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Faith and peace





# FAITH AND PEACE.

BEING

ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE "ESSAYS AND  
REVIEWS,"

BY THE FOLLOWING WRITERS.

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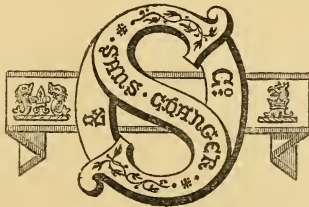
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WITH A PREFACE BY THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON DENISON.



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## P R E F A C E.

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WHEN a trial comes upon a national Church, that is, upon a Church established by law, such as has arisen out of the publication of the book called "Essays and Reviews," there are four distinct ways, as instanced below, in which faithful men may discharge the duty of assisting their brethren to meet and to overcome it. In the case of a Church not national, the four ways would be resolved into three, because the second would be merged in the first.

That the trial is a heavy one, and calling for every assistance which can be supplied need not be argued. The temptation which the book suggests and aggravates, is one which assails men at that particular point which is at all times the weakest point of their nature, the pride of reason; and, doubtless, if man's soul be at all times most accessible to the Tempter at this particular point, there are circumstances of the time in which we live which tend in an especial manner to increase the danger.

The book tempts man to "tempt GOD," saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"\* The writers have yielded to this temptation themselves, and, having so yielded, they have

\* Compare St. Luke iv. 12; Deut. vi. 16; Exod. xvii. 2—7; Numbers xx. 1—13, xxi. 4—6; 1 Cor. x. 9.

become instruments of others' temptation. For everything that we know of the dealings of God and of His presence with man is contained in the Bible. It is only by accepting the Bible as we accept no other book that we can be safe from asking all the days of our life, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Now the writers of "Essays and Reviews," if it be granted that it has been no part of their purpose to move men's minds to ask this question, yet is it beyond dispute that the effect of their writings has been this and no other. They have laid hands on the Bible as though it were a book of man, and not The Book of God. They have raised, or rather have revived (for "Essays and Reviews" is, after all, only a reproduction of scepticisms often refuted and exposed, weak and shallow in itself, but in its adjuncts dangerous), they have revived doubts as to the inspiration, and therein as to the authority, of the Bible. They have proposed to subject it "freely" to what is called the laws of thought, and to rules of interpretation such as may legitimately be applied to any other book. They have ridiculed portions of the Bible; they have discarded others. In so doing they have broken down the entire framework of the Book. The root of all this lies in, and draws all its nourishment from, the pride of human reason, refusing to accept what it cannot understand. The "manhood of the world" is a favourite phrase with these writers; is by them claimed for and applied to these our times as being times of intellectual perfection, and indeed is the basis upon which has been reared the superstructure of the entire book. Without discussing the question whether there be any "manhood of the world," or whether, if there be, it can be predicated of our age, it is obvious to remark that the spirit of the book is one and the same with that spirit of doubt,



through which, in the infancy of our race, man was first betrayed into disobedience, and

“Brought Death into the world, and all our woe.”

The same temptation which overcame our first parents and made them fall has ever since been of all temptations the most powerful with their fallen children. There are thousands upon thousands, who have withstood “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes,” but have fallen before “the pride of life.” The latest instance amongst us is to be found in the writers of “Essays and Reviews,” and in those whom they have taught to live saying day by day, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Is there any cruelty more reckless done by one man to another than to teach him thus? GOD has given to man, labouring under the sense of sin and alienation from GOD, striving day by day with manifold pains and sorrows, that which makes life to rejoice, and which comforts death, the assurance of heaven regained for him by CHRIST. GOD has revealed to man this assurance in the Bible. For every doubt cast upon the Bible a portion of this assurance is done away in every one who admits the doubt. For every doubt cast upon the Bible the power of cherishing this assurance is impaired, till life is robbed of its hope, and in death there is no light. These are the gifts of man to his fellow-men bestowed upon, and bequeathed to them in books like this.

Of the four ways referred to above whereby men are to be succoured in this extremity, the first and principal one belongs to the Church in her collective and corporate capacity; the other three to individual members of her body: the second and third to these in their official

capacity; the fourth and last to the same in their private capacity.

These four ways are therefore distinct, and should carefully be kept distinct. They have no necessary connexion with each other, except in so far as this, that the general end proposed by all is one and the same; but the means which they severally adopt are peculiar to each, and cannot be mixed up together without damage to the entire process by which it is hoped, under God, to meet and to overcome the evil now pressing upon the Church.

The four ways are:—

1. Proceedings in Synod.
2. Proceedings in Court.
3. Sermons, and other teachings and warnings by the bishops in their dioceses, and the clergy in their parishes.
4. Argumentative treatises by members of the Church, clergy and laity.

It is a remarkable feature of our times, and one which suggests many anxious thoughts for the future of the Church, that of the four ways just stated the last is the one upon which most reliance is placed, though it be precisely that one which, from the nature of the case, deals with the several points which it touches rather as being matter of controversy, and, so to speak, open questions, to be debated between man and man, than as being matter of Revelation, *i.e.*, of knowledge communicated from God and offered to man's acceptance. The Essayists and Reviewers have fallen upon a time of the world when men reason why they should believe rather than believe, and argue why they should obey rather than obey. It results that the questions between the Essayists and Reviewers and the Church are regarded very generally as questions more of reason and argument than of authority: and

if it is felt and urged that this is to place them upon grounds which are remote alike from the teaching of the Church and the positive declarations of Holy Scripture, the excuse made in reply is, that the spirit of the times will endure no other. Now it is worth considering whether what this resolves itself into be not that Churchmen in these days are very commonly accepting the truths of Revelation rather as matter of private conviction than of external law — a position dangerous in the extreme for the most powerful and learned mind to assume at any time, and in respect of the millions of mankind at no time either tenable or possible.

The contents of the present volume are an instance of the fourth of those means of succour enumerated above. And though, as noticed above, all treatises of this class are rather controversial than declaratory of the Truth as delivered by GOD into men's keeping, they have a great value over and above their immediate and specific use, as leading men's minds to contrast the use with the abuse of reason, and showing that it is not difficult for the first to vindicate its claim to the respect and affection of mankind. In this way treatises like the present contribute powerfully to make men sober-minded. For they proceed upon the principle that one use of reason in respect of things spiritual is to show how the evidence from the works of GOD's hands, alike in the moral and the physical world, coheres and consists with the account of His dealings with man as revealed in the Bible. That reason may and must be used to confirm and establish men's belief in that which is, prior to all use of reason, and independently of it, necessarily true; but that it may not, and cannot properly, be used to impair that belief. That if in any particular the above

coherence and consistence is not perceived, the use of reason is to abstain from affirming the truth of its conclusions as against the record of Revelation, because it is possible that the best ascertained conclusions of human reason and experience may be, after all, fallacies, but it is not possible that what GOD has made part of His Revelation should be other than the Truth. Thus it is a principal function of reason when approaching the Revelation of GOD to control and limit the exercise of its own powers. On the other hand, the abuse of reason, so marked throughout the "Essays and Reviews," is the assumption *a priori* that its conclusions may be depended upon as no less infallible than the statements of the Bible. When this position has been once taken, it is easy to proceed, as the writers of "Essays and Reviews" have done, to the further position, that wheresoever the conclusions of reason and the deductions of science are not in accordance with the statements of the Bible, the latter are to be regarded either as not rightly understood, or as of no importance, or as not intended to mean what they say.

Thus reason, or conscience, or knowledge, or "wisdom,"\* is made the supreme judge of Truth; and it becomes a hard matter to understand what room is left for a Revelation from GOD of things in their nature above and beyond reason, if when such things have been revealed, reason is to sit in judgment upon a tribunal of her own creating, and to accept only such parts of Revelation as she may decide to be worthy of belief on the ground that they are decided by herself to be infallibly true.

The process which issues in this result is dignified by the name of a free inquiry after Truth. What it is

\* 1 Cor. i. 21.

in fact, is a revival in some systematic shape of free thinking; of that with which the misery of the world began, and which has ever since been the great obstacle to man's peace, because it will not allow him to accept humbly and implicitly the remedy for his misery provided of God. There are warnings in the Bible which appear to show that the great apostacy which is yet to come will find its principal encouragement and derive its special power from the same delusion of the great enemy of man.

The writer of this preface has seen no cause to alter the judgment which he formed in the early part of last year, and which he then developed in his "Analysis of Essays and Reviews," that what the projector of this book—whoever this may have been—proposed to himself was a *systematic* attack upon the Bible, and upon the Church as the expositor of the Bible. This proposal the projector carried out through seven hands, acting, as we are told, in entire independence of each other; but all of them placing their respective contributions in the hands of the projector for the purposes of the arrangement which he had in view.

It is not worth while to inquire now what is the value of the independence claimed. It is enough to know that every one of the seven writers has long ago become responsible for the contents of the entire volume.

The present publication is a collection of answers to five of the Essays and Reviews. These answers were issued at intervals in the course of last year.

All the answers have, of course, one great object in common—viz., to confront the infidelity and to expose the sophistry and the fallacies of "Essays and Reviews."

Beyond this, they have no connexion one with the other. They were undertaken and written independently; the proposal to undertake having been communicated to the several authors by the writer of this preface. As they are now published in a collective shape, it is necessary to state in express terms that each one of the contributors to the volume, including the writer of the preface, is responsible for so much only as is comprised within the four corners of his own contribution.

It will be observed that the volume does not include a reply to the Essay or Review of Dr. Rowland Williams, nor to that of the Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688—1750." At the time when these replies were first contemplated, this latter Essay had been shown to be full of inaccuracies, and further exposure seemed to some to whom application was made to be not required; afterwards it was not thought worth while to pursue the matter. The writer of this preface has, however, a clear opinion that there is no one Essay of the whole number of "Essays and Reviews" more stimulative of an arrogant scepticism and more filled with incentives and temptations to be "of a doubtful mind," than the Essay of the Rector of Lincoln College. The learned and able man who had undertaken to write the reply to the Essay or Review of Dr. Rowland Williams has been compelled by ill health to abandon his task.

The position of the Church of England in respect of succouring her children in the present extremity by means of the first and second of the four ways of succour above enumerated is doubtless an unhappy position. The Church has not spoken in her Synods, and the time of her speaking appears to be, so to say, indefinitely

postponed. That which should have been the earliest, as it is the only true, foundation, of all means of defence resorted to, and of all means of succour supplied, will probably be the latest, if indeed it shall ever be called into life. It is to be added further—for in such a case there is no excuse for understatement—that it is impossible to regard the grounds alleged by the Upper House of the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury for the postponement of Synodical proceedings as valid and sufficient.

The members of the Church of England, clerical and lay, have been so long unused to proceedings in Synod, that it is not an easy matter even to gain a hearing when it is attempted to be shown how the first principles of Church authority are involved in their revival and their application to a case like that of “Essays and Reviews.” The Church has it in charge to guide and to warn in controversies of Faith. That she do this faithfully is the very condition of her existence as a living branch of the Church Catholic. The Church can do this in Synod. She can do it nowhere else and by no other way. In Synod she has the promise of THE HOLY GHOST to enable her to do it. In Synod she prays specially that the promise may not fail through her own fault.

It was a day of great and lasting trouble to the Church of England when her Bishops attempted to do at a private meeting what could only be done in Synod. It was a day of greater and yet more lasting trouble when the Church was lost sight of in the Establishment; and because proceedings in Court had been taken by one of the bishops for the relief and protection of the parishioners of a place within his diocese, and because certain complications—in themselves unimportant—might possibly ensue, proceedings in Synod were sus-

pended. The writer of this preface cannot hesitate to declare the sorrowful conviction which is always present with him, that more injury has herein been done to the Church of England than by all the ten editions of "Essays and Reviews."

Meantime, what is the spectacle in the Court of law? A single judge, trembling under the responsibilities of his position; shrinking from dealing with the case in the only way which can satisfy the case, and in such sort narrowing the limits within which it appears to him to be competent for him to act, that it seems to be not improbable that, in the first of the two cases before the Court, a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England may deny, disparage, or call in question the inspiration, the authority, and the historical truth of Holy Scripture, to his unfeigned belief in which he called God to witness at his ordination, and which he reads every Lord's Day to his parishioners as the foundation and source of all his teaching; may deny not only the doctrines which flow out of the doctrine of the Atonement, but the doctrine of the Atonement itself, and yet, because he shall have done this under cover of reviewing another man's writings, and not as promulgating his own opinions, a pretence which the moral sense of all who read rejects and shrinks from as only adding hypocrisy to crime,\* be adjudged to have committed and to commit no offence which brings him within the jurisdiction of the Court—the Court through which all such cases must pass in the first or the second instance. The judge may be correct, if such shall prove to be his view

\* The Reviewer adopts his author in all essentials, and in pp. 56, 62, 70, 77, 84 goes beyond him. Note to "Analysis of Essays and Reviews," p. 19.



of the law: the blame may not be his, but may be an inevitable consequence of the position in which he is placed. How grievous the blame of that position, and how great the present, and yet more the prospective, injury to the Church it is not easy to say.

In the second of the two cases before the Court, the pretence of reviewing finds no place. In the Essay which is the subject of this case we have, among other things of offence and scandal, “the flagrant immorality of an argument which labours to show by how many processes of the reasoning faculty the acceptance and the use of the formularies of a ‘National Church’ may be combined with absolute disbelief of the doctrinal statements of such formularies, even when these may have been limited to the enunciation of the principles of the doctrine of CHRIST.”\*

Now men may make what metaphysical or theoretical distinctions they please, but the fact remains, and with it the injury remains. The result of an acquittal in the Court of Arches in either of the cases now before it, will be—unless reversed upon appeal—the legal endorsement of the claim put forward by beneficed ministers of the Church to think “freely” and to speak “freely” upon all points which the Church has ruled: to do this even to the denial of the truth of Holy Scripture. They shall have done this by public act, and shall continue to do it day by day, and yet there shall be no power in the law of England to declare even so much as this—that they who do such things may not retain their position as beneficed ministers of the Church.

This is the position in which the Church of England

\* “Analysis of Essays and Reviews,” p. 28, and note.

may soon find herself placed. Is it a good position? Is it even a tolerable position? Is it not a position in the offence, and scandal, and danger of which there is no member of the Church, clerical or lay, who, in his order and degree, has not a share?

But most of all the Spirituality; because to the Spirituality it is specially committed for the sake, and in behalf of all, to keep watch in defence of the Truth. Now the Spirituality of the Church speaks *for the Church* in her Synod, *and nowhere else*. If then the position traced above shall be the result of the present legal proceedings, then, so long as the Church does not speak by her Synod, the Church, through the fault of the Spirituality, is an accomplice in the fact of that position. The writer of this preface rejoices, indeed, to think that the proved inadequacy of a Court of Law to meet the evil of cases like these now under trial has compelled many who last year were not favourable to proceedings in Synod to turn to such proceedings now as to the only true security of the Church. But all this is of no avail to the exculpation of the Church until the Synod shall have given it effect by the formal condemnation of the book.

Again, so long as the Spirituality decline to speak in Synod, *because* of proceedings pending in Court of law, they do the things following:—

1. They abdicate their proper functions.
2. They mix up together things which are in their nature distinct, and should carefully be kept distinct—viz., proceedings in Synod and proceedings in Court.
3. They not only place the judgment of a Court of law on the same level with the judgment of a Synod in things spiritual, but they do, in effect, subordinate the last to the first, though the last have

the promise of Divine guidance, and the first have not.

And even supposing the judgments in the Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury to be not adverse to the Church, the Synod will have allowed the Court of law to have been the first to do its own proper work—not to do the Synod's work—for no Court of law in a country where there is a National Church can act as a Synod, and no Synod of the National Church can act as a Court—but to do its own proper work when the Synod shall have neglected its own proper work.

Part of this unhappy position is already a fact of our history; the rest may soon be a fact also. It behoves men who love the Church of England for the Truth's sake which is in her, and who know that her honours, and her dignities, and her claims, and her possessions are as nothing if there be a disease at her heart, to draw together in prayer and in endeavour, lest what was but natural in the deputy of Achaia\* be found in her to be one of the worst offences against God that a Church can commit.

It is an evil sign when a country is visited with a curse so heavy as the publication of a book like "Essays and Reviews." It is yet a more evil sign when the book is eagerly purchased by and widely circulated among all classes of the people. It is worse still when those among its writers who at the time of its publication were in charge of the education of youth should still have that education confided to them, as though their principles were only matter of allowable speculation—as though there were no danger of contamination

\* Acts xviii. 17.

from the contact of their life.\* For, in a soul which has been called to belief in CHRIST, even moral purity, when not a fruit of Faith, becomes a snare, and has no inheritance in the promise of CHRIST, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD." Alas! it is not the first time in man's history when infidelity towards GOD has been linked together with alluring qualities towards man, and when the eye has been allowed to rest upon many marks and tokens of a vigorous and healthy training, but has been closed to the process by which an unsound foundation is being laid in respect of the things of GOD.

It is the worst sign of the worst evil when there is any hesitation in the Spirituality of the Church to confront the evil by the way of GOD's appointment, in reliance upon GOD's promise, with prayer for GOD's guidance, in assurance of GOD's strength.

GEORGE A. DENISON.

LONDON, *February* 28, 1862.

\* "Maxima debetur puero reverentia."

SUPREMACY OF SCRIPTURE.

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AN EXAMINATION INTO THE PRINCIPLES AND  
STATEMENTS ADVANCED IN THE ESSAY  
ON THE EDUCATION OF  
THE WORLD.

IN A LETTER TO THE REV. DR. TEMPLE.

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD JELF, B.D.

*Late Censor of Ch. Cb. and Whitehall Preacher: Bampton Lecturer for 1857.*



## LETTER TO DR. TEMPLE.

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MY DEAR TEMPLE,



TRUST that the recollection of our former intimacy will make it unnecessary for me to do more than simply assure you, that in taking up my pen in answer to your Essay, I am writing in no spirit of hostility to yourself, but only against the theories you advance, and the arguments whereby you support them: it is true that for many years I have heard little of you, except through the newspapers, and seen less; but as your Essay speaks of the way in which old intimacies retain their place in the heart long after they have passed away from life, I feel sure that you will receive what I write in the same spirit, as that in which it is written.

Nor, in good truth, do I think I could have prevailed upon myself to undertake the task, had I not felt myself able to disjoin the Essayist from the Essay, so that in writing against it, I scarcely conceive myself to be writing against you. Nay, in some points, I doubt not, but that in combating the views rashly and

incautiously advanced therein, I shall occasionally be more really interpreting your own mind, than is done by the words which have fallen from your pen. I am sure that many of the passages which strike thoughtful men as most objectionable, do not correctly convey your own deliberate opinions, or rather they give the impression, that your opinions are very different from those which guide, and have guided, your own faith and practice. Indeed, you must excuse me for saying that the whole Essay bears marks of having been the hasty production of rare and disjointed *horæ subsecivæ*, rather than the result of continuous and mature thought: but this does not diminish the danger of the work itself, or make it less a duty to try to neutralise the evil it contains, by confuting its errors, and setting forth, as far as may be, the truths it denies or perverts. Many of the views which your Essay propounds are so agreeable to human nature, that they need not the authority of your name or position to render them acceptable to that class who, under the influence of pride of reason or of a self-indulgent temper, desire to shake off the restraints of Christian belief and duty; and therefore it is not necessary to view them, or treat them in their relation to yourself, or as affecting your position and influence, but simply as if they were the productions of an anonymous writer, containing much that is false and dangerous.

I confess that I fully share in the alarm and indignation which the volume has excited among men of all classes in society and of all shades of opinion; nor do I wonder at the very general conviction that there never has been a more decided attempt to sap the foundation of the faith once delivered to the saints, than in this simultaneous, if not combined, attack on



several points at once. I do not go so far as to say, as some say, of you all (and least of all of yourself), that you are infidels: to my mind we have to do not so much with the belief of the writers, as with the result these Essays may probably have on generations present and to come; but I say, without the shadow of a doubt, that the book does tend and minister to infidelity, and to nothing else; it tends neither to real soundness and clearness of thought, nor yet to real truth, nor yet to a high standard of action; it will not add one to the kingdom of God; it will not convince a single gainsayer of any one Christian truth; it will not win over to Christ a single enemy; it will not confirm a single waverer; it will not satisfy a single doubt, or solve a single difficulty;—it will but suggest doubts where they have been hitherto unthought of, and confirm them where they already exist. The fact so well put in the “Quarterly,” that it is hailed with joy and sympathy by infidels of every class, too painfully marks its character: and well may they rejoice, though with no angel’s joy; for, to leave out of view the definite errors it maintains and inculcates, I have no doubt but that in the intellectual being of every man who receives its principles, there is sown an erroneous notion of truth, a false tone of judgment, which, unless hindered by other influences, must needs ripen, as in some minds it has already ripened, into a disbelief of Christ’s atonement, and of the gifts, and promises, and threatenings of God,—a disbelief, in short, of all the essential characteristics of the Gospel as a supernatural scheme of salvation. That *you* propose this to yourself I am very far from supposing; it is a point for you to settle with yourself how far you are excused by the plea that you did not intend to produce any such results: I am

very much mistaken if many of those, whose opinion you most value, do not think that you would have been more true to yourself and your position, if you had declined to lend a hand, or even a finger, to removing the ancient landmarks, and causing a pæan to be sung by the enemies of Christ and the disbelievers in the God of the Bible, for the aid which clergymen and schoolmasters are lending to their work.

Let me, however, at the outset, gladly admit that your contribution does not strike one on the whole as containing so much that is startlingly objectionable as five out of the remaining six Essays ; and especially on a first and hasty perusal. There occur, too, every now and then, passages in which I think I can discern your real self speaking, setting forth practical duties, or drawing pictures of practical life, which call off the attention from, or at least throw a gleam of light over, the darker passages. It may be true that in some minds your own views have been unfairly interpreted by the views and expressions of your colleagues ; but on the other hand, I think it is equally true that your Essay has received on the whole a more favourable judgment from being contrasted with the others ; nor, while we hail with pleasure anything in your Essay which may possibly counteract or neutralise its evil tendencies, may we forget that these very passages make the evil more insidious ; that they may induce many minds to receive without due suspicion principles of thought, which, if once admitted, will probably develop themselves little by little to the full proportions of infidelity.

I think, too, that an attentive reader will find some of the censurable assertions somewhat interpreted and modified by other passages in other parts of your

Essay, which, by their very indistinctness of view and inconsistency of expression, do in some degree relieve (not your Essay, but) you from the imputation of unsoundness which the former passages throw upon you. I am anxious, as an example of what I mean, to call particular attention to the passage\* where you speak of the Gift of the Spirit as the Instructor of mankind; and I do so because I believe it gives more nearly your real and practical views on the subject. I do not think that even in this sense your theory would be true, so that a man could safely or rightly set himself above Scripture on the plea that he had the Gift of the Spirit†; this is the foundation alike of the Romish theory of development on the one hand and the antagonistic fanaticism on the other: but still it would be far better than the impression your Essay as a whole conveys; for, alas! this is the only allusion to the Holy Spirit throughout; the word Spirit sinks from its theological force into the rationalistic sense of reason or conscience.‡

This contradiction between parts of your Essay increases much the difficulty of handling it; for it is necessary to point out and meet the evil, and yet there is no wish to deny the good: I therefore give you for the better passages as much credit as they deserve; without in the least allowing that either they, or whatever you may have published or may publish, are a set-off, as far as your Essay is concerned, against the dangerous principles and views of which they are, or may be, in themselves in some sort, a denial and refutation: or that they render the exposure and answer of

\* Page 5: "First comes the law," &c.

† See Sherlock's Sermons, vol. i. p. 247.

‡ Page 31: "The spirit or conscience," &c.

those principles either superfluous or unfair; for it does not diminish the deadly character of the poison which a treacherous host places before his guest, that there are wholesome viands and even antidotes within reach, if he can but find them. As the better and brighter sort of passages and statements will strike those who sympathise with them, so will the more dangerous catch the eye and impress themselves upon the memory of those who are most likely to be injured by them.

Your Essay, to say the least, gives countenance, either directly or by implication, to the notion of the perfectibility of men and mankind by reason and science, rather than by religion and grace; to the notion that human reason is capable of, and has received, such a development as to change the relations in which it stood to Scripture \*: it assigns to it in these relations such a sufficiency and supremacy, as to make it perform by its own will and authority, those functions which the Bible assigns to grace †; it assigns to the Bible an inferior position and authority ‡; it speaks of knowledge as likely to affect our religious convictions §: it proposes a modification of view on theological matters, not in trifling or secondary points, but to such an amount as to make it worth while to direct the whole force of the intellect on the internal criticism of the Bible; so that the passages on which the distinctive belief and teaching, not of our own Church only, but of Christendom in general, are framed, may, if reason thinks them blunders, either be got rid of, or receive a rationalistic interpretation.

And though your Essay does not deny any funda-

\* Page 40: "The Church in the fullest sense," &c. Page 42: "The time was come," &c.

† Pages 5 and 44.

‡ Pages 44 and 48.

§ Page 48.

mental article of Christian belief (such as the Atonement), or any definite teaching of the Church of which you are an ordained minister (unless, perhaps, in your assertion of the supremacy of reason over Scripture), yet it is a most painful fact that there is no recognition of any one distinctive doctrine of Christianity. It may, perhaps, be truly urged that these did not necessarily come within its sphere; but still it is an ominous sign when such subjects are treated of without one word on the great mysteries, particularly when our Saviour is especially adduced as an example\*; and further than this, you have, in my judgment, set forth a method and invented almost a formula, whereby any one may disbelieve and deny anything, either in belief or duty, without supposing himself to have cast off his Christian faith or renounced Christian privileges. Your Essay, when it makes reason the sole arbiter of what is to be believed †, certainly does suggest and recommend an universal ground for doubting and relinquishing doctrines or precepts if reason does not assent to them. This would be no ground to you very possibly, but it may be, and must be, and will be to others. Your Essay supposes that complete identification of the Bible with conscience and reason, which, unless reason submits to the Bible as a direct revelation, is unattainable; and, in case of difference, you give reason the upper hand.‡ I need not point out to you the dangers likely to result to any one who has imbibed from you the supreme authority of reason, and then finds that his reason and the Bible do not agree.

On the question of your joint responsibility, I have no need to enter; it does not materially affect the

\* Page 26.

† Pages 31, 42, 45.

‡ Pages 44, 45.

matters which I propose to discuss: it is a matter rather for yourself. I am not trying to fix opinions and theories on you; I am rather discussing your own Essay with you, as if it were the production of some third person. Doubtless, no man has a right to fix upon another opinions which there is no ground for supposing him to hold,—still less to insist on making him responsible for opinions which he repudiates. I think, however, it must be confessed, that the mode and circumstances of joint publication are a fair ground for suspecting a joint enterprise, and of course such a suspicion is heightened by your not having disowned your partners' views. I cannot help thinking that it would tend to clear the question one way or the other, if the antecedents of the volume were known. Who suggested it,—who superintended it,—who arranged the Essays in the order in which they stand: whether any of the other Essays were corrected or read by you previous to publication: whether your Essay was submitted to any of the other writers,—a statement of these, and some other like particulars, would enable men to judge of the meaning and justice of the claim put forth on the fly-leaf. And though it may be a matter of indifference to you, though you may feel a chivalrous pride in not deserting those with whom you have in the world's eye cast your lot, yet I cannot help feeling that you owe it to yourself, to your friends, to your school, and to the Church at large, distinctly to disavow that which you do not share in.

But whatever may be the judgment formed as to your joint responsibility for all the opinions advanced in the volume, your Essay assumes a peculiar aspect when viewed in its unavoidable relation to the rest. It seems to me that, whether it owes its position to accident

or to design, it is fitly placed at the beginning of the volume, as being practically a foundation and introduction to the rest; for the impression I have received of the general bearing of your Essay is, that it seeks to prove men of the present day to be under rules and obligations of faith different from those of former times, and more especially from those which obtained in the early Church; that the points which were then fixed and defined on Scriptural grounds, though true and necessary for that age, are no longer true and necessary for us, nor even desirable or suitable guides for us\*; that they are not even permissible to us; that not only should we not be wrong in giving them up, but are wrong in retaining them. Nor does your Essay touch the Early Church alone: but it further suggests that reason, having now attained its maturity, is in fact a higher revelation†, and that Scripture has no longer any right to do more than to suggest to reason that which reason may reject if it pleases‡; that whatever interpretation of Scripture may have been true in former ages§, Scripture is now to be interpreted and modified to suit the tone of the age or the supposed progress of the intellect||; that this supremacy of reason is not only in harmony, as some would have it, with the pride and blindness of man, but with the counsels of God and the Divine economy of Salvation.¶

And herein it may be as well to point out at once that this is not merely a Church question. The Bible as held by the early Christians is the common property of all who can truly call themselves by that name; it is the interest of all to maintain the Bible intact and supreme; and therefore any attempt to substitute in any

\* Pages 41, 44.

† Page 44.

‡ Page 45.

§ Page 41.

|| Page 44.

¶ Essay, *passim*.

degree the inner voice of man for the revealed Word of God, and the authority of reason for the authority of Scripture, is in that same degree an attack upon Christendom.

Now hitherto it has, I think, been conceived to be impossible to hold the supremacy of reason in spiritual matters together with a belief in Scripture as a Divine revelation at the time it was published; and hence, the Deistical school have always sought to overthrow the Divine origin of Scripture, by urging various objections against certain parts of it, which they considered to be fatal to its claims as a whole. These former impugners of the supreme authority of Scripture were consistent with themselves; for it is Scripture as a whole, and as an eternal immutable source of truth, which is fatal to the Rationalistic theory of the self-perfectibility of man. They saw that if there is any Divine revelation reason must needs submit to it, and, therefore, they directed all their efforts to the proof that the Bible was not such a Divine revelation, but merely the production of designing men. The attacks of the former Rationalists were directed against Scripture as a whole, and in all ages; of the new school against parts of Scripture, and in these later times alone. Formerly it was that reason needed no revelation, and therefore no revelation had been given, or at least no revelation need be received: now it is that, a revelation being admitted as necessary and desirable, reason may supersede it as the supreme standard of belief, and modify and alter it as an instructor. It was reserved, I believe, for your Essay to admit the Divine origin of Scripture, and yet to neutralise its teaching and its authority; to invent a system of religious thought, whereby a certain amount of belief in Scripture as a real



revelation might be reconciled with the reception of the supremacy of reason as a guide in faith and practice; to believe, that is, and to disbelieve in the same breath. The practical result will be much the same; the setting up man as self-governing and self-perfecting; but the difficulties into which former Rationalists have fallen in their clumsy endeavours to prove the Scriptures to have been forgeries or myths, are avoided by admitting the genuineness and authenticity of Scripture as a supreme revelation in and for a particular age of the Church, but confining its supremacy to times long past, and placing the present age, by a supposed gradual evolution of implied truth\*, under the government of the reason, as if by the will and design of God Himself.

It will now be seen how the connection between your Essay and the rest of the series corresponds to the place it holds at the beginning of the volume. The reception of Scripture, as an authoritative revelation of truth from God, stood in the way of the rejection of certain portions of it, as unsuited to the spirit of the age, and the ambitious designs of Rationalism. Scepticism is again raising its head in the old shape of a belief in the power of man to save himself by the knowledge and holiness which is within his reach by nature, so that he has no need to humble himself at the foot of the cross, or to look on Christ as anything more than an example; but before this can become the reasonable foundation of any man's hope, the Gospel, as a scheme of salvation by the sacrifice of Christ, must needs be got rid of: and it seems as if it were felt, that the former tactics of scepticism,—a denial of and pretended

\* Page 41: "The Church was not capable, any more than a man is capable, of extracting at once all the truth and wisdom contained in the teaching of the earlier periods."

disproof of any revelation at all,—must be exchanged for a more subtle and less startling mode of disbelief. The evidences in favour of the reality of the revelation are too strong, and have been too often and too firmly established, to admit of your essayists denying it, even had they been inclined to do so: and therefore your theory that the belief which was truly drawn from Scripture and fixed in a particular age, was not fixed for all time, and especially not for the present age of supposed enlightenment, helps them out of their dilemma. It gives no small aid to those who designed in the name of truth to supersede parts of Scripture, if we can be persuaded to believe that the points attacked might be viewed as belonging only to the past, in consequence of the former nonage of reason; as matters, indeed, of former revelation and belief, good enough and true enough to men of old—out of date and old-fashioned now; that it was doing a service to Scripture to clear away from it certain points, which were only designed to be revelations in the lack of a more informed and more developed reason, and to strip it of an authority which was suitable only to a less mature stage of humanity; so that the fact of their theories being rejections of portions of Scripture, and contrary to the faith of Christendom, might not predispose us against them: that we might accept the new, modified, faith as being to us what the old faith was to St. Peter or St. Paul: this seems to be the aim, or at least the natural bearing and result of your argument; and, however completely your conscience may acquit you (as I have no doubt but that it does) of any common design against Christianity as a whole, yet you cannot fairly complain if your Essay be viewed in its results, and by the light which is reflected on its

tendencies by those works with which unhappily you have bound yourself up.

For to take the first instance that occurs to me, I do not think it possible to read your words in page 44 : “ *All these (physical sciences, &c.) have an influence whether we will or no on religious truth ;*” or in page 48, “ *clearing away any blunders which may have been fastened on it by human interpretation,*” without viewing them in their relation to the passage in Essay III. : “ *Recently the discovery of the antiquity of the human race, and the development of species, and the rejection of the idea of creation, have caused new advances in the same direction.*” You possibly may not share in these opinions, but your words I have quoted above are decidedly an encouragement and apology for them.

Nor, again, can you reasonably complain, if what you advance is interpreted by the relations on which your whole line of argument is founded, and which your continual tone of expression implies ; for instance, you frequently draw so strong and marked a contrast between the several eras and their accompaniments, that what you assert as the characteristic of the one is virtually excluded from the other. Again, you insist on so precise and minute an analogy between the individual and the race\*, that what you say of the one necessarily applies analogously to the other ; and again you have so continually neglected to limit and define your assertion, that your words and statements are necessarily judged by the principles and opinions (far worse probably than your own), which they support and suggest, and for which encouragement and suggestion your Essay is necessarily responsible. It may

\* Pages 3, 6.

be possible (to me it is more than probable) that your Essay may thus misrepresent your views; but it is not with you and your opinions that I have to deal, but with your Essay and its probable tendencies.

That this modification of Bible teaching is not only allowable, but even exactly what God designed for us, you think to prove by asserting so complete an analogy between the life of an individual man and the existence of the human race, that not only may the one be illustrated by the other, as in a figure, but that what is true of the one is true of the other, even to the minutest details; that, as a matter of fact, because in the one, certain divisions or eras with different habits and laws may be discerned, therefore in the other there is a similar series of divisions or eras with a similar difference of habits and laws: so that the history of the human race is to be arranged and interpreted by the analogies of the history of the man; and moreover, because with a little, or rather a good deal of squeezing, this may be made out in the two past eras of humanity, we may, in accordance with sound reasoning, argue that the unknown stage of the one corresponds exactly to the known stage of the other: so that the privileges and duties of men, at the present time, are fixed by the privileges and duties of the grown man. I suppose for the moment, but only for the moment, that the details of the analogy are correct.

All this seems to me to indicate that the theory of change in our obligations to the Bible, and consequently in our faith, must have presented itself to your mind as unable to stand by itself. You know best whether the theory you propose led to the analogy, or the assumed analogy to the theory. My impression is, that the whole notion occurred to you as a subject out of

which you might make a novel University Sermon ; and of such an ephemeral production it would scarcely be worth while, or rather it would be hypercritical, to weigh the premisses very accurately, or examine very curiously whether the conclusion followed logically from the premisses ; nor would it, as an University Sermon, be likely to do much harm : for the more subtle propositions would scarcely be taken in, while the attention would be caught by the better points, such as the sentence about the power of a life of holiness, in the last page. But it is quite a different thing when it is set forth as a theological work, to be read and studied in the closet : it is then necessary to test the premisses and the conclusion. You profess to build your theory on a certain analogy : at all events you work out the details with all the professed care and labour of a man who believes himself to be following out a train of thought, every step of which is necessary to the conclusion : and therefore it is needful to see how far your argument holds good. It seems, at first sight, somewhat hard measure to subject a notion so evidently fanciful to a strict examination, but the conclusion you build upon it leaves no choice.

I cannot help thinking that if you had felt confident in your theory, you would have taken a bolder line ; but as it is, instead of plainly stating your proposition that humanity is capable of, and has received such a development as to make fresh methods of religious instruction and thought reasonable and necessary for it, you bring forward a fanciful analogy between the individual and the race, which has in it enough of poetic reality, to induce the reader to admit your colossal notion for what it is worth, or at least not reject it, as he would probably have rejected your theory itself ; you gain the

advantage of carrying the reader carelessly along with you up to a certain point, and then in a single sentence\* you arbitrarily substitute the reality for the figure, with scarcely a word more of argument to support your position. If you had said, "this is no argument, but only a figure illustrative of my view of the state of humanity," you would have been nearer the truth; for a figure it is, and nothing but a figure: and the analogy, whereby you profess to have established it, is in reality worth nothing as an argument, both in itself, and from the foundation on which you make it rest. Your reasoning seems to be this:—There may be progress in the spiritual world because there may be none in the material: there is progress therefore in the whole race as well as in the individual man; and therefore these are in their nature and development precisely similar. I will consider the analogy first, which seems to me to be most unsubstantial: and for the following reasons:—

1. It proceeds from a real to a metaphorical existence. Analogy, though as a negative argument is very useful in answering objections, yet as a positive argument it has no sufficient force to establish a position by itself; it is weak as a positive argument from a metaphor to a reality: as if one were to argue that because human life flows on like a river, therefore every man would fall into the ocean of a common death; the fact concluded would be true enough, but not by virtue of the analogy, any more than if it were argued from the same analogy, that men would in death

\* Page 3: "All this is no figure, but only a compendious statement of a very comprehensive fact."

for ever lose all personal identity, or because the sea is ever restless that the dead would find no rest in the grave.

Still weaker is the argument from something real to something only metaphorical: in fact, it is no argument at all; for not only is the resemblance imaginary, but as the being to whom the properties are attached is imaginary, these properties as appertaining to it must be imaginary also; and to apply the properties of the reality to the imaginary man, as if they existed in him as real properties, and to found a weighty argument upon them as if they were real properties, is as if you were to argue gravely that because the grief of men was lessened by time, therefore the sighing of the winds or trees would in time cease, so that any one who chanced to dislike their plaintive murmurings, might reasonably hope in a year or two to take his shady walk undisturbed. This might be poetic, but nothing more.

2. It is an analogy from a development in a being which has a continuity of parts to a (supposed) being whose parts are continually changed, and that not in the way of renewal by growth and accretion, but in the way of renewal by substitution. I need not say that this is a point in which the resemblance must hold if the analogy is to be correct; for the property deduced depends on the progressive continuity of the parts. In the former the parts are continuously developed, stage after stage, by regular increase, like a tree or a perennial flower; in the latter, each successive part has to begin where the one before it began; and, though the individual growth of each part may be greater or less, quicker or slower, than the one which preceded it, yet the one which follows has to begin exactly at the same

point. As I shall have to touch upon this more at length hereafter, it may be passed by for the present.

Nor can I think that there is much force in the abstract and speculative grounds, whereby, Prometheus-like, you think to create your colossal man. Your first position preparatory to your analogy, is "*that the power whereby the present ever gathers into itself the results of the past, transforms the human race into a colossal man, whose life reaches from the creation to the day of judgment.*" This is preceded by a statement of the difference between the spiritual and material world, whence you argue the progress of humanity from generation to generation. Supposing, for the moment, your assumptions to be correct, it is yet difficult to see how the human race, actually consisting of separate nations, separate, successive generations, and distinct successive individuals, each of which totally passes away, can be transformed by any such power of progress into a really existing comprehensive individual in any but a figurative sense—how such a notion, depending as it does on an ideal entity, can be what you call a "*comprehensive fact.*" Still less will it be to most minds obvious how such an ideal fact (for at the best your notion amounts to no more than this) can furnish you with sufficient ground for such a very material superstructure as you pretend to raise upon it—the alteration of our views of revelation and of our relations to Scripture. I doubt whether any reasonable man would frame his life, or any action of his life, or educate his children, or stake his property (were it possible), on such an airy nothing as you think sufficient ground for the grave results you contemplate in your Essay.

Nor again does this speculation itself rest on any sound foundation. From the assumed fact of unpro-



gressive cycles being inconceivable to the spirit (or heart), you argue that such cycles, though possible in the material world as being conceivable to the logical understanding, are impossible in the spiritual; now, if the fact of such cycles being inconceivable to the spirit makes them impossible, it is difficult to see why they are not equally impossible in the material as in the spiritual world: for you say that the *heart of man refuses to believe in a universe without a purpose*, such as you suppose to result from your fixed cycles in the material world. Your argument, such as it is, is a play upon the word spiritual: because it is inconceivable to the spirit it is impossible in the spiritual world.

Nor is it much better when you somewhat shift your ground, and, from the imaginary possibility of a certain quality (fixed succession of similar cycles) in the material world, profess to deduce the likelihood of the opposite quality (a succession of dissimilar progressive æras) in the spiritual world, as if opposites must needs have opposite qualities. But further, from this likely characteristic of humanity, you argue the likelihood of the existence of an abstract power of progress which governs the destinies of the race, and then you assume the actual reality of this power; and then, from this assumed reality, you assume the actual existence, by virtue of this power of progress, of a colossal man on which your whole theory rests. Whether there is any argument here, or any real coherence between the assumptions, I leave it to others to judge. It seems to me to be simply a *fallacia dictionis*; a show of arguments in the words and the sound, without any argument in the sense. Surely a possible likelihood linked to another possible likelihood is not a very strong chain for a stout certainty to depend upon, especially when

this certainty is weighted with a heavy analogy, and when the hook from which it all hangs is merely an imaginary probability.

Your argument fails in another point of view: your supposition of the possible omission of any cycle does not hold good in all material phenomena. It seems impossible to conceive the phenomena of the earth's formation (which I suppose you would say are bound together by a rigid law of cause and effect) working themselves back to chaos; or if so, is it not equally possible to conceive the human race again reduced to two persons, and the whole framework of society having to begin again? In fact your supposition can only be supposed possible when events are such as to work in a circle, such as in the *Magnus Annus* of ancient astronomy, when the effect reproduces sooner or later its own cause; and therefore your argument stands thus: In a certain sort of material phenomena it is possible to conceive the absence of progress: therefore we may assume that all spiritual phenomena are necessarily progressive; whereas in reality the supposition of the effect reproducing its cause is logically as admissible in the moral as in the material world, and therefore the difference on which you found your argument in your second page does not exist.

Moreover, I do not see why the analogy you use, supposing it for the moment to be formally and materially correct, should not be turned against your theory in more ways than one; for if this power of gathering the present into the past can really and actually transform the successive generations of the whole race into a colossal man, it can also transform the successive generations of a family or national existence, not into a colossus indeed, but into gigantic individualities of more or less colossal

proportions; and if so, we have a right to expect that every such comprehensive individuality would be distinctly marked by the æras of infancy, youth, manhood, with the respective educators which you assign to these respective stages; and if this does not take place in the lesser transformation, we have no right to assume it in the greater. Now, as a matter of fact, is the history of any nation distinctly marked by these three eras, in the first of which law is supreme, then example, and lastly reason? or is it not the fact that in the early stages of society, there is very little law, and that as society grows, law grows with it, until, in a highly civilised state, the relations of society become so complicated as to need a great variety of laws to guard against and control the covetousness and self-indulgence which reason is unable to grapple with? Is there any known state in which society can rely for its well-being on the energies of internal reason without having perpetual recourse to some outer law?

Again, if your analogy holds good, there must needs be an old age, a second childhood, in store for humanity; a stage in which reason will begin to fail, and a downward progress commence: nor can we tell the exact point when this old age would creep upon us. In the individual the powers of reason flag long before he is conscious of it, often long before he is incapacitated for business; perhaps we may have entered on it already. I think Aristotle fixes the prime of the mental powers at forty-nine: and the world surely must be held to be older than that.

There is another point on which you do not express yourself clearly, but which, nevertheless, is important to the clearness and consistency of your view, viz. whether this colossal man includes the whole human

race, or only some favoured portions; it should be the former: for the power of gathering the present into the past is, in your reasoning, a result of the immateriality of the race, and of course the whole should include the parts; and if so, there are many portions of the human race which contradict your theory: but I suspect that you have fixed your eyes on an upper ten thousand of mankind\*, and argued from this part as if it were the whole: and if so, your colossus falls to pieces of itself.

You must further excuse me if I say, that not only does your argument seem to be inconclusive, but the details and facts of the premisses singularly incorrect and inconsistent. I shall proceed to point out some of these, not from any morbid love of picking holes, still less from any desire of annoying you (supposing you to care for my criticisms, one way or the other), but because I think these flaws proceed from, and betray the weakness of your position, as well as the want of clearness in your view of the theory, as it existed in your own mind; and further because they deprive your Essay of the authority it would have had (besides and beyond any weight there might have been in the arguments), if it had borne the marks of being the matured and well considered production of a mind like yours. Your theory bears internal evidence of its own unsoundness, when it can be supported, even in your hands, only by statements and arguments which, when tested, fail.

In the first page you say that in a series of phenomena bound together by a rigid law of cause and effect, *whole cycles* may be imagined as cut out; and shortly after you say, *each event* would be purposeless. It

\* Page 37.

seems to me that there is a confusion here between the whole cycle and the single events of each cycle; if any event in any one cycle were cut out or altered, the machine would stop, or its operation be turned into another direction: though, to say the truth, the fancifulness of the notion and the obscurity of the language is so great as to place it almost beyond criticism.

