἰς αὐτόν, are all things.* This is a truth to be adored rather than discussed. In each of the three conceptions of the Supreme there is unfathomable mystery. That He is IN the universal creature with its evil and good; that He can be OVER it, as if in a personality like ours marked off from what is God Himself; that the Absolute can use means: all these are thoughts with which Biblical terms make us as familiar as with OUR FATHER. But no thinking of ours can comprehend them.

Rom. xi  
36.

Epicureanism.

8. The ancient Epicurean notion, unconsciously represented by much modern Theistic speculation, erred in the opposite direction. It adopts the second and third of their principles, but at the expense of the first. God is over the creature, and acts through it, but not as being in it. This conception of the Divine Being is also and equally precluded by our doctrine of Providence. As the Creator makes the universe an instrument for the accomplishment of a purpose,

He watches its operation, and is intimately present to all its processes and developments. It needs His omnipotence for its conservation in being; and not less His omnipotence and wisdom to adjust everywhere and always the relations of its organic laws to the laws of life, and both to the laws of spiritual existence. This presence of the Eternal at the root of the elements of creaturely existence is termed in philosophy IMMANENCE, as opposed to or combined with Transcendence. The Scripture says, in the language of the Creator: *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord;* and, in the language of His creature: *In Him we live, and move, and have our being.*

Jer. xxiii  
23, 24.  
Acts xvii  
28.

4. The Divine apostrophe in Jeremiah, wherein the Supreme claims to be at once far from every creature and very near to it, is of great importance in any philosophical view of Divine Providence. It gives the true doctrine in regard to its bearing on the widest relations of the creature to God, suggesting the union of the two ideas of immanence and transcendence. God is present to all things, to every physical force in its operation, to that higher than physical force which is life, to that life which man has more abundantly than the beasts which perish, to every movement of the free mind of man originating its own thoughts, as the FIRST CAUSE: not the first in the order of priority only; first also in the order of efficiency. This is the true Immanence. But God is present through SECOND CAUSES, to the operation of which, as the established laws of physical, mental, and spiritual nature, He has consigned the universe. This is His true Transcendence. The order of Divine Providence blends with infinite ease the two theories between which human philosophy finds it necessary to fix an impassable gulf. The mystery of the relation between the almighty, ever-present efficiency of God and the imparted quasi-independent forces of nature and of will, is not to be solved by any faculty of man. A multitude of hypotheses have been devised to bridge over that gulf, and bring the infinite into contact with all the finite. Some of these have been already mentioned under the high-sounding names of Pre-established Harmony, Plastic Medium, Emanations, and so forth. They serve little purpose in an

Imman-  
ence and  
Transcen-  
dence.

**Concursus**

inquiry which is interdicted to every created intelligence. No investigation has brought us nearer to the secret of the action of mind on body in our own constitution ; and this is an ever-present illustration of the futility of that other attempt. Something but not much is gained by the invention of the term **CONCURSUS**, to signify the concurrence or co-operation of the Divine Power with all subordinate powers according to the pre-established laws of their operation. It is certain that God does not use His creation simply and only and absolutely as a mere instrument of His own direct energy. He does not make anything immediately dependent on Himself : no attribute of Absolute Sovereignty presides over either nature or grace. When the Omnipresent Controller of all dispenses with second causes in either of these departments He makes a **NEW THING** : in the former department, that of nature, it is called **MIRACLE** ; and supposing it to occur in the latter, it is **Miracle**, whether so called or not. The delegation to second causes never can shut out the First. They cannot rest without Him, but He may dispense with them.

**Miracle.****THE TRINITY.****The Trinity.**

The Providence of God is in all its acts and offices attributed to the several Persons of the Holy Trinity respectively.