You conceive\* that the early period of the world's existence was divided into infancy, the characteristic of which is brutal violence, and childhood, the characteristic of which is that it is under the instruction of law. I am quite at a loss to guess where in the very scanty notice we have of the early world, you get the notion that the earlier races of mankind were lost, *not only in lawlessness, but in blind, gross ignorance of all around them*: nor do I see how such ignorance falls under the category of violence: a being may be totally ignorant and yet not violent; but, supposing the infancy of the world to have been marked by *brutal violence*, it follows, by virtue of your notion of there being a precise analogy† between the race and the individual, that there must be something in the infant corresponding exactly to this brutal violence; and yet it is of little children that our Lord says, "*of theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*;" and again, "*Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye cannot enter therein.*" I have in vain tried to discover what is meant by "*Lamech's presumptuous comparison of himself with God*;" but we do know from 2 Thess. ii. that such a comparison is not so impossible in these latter days as you suppose; and the Tower of Babel strikes me as no unfit

\* Page 6.

† Page 6. "Now precisely analogous to all this is the history of the education of the early world."

symbol of the presumptuous efforts of modern rationalists to make their theories into a tower of strength, which is to place men above God's Word and out of the reach of His dispensations. Where do you find the earliest commands referring to bodily appetites? Did the prohibition to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, refer to bodily appetites or animal passions—or the command to be fruitful and multiply? or the command to Noah not to eat the blood? And as for those ages being lost in the ignorance you speak of, we find even in these scanty notices, that music and the useful arts and religion were anything but unknown to them. And what warrants you in confining violence, whether it be ignorance or lawlessness, to the early ages of the world? there is not a nation, however civilised, in what you term the manhood of mankind, the history of which does not bear abundant witness to the lawlessness, and violence, and ignorance, which, on the ground of their being assigned by Scripture to the later generations of the antediluvian period, you assign as the characteristics of the whole period,—take even the ages from the overthrow of the Western Empire: surely there was lawlessness and ignorance enough here to satisfy your notion of violence; and if so, what becomes of your fanciful theory of these being the special characteristics of the early races of the world?

Moreover, it is curious, that according to your view many ages passed without any attempt at education\*; it seems as if mankind in at least the two thousandth year of its existence had made no progress at all. In such a case it would seem, according to your precise

\* Pages 7 and 8, line 6. "The education," &c.

analogy, as if its faculties would have been stunted beyond recovery, for surely such a case would be exactly analogous to the child born into uneducated society.\*

Again, you place † the child of twelve years old at the level of the full-grown man of ages ago; you do not say whether in respect of his moral or intellectual state; but be this as it may, the man of ages ago, by virtue of a certain degree of development in his individual life, was of right his own instructor and governor; if so, the boy, who now is at the same degree of development, at the same level of intellectual and moral growth, should be his own instructor now; for the discipline required depends on the degree of development, not on the accident of age: he should be free, or nearly free, from all restraint. If report speaks truly of you as being an admirable disciplinarian, and laying down somewhat arbitrary, but perfectly necessary rules, and enforcing them with the mild but firm energy which is natural to you, your practice is at variance with your theory; you ought to proclaim autonomy at Rugby, to let the boys make, by the supreme power and all-sufficient light of reason, their own rules for lessons, amusements, school times, holidays, punishments, bounds. I believe the experiment was tried some thirty years ago in the midland counties; a contemporary of mine had been there; and infinite diversion it used to be to hear him tell the tale of school parliaments, and school laws, and judge and jury, and all the mimic details of this self-governing body. I rather think that some ultra-patriotic and rationalistic jury convicted the master of high treason,

\* Page 4, line 2. "If the society," &c.

† Page 4.

and proposed to execute him *more majorum*. This *argumentum ad hominem* restored him to his senses. The republic was replaced by a stern despotism, and soon died a natural death.

Again, you say \*, that “*to the child obedience is the highest duty, affection the highest stimulus, the mother’s word the highest sanction.*” Is it not true that substituting *God* for *mother* in the last clause, this is a description of the most advanced Christian man of the present or any other conceivable age; and if so, do not these belong, as habits of mind, to manhood as much as to childhood? and does it not follow from your precise analogy between the individual and the race, that either your description of the distinctive characteristics of childhood are not correct, or your analogy fails? Further, as I have observed above (page 13), the form of your argument, and the contrast you draw between the several stages of life, imply that when you name any habit or temper as a distinctive characteristic of one stage, you virtually exclude it from the others. Do you then mean to say that obedience is now not the highest duty? Can you name any other more frequently enforced in Scripture, — more recognised by man? You seem to look upon obedience only as a discipline of character, which is to be thrown off as soon as the character is formed; and not as an element of perfection in the most perfect character. Even in our Blessed Saviour, obedience was an element of His perfection, wherein He differed from others only in excelling them.

I doubt very much whether there is not a confusion in your mind between rules and law. Rules may be

\* Page 5.



simply the instruments of discipline, and may pass away when the discipline is completed. Law is a principle of guidance which is needed, even by the most perfectly formed character, and must abide, not merely in, but by, a man as long as he lives, in some shape or other; whether it be as the political law of the state, or the moral law of public opinion, or of natural religion; it may agree with his own notions, and become an inner as well as an outer law, or it may differ from his own views, and be merely an outer law; but in either case he must yield obedience to it, or take those consequences which mark that he has committed a breach of duty. The man who refused obedience to an outer law, because it was an outer law, would very soon find that the outer law claimed and exercised authority over him.

But in the next page\* the child progresses a step towards perfection: and, strange to say, this consists in his no longer acting from love, but from that fear of punishment which reason impresses upon him; as if an act done from fear indicated a higher development than one done from love. Surely the words, *perfect love casteth out fear*, imply that the reverse of your notion is the truth. If this is the way in which the understanding reaches the conscience†, I am inclined to think that the conscience is better without the understanding than with it. And it may not pass unobserved, that the consequences of sin are spoken of only in connection with this life, and the moral degradation of the man on earth, without any allusion to the consequences of sin in a future world, and the spiritual death of the soul in the present. At all events your notion is contrary to the modern theories of education, which pride them-

\* Page 6.

† Page 6.

selves on governing boys by an abstract love of the right and beautiful, or a still more abstract love for the master, instead of having recourse to their fear of punishment or disgrace.

Again, you lay down that in the period before our Saviour the world was in its infancy and childhood; consequently all the parts or nations of the world were in their infancy and childhood; and as you suppose the world to have been, during this period, instructed by the four nations of Judæa, Rome, Greece, and Asia\*, and as these constituted the greater part of the human race and the whole of the civilised world, it follows that the infant world educated its infant self; for surely you do not regard your colossus as an abstraction totally distinct from the individuals of each generation; at least if you do, you remind me of Crambe's Lord Mayor†; though it does seem as if some such notion were in your head: for again‡, you speak of three companions, Greece, Rome, and the Early Church giving their society to the being whom God was educating by example, between the closing of the Old Testament and the closing of the New. That is, the Early Church, Greece, and Rome gave their society to themselves, for they constituted the creature whom God was educating.

Again, you place Greece in the childhood of the world, and yet you say, rightly§, that logic and all the sciences, natural and physical, were discoveries of the Greek mind; and that the Greek classics, expressing the life of the people of that day, give us the *image*,

\* I have adopted your division of the nations of the ancient world, though the cross division between Asia and Judæa marks the hastiness with which you thought and wrote.

† Martinus Scriblerus, chap. vii. vol. vi. page 152, Ed. MDCCLI.

‡ Page 26.

§ Pages 18 and 27.

*there only to be seen, of our highest natural powers in their freshest vigour ; it is the unattainable grace of the prime of manhood.* And again\*, “*There never was a period in history nor a country in the world in which peculiarities of temper had freer play.*”† Does not this tell at once both against your theory of present development and your theory of the world’s childhood?

It is observable too, that whereas you make law to be the proper discipline of the world in its first stage, yet of the four nations in whose hands you place the instruction of the world, only one, Rome, has, according to your own description, used law as the instrument of her discipline. Judæa supplied monotheism and purity; Greece used æsthetics; and Asia contributed to the common educational fund mysteriousness. So that either these four nations were not the educators of the world, or your descriptions of them are not correct, or law is not the proper discipline of the world in that stage, or the world was not in the stage you suppose; and as you assert all these with equal confidence, I may leave it to you to take which of these you choose.

Indeed, your sketches of the four great nations of the earlier world, though seemingly marked by occasional passages of accuracy and beauty, yet are in reality rather marked by singular inaccuracy and inconsistency. In this, as in the rest of your Essay, you seem to be writing under the pressure of some peculiar view, into harmony with which you are trying to force the facts, while these continually elude your grasp, and present themselves to us in their real aspect and relation.

The whole of your statements ‡ on the Law and the Prophets, suggest the notion that you trusted to very

\* Page 17.

† Page 27.

‡ Pages 9 and 10.

vague recollections of the Old Testament. You speak of idolatry and Sabbath breaking, as being parts of the ceremonial law : the other sins which you name are introduced as if they were only violations of the moral sense, and could not be referred decidedly to some one or other of the commandments which appear in the Decalogue, side by side with the sins from which you distinguish them, besides being in other parts of the Pentateuch absolutely forbidden.

In page 10 you ascribe a certain degree of spirituality to the Pharisaic as compared with the Mosaic teaching. Contrast this with our Saviour's language in the Sermon on the Mount, and again in St. Matthew xii. 7, and xv. 6, "*Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*" See ver. 8. You assert that *in the law there is very little directly spiritual\**, whereas, in Deuteronomy vi. 5, we find the sum and substance of spiritual religion, in the words : "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,*" &c. ; and Leviticus xix. 8, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;*" and curiously enough, it is to the law that our Saviour refers for an account of the practical religion which He requires. "*What is written in the law? What readest thou?*" and the lawyer immediately quotes from the law the two passages given above. The dictates of mere conscience are supposed to be substituted in the Prophets (of whom, by the way, you speak, as if they were merely great writers †), for the direct ordinances or precepts of God; whereas, there is hardly a chapter in the Prophets where direct mention is not made of the statutes, ordinances, commands, or word of God, if the character of the chapter is such as to allow them to be introduced.

\* Page 8.

† Page 9.

The Israelites are continually reproached or threatened with punishment as a rebellious people, not against their inner man, but against the God of their fathers and themselves. Still more unlucky is your assertion that *It is no longer as in the law, "I am the Lord," but, "Hath not He showed thee, O man, what is good?"*\* Whereas this latter phrase occurs only once: and if we take Ezekiel, whom you bring forward as a witness in your favour, there is hardly a chapter, where morality is introduced, in which the express words, "I am the Lord," do not occur, as well as the similar expressions, "The Lord saith," "The Lord speaketh," which abound also in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Again, you say that the Jewish system did not recognise the spiritual value of prayer till the Babylonish captivity †; and yet afterwards ‡ you speak of *the Old Testament as a ready made text-book of devotion*. But to pass over this answer to yourself, as well as the devotional parts of the Psalms (some of which you will, I suppose, allow to be anterior to the captivity), it has escaped your memory that, in Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kings viii.), prayer is the especial service which is contemplated, and sacrifice is not once mentioned, except perhaps incidentally in verse 31.

Surely you hardly take a true or scriptural view of the religious privileges and knowledge of the earlier Jews, when you speak § of their falling away from the worship of the true God into idolatry, being merely the *stumbleings in learning a very difficult lesson*; though you may be right in your estimate of the religious capacities of man unassisted by revelation, when you add the words, *difficult even for a cultivated man*. You surely

\* Page 9.

† Page 18.

‡ Page 12.

§ Ibid.

do not really mean to say, that the Jews had to find out the notion of the true God by themselves, or that the Jewish faith therein was the result of their gradual self-development? though your Essay does seem to ignore Revelation in the sentence: *We know the other world, and can only know it by analogy, drawn from our own experience.*\* Surely the words: "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord*" (Deut. vi. 4), and the first and second commandments mark their knowledge of God as a direct, clear, unmistakable revelation from Heaven of an elementary religious truth, on which their whole system was founded, and which was taught to every child. (See Deut. vi. 7.) St. Paul speaks of the idolatries of the Gentiles as wilful backslidings from primæval truth; how much more was this the case with the Jews? Is it not true that the Jews from the very first possessed a full and complete notion of Monotheism and the Personality of God? that it was embodied in their religious teaching and ideas; but that it was from time to time obscured, as they allowed themselves to be led away by the conversation of the heathen around them; and that it returned again when circumstances alienated them from heathenism? We know that it is one of the characteristics of a people who are oppressed, or who think themselves so, to feel peculiar hostility to the religion of their oppressor, if it is different from their own, and a corresponding tenacity in adhering to their own faith: and this, if I mistake not, is the secret of the frequent interchanges of backslidings and repentances in the Jewish history, or, in other words, of the ebb or flow of Monotheism. In Egypt, where they were an oppressed

people, they held loyally to the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and I do not think we have any reason to suppose that they ever held the knowledge of the true God more firmly than at this period. As they passed through the wilderness, relieved from the bondage, and sighing after the flesh-pots of Egypt, they fell into idolatry. The key to their backsliding after they had taken possession of the promised land, is given in Judges iii. 5—7 (see Psalm cvi. 35), and to their return in verse 9. At our Saviour's coming they had no tendency to idolatry, not because their training had placed monotheism more within their reach, but because idolatry had lost its attraction,—because the polytheistic temptations were finally taken away from them at the Captivity by the sufferings they had undergone, and the severe lesson which had been read them as a nation, as well as by the positions of danger and difficulty in which they were ever afterwards placed; at one time struggling for their national existence in the midst of enemies, at another in subjection to an alien and oppressive power. These are just the times when a nation is sure to cling to its national belief, which at others it might be tempted to abandon.

You certainly do not assign too high a place to the notions of monotheism and purity\*, though you say nothing of covetousness, which is idolatry, and the love of money, which is the root of all evil, the opposites of which can hardly be said to be the results of Jewish training; but surely you have lost sight of *the* great function of the Jewish system as a schoolmaster, viz. the bringing the Jews to Christ, so that the moral design

\* Page 13.

of the minute commands which you speak of merely as positive, was to try their faith, and to keep them a distinct and peculiar people. Nor is it clear how the ideas of the immortality of the soul, the supremacy of conscience, and a final judgment, are so intimately connected with monotheism as you represent them to be. Were not the Sadducees monotheists, and they did not hold the immortality of the soul? nor was it, on your own showing\*, a generally received notion till the Babylonish Captivity. The Asiatic belief was not monotheistic, or else you are mistaken in confining the notion to the Jews; and yet you say Babylon was selected to teach the Hebrews the immortality of the soul, a notion which I confess seems to me to have more of dogmatism in it than reason; other polytheistic nations too, held, with more or less distinctness, sometimes disguised in popular fables, sometimes wrapped in philosophical theories, the existence of the soul after death. As for the final judgment, how that is connected with monotheism I am at a loss to conceive.

Nor, surely, is it true, that where monotheism or the spirituality of God is not held, there the voice of conscience is a mere delusion.† Was it so among the polytheistic Gentiles? St. Paul speaks of these very nations as being a law unto themselves.‡

Nor is it so unquestionable that purity was so highly esteemed among the Jews: our Saviour's words in St. Matt. v. 27, 28, seem to indicate that their views savoured of formal rather than of real purity. Adultery is not only a sin against individual purity, but against social good, and it seems to be rather in the latter view that it was regarded. The great facilities for divorce,

\* Page 19.

† Page 14.

‡ Rom. ii. 14.



too, point the same way, and these up to a certain point supply the place of the concubinage and polygamy, which, certainly, are not indications of what you truly call a cardinal virtue; and our Saviour's words (St. Matt. xix. 8), seem to mark that the Jews possessed this cardinal virtue less than others before them. The Mahometan system you would scarcely call a system of purity; and yet, probably, the formal offence against the definite sin of adultery is as much prohibited, and as severely punished, as among the Jews. On the other hand, the Romans expressed a very high, if not the highest, degree of moral wickedness by the word *incestus*, which denoted the absence of this virtue.\* All these points should be taken into your consideration, before pronouncing so very decided an opinion on the subject.

In page 14 you do not speak very highly of natural religions, *i. e.* religions arrived at by reason from the working of nature, and where conscience is the sole guide, without any outer communication or law from God. They are *shadows*, *i. e.* negations of light, and these negations of light are *systems of law given by God Himself*; they are *projected by the spiritual light within shining on the dark problems without*; but surely these natural religions are, as far as they give any light at all, not dark but light. Surely shadows are, properly speaking, not projected by light, but by the objects which intercept the light. I dare say you can find authorities for this mode of speaking; these will teach you how futile it is to carp at Scriptural expressions which do not coincide with philosophical truth; but in your passage the matter is as inaccurate

\* Cf. Hor. Od. ii.

as the form, for your metaphor represents the natural religions as dark, and all round them light; whereas, what you seem to mean is that they were faint lights in surrounding darkness. If you had said that they were spots of light thrown on heathen darkness by the concentration of the otherwise invisible rays, as in the lens of the human reason, it might have had some signification, and expressed in some sort their nature and function. By the way, I can understand what a distorted shadow is, but what is an adulterated shadow? Nor do I believe that the final cause of these natural religions was to educate the people to become instructors of your colossal child, but that they were permitted in order to convince mankind of their utter insufficiency, — of the utter insufficiency of conscience or the natural faculties without a definite outer law by direct revelation from God. It was in this sense that the whole world was concluded under sin; so that the Jews being convinced of their own insufficiency by the failure of an outer law without the inward gift of the Holy Ghost, the Gentiles, by the failure of natural religion, might be more ready to receive the revealed economy of God for man's salvation; to betake themselves to Christ in distrust of themselves: and this I believe to have been the discipline and education of the world carried by the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 21).

In the functions which you ascribe to Rome, I cannot help doubting the correctness of your details. In what part of the history of Rome do you find the popular passion controlled? Is not her history a succession of popular struggles and popular successes? Is not your notion of the unquestioned authority of the civil officers at Rome rather negatived by the right of appeal and the veto of the Tribunes? Was it not the fact

that when those civil officers wished to exercise unquestioned authority, they were obliged to assume a military character; and when a still greater degree of unquestioned authority was needed, were not the civil officers superseded by a Dictator, the theory of whose power was that he was the military chief, not of Rome, but of the fictitious Latin League ?

Again, is it only to the annals of Rome that we are to look for models of patriotism? Are there none such in the Bible? What think you of the psalm, "By the waters of Babylon?" Where has patriotism spoken with a more touching voice? What of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Temple in the third generation after its destruction? What of those who waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens? Does the passage in the Revelation (xxi. 8) tell nothing of the moral aspect in which cowardice is presented to us in the Bible? And, to turn to the Apocryphal Scriptures, which give us at least an authentic record of the Jewish history, what think you of Judith? what of the Maccabees? And does Greece furnish no models of patriotism, and read us no lessons on love of our country? Has Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis, Plataea passed from your memory? In what part of the Roman history do we find a parallel to the conduct of the Athenians in the Persian wars? Have the names of Leonidas, Themistocles, Aristides, Epaminondas, ceased to have their significance as models of patriotism, and sunk into the rank and file of history? Is not the Homeric *εἰς οἰωνὸς ἀριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πατρὸς* as soul-stirring as the Latin *dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori*, which, after all, is only an echo of an Homeric sentiment? \* Were I obliged to contrast Greece

\* Il. N. 496.

and Rome in respect of their patriotism, and assign to one the honour due to both, I should be inclined to say that Rome was marked rather by a grasping, self-seeking, merciless national selfishness,—Greece rather by the love of country, which is content to live and let live. Real patriotism, that is to say, the patriotism which the natural law should hold up to the imitation of mankind, is not aggressive or aggrandising, but self-defensive and content: and, until the degenerate days of Alexander, Greece made no wars merely for aggrandisement. Self-defence, indeed, compelled the Athenians to convert her leadership against Persia into a dominion over the allies; but it was rather the result of events than of deliberate policy. If your details are necessary to your view, it must fall to the ground; but it was necessary to your educational crotchet that distinctive characteristics should be assigned to each; and your Essay is not the only proof that facts have but a poor chance with crotchets.

In Greece, again, I cannot think that you are much less mistaken. Surely there is no real contrast between the gods of Greece and the gods of Rome,—one is not more the result of spiritual needs than the other. Again, if a nation's language bears witness to its character, the untranslatable word *αἰδώς* proclaims you wrong in excluding reverence from the Greek temperament. Moreover, does not what you say of the Greek idea of beauty contradict what you say of her lack of reverence? I very much doubt whether any high idea or true appreciation of beauty can exist where reverence does not exist. Again, does not her superstitious reverence for places, supposed to be the sacred resorts of the beings of the supernatural world, bear witness against you?—to say nothing of the characteristics which St. Paul, in

their own presence, assigns to the Athenians, and which mark rather the excess than the defect of reverence.

Again, the description given by Thucydides\* of the Athenian character, will serve to correct your view of the political inaptitude of the Athenians; for, of course, when you speak of the Greeks, in their function of educators, you must have the Athenians chiefly in view. It strikes me that they had great aptitude for political life, as is evidenced by their rapid political development; but none for political permanence, as is evidenced in their no less rapid decline.

I feel convinced that you cannot have weighed the meaning of your words, when you say that it is in the contemplation of beauty, as interpreted and embodied in the Greek view of nature, that the startled conscience is to seek the corrective which is to keep it from gloomy asceticism; against such a notion it is impossible in these Christian days to protest too strongly. Doubtless, we get many things from Greece which no man of cultivated taste will undervalue; but surely it is not in her view of nature that we find the aspect of the Divine attributes which reassures a startled conscience. It may, perhaps, be true, that the beauty and cheerfulness which breathes from nature in her brighter scenes and more joyous moods may give a sort of relief to a startled

\* Thuc. ii. 40. "Ἐνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια, καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι· μόνον γὰρ τὸν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν. Thus paraphrased by Dr. Arnold, though with less force than the original:—*“With us the statesman does not lay aside his humbler duties and employments; nor is the mechanic thought incapable of forming a judgment on public affairs. We consider no man to be so incapable: nay, we do not allow that or any other plea to be urged as an excuse for a member of civil society taking no part in that society’s concerns.”*

conscience, partly by acting on the animal spirits, and partly by turning for a time the attention of the mind from itself; but this surely is not the corrective we need. I pass by the question which, perhaps, might be raised,—whether the beauty which the Greeks embodied, was not rather that of art and form, than of what are usually called the beauties of nature;—but surely it is in the Bible alone that the sources of comfort and hope are opened to the conscience. Has nature in her brightest and most beautiful forms any message like — *Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?* Is it not the Bible alone which interprets mercifully the dropping of the rain and the shining of the sun? I do not for a moment believe if a startled conscience, whether of young or old, rich or poor, thinking of gloomy asceticism, were to come to you as a minister of God, that you would tell him to seek relief in nature or in beauty: it would be but cold comfort; it would be giving a stone to one who was asking bread. No; you would,—I am sure you would,—open the Bible and speak to him of the love of Christ; you would point to the cross; you would tell him of the penitent Magdalene; you would read to him the parable of the prodigal son, and not one word of that which you have put forth in this passage would fall from your lips.

There is another passage\* of which it is impossible that you can have seen the bearing: that those who can remember nothing but folly in their early life, find a nameless charm in recalling that folly which they have repented of and relinquished; and that early folly is the source whence arise simplicity, generosity, affection

\* Page 23.

to the grown man. It seems to me to be a sentiment as untrue as it is dangerous, and as dangerous as it is untrue. I do not believe that any one, who looks back seriously to a life which speaks of nothing but folly, can do so without a deep pang. He may remember, perhaps, with mournful pleasure, the friendships which shared his ruin, the unsuspectingness which perhaps laid him open to it; but surely the folly itself bears its own fruit,—to the unrepenting in confirmed wickedness, to the repenting in sad recollections. Folly too is a wide term; and in common parlance includes the things of which you do not speak one whit too strongly.\* I am sure it would be very far from your intention to encourage any one to a sinful or idle life; but I confess I should not like a son of mine, entering into or involved in the trials and temptations of early life, to open your Essay at this page. It is true that you speak of love and marriage, as if they were the follies you allude to; but I doubt, after all, whether you would say that these are the sort of follies which men repent of and relinquish. There is another passage † which leads youth away from “the fountains of living waters” to “the cisterns, broken cisterns which can hold no water.” *He (i. e. the youth) cannot walk by reason and conscience alone; he needs those supplies to the imperfection of our nature which we are given by the higher passions.* One would think that this was the wisdom of a heathen philosopher, and not of one who had himself tasted the power of grace.

Nor is your account of Asia, again, free from the same incorrectness. When was it that Asia sought her inspirations in rest? In the perpetual change of

\* Page 14.

† Page 21.

dynasties which continued nearly, if not quite, up to the time of our Lord, is there any period of the world which presents a more troubled picture of unrest than Asia in the wars of Alexander's successors? The western nations you contrast with Asia as *being always tempted to make reason despotic*, and lo! they have submitted to the Papacy, and have, even in their formal creeds, one article of mystery more than the East. Asia has a *perpetual leaning to the mysterious*, and lo! she has accepted, and for twelve hundred years retained, the simplest of all creeds, "*There is but one God, and Mahomet is His Prophet.*"

The second stage in the education of your colossus you make the thirty-three years of our Saviour's presence upon earth; or, more properly speaking, the three years of His ministry; for during the previous years, in which it pleased our Lord to remain in obscurity, He did not come as an example. A brief youth truly! Mankind jumped at once from childhood into manhood. At least four thousand years of childhood, nearly two thousand of yet undeveloped manhood, and but three years of youth is surely a disproportion which suggests that your theory has more of fancy in it than truth. It is true that two pages further on you enlarge the period of youth to the closing of the New Testament, that is, to about A. D. 100. But even this does not remove the disproportion, and is a fresh proof of the indistinctness with which your theory existed even in your own mind. It is enough to turn us at once to the simple fact that human history divides itself into the time before our Lord and the time after Him, when the world was at enmity with God, and when the world was reconciled to Him; while our Saviour's brief ministry on earth was the space in which the



mighty work was wrought which changed once and for all the position and destinies of mankind. And this you yourself unconsciously recognise when you speak of the fulness of time as that *for which all history had been preparing, to which all history has been looking back.*\* This division surely is recognised in many passages of Scripture, such as Heb. i. 1; and the term latter days is, in other passages, as an expression of time, equivalent to the Gospel dispensation, including, of course, the early Church, which you attempt to disjoin from the latter times by making it the stage of youth.

But supposing we are to take the early Church as the youth of the world: I do not allow the justice, or force of the contrast which you draw between them and ourselves. Of course it was necessary for you to draw such a contrast, in order that, being supposed to be in a state as much removed from them as manhood is from youth, we might be held to be free from the obligation which they evidently believed themselves to be under to the Word of God as an outer law, to which it was their wisdom and their duty to submit their own views and notions; a duty which I believe and maintain to have been, and to be the same, both in nature and extent, ever since the Gospel was preached. The vague truism, that every age has its proper gift, is, in fact, as you use it, an assumption of the point to be proved, inasmuch as I maintain the gift of God in the Gospel is (of course excepting the miraculous powers) one and the same in all ages. Surely, too, it is very vague to say that we understand the precise outlines of truth better than they, without giving any instance of our preciseness as

\* Page 25. See also page 24: "These few years of His Divine Presence," &c.

compared with their inaccuracy ; especially, as shortly after you insist that their preciseness is the very point in which we are not bound to follow them, and that the tendency of religious thought has been to dislike their preciseness. The whole of your contrast seems strange and unreal.

Freshness of faith is ascribed *par excellence* to those whom our Saviour so often reproached with deadness of faith : deadness of faith ascribed, by implication, to them of whom our Saviour said, "*Blessed are they which see not, and yet believe ;*"—greater cultivation of the religious understanding stated as an advantage on our side as against those of whom St. John says, "*Ye have an unction from the Spirit, and know all things ;*"—the extraordinary notion that they recognised the devil as the ruler of the world ;—the claim put forth of calmness and fixedness of conduct for the age in which men are blown about like straws by every wind of doctrine : an age which, since the commencement of the present century, has seen an endless succession of religious impostures ; and even in the last year the restless vehemence of the revivals,—the whole sounds like a series of cross readings.

Doubtless, our Saviour's coming was well-timed ; but scarcely, I should say, for the reason that mankind would have stiffened past receiving Him. As far as I can see or hear, mankind is as open to fresh views and systems of religion as they were then, or even more so, especially if the system pretends to any supernatural demonstration in its favour. It seems so very strange an assertion that we should not have recognised, on the testimony of our own eyes, that which we now recognise by the aid of the eyes of the Apostles. No less strange is the assertion that the Gospels contain very little

of what is technically called doctrine\*, when we recollect that we find stated in precise terms, or precisely implied therein, as doctrines, the Trinity and the Unity of the Godhead, the pre-existence of our Lord, His miraculous Incarnation, His Sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of the world, the two Sacraments, forgiveness of sins, the nature, office, and procession of the Holy Spirit, and many others. It is true that the Sermon on the Mount, and the other parts you enumerate, are read alike by young and old; but this does not prove that no doctrine is stated by the Evangelists, or that in these parts, the Lord is put forward as an example rather than as a Redeemer and Lawgiver; for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount; our Saviour does not speak much of Himself or His own practice, but proposes commandments for the obedience of Christians, strict rules for the ordering of a Christian's heart and life. It is difficult to understand how these doctrines can be missed, except by those *whose faculty of faith is turned inwards, and who refuse to accept any outer manifestations of the truth of God*; which I should be sorry to think to be the case with you, though it may be the result of the teaching of your Essay.

No less difficult is it to understand how it can be said that the *early Church does not give us precepts but an example*.† If you mean that the precepts in the Apostolic writings set forth perpetually what was the daily life of faithful men in those times, what should be the life of faithful men now, it is true that every precept is an example, just as every example is a precept. But when they are opposed as you oppose

\* Page 26.

† Page 28.

them, the distinction between them is clear enough: the precept is the statement of what should be done, the example the setting forth what has been, or is, rightly done; and I am very much mistaken if you will not find as much of precept as of example in the records of the early Church; and, curiously enough, the form in which you express the lesson which the early Church conveys to us is a precept. "*Be ye followers of Me*" is as much a precept as if the whole details had been given, with the difference that it is more comprehensive and peremptory, and demands a more watchful and complete obedience. So entirely are your facts opposed to the theories you start, that even in your own hands they contradict them in spite of you.

Of course the practice of the early Church, as given us in the apostolic writings, is an example for us; but that does not exclude its being also a precept, inasmuch as this practice was settled by men with whom our Saviour had conversed concerning the things of the kingdom of God, and to one of whom a special revelation of these same things was vouchsafed. One of the particulars of this conversation of our Saviour in the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, is given us in the form of baptism; in accordance with which that Sacrament was administered in the practice of the early Church. Is the practice of the early Church in this respect not a precept for us, inasmuch as it interprets and sets forth the force and meaning of our Saviour's words? What has prevented the washing of one another's feet from being as much a matter of obligation as either of the Sacraments, but the fact that we find no trace of its having been ordained in the early Church by those inspired teachers

to whom our Saviour committed its formation and development?

What right have you to assume\* that the fountain of inspiration is confined to the Gospels, especially as the Holy Ghost was not given till after the close of the Gospels, or that the Epistles were only designed for the age in which they were written? When did their authority cease? or were they carefully and authoritatively collected into a canon only to be laid by as curious pieces of obsolete antiquity? † How is it that there has been in all ages so much pains taken to ascertain and defend their genuineness and authenticity? Has the whole of Christendom been under a delusion from the beginning? Have all who owned the name of Christian in all ages been wrong, and you alone in this last age right?

Undoubtedly there are parts of the Epistles which are addressed specially to those to whom they are written in their special character of Romans, or Hebrews, or Ephesians, &c., and inasmuch as we do not partake of this special character, these parts are only intended for us so far as their spirit is applicable to our circumstances; but by far the greater part are addressed to them as Christians, and all these apply to us as directly and decidedly as if we had lived at the particular time or in the particular Church to which they were addressed. They are to us as fresh and lively oracles as if they had been published but yesterday. And as, however much difference there may be in accidental precepts, yet the same essential commands are addressed alike in the several Epistles to Jews and Gentiles, Europeans, Asiatics, Greeks, Romans,

\* Page 26; "Yet here is," &c.

† Page 28.

Barbarians, we may fairly conclude that they were intended for all ages and all races alike.

And when you say that they are only *the fruits of current history*, do you mean that in every part they only apply to and embody the reflections of the writer on passing events? It is true that passing events may have been the occasion of their being written, but do you really mean to assert that the writer viewed the mysteries and precepts which they set forth as only true in their application to a particular city or particular year? An Act of Parliament or the ordinance of a despotic king may be the fruit of current history, but that does not make it merely of temporary force. The truest and most lasting constitutions are the fruit of current history and natural character; in fact, most enactments and legislation must be such: and this is one difference between human legislation and Divine enactment; but still such legislation is not only an example: it is not for that the less peremptory, or binding, or lasting.

I hardly know whether the sentence about the Church's legislation is meant for an *ipse dixit* assumption, or an argument.\* If the former, it is easily turned into a destructive conditional argument by the fact that certain things ordained in the early Church have not passed away, such as the two Sacraments and ordination by appointment of Bishops, which exist, though not now as the universal, yet as the general rule of Christendom.† But if it is meant for a conditional argument, as, from the somewhat careless form in which

\* Page 29. Had she legislated peremptorily for posterity, her legislation must have been set aside.

† See Hooker, Eccl. Pol. Book vii. iii.; 1; v. 10, vi. 5.

it is stated, may be supposed, it will, like all untrue assumptions of a connection between a consequent and antecedent, place you in a dilemma. For the legitimate working out of your process must be either, constructively, that she did legislate peremptorily, and therefore her legislation has been set aside: or destructively, that the legislation has not passed away, and therefore she did not legislate peremptorily; and whichever of these premises you assume as true, it overthrows one or the other clause of your original proposition.

How your theory would be affected one way or the other by the statement that *no system of religion has sprung up spontaneously within the limits which the Church has covered\**, you best know; but the statement itself is a strange one, when we think of Mahometanism, unless you mean to say (what I do not see how you can say consistently with your theory of conscience) that Mahometanism is no religion at all, or unless your words have some esoteric meaning.

I have said enough, and perhaps more than enough, to show that your theory of a new state of things, a new reign of reason, as far as it is founded on the supposed analogy between the individual and the race, is untenable; that its several parts do not hang together; that the details on which it professes to be built are incorrect and inconsistent; and from this it at once follows that not only is the Essay defective in what professes to be its main point, but that, as the argument is as much below the powers of your mind as the principles it maintains are below those which formed your own character and regulate your own religious thought and practice, no weight can be given to it as

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coming from one so talented or so amiable as yourself. I look upon it as a vast piece of self-contradiction.

But, as it is very possible for a theory to be true though the arguments and facts brought in support of it fail, I will briefly see whether the points to which you assign a prominent position do or do not hold good.

These I take to be —

1. Fixity of progress, as a law of humanity.
2. Actual development and improvement of the creature man, as a fact.
3. The improved powers and privileges of reason.

The supposed law of fixity of progress in generation after generation analogous to the growth of the bodily and mental powers of the individual man, is unsound in theory and disproved by experience.

Let us take theory first. It is perfectly true, as a general rule, that one generation exercises some influence upon, and produces some effects on the next. But this may be, and frequently is, for the worse and not for the better; so that one generation may be growing worse than their predecessors, and may be cast back by the wave of time rather than carried forwards. There is nothing to secure progress, many things to hinder it. Some external influences,— conquest, contact with other and less civilised nations, decay of external prosperity, and change of external relations,— may interrupt the national life, as has been the case over and over again in the world, so that an age of great civilisation and learning has been followed by ages of ignorance and barbarism. But besides external influences there are internal principles of retro-



gression frequently at work. Some cunning spirit of evil may creep into a nation's being through so tiny an opening as the personal tendencies or crotchets of an influential individual. You must be well aware that the tone of a school is neither uniform nor progressive. One generation of boys is cleverer and better behaved in every respect than the one which went before it, and a good tone is handed down to the next: and in this generation a single boy is frequently enough to demoralise the whole school, and a bad tone is handed down to the next. You are perfectly aware that one head master hands the school to his successor in a better, another in a worse, condition than he received it. And this is an illustration of what takes place in life, and has taken place since the world began, and probably will take place, as far as we can argue from continuous analogy, as long as the world lasts; for if we turn to experience a notion of a law of perpetual progress upwards is still more clearly disproved. Thus in the Mosaic record of the antediluvian period (which as you quote as an authority you will, I conclude, admit as an evidence) we find generations which were called Sons of God; in the days of Noah the race had so decidedly deteriorated that only eight persons were excepted from the picture of the world being full of violence. So St. Paul gives a sketch of the progressive degeneracy of heathendom to which you allude without, as it seems, noticing that it is a direct contradiction of your supposed law of progressive improvement. Another such instance is given\*, where you speak correctly enough of your colossus having been carried back to its second childhood by the bar-

\* Page 42; see also page 31, "The Rome we admire," &c.

baric irruptions, and though it is possible that some influences may have been at work during this period, which prevented the consequences of the retrogression from being so completely destructive of civilisation as it would otherwise have been, yet retrogression there was; the generation before the revival of letters was very far behind the generation before the commencement of the æra of darkness, in literature, knowledge, arts, religion, in fact in everything which goes to make up the improvement of man. Almost every nation furnishes an example against your notion, and, as I have before said\*, if it is a law of the whole aggregate of individuals which forms your colossus, so must it be of the smaller aggregates which form nations. The Greece of Cicero had degenerated from the Greece of Plato and Aristotle in every respect. Was she more manlike in the days of Sylla than she was in the days of Pericles. Did the so-called civilised ages of Rome produce men more able to think rightly, and to act boldly,—more able to govern themselves,—with their passions more under the government of their reason,—with a higher sense of duty and more prompt obedience to their inner law? The Rome of Tiberius was every way inferior even to the Rome of Augustus. Italy under the rule of the barbarians was less advanced than under the rule even of Tiberius. Is Italy of the present day better than the Italy of the middle ages? I had thought it was a fixed principle in ethnical science that there is an inherent tendency in nations unless refreshed by fresh blood, to degenerate physically, morally, intellectually, and politically. And if so, the tendency of mankind if left to itself, and apart from the help it may

\* See *supra*, page 20.

derive from fixed principles of truth and conduct given it by God, must be to grow worse instead of better after it has reached a certain point; and if these principles are to be modified to suit the falling age, of course the downward movement is accelerated rather than retarded; and this tendency was, in religious matters at least, in active operation under the influence of the Papacy, which modified the ancient faith to suit the spirit of the age.\* If any real improvement has taken place, I should be inclined to attribute it to the direct influence and authority which the Bible, as a rule and standard of action, has exercised on mankind since the Reformation, and not to the natural tendencies of mankind to improve, or to any law of improvement perceptible in the world's history. To my mind there is a sad truth in the heathen poet's description of the world left to itself:—

“*Damnosa quid non imminuit dies ?  
 Ætas parentum, pejor avis tulit  
 Nos nequiores, mox daturos  
 Progeniem vitiosiore.*”—HOR. *Od.* III. 6. 45.

and though the quotation is stale enough as an illustration, it has its value as the opinion of a person who was not disposed to view human nature in a worse aspect than he could help.

2. But though a present highly developed state of man may not be proved by virtue of your supposed law, still it may exist as a fact. Let us examine this, bearing in mind the kind and degree of development which your theory requires.

Now mankind cannot be in any state, good or bad, except so far as the individuals composing are in such a state. In whatever degree of development or

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perfection the race is supposed to be, the living individuals must be in that degree removed from the imperfections or weaknesses of former ages, or at least so great a majority of them as to make those who are not so improved exceptions to a general rule. First, then, is there any improvement in the moral tendencies of the majority of living individuals now? Perhaps in answer to this question I may be permitted to quote from my own Bampton Lectures, as I see no reason to modify or alter what I there wrote.

“Nor is this corruption a thing from which the world may free itself by the progressive advancement of generation after generation. Men may point to the conquests of science, to the stores of knowledge laid up by one generation for the next, and ask what bounds are to be set to this progress ; but this progress is rather apparent than real ; they cannot point to any one particular in which civilisation has affected our inborn nature. When we look at the heart of man, and take away the disguises in which refinement and language have hidden the motions and acts of sin ; when we see how actions seemingly different, and called by different names, do in reality flow from the same fountain of evil, we are obliged to confess that there is very little difference between the philosopher and the savage ; between what man is now, and what he was two thousand years ago. Human life is not an abstraction which can grow really better or purer, except so far as those who are born into it, and live in it are better and purer. It is not that one generation begins where the other left off ; it may be so in knowledge, in organisation, in the arts and appliances of life, but it is not so with the secret springs of thought and feeling with which each man is born into the world. These are for the most part the same. Jealousy, the love of power, of self, of pleasure, of money, — are not they as rife and strong in our towns, or ports, or schools, as they were when the places where these stand were occupied by men who knew nothing of civilised life? And what result can be produced by time? If the world were to last millions of years, we have no reason from analogy to suppose that the living soul, which was last born into it would, by virtue of any moral or intellectual perfection of his

forefathers, inherit, as his principle of being, capacities different in kind from our own, any more than we can conceive that, by successive development of the body, man would in time arrive at the stature of a giant, or the beauty of an angel. Not that I mean to say that in the outward developments of the moral nature, the actual phases of moral life, no improvement can take place; such an assertion would be contrary to the world's history. We can discover a gradual, though real improvement in the tone and feeling of society in one generation, compared with another, as the reason discerns and approves more and more of rational good. We can see that there is less of actual evil in the daily lives of men in one time and place compared with another, just as we see a difference between children brought up in a godly home, and those for whom no such home exists. Man may, again, from similar though opposite causes sink lower in one age or place than in another; but this is not a difference of nature, but the same nature acted upon somewhat differently by the different circumstances and examples whereby it is developed and moulded; and this has a limit. A man may rise or sink in the scale, but he does but seldom destroy entirely the rational good which is in him; never can he eradicate the evil; he can neither rise nor sink beyond his proper nature; he can become neither devil nor angel."—*Bampton Lectures for 1857; Christian Faith, Comprehensive and Definite*, p. 79.

As to an improvement in the intellectual faculties in the degree you suppose, I think an argument may be found against it in the fact which you admit, that each individual now comes into the world with these faculties differing nothing in kind, or degree, from those of former generations. Now, if the human race had progressively improved, as you suppose, we might expect the individuals of this generation to come into the world with different faculties, or at least with faculties in a higher degree of development. Where a decided improvement of race has resulted from discipline or cultivation, the respective progeny on its very first coming into the world bears marks of its improvement. Thus, where a breed of sheep or cows has been so improved as to form, for all practical purposes, a distinct class

marked by certain excellencies or peculiarities, the young of these animals come into the world with these peculiarities and excellencies, and do not depend upon treatment for the possession of them. So when any flower or shrub has been brought to a definite perfection of shape, or colour, the seed or the offshoots generally produce the same variety, perfect in these points. You seem practically to mistake a progress in the circumstances whereby the several ages are respectively surrounded for improvement in the race itself. You ought to have brought forward instances where the faculties of man had fresh powers, such as are implied in the table-turning and spirit-rapping media, &c., which you evidently treat pretty much as they deserve\*; in fact, in the whole of that passage you seem to be haunted with a lurking consciousness that the majority of mankind are very much what they were.

3. Nor, in good truth, is there sufficient ground to think that the natural powers of reason have received such improvement as to make them practically different in kind from those of our forefathers. Reason may in this or that age be more quickly and generally developed in a certain line marked out for it by nature, and up to a certain point more or less defined by nature, than in ages where occupation and amusement were found rather in bodily than in mental occupations; but this does not give it the power of going out of this line, or beyond this point, nor yet relieve it from the internal weakness and hindrances which mar its powers. This would involve new powers of vision, and comprehension, and conception, which reason has not now more than it had, and which no amount of develop-

ment can give it. The simple ideas are as undefinable and inconceivable as ever; to conceive or define them would require not the development of our present powers, but the possession of new ones. The bodily frame may be developed now more fully than a thousand years ago, by reason of the appliances and discipline for that purpose being better known and more easily applicable; but man cannot walk on the water, or ride on the wind now more than he could a thousand years ago; so reason does not, from its opportunities and advantages, or even from the realities of its development, acquire fresh powers to go into things beyond it; it cannot guide unerringly in practical things; it cannot foretell the future of the moral world; it cannot have any judgment, or possess any knowledge in things spiritual more than the heathen had, except so far as God has revealed them in His written Word. Things which were mysteries 1800 years ago are mysteries now, and will remain so until new spiritual powers are given us in the day when we shall know even as we are known: that is, when man will be no longer mere man, but another creature.

So again, if the man did, by rational development, possess the power you claim for him of seeing, by virtue of his reason, into things spiritual; for instance, if he could now realise a distinct notion of eternity, or of the abstract nature of the Godhead, or the like, analogy would require that the child should be born into the world with corresponding increase: he ought, at the very least, not to have to begin with exactly the same rudiments as the child who began a thousand years ago.

It may be true that the present age is one of much improved civilisation, and the hasty impression of some

persons might be that the powers and privileges of reason have increased with it; but if, by civilisation we mean the increase of substance, comforts, intercourse, locomotion, all resulting from the number of physical inventions with which the present age abounds, I doubt much whether it is the most favourable to the exercise of the highest functions of reason as they existed in former ages; I see nothing which can give reason any new powers or privileges. It has doubtless brought a greater variety of phenomena in the natural world within its ken, and enabled us to take a sort of birds-eye view of things physical; it has increased the opportunities of communication between learned men; but this does not prove that it has opened to it subjects which were formerly closed to it, not so much by the lack of facilities of observation and comparison, but as simply belonging to a sphere which was absolutely beyond it.

Nor does it seem to be an axiom that an age, the tone of which teaches men to think highly of their own intellectual powers and position, in which the physical comforts are more abundant, difficulties fewer; — in which the softer parts of human nature have larger and freer scope, — is the most suitable for that irresponsible power of self-discipline and self-guidance, which you think man has a right to claim, as being in a state of mature manhood; and one of my objections to your theory is, that it will deteriorate the tone of the age by removing men from the influences under which they have improved since the Reformation, when the Bible was restored to its ancient supremacy.

But you may say that knowledge itself is so much increased, that man's natural powers have increased and altered with it. To this a similar answer may be



given as in a preceding paragraph. Knowledge facilitates the operations of reason up to its powers, but gives it no new ones. A clear distinction exists between knowledge and reason—knowledge is that which is acquired, reason the power acquiring, or receiving, or applying it; the former may be more varied, and, in consequence, the latter may be better informed; but all the knowledge in the world in one sort of subject matter does not give us information or powers in another: a man is not a whit the better metaphysician for being an universal natural philosopher; it is true a man may have faculties for both these subjects, but if he has not, the possession of the one in its greatest perfection will not give him the other: the most accurate knowledge of the human frame, or of the human spirit, would not enable a man even to guess at the nature of angels, with any approach to likelihood. Nay, it may be doubted whether the sort of observation and reasoning needed for the one does not in some sort exclude or hinder the faculties necessary for the other, when the faculties severally required are different in kind. So far then is knowledge in one kind of subject matter (the material world, the things of reason), from necessarily giving us fresh powers and facilities in another subject matter (the immaterial world, the things of the Spirit), that it may very possibly diminish them.

And in weighing the intellectual state of the present day, it must, I think, be acknowledged, that our science is rather applied than theoretic, rather practical than speculative; the laws of electricity were handed down to us, we have made them the obedient couriers of man's words; the laws and the chemical properties of light were before us, we have invented the photograph; from the

laws of vapour has been educed the giant steam; and no doubt, in an intellectual point of view, the practical is inferior to the speculative. The independent efforts of reason in hitherto untrod paths of knowledge, are rather scientific inquiries, more or less accurate, than sciences; some of them, as table-turning, &c., are rather degradations of the intellect than improvements of it: and the best of them are rather an accumulation of facts, from which, possibly, some day or other, laws may be evolved, though, at present, even among the adepts, there is neither certainty nor agreement; others are mere guesses at possible operations in past ages of the natural world, founded either on the most shadowy analogies, or necessarily imperfect inductions of facts.

Further, it may be doubted whether knowledge received, as the present age receives it, does not really tend rather to deaden the intellect than to sharpen it. Every one acquainted with boys must know that a great store of knowledge in the receptive part of the mind, does not always produce or imply great activity or correctness in the speculative. The mind, as an active power of discovery, is not developed by knowledge, but rather by the degree and kind of exercise required for its acquisition. It is possible to conceive a mind very richly stored with a vast variety of knowledge, and yet less developed, as an active power, than another mind with less knowledge, but more laboriously and thoughtfully acquired; and the great mistake of the present day seems to be to confound the possession of knowledge with the actual powers of thought and the practical power of self-guidance and self-government.

I think that, on looking accurately into the matter,

most men would agree that any real improvement in our intellectual state arises, not from any change in the powers themselves, but either from the circumstances in which we are placed—the greater range of subject-matter, the greater facility for investigation, the interchange of discoveries and ideas, fresh sources of information—or from our use of principles and facts handed down to us, and which serve as stepping-stones for further progress in the particular subject-matter to which they belong.

When then these circumstances do not exist, even this improvement cannot be looked for or insisted on. Now in spiritual matters there have been no new sources of information opened; for you say yourself there has been no fresh revelation, nor can you point to any one Divine truth which was not equally known in the past ages of the Church; no fresh facilities for investigation, for the mysteries of revelation are as impenetrable to reason as ever; and it cannot be shown how the highest degree of physical science can throw any real light on the smallest particular of spiritual life. And as for any religious knowledge worked out by our ecclesiastical ancestors, and handed down to us, one of the objects of your Essay is to lay it on the shelf; for it must be observed that you do not profess to build upon or add to former truths, but to weaken their authority and to take from them on the plea that reason is now able to do without them.

But you say that from the time of the Reformation there has been a progress in a direction, which you hold to be an increase, but which I should be inclined to characterise as a decrease of spiritual knowledge; and I think you would be puzzled definitely to point out what are the particular points in which there is more

spiritual truth now than there was : for toleration, granting that there is more of it, is not spiritual truth itself, but a particular way of viewing and treating it. Moreover, you mistake the Reformation ; it did not spring from a sense that conscience was to be the supreme guide, but that the Bible was ; it was not an identification of the Bible with conscience, so as to merge the former in the latter, but it was a conforming of our religious opinions to the Bible ; it was not the weighing the Bible in human scales, and casting away whatever did not suit the spirit of the age, but it was the correcting human notions by a direct and strict reference to the Bible, taking it as the supreme and sole authority in spiritual matters ; and in this direction has been the uniform current of religious thought from that time to this, with the exception of course of the Deistical and Rationalistic Schools. But supposing the tendency of religious thought had been to merge the Bible in conscience, this might be a falling away from truth — it is progress, you may say, a new present flowing from the past, — true, but all progress is not upward. St. Paul seems, in 2 Tim. iii., to contemplate in these last days a downward movement in popular religion ; and it will be for our posterity to judge whether this has begun already, and to what period it can be traced back.

You say, naively enough, that at the Reformation it might have been thought that the study of theology was about to be revived ; it certainly does seem to be so both at that time, and from that time to this. For when we see on the shelves of our libraries the numberless works of Protestant Divines of all countries, all occupied in maintaining, on the authority of Scripture, precise views and statements of truth, or opposing those interpreta-

tions of Scripture which deny or explain them away; when we recollect the Augsburg Confession, the Creed of Pope Pius, the Council of Trent, the Westminster Confession, our own Articles; the Confessions or Catechisms of the Dissenting Bodies, one of which, by the bye, is embodied in a Deed in Chancery, so as to form a legally precise standard for teaching in that community; when we recollect that every one of the denominations is founded on some precise statement of one or more points of doctrine or practice, from which they allow not the smallest variation, and for which they refer directly to Scripture, it does seem strange to be told in half a dozen sentences that theological studies have passed away. There are, it is true, men who are striving to do away with that sort of theological study which gives a definite place and importance to definite mysteries, and to substitute in its stead a hazy criticism which dogmatises with as much preciseness in the statement of paradoxical error, as possibly the Schoolmen dogmatised in their paradoxical statements of truth: men, who are as arbitrary and as mistaken in seeking to neutralise the force and authority of Scripture as former theologians perhaps were in applying Scripture to subjects to which it was not applicable; but their attempts, even if successful, will not alter man's position in regard to the Bible, nor the means and conditions of salvation. These are the same as they ever were and ever will be; and I hope and think that few will be found who will listen to their reason rather than their Bible.

Having said so much, I need hardly sum it up by adding that I think your notions of a fixed law of continuous progress upwards, of a progressive development of humanity into a state differing from former ages, as

much as manhood does from youth, and of any consequent change in the powers and privileges of reason, have, separately or together, no ground to stand upon. It remains for me to examine the objects you propose as the practical results of the views you advance.

These seem to be. 1. The supremacy and sufficiency of reason in matters of belief and duty. 2. Toleration. 3. The study of the Bible.

I am not certain whether a fourth might not be added,—The reign of science over man, a millennium of knowledge.

1. The Scriptural testimony against the sufficiency and supremacy of reason in spiritual matters will of course decide the question with those who have not yet learned to override the Bible by their own views; for Scripture tells us clearly that our understandings require Divine aid to guide and overrule us. This Divine overruling aid is given us in two ways: 1. Scripture, which you, according to your Essay, never allow to override or dispute with reason, and therefore do not receive as God gave it. 2. Grace, of which throughout your Essay there is not the slightest mention.

I will not insist on the Scriptural arguments, because you may, according to your view and use of Scripture, put them aside by asserting that, though well enough for the Apostles and early Christians, they do not apply to us to whom reason is supreme. I will endeavour, therefore, to meet you on your own ground, and consider whether, leaving direct Scripture testimony out of the question, Reason is entitled to the privileges you claim for her to sit as a despot on the throne of our souls, as the sole monarch, judge, legislator, therein and thereof, without superior, without equal, without control, without appeal.

First let me observe, that you use the word conscience in a somewhat wider sense\* than I think strictly correct or usual, to denote the mental faculty which is concerned with doctrine, as well as that which takes cognisance of action, and therefore it is necessary to consider its supremacy in both these points.

I suppose I am right in saying that these privileges of reason are viewed in a two-fold relation: first, as regards the Church; secondly, as regards the individual.

With regard to the Church, I do not think I am misinterpreting your Essay when I say that it teaches, that as a State ought in all reason to draw her principles of law and right, say from the Roman jurisprudence, simply as being the best source within her reach, and not as having any definite claim on her imitation, so the Church ought to draw its principles of faith and practice, so far as our reason from time to time approves, and no further, from the Bible, as being the best source within our reach, and possibly as intended by God for this purpose, but not as being an overruling revelation from God, or an indisputable law and standard. And this is to be done by the natural faculties of the individuals composing the Church in its several generations, and according to the circumstances in which they find themselves; as their natural faculties are developed, the revelation is to receive a corresponding limitation, so that what is true in one age and for one set of Churchmen may be untrue at other ages and for other persons.

And for the individual an analogous right, or rather duty, is laid down of framing his belief and practice

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from Scripture indeed if he likes it ; but by the power, and according to the views of, his reason, without taking more from Scripture than reason allows : without any deference to any authority whatever ; every man's conscience is to be his only true guide, sufficient, supreme, without control, and without appeal.

And a further practical deduction from this is, that it is the duty of a Church, and the privilege of an individual, taking Scripture, indeed, as the basis of religious views, to modify and alter it *ad libitum* to suit the tone of the age and the national or individual bias of conscience.

It is necessary first to remark that there is a wide difference between having an abstract right to do anything, and having practically a right to do it with regard to any system or dispensation under which we are placed, or any benefits which we wish to possess. It is possible, nay it happens every day, that a person has a right to do something, which nevertheless would deprive him of any right or claim to that to which he may think himself entitled ; and it is in this latter sense that I speak of a Church or an individual, as having no right to do this or that ; and I draw this distinction, because those, who insist upon maintaining the Gospel scheme intact, are often reproached, as if they were trying to infringe on some abstract right of free speech or thought ; whereas all that is meant is, that if a person, in consequence of this freedom of thought, holds error, he cannot expect to enjoy the privileges which otherwise he might have enjoyed ; that he cannot escape the evil of committing a breach of duty, or the danger of self-inflicted loss ; neither of which, however, arise from, or can be removed by, any opinion or sentence of ours, and both of which he is perfectly at



liberty to incur if he pleases; and the only rights which will be invaded by his doing so are those of Christendom, to expect that every Christian, as long as he professes himself to be a Christian, should maintain Christian faith; or of a Church to expect that her members, as long as they continue in her, should adhere to her teaching; and perhaps the rights of a man's individual soul. In fact, when we speak of a person having no right to hold this or do that, it is only a form of expressing that we believe him to be in an error, which is a breach of some duty or relation, or entails upon himself some danger and loss, or some harm upon others.

Now I think it will be allowed that a Church (*i. e.* a body of Christians who would have been held to be a Church in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul\*), can have no right to lay down or teach, as essential truth, what does not derive its authority from God's written word, nor yet to omit or alter anything which is therein; she cannot do so without violating her duty to God and man; for when error is insisted upon, a person is called upon either to assent to error, or to lose the spiritual privileges which are attached to church fellowship. If truth be omitted, then the individual members of the Church do not enjoy that which God was pleased to give, and which, therefore, man has a right to receive. And if exact truth be thus requisite to the being and functions of a Church, then, of course, no Church is at liberty to use such methods or instruments as, from their own inherent incapacity or disadvantages, are likely to lead wrong, or such as in experience have been seen to lead wrong. The question then, whether

\* See Bampton Lectures, 1857, p. 237.

a Church is at liberty to work out her own principles for herself by reason, without recognising the supreme authority of Scripture as an outer law and standard of truth, is decided first by the place which God designed Revelation to occupy in the world; and, secondly, by the sufficiency of man's natural powers for the work.

First, you seem to allow that God's revelations to man did, in the earlier ages of the world, and even up to a certain point in the earlier Church of the Apostles, claim supreme authority to bind men to a particular belief and particular duties which they had no right to decline or evade; and you deny the same right to Scripture now, from the supposed maturity of humanity and supposed privileges attached thereto. But whether you allow this or not, I venture to assert, (and I appeal to Christendom in support of the assertion,) that in the earlier ages of the world, in the Jewish system, and in the Church, revelation always spoke with the decisive voice of supreme authority, as an outer communication from God; an outer law, to which men could not refuse to listen and assent in simple unconditional obedience, without at once violating the will of God and the dictates of common sense. Can you point to any instance in Scripture where revelation is represented as being at the mercy of the voice of reason or conscience? Instances to the contrary there are, where men were held to be guilty of disobedience in consequence of listening to the judgment of their reason, when it told them what ought, in a human sense, to be done, instead of simply doing what God told them to do. Nor do I think you will find any instances in the history of the world, where even a pretended revelation being admitted and acknowledged, it did not at once settle the point on which it was supposed to speak; and

this shows the view which not only deliberate right reason, but instinctive common sense takes of the subject. Nor could it well be otherwise: for surely it is absurd to suppose a revelation from infallible Wisdom and infinite Power, which does not *de jure* as well as *de facto* assume the office of a paramount guide.

This outward revelation is not to be confounded, as you confound it, with the inner moral sense. The law which God designs to be an inner law and nothing else, He gives us in and by conscience; what He intends to act as an independent outer law, He tells us by Revelation; and such a Revelation must continue in force, till it is distinctly abrogated by the same authority which gave it, as the Jewish ceremonial and political system was abrogated by God in person. You ought to have shown that this outer law of the Gospel has been abrogated or merged, instead of assuming that reason has, of right, the function which possibly it had before the outer revelation was given; for this is what your theory amounts to, the only difference being that possibly in some ages of the world reason has more varied information to draw from than formerly. And as this later revelation must in all reason be held to be beyond the former one, it would seem that if either conscience, as an inner revelation, is to supersede the Bible, or to be superseded by it, the latter alternative must be taken.

The fact which you truly state\*, that no new revelation or communication from God, as an infallible guide, has since the Gospel been given to man, instead of being in any way an argument in favour of the existing revelation having been abrogated, is to my mind a very strong argument the other way. Do you mean to

\* Page 40.

assert that if God had designed His revealed will to be the paramount guide of man, it would have been necessary for Him to have given a fresh revelation every year, or every hundred years? In your high estimate of man and his belongings, you seem to forget how infinitely insignificant are the spaces of time whereby we mark the world's brief life, in the eyes of Him to whom a thousand years are but as one day. Do you mean to say that the revelation once given by Christ has run out by lapse of time? No lawyer in Westminster Hall would venture to allege in proof of the abrogation of a statute of Queen Elizabeth, that no new enactment had been made since; and yet this, if I understand your meaning, is the argument you press in the passage referred to above.

Revelation, then, was designed to hold the paramount place in the world from the moment of its publication; and the fact of revelation admitted excludes, *ipso facto*, the sufficiency of reason: for the very theory, so to say, of revelation is, that it did what reason was unable to do, because reason was unable to do it. But you meet this by the notion that the Bible did not give at once, in the age in which it was published, a full, complete, and final exposition of that revelation, but a sort of shadowy outline to be filled in by reason; a writing, as it were, in sympathetic ink, to be brought out by the light of nature; a sort of cipher, of which reason, as it developed, was to find a more and more complete key: differing but little from the book of nature, which is in fact to be used as a sort of new Bible. On this revelation reason is to operate, as it did operate when the book of nature alone was open to it; so that each man and each generation is to work out its own system of religious truth by their natural faculties, and that all

religious systems so worked out are equally true ; each man is to build upon this perpetually shifting foundation, with an equal assurance of its being a rock, and this without any limitation, or any appeal from the internal faculties to an outer law.

Now we may observe that Scripture does not, like nature, present us merely with data, whence we evolve spiritual truths, but with the spiritual truths themselves, stated in language sufficiently precise and clear ; and therefore these do not depend on their being worked out by reason, but reason has to accept them. And this complete difference between the Bible and nature, as sources of information, is a bar against the same process being applicable to the Bible as to nature in this respect : the gradual process necessary in natural discoveries, whether of natural religion, or natural science, is excluded where all is presented at once. They may, indeed, be brought together, by an exercise of a certain function of reason, into compendious formulæ, or formularies ; but this does not affect their independent existence and authority ; and unless these formulæ or formularies can be shown to be contrary to Scripture truth, they have, if not in their exact form, yet certainly in their essence, the same force as the truth itself ; and though not of Divine authority and obligation, in their form, they are in their essence : and where they have been adopted from the earliest times as adequate expressions for the truth, the modifying them without scriptural cause shown is not to adopt and go beyond them, as might be the case with the earlier principles of natural science, but to reject and fall short of them. It is virtually an abandonment of the truth which they have from the first represented to Christendom.

You seem, however, to think that by referring to the

theology of the early Church, and to the form of Scripture, it may be proved that revelation is left to the tender mercies of man's natural faculties : and that these are to extract out of it from time to time what they will, according to their capacities and needs. This is practically to make revelation reveal only what reason sees or chooses to see, and even to reveal different things to different minds and in different ages.

The two following propositions will, I think, convey the sum and substance of what you advance as to the theology of the Early Church.\*

1. That the early Church was, from the very first, in the fullest sense left to work out her leading doctrines and principles by her natural faculties in the usual way, so that the body of faith was of human invention, and that this is a precedent for us.

2. That the Church was not capable of extracting all at once the truth of the earlier times, and that therefore something is left for us to extract ; that we are to be wiser than they were.

I hope to be able to show that neither of these positions rests on sufficient grounds.

Is it true that the Church was in any age left to herself in the unlimited way you speak of ? Certainly the Apostles did give to the early Church her formal doctrine and precepts, but this was not *proprio motu*, or by their natural faculties, but in conformity to the express teaching of our Saviour before and after His crucifixion : and after His ascension, by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit who was given them that they might not be left to themselves, but might by Him be led into all truth ; and what they ordained

and constituted in all essential points they ordained and constituted as eternal and immutable, and embodied it in Scripture as such\*, and wherever they omitted anything for which Scripture seems to give warrant, as in the case of not ordaining the washing of one another's feet as a third sacramental rite, they did so doubtless, not by virtue of any right of self-government, but in obedience to the Holy Ghost who was leading them. What the Holy Ghost taught them as an external power of truth, acting through their natural faculties, and yet often in spite of the rational conclusions and views of their natural faculties, they embodied, as I said above, in Scripture: and this became to the next, and to all succeeding generations, an outer law quite distinct from, and independent of their natural faculties, except in a sense which I shall speak of presently. The two sacraments surely were not administered in any age as a matter of self-government or natural deduction, but in simple and direct obedience to our Lord's express commands given by the Holy Ghost through the Apostles in Scripture. The Apostles were looked upon, not as speaking of their own wit or power what seemed to them to be most likely to be true, but as the channels whereby the Holy Spirit had conveyed to the Church the indisputable and incontrovertible will and counsel of God. In fact if their writings are not so regarded, the Bible is no longer the Bible, but another book; and so the atheists wish to make it.†

And when you say that these principles were worked

\* See Gal. i. 8.

† See Crabbe's Tales, XXI. vol. v. p. 234:—

“The Book has wisdom in it, if you look  
Wisely upon it as another book.”

out *as principles usually are*, do you mean to assert that in the early Church, Churchmen deliberated not merely how errors in teaching or practice were to be met by precise statements, but on what parts of Scripture doctrine it might suit them to adopt, just as politicians might meet together to elaborate a constitution? that they only used reflection to work out of the depths of their mind those mysteries, to which the natural mind is a stranger; or that they looked upon the Bible (which I suppose you mean by the records of the early Church), merely as the history of a particular generation, containing indeed, and implying the principles of truth, but not authoritatively setting them forth, and enjoining them; if you do mean this, all that can be done is to leave your assertion to the judgment of those who are capable of judging on the reality, or probability, or even possibility of that which you assert.

It is perfectly true, I think, that we are at liberty to form our body of positive doctrine as the early Church did, if we think it wise and necessary: but then it must be done as the early Church did it, by taking, as binding upon us, the teaching of our Saviour, or of those commissioned by Him to teach us: and as the Bible is the place where this teaching is to be found, it follows that we are to take the Bible, not merely as a source whence reflection may draw principles, but as the law wherein principles are given us, without any choice being left us.

And again, when you say\* the Church was left in the fullest sense to her natural faculties, as the sole instruments in the work, and that whatever aid she received was through these faculties, and not in spite of them, I think you have neglected to define to yourself what you



mean by the use of her natural faculties. If you mean that the early Christians used their natural faculties in comprehending or receiving what Scripture told them, it is merely another way of saying that they were rational creatures: for of course it is impossible for any truth, or any command, whether supernatural or not, whether communicated supernaturally or not, to be received except by the aid and use of the natural faculties: or again, if you mean that their natural faculties told them it was reasonable that they should receive what God had given them in Scripture, this does not in any way affect the question; this use of the natural faculties does neither directly nor by implication destroy either the supernatural character or the external authority of Scripture: in fact it is only the recognition of it. A lawyer uses his natural faculties to make himself master of the principles of law, or the provisions of a statute, and his natural faculties tell him that to these principles or these provisions he must conform himself; but however complicated may have been the process of reasoning whereby they were arrived at, yet their force does not result from, or depend upon the lawyer's reason or reasoning powers, but on the statutes by which they were established, and ultimately on the legislative authority which enacted them.

But if your meaning is that which I have supposed it to be above, that the early Church worked out, as we might work out a problem in political or moral science, her theology, merely taking the Bible as a record of phenomena, and not as a code of doctrine and precept, and only taking that which reason assented to, not as judging it reasonable to receive revealed truth except as consonant to the results of rational reflection: taking nothing in spite of the views which the natural

faculties would have discovered themselves, then I can only again leave you to the judgment of others, and I do not think your theory will find much acceptance with thinking Christians, educated or uneducated, in the present age, or receive any confirmation from the history of the past.

They, doubtless, had to provide themselves with creeds, liturgies, and systems of theology where they were needed, but their belief, speculative and practical, existed prior to these: the materials out of which they had to form these were provided for them at first by the teaching of the Apostles, and afterwards by the Bible in the shape of direct statements of what Christians had to believe and do: and of the things thus taught and commanded they might not leave one out or add one, without, in that same degree, losing one of their elements as a church, and the doctrines and commandments they thus extracted and combined were to them the outer law of the combination. The articles of their creeds are no more to be considered the creation of their natural faculties than the jewels which a monarch commits to a jeweller to be arranged in the best manner can be said to be created by the artist.

It is not quite clear how it was possible for a Church having definite revelation to start from, to work out truth by her natural faculties and nothing else; for the natural faculties of a church can only be the natural faculties of the individuals successively composing it: and do you mean that each individual, beginning as it were from a *tabula rasa*, evolved for himself the doctrines of the Gospel, so that an ever-shifting aggregate of truth was formed of the opinions of the ever changing individuals? Surely it is impossible not to conceive the creed of one generation to be the carrying on of the

creed of the last, which again it handed down to the next; a body of truth was formed, resting on Scripture as its authority, external to, and commanding acquiescence and obedience from the inner faculties of all, so that no generation could be left to work out its principles of action by its own natural faculties; not even at the Reformation, when the succession, so to say of belief, was seemingly broken off, for the Church of that day simply went back to the Scripture, and to that point in the early Church which was anterior to the unscriptural aberration of Rome. The Church of the Reformation was served heir, as it were, to the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

And when we try to trace the actual working of such a process as you suppose, the more unlikely does it seem that the belief of the early Church should have thus been formed. Take for instance the two doctrines which stand first in the Apostolic Creed. "*I believe in God the Father Almighty,*" we cannot imagine that this resulted from the experience of themselves or others, for this apart from revelation had been for the most part polytheistic; surely it came to them by the simple reception of the truth which had been preserved in the Jewish Scriptures, and republished in the Gospel, and they believed it, because they found it (by their natural faculties it is true) in Scripture. The authority for its truth, however, was not that of reason but of revelation; if they had got it from reason and not from revelation, its truth would have been to them no more a matter of certainty than it had been in the earlier ages. And again, "*in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.*" Surely it can only be by some play upon words that it can be said, that they got this by their natural faculties, in the same way as they might get a

principle in science: they got it direct from the teaching of the Apostles who received it from Christ, and embodied it in Scripture.\* When once the fact was made clear to them that they had been taught it as the rock on which their faith was built, they could not have for a moment doubted it, or examined into its possibility: they could not have rejected it on grounds of reason without ceasing to be Christians. When the natural faculties of men in the Church began to act independently, and as self-sufficient to work out principles from Scripture, taking reason in one or other of its shapes for their guide and standard, heresies arose even in the Church: and these were met by formal statements of the truth, as it is in Scripture, and denied, not on the authority of reason, but on the authority of Scripture. In exact proportion as the natural faculties were allowed to go beyond Scripture, and to extract or seem to extract fresh truth from it, in that proportion did the Church lose the truth, and fall short of the will of God, and the function which He had appointed her; and you will hardly say that a Church is justified in following a system whereby she falls short of God's will and her duty to man, on the ground that the system is one which reason may, and usually does pursue with success in other subject-matter.

You seem to view the Church in four eras since the Apostles' age: the Church of the Fathers, the Church of the Papacy, the Church of the Reformation, and the Church of our own Times. I should adopt your division with the further remark that as the Church of the Papacy destroyed the faith of the early Church by modifying Scripture by pretended theological reason-

\* See 2 Tim. ii. 2.

ing, so you wish to destroy the faith of the Church of the Reformation by modifying Scripture by pretended scientific reasoning.

The grounds on which you assert that the Church of earlier days was *not capable of extracting at once all the truth and wisdom contained in the teaching of the earlier periods\**, seem, when put into plainer language, to mean that the Church was in some spiritual points behind the heathen and Jewish world; for I suppose the earlier periods you refer to are those which answer to childhood and youth in man. You do not bring a single point to support your assertion, but you ground it on another assertion—that *a vast number of the early decisions are practically obsolete, and even many of the doctrinal statements unfitted for permanent use†*; that is to say, because certain decisions called forth by temporary circumstances have passed away with those circumstances, and because many doctrinal statements framed to meet heresies which are obsolete, are no longer necessary for the ordinary needs of Christian faith, “therefore the Church of the Fathers was not capable of extracting all the wisdom and truth,” &c. For anything your argument shows to the contrary, the Fathers were in most complete possession of the whole truth, even though some of their definitions of it have passed away with the errors they were framed against; but even supposing the contrary, the question now before us is not whether the Church of the Fathers were in complete possession of the truth, but whether the Church of our day is or is not to regard Scripture as having the supreme control in spiritual things over the human reason and human will.

\* Page 41.

† Ibid.

Further it is to be noted, that even supposing that any incapability of the Church of the Fathers did justify us in thinking we might extract fresh truth from Scripture, this might be an argument in favour of the Romanistic Theory of Development, but not in favour of what you are ever pressing upon us, — for what you aim at is not to extract fresh truths, but to modify, and alter, and virtually give up what we already have, — the result would not be positive but negative.

I confess that it seems to me that by your process of treating spiritual things, spiritual truth would be destroyed for man. Truth is truth to us in various ways: sometimes because it impresses itself on the mind at once, as in the case of axioms and the like; sometimes because it is founded on perceptible facts and experience; but in spiritual things, because it is revealed to us by God. Spiritual truth cannot be truth to us merely on reason's warrant; there will always be a certain degree of doubt as to its certainty; for reason cannot in such matters furnish the *exclusio oppositi* as in axioms; nor have we tangible facts or experience from which to work it out with any approach to certainty. Faith apprehends it as truth, simply because God tells it us; and the lack of demonstration or experience is thus supplied by the witness which God bears to it. If you take away or hide this witness, no warrant of reason can make it truth in the same sense in which it was truth before. The result of your theory would be, that there would be no truth, and consequently no revelation.

I would further remark that an important argument against the sufficiency of reason, as an absolute or independent judge of truth in spiritual matters, is suggested by the above consideration: viz. that without some test or confirmation beyond itself, it has not the

power of giving that certainty which is implied in the notion of a religious conviction; so that the result of trusting to reason would be the impossibility of faith; for faith is not the impartial balancing between the possibility or probability of any given notion in the Divine nature or economy, with perhaps a slight bias in favour of it; nor yet is it merely such a degree of certainty as may influence action; but the apprehending and retaining convictions as undoubtingly as the scientific reason apprehends and retains the primary laws of mind or matter.

And as your theory would destroy truth in its speculative aspect, what would be likely to result to practical truth either by trusting to reason to enlighten us on spiritual points or by placing revelation at the mercy of reason? Unless we are deaf to the voice of experience we have not to wait long for an answer; you yourself say that the Jews alone were able to attain to the two cardinal points of monotheism and chastity. Natural religion as well as natural morality was not only vague and uncertain, but mistaken and wrong: it was this which made it necessary (so to speak) for a written revelation to be joined to our Lord's ministry of salvation: not only that new truths might be given, but that the old ones, to the safe preservation of which reason had proved herself quite insufficient, might be preserved and renewed, enacted by fresh authority and committed henceforth to safer keeping. And here again we see the necessity for perpetual reference to Scripture. What would be the result if your theory were carried out, and the Bible were to cease to exist as a body of fixed truth, merely being regarded as a book of wisdom, revealed indeed, but still to be modified by reason after a wisdom of its own? We have the truth to start from,

it is true, but that is hardly a reason for letting go that truth. The heathen world had truth up to a certain point to start from: I think you will allow that there was a quasi-revelation given of certain spiritual truths in the book of nature, to leave out of the question the probability of the primæval world having enjoyed traditionally some more direct revelation. This book of nature was read by the natural faculties of man, and the result was the entire perversion of the knowledge of God into the worship of the creature, and of the moral law into the reprobate mind, which set at nought both the intimations of God's will in nature, and the natural sense of right and wrong; if the Bible is only to be considered as a book of data, whence religious systems of faith and practice are to be extracted and modified by this same reason, why should we suppose that a similar result will not follow? I do not suppose that your fancied maturity of mankind would be any guarantee, for reason seems as much disposed to go wrong as ever; and your volume gives a foretaste of what would be the probable end thereof, when at the beginning mysteries, and miracles, and prophecies are given up as blunders of interpretation, no longer to be retained in our knowledge: science is to be our teacher! *If they do these things in a green tree, what will they do in the dry?* all this resembles much the first stage in the Apostle's brief sketch of man under reason, — *professing themselves to be wise they become fools.*

If it be argued that in matters of religion there is no certainty because there are so many varying opinions as to what really is the teaching of Scripture, and that therefore the argument against reason as destroying Scripture truth does not hold good, I answer that



this uncertainty does not arise from the nature of faith or from Scripture, but from man's having let go of the one by misusing the other. And herein is seen the value of a system of dogmatic theology founded on and embodying Scripture, as interpreted, where interpretation is necessary, by the Catholic and Apostolic Church, and set forth in the creeds and formularies which you would sacrifice to the spirit of the age. It is owing to the existence of a dogmatic system of theology from the very beginning, that truth has been preserved throughout the ages of the Church : it is a safeguard against reason ; while a constant reference to the precise declarations of Scripture prevents this theology from being corrupted by theological speculations, or at least enables us to detect the errors which may accrue from them. If there are any errors in our theology, which can be proved such from Scripture, it would be our duty to amend it ; but this, if done at all, must be done by reason in conformity with Scripture and not by reason alone,—in harmony, not with the spirit of the age, but the faith of Christendom in ancient times.

Another source of uncertainty in spiritual things exists in the way in which men fix their eyes on some one passage or doctrine and neglect other passages and other doctrines. In all the religious denominations you will find some particular part of Scripture the favourite, if not the exclusive, source of teaching and argument, and a theology thus built upon a part must of course misrepresent the whole. If the most accurate science in the world were so handled by different schools, that one set of principles were maintained to the exclusion and negation of others, uncertainty would be introduced as to the points which each denied ; for

instance, if one set of philosophers were to maintain that attraction was the sole property of the magnetic current, and another with equal exclusiveness held to the repulsive properties, there would be uncertainty introduced ; but the uncertainty would not arise from the magnetic science, nor yet from the philosophy which laid down the truth with regard to both these properties, but from the perversity of these partial philosophers. But handle Scripture as a whole, neither leaving out anything from it, nor adding anything to it, there is no real uncertainty in it, nor any at all, except so far as any mind may choose to set up itself against Scripture, and to judge where it ought to receive ; and this defect is clearly not to be laid to the account of Scripture, when it arises from refusing to take it as God has given it to us.

But still there is something in this way of handling Scripture which tells against your theory that reason is to be the overruling judge in spiritual things, as practically an inner revelation speaking more certainly and authoritatively than the written word ; for not only were heresies in ancient times met by formal statements of Scriptural truth, and denied, not on the authority of reason, but on the authority of Scripture, but all the differing parties in their search after religious truth refer to the Bible ; they may differ in their view and application of the meaning thereof, and may create the accidental uncertainty of which I have spoken above, but they do not, in consequence of their differences, depose Scripture and enthrone reason : they all (except, of course, the infidel and rationalistic schools) agree in accepting Scripture as the supreme authority in matters of dispute. In fact, their errors arise from clinging too closely, I do not

say to the letter of Scripture, but to the letter of one passage and not taking notice of others.

And this principle of the inherent certainty of Scripture established, there is an absolute standard of truth : whereas, if reason is supreme, each of these opposed or differing opinions would be separately true by virtue of its being to each approved by his reason. Religion would be in its nature and in the intention of God, not merely from the mode of handling Scripture, an inexact science. Revelation would not have placed man in a better position than before.

Nor does the assertion of the supremacy of Scripture, as the standard of right belief, at all impugn or affect the right of private judgment, in the ordinary acceptance of the term : this is shown by the fact that among ourselves your theory is repudiated as decidedly by those who are inclined to this principle, as by those who are not ; for private judgment does not profess to deny the over-ruling, nay, absolute, authority of the Bible, or claim for conscience the right to take what it likes and leave what it likes, of God's revelation, without affecting the possession of truth : it does not involve the power of making error into truth, nor wrong into right : it does not, I conceive, set up conscience between us and the Bible \*, so that the instruction of the Bible is to be of no force as against the sentence of conscience ; but it is simply that every man has a right, if he chooses, to go direct to the fountain-head, and to listen to Christ and His apostles speaking to himself personally, without the intervention of any human means, but with a no less absolute authority : it does not even relieve a person from the spiritual consequences of mistaking darkness

\* Page 45.

for light, or bitter for sweet, should this be the result of his neglecting the aids God has given him, and trusting to himself.\* And when you speak of its being by virtue of private judgment that the Bible is made an inner law to the true Christian, it reads at first sight as if you were using the word differently from its ordinary acceptation, in order to enlist popular feeling on your side. But this is so unlike you, that I am inclined to think that you were misled by two points of identity between your theory and private judgment, since reason in both claims a certain degree of independence, and in both the authority of the Church is superseded: and hence you have unconsciously confounded the claim of reason to listen to Scripture as against the voice of the Church, with your claim of reason to listen to the voice of conscience as against Scripture—they are clearly very distinct. In your theory, it is held that the voice of Scripture is overruled by the voice of man; in private judgment, that the voice of man is overridden by the voice of Scripture.

And again, to my mind, you have confounded between

\* “He may form his own opinion if he will; to his own Master he will fall or stand. But neither does this liberty of prophesying imply that every man’s judgment will lead him right, or that he will not have to answer for every error of faith or practice into which it may lead him. It is for each individual to consider whether private judgment is likely to lead him to truth or error: we know it has led thousands wrong: it has been the parent of much evil: we know that it has led many right: to the exercise of private judgment against the authority of the Church of the time we owe the Reformation. A man has a perfect right to be, if he pleases, his own physician; he will live or die according as the treatment he adopts and the remedies he uses are right or wrong, but this does not give that treatment or those remedies the power of restoring health or averting disease.”—*Bampton Lectures*, 1857, p. 249.

the speculative apprehension of Divine truth by the reason on its own warrant, and its practical influence on the heart. It is true that those who exercise private judgment, get, so to say, a more personal acquaintance with Scripture, but still the incorporation of Scripture into the soul so as to become the living principle thereof, is the privilege both of those who trust private judgment, and of those who distrust it, provided that they respectively get at the real mind of the Spirit. They may, and in thousands of cases probably do, hold precisely the same religious views in precisely the same degree of lively faith, the difference between them being, that one makes it a point of religion to get at it without the Church, the other a point of wisdom to get at it through the Church; the faith of either may be living or dead—a mere code of outer laws or an inner principle of life, as the truth he holds has or has not penetrated his whole being; but in either case the Bible, and not conscience, is supreme. It is worthy too of remark, that those who most decidedly deny private judgment are those who have in former times acted on your theory, though in a different direction; the difference between you being, that they used the reason of the clergy in modifying Scripture-teaching and Catholic faith to suit the religious spirit, or meet the religious needs of the time, while you would use the reason of scientific men to modify the same belief to suit the scientific spirit of the age.

It should, of course, be the aim of every man to incorporate revealed truth into his inner being; to allow it to take possession of and to transform his reason, his affections, his desires; and if it were possible that the moral energies of the rational being should be merely the reproduction of Scripture truth, the religion of such

a man would surpass, in an infinite degree, that of one who, with a full speculative possession of the same truth, thought and acted only in obedience to an outward law. But I think you are mistaken in arguing that the existence of the law within implies the destruction of the law without ; that the law without is wholly lost and merged in the law within. You say\* that there are two kinds of law, — one wholly outward, the other wholly inward ; but you have omitted to notice a third kind, wherein the two are combined ; where, with the conscious recognition of the law without, the inner man acts instinctively and in harmony with it, continually obeying it, consulting it, referring to it. This is not the absorption of the Bible into conscience, as of a lower law into a higher : nor yet the identification of the Bible with conscience, so that the Bible is mute and conscience alone speaks ; but it is brought about by, and consists in the conscience habitually submitting itself to the Bible as the dutiful interpreter thereof, carrying out Scripture principles as principles, not of nature, or of natural religion, but of Scripture and revealed religion ; and this is very different from acting merely on the outward law from enforced obedience : and again, very different from recognising the inner law alone, and acting by the will of conscience only. Our Saviour Himself surely recognised the outer law of God's will †, though, of course, this same will dwelt in Him in its most perfect form and power ; and He tells us that the test of loving Him is keeping *His commandments* ‡, that it is those who listen to *His Words* §, that the Father and the Son will come to and dwell in as an Inner Power of Truth and Holiness. Does it not strike you, that to

\* Page 35.

‡ Ibid. xv. 15.

† St. John v. 30, and viii. 38, &c. &c.

§ Ibid. xiv. 23.

yield obedience to principles of right and wrong when they present themselves to you as the sentence of your own natural powers, and to refuse obedience to them when they present themselves as an outer law and communication from God, is to try to hide God in yourself? Does it not seem to you to savour of that self-sufficiency which St. Paul repudiates? of that pride which God withstands? and the punishment of such men may perhaps be that they are left to themselves, — as they believe so is unto them. Reason can never fathom the depths of God's wisdom, or understand all His ways; and therefore, day by day, God's wisdom seems more shallow, His ways more foolish. Truth hides itself from them. *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?\** And thus it is that the Rationalistic School go on so rapidly from one denial of Scripture to another; while to those whose reason grasps Divine truth as it is presented to them, this truth daily discloses itself in its depth and clearness: they are taught by the Spirit of truth which came down from heaven. Surely the scriptural, the reasonable attitude of man is to stand with ever-attentive ear and willing heart, to hear and realise what the Lord God will say concerning him by the mouth of His Son, and by His Apostles.

Nor do I think that the form of the Bible in any way excludes the notion of its being an outer law to us, though you seem to lay so much stress on it, when you say †, that the Bible is hindered by its form from exercising a despotism over us. You assert that there are no precise statements of faith or precepts, and that,

\* Jer. viii. 9.

† Page 45.

consequently, it is only to us a suggestive history, an example; and of course you insist upon this point, because, according to your analogy, the authority of the example properly belongs to the former stage of man, and is only an accident of his imperfectly developed maturity. But as this rests merely on your groundless analogy, it is needless to discuss this notion here; especially as you say afterwards that its historical form was not its essence. But I wish to call attention to what you say in the same sentence: that had the Bible been drawn up in "*precise statements of faith, or detailed precepts of conduct, we should have had no alternative but either permanent subjection to an outer law, or loss of the highest instrument of self-education.*"\* On this point I am willing to let the issue rest, and happily, you can hardly refuse to have your theory tested by what you yourself have laid down as a test. Let any one, then, open his Bible, and see whether it is designed to be merely a record of passing events, whether he can or cannot find in it precise statements of faith, and detailed precepts of conduct: if he can, then your own conclusion must be drawn, that it is, and must be, a permanent outer law, or (if you choose to accept the other alternative), that man has not the instruments for self-education. Were I disposed to cavil at every word, I might say that there was a slight inaccuracy in using the word despotism, as applied to a book, for it is not the book which exercises a despotism, but the will or authority which the book conveys to us. But I will suppose that you mean that the Bible is, by its form, hindered from conveying the will of God to us as an absolute law or, as you call it, a despotism. Now

\* Page 44.



the form of the Bible cannot hinder God's will from being a despotism if it is one. The Bible sets forth God's will partly in the form of examples which we are to follow, partly in the form of exhortations to which we should do well to listen, partly, and mostly, in the form of commands we are to obey, and of doctrines we are to believe. But even if it contains, as you would have it, only the two former modes of assuring us of God's will, the form in which the will is conveyed would not make it less a despotism. In fact it is only absolute power which can venture to substitute examples and exhortations for direct and exact commands without endangering the obedience which it requires. If a tyrant sends some one to his people and says, do "exactly as you see this my messenger do," he is not the less a tyrant for that. The wink or nod of a despot, his slightest hint, his gentlest word, if it is enough to indicate his tyrannical will, does not destroy the despotism of that will. The Roman emperor, however affable might be the words which conveyed to a senator the advice or invitation to put an end to his life, was not the less a tyrant than if he had sent an executioner with a warrant signed and sealed. Supposing then that God's will had been a despotism, the form of the Bible would not alter its character: but no despotism is claimed for the Bible, nor can I assent to your using this word, as though it was this from which you are trying to defend the Scriptures, and thus, as in your use of the word dogmatism, to enlist on your side a popular feeling. Three elements are required to make up a despotism, absolute or despotic power, unlawful authority, and unwilling obedience; and it is perfectly possible that the first of these may exist without either of the others; for the authority may be absolute, and yet legitimate,

and the conscience recognising legitimate power may willingly obey: and this would not be a despotism though it might issue despotic commands, that is, commands which it does not allow to be questioned or disobeyed; for there is the same analogous difference between despotism and despotic authority, as between dogmatism and dogmatic statements, or as between the tyranny and monarchy of Greek politics. The great king exercised despotic power: the patriarchal authority was despotic: and yet neither the one nor the other was a despotism: so that which is conveyed to us in the Bible, though proceeding from absolute power and leaving us no choice between obedience and the penalties of disobedience, is not a despotism. The Bible sets forth the will of God as of the rightful Lord of all that is in heaven and earth, animate and inanimate, spiritual and material, and the voices of reason and nature, superstition and philosophy, all bear witness to the legitimacy of the claim: it expresses the true and rightful relation between God and man, the Potter and the clay. Nor yet is the absolute character of this power, nor the absolute claim of its commands to obedience, disproved by this obedience being in the true Christian the willing obedience of love not in consequence of the natural will having graciously ceased to rebel against the will of God, but in consequence of his receiving the Spirit of God to dwell in him, teaching him his reasonable service in the commands, or at least impressing him with undoubting confidence in the wisdom and love of Him who gave them, teaching him not only to say "I must," but to feel "he ought" to obey.

I think you deserve some credit for the adroit way in which you seize adverse points and turn them to your

own purpose, and even gain some credit with those who are opposed to your theory for the words in which you state the fact which you explain away. Thus it has been found easy to form a collection of passages which seem, at first sight, to state valuable truths. I believe this arises from these truths being really recognised by yourself, and embodied in your practice; but standing in the way of the theory, which had for the time, at least, taken possession of you. This is very striking in what you say of the Bible, in parts of which there is much with which sound believers can sympathise. The fact that Protestant Christendom had taken its stand upon the Bible was too patent for denial, and so you make it out that this is because it contains neither precise faith nor precise precept, and hence was exactly what Christendom needed in her career towards your rationalistic abandonment of certainty in Scripture truth. Now the fact is, as I have before said, that Christendom took its stand on the Bible as against the human developments of Rome on the one hand, and of rationalism and scepticism on the other, not as affording a ground for inaccuracy or uncertainty; and, as I have also before pointed out, whatever errors Christendom has fallen into in the use of the Bible, have arisen from the supposing one or more passages of Scripture to be so precise and exclusively binding, as to refuse to allow even Scripture itself to explain them or modify them;—each party thinks itself to be a possessor of truth on precise grounds of Scripture. It is true indeed that an uncharitable notion is gaining ground that error is not dangerous; I say *uncharitable* because it leads into danger without being able to avert it; but that is quite a different thing from doing away, as you propose, with the

possibility of error, by holding that practically there is no sufficiently clear revelation on the subject to enable us to ascertain truth.