**The Father.**  
**John v.**  
**17.**

1. *My Father worketh hitherto* : these words might be understood as referring to that universal activity of God in the universe, and especially in this world, which is generally assigned to the Father to distinguish it from the special work of the Son in redemption. The Creator rested from His works : but He continues His work in Providence : that is, in the never-failing control, direction, and guidance of all the forces of nature and the free volitions of men. The long Divine Sabbath has been and still is, and will be to the end, filled up with the ceaseless activity of perfect rest, with the perfect rest of ceaseless activity : not indeed through a continuous creation, but by a continuous sustentation of what has been created. When our Lord goes on to say, **I WORK**, He tells us, first, that there never has been any Providence of the Father from which He has been excluded ; secondly, that the time had come for a special delegation of the government of things to the Son Incarnate ; and,

thirdly, that, as the Father had, humanly speaking, broken in upon the rest of the long Sabbath by the working of miracles, so also the Son in like manner goes out of the ordinary operation of nature on the present occasion. But it must be remembered that the term Providence is still in the language of religion appropriated to God generally: that is, to the Father. Without making any formal distinction, we understand by it that underlying or overarching or all-pervading presence and care which has reference to the well-being of man rather as a creature than as a redeemed creature. In this sense we speak of the GOOD PROVIDENCE OF GOD. The Lord's Prayer keeps this ever before our minds. It addresses *Our Father Which art in heaven*, and asks Him for the *daily bread* of our common life, the trespasses of which are forgiven, and from the evil of which we are delivered, in the economy of redemption. It is an instance, and a very high one, of the conventional use of terms in theology, that the word Providence is employed to designate the presence of God among His creatures in the widest sense.

Matt. vi  
9.

2. There is a Providence, however, which is the especial department of the Son Incarnate, and is bound up with the Kingly office of His mediatorial work. It was inaugurated, so to speak, by the stupendous miraculous interventions that make up the incarnate manifestation and atoning work of Christ as sealed in His resurrection and ascension. Between the resurrection and the ascension we hear the great saying which unites them: *All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*. These words explain the earlier declaration of our Lord, *All things are delivered unto Me of My Father*: spoken not only of the mysteries of knowledge to be imparted, but of the universal power which should be His. The later testimonies of the Apostles are abundant on this subject. One may be quoted, which is remarkable as combining the Providential preservation and dominion of the pre-temporal Son with that of the Son Incarnate: *Whom He hath appointed heir of all things; by Whom also He made the worlds; Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power*. This government of the Son is not usually in Scripture or in dogmatic theology called Providence, but all that the word imports is included in

The Son.

Matt.  
xxviii.  
18.  
Matt. xi.  
27.

Heb. i 2  
3.

Eph. i. 22. the authority vested in Him Who is *Head over all things to the church*. Indeed, in the unity of the Holy Trinity the mediatorial sway of Christ is still the Providence of the Father; and in heaven also our Lord may say: *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*. What is specifically His economical direction of the universe will be laid down at the last day.

John v. 17. The Spirit. 3. The Holy Ghost is also the God of Providence, and in two senses. In the unity of the Father and the Son He has—to speak after the manner of men—co-operated from the beginning in all acts of Providential administration. It is not the mere language of metaphor that said: *Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth*: the beginning and the continuance of all things are ascribed to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, and we may safely regard Him as the Lord and Giver of life throughout the universe: the Direct Efficient who connects the unseen with the seen in the whole economy of things. But the Holy Ghost is specially the God of Christian Providence, as sent forth to accomplish the will of God and of His Christ in that department of it which is supreme: the Administration of Redemption whether in its preparatory stages or in its complete fulfilment. As it respects both the Church and the individual believer the Spirit of Christ is the very Hand of Providence from the day of Pentecost and the Ethiopian at Gaza downwards through all the experiences of Christian history. In all the processes of salvation, preceding, accompanying, following conversion, He is the Christian's Providence. But, as the government of the Son is not generally so termed, neither is the administration of the Spirit. The word, as we have seen, is conventionally appropriated to God or the Father.

Ps. civ. 30. One God. 4. Though the precision of theology requires these economical distinctions in the Holy Trinity of Providence, it must always be remembered that GOD IS ONE. What is said concerning the special gifts of the Christian Ministry may be applied to the whole subject we are here considering. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Which worketh all in all*. The diversities of operation are real, and pervade the mediatorial economy, as will be here-

1 Cor. xii.  
4, 5, 6.

after more fully seen. But there is one Triune God of Providence; and the coming end, when *God shall be all in all*, will be only the great and final demonstration of a truth that already is assured to Christian faith. 1 Cor. xv. 28.

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Divine  
Attributes

The theological doctrine of Providence introduces the Attributes of God generally and particularly.

I. In its more limited meaning,—that in which the specific doctrine of Providence touches creation and redemption, but is independent of both and includes neither,—it is the sphere of those attributes which are related to the creature as such, and of which we may reverently say that they owe their existence in our thoughts to the creature. And the right understanding of the doctrine—not to speak of the solution of its mysteries—depends on the union and harmony of these attributes in every view of it. Sometimes, for instance, the Omniscience and Omnipotence of the Creator are placed under a supposed attribute of Absolute Sovereignty; and then Providence is only Christianised Fatalism. The Knowledge that foresees and the Will that determines and the Power that executes are not distinguished; and there is no room left for the boundless display of what the Supreme is pleased to term His Wisdom. It avails not to say that to the Divine Mind all space is HERE and all time is NOW: all things being viewed as projected and accomplished at once. This cannot be denied, for God is the Absolute and dwelleth in eternity. But in His eternity He gives birth to time and all its succession and contingency. We cannot reach this mystery; we must bow down before it. It should suffice us that the same Word on which we depend for all our knowledge tells us that the Infinite descends to finite succession in the process of His works, and makes space a reality in which to carry them out: He seeth the end from the beginning. If Providence is taken in its widest meaning, as including all the ways of God with man, then we are bound to regard it as the sphere in which those other attributes are manifested which in human language, and with human meaning too, are called Love, and Righteousness, and Faithfulness. If we give

Pertaining  
to the  
Creature.

all the revealed Divine perfections their equal homage, Providence is no other than the purpose of infinite Love using with almighty Power the means which unfailing Wisdom ordains. If this definition is rejected by transcendental theological philosophy we make our appeal to Him from Whose words we derive it.

General  
and  
Special  
Provi-  
dence.  
General.

II. This equal tribute to the Divine attributes will secure at once the unity and the distinction between the GENERAL and the SPECIAL Providence of God.

1. As He is present everywhere in His infinite power, all providential relation must be minute and special: to think otherwise of the Divine control of the laws of nature and the actions of men is inconsistent with the first principles of the doctrine. This is the glory of the Scriptural teaching, that it knows nothing of a Divine general care which does not descend to the minutest particulars. All general Providence must needs be special also. The ancient Epicureans thought that the gods were either indifferent to human affairs or limited their care to the more important interests of their creatures: "*Magna dii curant, parva negligunt.*" From the beginning of Scripture to the end the presence and influence of God are brought into the most immediate relation with all things and all events. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

Matt. x.  
29—31.

Special.

2. OF MORE VALUE. It is not always the same relation, nor is all Providence the same Providence. There are, as will be seen, gradations of care among the objects of the Divine universal lovingkindness. But when we include some other attributes, the Divine love in Christ Jesus and fidelity to His promises, the doctrine of a Special Providence begins at once to emerge. *A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps:* this is an unlimited declaration of a universal control. But when it is said that *the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way,* there is implied that most special and minute supervision of the life of the righteous which adds one more to the blessed mysteries of the Providence of heaven. The New Testament teaches us everywhere that a special supervision is bound up with answers to prayer; and generally that *all things*

Prov. xvi.  
9.

Ps. xxxvii.  
23.

Rom. viii.  
28.

*work together for good to them that love God*: the provision of His Providence carries out the purpose of His grace. It is not, however, a doctrine of the New Testament only: it is the gracious teaching of the whole Bible, exhibited in all its narrations and histories, and confirmed by a thousand promises.