Again, the authority which the Bible exercises over the minds of men was too patent for denial, and therefore you assume that, by virtue of private judgment, this authority is only an auxiliary to the inner law of conscience; an instructor which may enlighten, but cannot claim obedience, just as a lawyer might refer to some legal light of old times: not as an indisputable setting forth of that will, which, though unprofitable servants, we must obey in all things.

Another way of meeting the same fact, strengthened by the tendency towards primitive practices, as connected with Scripture, is the representing this clinging to Scripture as a backward step, an instance of the working of your analogy — a *recurrence* of humanity in its yet imperfectly developed maturity to the law of youth and childhood; that is, according to your analogy, first, to the position of those whom our Saviour taught, and secondly, to that state of heathendom: as these, in the earlier part of your Essay, answer respectively to the youth and childhood of the world; whereas, in reality, it is merely the recognition of Scripture being the immutable, ever present, ever enduring law to all who are within hearing of its voice.

Again, your assertion of the tendency of Christendom towards modifying Scripture is at variance with the fact that the sanction of Scripture is still held as decisive by most Christians, and that the number of those whom your view would not strike as a novelty is but small. This is turned aside by the assertion that it is but a proof of the reality of the progress of your toleration, and a condition of its final success; and you graciously

add, that "this perverted use of the Bible,"\* as the supreme sanction of human action and thought, has not been without its great advantages, and is to be viewed almost as part of the counsels of God, to ensure the final triumph of the principle which is practically to make the Bible, in course of due time, a thing of the past, though possibly useful for present purposes. Your exhortation to the study of Scripture, as a paramount duty, I shall consider presently. It was with great disappointment that I found that the statements with which, at first sight, I could so fully sympathise, were so completely altered in their meaning by the context in which they stand.

Another instance of this occurs in what you lay down as to the relations between Scripture and conscience. The way in which you try to reconcile—what I suspect to be your own private rule of life—the authority which Christendom assigns to Scripture with the authority which you wish to give to conscience, reminds me of the story of an ingenious vicar, who proposed, most equitably, to place the management of the parish school in the hands of three trustees, of whom he was to be one. All questions were to be decided by the majority, but the majority was always to be held to be on the side on which the vicar voted. His colleagues might enlighten him, and evoke his vote, but never override it; and strange to say, they refused to be parties to the arrangement.

You lay down that the use of Scripture is to evoke conscience.† I think what you afterwards say, that Scripture is an instructor‡, approaches nearer to the truth, though very far short of it; but I do not see how

\* Page 47.

† Page 44.

‡ Page 47.

the two notions are reconcilable ; for to evoke is to call out what we already have, to instruct is to give what we have not. Nor do I see how Scripture, as you view it, can be said to instruct conscience, for instruction implies authority on the one side, and submission on the other, at least in the points to which the instruction refers. A strange sort of instruction, truly, where the disciple is ever above his master, where the disciple is to interpret his master's teaching to meet his own views on the subject, to have the right to declare that his master's words mean one thing, when they evidently mean another, without the master being allowed to override the interpretation.

But to let this pass. If by Scripture evoking conscience, you could be supposed to mean nothing more than that conscience is set in motion by the Bible, that the Bible cannot produce belief without first producing an act of at least passive acquiescence on the part of the speculative intellect, nor yet moral action without producing an act of volition on the part of the moral faculty, your statement is indisputable. But if you mean, as you must mean, that the act of volition so produced is essentially independent of Scripture, and is carried out into action simply because it is directed by our moral sense ; that it gets its essential being and authority from reason or conscience ; that it is an act of obedience *to a law not imposed on us by another power, but by our own enlightened will\** ; then, as it seems to me, it is an assumption of the point to be proved, viz. that the sense of right vaguely expressed in the moral view of the natural man is superior to and of more intrinsic authority than the will of God, clearly expressed in His

\* Page 35.

written word ; and this, I think, you will have some difficulty in proving. The will of God must surely be confessed to be, in every point of view, superior to the will of man ; and you hold that the adoption of a scriptural precept by the conscience removes it from the sphere of God's will, and makes that which was before divine, simply and purely human ; that its essential character, that whence it gets its force and power\*, is destroyed, and the will of the conscience is to be substituted instead thereof : that is, where two wills coalesce, the greater is to be lost in the less ; the less clear to interpret the more clear, by virtue of some supposed privilege belonging to the former ; the action to be held to be independent of the law, which, being essentially divine, must in all reason overrule that which is essentially human. It is true that the act is made, by the incorporation of the outer law into the inner man, more an action of the moral man than it would have otherwise been, but that does not make it, either in theory or practice, less an act of obedience to the outer law, if the agent is, by his position and relation to a higher power, bound to obedience ; and I think that most persons who use the prayer, "*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,*" will recognise obedience to be a primary duty of man, as well as a primary element of whatever perfection he may claim.

It seems to me that in theory the will of the conscience is suspended as an independent authority where the higher and more direct revelation speaks : and then its chief function is to apprehend God's will therein conveyed to it †, and recognising a wisdom higher than its own, a will superior to all human will, to adopt it as

\* Page 16.

† See Essay, page 31: "The office of the Spirit," &c.

the rule of its own operations, which it may not vary nor diverge from ; and further, to apply honestly this rule of action to the circumstances of the case, so as to prevent the flesh evading, under false pretences of conscience, the Bible precept. But I do not see how the operations of the conscience in adopting and applying, interfere with the supreme authority of Scripture, as enjoining and directing. The judge who applies the law does not make it, nor does the authority of the judgment derive its essential force from the judge's application of the law. It seems to me that you allow as much as this, when in another part of your Essay you say that the life and power of all morality must be derived from the Scripture.\*

I think, moreover, that if we look into the practical character of human action, we shall see that it bears witness against your notion of the Bible precepts being merged in the will of conscience. Your rule, if it exists at all, must exist as an universal rule, for it must arise not from the character of the command, but from the supposed privilege of conscience. Let us take the case of a man who, in reading the Bible, finds some duty enforced upon him for the immediate performance of which circumstances give an opportunity. Is not the act of volition produced in the mind by the direct command of Scripture, and carried out without any further interference on the part of the conscience than the recognising it as a duty by virtue of the direct precept given ? and do you pretend to say that a pious man looks upon it as done upon the sanction of his natural moral sense of right, and not as an act of obedience to the outer command he has just been read-



ing?—that he looks upon it as indirectly and secondarily agreeable to the will of God, and to his own duty in relation to God, by reason of its consonance with his own will, and not directly and primarily by virtue of its consonance with the will of God, made known to him in Scripture?

But we will take another case, which perhaps may be that which you are thinking of, though if so, it is of such rare occurrence as to be an exception and not a rule: the case of a man whose inner will is as much conformed to the will of God as may be. In proportion as he is instructed by the Holy Spirit putting into his mind holy desires and good counsels, he will not ordinarily need the Bible as his instructor, for the command will come to him, so to say, direct. I think it is impossible to suppose a more favourable case for your theory than this. Now will the Bible be to such a man a dead letter? will he make no use of it? will it be to him as if it had never been written, now that its function of instructor has passed away? I think not. I think the Bible will ever be present to him as giving him the will of God, the outer law of his new man; as giving to his desires and counsels a character which cannot belong to them when they are viewed in their relation to himself and his own will. Nor will his Spiritualised conscience be able to fix its eyes on itself alone; it will be led instinctively to God in heaven, and before it returns to earth, will dwell on that which God has been pleased to give us as a medium of communication between Himself and His creatures; as something proceeding from Him, the *one Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy*\*; and who will save and destroy, as we are or

\* James iv. 12.

are not obedient, not to our consciences, but to His will.

Again, will he not need from time to time to look into himself, and see whether he can believe that his heart can with truth not condemn him? And how will he ascertain this? His humility, which I need not say is an essential element of his spiritual-mindedness, will forbid his trusting to his own convictions, or measuring himself by himself, taking his own will on trust merely, as its own witness. He will feel that the Spirit must bear witness with his spirit. Where will he find the witness of the Spirit, but in the daily actions of his daily life? And with what are these actions to be measured? With his own moral sense — with his own enlightened will? But these are the very things which are to be tested and tried by his actions; he can refer to nothing, and does refer to nothing but the written word, which contains in various forms God's commandments; and thus Scripture is confessed to be *de facto*, as well as *de jure*, the law which fixes his duty, distinct from and without his own enlightened will. And yet you would have us believe that, in such a moral state, Scripture only plays the part of humbly suggesting to conscience that which is binding on it only if conscience assents to it, and which conscience may get rid of, or modify according to its own views of its own enlightenment.

On the contrary, I should be inclined to say that, practically, in whatever proportion any one fancies himself independent of the outer law of Scripture, in that proportion he will need all the more to refer to it, if he wishes to escape the mistakes into which self-confidence will lead him; and of course in proportion as he does not feel himself independent of it, in that

same degree will he continually refer to it. The true view on the subject is given us in Scripture: "*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*"\*

And again, such a man will perpetually need a reference to Scripture in deciding on moral action. For other desires and aims will of necessity rise up from the old man; and these will sometimes present themselves to him in a shape, in which even an enlightened will may be disposed to accept them. Our Saviour has taught us how such temptations may best be met, by a distinct and immediate reference to the outer law of God's written word.

And when I try to realise to myself what you really mean by Scripture evoking conscience, it seems to be difficult to see how it can do so without presenting itself as declaratory of God's revealed will, and man's revealed duty. It must evoke conscience by putting before it points of duty,—things to be done. Does Scripture represent these as duties owing to a man's own will or the will of God? to the inner law of the inner man, or to the outer law of God? The conscience evoked may adopt the duties as laws for itself, but they come from without and not from within. It seems to me that if you retain the Bible to evoke conscience, you must allow that it pronounces authoritatively on what conscience must do, on pain of the penalties of disobedience. A Mahometan might use Scripture to evoke conscience without thereby acknowledging a law, be-

\* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

cause the Bible expresses to him not the will of God, but only a human collection of truth and wisdom. I do not see how a Christian can.

It is not of course meant that there is a definite reference to some particular precept of Scripture for every thing which is planned or done; neither was there in heathen action any such definite reference to the natural law: but as in the latter, the conscientious heathen always felt himself to be acting under the general sanction of natural religion, and frequently with definite reference to some particular precept thereof; so the conscientious Christian always feels himself to be acting under the general authority of Scripture, and, as occasion requires, with definite reference to some particular commandment.

Nor is it meant that nothing is to be undertaken but what Scripture definitely enjoins; for there are many points of daily life on which Scripture does not speak, but leaves us to the guidance of common sense or instinct: but in these matters neither is conscience called into play by the natural man. They are popularly termed things indifferent, and in heathen times, when there was no law but conscience, they really were so. Now, for the most part, they are not, or ought not to be so; for though the Bible has given us no directions for each particular, yet it has given us new laws utterly unknown in natural religion, applying to all things, such as "Do all to the glory of God," or "Love thy neighbour as thyself,"—whereby an act indifferent in itself may, by the mode of doing it, or in its results, become right or wrong; so that even here are points which, seeming at first sight to be out of the range of Scripture, do in reality confirm my position, that it is the law of Scripture and not the law of conscience which gives to Christian acts

their Christian bearing, and their true aspect of good or evil.

Now had you been contented to stop here, so that the practical result of your exaggerated views on conscience had been to impress upon us the paramount importance of being thoroughly leavened with Scripture as an instructor; of making God's will our will; of allowing our inner man to be clothed upon by the Spirit; I should have been glad to have expressed my sympathy with so true a lesson, even though founded on an erroneous view of the relations between conscience and Scripture. It would have been sufficient to have pointed out and guarded against the error, wrong indeed in itself and its bearing on your theory of the function of Scripture, but still without any great danger of practical evil resulting from it; for you acknowledge that the evoking of conscience by Scripture is a fact of which some at least are unconscious; and I suspect this is the case with so large a majority, that general experience of the facts of man's inner being would practically have corrected the error. Men would not practically have required to be warned against this use of Scripture, because they would have found it impossible; and thus there would have been no great harm beyond the error itself.

But the whole matter is altered when you go on to assert the independence, supremacy, and infallibility of conscience, in a fashion which is not only erroneous in itself, but points out the tendency of all you say on the subject. I agree with you in thinking that conscience and Scripture should never differ—that conscience should be identical with Scripture; but I differ *toto cælo* from the method you propose of producing this harmony between them; for you lay it down

that\*, when conscience and Scripture appear to differ, it is a point of piety to assume that Scripture is to be interpreted to suit conscience; and this without exception, limitation, or explanation. A principle more untrue, or more practically dangerous, it is, to my mind, impossible to conceive. It is really terrible to think of the practical results which this short sentence may bring forth in the hearts of those who receive it as true. It is impossible to conceive that you hold the principle as you have stated it; but there it is in your Essay, sent forth to the world, in plain words, on its message of evil, and therefore it cannot be passed by, even though it may be doubted whether you really mean what you say. It follows, moreover, immediately on the assertion that the Bible is never to override conscience, as if it was an addition to, and explanation of, something not sufficiently clear in itself; and it is followed shortly after by the position that it can never be a duty to disobey conscience, though it seems it may be a duty to disobey, at any rate, the obvious, and, if necessary, the real meaning of Scripture. The doctrine then of the unlimited supremacy, independence, infallibility of conscience must be held to be the teaching of your Essay.

I must again observe that you use the word conscience rather vaguely, as if it were the faculty that took cognisance of doctrines as well as of moral principles and duties; but, as I think the question of its doctrinal infallibility may be more fitly considered in connection with the sufficiency and supremacy of reason in spiritual things, I shall defer it for the present, and consider your position only as applying to the moral faculty; merely observing that, whatever may be thought

as to the possibility or probability of error (infidelity for instance) being relieved from the penalties attached to it in Scripture, on the plea of such opinions being held under the conviction of their being true, yet that a conscientious impression (supposing it to deserve the name), cannot make human error into divine truth, nor can it give to error the power possessed by truth, of purifying and strengthening man's moral being.

This, however, immediately suggests an argument against the infallibility of conscience, which it may be well to notice at once. If conscience is infallible, how is it that error is not detected by it, as error, and rejected? how is it that infidelity and sometimes even immorality are sanctioned by what calls itself conscience, and defended by moralists who arrogate to themselves no small wisdom, on the plea of being conscientiously viewed as right or allowable? If conscience is infallible to us, it must be so to all men, and at all times; how is it then that acknowledged error is supposed to be sanctioned by the consciences of enlightened and advanced men? Either infidelity is no error, or conscience is not infallible.

But it may be said this is perverted conscience. But still it is conscience, by the very plea. And if conscience can be thus perverted and warped, what becomes of its infallibility? How came this wise man to be misled? It may be said, by wrong reason. Is wrong reason then identical with conscience? If so, conscience cannot be to us infallible; and I believe this is in part the true account of the matter. There is a twin brother of conscience, or Right Reason, called Wrong Reason, and the latter perpetually assumes the form and voice and functions of the former: so that conscience, even if in itself

infallible, is not so to us, because we cannot distinguish between the two; and hence the necessity of Scripture as an outer law and supreme arbiter. And if there is a perverted conscience (which is admitted by the attributing error to it), how are we to know when it is right? You may say that conscience is always right because it is infallible—why so? I doubt whether you can give any answer, except because it is always right.

It is the voice of God to us, you may say, and therefore infallible. True enough, the voice of God must be infallible in itself, wherever it speaks. It may, however, lose that infallibility in us, in consequence of the rabble rout of passions, desires, &c., to say nothing of the confusion produced by wrong reason: and if that which we take for it is always the infallible voice of God, how is it that idolatry, and the like, have been sanctioned by men's moral sense, and positive sins made into positive duties with its full approbation, if not by its direct influence?

Conscience, if not in its information and enlightenment, must, at least in its powers, be the same now as ever it was. If it is infallible now, how is it that it was not so in heathen times, when the greatest crimes and sins were done in obedience to it? How was it that conscience made a duty of cruelty and revenge?

Again, if conscience was infallible, why was Revelation given even as an instructor? The judge who needs information on certain points of law is not held to be any great authority, even in points to which his ignorance does not extend. If conscience was not infallible without revelation, neither can it be so with it.

And what is the warrant, after all, for this infallibility of conscience? Evidence is against it; witness the



errors that have been in the name of conscience committed: take the wars of the Albigenses, or the persecutions of Philip the Second. The opinion of men is against it; witness their attributing to conscience, actions that they think wrong, and excusing them on the plea of their proceeding from conscience. What is the warrant for infallibility of conscience? Its own sentence that it is infallible? And why is this sentence to be received as true? Because conscience is infallible?

It may strike some one at first sight that such crimes as the wars of the Albigenses and Philip the Second's persecutions did not proceed from conscience, but from a wrong view of religious duty, a misrepresentation of Scripture. True; but I believe if ever men felt persuaded that they were doing God a service, it was those who, with the cross on their shields, massacred men, women, and children, in what they called a holy war. If ever there was a man who acted, politically at least, on conscience without regard to results, it was Philip the Second. But the fact is, these wrong views were not really derived from Scripture, but, like all superstitions, persecutions, heresies, and the like, arose from men building, by the help of their natural views of right and wrong, on the foundation of Scripture, that which is not scriptural; from their modifying or interpreting Scripture to suit their own views, or the spirit or necessities of the times, without Scripture being really an outer law to them: allowing their own views of religious duty to override Scripture, just as you propose to do in another direction.

Nor, again, can the conscience pretend to infallibility or supremacy when viewed as a storehouse of great moral principles of right and wrong. For the natural reason, though undoubtedly endowed with a power of forming,

or at least receiving, such principles, yet did, nevertheless, obtain in very few, if any, minds to anything like a certain or clear conviction upon them; for besides the perplexities which arose from the contradictions of practical life, and their ignorance of the general scheme of Divine government, conscience was liable to be warped in its judgments by a variety of influences internal and external; so that Aristotle, whose authority in the facts of heathen morality you will fully acknowledge, says they were so variable and vague that they were held by some to be merely conventional and not natural and independent. He was obliged to confess, that while he held them to have an independent existence in themselves, they were, as held by men, vague and uncertain; and it is necessary to distinguish between the instincts of individual moral sense, or the deductions of individual moral reason, and that general collection of principles which, existing more or less in every individual, though more or less in each individual mutilated or neglected, yet do, as a whole, viewed abstractedly, form the moral code of natural religion, and are, as far as they go, definite and certain. The heathens were so sensible of the necessity of some outer law to sustain or correct their moral convictions, that they tried to find out the outer law of the Divine will in all sorts of ways,—by omens, divinations, oracles, and the like,—all of which may perhaps seem silly enough to us, but were serious matters to them, inasmuch as they pretended or were supposed to supply an outer law, and to give them intimations of truth and right for which they could not sufficiently rely on their inner impressions; and they are valuable to us in signifying to us the judgment of those who had tried the experiment of the sufficiency and infallibility of mere conscience.

Where these general principles of natural religion are laid down in Scripture, they must be received by conscience as supplying that acknowledged need of an outer law, which without Scripture was not really within man's reach. And now when that which kings and princes and wise men desired in vain has been given us by a special revelation, we are told it is our wisdom and our duty to return to the state from which they in vain struggled to escape!

But let us, for the sake of argument, suppose a natural conscience stored with as clear a perception and as firm a conviction of natural right and wrong as man can form, both in its principles and details. Of course, as far as it embodies and possesses these true principles it will be so far identical with the revealed word of God; but if it is in these points found to differ from Scripture, it is as probable that the difference should have arisen from the conscience having, from some cause or other, misapprehended or misinterpreted natural religion, as from its having misapprehended or misinterpreted Scripture. But is natural right and wrong co-extensive with revealed right and wrong? Natural religion does not enjoin love for enemies, or forgiveness of injuries; conscience here differs from Scripture. Is the pious man to hold that these are not scriptural virtues because he cannot find them in his conscience, and to explain away the passages embodying them? Are there no duties which flesh and blood hath not revealed unto us, but our Father which is in heaven? \* Scripture too reveals to us new relations of which the moral sense has for the most part no cognisance; such as, first, our relations to God, as bound to

\* St. Matt. xvi. 17.

love and serve Him and do all to His glory; secondly, in relation to man, to love him as ourselves, and do unto all men as we would they should do unto us. Now these higher relations and these higher duties do not contradict or deny the duties of the natural man, but suspend them occasionally, just as the lesser moral duties are not abrogated but suspended by the higher. Thus the love of country, or even the love of parents, may be suspended in certain cases by the higher law of love to God and Christ—“*If any man love father or mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me.*” Or, to take an instance from Scripture, the practical duty of following Christ, totally unrecognised even in its spirit by natural religion, overrode the promptings of moral sense implied in the words, “*Let me go and bury my father.*” Do you mean to say that these duties and calls, higher than natural law, which occur oftener in most men’s lives than they are aware of, are to be explained away, as well as the passages in Scripture which enforce them?

I have already considered the case of a conscience instructed and enlightened by Scripture; nor do I, on further consideration on the subject, see any reason to doubt what I there asserted, that conscience is bound to regard Scripture as an outer law, and that the authority for, and moral character of, the action arise from its consonance with the outer will of God, and not from the inner voice of man’s self.

And, moreover, there is a wide difference between a conscience being really instructed and enlightened by Scripture, and its having had the opportunities of being so.

Indeed, I do not see, according to your theory, how it is possible for Scripture to instruct or enlighten con-

science; for the man must start with the principles of natural conscience; and if Scripture is merely to be the echo of these principles and views, how can the conscience receive anything but what it has already got? If Scripture puts before him some new principle from which his conscience differs, it is a matter of piety to explain it away, and to work out of Scripture some meaning which may suit it better. Any improvement which can be given by Scripture to conscience, must be given by conscience viewing Scripture as something above and beyond itself, and not merely its own echo.

When we turn to conscience, not merely as embodying true principles, but as directing every-day action, your dogma seems still more at variance even with reason. Surely you cannot maintain that, when a man has persuaded himself that such or such a line of conduct is his duty, he is to explain away any passage, however plain, which stands in his way. For my own part I do not believe that you do mean this; but there stands the passage in your Essay, with nothing at all in your words to limit it. A sentence, which many men would be only too glad to use as a cloak of maliciousness, should have been most carefully worded and defined and limited, even supposing there is any sense in which it is true.

It seems to me, however, that it is easy to conceive a case where it is a duty to override the practical voice of conscience by Scripture. If, on reference to Scripture, we have reason to think that conscience has misconceived the line of duty, then surely we should be acting contrary to our duty in following conscience rather than Scripture. It is quite possible for a man to have completely made up his mind on grounds of

conscience to a certain line of conduct, and suddenly to have brought before him, either by his memory or some friend, some passage of Scripture hitherto overlooked, and which forbids his acting as his conscience had directed him. Or again, suppose a man whose conscience, on some plea or other, evades some moral duty. The man shall be pious on the whole, but yet mistaken in this; and there are thousands such. When such a man opens his Bible and finds this moral duty unmistakably enjoined, what is he to do? Would it not in these cases be a plain matter of wisdom and duty to override conscience by Scripture, even though at the moment he cannot see the exact moral bearings of the Scripture command? Would a pious or wise man trust to his own views of right, or to God's express command? Would the wrong act done in obedience to conscience be right? and the right action done in obedience to Scripture be wrong? When a duty comes to you speaking in its own name, is it to be obeyed? and when it comes to you in God's name, to be suspected and refused?

There has been but one man whose conscience was wholly free from the bias of affections, interests, desires, aims, opinions; while your theory presupposes that conscience always judges right; and perhaps you will say that the conscience you are speaking of is a right judging conscience; but there is no such limitation, nor is this the lesson which your words will convey to those among your readers who are willing to profit by the licence which, in form at least, they give to the evasion of Scripture. Further, it may fairly be asked, how is a man to judge whether his conscience is right? By public opinion? Surely this can be no rule. Or is a man's conscience right if he thinks it to be so? But the man who has adopted a wrong view of duty is just as

convinced of his view being right as the man whose view really is so. We see instances of it every day ; your rule practically applied authorises such a man to go on his evil way rejoicing, and to compel Scripture to speak the language of his mistaken conscience.

And this is still more apparent, when we view conscience in what may be called its permissive function : where it has to decide on what it is allowable for a man to do. There is nothing in which men's consciences are so lax : for the spirit of self-indulgence and the dislike of restraint make them feel God's commandments grievous to them. Can we believe that when a man has found out some plea of conscience for tasting of the forbidden fruit, the passage in Scripture which forbids it, is quietly to be got rid of by a new interpretation ?

Even the most mistaken conscience can find a show of reason, and sometimes even piety, to support itself withal. There is a law of the flesh which reason embodies into a code, as well as a law of the mind, and the rules of this code present themselves as the voice of natural reason. If you remove the voice of Scripture from its supreme control in matters of morality, what chance can such a man have ? His fleshly reason has perverted his moral sense, and he may fairly urge that his moral sense is as good as that of others, or that, at least according to your view, it is a sure guide to him ; and as for Scripture, he finds that a man of no small authority has laid it down that where Scripture appears to differ from his own convictions of right, it is merely a misinterpretation.

I think you have somewhat confused between conscience and conscientiousness. It is most true that a man ought to act upon his convictions ; and had you said that when a man, in whatever station of life, had

honestly ascertained what his duty to man and God really was, he was bound to carry it out without fear of consequences to himself, or thinking of his private interests and feelings, even though the probable or even certain results would be the bringing the vengeance of the world upon his head : loss of good name, or of friends, or what is almost harder still to bear, failure in life, or even death itself, then you would have my heartiest sympathy, and I would pray to God that, should I be thus tried, I might have strength for the trial. But this is very different from saying that a man is at once to take it for granted that his convictions are right, though he has reason to think that Scripture speaks differently ; to take it for granted that Scripture means something different from that which it seems to mean. The acting upon conviction is one principle of right action ; the other is that these convictions should be formed, corrected, and tested by the highest standard we have ; and that standard is Scripture. There is a certain degree of respect felt for one who acts upon conviction, even when wrong ; first because he is complying with one of the principles of right action, and next because it implies the existence of a certain degree of moral courage ; but we must not allow respect and admiration to dazzle our eyes, so as to make us try to do that which we cannot do, turn wrong into right, or right into wrong. For any one even to seem to tell men that their opinions are true if they are sincere, and their convictions right if they are acted upon, is to lead them away from truth and morality.

Not that I mean to say that in every case a man's interpretation of Scripture is to override his conscience ; this would be an error in the other extreme ; and it is one of the instruments by which self-love often



contrives to evade a plain duty : it is perhaps true that in judging of human interpretation, if an interpretation contradicts not merely our own individual views of right and wrong (for these are easily perverted), but the generally received axioms which are known under the name of natural religion, then the chances are that this interpretation is wrong. But even here conscience must take care that the matter is such as is legitimately within her province, and next she must consult Scripture in other passages to see that there is no higher duty or relation laid down which suspends for the time the force of the natural axiom in question.

My own impression is that when a pious man finds that his own views of right and wrong, either speculative or practical, differ either from the plain words, or some general doctrine, or even from an interpretation of Scripture which has received the sanction of early Christians or of good and faithful men, he will pause and examine his own conscience with a just suspicion, that somehow or other he is not looking at the matter from a Scriptural and Christian, but only from a natural and heathen point of view ; he will, until Scripturally persuaded to the contrary, believe it to be his duty and wisdom to receive the view of Scripture, rather than to force his own view on Scripture : he will think, I confess it seems to me rightly, that Scripture is to mould his conscience, and not his conscience Scripture ; he will remember that God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

And does he hereby do violence to his obligations as a moral being ? We must briefly consider what those obligations are. First, a man has obligations to himself—his own conscience, as a rational human being ; secondly, he has obligations to others as a member of society ;

thirdly, he has obligations to God, as his creature, and as a Christian ; and of course the greater of these includes the less. If he acts in obedience to his obligation to God, he cannot be acting in violation of his obligation to himself ; and therefore, if he acts in obedience to Scripture, he cannot be violating his proper duty ; and, indeed, I do not know any greater exercise of self-denial than when a man, having settled convictions of what he ought to do, postpones them, not, indeed, to expediency, but to the real permanent good of his brethren or the Church, or yields them up in simple faith to the plain words of God. And if he does not do so, he seems to me to be neglecting duties for which he will have to give account. Saul, for instance, doubtless thought he was acting in accordance with the natural principles of mercy when he spared Agag, whom the Lord had doomed ; he doubtless thought that he was acting on true convictions of his religious and national duty, when he spared the best of the spoil for the people to make a sacrifice to God : but he was told that what ought to have governed his action, as being his simple duty, was obedience to the plain command of God.

It is true that, in a well-ordered mind, all these obligations will coincide : but it will be by virtue, not of the supremacy of the lower over the higher duty, but of a proper subordination being maintained between them. The action, when done, will represent a duty done to God, in obedience to His outer law, and not as a duty done to the man's inner self. " We are not our own ; we are bought with a price : wherefore we are to glorify (not ourselves, but) God in our bodies and spirits, which are God's."

Nor, as it seems to me, does any claim, which conscience has to be considered the voice of God in us, in

any way supersede the claim of Scripture to be considered as having a paramount authority over it. The Gentiles, who had the law written on their hearts, were held to be in less direct communication, so to speak, with God, than the Jews who had His written oracles. If there be two divine voices, one indirectly so, and almost by a metaphor, as being that which, in consequence of our natural views of right and wrong, and of our instruction by Scripture, we believe to be what God Himself would have told us, had He spoken to us personally; the other the direct voice of God the Spirit, speaking in human language by the Prophets, or the Son, or His Apostles; then surely, in all reason, the direct ought to have more authority than the indirect; especially when this latter is seen by the very conditions of its existence, as well as by experience, to be very vague and shifting.

It may be urged that the interpretation of Scripture is vague and shifting, but it is not true of all Scripture; for we must remember, that in declaring most points of doctrine, and in almost all matters of duty, Scripture needs no interpretation; it can, as far as the words go, have but one meaning, and that meaning it must have. And even where a vague interpretation is forced upon Scripture, it is much less vague than the natural law; for natural law is subject to uncertainty, not only in consequence of its voice being wrongly understood, but also in consequence of its depending for its very existence on natural religion being truly reflected in the broken mirror of human reason. It is uncertain in two ways: first, in itself; and next, by wrong interpretation. Scripture is only vague by the erroneous interpretations of man. This is one very great objection to your theory, that it would make Scripture more uncertain by

making it possible to have as many true meanings as there are consciences or varieties of conscience. You allow that in the early Church, when Christians were of one mind, and all spoke the same thing, the Bible spoke most certainly and definitely to them; that they were able to get from it precise statements of truth when they needed them; and it is a very strange argument that because reason has succeeded by its self-willed interpretations in making Scripture less definite and certain to some men, that therefore Scripture is to be subjected still further to the same truth-destroying power.

The relations, then, between Conscience and Scripture, I hold to be, that conscience is bound to accept, in matters both of faith and practice, whatever Scripture teaches without hesitation and without reserve. Scripture is to conscience the ground, the instructor in, and sanction of, all speculative and practical truths, in which she consciously operates, and as you yourself say, *the office of the spirit is in fact to guide into truth, not to give truth.\** Conscience plays the administrative and executive part to Scripture. Scripture needs no sanction from conscience, though a rightly ordered conscience will perforce offer her allegiance to Scripture, or violate not only her rightful duty, but the law of her being. Conscience continually and invariably needs the sanction of Scripture, even where the duties are such as might have resulted from natural religion; first, because natural religion, being only an inchoate and imperfect law, both in itself and from the incapacity of man to discern its real teaching, there is no security that natural religion, or the mere human views of even the best of men on natural religion,

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shall enable conscience for certain to judge, or act rightly. We need a more authoritative and clear expression of right and wrong to assure us infallibly that we are right, and such a guide is Scripture fairly used: and hence the principles of natural religion are either reordained in Scripture, or sometimes modified as need may be, as in the case of an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth, which is a dictum, not only of the Mosaic law, but also of heathen morality. Secondly, because human actions, if done only in the name and authority and sanction of conscience, as far as they are, and in consequence of their being, merely human and rational, are after all but phases of concealed imperfection and suppressed evil. And hence virtuous actions can be ascribed to God only figuratively, because His whole being and nature are without any admixture of evil. Our acts of duty to God, the very best we can offer, what are they in themselves but the service of most unprofitable servants, performed against the evil will, and amid the evil murmurings of many parts of our nature? What are they but the temporary suspension of the law of the flesh and love of the world, which are at enmity with God? Our acts of duty to our neighbour, what are they but temporary negation of and victory over that selfishness which is in itself sin? Forgiveness of injuries, what is it but the temporary negation and victory over those passions which lead some men to murder? Purity, when consciously present, what is it but the victory over and negation of the lusts of the flesh? Control of the temper or the tongue, what is it but a victory over and negation of wrath? Every act of virtue, when exercised in the name of conscience alone, having nothing beyond itself to hallow it, bears witness to evil as a condition and element of its existence. But when

conscience has gained the habit of looking beyond and out of itself to Scripture, not merely for guidance but for approval and ratification, viewing actions which it approves of, not only as approved by itself, but as consonant to the will of God and as the work of the Spirit, then there is attached to the action, after conscience has, so to say, completed and done with it, a perfection of a distinct and independent character, without any admixture of evil; namely, compliance with and obedience to the will of God. And the pleasure attached to the consciousness of that action does not, to the Christian, arise from the contemplation of the act itself, nor yet from its consonance with conscience, but from the feeling and knowing, on the authority of Scripture, that it is in harmony with the will of the ever blessed God, done in obedience to Him, for His love and for His glory. And this I believe to constitute the difference between the heathen faculty of conscience and the Christian faculty of faith. Conscience begins and ends in itself and man; faith begins and ends in the Scriptures and God. And herein consists the real difference in moral and religious value between the good acts of a Christian and the good acts of a heathen, seemingly exactly similar. It is needless to say that if conscience is to refer her actions to herself as a final authority and standard, and to use the written word of God only as teaching her before hand, and not as conveying a crowning sanction after the act is done, this difference no longer exists: we return to heathendom. Scripture must be to Christians the Omega as well as the Alpha of all religious convictions and actions.

Another point to be considered is that one who habitually refers the actions dictated by conscience to Scripture after they are done, is less likely to be misled

by his conscience afterwards, more likely to keep the mirror clear and unsullied; for allow what degree of perfection you will to conscience as a human faculty; suppose it further to be instructed by Scripture, yet conscience, in consequence of being only a human faculty, is liable to human error and open to human weakness; it continually needs refreshing and correcting, not only in its premisses but its conclusions; and this can only be done by a continual reference to God's written word as an outer law. For a most dangerous temptation to even the higher order of conscience is, that it may be misled even by virtues. Thus zeal for religious truth may make persecution seem even a duty, and the error pass unnoticed. But if after every act of persecution so sanctioned by conscience a distinct reference had been made to Scripture, the discrepancy between an act of persecution and God's will would have been more likely to be perceived.

It is not at all meant to deny that our minds may by study and exercise be developed so as to be more able to penetrate into the meaning and teaching of the Bible. It need not be said that there are men even in our own age who bring to bear on Scriptural studies faculties of mind which excel those of other men, as well by their own strength and self-development as by the proper use of the labours of those who have gone before; nor need it be said that it is with profit alike to the cause of truth and to their own self-edification: but then it must be remembered that this is, above all others, a special study, not only from the sacred character of the subject but from its peculiar nature. We must, in all reason, accept implicitly data which would in other matters be legitimate points of doubt and investigation, much that it is equally impossible to solve or to doubt.

Moreover, many of the ordinary rules of investigation and evidence must be suspended; and of course, where these are not applicable, then the more familiar a man's mind is with them, the more they are worked up into secondary laws of his thinking faculty, the less fit he is for the study where they are either wholly or partially excluded. And hence it is that scientific men so often, alas! fall into error\*; not merely because science puffs them up, but because the reasoning rules of science are in spiritual questions so often abrogated or modified. But still there have been and are men who, by the blessing of God on their faculties and endeavours, have seen farther and clearer than others: and it is the opinions and convictions of these very men that you would throw aside. Is it nothing to you that the points of faith which you would in these last days modify on merely rationalistic grounds, either by a strained interpretation or arbitrary mutilation of Scripture, have been intellectually and spiritually received after a thorough and patient study of Scripture, in its evidences as well as of its contents, by men before whose powers of mind the seven Essayists (*pace vestra dixerim viri confidentissimi*) giants as they are in our puny day, are dwarfed into nonentities, or, to use a metaphor of your own, are as shadows projected by the inner light shining on the dark problems around? Is it nothing to you that to men of the deepest faith and most shining piety in our own Church, these doctrines have been the instructors of their youth, the guides of their manhood, the comfort of their death-bed? If your volume is to teach us that these men are wrong and you are right, one is almost tempted to say, *Malim errare cum istis, quam vobiscum dubitare.*

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The general question of the supremacy and sufficiency of reason in spiritual matters, on which, I need not say, the abstract truth and practical correctness of your proposed way of treating Scripture ultimately depend, will, I think, be best considered, and the whole matter summed up, if we examine into the proper functions of reason in spiritual things, and see what it can and what it may do; for, as I said, those who differ from you do not wish to exclude reason from religion, but only to confine it to its proper functions.

Under natural religion, reason has the faculty of perceiving in the book of nature regular operations and movements: and these from analogy and experience imply a creator and an agent, so that man was able by his natural faculties to arrive at the notion of a God: and further, as reason discerned acts of power, wisdom, and goodness in the world, the further notion of a God of wisdom and power and goodness was or might have been realised by reason, and the not doing so was a sinful misuse or neglect of the powers which God had given man. And even in these days there is no higher function of reason than to trace out the finger of God in His works, and to set forth the secret wonders of His Almighty skill. But when reason tried to discover that whereof it had no experience, and of which it could find no test, such as the real being and counsels of the Divinity, nothing can have been more vague than its guesses. The natural reason discovered with certainty little more than His power and Godhead, and hence Christ is said to have revealed God because He revealed these mysteries in their practical relation to man. They were to the heathen insoluble problems, and reason's vain strivings to discover them, gave rise to error in an infinity of forms; to Polytheism, Idolatry,

Pantheism, the worship of the moon and stars: and even those who, arguing from the soul as the highest part of man's nature, conceived that the Deity was immaterial, yet fell very far short of a true conception of His dealings with man. Hence, of course, whatever notions of the Divine Being a heathen may form by reason must give way to God's own clear revelations of Himself; and even where they agree with these, they are, as confirmed by Scripture, matter of certain knowledge to us which they never could have been if only guessed at by reason.

Reason too had the power of evolving or receiving the general principles of right and wrong, so as to be a guide to man; and here conscience, or the moral reason, was the highest and best guide that man could have, to which he was obliged to trust, because there was no higher law to which he could appeal, no higher sanction than the hesitating accents of self-approbation or the fickle voice of praise and blame.

In revealed religion the functions of reason with regard to Scripture are, first, receptive: apprehending and storing up in the treasure house of thought, God's revelations of Himself, His nature, attributes, counsels, will, dealings, His scheme of salvation,—our peculiar destinies, duties, and hopes in that scheme. These, by the very hypothesis of revealed religion, cannot be, and are not, discoverable by reason; and if reason is to act as a religious faculty, it has not the choice of receiving them or not. Reason cannot prove or disprove them. Here reason is neither sufficient nor supreme: it is not sufficient, for it never could discover them by itself; it is not supreme, because it must perpetually defer to them as primary facts and laws of the subject-matter in hand, which reason cannot alter or deny. These are not true

in themselves because reason has recognised them, for they exist as independent facts; nor are they true to us because reason has recognised them, but because it has recognised them as declarations coming from God, in matters beyond our ken. Reason contradicts herself when she sets herself up to judge which of these she will receive as consonant or which she will not receive as dissonant to herself.

Reason, however, has to receive not only God's revelations of Himself and His counsels for us, but also His commands. First, because they proceed directly and indisputably from the Supreme Authority, who has the right to our obedience: and secondly, because they will lead to our highest good; the second of these is binding on us by virtue of the sentence of reason herself, and in this point of view they might be disobeyed without the violation of any obligation beyond that of rational self-love. But in the former and higher point of view, they are binding on us by something out of reason. Reason, indeed, tells us, that it is necessary to obey God's precepts, but even this Scripture tells us afresh in God's own name and words. And the precepts themselves thus set forth by the higher authority, cannot be supposed to depend upon the lower. We are bound to obey them, not because man's servant, reason, tells us it is fitting, but because man's Lord and Master commands us. And hence the written word is not merely the instructor and enlightener of reason, but even where reason might have spoken, Scripture speaks in her stead, though still through her, but with decision and authority; and where reason through her blindness and weakness goes astray, Scripture not only leads her by the hand, but is imposed upon her as an outer law, which she may not disregard or transgress.

For, place reason and Scripture side by side, one the voice of man, the other the voice of God: the results of one, vague guesses after laws for moral conduct, of the other the unerring precepts of Him to whom all our duty is owing, and who will in the day of account decide whether we have walked right, or whether we have walked wrong. Compare the obligation of a principle of antiquity with the obligation with which revelation has clothed it. Take, for instance, *Honour thy father and mother*. Was not this formerly rather a matter of sentiment and feeling than of plain duty? Contrast the weak apprehensions of the philosophic Greek on this point, with the decided convictions of the Christian. Where men are trusting to reason as a court of ultimate appeal, they must needs be continually stumbling in twilight; when men go to Scripture, they walk with a firm step as in noon-day. I doubt whether even your rationalising moralist, when he finds himself perplexed with his own notions of duty, does not involuntarily refer to Scripture to decide the point, and thus acknowledge in practice the blessing which he is ungrateful enough to deny in words.

But besides this receptive faculty and subsidiary to it, reason has also an interpretative function, whereby our minds get at the meaning of the words of Scripture and the doctrines they convey: and here reason is neither arbitrary nor supreme. She is not arbitrary, because she may not on her own warrant alone evade the plain meaning of any passage of Scripture. In those passages which convey to us the insoluble problems, whether they are insoluble in themselves, or from their supposed contradiction to other parts of Scripture, she may not plead that the plain sense of the words is contrary to her abstract conceptions

or experience, because her abstract conceptions belong to a sort of being different in kind from that to which the statements refer; and her experience can be no evidence in a case in which she cannot possibly have had any. In fact, her plea that the thing stated is beyond her comprehension, is at once a bar to any endeavour to evade words which convey such statement. And in miracles too, the objections of reason are equally powerless. For these are *ex hypothesi* contrary to what natural reason would have expected, and therefore, if reason did not stumble at them, they would not be the miracles they profess to be. It is impossible for reason without a self-contradiction to say either, that Omniscient wisdom may not think fit to suspend the laws or alter the course of nature or to give new faculties to any of His creatures, or that Omnipotence cannot do it. She must either deny Omniscience or Omnipotence. Of course it is not meant to say that the mere human forms of expression are to be literally insisted upon when they contradict a known universal law, such as the sun standing still, or the sun rising and setting; but any miraculous interference with the course of time expressed by these or similar forms, do, for the reasons given above, hold good against any laws of science whatever, not merely in spite of, but in accordance with their professed supernatural character; and it is to be remarked that the probability of the Divine Power suspending or altering the general course of things was recognised by the instinct and common sense and reason of ancient times, and that the most incredible stories obtained credence without any authority to support them. So far was the supernatural character of these supposed facts from furnishing any *à priori* improbability against

them, that they owed the place which they held in popular belief, and even in philosophic minds, to their supernatural character. Of course their resting on no sufficient authority places them in an entirely different category from the Scripture miracles; but still they serve to show how little any *à priori* improbability or impossibility against that exhibition of Divine Power is recognised by natural religion or natural piety; and surely you will not discredit the witnesses to whose supreme authority you are willing to hand over the conduct of man.

Nor again is her plea more tenable when it takes the ground of these plain expressions being contrary to other equally plain words in other parts of Scripture; for such statements are not to be held to be false or modified into nothing, but to be regarded as parts of one great mysterious whole, each the complement of the other, so that both are to be held as true and entire.\* The fact is, that between the passages which reveal to us the Trinity in Unity, or free will and predestination, there is no real contradiction: there is no passage in Scripture which says God is not one, nor yet any passage which says the Persons of the Godhead are not three; there is not any passage which says man has not free will, nor any passage which says that there is no predestinating will of God. If there were any such really contradictory statements, the objection might possibly be good for something. How much, I will not now stop to consider; but the contradiction, such as it is, is not contained in Scripture, but is invented by reason itself, and in a subject matter in which she cannot have that sufficient acquaintance with the relations in which the

\* Perhaps I may be permitted to refer to my Bampton Lectures, in which I endeavour to demonstrate and illustrate this position.

different parts of God's will stand to each other, which would justify her judging of the possibility or impossibility of any given point. This is expressed in our Saviour's words, *What is impossible with man is possible with God*. Reason is not supreme in such points, because, whatever notions of God's nature or will she may profess to have deduced from Scripture on scientific or metaphysical grounds, there lies an appeal from her to the words of Scripture, as either plain in themselves, or as they were received and understood before those scientific notions came into the mind of man. And I think that no person who knows what truth is, would in such a matter, take the words of reason without testing it by Scripture statements.

Again, in the soluble problems, that is, those which are within reason's comprehension, though not discoverable by her, relating to God's counsels, such as, God so loved the world that he gave His Son to die for it, or the eternal punishment of sinners, reason may not *suo arbitrio*, modify or explain away the doctrine conveyed by the words. Nor again, in the Scripture narrative, may she object to any part of it that it is not what would have been expected if Scripture had not told us; she may not argue as to its incompatibility with her notions of God's attributes, for before she can do so, she must prove her notions to be correct, which she can only do from Scripture, and she may not accept and reject Scripture in the same breath. She may not explain away the plain doctrine or the plain statement in order to make the Scripture representation of what God is, or has done, agree with her notions of what God should be or should have done. It is perfectly true that the idea of God excludes all evil or imperfection, and hence we may argue to a

certainty that God cannot be unjust, and therefore no act which is clearly His doing can be unjust; but we cannot argue positively as to the nature or operations of His justice, because "*His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts: His judgments are far above, out of our sight;*" and to explain away a plainly stated fact because reason thinks it would have been in a human sense unjust, is a step many degrees beyond her powers and knowledge. There are two remarkable illustrations of this in Scripture itself; one is in Rom. iii., where the Jew is urging upon St. Paul the argument that if he has by his unbelief furthered God's purpose, it would be unjust that he should be punished as a sinner. The argument seems in a human sense reasonable enough; St. Paul answers it, not by yielding the point that he is free from sin, but simply by a short and emphatic denial of the impossibility of God being unjust. The other is in Rom. ix., where the doctrine of election and judicial blindness followed by punishment is open to objection on the score of its being in a human sense unjust. St. Paul insists upon the doctrine, and denying in the same emphatic words as before the possibility of God being unjust, insists on His absolute power and will as giving His dealings with man a different character from that which might have marked the actions of men between themselves.

Nor again, does it make any difference if it is pleaded that reason is now enlightened by Scripture. For reason now differs nothing from natural reason, except in what she has learnt from Scripture, and she is bound to take from Scripture what it teaches; it is illogical to plead the enlightenment of Scripture as making her more enlightened than Scripture, or object to anything



in Scripture, that it is what she could not have believed had not Scripture told us.

Nor, again, in precepts, may reason do away with, or modify, a plain passage on natural grounds alone ; nor at all, unless from the context, or the facts of the case as given in Scripture, or from the practice of the early Church, it can be shown to be of temporary obligation, such as the not eating of blood ; or optional, as the community of goods ; or to have been repealed by the same authority which gave it, as the command to those who are to preach the word to take nothing with them ; or modified in its application, as, "Swear not at all." We may, nay, as rational beings, we must, use our reason in ascertaining God's will ; but it must always be in strict subordination, and with an appeal, to the words actually written ; it must be in strict subordination to the particular passages, and the general tenor of the scheme of salvation ; for, without taking cognisance of these, reason is letting go the clues which are to guide her.

It is of no avail to say that men who have professed to take those clues have arrived at different views of truth : for first, the very fact of so many who profess to be seeking for truth having thus taken Scripture as an authority, is no small proof of the rightful claim of Scripture to the position which is thus conceded her ; and, next, the professing to take these clues, and really taking them are very different things. If we look into these opposite conclusions, and trace the reasoning whereby they were arrived at, I am very much mistaken if we shall not be able to discern, in one or other of them, that reason has contrived to work into the argument some rational principle of interpretation which, having only an apparent, and not a real scriptural foundation,

brought in error with it; or there may be a fallacy in the reasoning itself; for, of course, where reason legitimately enters into religious questions, her operations must be legitimately carried on. We do not exclude reason; we assert we must reason rightly where we have any right to reason at all; but we say that, if we are to reason rightly in spiritual things, our reason must in every step take Scripture for her guide, by Scripture test every step, and to Scripture refer the final conclusion; and if the perpetual test or the final reference is not agreeable to Scripture, then it shows that somehow or other, either in the understanding of words, or the assumption of premisses, or the process of argument, we have gone wrong, and we have to begin again; or, what is safer, defer to the judgment of others, who, having reasoned more wisely than ourselves, can stand the test of being compared with Scripture.

Another function of reason is explicative or didactic, which works out by the natural faculties of thought and reasoning the various secondary particulars and details which Scripture leaves us to make out for ourselves. Such, for instance, are—the place which, in the scheme of salvation, is held by a doctrine (such as justification by faith), or an event (as our Saviour's temptation), or a precept (as, “Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”); their meaning for us, God's object in them, their bearing on our hearts and lives:—in fact, such treatment of Scripture as we find in sermons, or what are called practical commentaries; and here, of course, the range of reason is freer and wider, inasmuch as the practical meaning and bearing of Scripture is so manifold and so inexhaustible, that it may be truly represented in a vast and ever

fresh variety of lights, for the use and edification of different tempers and classes.\* “*Therefore, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*” Novelty, here, does not bear witness against itself; but even here reason must subordinate herself to Scripture, for she may not transgress or alter the obvious meaning of the passage, nor give it an application which is at variance with any part of scriptural faith or practice.

Reason, again, is what may be called an administrative function, whereby it applies the doctrines and precepts of Scripture to our practical life, so that they become daily sources of thought, and rules of action: and of course the function is most perfectly exercised when the outward law is transferred to the inner man; so that, having true principles for moral conduct, we take a scriptural, and not a sensual view of the circumstances of life, and at the same time refer these circumstances to the principle which is in Scripture to decide our choice and rule of action. The relation between the inner spiritual law thus created, and the outer spiritual law which is contained in Scripture, of which it is but the reflection, has been fully treated of before. I wish, however, to guard against the supposition which I think I discern in your Essay, that when a passage of Scripture is, by the aid of this faculty, applied in its spirit to some present circumstances, it comes to us on the sanction of reason only. It seems to me that if from a parable we evolve a doctrine or a duty, or if taking the spirit of an injunction, which has in its letter become

\* Matt. xiii. 52.

obsolete, we recognise in it a duty corresponding in our days to that which was enjoined in days of old, these present themselves to us as much in God's name as ever; for the very theory of it is that the spirit is contained and intended in the letter, and if so we must take it as it was given; so that if the original command contained in the letter was an outer law to men of old, the new command contained in the spirit is so to us, the only difference is that the administrative faculty operates less directly in the one case than in the other. I will only further add that it cannot exist in its full authority, without perpetual reference to Scripture, for it must depend on its being assured of itself. The moment any degree of doubt crosses the mind, as to whether this is the creation of our own natural faculties, or the work of the Spirit within us, in that degree it loses its authority; our aims become uncertain, our counsels hesitating; and the only way whereby we can assure ourselves of the Spirit being within us, is by reference to the Scripture as an outer law, and testing the results of the inner law on our hearts and lives by it; and I think it probable, that when you have been thinking and speaking of man's general independence of the outer law, you have had this exceptional stage, this phase of spiritualised reason, in your mind. It is true that it does, at first sight, and for the most part, have a seemingly independent action, inasmuch as for the most part it acts instinctively, applying without an effort, mysteries, doctrines, and precepts, to the daily thought and life; so that the moral notion has in it less of reason, and more of instinct. The new man acts without any definite reference to reason or Scripture, not so much from a rational conviction, as from a religious impulse; but every now and then, as if to remind even such an one of his

allegiance to Scripture and his dependence on the Holy Spirit, errors in this instinctive application, or doubts of the applicability of some precept arise, which compel the directive or judicial conscience to go to Scripture for more safe guidance and more true judgment in the difficult conjuncture.

Another faculty of reason in religious matters I have left to the last, because in one of its phases it is comparatively rarely needed by most men. This is the critical faculty, whereby we ascertain and decide what God's written word is, and what are the contents of the sacred volume. In the earlier ages of Christianity this faculty was much needed, because then there were many false gospels, pretending to the same authority as the inspired writings, without possessing the same grounds; hence St. John tells his readers \* to *try the Spirits whether they be of God*; and that whereby this trial was to be carried on was this critical faculty. Now we do not need this faculty for this purpose, because the work was, by God's infinite mercy, done to our hands. Our reformers needed it, though in a less degree than the early Church, because the Church of Rome had, for its own purposes, added certain books to the Canon acknowledged by those who were able to judge with a certainty which later ages cannot possibly pretend to. And our reformers exercised this faculty, not by speculations on the internal evidences of the several books, but by deferring directly to the original judgment of the Church. But to deny the authenticity of any whole books of Scripture on the ground of their containing statements of doctrine or facts which are

\* 1 John iv. 1.

contrary to what reason would have expected, or what science thinks she discerns in the natural world, is a simple assuming the question to be proved. If the authenticity and genuineness of the books are sufficiently proved, it cannot be disproved by their contents being confessedly such as under the ordinary circumstances of life, would not have been held true.

Another most important function of this critical faculty is, the testing the doctrines or practices of ourselves and others by comparing them with Scripture; whether these practices or doctrines be those which we have received from others to hold, or whether they have suggested themselves to our own minds, or whether they are any of those novelties which are continually springing up even in the land where the good seed has been sown, as the natural result of the important place which religion must hold in our social and moral being, and from the confidence and impatience of control which is an innate principle of human nature. This is not only the right but the duty of every Christian man, according to his abilities and opportunities; and even in the points of primitive belief it is well for a man to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him, beyond their having been handed down to him from the primitive Church, even though this may completely content himself. But reason is here so far from being supreme, that those who are satisfied with it, and consult it alone on matters of belief or duty, will find themselves continually involved in greater perplexities and contradictions than those from which their reason promised to relieve them. The verdict of reason can only be binding on us as creatures of God, as far as it conveys to our apprehension that which God would have us to be, and to teach us this without doubt was the

avowed purpose of the written revelation, and to this therefore reason must defer. Any independent verdict of reason, however consonant it may be to reason, nay, however logically correct, nay, however much it may recommend itself to rational views of Scripture, that is, to Scripture placed in a wrong light, and interpreted from a wrong point of view, is very likely, if not tested by Scripture, nay, almost certain, to lead us wrong; for the premisses on which reason's conclusion is founded, however undoubtedly true in mere human affairs, may be, and frequently are overthrown by facts of God's counsels which are revealed to us as certain in Scripture; or a conclusion of reason, though correct both in form and matter, may express a connection between subject and predicate, which, holding good invariably in scientific conclusions or human morality, does not hold good in spiritual matters. In fact, religious speculations, if Scripture be taken away, are like an inchoate science, in which, in consequence of its laws and phenomena not being sufficiently ascertained, the conclusions of reason must be merely probable, and a test depending on such a standard is more likely to be wrong than right. Thus, if we are called upon to test the doctrine of human irresponsibility, we might be led by our reason to admit it, on the grounds that God's predestinating power leaves us without choice. Of course, this conclusion, tested by Scripture, falls to the ground instantly. So, again, from the considerations and reasonings upon God's infinite mercy men are readily induced to suppose the impossibility of any being lost. In fact, it was from the deductions of reason, partially instructed by, but not ultimately appealing to, Scripture as a test and a standard, that all the errors and heresies of modern and ancient times arose and found supporters. And

again, suppose our religious reasoning leads us to a right conclusion, which we find to be Scriptural, and therefore accept, reason indeed may have furnished us with a probability of its being true, but we finally accept it, not on the ground that it is the result of sound reason, but that it is Scriptural. Thus the doctrine of indulgences is not wrong in a rational point of view, but because there is no trace of it in Scripture. So, again, the supposed influence of the Virgin over her blessed Son we reject, not because it is not, humanly speaking, consonant to reason; for, admitting the conscious existence of departed souls with the Lord, it is not unreasonable, and is defended by the Romanists on the ground of its reasonableness; but because it is contrary to the plain language and general tenor of Scripture. So, again, we receive the resurrection of the body, not because reason, taking certain Scriptural statements as its basis, deduces its truth logically, far less because we can confirm this view by analogies and the like, but simply because there are plain unmistakable words of Scripture, which admit neither of reasoning nor of doubt.

There is yet another possible function of this critical faculty, to which your Essay would at present assign the chief place. It consists in seeing how far, or by what methods, Scripture may be made a new book to us; how far it may be forced to speak as it did not speak to those to whom it was first written; how far Scripture may be made to contradict itself; how far a new light may be thrown upon it by the supposed or actual discoveries of Science in other subject matters; how far, by the application of tests which hold good in natural things, the aspect of religious truth and the meaning of Scripture may be made to harmonise with the spirit



of the age. Your views on this point I shall consider presently. Suffice it now to say, that neither in this function is reason sufficient or supreme. It is not sufficient, because, if it sets about making Scripture contradict itself, it must in great measure assume the truth of one part of Scripture to prove another part false; and then another set of critics may reverse the process, and disputing the truth, which you assume as disproving some other, disprove this by assuming the truth of that which you dispute. Or, if it tries to modify and interpret Scripture on purely rational grounds, it must assume that, for some cause or other, reason has greater powers and rights to judge of spiritual things than it had formerly; the value of which assumption may be seen by the fact that you have nothing better to depend upon than the supposed maturity of your supposed Colossus. In fact, when these reasonings come to be tested, I suspect it will be shown that nothing can be more uncertain and arbitrary; moreover, it can never go beyond a probability, which, considering the circumstances, might more properly be called an improbability. Nor is it supreme; its decisions cannot claim to be received without appeal: Scripture has a far greater claim to decide on its own contents. No conclusion can be drawn against a portion of Scripture, which is contrary to the evidence of other Scripture or a known fact in God's counsels as revealed in Scripture, or, when not defined by some particular passage, to the general tenor of the Gospel scheme: these must be admitted as data to which your critical faculty must bow. For instance, if your conclusions on one passage had led you to doubt a fact which was asserted unequivocally in another passage, then the latter proves that the critical faculty was wrong in the other, and it is a reckless

argument which tries to sweep away by bare assertion one witness after another. Your critical faculty is limited, or more properly speaking, it is entirely hindered, by the very simple rule that you must not assume as foundations of argument, impossibilities which can be supposed to be such only on the assumption of your conclusions being true: which are not recognised impossibilities in Scripture. As if a person were to try to discredit the sacred record of our Saviour's life by reason of its containing accounts of miracles which are impossible only on the assumption of that Divine record being false. Nor may it assume as impossibilities those things which seem to us to be so only from our own ignorance, or from our experience not furnishing any analogies in our own days: such as the length of life in patriarchal times: nor yet may it ground itself on any records which are less likely, or even not more likely, to be true, than those which are disputed; and I am very much mistaken if your critical faculty, if it operate at all, will not be found to have taken some such undue assumption as the basis of its operations.

You speak of this exercise of the critical faculty as a necessity of the age\*, and in doing so you bring against modern science a heavy accusation which its advocates have hitherto strenuously denied, that it must, whether we will or no, have this rationalistic influence on spiritual matters. I should not have brought such an accusation, because I still believe that the two are distinct, and may be kept distinct: religion not interfering in those physical matters, which properly belong to the domain of science; science not

\* Page 44.

interfering in those spiritual matters which are properly within the domain of revelation. But if I am mistaken, and if this people, and especially the Church of which you are a minister, are to choose between an un mutilated Bible, un mutilated creeds, un mutilated faith, and science, I believe the choice would soon be made. But the tone of your observation betrays your inability to establish your position on the grounds of reason; it pleads that necessity leaves us no choice; in other words, the presence of the enemy is a reason for throwing down our defences; a spirit of tampering with truth is a reason why it should be surrendered to its mercy. To me it seems that the very ground you assign for modifying our ancient faith will furnish to all thoughtful men a most cogent reason of clinging all the more closely to those formulas which, being originally devised for its preservation against error, have by God's blessing preserved it. If there is one duty more sacred than another, a duty owed to God, to Christ, to the Holy Ghost, to our Church, to our country, to mankind, to our children and children's children, it surely is that we do not suffer the strong man of the age to spoil our house.

I must again guard against being supposed to impugn the right of any one who chooses to sift the formal faith of the Church. In the case of a clergyman, perhaps, it should be done before he takes orders, because then he pledges himself to uphold that which his Church upholds. This is a matter for yourself. As for men in general, I am not inclined to think it a matter of duty or even of wisdom, on the part of any mind, to harbour doubts where they are not forced upon it. I am inclined to think that St. Paul would make it for most men rather a matter of duty to hold fast the faith delivered, than to doubt and sift it. To

some minds it may come as their peculiar temptation, but a wavering mind is not the highest phase of the spiritual intellect. But I am very far from denying the right of any man to do it if he pleases, or sometimes the duty of doing it: but I think that there are conditions attached to this privilege; first, that there be reasonable and scriptural grounds to doubt the faith, beyond the fact of its being handed down from the earliest Christians, or of its not suiting the popular tone or the scientific spirit of the age; next, that the standard to which the verifying faculty refers any creed or formularies, be not either these popular views or scientific formularies, but the Bible; thirdly, that where in this estimate of creeds or formularies reason and Scripture differ, the latter, not the former, is to be held paramount,—that the rational view be in this judgment subordinate to Scripture and not the scriptural view to reason. Against any other system of verification or any alteration founded on any other system, we protest as alike unscriptural and illogical. Nor may it be forgotten that the contents of Scripture, which you profess thus to criticise, were defined clearly, and not the less clearly for being defined logically according to Scripture, by the early Church, at different periods, in the three creeds. You allow these to have been then necessary and true; necessary to meet error, though you seem to object to the very qualities which enable them to do so: namely, their being defined with logical though with no unscriptural preciseness. If they were necessary then, what has made them unnecessary now? For though the particular errors which they were framed to meet have passed away, yet their scriptural preciseness enables them to meet fresh errors as they did those of former ages. Error is multiform, it is

true, and can vary in its attacks on truth, but truth being uniform can always defend itself with the same weapons. Once stated clearly and scripturally, it is laid up in the armoury, ready for all emergencies in all ages; and therefore it was impossible for the Church of the Fathers to teach the truth\* and to clothe it in logical statements merely as opposed to the then prevailing heresies, without doing it for all succeeding time. Your fundamental error here seems to be the notion that truth becomes less true by keeping. You allow that these logical statements embodied the truth then? What has made them less true now? When did they cease to be true? If they were not true at first, then of course their acceptance by generation after generation could not make them so: nay, it would rather add to their falsity; but if true then, their traditional acceptance not only cannot make them not true, but, if anything, it is an additional warrant of their truth. Physical science cannot make them less so, because physical science cannot alter the truth of which they were the expression. If they were false then, physical science might possibly prove them not true; but if they were true then, physical science could not prove them to be false: or if any one accepted the seeming truth which science might bring, he would necessarily be wrong.† I cannot agree with you when you speak of deference to the Early Church as a lingering weakness. It seems to me to be a tower of strength as well to individual faith as to the soundness of theological teaching: one, to give up which would be neither rational nor prudent; to do so would expose the critical faculty to the perpetual peril of judging

\* Page 41.

† Page 45.

wrongly. It is true that it is possible to conceive these truths being clothed in other terms without losing anything of their truth; but, as I have before said, when terms have been for so many ages the acknowledged expression of the faith of Christendom, to modify or abandon them now would virtually be an abandonment of the truth they convey. It is nothing to the purpose to say that generation after generation went wrong on other points not defined by the Early Church; the question is, did they go wrong in these? It is nothing to the purpose to say that Galileo was condemned on pretended Scriptural grounds; no doubt Romish Churchmen committed not only a gross injustice but a gross error; but it was in consequence of their applying Scripture to points to which it did not apply: it was not in consequence of their adhering to the truths contained in the three creeds. Your argument would be this: Because in a certain age of the Church Scripture was erroneously applied to physical subjects, which are, strictly speaking, without the range of Scripture, therefore we are to remove all the landmarks of our faith in Spiritual things which do come within the range of Scripture, and set them up again for ourselves by the aid of our natural faculties.

The second result which your Essay proposes, is Toleration. Now I need not tell you that this notion has more than one meaning, or at least is applied in different ways; and as it is a notion which a person may entirely allow in one sense, and deny it as entirely in another, it is necessary to try to find out which of these you intend to recommend and enforce. Your Essay may gain somewhat of an unfair advantage if, by enlisting our sympathies in favour of what is generally admitted and approved, it prevents our detecting

and dissenting from that which is really intended. In fact, throughout the Essay, I see symptoms of an equivocal use of words, arising probably in part from the indistinctness of your own view, in part from hasty writing; for I should be very sorry to think of you as not being far too honest a man to use a word dishonestly; but the practical effect of it is, that a word conveys a dangerous suggestion to those who are willing to receive it in that sense, while the attempt to counteract the evil may be met by the assertion, that this was not the meaning which it was intended to convey. It is necessary, therefore, to get a clear notion of what you mean by toleration, and how far, and in what sense, it may be admitted as a sound principle.

If you mean by toleration the permission for every man to adopt whatever forms of belief he pleases, without persecution or hindrance, toleration is, I think, no less a principle of Scripture than of common sense. In this sense I think toleration is increasing as a fact, though not as a principle. I believe that if any one of the parties in the Church, or the denominations out of it, were to get the upper hand, it would at once forbid all other forms, or even private opinions; it would insist on the most rigorous conformity, not only to its public confession, but its private Shibboleths, just as was the case in the seventeenth century. We know that the pilgrim fathers fled from persecution here to establish it a hundred-fold in America. Even the Romanists are in favour of toleration here; but, if ever a favourable circumstance occurs, the principle of toleration quickly vanishes before the fact of persecution. But still, in the present state of things, toleration in this sense is an admitted and recognised part of our political and religious system.

But if by toleration you mean the theory that any opinion may be true, and consequently none false, it seems to be contrary alike to Scripture and to right reason. It is contrary to Scripture, because the errors (the non-existence of which this sort of toleration, or rather indifferentism, presupposes) are spoken of in Scripture as endangering a man's spiritual life in consequence of their being false, and therefore to suppose them not false and dangerous is contrary to Scripture. It is contrary to right reason, because it is a negation of the truth which Revelation presupposes and sets forth, and therefore a negation of Revelation itself; because if truth is not revealed so that man may know truth from falsehood, if men were obliged to read Scripture as if it were written in a language which had never been a living language, or in the cuneiform character or the symbolical writing of the Indians, so that every one might guess with equal possibility of being right, and equal uncertainty of actually being so, it would in reality be no revelation of truth, but only a suggestion of infinite error; and for any one who believes in Revelation as a fact, thus to destroy its revealing power would be a self-contradiction. But in reality Scripture is singularly precise and definite. There is no doctrine which is not supported by more passages than one; so that, if there is any obscurity or difficulty in one, it is cleared up and interpreted by the others, and in most cases by the whole tenor of the Gospel, as might be expected of the parts of a coexistent and coherent body of truth. The reason why want of precision and certainty is ascribed to any of them is, because it militates against the crotchets of a party, or the irrational voice of reason in some particular point; for the general sentence of reason would be, that nothing



in God's Revelation is to be doubted by men because they do not see its relation to the whole scheme of God's counsels. And it is especially observable that the various denominations and parties hold those passages of Scripture which favour their peculiar opinions to be precise and definite enough, while they try to explain away those passages which are opposed to them, thus showing whence the supposed want of preciseness arises.

And this is owing to the lack of another and very different sort of toleration, viz. the acquiescence in the insolubility of certain spiritual problems revealed in Scripture, with the result, not of abandoning, or explaining away\*, or passing by *sub silentio* any one of these problems, but of seeing that all may coexist coordinately as parts of a great whole, though they may be to human reason and notions opposed. If this is what you mean †, I fully agree with you that this should be the result of a reverential study of Scripture, and that is in complete harmony with right reason. And it is in this sense that I hold the Church of England to be a broad Church; for there is no Church so tolerant in this sense as our own is, and has been from the time when Romish corruptions were cast off. She accepts all as coexistent, without attempting to explain how they coexist, or insisting on one to the exclusion of others. Her courts are open to all comers. The erroneous opinions, which you are bound to drive away, arise, for the most part, either from the denial of some fundamental doctrine as being insoluble in itself, or from the exaggeration of some one doctrine to the exclusion of the coordinate one, in consequence of the

\* Page 34, line 10: "But the greatest," &c.

† Page 43, line 18: "It implies," &c.

assumed impossibility of their being true together; such as predestination and free will—Trinity and Unity, and the like. This toleration is doubtless a duty, because it is founded on the fact of these insoluble problems being revealed by God, and, therefore, to be received without solution, or any attempt to solve them.

But, perhaps, your real meaning is contained in the words "*toleration is the very opposite of dogmatism,*"\* though even the latter word is so vague, that it is not so clear what the exact opposite may be. It seems to me that in your use of the word *dogmatism* to denote the opposite of the principle you are advocating, you betray, by an unconscious artifice to enlist the popular feeling on your side, a suspicion that your theory would not recommend itself to the religious world; and this not quite correctly, for you use dogmatism as if it was equivalent to *dogmatic statement* or preciseness, which it is very far from being. The words *dogmatism* and *dogmatic statements* are not identical; it is one of the cases in which the meaning of two cognate words do not correspond to their etymological relation, in consequence of usage having affixed an almost technical sense to one, if not both. A dogmatic statement is a precise statement in precise terms of a precise truth, and, as such, must exist in every science in exact proportion to its claims to be a science: but every such statement is not dogmatism; nay, it may rather be said that most dogmatic statements are not dogmatism. Dogmatism is a peculiar habit of thought or tone of argument. In a church it is the setting up, on her own authority, points of belief and practice, which rest, or profess to rest, on no warrant beyond this authority. In an

\* Page 43.

individual, it is the setting up his own (frequently paradoxical) opinions on points of religion, or morality, or science, or art, or politics, or anything else on his own *ipse dixit*, and treating those who differ from him with a haughty assumption of their inferiority, as if he alone saw where others were blind, so that his opinion was practically a final decision on the matter. In an argument, dogmatism is the briefly assuming as indisputable, truths, or idiosyncratic principles, or disputed facts, without condescending to waste words in explanation or support of them. The essence of dogmatism is self-confidence, or rather self-conceit, and consequently is generally accompanied by more or less of error; while a dogmatic statement, inasmuch as its preciseness arises from the desire to conform to the exact conditions of its being true, savours rather of humility. All sciences must have dogmatic statements, while a science that indulges in dogmatism, whether of principles or facts, loses its claim to be considered a science. It is true, again, that dogmatism is very often precise, for it hopes that brevity will be mistaken for truth, and absence of proof for a sign of strength. Sometimes, however, it is diffuse, where the dogmatism is rather a result of the school to which the writer belongs than of the tone of his own mind: I might instance your own Essay, which, without being accurate or precise, lays down the law as to principles and facts, with a self-confidence which, I must say, is very unlike yourself. I must gladly remark, however, that it is wholly free from that tone of what I must call impudent sneering, which makes some of the other Essays as offensive to good taste and good feeling, as they are to sound truth.

The merely holding, then, precise statements of doctrine or rules for practice is not dogmatism; for instance,

our own Church invariably refers to Scripture, as interpreted by the teaching of the early Church, as the ground for that which we hold and teach, and, therefore, though dogmatic is not dogmatic, if I may use such a word; while on the other hand the whole of popular, as well as scientific rationalism is strongly marked by dogmatism, both in its theoretical character and the tone it uses.

But though I do not admit that you get a correct notion of toleration by opposing it to dogmatism, yet I think I shall not be far wrong if I say that what you mean by toleration, is the affixing a less precise meaning to the doctrines of Scripture, than that in which they are held by our own, as they were by the early Church \*, so that all opinions † may be held to be possibly true: to shade off little by little the precise teaching of the Bible, till it becomes merely a neutral tint: *to modify and soften the severity of the principles which its early manhood (i. e. the early Christians) had elevated into statements of immutable truth*, and of which the faith of Christendom is made up; in other words, the toleration of error under the guise which such error has so often tried to put on, of a more enlightened and scientific criticism of Scripture and interpretation of its contents.

Now before we can, on this showing, give up what we have received to hold, we must know whence this supposed enlightenment comes. There has been no direct

\* Page 43: "*Its tendency is to modify the early dogmatism by substituting the spirit for the letter, and practical religion for precise definitions of truth.*" In reality both of these must refer to doctrine, for as to practical duties there is not any room for modification of opinion, for all varieties of theological profession agree pretty much in these, however much individual consciences may differ in their application of them.

† Page 46.

fresh revelation since the Bible. Reason has no power to explain away mysteries or to dispense with commands. If Scripture has stated certain truths clearly and precisely, where does man get the power to take aught from its clearness and preciseness? You are bound to show sufficient cause,—and no such cause can be found in the lapse of time, for truth does not alter with time, and the Gospel, though given in one age, is in all its essential points and in its spirit, intended on the very face of it for all ages. There is not a trace in Scripture of any doctrine being meant to cease, and when you allege the eating of things offered to idols and blood as instances of Apostolic legislation having passed away\*, you must, I should think, be aware that the argument is worth nothing, as it proceeds from accidentals to essentials; and every such argument not only does not tell for you, but does tell against you, inasmuch as if you had any better instances, you would not have adduced these. Nor is there any such cause in the supposed maturity of the colossal man, for this is a mere fanciful analogy. Nor yet on your supposed development of mankind, for that must yet be proved to exist in the degree you suppose before it can be assumed: nor even, were it a reality, would it involve any alteration or modification of the Bible to suit it. Nor yet in any increased power of reason to understand and interpret Scripture better than those who lived in almost Scriptural days;—nor yet in any greater probability of reason judging without a bias towards error, for it is, to say the least, quite as open to bias as ever. The only possible pretext must be that which your Essay really advocates, that it is in the power of any

\* Page 29.

age to form its views of Scripture *ad arbitrium*,—to take of what God has revealed so much as reason, more or less developed, pleases : in other words, that it is the privilege of humanity to alter truth without making it less true ; to admit error, without being wrong, or falling short of that spiritual knowledge, which (under certain moral conditions) becomes faith,—and on this issue I am willing to let the question rest.

There are a variety of doctrines held all together as one body of truth in some parts of Christendom, held separately in other parts, one by one communion, another by another, and so on. Now if you maintain that instead of embodying all these truths, a true profession of faith ought to embody none of them ; that the belief of Christendom is to be so modified as to have as much identity of religious thought and sympathy with those who reject any of them, or explain any of them away, as with those who receive them ; so that practically each man's conscience is to be a Bible, not only to himself but to the Church at large ; then I think that your views, when really understood, will find but little acceptance with the mass either of the educated or uneducated, though it may make shipwreck of the faith of some. I do not think you will get any of the denominations to hold thus loosely the particular point on which their distinctive teaching is based,—nor do I think you will get any real Churchman thus practically to give up, bit by bit, the whole body on which our theology and teaching rests, though you hold out to them as the result thereof, that spiritual truth and religiousness of life \* which in Scripture is promised to humble faith and complete obedience.

\* Page 47.

It seems to me that there is nothing very tempting in your toleration: it is a perpetual process of getting rid of something,—so complete a system of abandonment, that *religious elements are sometimes abandoned, sometimes sacrificed\**; and this character is evidenced by its being hindered by *a fear of following out the plainest conclusions*†, *i. e.* of abandoning something which reason itself would retain:—it arrives at no new truth, unless this is to be regarded as a new truth, that all truths are only possibly true; new it is certainly, but to my humble judgment, not true.

The way in which toleration is to operate is somewhat strange, — it is *to disentangle from dogmatism the really valuable principles and sentiments which have been mixed up and entwined in it*‡; that is to say, the denial of the possibility of arriving at certain truth, or of pronouncing certainly on error, is to disentangle from the theological teaching of the church certain principles and sentiments, which are, I presume, when so set free, to be held as certain and true, *i. e.* toleration is to end in your dogmatism: or is truth to be an ever-vanishing point, an airy nothing, an ever-shifting light? or who is at last to be the judge of what these sentiments and principles are, or how far they may require yet further disentanglement?

But, to be sure, you promise that in the end truth will be more valuable when we get it; but when is this to be? are we thus to give up the substance for the shadow? Nor is, I think, your estimate of the improved value of truth, thus held in suspense for some time, a correct one. It may be true of doubtful theories, but it is not of Scripture truth: for that is only un-

\* Page 43.

† Ibid.

‡ Page 46.

certain to those who adopt your process. Was the opinion of those who first saw the Messiah in the poor carpenter's son\* thus worthless, because it had encountered no opposition? or are the truths of natural religion or the axioms of philosophy worthless,—or what opposition do they meet with?

I should be inclined to say that the danger of tolerating all opinions, in what seems to be your sense of toleration, is, that a truth is valueless to us in exact proportion as our conviction of its truth is weak; and that the holding opposite opinions to be possibly true, must weaken our conviction of truth.

You speak of the study of the Bible as the one which must occupy the attention of thinking men in the present day. The words sound well, and doubtless have awakened in many hearts somewhat of sympathy for a theory which comes to this as its result; in fact, one of your newspaper apologists brought it forward in defence of your Essay—the Bible to be studied above all things—a noble sentiment truly! one which was felt and realised in the days of the giant-saints of old, whose knowledge of religious things was (say what you will), as far above ours as our scientific knowledge is above theirs. They studied the Bible to find therein the helmet of Salvation and the sword of the Spirit, and they found them. The study you speak of and recommend is to be undertaken, not to become more fully possessed by the mystery which was hid from the foundation of the world, but is now revealed to man in Christ; not to be more filled with gratitude, and love, and trust in the Father of our Lord; not the better to mark our Lord as He walks and works on earth; not to catch the



meaning of His soul-inspiring words; not to fix our eyes on the mystery of salvation; not to watch Him as He comes from the grave; not to follow Him as He ascends into Heaven; not the better to gaze on Him on the right hand of God; not the better to catch the inspiration of that Holy Spirit who in Scripture speaks to us as He did to the early Church; not to see if we can form by His help any conceptions of the heavenly mansions; not to ingraft God's commands and promises and threatenings more completely into our moral nature; not to drink more deeply at the fountain of Divine love,—not all or any of these—but—is it possible? to see how much of the word of God we may, by the aid of our natural so-called science, throw a doubt upon; for, mark, it can be only a doubt—you may by science destroy, but you cannot by science reconstruct; to see how much of the Divine mystery we may reasonably discredit; how much we may reasonably pare away from the faith once delivered to the saints; how many pages we may venture to tear from the book which our Saviour and the Apostles recognised as true; what we may make uncertain, what we may cast aside, what is the least we may retain. Is it possible to believe that God has given us our reason for this purpose? Is it possible that He has given us the Bible for this? Is it possible that He means this, in any age, to be the mode in which the Bible is to be studied? Is it possible that when it pleased God to allow us to form sciences, that He meant them to be put to this use of making men in these latter days receive with suspicion the records of His Providence, which His Spirit, speaking to men by His Apostles, and leading them, according to His especial promise, into all truth, caused them to recognise as true? Did He give men insight into things

natural to make them doubt things spiritual? For, recollect the utmost that science can do is to make men doubt parts of the Scripture; it can shake possibly in some minds the credit of the witness, but it cannot add one jot or tittle to the faith of any. It can produce no other witness to the truths on which it may cause men to waver. Cause a man—a weak man, if you will, but still one for whom Christ died—to doubt whether Scripture is true or not, by showing that some insignificant figures of speech are formally contrary to laws of nature, or that the guesses or theories of certain sciences are against statements of Scripture, and you are like to sweep away his faith in truths of which science cannot and dare not say that they are false. Truths, recollect, which affect not his happiness here, but his hereafter; not time, but Eternity.

If it is the result of science that this is to be the proper study of the Bible, then I say science is dearly bought; but I am no enemy to science, quite the reverse. Let the human intellect soar to her highest; let her have her freest range in things within her reach; yea, let her aspire to wing her flight to some things which seem beyond her; let her go down to the depths beneath, and trace, if she can, what it is which keeps the great sea in ever ceaseless motion; let her ascend to the heavens above, and map out the heavenly countries, and tell us if she can the number of the stars; let her search the secret places of this star we tread and live in, and mark, if she can, the throes of mother earth; let her weigh the grain of dust in her balance, and take the mountains in the palm of her hand; and I for one with all my heart and soul bid her God speed, and hold out to her the hand of fellowship; with all my heart and soul will I welcome

her to our Christian companies, and pray her to join with us in telling forth the power and wisdom and goodness of the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth, which the wonders of earth and air and sea have vividly impressed upon her thoughts. I would pray her to tell forth her wonders to the ears of young and old, rich and poor; it is only such words as yours, such a book as that in which your Essay appears, which does dishonour to the name, and throws suspicion on the pursuit of real science. You say it is high treason to the faith to be afraid of any thing that any sciences can do. It can be no high treason against the faith to feel suspicious of that which the Bible warns us against; and, unless the words *science falsely so called* have no meaning, they surely must find their application to science, as you and yours would bring it to bear on the Bible: for the sciences you rest upon are so completely in their infancy, that they ought to be called possibilities of science rather than science itself. It will be time enough for them to throw doubts on Scripture when they have settled their own principles with scientific certainty, but at present they are mostly conjectures and theories, founded partly on very incomplete inductions, or on very shadowy analogies. Such conjectures and theories, indeed, when viewed aright as the stepping-stones to further discoveries, and the possible groundwork of future really scientific results, are not only interesting, but valuable; but if we insist on mere conjectures and theories as if they were undoubted facts, and as such bring them face to face with Revelation, we are doing not only a dangerous but an unphilosophical thing. I confess it seems to me to be more like high treason when you set up reason as the mayor of the palace, and virtually

displace faith from the throne of her ancestors. I confess it seems to me to be more like high treason to God and man to commit the eternal destinies of the human race to that reason who has failed so often ; to weave the bonds of freedom of thought round the religious faculties, and hinder them from receiving that which God sent His Son to give us ; but I am conscious of no high treason to the Bible ; I tremble not for the Bible, but for man ; I distrust not the Bible's strength, but I do distrust weak human nature. I tremble for those I love, for my children, for my friends, for future generations, lest, misled by your delusions, they should make shipwreck of their faith. I tremble for my country, lest those Christian principles which hitherto, enthroned in the conscience of her sons, have insensibly, but not the less really, guided under God her destinies, should be exchanged for the rationalistic principle of every man doing what is right in his own eyes, which I suspect lies at the bottom of the self-willed dissensions of less fortunate and not more free nations. I have no fear for Scripture—doubtless the written word of God will ever be what it was to the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul—doubtless it will remain as true as ever, and will convey the same true portraiture of God's truth and God's will throughout all ages to those who have ears to hear—*φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν* ; but the number of those who have ears to hear will be daily diminished by the tale of those whose ears the pride of reason will close or the subtleties of reason perplex. A doubt may be true in itself as a doubt, but infinitely false in its suggestions and results ; and no doubt is barren ; even when itself has passed away it leaves its offspring behind it : the appetite grows by what it feeds on. The man who enters on

the study of the Bible in the spirit you recommend, to see what holes and flaws can be picked in it, will probably go on from one point to another, till he will end in rejecting whatever reason cannot comprehend. It is easy to see how this may be, without assigning to human pride of reason or human impatience of control, any definite part in the world of disbelief. A man is induced to think, on grounds of historical or natural science, that some fact recorded in Scripture has never taken place; this disbelief takes its place among the convictions of his mind; he hits upon some passage in Scripture which supports the fact he disbelieves; he then searches about for some way in which this passage may be got rid of, and in order to do so adopts some of the interpretations which recommend themselves to his reason, and where Scripture is on one side and reason on other, you teach him which is to interpret and control the other: and thus he goes on; one error necessitates another, and by a series of progressive denials he gives up his once precious possession. I have not the smallest doubt that Scripture will triumph in the contest which rationalism is preparing for it; but even that triumph will be dearly bought by the thousands whose faith will be shipwrecked in the struggle. In thinking of a great battle which stands out in the world's history as the triumph of right over wrong, we are apt, in the contemplation of the glorious result, to lose sight of the thousands whom that evening of glory left lifeless on the field; but we cannot lose sight so easily of men's souls exchanging the life and wisdom of the Spirit for the life and wisdom of reason, losing the certainty of Christian hope for the dreams of disbelieving philosophy; it were less miserable to see a man filling a sieve with water

than to see a man under the influence of the scepticism which Rationalism suggested to him, trusting to his own works.

And what do you believe will be the result? In one passage you seem to think that the results are to be so great, that this must take the lead of all other studies; in another, that the substance of religion will not be affected by this study; and when you say the latter, it shows that you must either have a very inadequate notion what the substance of our faith is, or a very inadequate notion of the aims and results of this pseudo science, as evidenced in the volume which you usher in. You speak of modern knowledge as likely to have its effect upon religious conviction: but it is difficult to see how historic criticism, applicable though it may be to the elucidation of a history confessedly uncertain and unworthy of credit, the written records of which had perished long before, so that it depended chiefly on popular or family traditions, can disprove any part of records avowedly authentic, of a people who were on religious grounds most careful of their records, compiled in some parts by eye-witnesses of the events, and depending for the parts anterior to those events on a revelation, this revelation being attested by its being incorporated into a divine system under the visible protection of the God of truth Himself. History cannot doubt part of these records, in their essential points at least, without doubting them all; and moreover, these records, existing in our Saviour's time as they do now, are referred to by our Saviour and his Apostles as true, which they could not have been if they had not been so. So that to doubt them, is to doubt our Saviour and the Holy Spirit of truth; it is difficult under these circumstances to see how historical criticism, at the distance of thousands of years, can rea-

sonably throw either light or doubt. All that natural science can do is to present us with secondary causes, which may have produced the effects which in Scripture are attributed to the immediate hand of God, or to show that the facts stated cannot have happened in accordance with natural laws, in other words, if they happened at all, must have been miracles: or that some of the idioms of language or style on which these facts are stated are founded on incorrect notions of natural phenomena. Some natural sciences may in their present infancy suggest difficulties to which in their really scientific maturity they may possibly furnish the answers. It is possible to conceive that it may even now furnish to some minds, confirmation of some unimportant points in the sacred narrative, but the unfounded doubts it will infallibly create on the other side must more than counterbalance this seeming advantage; in fact, I doubt whether real faith will, even in its beginnings, stand in need of such confirmation. All that philology, as an instrument of your critical faculty against the views of the early Church, can do, is to doubt whether those who spoke the language in which a considerable part of the Bible was written, understood that language as well as we do; and if an examination into the supposed interpolations of Scripture is to produce any satisfactory results, it must be founded, not on any internal evidence of the contents of the passage, for that surely the nature and structure of Scripture excludes, but on the external evidence of manuscripts and authorities. And the worst of this critical faculty is, that a man is familiar with religious subjects without becoming religious. A man with nothing but this critical faculty may remain as cold at heart as if the Bible message had never been given; nay, may it not be said that it has a tendency

to make a man dead and cold, because it puts Scripture truth before him in a wrong point of view, as something to be looked at with suspicion instead of trust, as if heaven was opened to us as a field for shallow contention, rather than as a field for the deepest awe and love? You say that mistakes are better than unthinking acquiescence\*; I confess I should prefer the acquiescence of the fool which ends in faith, rather than the mistakes of the wisest to end in infidelity.

And what, after all, do you think will be the result? — do you think that Rationalism will be able to win a seeming victory over the great truths of the Christian scheme? or do you think that its triumphs will be confined to a few details? if the former, are you prepared to go the whole length, and lead others with you? are you prepared, at the bidding of any science under the sun, to cast away your trust in the Atonement, and place it on the heavenly power of your own life of holiness: and mark that this result is not simply a danger, but a danger which is a sign of error. Or do you think that if the school goes as far as this it will be going too far? if so, will you advise others to enter on a course at the end of which spiritual death is waiting for them? Men may, if they like, launch their boats in the rapids just above the fall, and keeping their eyes fixed on their own efforts, may fancy that they are moving upwards, though the stream is all the while carrying them down, though they know it not. Or do you think, as you say you do, that true science will touch nothing but trifling details? I pray you to consider whether what is to be gained is worth the risk. It is surely a maxim of reason, where there is no call of definite duty,

\* Page 47.



to weigh these opposite results. The study of the Bible, which you recommend, will not, I believe, bring one soul nearer to Christ, and may cast thousands from Him ; and think of it, not only for others, but for yourself — *he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*

You say that in the understanding of religious truth we have no right to stop short of any limit but that which nature, that is, the decree of God, has imposed upon us.\* I will not now stop to inquire how far this is in harmony with the command to Timothy †, *Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.* But I will say that God has fixed the limit by giving us a final revelation, and that our nature marks this limit by having no powers to go beyond it with any thing like certainty. I most fully agree with you that we are bound to go as far as God permits us ; and as in nature we are called upon to receive certain insoluble truths upon the evidence of nature's voice speaking to us in things natural, so in the spiritual world we are bound to go as far as to receive certain insoluble spiritual truths upon the evidence of God's voice speaking to us, by those whom He sent for that purpose ; and we are at once doing violence to our own nature, and to God's will for us, if we allow our natural faculties to keep them from us.

You have yourself set forth the danger of exclusive scientific pursuits more strongly than I should have thought myself justified in doing, when you say ‡ that some highly educated men, engrossed by a special pursuit, think of the study of the Bible as a thing of the past : whether their special pursuit will compensate them for their loss of the Bible, it is not

\* Page 48.

† 1 Tim. vi. 20.

‡ Page 48.

within my province to determine, but those persons who hold the old-fashioned opinion, that in the Bible, and only in the Bible, are to be found the words of everlasting life, may perhaps learn something more than you meant them to learn from your admission of the narrowing results of special scientific pursuits in these cases. But it is strange that you seem to contemplate with great complacency the wider operation of these special results ; you confess, indeed, that the Bible is still to be studied, but when you use the words *for the present and some time*, you seem to look forward to a still more mature development, when the written word of God will be replaced as the source of belief, as well as the standard thereof, by the speculations and dogmas of Rationalism. You find no fault with these philosophers for this abandonment of the Bible, except so far as it would have been more worldly wise to have retained, in pretence at least, the Bible as an instrument by the aid of which they may obtain an hold over the people whom, otherwise, they might have found it difficult to move. How your right hand could have penned this sentence I am at a loss to imagine: I am sure that the almost dishonest sentiment it expresses, could never have had any real existence in a mind like yours.

The vision of your dream seems to be of a few philosophers enthroned by reason as masters of the world, invested with the power, influence, possibly wealth, and all the other advantages which may result to them from their knowledge if they are able to move men in the mass by their rationalistic use of the Bible : holding the Bible indeed to be, in reality and for themselves, a thing of the past, but wisely allowing it a place in their Fasces, as enabling them to obtain an influence over the multitude by the means of their

moral and religious convictions. In good truth, this sacerdotalism of reason, this philosopharchy, would be an evil in comparison with which the worst forms of religious sacerdotalism would be but a feather weight, for religious sacerdotalism must be bound by some regard to an outer law, even if it often disregards it, while the hierarchy of reason is by its hypothesis free to make what laws it will.