3. The only method, lastly, by which we can deal with OBJECTIONS to the doctrine of Providence is to connect that doctrine with all the attributes of God unitedly and impartially. Those objections have been the same in all ages: the refuge of those whose secret desire is to rid their conscience of its terror, the sincere though fruitless arguments of philosophy, the stumbling-blocks of unbelief, and the trial of the faith and patience of the saints. We take refuge in that only revelation of the Divine character and indication of His purposes which He has given us in His Word: remembering always that we see only parts of His ways, but also remembering that we must interpret what we see by all His attributes. There we find these difficulties propounded in every variety of form: there is no appeal of man's questioning spirit which does not find expression in that Book which is no less a revelation of man's heart than of God's counsel. But the answer is given always in one way: by a demand for submission to the unerring wisdom and unfailing love of that Providence which reserves the solution of its mysteries for another state. The last book of the Old Testament contains a remarkable record of human struggles with the difficulties of this subject: that colloquy between man and his Maker sums up on the human side all that can be said, and equally sums up the everlasting reply of God; *Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked*. There is no more complete exhibition of the contest between the human mind and the unsearchable mysteries of Providence than in the prophecy which ends the Old Testament and anticipates the New. Similarly in the prophet Ezekiel the challenge of unbelief receives its answer: *Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal?* The Divine ways are equal, when measured by all His attributes, unequal when measured by part of them. Our Lord's words to Simon Peter may bear the widest application: *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*. To

Objections:

Mal. iii.  
14—18

Ezekiel  
xviii.  
25.

John xiii  
7.



Job xxiii.  
8—10. go back to the Old Testament, Job gives the practical issue of all : *Behold I go forward but He is not there ; and backward but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand where He doth work but I cannot behold Him : He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him. But He knoweth the way that I take.* After all that has been said and written on THEODICY—the vindication of Divine Providence—it is a branch of theology which God reserves for Himself and for the revelation of the Great Day.

Objects.

### THE OBJECTS OF PROVIDENCE.

Another view of the doctrine presents to our study the range over which Providence extends ; and the consideration of this will confirm, supplement, and illustrate what has been already said. First, the Universe as such is the object of what may be termed Conservation. Secondly, that part of it which is the subject of creaturely wants is the object of ceaseless providential Care. Thirdly, that more select and highest portion which consists of probationary beings is the object of Providential Government.

Threefold  
Scale.

Here we have Divine Providence in the centre of three widening circles ; or, to put it in another form, there is in the sphere of its objects both a descending and an ascending scale. The Universe, as the universal all in one, includes in its vast extent the sum of creatures in their very nature needy and dependent, and within this sphere there is a very much more limited range of probationary beings : this is from the wider to the more limited. But we pass from the sum of things as such up to the living creatures generally, and then still upwards to the intelligences for whom all other things exist : this is from the less to the greater. Preservation embraces all ; the lovingkindness of God is over the inner circle of such creatures as have to seek their means of life ; the Rule of God is over free intelligence.

Conser-  
vation.

### PROVIDENTIAL CONSERVATION.

Providence over the universe is the CONSERVATION of all things with reference to the end for which they are called into being.

1. Hence it is not a CONTINUOUS CREATION, according to an hypothesis favoured by many thinkers. This notion seems to involve the denial of the continuity of creaturely existence; and, if applied to the material universe, must be applied to the spirit of man. So applied, it further involves the perpetual fiat that brings evil as well as good into being; it is therefore Pantheism in another form, or rather the idea of creation becoming Pantheistic. If, in the reference to the Providential conservation of all things by the Son, *the Word of His power* might serve to warrant a perpetual creating fiat, *the upholding all things* denies it again; and the Upholding has the priority in the sentence. Nothing is really gained by effacing the distinction between the creating act and the conserving power. But very much is lost by it.

Con-  
tinuous  
Creation

Heb. i. 3.

2. The hypothesis of CONCURSUS, so far as it is amenable to definition, tends to the same issue: it is only the shadow of the former; disguising under the term Concursus the idea of such a co-operation between the First Cause and second causes as makes the resultant action equally that of God and that of the immediate agent. Outside of the sphere of moral action we may hold what the Lutheran Quenstedt thus formulates: *Non est reipsa alia actio influxus Dei, alia operatio creaturæ, sed una et indivisibilis actio. Quemadmodum eadem numero scriptio pendet a manu et calamo, nec pars una a manu et alia a calamo, sed tota a manu et tota a calamo: ita concursus Dei non est prior actione creaturæ propria prioritate causalitatis, cum in re sit omnino eadem actio.* But, however true this is, and however easy to understand, as to all functions of the reasonable creature which are outside of the sphere of others, it is hard either to understand or to apply it when the distinction of virtue and vice enters.