The same vision peeps out in the exulting tone in which you proclaim that knowledge is the lever which is to move the world\*; you do not seem to recollect that only a few lines back, you reminded your highly educated sceptics that this knowledge must use the Bible to move mankind—which then is the lever? religion or knowledge? In one line you say it is religion, in the next knowledge; I have no doubt that your first view is right, that knowledge is powerless without religion: and I add that religion is powerless without the Bible; knowledge may inform, amuse, possibly elevate, and keep from sensuality and the stagnation of self-indulgence; the world will be moved by national interest and national pride, by the aims, interests, pleasures, fancies of individuals, and then knowledge has no more power to bind or stop than it has to bind the wind or stop the waves. In any time of national excitement or distress the men of mere intellect in vain wave their rod of power: they do not of necessity make the best statesmen, or the best generals, or the best lawyers, or the best clergymen, because intellect cannot touch the secret springs of human feeling and action.

I confess the more I study your Essay, the more completely I disjoin it from yourself, very much in

harmony, I allow, with my own inclination. It seems to me impossible that one whom I know to have been so blessed by a pious Scriptural education can really believe that reason is the supreme judge and guide over Scripture; it seems to me to be impossible that one whom I know to be of singularly honest and straightforward turn of mind, can have put forth a method which will give self-deceit more power over others; it seems impossible that one whom I think of as firmly believing in the Name and resting in the hopes of Christ can really teach men they can only fall into error by having a fixed definite hold of truth. It seems impossible that one, to whom the Bible has ever been a household book, can really regard it as to be studied chiefly with a view to see what can be got rid of, or think that the time can ever come when the study of the Bible shall be a thing of the past. It seems impossible that one so clear-sighted as yourself can really believe in such an improvement in man as to place him in a relation to God's revealed word different from and superior to that of the early Church: or that the happiness and perfection of man is really to be attained, not by reverent submission to the words of God, but by obedience to the dictates of the natural conscience even when they seem to differ from those words.

And now before I conclude, allow me to speak to you as I should have spoken twenty years ago. Every one knows Rugby never had an abler master; I think you owe it to yourself and to Rugby to tell the world plainly whether you do or do not, in the teaching and training of your boys, put before them the views expressed at least in the words of your Essay: whether you teach them to study the Bible chiefly with a view to a critical judgment as to what it does and does not contain;

whether you teach them that reason is to be their sole arbiter in right and wrong ; whether you teach them that if their views of duty differ from that of Scripture, it is the part of piety to explain Scripture away. As I said above, I do not believe you do ; but I think you owe it to yourself and to Rugby to assure the world that the forms of thought and expression which convey these sentiments in your Essay find no place in your teaching.

Will you forgive me if I express my notion of the tone of mind and train of thought which gave rise to your Essay in your own words ? “ Some men, on the other hand, show their want of intellectual self-control, by going back, not to the dominion of law, but to the still lower level of intellectual anarchy. They speculate without any foundation at all. They confound the internal consistency of some dream of their brains with the reality of independent truth. They set up theories which have no other evidence than compatibility with the few facts that happen to be known ; and forget that many other theories of equal claims might readily be invented. They never practically realise, that when there is not enough evidence to justify a conclusion, it is wisdom to draw no conclusion. They are so eager for light, that they will rub their eyes in the dark and take the resulting optical delusions for real flashes.”

Believe me to be, ever yours truly,

WILLIAM EDWARD JELF.

Caerleon, Merioneth :  
May 16th, 1861.

THE END.

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THE NATIONAL CHURGH.

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AN ANSWER TO AN ESSAY ON  
"THE NATIONAL CHURCH."  
BY HENRY BRISTOW WILSON, B.D.  
VICAR OF GREAT STAUGHTON, HUNTS.

BEING NO. 4 IN A VOLUME ENTITLED "ESSAYS AND REVIEWS."  
(The Second Edition.)

BY JAMES WAYLAND JOYCE, M.A.

*Late Student of Ch. Ch.: Rector of Burford 3 P.:*  
*One of the Proctors in Convocation for the Diocese of Hereford:*  
*Author of "England's Sacred Synods," &c. &c.*






# AN ANSWER

ETC.

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## I

- I.  VOLUME which has lately attracted much attention, entitled "Essays and Reviews," contains a paper written by Henry Bristow Wilson, B. D., Vicar of Great Staughton, Hunts, on the subject of "The National Church." In that performance, some principles are enunciated, some arguments adopted, and some conclusions drawn, which do not commend themselves among thinking men to universal acceptance. It is the object of the following lines to point out the straits into which the theories there contained would inevitably lead submissive disciples, not unlikely to find themselves among the numbers of those, who while seeking to avoid some vicious errors, run into opposite extremes, and while endeavouring to escape the dangers of Scylla, suffer hopeless shipwreck in Charybdis. Now it behoves any man in treating this proposed subject, to bear in mind, that it is one of very grave importance, not to be lightly handled—that truth and not conquest should be the aim. And as he appears before the tribunal of

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thoughtful Christian men in the character of an advocate earnestly seeking a verdict favourable to his own case, there is abundant reason why all the opponent's arguments should be dispassionately stated, his conclusions fairly weighed, and the whole cause pleaded in becoming language, and above all things, with good temper.

2. In the Essay now under view, some passages are contained with which the Christian mind must gladly and unreservedly agree; on these it is not proposed to make any further remark than to acknowledge that they are frequently clothed with a grace of language which lends an additional and external charm to the sentiments conveyed. Some propositions are maintained of more doubtful character to which even that grace of language can hardly reconcile a thoughtful man. Others there are to which no power of diction, no art of rhetoric, will ever constrain an honest mind to assent. And it is lamentable to add that there are still others which threaten the demolition of the Christian faith, and, indeed, sap the foundations of all revealed religion. It is moreover observable that there is sometimes in this Essay, and indeed frequently throughout the volume of which it forms a part, a reserved and cautious mode of stating propositions, and an exercise of art in maintaining opinions, which render it somewhat doubtful whether they are really those of the writer, or only such as may be held by others. This necessarily increases the difficulty of reply, and creates a certain amount of embarrassment, as it would subsequently be a subject of unmixed regret to any fair writer to find that he had inadvertently charged on any one an obnoxious opinion, which that person had not unequivocally avowed. But, notwithstanding all the

advantages secured by the seductive beauty of language and the charms of style, notwithstanding the caution generally displayed in preparation of the materials, there are yet positions here maintained, against which any one vastly inferior in all the arts of literary exploit, may hope to have some success; trusting not on his own ability for the service, but only in the justice of the side which he maintains. In a righteous cause, a simple sling and stone have ere now prevailed against the most gigantic weapons and the completest armour.

3. It may here be premised that in dealing with the subject there is no intention whatever, after the manner of some anonymous reviewers, of carping at details, though indeed some exceptions might here be taken, nor of entering into any controversy about forms of expression, nor of making querulous complaint about the position of this word or the application of that. The intention is to inquire fairly into the general meaning and main object of the whole Essay, to consider the principal steps, and to weigh the chief arguments by which our author arrives at his conclusions, and so to take a comprehensive view of the means he uses and the ends he proposes to attain.

Certainly those ends are, at first view, by no means distinctly discovered. One travels on in the dark for some distance without perceiving whither one's steps are tending, and it is not until one has surmounted fifteen pages that the light begins to dawn and a glimpse is caught of the main path through which the course is to be directed, and the bourne to which the journey will finally lead. The three chief objects, however,

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which eventually appear to be proposed by our author, are —


1. To commend the Ideological method of interpretation for the explanation of Scripture.
2. To show that the principle of doctrinal limitation is at variance with the true principle of a multitudinist Church.
3. To recommend a relaxation of the present form of subscription to the formularies of the English Church, required from her clergy.

Such seem to be the main ends proposed. But as the several heads are not formally laid down, the arguments are found to be somewhat loosely scattered about the pages of the Essay, and one is forced to collect them with some industry in order that they may be reduced to order. Moreover, there are some decorations, if so they may be called, which do not seem readily to fall under any of the afore-mentioned divisions, nor is it indeed quite clear how they could be directly combined with our main subjects. And, further, our author betrays throughout a general restlessness and uneasiness under some burden which seems to gall the bearer, and compel him to utterances which sound like plaintive appeals for relief.

Now it will be desirable first to glance at some of these decorations and these proclaimed causes of uneasiness, and afterwards to proceed to the three main heads of the Essay before us; and thus our inquiries will be reduced into tolerable method, and reasonable precaution will be taken —

. . . . . “ loco ut dispôsta decenti  
Omnia sint opere in toto, nec meta laborum  
Usquam dissideat ingressibus ultima primis.”

## II.

1. IRST, then, as regards the decorations not intimately connected with the main subjects of the Essay, and the expressions of that uneasiness which appears to afflict our author. At the very outset we are reminded of the changeful signs of the times, of the desirableness of inquiring into the best method of adjusting old things to new conditions, and of the probability of our being able to transmit to those who shall follow us something better than the traditional religion which has descended to ourselves. The faults which have unhappily adhered to professors of Christianity in past ages, and the blessings which have accrued to mankind from the march of civilisation, unconnected with religion, are next placed in somewhat invidious contrast, and represented as causing grave doubts in the minds of well-meaning persons, as to "whether the Church is to be hereafter the life-giver to human society."<sup>1</sup> A rather heavily charged statement follows of an asserted wide-spread alienation, both of educated and uneducated persons, from Christianity as hitherto taught in this land. The melancholy fact is then adverted to, of the inadequate attendance, as compared with our population, at places of public worship on the occasion of the census in 1851. And, further, a great extent of dissatisfaction is presumed as existing on the part of the clergy with some of the formularies of the Church, in which dissatisfaction it appears that our author himself joins, as he here commits himself to a

Decorations and proclaimed causes of uneasiness.

<sup>1</sup> p. 149.

Decorations and proclaimed causes of uneasiness.

somewhat exceptionable expression with reference to one of the Creeds. Then with a passing compliment to the patience of German investigators and the soberness of modern English judgment, and a comparison of the sceptical publications of the last generation with those of the present day, to the advantage of the latter, we are informed that there is a spontaneous recoil on the part of large numbers of our acutest people, from some of the doctrines taught in our churches and chapels, and a distrust of the old arguments for and proofs of a miraculous revelation, as well as a “misgiving as to the authority, or extent of the authority of the Scriptures.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 151.

Now all this naturally suggests to the thoughtful mind very serious subjects for consideration, and, indeed, some of it if true, or true to the extent supposed, may well create extreme alarm. Only some persons may be inclined to consider the case as somewhat overcharged, and to doubt whether a considerable portion of the matter is not rather a reflexion of the Author's own mind than a correct statement of the facts of the case. But, however, this may be, he here supplies us with a condensed summary of recorded discouragements, which once admitted, may well account for that uneasiness under which he himself so constantly labours. Whether the remedies subsequently suggested for the alleviation of the proclaimed disorders would really insure any permanent relief, or on the other hand, would help most alarmingly to augment the evil, the reader will be better able to judge as we proceed.

2. After having introduced to notice this somewhat gloomy view of the state of religious belief in England, our author proceeds to specify some of the causes which in his opinion have led to it. And those causes are

treated with remarkable lenity, for we are assured that “the sceptical movements in this generation are the result of observation and thought, not of passion.”<sup>1</sup> The two former exercises of the modern mind are certainly rather praiseworthy than otherwise if rightly directed and properly applied. But then here the subject-matter of this presumed observation and thought assumes, under our author’s pen, so startling a character, and takes a shape so odd, as to create some misgivings as to the conclusions which would be arrived at even were the intentions and method ever so correct.

As a prerogative instance, the very first difficulty presented to us, which modern observing thinkers have had recently to contend with, is the vast multitudes of heathendom, as compared with the sum of even professing Christians, and the grave question as to what will be the condition of the former in a future state. And this difficulty is represented, if not as a new one, yet at any rate as one of which the sense has been greatly increased of late by our recent and more intimate acquaintance with “the teeming regions of the far East,”<sup>2</sup> and by our perusal of the ephemeral news of great and distant nations. Of the enlarged extent to which these new sources of information have increased this difficulty, we are assured, by an assertion of a remarkable lack of information declared by our author to have prevailed in England thirty years ago as compared with the abundant flood of knowledge poured upon us in the present day. By his own pen we are instructed that “in our own boyhood the world as known to the ancients was nearly all which was known to ourselves.”<sup>3</sup> After recovering from the first shock of surprise occasioned by such an announcement as this, one feels disposed to recollect oneself, and consider whether there is even a colourable pretence for

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<sup>1</sup> p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> p. 152.

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this assertion. Among other subjects of inquiry, one begins to ask oneself, was the western hemisphere really known to the ancients, or did a hitherto unsuspected amount of ignorance upon that subject, now happily dispelled, prevail among the contemporaries of our youth? For most assuredly the vast expanse of the continents of the Americas and Australia, as well as the multitude of the Pacific isles, cannot be excluded from the expression "nearly all the world." It is clear that by this assertion one of the following alternatives is inexorably forced upon us by our author. Either the ancients did possess the information above specified, which no one believes — or on the other hand, what is equally incredible, the discoveries of Columbus and other navigators, the expedition of Cortes and Pizarro, the fate of the Caciques and Incas, the enterprise of Raleigh, the western colonisations of Spain, France and England; the American wars of independence, the establishment there of governments imperial, royal, republican, independent, and dependent, to omit further particulars — this, or at least a considerable part of this, must have been unheard of or forgotten by all the contemporaries and companions of our boyhood.

But this is such a wholesale imputation of neglect upon their teachers, or of incapacity and forgetfulness upon themselves, as no one can think justly deserved, except indeed it be our author, who has unmistakably asserted it: and even he, one would hope upon due reflexion, will be willing to retract so sweeping, so invidious, and so unfounded a charge.

3. It must be confessed, and indeed we have just witnessed, in one instance at least, a conspicuous evidence of the fact, that in the present day an imputation



of incapacity on those who have gone before us, or at least an assumption of vast superiority over them for the colossal man of our own time, improved by his verifying faculties, is on the part of some writers considerably overstrained. Whether this may arise, in the case of any of them, from underrating the qualifications of other people and overrating their own, may perhaps be a query: but one thing at least is so clear as to admit of no question whatsoever, and it is this—that the writers of “Essays and Reviews” have not given sufficiently ample credit even to their own contemporaries for common exercise of thought or average competency in information. For we have in that volume old thoughts, old questions, old difficulties, old doubts paraded for inspection, and passed in array to challenge our attention and admiration, as if they were a newly recruited phalanx fresh in the flower of youth and confident in the vigour of rising manhood. But by the commonest observer they are instantly recognised. They are the worn-out veterans of many a long-fought fight—a hasty conscription from the scattered stragglers of Blount, Bolingbroke, Chubb, Collins, Gibbon, Hobbes, Hume, Morgan, Paine, Toland, Woolston, not to specify an imported contingent from an unsuccessful band of foreign allies. Their figures, as they pass on in somewhat halting gait, even to the very scars they have received in combat, are as familiar as would be the forms of their old antagonists, were they too recalled to the review. It would require no slender amount of industry to discover one single question, difficulty, or doubt raised, and their number is not small, nay, indeed, one single thought suggested (except indeed such as arise from some new essays at the interpretation of Scripture), which are not distinctly recognised, and intimately familiar to any man whoever

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thinks at all. And even further, it would lie within the power of most persons of ordinary education to assist our authors in largely swelling the catalogue of those antiquated speculations and time-worn difficulties which seem to have for them so peculiar an attraction.

4. To revert, however, to the point under consideration, the simple truth is that the contemporaries of our own boyhood, and their fathers, and their fathers' fathers before them, in every age of Christianity, were sufficiently informed of the existence of the Gentile world and of multitudes external to the Church. What we are by our author invited to believe is, that there is now a larger sense of the comparative difference of numbers between Christians and Gentiles than aforesaid. Does he mean, in support of this position, to refer us to the time when that small and despised gathering from Galilee followed their Master, persecuted, or at least uncared for, by all save their own little company? Were they ignorant of the vast preponderance in numbers of those who were either hostile or indifferent to the object of their faith and love? Does he mean to refer us to that diminished band who were gathered together with closed doors for fear of the population by whom they were surrounded? Were they uninformed of the inconsiderableness of their own number as compared with those who hated them or who had never even heard of their existence? Does he mean to refer us to the testimony of those early converts to whom the catacombs of Imperial Rome afforded a refuge and a tomb? Were they blind to the truth that few indeed were yet chosen into their company, as contrasted with those who never had been called, or if called had turned a deaf ear to the invitation? Had not those martyrs

too bitter an assurance of the multitude of unbelievers then? To what succeeding age, to what period in the revolving course of time, can he point in which the fathers of the Church and her successive writers on sacred subjects have not manifestly declared upon their pages, that the fact of the multitude of the heathen was constantly familiar to the minds of Christian men? Certainly one would naturally feel confident but for our author's assertions, that in earlier ages even a larger sense of the vast disproportion between the number of Christians and that of Gentiles must have existed, than is now by any one entertained. If it were not so the belief must have been very contradictory to the fact, for, according to our author's own showing, the number of Christians has since approached "a fourth part of the people of the earth."<sup>1</sup> And beyond all dispute the Christian Church does now bear a far larger proportion to the sum of the human race than it did in earlier ages—a proportion for the increase of which the prayers of the Church have been hopefully offered, and to a great extent have been mercifully answered. For in the words of S. Chrysostom when speaking of S. John the Evangelist:—"the Syrians, and Egyptians, and "Indians and Persians, and Æthiopians and very many "other nations, have transferred to their own tongues "and have learnt the doctrines derived from him."

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<sup>1</sup> p. 155.

5. However widely one may be constrained to disagree with our author's mode of treating this momentous subject, it is one which is in itself of such importance that one would be glad to come to some satisfactory agreement upon it, at least with one's reader. Now by its introduction into this Essay one or both of the following objects must be taken to have been proposed:

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1. either thus to commend for acceptance the author's ideological method of interpretation for scriptural explanation, which on this head must have appeared to him defective; or, 2, to recommend his suggestion that subscription on the part of the clergy to the doctrinal faith of our church, which in this matter must have seemed to him unsound, should be relaxed; subjects which will both in their due order be hereafter considered. And so he must fairly be supposed to think either that our authorised interpretations of Holy Writ on the subject of heathendom, are such as require amendment, or that the expressed faith of the Church on this point is such as to lay a burden on the conscience of her thoughtful clergy. For under any other supposition whatsoever, one is entirely at a loss to perceive the pertinence of the thoughts suggested to the reader in this place.

Now with the fullest sense of the larger multitudes of heathendom, as compared with the Christian Church, abiding on our minds, we may fitly remember that the earnest prayers of her sons to the throne of grace have ever been offered for the Gentile world in accordance with that charitable exhortation of S. Chrysostom, "Imitate God; if He willeth that all should be saved, it is just and right that prayers be offered for all. If he has willed all to be saved, do you join in that wish? and if you wish it, pray for them." And even if, as may be said, the concurrent language of Christian antiquity rehearsed such an expression as this:—"There is no salvation save in the Church;" if S. Ignatius has said, "Except a man be within the altar he lacketh the bread of God;" or if S. Irenæus has written, "Those are not partakers of the Spirit, who betake themselves not to the Church, those who partake not, nor are

nourished at the breast of their mother for life . . . . are not founded upon the one rock, but upon the sand;" if he has declared that "the church is the entrance to life;" or if S. Prosper has avowed that "outside Jerusalem there are no blessings, because he is not sanctified who is disunited from the Church which is the body of Christ;" or if S. Cyprian and S. Augustine wrote that "no one can have God as his father, unless he has the Church as his mother; or if the last-mentioned father said "that sins are not remitted without the Church;" or if S. Ambrose asked, "How can he be with Christ who is not with Christ's spouse, and in his church"—yet is any man prepared to pronounce that these expressions were not some of them confined to the doctrine of the collation of the Holy Spirit by the Christian Sacraments; and that they were not ALL of them restrained in the severity of their intention to the cases of those who had enjoyed opportunities of hearing the glad tidings of the Gospel message, and of availing themselves of the blessings therein offered? Still less can any one pretend to say that our church has ever denied such restraints to their meaning. The plea of invincible ignorance is no new one. It is one which has always found, thank God! very favourable acceptance in her large-hearted charity as well as in that of thoughtful and merciful Christians of every age, and place.

For how constantly we find, when the thoughts of Christian writers have not been specially confined to the cases of those to whom the Gospel had been made known, that the most charitable regard is expressed for such as are external to the Church. In accordance with the saying of the wise king, "He that is Master of all alike careth for all," S. Clement of Alexandria tells us "all

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things are established by God equally for all, so that none can complain" of Him. S. Clement of Rome, the fellow labourer of S. Paul, thus exhorted the Corinthians : " Let us look upon the blood of Christ, and see how precious that is in God's sight ; for, being shed for our salvation, it hath conferred the grace of change of heart on all the world. Let us behold all ages, and learn that from generation to generation the Lord hath granted a place for change of heart to all that would be turned to Him." For in the words of the later Clement, " He careth for all, which becometh the Lord of all, for he is not the Saviour of these to the exclusion of those." And again that same Father assures us that " He, in very many ways, bestows salvation on all mankind ;" for, as he elsewhere writes : " God knows those who are worthy of benefit and those who are not, whence he gives what is suitable to each, for He is the Saviour, not of some, excluding others, but, according as each is fit, so has He distributed to him his beneficence." With reference to the universality of the evangelical invitation, Origen declares that " All mankind, labouring and burdened by the nature of sin, are called to that rest which is by the word of God." And, further, his argument is very pertinent when he thus writes on the subject of the condemnation of the Gentiles for their unrighteousness : " I think it cannot be doubted but that the same person who deserved to be condemned for an evil deed, if he did a righteous one, would be deemed worthy of the reward for a good work." S. Athanasius, in one of his orations, says that " God has made Christ to have a rightful dominion over all and to cleanse all," in no restrictive sense. He declares too that our Saviour, by blotting out the first " man's sin, would remove it from the whole race," and that without any exceptional

reserve. S. Ambrose assures us that "the mystery of the Incarnation of God has respect to the salvation of every creature." "God showed to all," he elsewhere says, "what was in him,—that he did wish to save all;" and he also makes this remark on the choice of Judas as an apostle: "The Lord ought not to pass over the man who should betray him, so that all might see that, in the choice even of his traitor, he set forth a pledge of the possibility of salvation for all men." We have the testimony of S. Jerome "that no one is born without the seeds within him of wisdom, justice, and other virtues; whence many, without faith and without the gospel of Christ, do some things even wisely, yea, even in a holy manner." "Wonder not," taught S. Cyril, "if the whole world was ransomed, for it was no bare man, but the only begotten Son of God who died." The consideration of the price paid may, indeed, as S. Augustine tells us, answer for the largeness of the purchased possession. "Do ye ask," writes he, "what he bought? See what he gave, and find then what he purchased." S. Prosper of Aquitaine affirms that "Christ may be most rightly said to have been crucified for the sins of the whole world, both on account of his true susception of human nature, as well as on account of the common perdition of all in our first parent." And, lastly, that other African Prosper, in his learned work on the calling of the Gentiles, displays a very extensive charity towards all such as are external to the Church. "The Church of God," he says, "everywhere prays, not only for the Saints already regenerate in Christ, but even for all infidels." "The grace of God," he tells us, "never denied itself to any age,—of the same virtue, but of different measure; of unchangeable counsel, but of multiform operation." "There was always," he informs

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us, “dispensed to all men from above a certain measure of instruction ; and although this has sprung from a more occult and sparing grace, yet it has sufficed as a remedy for some, as a witness for all.” And as to what we should hold on this point, this author writes very plainly in the following words : — “In accordance with Scripture we believe and most piously confess that the care of divine Providence never failed the whole human race. For though by special laws he directed to piety a people chosen to Himself, yet from no nation of men has He withdrawn the gifts of His goodness.”

It has seemed needful to trespass at some length on the reader’s patience, with quotations from Christian authors on this subject, because our essayist has brought the very heavy charges against the scriptural writers of having “represented to us their own inadequate conceptions and not the mind of the Spirit of God,”<sup>1</sup> in case our traditions have declared to us as a just inference from Scripture, that the heathen are incapable of God’s mercy in the next world. And it is to speak softly, at least insinuated that our traditions have declared this, and that in so doing they do “fairly declare to us the words and inferences from Scripture.”<sup>2</sup> To what traditions our author refers we need not at this moment inquire. We have seen above that some traditions of considerable authority look another way, and it would be easy to point to authors of great weight in our own Church in later times who follow in the same course.

<sup>1</sup> p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> p. 154.

6. To come, however, directly to the point, the question is not what any individual writer may have penned, or what any particular tradition, if there be such, may have handed down on this subject. The real



question is, what has our National Church authoritatively affirmed? For our author's introduction of this inquiry in this place, unless indeed it is altogether irrelevant to his general subject, must be with a view to commend some amendment in the Church's interpretation of Scripture, or to recommend a relaxation of the terms of subscription to her faith. Has she then affirmed dogmatically anything in this most momentous matter, which could offend the largest charity or lay any weight upon the tenderest conscience? It is quite beside the requirement of this case to remind us of the exclusiveness of a sour puritanism which seems to rejoice in narrowing the compass of Heavenly mercy. It is idle to reproduce the opinions of individuals whose assurance of their own salvation takes up so much room in their hearts as not to leave space enough there to contain a hope for other people. If our author desires under the present plea to obtain a judgment from thoughtful men; to alter the Church's mode of Scriptural interpretation; or to relax the terms of subscription now required to her doctrines; it is absolutely essential to his case that he should show that the Church of England by her own voice, or in some authoritative manner, has contradicted the words of her Lord: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."<sup>a</sup> It is essential to his case to show that she has committed herself to a denial of S. Peter's declaration: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."<sup>b</sup> It is

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<sup>a</sup> S. John x. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Acts x. 34, 35.

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essential to his case to prove that she has contravened the truth thus impressed by S. Paul upon the Romans: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."<sup>a</sup> The Church of England never appears to have forgotten these passages of Holy Writ expressive of the relation in which the Gospel stands to the millions external to itself. Though it certainly seems clear that our author at least for the moment was guilty of this forgetfulness himself, for he makes this most remarkable inquiry of his reader: "Is there any trace on the face of its records that it even contemplated their existence?"<sup>1</sup> However, until the Church of England has been here proved guilty of the same defect in memory, and further of contradicting, and that authoritatively, the words of Christ and his Apostles, we may at least in this matter be content with her received interpretations, and peacefully resting in her faith, be willing also to subscribe to her mode of expressing it.

7. Before our author has concluded his observations on this last topic, he interposes, in a somewhat irregular manner (for it must be confessed that he is not innocent on occasion of deserting the "lucidus ordo"), some exceptions which he thinks are considerable against certain arguments which he tells us have been used in support of Divine Revelation. The first of these arguments he affirms to be: the assertion of the swiftness with which Christianity spread itself. But in opposition to the truth of such an assertion, he avows that after a lapse of 300 years, in the reign of Constantine, the Christians of the East could not be reckoned at

<sup>a</sup> Rom. ii. 14.

<sup>1</sup> p. 153.

“more than half;”<sup>1</sup> and those of the West at not so much “as a third,”<sup>2</sup> of the population of the Roman Empire. And consequently, he adds, that it is “impossible to appeal any longer to the wonderful spread of Christianity, in the three first centuries, as a special evidence of the wisdom and goodness of God.”<sup>2</sup> The second of the arguments which he combats from our “increased knowledge,” is the following, which he asserts to have been used, viz. “that *à priori* a supernatural revelation was to be expected at the time when Jesus Christ was manifested upon the earth,”<sup>3</sup> because “the state of the world”<sup>4</sup> . . . “had become so utterly corrupt and hopeless under the Roman sway, that a necessity and special occasion was presented for an express Divine intervention.” But in direct contradiction to such a position, he contends that, “it would be more like the realities of things, as we can now behold them, to say that the Christian revelation was given to the Western world, because it deserved it better and was more prepared for it than the East.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> pp. 155, 6.

<sup>4</sup> p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> p. 156.

Now, without giving any opinion whatever, one way or the other, on these discrepancies of conviction between our author and those whose arguments he opposes, let us suppose for the moment that he is right and they wrong. Still one is curious to know what direct bearing all this can have on the objects he really has before him — either on that of preparing his reader for the acceptance of the ideological method of interpreting scripture — or on that of commending his plan for the relaxation of subscription to the formularies of the national church. If her authorised interpretations of scripture commended either of the arguments he here opposes, or if the Church had formally adopted either of them, then the object of the interpolation of this

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matter, even if somewhat out of place, would have been distinguishable. But if, as is true, neither of these suppositions has the slenderest foundation whatsoever in fact, why does our author introduce arguments irrelevant to his subject, and drawn from some undefined source, merely for the sake of an assault upon them with a view to their demolition? One really is, without any lack of charity, tempted to inquire whether this is a rhetorical method of endeavouring to fasten opinions, which in his view are untruthful, upon the national church, though she is in no way corporately responsible for them — or whether this is only an instance of that uneasiness above referred to, which afflicts our author in reference to what he considers as older modes of thought, and a manifestation of a desire to involve other people in that uneasiness, by parading before their eyes an assumption of the wider observation and deeper knowledge which our “recently enlarged ethnographical information”<sup>1</sup> in the present day has conferred on this improved generation.

<sup>1</sup> p. 156.

8. Under this head we are further told, that “there are many other sources of the modern questionings of traditional Christianity, which cannot now be touched upon, originating like those which have been mentioned in a change of circumstances wherein observers are placed, whereby their thoughts are turned in new directions, and they are rendered dissatisfied with old modes of speaking.”<sup>2</sup> As an example of those old modes of speaking, we have an instance cited of representations as to the short duration of this world made “in Millenarian, or Rabbinical fables,”<sup>3</sup> while our author suggests, as a probable alternative, that “there may be a long future during which” . . .

<sup>2</sup> p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> p. 158.

it . . . “shall last.”<sup>1</sup> But as there is no endeavour even made to show that such “fables” were ever adopted by our Church, and as we may reasonably believe that if made it would be futile, the remarks at the end of the last paragraph here also wholly apply.

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<sup>1</sup> p. 157.

9. To proceed. We now come to some matter in this Essay which, for want of better light, or if not, from lack of sufficient discrimination, one is fain to describe as “disjecta membra.” At any rate it is somewhat hard to see its direct relevancy to the matters close at hand. We are introduced to “the different estimates made”<sup>2</sup> of the beneficial effects already wrought by Christianity upon the secular aspect of the world according to the different points of view from which it is regarded. We are reminded of the controversies between “Multitudinists” and “Individualists,”<sup>3</sup> with reference to their respective principles of church organisation. We are assured of the deficiency of the “Primitive Christians”<sup>4</sup> in faith and morals, as compared with “the ideal which has been formed of them,” and we are informed of indeterminateness of doctrine in “the Early Church,”<sup>5</sup> as having existed to a much greater degree than would be thought by such as had read it “through the Ecclesiastical Creeds.”<sup>6</sup> But the real object of all this supplied information is not vouchsafed. And one is somewhat at a loss to conclude positively, at least in this place, upon its true bearing. If it is irrelevant matter, it seems a pity that it should have been here introduced, so as to disturb the stream of continuous argument on subjects of the highest importance. But if, on the other hand, it really has a remote connection with that subject which gives its name to this Essay; and if it is meant, in preparation for some subsequent propositions, to shake

<sup>2</sup> p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> p. 159.

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men's faith in the value of Christ's institution — His Church — and to fortify those "grave doubts" which our author has before told us "arise in the minds of really well-meaning persons, whether the secular future of humanity is necessarily bound up with the diffusion of Christianity; whether the church is to be hereafter the life-giver to the human society;"<sup>1</sup> if this really is the object, as in charity one would hope it is not, then it must be said that this mode of pursuing it is singularly indefensible. Such an attack, as this supposes should, in all honour and conscience, be made straightforwardly in the light of day, with honest and open declarations of hostility, and not be thus obscurely pushed on by desultory assaults and insinuating approaches.

<sup>1</sup> p. 149.

10. We now emerge into broader daylight as regards the direction of our journey, and our author proceeds clearly to prepare the way for introducing one of his main propositions, that subscription to her formularies on the part of the clergy of this National Church should be relaxed. The mode adopted in the preparation is this. A broad contrast is drawn between the respective values attached in the Early Christian Church to morals and faith, considerably to the disadvantage of the latter. Correctness of faith in the first ages is represented as having held a much lower place comparatively, and so relaxation of subscription to the expressions of it now could of course, in such proportion at least, be more hopefully recommended. However, while pursuing this comparison, our author somewhat unnecessarily introduces the assertion of an assumed fact which, so far as his argument here is concerned, is altogether needless, not to say damaging to his own case. He tells us that "the morals of the first Christians were certainly

very far below the estimate which has been formed of them.”<sup>1</sup> Now as the object here is to raise the value of Christian morals in comparison with that of Christian faith, this at least unnecessary and somewhat gratuitous depreciation of the characters of the early Christians is rather surprising. One is at a loss to perceive its object, especially as the Essay professes to be written in the interest of the Church. Why this needless disparagement of the morals of her earliest children? Is it a mere random slip of the pen? for if so, it is a very unfortunate one; or is it one of those desultory assaults upon her, respecting which it was but now necessary to express a charitable hope, that they could not be intentional?

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<sup>1</sup> p. 160.

11. In more direct and legitimate pursuit of the argument that correct morals aforesaid were considered as of proportionably greater importance than a right faith, we are first referred to our Blessed Lord's own teaching; and, secondly, to Apostolic precept and practice as evidences of the asserted fact. As regards the first, beyond all controversy, our Blessed Saviour's beatitudes<sup>a</sup> and gracious declarations<sup>b</sup> on the one hand, and on the other his denunciations against those that “work iniquity,”<sup>c</sup> are the sweetest encouragements to virtue and the most powerful dissuasives from vice. The rewards promised, the punishment threatened, may well impress us with the high value He set on Christian morality. Yet still it does not appear, at least from our Lord's own words, that any lower value should be assigned to a right belief. It requires but small acquaintance with the Gospel history to know that a true faith in Christ

<sup>a</sup> Matt. v. 3-9.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxv. 34.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vii. 23.

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was by Him required in those on whom He exercised His gracious powers of bodily healing. The Divine blessings annexed to the exercise of faith, the heavy penalties denounced against those who herein failed, we also learn from His own mouth. "He that believeth," He tells us, "on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." <sup>a</sup> And again: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." <sup>b</sup> Without derogating in the minutest measure from the value of Christian morality, one necessarily hence concludes that according to Christ's own words a right faith is not less valuable than right conduct in a Christian man. And so our author is no way justified in writing that "with our Lord himself" . . . . "morals came before contemplation, ethics before theoretics." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 160.

12. But if on due consideration this position is altogether untenable when brought to the test of the Lord's own words, it is equally indefensible when tried by Apostolic precept and practice, to which it is referred in the second place for confirmation. Now first as regards Apostolic precept on this head. It is not intended to contrast faith and morals to the disparagement of the latter in the slightest degree, but only to show that from Apostolic teaching our author is not warranted in placing them above the former. The second Pauline epistle to Timothy [which in all reason takes us to the root of the "Gospel tradition," <sup>2</sup> for it is an Apostolic direction to a contemporary Bishop for the government of his church] would seem to assure us that faith was

<sup>2</sup> p. 161.

<sup>a</sup> John iii. 36.

<sup>b</sup> Mark xvi. 16.



by no means to be postponed to morals. S. Paul warns this bishop against “profane and vain babblings, for” — he tells him that — “they will increase unto more ungodliness,” and assures him that “their word will eat as a canker” . . . who “concerning the truth have erred.” He warns him also against the time when men “will not endure sound doctrine,” and they “shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”<sup>a</sup> S. Paul also gives this direction to the Romans: “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.”<sup>b</sup> He gives this instruction to the Thessalonians: “Now we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”<sup>c</sup> The same Apostle exhorts the Hebrews to “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,”<sup>d</sup> and assures them that “without faith it is impossible to please”<sup>e</sup> God. S. Jude, in his General Epistle, impresses upon those to whom he writes, that they “should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”<sup>f</sup> S. John emphatically forbids any communication even, with such as fail in that faith, under very heavy censure. “If there come,” he writes, “any unto you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”<sup>g</sup> In what does the same divine writer tell us that “the patience

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 16-18; iv. 3, 4.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 6.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

<sup>b</sup> Romans xvi. 17.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. x. 23.

<sup>f</sup> Jude iii.

<sup>g</sup> 2 John 10, 11.

of the saints ” consists but in this, that they “ keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus ? ”<sup>a</sup>

The blessings, moreover, attached by the Apostles’ precepts to a right faith, lead us to believe that they did not consider it as any way less important in the Christian system than right conduct. When S. Peter preached at Cæsarea, he told his hearers that “ whosoever believeth ” . . . in Jesus of Nazareth “ shall receive remission of sins.”<sup>b</sup> S. Paul, moreover, assured the Romans that “ whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.”<sup>c</sup> S. Peter again declares of him who exercises that same grace of faith, that he “ shall not be confounded.”<sup>d</sup> S. John asserts that he who believes in Christ “ is born of God ; ”<sup>e</sup> that he who thus believes “ overcometh the world : ”<sup>f</sup> and, on the other hand, that he who believeth not the record that God gave “ hath made Him a liar.”<sup>g</sup> In the face of such Apostolic precepts as these, one cannot with any satisfaction assent to our author’s proposition that “ at the very first,”<sup>1</sup> with the Lord’s . . . “ Apostles as represented to us in the New Testament, morals came before contemplation, ethics before theoretics.”<sup>2</sup>

13. But, again, if one is dissatisfied on this head with our author’s argument as drawn, first, from our Lord’s own teaching, and, secondly, from Apostolic precept, there is still less contentment to be found in his reasoning from Apostolic practice. The reader must be pleased to bear in mind that the original proposition laid down is this, that correct morals were “ at the very root of the Gospel tradition,”<sup>3</sup> repre-

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xiv. 12.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. ix. 33.

<sup>e</sup> 1 John v. 4.

<sup>b</sup> Acts x. 43.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 6.

<sup>f</sup> 1 John v. 4.

<sup>g</sup> 1 John v. 10.

sented as of greater value relatively than right faith; in the essayist's own words just quoted, that "ethics came before theoretics."<sup>1</sup> In maintaining that proposition under the present head of Apostolic practice, the cases are cited of some early Christians supposed to have been recruited from the sect of the Sadducees, and of those among the Corinthians "who said there was no resurrection from the dead."<sup>2</sup> This, it must be admitted, was an extreme case of misbelief; and notwithstanding this excess of error our author tells us that "we do not find the Apostle excommunicating these Corinthians."<sup>3</sup> But then "on the other hand,"<sup>4</sup> and as an antithesis to this asserted fact, we are informed that "he sanctioned excommunication for the cause of immorality."<sup>5</sup> It must be confessed that in this passage one is not altogether free from some amount of embarrassment, arising from an equivocal mode of expression which has been adopted. But taking the whole drift of the argument into consideration, and giving the passage the best attention one is capable of, one cannot doubt but that this is a fair representation of its intention; viz. that the reader should gather that the Apostle directed excommunication to be adjudged for faulty morals, but that the same penalty was not sanctioned by him for faulty faith: and, consequently, that the former was considered by him as an offence requiring more rigid correction than the latter. This much, however, is certain, if it does not mean this it means nothing at all pertinent to the argument before us, and the whole passage is wide of the matter in hand, which is introduced in our author's own words as "an illustration of the RELATIVE value, in the Apostolic age, of the doctrinal and moral principles."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> p. 162.

Now that S. Paul did sanction, as we are here told,

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<sup>1</sup> p. 164.

and not only sanction, but in the most solemn terms adjudge “excommunication for the cause of immorality,”<sup>1</sup> in the case of the incestuous Corinthian, is absolutely true. The apostles words are clear. “I verily,” . . . “have judged” . . . “concerning him that hath so done this deed” . . . . “when ye are gathered together” . . . . “with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such an one unto Satan.”<sup>a</sup> For interpreting the words — “deliver unto Satan,” — as signifying excommunication from the privileges of the Church, the authorities, derived both from Hebrew, Greek, and modern sources, are so considerable, so numerous, and so conclusive, that any one would show himself but little of a divine or a scholar, who should append to them any other meaning. And so our author is entirely justified in representing this judgment of the Apostle S. Paul, as sanctioning a sentence of excommunication upon this offender against Christian morals. With this just and warrantable conclusion as to the meaning of this passage of Scripture, persons of competent information will undoubtedly agree with our essayist.

However, after having adopted, and rightly adopted, this true meaning of the Apostolic expression, — “deliver unto Satan,” — how is it that our author, when the very same expression is used in reference to two persons who “concerning faith have made shipwreck”<sup>b</sup> — then expresses a sense of doubt and uncertainty as to “whatever that may mean”?<sup>2</sup> Why should the very same words of S. Paul convey the definite meaning of excommunication to our author’s mind, and be so represented to his reader when

<sup>2</sup> p. 164, note.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. v. 3-5.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. i. 19.

referred to the immoral Corinthian, and yet become at once matter of question, uncertainty, and doubt, when referred by the same Apostle to those who had made shipwreck of faith? Is our author, for the sake of his argument here, endeavouring to lead his reader into the belief that excommunication was adjudged under apostolic sanction for immorality, but that the same penalty was not plainly attached to shipwrecking faith? or, does he only knowingly abstain from informing him of the fact that the very same penalty, in the very same words, was by the Apostle adjudged against a fault in morals as against a fault in faith? If either course was intentional, and one may well hope that neither was so, then it is very far from commendable, and the method employed in pursuing it is much farther still.

To be sure, one cannot be positive which passage was first written, that assigning the true sense to the words in question, or that containing an expression of doubt as to their meaning, because though they both appear on the same page, one is inserted in the text, the other in a note to a previous sentence. But thus much may be positively said: if the note was written first, one is glad that in the interval between the dates of the two compositions our author's doubts were by competent inquiries resolved; if on the other hand the text had the precedence, then such a recourse to art, if intentional, especially where the words of Holy Writ are the subject-matter, is altogether unpardonable.

Another statement tending to impress the reader with the belief that excommunication was not adjudged for faulty faith is contained in these words: "They who caused divisions and heresies were to be marked and avoided, but not expelled;"<sup>1</sup> our author forgetting, I presume, S. Paul's direction to Titus: "A man that is

<sup>1</sup> pp. 164, 5.

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an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." <sup>a</sup> But as this misstatement may have arisen only from a defect in memory, it is only needful to remark that a more careful recollection of Apostolic direction would ensure a more correct representation of Apostolic practice.

However, as the candid reader, upon due consideration, can hardly have found satisfaction in our author's arguments from Apostolic practice on the relative value of the "doctrinal and moral principles" <sup>1</sup> in the Primitive Church, it may be well to consider for a moment how the truth of this matter really stands with regard to the penalties attached to faults in faith and faults in morals respectively. It appears from the pages of Holy Writ, that in the case of the immoral Corinthian <sup>b</sup>, S. Paul adjudged that the penalty of excommunication should be inflicted; that in the case of those who had made shipwreck of the faith he had already himself inflicted that same penalty; and that in the case of an heretic, he bid Titus reject such an one after two admonitions. Collecting then these facts, it appears that, so far from there being a less warranty for punishing faulty faith with excommunication than faulty morals, the balance seems, at least so far as our instances go, to discover a tendency towards the other side of the scale. And so under this head our author's arguments, as drawn from Apostolic practice, are not more convincing than those which he before vainly attempted to found on the Lord's own authority, and on Apostolic precept.

14. Before taking final leave of this head of our sub-

<sup>a</sup> Tit. iii. 10.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. v. 5.

<sup>1</sup> p. 162.

ject, a word must be said upon a remarkable conclusion deduced from his previous statements, and with which our author sums up this part of his Essay. He tells us in his last words on this topic, that "Any judicial sentence of excommunication was extremely rare in the Apostolic age as we have seen; and the distinction between the worthy and unworthy members of the Church, was to be marked not by any public and authoritative act, but by the operation of private conduct and opinion."<sup>1</sup> Now as regards the rarity of excommunication in the Apostolic age, it is not here needful to speak: but as regards the method of marking the distinction then between the worthy and unworthy members of the Church, the conclusion here seems to follow so very oddly upon the subject-matter immediately antecedent as to require some remark.

It was only in the preceding page that our author himself informed us of the Corinthian who was excommunicated for immorality, and of Hymenæus, who was delivered unto Satan for misbelief, and by this time our author had unquestionably arrived at the true meaning of these words—"delivering unto Satan." Yet he draws this surprising conclusion, after these two instances of excommunication just quoted by himself, that "in the Apostolic age" . . . . "the distinction between the worthy and unworthy members of the Church was to be marked not by any public and authoritative act, but by the operation of private conduct and opinion."<sup>1</sup> But really this mode of reasoning places conclusion and premisses in such offensive attitudes, and institutes so hostile a relation between the "*Comparentia instantiarum præsentium*," and the accepted result, as to render hopeless any attempt at reconciliation, even

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<sup>1</sup> p. 165.

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by the acutest logician, or the most accomplished philosopher.


Considering the course of argument, the above conclusion may be presumed to be directed, like some other desultory assaults above glanced at, against the integrity of discipline in the early Church, and consequently as commending a relaxation in our own; but as this conclusion appears, at least until we have further light, to have been just before absolutely contradicted by our author's own produced instances, we need not stop longer to combat it, but will proceed to a topic which he less equivocally maintains.

Only it may be added here that the endeavour to separate Christian faith and Christian morals is every way as mischievous as it is indefensible by argument. As allied champions, Christian faith and Christian morals go forth, in unanimous consent, to battle against the confederacy of evil. The intimate union of each with the other respectively, may be expressed in the language of the warrior of old to his loving and loved companion: —

“Hâc iter est: tu, ne qua manus se attollere nobis  
A tergo possit, custodi, et consule longè.”



## III.

I.  E now come to what appears to be one of the three chief objects of the Essay before us, and referred to in the outset of our undertaking, namely, — to commend the Ideology. Ideological method of interpretation for the explanation of Scripture. It must be admitted that the subject is here taken out of the order in which the greater part of it occurs in the original Essay. But then the matter connected with it is so lavishly scattered about the pages that, for a due prosecution of our inquiry, it is absolutely necessary to condense the subject into one head; and as this topic is of the first importance to the general reader, there is no impropriety, but perhaps rather the contrary, in applying ourselves first to its consideration.

Without now inquiring into the antiquity of the science of Ideology among foreigners, it must be admitted that to the mass of English readers it is a new one. And consequently as our author has undertaken to propose this novel branch of study for favourable acceptance, it has been necessary for him to enrich our language with some new terms, for the elucidation of his subject. If, therefore, in following his reasoning, it is hereafter necessary to make use of them, I must earnestly implore the reader to bear constantly in mind, that those terms are not of my invention, but that he is indebted for them to another source. It must be

Ideology. frankly confessed that, in the investigation of a new science, considerable perplexity sometimes arises from a misapprehension of its first elements. One is at the outset labouring to some extent in the dark, and therefore it is always desirable under such circumstances, from every possible quarter, to procure a light, and so to proceed by way of regular discovery. In the present case, that light is very profusely supplied by our author himself, and consequently by availing ourselves of its direction, we shall obtain the most valuable assistance, and be able to pursue our inquiry in an orderly method —

“Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum.”

2. Our author instructs us that Ideology is—

I. CRITICAL.

II. EXEGETICAL.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we have the science at once separated by competent authority into two main divisions.

Under Division I. — Critical Ideology—we are informed that the ideal method is applicable “to giving account of the origin of parts of Scripture,”<sup>2</sup> that is, to the investigation of the genuineness of the inspired books; and one must presume also from its name, though this is not mentioned, to the critical examination of the sacred text. But as we have no detailed explanation of the rules by which this 1st division of the new science is to be governed, the method of its application must be left veiled in some obscurity. This, however, as regards this 1st division is less to be regretted, because the principles and character of Ideology do not seem, upon mature consideration, to be of such a practical nature as to commend it hope-

<sup>1</sup> p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> p. 200.

fully for the investigation of questions connected with the positive facts of authorship, nor for those more precise and technical inquiries which are essential to the correct solution of grammatical intricacies. Ideology.

However, as regards Division II.,—Exegetical Ideology, — we are by no means involved in the same obscurity, for this branch of the science we find employed under four separate heads. Indeed, from our author's own pen, we learn distinctly that the capacity of this IIInd or Exegetical division of Ideology is fourfold, as we have a striking example of its fourfold application at pp. 176, 177, of his Essay, where he instructs us that historical narrative may be interpreted—

1. Allegorically.
2. As parable.
3. As poetry.
4. As legend.

Moreover, we have many other cases supplied of the application of this method of interpretation, and also numerous examples of its effects appear throughout the Essay. And so, under this IIInd division at least, one cannot complain of any want of light necessary for the due prosecution of the subject. It is also worthy of mention at this point, as a testimony to the supposed value of the entire science, that our author instructs us that there are “parts of Scripture more usefully interpreted Ideologically than in any other manner.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> pp. 200,  
201.

3. Now having arrived at this knowledge of the several canons of interpretation embraced under this IIInd division, — Exegetical Ideology, — one may be excused for feeling some curiosity as to whether it is applicable not only to Scripture, but whether its common use would

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prove advantageous to the general cause of historical research. We are, indeed, informed in the volume before us, that we must "interpret Scripture like any other book;"<sup>1</sup> the consequence, therefore, is inevitable according to the principle here enunciated, that other books are to be interpreted in the same manner as Scripture. And having been recommended to apply the Ideological canons to the interpretation of sacred history, one is fairly encouraged to try what would be the result if the same method were adopted in studying the narratives of profane writers. It is further observable that our author specially instructs us that "liberty must be left to all as to the extent in which they apply the principle."<sup>2</sup> Thus we see that considerable latitude is conceded, and no single individual can justly fall under our author's censure, for making use of that liberty which he himself so largely grants to all.

<sup>1</sup> p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> p. 201.

4. If then we proceed to apply to the narratives of profane writers the IIInd or Exegetical division of our science, distinguished under its four heads of (1) allegory, (2) parable, (3) poetry, (4) legend, some conclusions, without any encroachment on the liberty given, may be arrived at, which to speak softly, would probably appear surprising to some students of history.

For instance, in accordance with the 1st or allegorical head of Exegetical Ideology, the events of the Peloponnesian war, from the Theban advance on Plataea to Lysander's victory at Ægos Potamos, very carefully recorded and minutely described by the pens of Thucydides and Xenophon, historians hitherto held in considerable repute for accuracy, may all be resolved into an allegory portraying the evils which strifes among neighbouring states entail, and the loss of poli-

tical influence which those engaged in such struggles are eventually liable to incur.

Or again, under the 2nd head of this II<sup>nd</sup> division, the collection of a foreign army by the younger Cyrus, the events of his campaign against his brother Artaxerxes Longimanus, the fatal battle of Cunaxa, and the subsequent retreat of the Greek forces to their homes, — all this very precisely recounted by one of the historians above mentioned, and by Plutarch, may “usefully” be considered as a parable, representing the sad effects of fraternal jealousies, and the very difficult straits into which mercenary bands of adventurers are liable in all ages to run.

Or further, in accordance with the 3rd or poetical head of Exegetical Ideology, the circumstantial narratives given by Livy and Polybius of the Carthaginian warrior, in despite of material obstacles forcing his army into the centre of the Roman empire, vanquishing their hosts in four general actions, and all the minute details of that enterprise from the siege of Saguntum to the final catastrophe at Zama, may be looked upon as a poetical vision, not recording facts, but only setting figuratively before the contemplative eye a valuable lesson on “the vanity of human wishes.” Thus to the Ideologian these historians appear not as the chroniclers of real events, but only as portraying at one time an imaginary representative of successful ambition, at another, an ideal example of blighted hopes. And so the poet’s apoplexy —

“ Ut pueris placeas et declamatio fias,”

becomes the full expression of all real existence that ever truly appertained to the illustrious Hannibal.

Or finally, to conclude with the 4th or legendary

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head of the IIInd division of our science, the historical relations by Sallust and Cornelius Nepos, by Cicero and Plutarch, by Suetonius, Dion Cassius, and other writers, hitherto relied on as authentic, of the troubles of Consular Rome, and all the details of the three most renowned battles of her later days, may be interpreted not as describing real events, but rather as legends teaching mankind a lesson — not even to this improved age an inopportune one — on the evils of intestine and fratricidal wars; or as romantic tales representing, under lively figures of fancy, the vastly disproportionate losses sometimes sustained by contending armies on battle fields, the short-lived friendships of rival politicians, and the futility of luxurious pomp and effeminate display when matched against determined attack and vigorous onslaught.

5. The application of these methods of interpretation might of course be further exemplified by subjecting the writings of more modern historians to their exercise. But as the effects of a somewhat similar process may be seen in the work of a learned and logical Irish prelate, the foregoing brief examples under each head seem sufficient at this moment to test the value of this new science. And as we are assured that it may usefully be applied, it must now be left to the consideration of the reader whether much advantage does really seem likely to accrue to the study of history generally from this invention. Thus much, however, is tolerably clear, that if these canons of interpretation had been universally adopted in the instruction of its pupils by that college which has of late gained such high distinction in our elder university, the brilliant successes of those eminent young scholars — to whom all honour is justly due — would very hardly have been achieved.

6. The Ideologian, however, may perhaps plead that Ideology. his method is "more usefully" applicable to those histories which describe events of very remote antiquity, and record circumstances veiled in the dimmer distance of the earlier ages of the world. But it is here observable that the instances above subjected to the Ideological process are every one of them of higher antiquity than any one of the passages in the Gospel narrative, which our author gravely proposes to submit to its operation. Some proposals indeed are like rich mines, giving but small promise on the surface, yet big with hidden treasure below, though every one has not patience and force enough to dig down and discover it. But really here the more we labour the less seems the chance of reward, and so one is sorely tempted to throw up the enterprise and abandon the venture.

7. However, circumstances lead us to proceed in our undertaking, and, notwithstanding such heavy discouragement, to view those parts of the scriptural narrative which our author particularly marks out for subjection to the Ideological method,

"Sed tamen amoto quæramus Seria ludo."

And here it is my purpose, as indeed the subject demands, to write with all possible gravity and in a reverential spirit. Our author specifies certain historical parts of scripture which, "under the terms of the sixth article" of our Church, as he informs us, "one may accept . . . allegorically, or as parable, or poetry, or legend."<sup>1</sup> Such are the history of the fall <sup>1 pp. 176, 7.</sup> of man<sup>a</sup>, the miracle by which God rebuked the prophet Balaam<sup>b</sup>, the miracle by which God aided the

<sup>a</sup> Gen. iii. 1, *et seq.*

<sup>b</sup> Numb. xxii. 28; 2 Pet. 2. 16.

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children of Israel against the Amorites<sup>a</sup>, the miracle He worked<sup>b</sup> as a token that King Hezekiah should be healed of his sickness, the miracle exhibited at the passage of the Red Sea<sup>c</sup>, the miracle of the confusion of languages at Babel<sup>d</sup>, the miraculous assumption of the prophet Elijah<sup>e</sup>, the records of various apparitions, and "the miraculous particulars of many events" as detailed in the pages of Scripture. This would undoubtedly be a free "handling" of these subjects, but whether "in a becoming spirit" and with any advantage "to the cause of religious and moral truth,"<sup>1</sup> is exceedingly questionable. And although our author does not here tell us that he himself interprets the aforementioned miracles as allegory, parable, poetry, or legend, yet he certainly here frees from the blame of contravening the sixth article [which sets forth the Church's authoritative specification of the canonical books of the Old and New Testament] any man who chooses so to understand them.

<sup>1</sup> Preface.

8. Next, with reference to the historical statement in Scripture, that mankind sprang from their first parents Adam and Eve, we are told, in commendation of the application of Ideology, that "the force, grandeur, and reality of these ideas are not a whit impaired in the abstract" . . . . "even though mankind should have been placed upon the earth in many pairs at once, or in distinct centres of creation."<sup>2</sup> As regards the qualities of force and grandeur here asserted, it is not needful at this moment to speak, but as regards that of reality a word must be said. Of course if it is meant that the reality of the ideas themselves would not be impaired by the fact that they were inconsistent with the truth of

<sup>2</sup> p. 201.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. x. 13.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Kings xx. 11; Is. xxxviii. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Ex. xiv. 22; xv. 8.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xi. 7-9.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Kings ii. 11.



the case, this is so self-evident that it need hardly have been stated; because, once admitting the condition of reality to belong to an idea, all ideas, whether true or false, correct or absurd, are equally real. But if it is meant that the reality of the historical facts which those ideas represent to the mind would not be a whit impaired, should the sacred record narrating those facts be proved false, this is a proposition which can scarcely be seriously maintained, upon due recollection, even by an Ideologist. Ideology.

It cannot be concealed that the whole train of argument connected with these doubts respecting man's descent from Adam as declared in the Bible, is very surprising from the pen of a Christian writer. The subject is here specially introduced in order to illustrate the application of Ideology, and so we have a full apprehension of the conclusions to which that method of reasoning would in this instance lead. Its disciples would look on the scriptural account of man's origin as "a form of narrative into which, in early ages, tradition would easily throw itself spontaneously."<sup>1</sup> For it is natural, we are told, nay, under some circumstances, necessary, that each race should suppose itself "to be sprung from a single pair, and to be the first or the only one of races."<sup>2</sup> Thus a considerable amount of misconception would unquestionably exist among the various races; for if any one of them should chance to be right in their convictions, all the rest must inevitably be wrong. However, according to our author, among each particular people, the historical representation of such convictions, even if untrue, would become the "expression of a great moral truth,—of the brotherhood of all human beings, of their community . . . in suffering, and in frailty, in physical pains, and in moral corruption."<sup>3</sup> For their real brotherhood, it is asserted, depends not upon the fact of

<sup>1</sup> p. 201.<sup>2</sup> p. 201.<sup>3</sup> p. 201.

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their descent from a single stock, but from their common constitution partaking of the same "faculties and affections, fitting them for mutual relation and association."<sup>1</sup>

And so the value of such a representation would lie, not in its historical truth, but in its emblematical application.

Now it is beyond all controversy clear that, according to this view, the Scripture narrative of man's origin may be Ideologically considered not as a record of truth and a history of real events, but as a human tradition, originating in the misapprehensions of men, which have spontaneously or necessarily arisen, and then taken this form of expression. But evil as this mode of dealing with Scripture may be thought, there is much more evil underlying than at first view appears on the surface. And it must be said that this passage is only a specimen of that which frequently occurs in this volume. Propositions are laid down, assertions made, and conclusions drawn, which involve necessarily other and more important matter. They are far too capacious in their grasp,—a serious fault in serious argument. And so here our author is so busy with the matter just in hand, that he seems utterly blind to the conclusions which necessarily and logically follow from the adoption of his Ideological method of interpretation on this subject. Indeed it is devoutly to be hoped that he did not here discover the ultimate consequences of his arguments before he proposed them in any sense for acceptance. For the most momentous verities of the Christian religion depend upon and are indissolubly linked up with those historical records of our first origin, which Ideology would lead us to believe are no records of fact, but traditional misrepresentations of men. Has our author here so far extended his reasoning on this subject as to consider, under his suggestions, what becomes of the doctrines of

<sup>1</sup> p. 201.

original sin, and of the object and truth of the Incarnation; of the old creation in Adam; of the new creation in Christ Jesus? How shall we verify, if we accept this method, the Apostle's words: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive?"<sup>a</sup> How shall we reconcile with this view his statement that "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin?"<sup>b</sup> And — without here repeating those well-known texts of Scripture which enforce these great doctrines, dwelt upon continually by the fathers of the Church, by S. Jerome, by S. Chrysostom, by S. Ambrose, and summed up in those comprehensive words of S. Augustine: "The parents who begat us unto death were Adam and Eve, the parents who begat us unto life, were Christ and his Church" — it is perfectly clear that, according to this Ideological interpretation, the concurrent language of Holy Writ on this subject must be abandoned, as not representing truth. Did our author perceive these consequences? or perceiving them, was he willing to encounter the difficulty?

9. Again we read, in commendation of the Ideological method, that "relations which may repose on doubtful grounds as matter of history, and as history be incapable of being ascertained or verified, may yet be equally suggestive of true ideas with facts absolutely certain. The spiritual significance is the same of the transfiguration, of opening blind eyes, of causing the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly, of feeding multitudes with bread in the wilderness, of cleansing leprosy, whatever links may be deficient in the traditional record of particular events."<sup>1</sup> Now what is the plain scope of these words? Is not the thought here at least suggested to the reader, that miracles of our Blessed Lord worked in

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 22.<sup>b</sup> Rom. v. 12.<sup>1</sup> p. 202.

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accordance with the predictions of prophecy, repose on doubtful grounds as matters of history? Is not this apologetic strain, asserting that their spiritual significance by the aid of Ideology is the same, whatever links may be deficient in the traditional records, really a reserved mode of stating that such deficiency is held to exist?

10. Further, under this head some suppositions of uncertainty in the sacred narrative are suggested, and should these suggestions be granted, we are told that our Blessed Lord would be "none the less" . . . "in idea"<sup>1</sup> what Scripture represents him to be, "even if it be unproved" that the representation were true in "historic fact."<sup>2</sup> But really there is here such an identification of imagination with reality, of that which has not been with that which has, of that which is not with that which is, as, if carried out to its legitimate consequences, would create and foster doubts respecting the former existence of all whose names are handed down to us in history whether sacred or profane: and would scarcely escape from pressing hard upon a belief even in our own personal identity.

We are also here assured on our author's authority, that "it need not trouble us if in consistency we should have to suppose both an ideal origin, and to apply an ideal meaning, to the birth in the city of David, and to other circumstances of the infancy. So again the Incarnation of the divine Immanuel remains, although the angelic appearances which herald it in the narratives of the Evangelists, may be of ideal origin according to the conceptions of former days."<sup>3</sup> Now so far as regards the application of ideal meanings to these events, that of course may not only be no cause of trouble to any one,

<sup>1</sup> p. 203.<sup>2</sup> p. 203.<sup>3</sup> p. 203.

but may really tend to edification, if managed with wise discrimination and becoming reverence; and for such improvement of historical facts we have the highest authority. But when we are told that the great Christian verity of the Incarnation "remains"<sup>1</sup> [*i. e.* of course means unimpaired, for otherwise such suppositions would trouble us, and so our author's whole argument would be worthless], if we should suppose an ideal origin to the appearances of Gabriel to Zacharias and the Virgin Mary, of the angel to Joseph, of the heavenly choir to the watching shepherds, and if we should suppose an ideal origin to the historical details of the Saviour's manger-cradle at Bethlehem, as well as to the other recorded circumstances of his infancy — then it must be confessed that such a proposition does violence to all rules of evidence, and is inconsistent with the application of correct reasoning.

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<sup>1</sup> p. 203.

11. Thus far we have not been directly assured that our author himself applies the Ideological method to the interpretation of Scripture, though it certainly has been favourably commended to notice. However, he tells us that the narrative of our Blessed Lord's temptation in the wilderness may be "more usefully interpreted ideologically than in any other manner;"<sup>2</sup> so at least in this instance of Scripture history we learn that our author himself adopts this method of interpretation, because the alternative would be that he selected one which he considered as less useful: an indefensible choice which it is derogatory to his discernment to suppose that he would make.

<sup>2</sup> p. 201.

12. We must now retrace our steps for a short recapitulation, and consider generally the conclusion which

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the foregoing passages inevitably force upon us. Our author has expressed his conviction — 1. That under the terms in which the English Church has defined the canon of Scripture, any person is blameless for applying the Ideological method comprising allegory, parable, poetry, and legend to the interpretation of many miracles of the Old Testament. 2. That the force, grandeur and reality of our ideas respecting the creation of the human race, are not a whit impaired if we interpret the scriptural account of man's origin ideologically, and so believe that several pairs of our species were originally placed in distinct localities. 3. That the spiritual significance of some of our Blessed Lord's miracles Ideologically viewed is the same, whatever links may be deficient in the evidence recording them. 4. That our Saviour himself is equally in idea what the Scripture represents him to be, even if there lacked proof that that representation was true in fact. 5. That it need not trouble us if we have to refer to an ideal origin the narratives of his birth, incarnation, and the circumstances of his infancy. 6. And finally, we have at least one instance in which our author must be held to adopt himself the Ideological method of interpretation as applicable to Scripture historical narrative.

Now whatever art may have been exercised in stating propositions, whatever caution may have been observed in framing statements so as to embarrass reply, if permission, counsel, encouragement, comfort and example, are the ablest means of recommending any particular course to mankind, it is as clear as anything can be clear, that the Ideological method in the interpretation of Scripture is by our author generally commended, and that with all appliances within his reach, for the acceptance of his readers. And this too is done in such form as to make each individual the judge as to the extent to which

this principle may be applied, without modification, reserve, or limitation, for we are specially told on this head that "liberty must be left to all."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> p. 201.

Where then are we to stop? What single sentence of Holy Writ is safe from this most strange treatment? If the record of some of our Blessed Lord's miracles are not here left unscathed, why should others escape? Why should not all equally suffer? And further, is not every narrated particular of His mysterious birth, life, passion, death, resurrection and ascension, liable to be interpreted as though it had only been an idea conceived in some ingenious — it may be pious, mind — and then afterwards falsely translated from the regions of imagination and fancy, without truth or warrant, to this material world of real existence?

13. There are really many reasons which induce one to abstain from writing much or long on this painful part of the subject. But it is right to say that one must conclude that our author has not taken a comprehensive view of the inevitable consequences following from the principles he has enunciated; and that he, in common with other Christian men, would be shocked at the results which must ensue if those principles were carried out. From motives of reverence I have myself abstained from submitting one single passage of Holy Writ to the Ideological method, and passages from profane writers only were above selected in order to test its value. We have seen above what (without, so far as I can perceive, any exaggeration of the principles propounded in the essay under view) would be the logical and inevitable results of thus dealing with profane history. And I would now put it in all solemnity and seriousness to any thoughtful reader, whether he is prepared to submit to such a process those writings which claim to be the records of God's

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dealings with men; and I ask in all soberness whether this can be to any reasonable person an acceptable mode of interpreting that Book, — without at this moment assuming its Divine origin or the truth of its contents, — which professes to convey messages far transcending all others in value and importance to the human race?

14. “The Ideologian,” however, our author tells us, “is evidently in possession of a principle which will enable him to stand in charitable relation”<sup>1</sup> towards those who differ with him. That this principle is consistent with charity to others, in some sense, shall not for the moment be disputed; but, with the sister quality of mercy to them it very surely has, alas! nothing in common. There is no double boon here. It is very hard to see, should our author succeed in recommending it for adoption, how it could bless the giver; and as for “him that takes,” so far from conferring any blessing, it would assuredly, in the dark hours of human trial and sorrow, rob him of his sweetest consolation, and, in all hours, of his surest comfort. For all firm confidence in Divine assurances, all sure reliance on Divine declarations, all steadfast hope in Divine promises, are thus undermined. By means of this invention we are too truly told that “histories to some become parables to others, and facts to those are emblems to these.”<sup>2</sup> Thus fact and imagination, reality and fiction, truth and fancy, are undistinguishingly identified, and so this principle, once unreservedly admitted and allowed to have free course, could not fail, like a weight on an incline, to gather motion in descent; and would most assuredly never stop till it had rolled giver and receiver, tutor and pupil, teacher and disciple, to the very darkest bottom of helpless scepticism and infidelity.

<sup>1</sup> p. 202.<sup>2</sup> p. 204.



## IV.

1.  HE second of the main objects, according to the order above laid down and proposed by our author's Essay, is to show—that the principle of doctrinal limitation is at variance with the true principle of a multitudinist church. And this position would of course, if proved, render more reasonable and more hopeful his succeeding suggestion for relaxation of subscription to formularies on the part of the national clergy.

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Now the first proper advance in approaching any argument is this: to take special care that all persons engaged in it should be agreed upon the meanings of the terms used, and that the subject matter on which they are employed should be distinctly understood. The position here maintained by our author has reference to what he terms a "multitudinist church." Of this somewhat novel term it would be unfair to complain, because it is not of our author's own invention, but has been borrowed from other writers; only to some readers it may perchance fail to convey a definite meaning. However, to cure that possible inconvenience, a few words will probably suffice. From our author's arguments and reasoning it is clear that, in his opinion, though every multitudinist church need not be national, yet that every national church must needs be multitudinist. In short, in his view multitudinism the greater includes nationalism the less. Consequently,

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the reasoning applied by him to a multitudinist church in pursuing this subject must be held applicable, the greater containing the less, to a national church. Thus, by clearing the way, and hereafter, whenever possible, using the term "National Church," the subject with which we are really concerned, a sufficiently complete understanding of the terms used, and a tolerably clear idea of the subject matter in discussion, may be secured.

2. Our author's position is asserted in no doubtful language. "Together with his inauguration"—he tells us—"of Multitudinism, Constantine also inaugurated a principle essentially at variance with it, the principle of doctrinal limitation."<sup>1</sup> This last principle is also said in another place to be "at variance with a true Multitudinism:"<sup>2</sup> and we are further told that "doctrinal limitations in the multitudinist form of church are not essential to it."<sup>3</sup> Now in these passages it is beyond all question asserted that the principle of doctrinal limitation is not essential to a multitudinist, or, as after the preceding explanation we will call it, a National Church. Nay, further, that the principle of doctrinal limitation is essentially at variance with the principle of such an institution.

3. Considering the light thrown on this subject from reflections on past history, it must be confessed that this proposition is at first view highly surprising; and one would naturally conclude that in support of such a position some weighty reserves of argument would have been forthcoming before its adoption could be expected. However, after searching with some industry under this head, one must say that very little argument, and that little very inconclusive upon the matter in hand,

<sup>1</sup> p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> p. 167.

can be discovered. Upwards of nine pages appear devoted to the subject; but it is not easy to perceive, at least without faculties considerably improved, the close relevancy of their general contents. For example, we are reminded of some vulgar errors, certainly foolish enough in themselves, which have prevailed in reference to the Emperor Constantine, and our monarch Henry VIII.; and of the inconsistency of Calvinism with the fundamental principles of a National Church—a complaint against that acid profession which might be justly swelled to a charge of irreconcilable enmity against almost all other good principles whatsoever connected with faith and morals. We are assured, on the other hand, that “a large admixture of the congregational spirit”<sup>1</sup> is compatible with a National Church. Then the opinions which the early Christians are assumed to have held with respect to the heathen states in which they dwelt are introduced, and also a comparative view of the measures of charity discernible in the characters of S. Paul and S. John, together with a suggestion that our predecessors in the Church were scarcely sufficiently cognisant of an imperfect analogy in some respects existing between Christianity and heathenism. Next an assurance is supplied that “Heathendom had its national churches;”<sup>2</sup> and, as a corollary from this, that “a National Church need not, historically speaking, be Christian:”<sup>3</sup> though no references are given to any authors of credit, so as to enable us to consult the records of any such institutions, nor is any instance cited for our information of a Buddhist, Confucian, Hindoo, Parsee, Mahometan, nor indeed of any Heathen Church, in support of these statements. Then follow some reflections upon priesthoods generally, with a suggestion of opinion that a fresh supply of such orders in

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<sup>1</sup> p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> p. 173.

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all religions would in any case of failure be reproduced. Some similarities and discrepancies between the conceptions formed by the Jewish people of Jehovah, and those formed by the heathen of their false deities, are then adverted to; and a most proper caution given that Christians are not warranted in universally imitating Jewish institutions. A very brief glance at the subject of the development of various religions next follows, and specially of the Christian religion under the individualist and nationalist principles respectively. A comparison is then instituted between the freedom of the Teutonic and Latinized Churches. And, finally, we are reminded of the existence of two types of mind among Christians, the one prone to draw fanatical inferences from adopted principles, the other eager heedlessly to follow free thought; a word of warning and advice being added to our churchmen, that unless a frank appeal to reason is allowed, and a frank criticism of Scripture is adopted, certain specified evils will ensue; and that consequently some extraneous aid should be sought for enlightening the fanatic, and some endeavour made, on the other hand, to "supply to the negative theologian some positive elements in Christianity, on grounds more sure to him than the assumption of an objective 'faith once delivered to the saints,' which he cannot identify with the creed of any Church as yet known to him."<sup>1</sup>

Such is a brief outline of the chief subjects submitted to the reader under this head; but how they can be used as arguments to prove or illustrations to elucidate the matter in hand, is not altogether clear. Of course, an ingenious mind may detect remote connections between some of them and the position maintained — that the principle of doctrinal limitation is a principle essentially at variance with that of a National Church;

<sup>1</sup> pp. 174-5.

but it requires an understanding more than common to perceive how they even approach towards any proof of the point in question.

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However, amid the somewhat excursive matter above specified, one finds interspersed a few passages which at least seem to claim the semblance of arguments on behalf of the point in hand. These have, therefore, been left to the last, and what their value is must be answered by the reader's judgment. One such argument is an assertion, that certain forms of doctrine and practice which were current in parts of the West, "were neither of the essence of a National Church, nor even of the essence of a Christian Church."<sup>1</sup> This is probably, nay, perhaps certainly true; but is an argument good only against those particular forms. Another argument is an averment, that a National Church need not be "tied down to particular forms which have been prevalent at certain times in Christendom."<sup>2</sup> Still this hardly comes up to the requirement of the case; for, granting the axiom, it does not follow that each national Church ought not to assert its own doctrinal limitation, but only that such doctrinal limitation need not be everywhere identical. And that such dissimilarity does exist between the several conditions of different churches is notorious. Another argument against doctrinal limitation is founded on the danger of provoking to separatism. Of course, if no faith was defined, there would be nothing in respect of belief to separate from. But to pull down a house for fear the inmates should chance to emigrate would be odd management, and so this argument, like those preceding it, seems short of satisfaction. Notwithstanding, however, their inconclusiveness to some minds, the matter appears unquestionable enough to our author's. He must, one

<sup>1</sup> p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> p. 173.

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would suppose, have some more ample fund of information to draw on, some more accurate insight into the human mind, some more sensible appreciation of the injury which doctrinal limitations inflict upon the universal Church, than he thinks fit to divulge in detail, for he gives us this very positive general assurance, that, — “upon a larger knowledge of Christian history, upon a more thorough acquaintance with the mental constitution of man, upon an understanding of the obstacles they present to a true Catholicity, they may be cast off.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 167.

4. It will thus have been seen that the proposition before us—namely, that the principle of doctrinal limitation is a principle essentially at variance with that of a National Church—has been by no means conclusively established by argument, but that it rests for support chiefly upon the bare assertion of our author. Now as the arguments he has used are certainly very unsatisfactory, the method I shall take is not to combat them, but in direct contradiction to his conclusions to assert, 1st—that the principle of doctrinal limitation is essential to the existence of every church whatsoever : and, 2ndly—that it is more largely involved in the condition of a National Church than in that of others. And if I should be happy enough to produce arguments for these two positions sufficient to convince my reader of their truth, then, at least in his judgment, our author’s propositions, as maintaining the direct negative to mine, must as a matter of course fall to the ground.

5. My 1st proposition is this—that the principle of doctrinal limitation is essential to the existence of every Church whatsoever. And certainly it had never occurred

to my mind, at least before reading our author's argument, that any man of thought had ever doubted this, nor had it ever seemed to me a point requiring for corroboration any proof at all. However, these were clearly great mistakes. Indeed, from the evidence of the Essay before us, summary conviction of these errors is inevitable.

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Doctrinal limitation would seem to an ordinary mind essential to the very existence of a Church, whether the nature of the institution is considered, or its inherent character, or the conditions attached to it. For, without now entering upon formal definition, what is a Church but a body of men holding in some measure corresponding belief, and assenting in some measure to similar doctrines? or if not doing so, professing (which for our argument will suffice) to do so. Some limits as regards faith and doctrine then must exist; I do not say now how wide or how strait those limits should be, but some there must be, otherwise the idea of a Church vanishes altogether. Men might exist in bodies politic, but to call any aggregation of those individuals—a Church—where there was no professed correspondence at all in belief, no asserted similarity at all in faith between any two of them, would certainly be absurd. One feels, at least until some new considerations should intervene, as though the matter was too self-evident to need a word in elucidation; but still one is really driven by our essayist, to produce proof for what one had hitherto considered far outside the possibility of doubt. Once then admit, and who is bold enough to deny it, the necessity of some correspondence in belief even the very least, of some similarity in faith even the very least, between individuals as necessary to the constitution of a Church, and you have the conclusion, in my opinion, a very just one, instantly and inevitably

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forced upon you that doctrinal limitation is as a principle essential to the existence of every Church whatsoever.

Not a word has yet been said, because for the present purpose it is unnecessary, about the mode of limiting doctrine, or the straitness or wideness of the boundaries to be assigned. All as yet asserted is, that the simple idea of a Church is that of a number of individuals united to some degree in the same belief, and so involving the principle of limitation in that behalf. It is positively impossible to conceive the notion of a Church where every man, as regards faith, is to be a law to himself; unless indeed one shelters oneself under the assumption that there are as many churches as individual persons in a given population. Under such an absurd assumption only is this notion for a moment admissible. If one supposes the existence of a Church at all, individuals must be united in it in some measure of common belief; and though it is a question of degree how far they may be permitted to differ and yet constitute one Church, yet that there must be some community of faith really is a self-evident proposition. An entire unity in true faith would evidently enough constitute the perfection of a Church, while every grade of difference is a mark of imperfection, and every breach of unity a step towards disruption. "*Dissensio quippe vos et divisio,*" as says S. Augustine, "*facit hæreticos; pax vero et unitas facit Catholicos.*" But if some community of faith is necessary to constitute a Church at all: then beyond controversy — the principle of doctrinal limitation is essential to the existence of every Church whatsoever.

6. The 2nd proposition now to be maintained is this, — that the principle of doctrinal limitation is more



largely involved in the condition of a National Church than in that of others.

That we may have a clear notion of the condition of a National Church, one cannot do better than take our own Church as an example ; and some prolixity on this subject may be considered as the more pardonable, from the fact that “ The National Church ” is the avowed subject of our author’s Essay and of our inquiry. Moreover, there are several other reasons which will excuse our taking her as an example. For she affords, perhaps, the most perfect type of a National Church that the world has ever seen, regarding her as an institution, in its integrity, and apart from the anomalies which have been forced upon her by an unjustifiable exercise of extraneous power. Her condition too, and character and position are here better known, than can be the case with other churches. And further, from the interest which one may hope that any reader of these lines takes in her, arguments drawn from her state and requirements will more readily and closely come home to his mind.

Without now reverting at any length to the history of British and Saxon times,—from which, if space would allow, arguments most conclusive might be supplied for the complete and independent nationality of this Church ; and whence also it might be shown, beyond controversy, that the principles of a National Church, “ free in her judgments,” are intertwined among the deepest roots of the English constitution,—without now showing in detail how these principles have been subsequently, by Magna Charta, by numerous statutes, and by common law over and over again ratified and confirmed,—it will be sufficient for the purpose in hand to present to the reader the real present relation of this Church to this nation. And that, not indeed as represented by some modern orators,

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whose harangues seem to indicate no laborious application to historical research, and betray remarkably slender acquaintance with any creditable sources of information, but as now existing in fact, and as still asserted by the authentic records of our country.

Now the nationality of this Church is very specially manifest from the following considerations. It is manifest by the necessity that the sovereign should be a member of this Church ascertained in a manner most authentic — participation in the Holy Communion. It is manifest by the Coronation Service, both from the sense of its terms and in its distinctive act by the primate of all England. It is manifest by the summoning of the provincial synods of the country, now called Convocations, which the Crown, by most imperative writs always requires the respective archbishops to call together whenever a parliament is convened. It is manifest by the presence of bishops in the Senate, a right inherited by them from the times of the “Great Councils” of our early ancestors, as also by the presence of the bishops in that more modern institution, the Privy Council. It is manifest by the terms of the parliamentary summons, and the daily service with which the proceedings in Parliament commence. It is manifest by the oaths imposed on persons assuming official posts, and by the oaths imposed on Roman Catholic members of parliament. It is manifest by the Acts of Union, by the authority of Ecclesiastical Courts, and by the inauguration, with acts of national worship, of the general gaol deliveries and trials at Nisi Prius before the sovereign’s representatives in various localities. It is manifest by the religious services celebrated, as the rule and not the exception, in all national institutions, and by the rights of baptism, of provision for attendance at public worship, of marriage, and of

burial, which legally appertain to every citizen, where no publicly recognised impediment intervenes.

A further very strong proof of the nationality of this Church is also solemnly and publicly expressed, in another particular, and if the reader should feel doubts when that proof is asserted, I venture to assure him that competent inquiry would suffice to dispel them. I refer to the required presence of elected representatives of the second order of clergy in parliament, as enjoined by the constitution, and very solemnly to this day commanded by the crown in the writs of summons issued whenever a parliament is convened.

One in some measure fears provoking a smile on this subject; but it is really no laughing matter that royal commands, continually repeated from the time of King Edward the First, should be now so systematically disobeyed, and the requirements of the British constitution so pertinaciously set at defiance. For the fact<sup>a</sup> is, as above

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<sup>a</sup> By the "præmunientes" clause in the bishops' writ of summons to parliament, they are all and each required to cause proctors or clerical representatives in each diocese to be elected, who, with other specified divines, are to attend in the parliament: not that these persons should have votes on divisions (except, perhaps, on money bills since 1665), but they are as spiritual assistants to advise, consider, consult, and consent in matters touching the Church, and, as Sir E. Coke tells us, have "many times appeared" for such purposes. The same fact may be learned from the ancient treatises, "De modo tenendi parliamentum," of which some remarkably interesting and valuable copies may now be seen by any curious inquirer in the British Museum; and also from abundant records now existing of the elections of such representatives, some of them as late at least as the year 1676. The intended object of the attendance of such parliamentary proctors is the same as that which requires the attendance at the opening of a parliament of the judges learned in the law, that they may be prepared to give advice, counsel, and consent on matters peculiarly connected with their office and profession. It may be added, by the way, that this summons of clerical representatives to Parliament dates from

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asserted, whatever may be the modern practice. This royal summons for the election of parliament-proctors, who have been ignorantly confused with the convocation-proctors, has led many writers, and some too of mark, who in all reason ought to have known better, to date our Provincial Synods or Convocations from the time of King Edward the First. But those assemblies are of far older date than parliament, and the vulgar notion that they derive their origin from that monarch is unquestionably false, and may be at once exploded from the mind of any one who will studiously apply himself to the perusal of the earlier accounts of our synods given in full by Spelman, and in the “*Concilia Magnæ Britanniae*.” Or if any curious inquirer prefers the evidence of original records, and will take the trouble to make a pilgrimage to the registry of Worcester Cathedral, he may there see for himself the original papers citing the bishop and clergy of that diocese to attend a Convocation under Archbishop Robert Kilwarby, at the New Temple, London, in 1273; and dated September 7th and 10th of that year. Now considering that Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward the First, was abroad at this time, not having returned from his expedition to the Holy Land, and that he was not crowned until August 19th, 1274, it is hard to persuade oneself that our Provincial Synods or Convocations date their origin from that monarch.

However, it must be candidly confessed that this has been somewhat of an excursion, pardonable, I trust, considering the title and subject of this Essay, and we must hasten back to the proposition in hand. From

the year 1295, the twenty-third year of King Edward the First, and has never since (except during the Rebellion) been omitted.

what has been said above, one ventures to think that the reader will have been persuaded that this Church of England affords, at least in theory, a very perfect type of a National Church. Much in corroboration of this might be derived also from a consideration of her ancient and never failing jealousy of all foreign interference whatsoever, and her constantly expressed determination to define by herself and for herself, faith, morals, and discipline. This, however, shall be passed over as leading us too far from our point. If the reader will admit that she presents a true type of a National Church, that is enough for the present, and we will proceed.

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My second proposition then is narrowed to this point, — that the principle of doctrinal limitation is more largely involved in the condition of this National Church, or of such a church as this, than in that of others.

First, then, the acceptance of any synodical decisions whatsoever at once presumes the principle of doctrinal limitation, for practice must at least in some sort correspond to belief, if honest, and belief to practice. Such were those Synodical decisions which S. James, with the Apostles and Presbyters at the Council of Jerusalem (the true type and proper original of our Convocations, the bishops and second order of the ministry uniting in council), thought fit for the government and discipline of the early Church. And such directions for the government of a National Church it seems, upon consideration, impossible to dispense with. Indeed, how the Christian faith and morals of a number of individuals joined in a corporate body can, according to the Gospel directions and apostolic example, be otherwise reduced into any tolerable method and order it is not easy to see. However, to favour our author's position, suppose for the sake of argument, all such doctrinal limitations as those abandoned:

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Secondly, the acceptance and use of any creed whatsoever, say the Apostles or the Nicene (if I may be permitted to use the common, though perhaps not the precisely correct designation of that record), of course, instantly presume the principle of doctrinal limitation. And the idea of a National Church without some such symbol, or — what it may be presumed in our author's view, to which I should cordially assent, would be far less desirable — without some newly invented confession of faith of modern times, can hardly with any reason be entertained. Still, again, however surprising to most minds such a proposition may appear, suppose for the sake of argument the use of all creeds and confessions in a National Church abandoned :

Thirdly, the use of any liturgy whatsoever presumes the principle of doctrinal limitation. And here a word must be interposed. Whatever dark hints on this subject may have at any time been made in law courts, where conquest and not truth is the avowed object of some ; one may express a devout hope and rest in a firm belief that among those who have the slightest regard for truth or religion, still more among those who are their professed advocates, the proposition that the *lex orandi* need not necessarily be the *lex credendi* will always be scouted with universal reprobation. The principle that expressions of prayer are limitations of belief, seems to have been very closely present, and very rightly so, to the mind of one considered a great theological authority by the authors of the volume before us. For the new Prayer-Book lately composed for the Church of England, and generally attributed to Baron Bunsen, is remarkable for the mode in which all the addresses to the throne of Heaven in the litany are altered, so as to exclude any possible inference of the doctrine of the Trinity ; and

though the Church of England did not consent to the adoption of this manual, yet, as a curiosity of literature, it is valuable, and may be consulted in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, as well as in some private collections. Indeed, if a man's faith and his prayers do not correspond, he had far better not pray at all. That is a shocking alternative for an individual; it is still more shocking for a nation. But if a nation accepts any form of liturgy, however brief, or indeed prescribes any guidance whatever for the expression of national worship — and how a nation professing Christianity can in its public devotions to Almighty God avoid this, is not clear — then there is involved at once the principle of doctrinal limitation. However, again, for the sake of argument, suppose National liturgies and National forms of worship abandoned:

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Fourthly and lastly, the use of the Lord's Prayer, if that alone were left and Nationally used, presumes the principle of doctrinal limitation. If the *lex orandi* is admitted to be the *lex credendi* — and I feel positive that none but an infidel, and he must be an illogical one, will seriously deny it, — then a National use of that Divine Prayer necessarily involves the belief that God is in heaven; that His kingdom will come; that He can supply our needs, and forgive our sins; with other particulars of faith which will suggest themselves to every Christian. And here, one cannot even for the sake of argument, suppose the abandonment of its use by any National Church whatsoever, for such an institution (as one cannot without further information assent to the existence of our author's presumed "National Churches" of "Heathendom")<sup>1</sup> would cease to be a Church at all, and would profess itself heathen, as contravening the direct and explicit command of the Lord of the Church himself.

<sup>1</sup> p. 169.

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I have certainly for the sake of argument supposed some very large concessions. Still with all the advantages thus accorded to our author's position, it cannot, one would think, be maintained to satisfaction. The reader will probably think that not even one of the above concessions could be practically granted in a National Church. But he must be pleased to remember, that if any one of them is refused; and if the consequent recognition of any one measure of belief is more sensibly and more authoritatively avowed by national and public acts than by those of individuals or of disjointed congregations, and so more largely involved in the condition of a National Church by such avowal, then my second proposition stands incontestably proved. And now, if my reader should have seen reason to be convinced of the two foregoing propositions — 1. That the principle of doctrinal limitation is essential to the existence of every Church whatsoever: 2. That the principle of doctrinal limitation is more largely involved in the condition of a national Church than in that of others:—what in his judgment becomes of our author's position — that the principle of doctrinal limitation is a principle essentially at variance with that of a National Church?

7. It might possibly be pleaded by our author that he only meant to describe the adoption of exclusive formularies and dogmatic tests, as opposed to the true principles of a National Church. But here our argument might become involved in questions of degree; and whether such instruments have not in some instances been too tightly strained, may be with some persons a matter of reasonable doubt, and indeed with others it may amount to a matter of certain conviction that they have. The above arguments, however, have been directed



against what our author has said, not against what he might have meant, when he spoke of the principle of doctrinal limitation. Of course, if his recorded propositions had been other than what they are, the arguments either in favour of them or opposed to them, must have another source, and the advance either for support or attack directed from another quarter, and pushed on in a different direction.

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8. There is, in conclusion, one misapprehension involved in our author's arguments on this subject, which it would be desirable to remove from any mind where it may have found a place. He suggests, with some strain of commendation, "a large admixture of the congregational spirit,"<sup>1</sup> in a multitudinist Church as though that were a spirit which would tend to relax the strictness of doctrinal limitation. But really, from what knowledge we have of that spirit, one can hardly think that it would promote our author's declared wishes. And though it would not be fair, as he excepts Congregationalists who are Calvinists from his exemplars, to use as a direct argument against him, their tendencies not only to limit the bounds of faith for a man in this world, but to limit within their own narrow number all hopes of mercy in the next; yet when the leaven of Congregationalism is recommended, the cruel and unchristian belief which a vast portion of its votaries has adopted, at least makes one most suspicious of any approximation at all towards its spirit.

However, for the reason above specified, not to urge this as an argument, but only as a warning, it must be confessed, that Congregationalism, at least as we have seen its "spirit" developed in our own land, does not offer any very happy promise of relaxation of doc-

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trinal limitation. Some considerable expression of its amenities in a contrary direction, has certainly within our own knowledge been exhibited even in this free country, when parliament, imbued thoroughly with the spirit of Congregationalism, and voting, in 1647, "liberty to tender consciences by way of indulgence," also added that, "the indulgence as to tender consciences shall not extend to the Book of Common Prayer;" and subsequently enacted that the use of that manual, even within any private house or family within this kingdom of England, should subject the offender to a penalty of five pounds for the first offence, ten pounds for the second, and for the third, one year's imprisonment, without bail or mainprize. Certainly here appears little encouragement at the hands of Congregationalism for a hope of relaxation of doctrinal limitation. For what was then included within the limits of permitted belief, the Westminster Confession can vouch, for what was excluded out of them our own Prayer-book may furnish at least considerable evidence.