Concursus

3. There is but a step between this doctrine and that which asserts the ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE of all things on the immediate energy of the First Cause, thus denying second causes altogether. This is the secret of Pantheism in modern philosophy, as it was of Fatalism in ancient heathen systems, and, it may be added, of rigid Predestinarianism in modern theology. The Scripture which asserts that *in Him we live and move and have our being* does not convert the proposition and say that God lives and moves and has His being in us. The very passage which seems to declare

Absolute  
Depend-  
ence.

Acts xvii.  
28.

the unconditional dependence of the inanimate universe on God as its soul, and of every breath of all that lives on God as its life, represents the Supreme as making Himself, in a certain sense, dependent on the course of action adopted by His free and intelligent creatures. The term Absolute Dependence, therefore, as applied to the creature, like that of Absolute Sovereignty as applied to the Creator, is an exaggeration of an undeniable ultimate truth, that without the will of God nothing is in the universe.

The  
Divine  
Concur-  
rence

4. The only safeguard against these incomprehensible hypotheses is the firm assurance that the Divine Author of all things permits us to regard Him as co-operating with the forces to which He has given a real though not independent existence. He is pleased to accommodate His infinite presence and operation to the laws which He has established, concurring with them according to their nature: with free agencies as Himself free, and with those that work necessarily as guiding their necessary action. But it is only with the movements of free intelligence that He is said to co-operate: the word *συμπετεῖν* is strictly limited to this, and suggests a most important distinction. No efforts of the human mind can go beyond this acknowledgment of a mystery that cannot be solved.

The Final  
End.

5. But the purpose of this co-operation must ever be kept in view. It is not merely the upholding of created nature: the end for which all things are what they are is inseparably bound up with the term Providence, and alone justifies its application to the Divine supervision and control of the universe. It may be said of all created things that they HAVE AN END: not an end of being, but an end of development, even the smallest atom having its predetermined place in every molecule, and every movement produced by every force having its relation to the motion of the whole. The Providence of God as Preservation and Co-operation is exercised over the vast system of things as one immense but not unbounded organic unity. That unity embraces the sum of all that exists by the will of the Creator: the Cosmos is a complex of endless varieties of motion, all mutually interacting, and all tending to one foreseen and predetermined issue. The moving life of matter which is its Force, the animated life of the unconscious vegetable world, the sentient life of animal or impersonal creatures, the

higher and spiritual life of angels and men, all form one great economy, the necessary and the free processes of which are all controlled alike, and directed toward the one issue purposed in the supreme, eternal Mind. And, Providence being a term of theology as belonging to man, that supreme purpose is, in our present discussion, connected with the final issues of redemption. The Apostle gathers the entire compass of things into one when he says, *All things were created by Him, and for Him*: for Him Col. 1. Who is the Head of the body, the Church. It is His Name which 16-18 makes it the Universe to man.

PROVIDENTIAL CARE.

Care.

Providential CARE is exercised over the creatures that are dependent for the sustentation of sensitive life on the supply of other forms of matter. Here we must distinguish between two orders of these dependants—impersonal living creatures and personal intelligences—but without including as yet the spiritual relations of the latter.

1. It may be said that the Creator's care over the lower orders, or His Providence, extends far beyond the animal world, and passes over that mysterious frontier line, if there be such a line, where animal passes downward into vegetable life, or the distinction between them ceases to exist. As soon as the life-cell breaks the dead monotony of the creation, the care of the Supreme is wanted to provide for its expansion into its predestined forms. Everywhere reigns the law of Selection, not natural but supernatural. The Disposer of all things appoints the ten thousand contrivances by which the plants find out their appropriate soil, and even allure and devour their insect and animal prey. In this domain, as well as in that of the beasts which perish, and of man that perishes not, the word holds good: *He hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation.* When, however, we rise to the creatures which not only share man's animal life but reflect many of his passions and infirmities, the revelation of God becomes most explicit as to the minuteness of His superintending care. Some of the most affecting words both of the poetry and of the prose of the Old Testament suggest themselves; too familiar to need quotation.

All  
Creatures.

Acts xvii  
26.

- But, lest it might be thought possible that His supreme demonstration of love to man in His Son might make us forgetful of His care over creatures that need no mercy, that Son has surpassed all other witnesses in declaring the lovingkindness of His Father to everything that breathes. *Ye are of more value than many sparrows* is preceded by, *One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father*. To that Father is even given His highest name in this connection: *Your Heavenly Father feedeth them*, with which we may conjoin the most ancient of all testimonies: *In Whose hand is the soul of every living thing*. This means His care, as the universal lovingkindness of the Creator is over all His works; but it is Providence, as that lovingkindness is exercised according to appointed secondary laws, and for an end which includes the subordinate ends that order the troubled destiny of the groaning creation. *The young lions . . . seek their meat from God*, and find it through His care; it is, however, especially of His Providence that they, as the same touching verse tells us, *roar after their prey*. This word is wanted to reconcile care for the devourer with lovingkindness to the victim. Both belong to a deep-laid plan: deep as eternity. There is profound mystery in the relation of the Creator to the irrational and helpless creature of His hands. We must be content to merge it in the still deeper mystery of the reappearance of ravage and death in the reorganised world as the result of human sin: remembering always that there is a universal Theodicy in the future. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth—of all the earth with all its myriads of wronged inhabitants—do right?*
2. As the creature for whom the earth was formed, Man is specially the object of that care of which we speak. The human race, that is; concerning which it is affirmed by St. Paul that God *determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation*. This word must have its full force, as revealing the great truth that the historical spread of the races of men is not only superintended and watched by the Eternal Eye, but was predetermined in the foresight of all national life. Human history, as well as human salvation, comes under the sway of a preordination which is bound up with the free development of all those principles which mould the course of events on this earth.

Men generally, both good and evil, are equally its objects: *He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* The apocryphal book of Wisdom says: *He hath made the small and great, and careth  $\pi\rho\omega\sigma\epsilon\iota$ , for all alike;* a sentiment, however, which Scripture does not so broadly state, but modifies the  $\delta\mu\omega\iota\omega\varsigma$ : not literally FOR ALL ALIKE. Especially does it reign over individual human life, the entrance upon it, continuance in it, and exit from it: *Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds.* It extends over all the variations and chances and changes of man's probationary career: *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps. My times are in Thy hand.* So also it descends to all the common needs of life, which make all creatures one. Our Saviour says: *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* These words of highest authority contain all the elements of the doctrine of Providence. There is a special care over all creatures; especially over man, the highest creature on earth. Our own provision for our own necessities avails not without that heavenly forethought for us, acknowledged or unacknowledged. Providential care is exercised over all men, good and evil alike: in virtue of the bond of dependence that links them with the lower orders. Yet as men, especially Christian men, are *better than they*, there is a higher place for them in this graduated scale of Divine consideration. Yet it is a Providence which provides in harmony with secondary causes and human forethought, the *gathering into barns*. Finally, our Lord has added elsewhere this, that in the specific allotments of men's conditions of life there is mystery which He not only does not solve Himself, but forbids us to pry into: *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Which may be said to be one of our Lord's last words on this subject.

Matt. v  
45.

Wisd. vi  
7.

Job x. 12.  
Job xiv. 5.

Prov. xvi.  
9.  
Ps. xxxi.  
15.  
Matt. vi.  
26.

Matt. vi.  
26.

John ix. 2.

**Government.****PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT.**

Providential GOVERNMENT is limited to intelligent or probationary creatures. It is a vague use of the term government which applies it to the control of all things: there is no rule, worthy of being connected with the name of the Supreme, save over free beings, conscious of their freedom and of their responsibility. Similarly, the word strictly belongs to the control of God over probationary creatures, that is, over beings undergoing a temporary trial with reference to an eternal issue. From these two principles flow certain very important applications of the doctrine which we now study.

**Over  
Free Intelligence.**

1. The moral government of God is, by the very terms, exercised over beings free and consciously responsible for the use of their freedom. It is sufficient to appeal to the consciousness of the spirit in man which asserts its own origination of the movements of will, that is of its own acts; and, in the form of conscience, or moral consciousness, proclaims universally its sense of obligation and responsibility to a supreme moral Governor. On any other theory the word Providence loses the better part of its meaning: part indeed it may retain in the form of predestination, the unbending government of a soul that must act out its destiny; but all that belongs to the administration of law as a means of discipline and education for the human spirit on its way to the highest perfection, which is necessary obedience in perfect liberty, is taken from it.

**Over  
Probationary  
Beings.**

2. It is only another way of presenting the same truth to say that the Providence of government is exercised only over beings in a state of probation. Over those who are fixed in their eternal estate there may be a Divine rule, in a limited sense, but there is no Providence in the strict meaning of the word. They are instruments of that Providence, and are themselves bound up with a scheme which includes them in common with all orders of creation in its ultimate designs: but they are not objects of that all-wise adjustment of means to ends, and of that rectoral supervision of free volitions and acts, which are connoted in the term. Hence, the most impressive view that may be taken of

this doctrine regards it as the slow but sure guidance of all creatures whose state is not yet eternally fixed to the consummation of their destiny as foreappointed of God.

3. It follows that theology has no doctrine on this subject which does not connect it with sin and redemption : not with the one without the other, but with both. Strictly speaking, the whole of revelation is the history of the dealings of God with Sinners redeemed : we cannot, therefore, dissociate the term Providence, which is a name for that history, from the idea of provision to meet a foreseen, permitted, restrained, condemned, and vanquished, though not eternally abolished, evil. In Re-  
demption

(1.) Sin, or the separation of the created will from the will of God, was foreseen by the Creator. This first great and awful truth involved in the word Providence, as it has been defined, lies at the threshold of all theology as an unquestioned and unfathomable fact. But this is equivalent to saying that it was permitted : in other words, that no Divine restraint was laid upon the freedom of the creature in that possibility of its direction which was towards departure from God. "Deus quidem permittit, sed non vult τὸ permissum." There is no decretive will—*μὴ γένοιτο*—in the Providence that foresees, humanly speaking, the whole history of sin. The difficulty of reconciling this permission with the holiness and goodness and all the perfections of the Supreme must be left, finally,—let speculation and controversy say their utmost,—to the Divine THEODICY, or God's vindication of Himself. As every mouth is stopped in the silent confession of universal guilt of sin, so must every mouth be stopped in silent awe before the mystery of the fact of sin. Suffice that SIN IS, and that it has had by human measurement a long career. Provi-  
dence and  
Sin.

(2.) Providence is the history of Divine dealings with men as fallen and restored. The relation of the idea of *πρόνοια* to the counteraction of evil needs only to be indicated: the specific doctrines of Sin and Redemption will require fuller treatment of what is here only suggested. The government of the world from the beginning has been conducted on the basis of a Divine scheme, the evolution of which has been so interwoven with the development of the sinning race as to make the history of mankind one great display of the wisdom and forethought of what we call Providence : fore- Redemp-  
tion.



- appointment or *πρόθεσις* presiding over the beginning of all things, foreknowledge presiding over the end, and Providence between these as their union. This is impressively set before us under two aspects : with reference to the coming of Christ and the preparation of the world for His coming, and the provisional forbearance of Divine righteousness in the prospect of the atoning sacrifice. As to the former, let these sentences of Scripture be instead of any further enlargement. *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh : as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* This name of the Eternal expresses all that is meant by His Providence : *The Lord will see and provide.* JEHOVAH-JIREH is the watchword of the doctrine in its relation to the One great object of the Divine Provision for man ; to that future mount all the Providential dealings of the Governor of mankind converged.
- Gen. xxii. 14. Our Lord said, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day ; and he saw it and was glad.* We of the Gentiles may remember that Abraham was our father also, and we also now see and rejoice with him. Until He came, Whom His Father provided for the infinite need, the law of the government of the world, whether Jewish or Gentile, had reference to the preparation of His coming : of His coming in *the fulness of the time.* He Who was to be provided was the *Lamb of God Which taketh away the sin of the world ;* and the fulness of time was the time of His incarnation and redeeming death. In the prevision of this provision the peoples were governed in forbearance during the long ages of their darkness and errors. The wickedness of mankind has been marked, controlled, and punished by stern visitations, on the one hand ; on the other, there has been manifested a Divine forbearance in reference to which St. Paul says that *the times of this ignorance God winked at :* words to be expounded, if expounded at all, as teaching that the heathenism of the wandering nations had never been, as it never will be, beyond the reach of the infinite resources of Providence. But the relation of the God of redemption to the part of mankind unvisited by the light of the Gospel is one of the inexhaustible mysteries of that Providence before which its greatest expositor recoiled in the adoring humility of his reason, and we must join him : *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out !*
- John viii. 58.
- Gal. iv. 4.
- John i 29.
- Acts xvii. 30.
- Rom. xi. 33.

(3.) Certain general principles there are which serve to protect us from error, though they still leave the clouds and darkness round the throne of the Divine Ruler. Evidence is abundantly given on all sides that sin is opposed to the will of the Supreme Controller of events. Not only is there an abiding remembrancer of this in conscience; it is also confirmed by the judgment of mankind interpreting history. Sin is for ever bound up with evil; and, whatever triumphs may be permitted to the cause of iniquity—so that men go so far as recklessly to call evil good and good evil—no reasonable mind ever yet doubted that the course of things is utterly opposed to wrong of every kind, and steadfastly in favour of righteousness. Even Manichæism, at least in its more ancient forms, tended to the admission of a final triumph of the good: it never contemplated evil as eternally rooted in nature, and triumphant against its opposite. Again, it must not be doubted that Divine Providence uses evil for the accomplishment of His purposes. It derogates from His dignity to suppose that He would permit sin to coexist with goodness, and be everywhere diffused around and within His kingdom, without subserving His designs. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee* is the striking expression of an eternal truth; as is also that other, *the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain!* Even when eternally cast out of His presence and condemned, it will yield its tribute of glory to His attributes. But much more is this seen to be the case in the world of mixed Providential dealings. Good is in many ways brought out of evil. The records of the Bible constantly show, so consistently that quotation is needless, how the evil as well as the good, and sometimes in even a more striking manner, have helped on the cause of God and of truth. Experience proves that much of the spiritual discipline, education, and advancement of God's people is the result of their conflict with sin. *O felix culpa!* is not to be rejected absolutely; there is a sense in which it is true for ever. Lastly, there is a never-failing judgment, or discrimination, going on which is the precursor of the final judgment. Many of the rewards of virtue and punishments of vice are meted out even in this world: enough at least to show that *Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth*; and to prophesy, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

Principles  
of  
Theodicy.

Ps. lxxvi  
10.

Ps. lviii.  
11.  
Gen. xviii  
25.

**Summary****SUMMARY.**

A few general observations are still necessary to complete this view of Providence. It is obviously the most comprehensive term in the language of theology: the background, mysterious in its brightness or darkness, of all the several departments of religious truth. Rather, it penetrates and fills the whole compass of the relations of man with his Maker. It connects the Unseen God with the visible creation, and the visible creation with the work of redemption, and redemption with personal salvation, and personal salvation with the end of all things. There is no topic which has already been discussed, none which awaits discussion, that does not pay its tribute to the all-embracing, all-surrounding doctrine of Providence. The word itself—let it be once more impressed—in one aspect of it carries our thoughts up to that supreme Purpose which was in the beginning with God, and in another carries our thoughts down to the foreseen End or consummation of all things; while it includes between these the whole infinite variety of the dealings of God with man. It silently accompanies theology therefore into all its regions of study and meditation; touches it literally at every point, and sheds its glory, oppressive to reason but invigorating to faith, over all branches of its investigation. It ought to be the grand Reconciler of the contending advocates of predestination and conditional election. The former claim and must have all the legitimate rights of the *πρόθεσις*; the latter should not be defrauded of the rights of the *πρόγνωσις*; while both must rejoice in the *πρόνοια* that comes between. All theological truths are rounded by this unfathomable word. But for the very reason that it is, in its widest compass, so literally boundless and universal, we find it necessary to give it only a scanty treatment as one distinct department.

END OF VOL. I.