Nor can one reasonably gather from historical examples that the "Congregational spirit" which so highly raises our author's hopes, would be more beneficent in granting freedom of thought to nationally accredited teachers than to private individuals or their families, in case, as he suggests, "the most eminent of the congregation"<sup>1</sup> were allowed to emerge "into offices for which they are suited." Some of the "true hierarchs and leaders of thought and manners,"<sup>2</sup> of whom he speaks under such a system,—unless we are misinformed,—were at that period of our national history when the "Congregational spirit" was very largely diffused, Mr. Nye, Mr. Tombes, and Mr. Peters. Whether they had "true unction from above"<sup>3</sup> one cannot now

<sup>1</sup> p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> p. 168.

decide ; but, at any rate, that they emerged into offices for testing the qualifications of candidates for preaching is matter of history. And certainly doctrinal relaxation does not seem to have been very largely granted to those most unfortunate aspirants who then came under examination, and whose learning and ingenuity must have been sorely taxed by the inquiries put to them — Was God willing that Adam should fall? — Are motions to sin before consent sinful? — What is the breath of the soul? What is the heat of the soul? — What is the action of the soul? These are some of the questions proposed by the afore-mentioned “hierarchs and leaders of thought and manners,” which, by way of requiring answers would seem calculated to overstrain somewhat tightly limitations of doctrine. Whether any process of the new science Ideology would have assisted the respondents may be a question. At any rate our author, even by the application of that method, could hardly here discover much encouragement for the invocation of Congregationalism in aid of the desired relaxations. On the contrary, if one is not very much mistaken, he would find the “Congregational Spirit”<sup>1</sup> the most cruel of taskmasters. And whoever shall submit to its sway will surely find but small encouragement to join in the words of the Latin king —

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“Pars mihi pacis erit dextram tetegisse Tyranni.”

<sup>1</sup> p 167.

## V.

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I.



THE third of the chief objects proposed by the Essay under view, following the order in which we undertook to consider them, is—to recommend a relaxation of the present form of subscription to the formularies of the English Church, required from her clergy.

Here, however, some general topics of great importance are involved, to which it is desirable first to advert, and so to proceed to the main proposition. Now, though from considerations suggested under the last head, it must be, to speak guardedly, clear to some minds that the principle of doctrinal limitation is essential to the existence of every church whatsoever, yet how tightly those limitations should be strained, may be to the same minds a question of degree. That must depend on many circumstances, and must be subject to many modifying considerations to which no prudent man can be blind. When S. Paul preached to the Athenians on Mars Hill, and proclaimed the word of the true God to them then unknown<sup>a</sup>; or when S. Peter<sup>b</sup> preached to those who were present at Cæsarea the things that were commanded him, we cannot suppose that the same expressed precision in belief could be looked for or required as necessary for admission into the Church, from Dionysius and Damaris<sup>c</sup> and the others with

<sup>a</sup> Acts xvii. 22.

<sup>b</sup> Acts x. 34.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xvii. 34.

them, or from Cornelius and those with him, as would be reasonably exacted from an English convert from infidelity, or Judaism, at the present day. The categories not only of time, but of place and opportunity, must enter into our calculations on this subject. The Church and her faith does not stand in the same relation towards those who, even granting them to be infidel, have been brought up in a Christian country, and towards Pagans who have never before heard of the sound of the Gospel. When our heroic missionaries now labour to convert the barbarous tribes of Africa, the preachers of the word must be satisfied to confer the rite of baptism upon a less stringent confession of faith than would reasonably be required of any one brought up in England. If those Pagans will, for the sake of Christ's religion renounce the practice of putting their fellow-men to a cruel death, and will discard their plurality of wives, a very great advance is held to have been made towards a claim for admission into the Christian Church. But surely a simple undertaking not to murder his neighbour, and to abstain from polygamy would hardly be thought, in the case of an Englishman, to discover any tolerable approach towards a claim for Christian baptism.

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2. If then limitations of doctrine become, as one would think must be allowed, questions of degree subject to many external considerations and consequent modifications, it may fairly be a question whether there has been a tendency in some cases to strain those limitations too tightly. The subject of the more modern confessions of Christendom of course immediately occur to the mind. The Decrees of Trent and Dort, the Confessions of Augsburg and Wurtemberg, the Helvetic and Saxon Confessions, the Articles of the English Church, the

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Westminster Confession, are examples. And certainly, in candour it may be said, that my opinion probably approaches that of our author, on this point of strict limitations more nearly than it does in those other matters, on which it has been my fate so widely to disagree with him. Still, however, even if it be conceded, that a tendency to overstrain such limitations is sometimes discoverable; yet I must think that our author has assailed and endeavoured to weaken those very points of limitation which are least open to any just complaint, and which, on the other hand, should be defended with extremest jealousy, and maintained with the utmost determination.

3. For in the Essay before us, a most vigorous endeavour is made to show that we are not bound under the terms of the Sixth Article, which defines the canon of Scripture, to acknowledge the contents of the Bible as a book, as the "Word of God."<sup>1</sup> The real intention being afterwards to commend for the explanation of parts of that book, the ideological method of interpretation, which would by most pious minds be considered as inadmissible in dealing with a direct revelation from the Most High. Now at the commencement of this endeavour to show that under the terms of the Sixth Article, we are not bound to receive the general contents of the Bible as the "Word of God," we are assured, that in that "pivot article of the Church, this last expression does not occur, but only" the expressions, "'Holy Scripture,' 'Canonical Books,' Old and New Testaments.'"<sup>2</sup> And on this fact a distinction is founded; for we are assured that the phrase "Word of God, . . . is never applied to" the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments "by any of the Scriptural authors, and . . .

<sup>1</sup> p. 175-9.

<sup>2</sup> p. 175.

according to Protestant principles never could be applied to them by any sufficient authority from without.”<sup>1</sup> What our author means by “Protestant” principles he has not explained. The word was first applied to those persons who protested against the acts of the diet of Spires, and in serious argument and careful writing should reasonably be confined to them and such as hold like opinions. A careless use of this word, which must include in its embrace, faiths (not excepting pagan ones) as diverse as the constitution of men’s minds, will certainly never tend to accurate definition, for the term “Protestant,” has a negative intention only, and in any case can only declare what a man does not believe, never what he does. However, to pass this by, our author, from the above remark, must of course deny that the Wurttemberg Confession, which calls the Scriptures “the oracle of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>2</sup> and the Helvetic Confession which calls them “the very Word of God,”<sup>3</sup> as he himself informs us, were rightly framed according to what he terms “Protestant principles.” And this controversy may be left to the advocates of those respective confessions, to settle with him.

He encourages us however to “rejoice in our comparative freedom,”<sup>4</sup> that the Sixth Article only calls the Bible “Holy Scripture,” “Canonical books,” “Old and New Testaments,”<sup>5</sup> and does not use the expression, “Word of God” in reference to it, nor “lay down that everything which is contained in Scripture, must be believed on”<sup>6</sup> peril of salvation. From this fine distinction between the term “Word of God” as applied to the Bible by the Helvetic Confession, and the terms “Holy Scripture,” “Canonical books,” “Old and New Testaments,” as applied by the English Church, our author considers himself as justified in enlarging to a most surprising

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<sup>1</sup> p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> p. 175,  
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<sup>3</sup> p. 176,  
note.

<sup>4</sup> p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> p. 176.

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extravagance of licence, that freedom in respect of the interpretation of Scripture, which he above told us was a subject for rejoicing.

Consequently, we are assured, that “under the terms of the Sixth Article one may accept literally or allegorically, or as parable, or poetry, or legend, the story of a serpent tempter, of an ass speaking with man’s voice, of an arresting of the earth’s motion, of a reversal of its motion, of waters standing in a solid heap, of witches, and a variety of apparitions.”<sup>1</sup> “So under the terms of the Sixth Article,” as he tells us, “every one is free in judgment as to the primeval institution of the Sabbath, the universality of the deluge, the confusion of tongues, the corporeal taking up of Elijah into heaven, the nature of angels, the reality of demoniacal possession, the personality of Satan, and the miraculous particulars of many events.”<sup>2</sup> Now the last clause of this sentence is so capacious, no limitation whatever being assigned to its comprehensiveness, that one is absolutely bewildered in endeavouring to arrive at a distinct apprehension of what it may contain, or what it excludes. Whether as to all miracles recorded in the Bible or only some, one is left “free in judgment,”<sup>3</sup> whether the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Blessed Lord, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, may be here included or not, is no way specified. However, sufficient subject-matter for the exercise of this freedom of judgment, as we have seen above, is precisely detailed, which may serve to arouse the extremest alarm in the Christian mind. And the permission for all this freedom of judgment is extorted from this fact, that our Church in her Sixth Article defines the contents of the Bible only as “Canonical Books,” “Holy Scripture,” “Old and New Testaments,” and has not used the term the “Word of God.”

<sup>1</sup> pp. 176-7.

<sup>2</sup> p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



But if, as our author rightly tells us, the term "Canonical Books" means "determined books,"<sup>1</sup> and those "determined books" are designated as "Holy Scripture," then it must be said that there can be but small warranty for treating that which is designated by our Church, and has been acknowledged by himself as "Holy Scripture," in the manner above specified. The distinction between what is meant and properly understood by the term "Holy Scripture," and the term "Word of God," is certainly not so broad as he has here represented, nor does it justify such startling consequences. Probably by many Christians that distinction is almost inappreciable.

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<sup>1</sup> p. 176.

4. Upon the "comparative freedom"<sup>2</sup> in which our author invites us to rejoice, as conferred in his opinion by the modes of expression used in the Sixth Article, he has further presumed to a most exceptionable and unwarrantable extent. In regard to that book which he admits that this Church calls "Holy Scripture," a term subscribed to and still acknowledged by himself; he tells us that the learned "ought to lead the less educated to distinguish between the different kinds of words which it contains, between the dark patches of human passion and error, which form a partial crust upon it, and the bright centre of spiritual truth within."<sup>3</sup> In regard to the composers of that Book, he not only tells us that, "ill consequences follow from not acknowledging freely the extent of the human element"<sup>4</sup> in their records; but commends the admission that the writers "may err in facts, be weak in memory, mingle imagination with memory, be feeble in inferences, confound illustration with argument, be varying in judgment and opinion."<sup>5</sup> One does not presume upon too

<sup>2</sup> p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> p. 179.

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intimate a knowledge of the feelings of Christian England in affirming that such language as this applied to "Holy Scripture," and the writers of "Holy Scripture," will not generally meet with a favourable reception.

5. After so many expressions of dissent from our author's views and conclusions, it is a relief, and indeed a pleasure, to arrive at a point in this Essay, at which one can come to an entire and cordial argument with him. A complete assent is here given to his declaration that, "Many evils have flowed to the people of England . . . from," what he designates, as "an extreme and too exclusive Scripturalism."<sup>1</sup> He most truly tells us that "There has been something very agreeable to some of the feelings of the Englishman in the persuasion that he possesses, independently of priest or clergyman, the whole matter of his religion bound up in the four corners of a portable book, furnishing him, as he thinks, with an infallible test of the doctrine which he hears from his preacher, with a substitute for all teaching, if he so pleases, and with the complete apparatus necessary, should he desire to become the teacher of others in his turn."<sup>2</sup> This is literally true, and that many evils have thence flowed, it would be very hazardous to deny.

For to suppose that every man can really provide himself with a complete code of Christian faith and morals, from a private perusal of God's Revelation, without some authority to guide, and some interpreter to explain, is, indeed, a Utopian notion. First, each man would, without any such help, have to decide for himself on the canon,—what is Scripture, what is not? for on this point there has been a vast diversity of

<sup>1</sup> p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> p. 178.

judgment; then upon the translations from the original languages,—which is right?—which wrong? for it need hardly be said how much may depend on this, and how various those translations are. The most laborious and the longest life of study applied to these subjects, unassisted, would not suffice for either one of them. And whoever accepts the canon or depends on a translation, at once admits authority, and interpretation external to himself.

Suppose, however, for the sake of argument, this difficulty conceded, and the true canon of Holy Scripture in their mother tongue directly placed in the hands of highly cultivated and acute men, with ample time and opportunity for study and reflection :—is every one of them by his own unassisted powers capable of deducing from that record a correct code of doctrine and practice? If we may judge from recent experience there would under such circumstances be at least but slender guarantee for a right belief. Some strange doctrines might become current. The writers in “Essays and Reviews,” for instance, appear to have arrived at conclusions very different from those taught by this Church and believed by the majority of their countrymen. The unlimited exercise of private judgment certainly, from our late experience, would seem to hold out but small promise either of unanimity or correctness in faith. And one inclines, by the way, to the conviction, that those who have most vociferously arrogated the exercise of this assumed right, are now by no means the most backward in proclaiming their horror at its natural, and indeed its necessary results.

But even if the unlimited exercise of private judgment, as completely and as widely as it is assumed, should be accorded to highly cultivated and acute men,

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with ample time and opportunity for reflection, — what is the necessary condition of the busy multitudes of this busy country, as regards the formation of their own faith? Listen to the hum of many voices and the tramp of countless footsteps, as they break the silence of early morning in some great city, and see an active population hurrying to their various duties. Hear throughout the long day the ring of the hammer and anvil, the echoes of the axe, the chisel, and the trowel, and the distant boom of untiring machinery, reminding us also of skilled hands and nimble fingers employed in countless branches of labour and manufacture. Consider the active thought and careful calculations of the heads which originate, direct, and record the compass, and detail of this complicated mass of human action, while each is honestly and laboriously employed in that sphere where Providence has placed him. And then remember that as the bright hours sink to the stillness of evening, so the wearied powers of those, who have been throughout the day actively employed, follow too the Almighty's laws and need a like repose. Or look out on some fertile plain, and see the toil of a working population, obeying God's primeval law — "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;"<sup>a</sup>—and so labouring from morn to eve, that the valleys may stand thick with corn, and the flocks and herds multiply, even until those laborious limbs require the refreshment and rest which the night brings. And can we then possibly force ourselves to the conclusion, that the overwhelming majority of our people can individually have leisure and opportunity and power, each one to work out for himself, by studious application, and careful thought, and nice comparison, a correct code

<sup>a</sup> Gen. iii. 19.

of Christian faith and morals? Can we constrain ourselves to this belief, even supposing that they have a true canon of Scripture, and a correct translation put into their hands, and, moreover, that they can all read it with sufficient facility, to arrive at any tolerable appreciation of its contents?

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But to recollect ourselves, for far too much has been here supposed, what must be the fate of the principle of an universal unlimited exercise of private judgment as regards the large portion of that toilful multitude who cannot read at all? What is their power of deducing a system of faith and morals from that record which is to them a sealed book? If they are to have no faith and no morals but such as they can themselves gather from their own unassisted study, the measure of belief and morality among some of the most honest — yes, and I will say, from my own experience, — some of the most virtuous of our countrymen would be lamentable indeed. Unless perchance a hopeful issue could be expected from such a course as that pursued by a servant of the last generation, who, on being rebuked by his master, a reverend contemporary of my childhood, for venturing to preach though unable to read, gave this instructive record of his proceedings: “They do read and I expound.”

And still, again, no account has here yet been taken of the children of this country. What, in accordance with this principle, is to become of the faith and morals of “the lambs of the flock?” Will any one be hardy enough to say that they are to be taught no definite faith, no Christian rules of conduct but such as they can arrive at by their own unassisted judgment? Few parents will thus neglect their offspring. And if, as we have been told lately on high authority, that the

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influence of education on matters of opinion is extremely great, — a proposition which few prudent persons would deny, — what, then, is the fate of this asserted principle of unlimited private judgment as a principle, without such modifications, reserves, cautions, and exceptions as leave it no principle at all?

We must remember, moreover, that the difficulties which would have surrounded any attempted application of this assumed general principle during those centuries which elapsed between the foundation of the Christian Church and the comparatively recent invention of printing, present so enormous a bulk, and ramify into such an infinity of details, that one really cannot so far presume upon one's readers' patience as to venture upon any of them. They had better be left in a mass for his own consideration. Only this must be said, that if the principle is valuable, it seems very lamentable that so many generations of men since the Christian era should have been utterly incapable of enjoying its full benefit.

It must, upon due reflection, one would think, be admitted that many writers and speakers on this subject have not made proper allowance for the difference between their own condition and that of the mass of mankind. The man whose wants are supplied without the daily labour of his hands, the scholar in literary leisure supplied with all appliances of learning, and the divine with a week for the consideration of a single subject, have time, and means, and opportunity not accorded to all men. The question is not just at this moment whether any such persons as those above specified have assumed to themselves too large a liberty of private interpretation, but whether they have not thoughtlessly extended the commendation of its exercise, so as

to endorse as a general principle, one which is not of universal application. It is, one is conscious, no very hopeful or popular task in this age to suggest any limits whatsoever to the free play of all men's intellects; but still, if liberty in speculation is equitably conceded, some thoughts on this side of the question may surely be forgiven, or at least escape becoming a subject of censure.

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But though cordially and unreservedly agreeing with our author's position on this subject, nay, perhaps advancing beyond it, yet a stand made with him seems most seriously to threaten not only his doctrine of Individualism, but also two of the chief points of his Essay, the first asserting — that the principle of doctrinal limitation is at variance with multitudinism; the second — his present proposition for the relaxation of subscription to formularies of faith on the part of the clergy. Indeed his three positions appear to be at one and the same time utterly untenable. Whether he changed his mind between the dates of the several compositions may be a query; at any rate they can hardly be all held by a competent reasoner at one and the same moment. For first, just in proportion as our author holds it impracticable for every man to frame his own belief, in like proportion it would seem necessary for people to have some authoritative guide of faith, and that too a national one in a National Church. And secondly, one may feel pretty certain that if the nation accepts a nationally authorised faith, she will severely insist upon it that her accredited teachers should “allow,” “acknowledge,”<sup>1</sup> and “assent to”<sup>2</sup> that which she engages them to teach.

<sup>1</sup> p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> p. 185.

6. To proceed. I must now venture to use our author's produced arguments, in order to confirm my case and oppose his own; for he has urged, with con-

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<sup>1</sup> p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> p. 193.

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<sup>4</sup> p. 193.

siderable vigour, as a reason for relaxation of subscription on the part of the clergy, what may be termed the argument *ad crumenam*,<sup>1</sup> informing us that as the nation supplies the funds for the ministry, so the circulation of those funds should “be free from all unnecessary limitations and restraints,”<sup>2</sup> and that thus a wider distribution of “the national endowment” would take place. And, further, we are warned that “no artificial discouragements should limit the number of those who otherwise would be enabled to become candidates for the service of the Church,—that nothing should prevent the choice and recruiting of the Church ministers from the whole of the citizens;”<sup>3</sup> from which body, by the way, it is observable that our author does not except even those of the Jewish persuasion. And moreover he adds a considerably over-estimated calculation as to the number of persons thus lost to the ministry, assuring us that “as a matter of fact we find that nearly one half of our population are at present more or less alienated from the communion of the national Church, and do not, therefore, supply candidates for its ministry.”<sup>4</sup> A statement which, having regard to that part of our people in a condition to educate their sons for holy orders, is wholly unwarrantable.

<sup>5</sup> p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> p. 191.

However, in prosecuting this train of reasoning, our author, in a manner as it appears to me remarkably un-serviceable to his own case, has applied himself with some industry to this subject of the “endowment of the National Church,”<sup>5</sup> and the usufruct thence derived. “The enjoyment of it,” we are told, “is subject to the performance of special services.”<sup>6</sup> We are most rightly instructed that “the benefices of the National Church”<sup>7</sup> are really “trusts;” and, moreover, that “if the nomination to the place of a schoolmaster ought to be con-



sidered as purely fiduciary, much more should the nomination of a spiritual person to his parochial charge." <sup>1</sup> While one assents most unreservedly to this last view of the case, it is also to be remembered that the highest and most valuable of those appointments, as well as a very large portion of the less important ones are directly in the gift of the Crown as representative of the nation, and holding for the purposes of the Church in trust. And, further, that the nation, as the protector of vested rights, is in a general sense answerable for a right disposal of all of them, so that their incomes may secure, in our author's words, "a free circulation of a certain portion of the real property of the country, inherited, not by blood, nor through the accident of birth, but . . . in requital for certain performances." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> p. 191.

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Now if in respect of many, and those the most important of these appointments, a solemn trust is directly lodged in the Crown as representing the nation, and if in respect of all of them, both from the interest created by supply, and also as the guardian of all vested rights, the nation is in some sense answerable for their proper disposal, then it would be hard to conclude that she could justly absolve herself from the imperative duty of providing that those persons selected for the "services" and "performances" in question, should hold and teach the faith of the English Church, for whose purposes the trusts were originally created; a faith, moreover, which the nation, at least at present, happily herself professes. A faithful trustee, as well as a faithful guardian, takes every possible precaution that all trusts and interests committed to his supervision may be punctually carried out and carefully protected; and so long as the English nation is true to this principle, our author's reasoning here will hardly serve his

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case, but rather cast its weight to the opposite side of the balance. And so his argument under this head not only seems singularly unserviceable to himself, but appears on due consideration to increase our sense of the obligation under which the nation lies to remember, and to act upon the remembrance, that, in our author's own words, "the endowed minister is by no means independent of all restraints, as, for instance, of the law of his Church."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 192.

7. As the nation has in time past required, and up to this date does require, subscription and assent to the Church's formularies of faith on the part of the Clergy, we must now proceed to consider how our author conceives himself justified in dealing with those incurred obligations. And first, let us consider the obligations referred to by himself, for he includes them all together, both those which are imposed by the terms of the 36th Canon, in obedience to which he has solemnly subscribed to this declaration, the "he alloweth the Book of Articles of Religion, and acknowledgeth them to be agreeable to the Word of God;" and also those which are imposed by the Statute of 13 Elizabeth, c. 12, in obedience to which he has "subscribed the said Articles in the presence of the ordinary, and publicly read them in his parish church, with declaration of his unfeigned assent to the same."

By way of asserting liberty of thought and free play of intellect respecting those formularies under such stringent obligations, he introduces the following remarkable commentary on the words to which he is pledged. He reminds us that we "'allow' many things which we do not think wise or practically useful, as the less of two evils, or an evil which cannot be re-

medied, or of which the remedy is not attainable, or is uncertain in its operation, or is not in our power, or concerning which there is much difference of opinion, or where the initiation of any change does not belong to ourselves, nor the responsibility belong to ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> pp. 182-3.

He assures us that “many acquiesce in, submit to, ‘allow’ a law as it operates upon themselves, which they would have been horrorstruck to have enacted; yet they would gladly and in conscience ‘allow,’ and submit to it.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> p. 183.

A man, he tells us, may acknowledge a matter while “he does not maintain nor regard it as self-evident, nor originate it as his own feeling, spontaneous opinion, or conviction: but when it is suggested to him, put in a certain shape, when the intention of the framers is borne in mind, their probable purpose and design explained, together with the difficulties which surrounded them, he is not prepared to contradict, and he ‘acknowledges.’ There is a great deal to be said which had not at first occurred to him: many other better and wiser men than himself have ‘acknowledged’ the same thing.—Why should he be obstinate? Besides, he is young, and has plenty of time to reconsider it, or he is old and continues to submit out of habit, and it would be too absurd at his time of life to be setting up as a church reformer.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> p. 183.

It is observable, that our author assures his reader that it is needless “to repeat concerning the word ‘assent,’ what has been said concerning ‘allow,’ and ‘acknowledge.’”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> p. 185.

Thus we are to consider his canonical and statutable obligations in the same category. Now if the foregoing anatomy of words means anything, it signifies that our author teaches us that a man is justified in “allowing,” “acknowledging to be agreeable to the Word of God,” “subscribing” and “publicly reading in his parish church, with declaration of his un-

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feigned assent," matter which he neither thinks wise nor practically useful, which appears to him only as the less of two evils, or an irremediable evil, or one difficult of remedy, or in regard to which the change does not belong to him, nor the responsibility of alteration reside in him. It signifies that our author teaches us that a man is justified in setting this most solemn seal of acknowledgment, allowance, subscription, and unfeigned assent, to what he would have been horrorstruck himself to have enacted. If the foregoing inquisitive vivisection of terms means anything, it signifies that a man is justified in allowing, acknowledging, as agreeable to the Word of God, subscribing, and publicly reading with unfeigned assent superadded, what he does not maintain, but only is not prepared to contradict; because much may be said which had not at first occurred to him; because others have done so before him; because he is young and has time for reflexion; because he is old and has contracted a questionable habit, and because it appears to him hopeless at his advanced period of life to set about reforming what he believes to be wrong.

Alas, for the morality of our country if such principles as these should prevail! If this is the first-fruits of our present intellectual advancement and extended knowledge, and liberty of thought, what is the promise of the full and ripened harvest? Surely here is another instance in which our author has not perceived the consequences of his own reasoning; one cannot in charity believe that he fully apprehended them. "*Nescit vox missa reverti,*" and who can tell the evils which such proclaimed doctrines, at least should they be any where accepted, will entail upon this and future generations? This, at any rate, one would fain hope for the sake of the credit and character both of himself and of those

who are commonly held responsible with him, for this published interpretation of moral obligations, that he will take some means of explaining, or withdrawing what is here so unmistakeably taught.

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Our author's train of reasoning on this subject now compels us for a moment to descend from the higher arena of purely moral questions to the somewhat fouler atmosphere of the common law courts. For he has dealt with a statutable obligation, (13 Elizabeth c. 12), assured us of a statutable relaxation (13 Car. II. c. 12), relied on the answers of two Chief-Justices, and finally proposed to make a legal obligation the measure of a moral one, — a most astounding enterprise.

Now the construction and interpretation of statutes is a very important, a very interesting—and in the presence of religious, political, or party-feeling on the part of those who by profession and duty are specially appointed to construe, interpret, and enforce them—sometimes a remarkably curious art. Still, in the entire absence of such disturbing influences, the process is tolerably well defined, and subject to clear, honest, and intelligible principles. Indeed, that justly esteemed authority in this department of jurisprudence, the learned commentator on the laws of England, has laid down some admirable rules for direction in this behalf, which one would rejoice to see universally regarded as they deserve.

In pursuing his legal argument our author has told us that “as far as opinion privately entertained is concerned, the liberty of the English clergyman appears already to be complete. For no ecclesiastical person can be obliged to answer interrogations as to his opinions, nor be troubled for that which he has not actually expressed.”<sup>1</sup> And this last assertion, but of course the

<sup>1</sup> p. 180.

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last only, he has confirmed by a reference to the authority of Sir John Popham and Sir Edward Coke. In our author's view then an English clergyman appears legally to have complete liberty, while he still remains an English clergyman, to believe privately the doctrines of Confucius or Zoroaster, of Buddha or Mahomet, of the Hindoos, of the Red Indians, of the Mormons, or of the Deists; and all this, notwithstanding that he has subscribed to the articles of faith of the English Church. This we gather in our author's opinion is the very lax condition of the legal obligation by which the English clergyman is bound. And this I will not venture or pretend for one moment to deny. For without disputing the grave authority of the above-mentioned Chief-Justices, it would be impossible to show how the law could reach such profane and scandalous immorality.

p. 181.

But when our author makes so bold as to tell us that "in this case the strictly legal obligation is the measure of the moral one,"<sup>1</sup> one is perfectly aghast with surprise, not to say horror, at such an announcement. Could any man in the wildest flight of fancy have ever imagined that such a sentence would have been penned in a civilised, to say nothing of a Christian country, and that too by a teacher of Christian morals? One is amazed that the writers of "Essays and Reviews" could ever, after it had once issued from the press, have permitted a republication of this astoundingly immoral doctrine in any connection whatsoever with their names.

For, to tell the truth, our author, though a teacher of morals, has, in his ardent pursuit of this legal subject, descended very far lower than even the members of the legal profession themselves could safely venture,

in the identification of legal and moral obligations, and that, even supposing the presence of the aforementioned disturbing influences. Their common text-books teach them that there is, one may almost say, a chasm of distinction between such offences, as are only "*mala prohibita*" and such as are "*mala in se*"—and certainly, if ever they do stumble over the mere-stones which mark out those two separate domains, the catastrophe does not occur from want of proper instructions. For one of their great masters has taught them far better, and specifically told them, that in such a case as this before us, "the strictly legal obligation is" by no means "the measure of the moral one."<sup>1</sup> "In regard to . . . such offences as are '*mala in se*,'" says Mr. Justice Blackstone, "here we are bound in conscience, because we are bound by superior laws before those human laws were in being, to . . . abstain from" such offences. And surely if ever an offence was "bad in itself," the one above suggested and justified by our author cannot escape from holding a painfully conspicuous position in that category.

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<sup>1</sup> p. 181.

Although there is something inexpressibly sad in having to refer a divine to Westminster Hall for instruction in moral obligations; still,—notwithstanding some loose notions floating about there as to the authority of the civil legislature in absolving from oaths and promises, with which it was no way itself originally connected,—one may venture with considerable confidence to affirm that there is not a single man of credit in that stronghold of law, who, in defiance of the learned Commentator on the laws of England, will in this case give the least measure of approval to our author's doctrines. And while our author assures us that "the meshes" of the statute (13 Eliz. c. 12) "are too open

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<sup>1</sup> p. 185.

for modern refinements,"<sup>1</sup> yet he may, on the other hand, assure himself that a universal verdict will be returned, both by the gentlemen of the long robe and by all other reasonable persons, that this struggle is a most lamentable method of attempted escape, and suggests far too slippery a process of absolution from engagements, for any creature of God's hand on earth to adopt, who has a proper sense of the dignity and honour, the obligations and responsibilities of a man.

8. Notwithstanding the affection of some minds for these modern refinements, and their apparent contempt for older modes of thought, it may yet be refreshing to other minds to turn from such conclusions as that of our author above to the fairer methods of instruction handed down from our ancestors. We have been taught a lesson pertinent to the point before us by the golden-worded Sanderson, that Chrysostom of instruction in moral obligation whose precepts if followed would have saved us from so sad an exhibition as that just detailed. By him oaths, promises, undertakings, subscriptions, are all treated together as follows. How is such an obligation to be kept? According to the intention of the imposer? No; he may have intended more than the words of the obligation justly represented, and more than he who undertook it understood. According then to the intention of him who undertook? No again; he may have understood less than the words of the obligation justly represented, and less than he who imposed the oath intended. How then is the undertaking to be kept? "According," he answers, "to the true sense of the words, as virtuous and prudent men would define them:—*'secundum verum sensum verborum, ut pii et prudentes definiant.'*" This is a



canon which will indeed bear the closest scrutiny, and the more we inspect it the more we shall be apt to admire its wisdom and its worth. Let us then bring the case before us to this test, and when a man has "allowed," "acknowledged to be agreeable to the Word of God," "subscribed," and "declared unfeigned assent," it may be left to the judgment of "virtuous and prudent men" to define what the true sense of those words is. That they will agree with our author is not credible.

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He has indeed recommended club law, *Contra re-tiariium baculo*<sup>1</sup>, he says, against any one who should endeavour to entangle another in formularies. But there is a better known Latin proverb than this, which may remind him that an attack upon the canon of Bishop Sanderson would resemble the enterprise of one who should assault an approved master-at-arms with a schoolboy's ferule. And when our author has told us that "no promise can reach fluctuations of opinion and personal conviction,"<sup>2</sup> it may readily occur to some minds that a promise retracted does not reveal at the most so foul a blot as a promise broken.

<sup>1</sup> p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> p. 189.

9. And yet though our author sees by the aids of "modern refinement" so easy an escape through the "meshes"<sup>3</sup> of allowance, acknowledgment, subscription, and unfeigned assent, he somewhat unnecessarily, at least one would think for himself, and for those who may be found to agree with him, presses with considerable urgency for relaxation by law of such obligations. "An enactment" he urges, "prohibiting the bishops from requiring the subscriptions under the third article of the 36th canon, together with the repeal of 13th Elizabeth, except as to its second section, would relieve many scruples, and make the Church more national, without

<sup>3</sup> p. 185.

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<sup>1</sup> p. 188.

disturbing its ultimate law.”<sup>1</sup> This then is his proposed remedy, and this he suggests to the Legislature, as sufficient to afford the desired relief, and indeed, he dwells at considerable length on the grounds of this policy, and on the advantages which, as he thinks, would result from its adoption.

We just now were constrained to betake ourselves to the common law courts, the seat of the executive; we must now enter on a higher excursion to the fount of statute law, the imperial legislature. Now it is the part of wise legislators to take care that when a new statute is enacted, it should secure the objects which it is intended to effect. But here, under our author’s guidance, one cannot think that the proposed end would be attained. A more comprehensive grasp of the matter in hand would be essential to effect his purpose. Our author appears to have sufficient recollection of the obligations contracted by him in accordance with the provisions of the 36th canon, and 13 Eliz. c. 12, notwithstanding his mode of dealing with them. But on a more important point his memory seems sadly defective. Does he remember the most solemn hour of his life? the most solemn hour of any man’s life who has taken upon himself holy orders in the church of Christ? Does he remember when these words with the imposition of hands upon his head were pronounced over him? “Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of hands . . . and be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of His holy Sacraments, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.” And if he recalls this, does he further remember the following obligation which in that solemn hour he solemnly contracted, an obliga-

tion which from time, and place, and circumstance (if we admit degrees of obligation), transcends those which either canon or statute have ever imposed on him? Does he remember the answer he gave to this question? — “Will you then give your faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine . . . of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as *this Church and realm hath received the same?*” Does he remember this his response at that solemn hour?—“I will do so by the help of the Lord.” And if he thus engaged, or if any other man shall hereafter thus engage to minister the doctrine of Christ as this Church hath received the same, unless he conceives himself at liberty to believe one thing in religion and to teach another, he is, to say the least, quite as stringently thus bound to hold the Church’s authorised and expressed faith, as he is by any subscription under the canon, or any assent under the statute.

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It seems certain, upon due recollection, that the scheme above proposed to our legislature, would be defective in means for attaining the intended object; and that an English clergyman, even if the suggested enactment was passed and enforced, could not escape from the obligation of holding the faith of the English Church, except by subjecting his ordination vow to the same treatment as was above inflicted on the words, “allow,” “acknowledge,” on the act of “subscription,” and on the declaration of “unfeigned assent.” And it is further equally certain that any appeal to the imperial legislature to alter the ordination vows of the English Church must be absolutely vain, because, as every one of competent information is well aware, the powers necessary for such a purpose do not reside in that august body. Moreover, having above witnessed the effects of our author’s science of Ideology on Scriptural interpre-

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tation, and having had experience of his complete liberty of opinion privately entertained, both permissible, as he thinks, under present obligations, one cannot imagine that his suggestions for a relaxation of those restraints which do exist, will meet with a favourable acceptance either by Church or State.

But not only would our author's suggestion to the legislature for an act "prohibiting the bishops from requiring the subscriptions under the third article of the 36th canon, together with the repeal of the 13 Elizabeth, except as to its second section,"<sup>1</sup> — thus signally fail in its professed object, there are two other grave objections to the course of policy which he proposes.

The first is, that an endeavour to enact a statute formally prohibiting the use of a canon of the English Church, which has been constantly acted on for two hundred and fifty-seven years in matters purely spiritual, is an enterprise which it would require a remarkably bold legislator to undertake. Of course as regards the repeal of the 13 Elizabeth, except as to its second section, the imperial legislature has not only full power but a perfect and indisputable right to make and unmake statute law at discretion. But our author seems to have forgotten that both constitutionally, and also from the rights of things, there is another and a distinct authority which cannot be overlooked by any prudent statesman, and which is required for the formal making or unmaking of a canon of the English Church. After the enactment of the canons of 1603-4 by the Church, fortified as they were in front and rear by royal authority, and supported on the provisions of 25 Hen. VIII. c. 19, a very busy endeavour was made by some disaffected spirits in the House of Commons directly to

<sup>1</sup> p. 188.

disable their authority. That enterprise, however, was a signal failure. Again, after the enactment under similar authority of the canons of 1640, some members of the Lower House of Parliament, after indulging in very exceptionable, and indeed very abusive and one may say absurd language, were obliged to content their zeal with passing two rather heady resolutions in that assembly; but, so far as legislation was concerned (for their bill against those canons came to nothing), no effects resulted, even in that inflammatory time, from the noisy explosion. And after a lapse of so many years, in this age of comparative wisdom, calmness, and justice, one cannot imagine how any statesman could be prevailed on to enter upon so difficult and dangerous an enterprise, as was signally discomfited in the early part of the reign of King James I., and even afterwards failed of success under the auspices of such reckless and fiery champions as Lord Digby, Sir John Culpeper, Mr. Grimstone, Sir Thomas Widdrington, Mr. Whistler, Mr. Bagshaw, Mr. Nathaniel Fiennes, and Sir Edward Dering.

The second objection to our author's proposed legislation, is the inexpressible and almost inhuman cruelty which such a statute as he desires would inflict on the two Primates of England, and on the Right Reverend Bench of Bishops. Each of those prelates, on his ordination as a priest, has promised that "by the help of the Lord," he will give his "faithful diligence always so to minister . . . the discipline of Christ . . . as this Church hath received the same." On his consecration as a bishop each has superadded to this obligation a fresh one, that "by the help of God" he will be "faithful in ordaining." Now this double obligation being jointly considered, one cannot possibly imagine how any one of our most Reverend or Right Reverend

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Fathers in God could conceive himself absolved by any statute law whatsoever [for one cannot assent to the doctrine of legislative absolution from engagements incurred lawfully and which were not originally imposed by the legislature] from the obligation of ministering “the discipline of Christ . . . as this Church . . . hath received the same,” when conferring holy orders on candidates, and so from the duty of enforcing the requirements of the 36th canon, upon such as should by them “hereafter be received into the ministry.” This, then, if our author’s proposed statute were enacted, would be the cruel position of the two Primates and the Bishops of England; they must either be false to their solemn promises made before God, or incur the penalty of the suggested statute. Certainly those penalties might not be very explicit, if the statesmen in charge of the bill should chance to forget the specification of any, as was the case in the year 1857, when an endeavour was made by a painfully notorious act to force the clergy to break their ordination vows; an endeavour, by the way, which will never be successful in the case of any man who has a proper regard for his own honour, for his incurred obligations, for the Church, or for religion. Still we must remember that even where no specific penalty is attached, the breach of an Act of Parliament is a misdemeanour at common law. And so our author’s proposed statute, if enacted, even in the event of such legislative omission again occurring, would place before all our Prelates this most painful alternative, either to be faithless to their most solemn obligations, or to incur an indictment for a misdemeanour. Such inhuman legislation as this, notwithstanding some past experience, one cannot believe, as its effects are patent, could be permitted.

The foregoing considerations seem to place almost insuperable difficulties in the way of our author's proposed statute, and one cannot believe that any statesman with the least pretension to wisdom, constitutional knowledge, or common humanity, could be found even to propose, on due consideration, its provisions for the acceptance of the English legislature. Should, however, so unwise, so unconstitutional, and so cruel a statute, ever be enacted in accordance with our author's suggestion, the words of a learned writer in reference to one John de Mettingham, a clergyman, might be truly repeated. One of our monarchs employed this last named divine to pronounce a cruel judgment against his brethren in holy orders; upon which Dr. Atterbury remarks, "Look through all our history and you shall find that wherever the clergy have smarted under any great hardship, some of their own order have been still at the bottom of it, without whose helping hand the rights and privileges of the Church never were and never would be invaded."

The issue of our author's case in the courts of law did not appear encouraging; his present appeal to the source and fountain of all statutes seems to disclose no better prospect of success. A more reasonable course would be to propose to the proper authority some relaxations in the formularies themselves. But to suppose that while they are authoritatively ratified and do exist their accredited teachers will not be bound to confess them, is a strange imagination; to suggest release from such confession, a hopeless proposition.


10. We must now for a moment look back. If any forbearing reader has had patience to follow these lines, he will have had an opportunity of judging for

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himself:—1. Whether the decorations of our author's subject reveal any just causes of complaint against the English Church or not, whether his proclaimed subjects of uneasiness are fairly reasonable or not, and whether the endeavour to separate Christian faith from Christian morals is warrantable or not. 2. Whether the science of Ideology is likely to prove useful to historical research and Scriptural interpretation, or the contrary. 3. Whether the principle of doctrinal limitation is essentially at variance with the principles of a National Church, or on the other hand, positively inherent in the existence of such an institution. 4. Whether our author's mode of dealing with moral obligations is satisfactory or the reverse; and also whether a relaxation of obligation to the Church's formularies of faith on the part of her clergy, as suggested by him, is, by the means he proposes, any way possible. Such cases set down for the reader's judgment are in accordance with the divisions of our subject as at first proposed, and an endeavour has been made to bring the arguments applicable to each in succession, as closely as possible, under their proper head.



## VI.

I.  HE Essay under view concludes with a Conclusion. very remarkable passage, which attaches a character to the populations of Christendom so neutral as to leave us, in our author's opinion, "at a loss to apply to them either the promises or the denunciations of Revelation."<sup>1</sup> 1 p. 206. And then the expectations of the heathen with regard to a future state of rewards and punishments, and the Roman doctrine of the "*Limbus infantium*" is introduced in order to place in contrast with such views the "hope" which we should "rather entertain."<sup>2</sup> 2 p. 206. That hope is thus expressed: "That there shall be found, after the great adjudication, receptacles suitable for those who shall be infants, not as to years of terrestrial life, but as to spiritual development—nurseries as it were and seed grounds, where the undeveloped may grow up under new conditions, the stunted may become strong, and the perverted be restored."<sup>3</sup> 3 p. 206. And finally we are instructed that, "all both small and great, shall find a refuge in the bosom of the Universal Parent, to repose, or be quickened into higher life, in the ages to come according to His will."<sup>4</sup> 4 p. 206. Upon the doctrine here taught that, after the great day of adjudication, the condition of those who have stood before the awful judgment seat of Christ, as He himself has described it, Matt. xxv. 31—46, will be a changeable one, it is not now proposed to speak. That subject is

Conclusion. far too solemn a one for this occasion, too sacred to be mixed up with the legal topics we have had need just above to deal with.

But on another subject connected with this passage a word or two may be fitly introduced. One is very glad that our author is not altogether responsible, at least for originating the strange doctrines here contained. A writer of renown, originally educated in the famous Neoplatonist school of Ammonius Saccas at Alexandria, must justly bear whatever blame attaches to their first publication. And to tell the truth, those doctrines are here reproduced in so precise and accurate a form, that if the original writer had been a contemporary and countryman of our author, one is not quite sure that an action for infringement of copyright might not have lain against the successive publishers of "Essays and Reviews." Indeed, upon a perusal of 54 Geo. III. c. 156 and the ruled cases, one inclines to the persuasion that under the circumstances supposed damages might have been recovered, not only from those gentlemen, but from every person who had sold, or even exposed for sale a copy of the volume.

2. In conclusion, a word must be said on the subject of this Essay before us, as it is connected with that book of which it forms a part. What underlies the entire publication? Is there not discernible throughout a turbulent uneasiness, one may almost say a petulant remonstrance, as regards everything which is beyond and above the writers' comprehension? Does not a mystery, a miracle, seem almost like a personal affront, to this modern observation and thought, these verifying faculties, this intellectual advancement here so highly vaunted? Indeed, against recorded miracles

continual hostility is apparent. But the logical position of the attacking force is extremely questionable. Such advances as the following would not so much surprise one :—Are the elements of God's creation generally suitable to the creatures of his hand ?—Do man's capacities approve him a fit subject for a Divine revelation ? If so, — is there an *à priori* probability that it would be accorded ? And if it has, — has the Christian religion a higher claim to be so considered than any other ?— Can a revelation be granted without a miracle ?— Is that which is unusual to us a greater miracle in itself than the ordinary objects which surround us ? Such questions as these, occurring without number, might suggest inquiries worthy enough of a philosophical mind. But ostensibly to admit a revelation, and then carp at its details, professedly to allow a book and then explain away its contents, to appeal to the whole and deny the parts, this really is a somewhat puerile proceeding. One looks in vain for reason and logic here. So far as the method goes, one is far more surprised at those who thus nibble at the edges of the sacred pages, than at those who recklessly tear their way headlong through the entire record. The former, however, is the method pursued by those who profess no desire to “go back to the childhood and youth of the world,”<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> p. 46. but who would rather seem to challenge the position of “true hierarchs and leaders of thought.”<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> p. 168.

And those who would thus lead forward this improved generation, are by no means content with what has descended to them, but desire to “transmit something better,”<sup>3</sup> and so display a constant restlessness <sup>3</sup> p. 148. and uneasiness under that faith which has been handed down. Still there are, thank God, yet among us many modest and humble spirits who are contented not to

Conclusion. exercise themselves in matters too high for them — to possess their souls in patience—to wait and watch, if so be they may be found faithful to the end: and whatever misgivings they may feel as to their own judgments in some respects, of this at least they are firmly sure, that He who placed bounds to the mighty ocean which it may not pass, has also fixed limits to human knowledge which cannot be over-stepped; of this they are unquestionably convinced, that there are inscrutable strongholds of Divine mystery, into which even the colossal man with all his proud display of vaunted science, and his flaunting bravery of “verifying faculties,” will never be permitted on this side the grave to force an entrance.

3. That one may take leave of our author with a word of cordiality, it is but right to quote two of his sentences, which would do honour to the heart and pen of any man. “There is enough, indeed,” he tells us, “to sadden us in the doubtful warfare which the good wages with the evil, both within us and without us. How few under the most favourable conditions learn to bring themselves face to face with the great moral law, which is the manifestation of the will of God.”<sup>1</sup> *O sic omnia!* One really grieves to have had to differ so widely from one who could thus write. However, his arguments have been dealt with fairly as arguments, and of course it will be understood that the conclusions above drawn from them are by no means meant to be fastened on our author, an attempt only has been made to show the logical results of his positions. One has no right whatever to fix the most unquestionably logical conclusion on any man from propositions which he unequivocally avows. One has only a right to say, as regards

<sup>1</sup> p. 205.

at least matters within human ken, you either hold the Conclusion. conclusion, or you reason miserably. I have not to my knowledge misrepresented a single word or overstated a single argument that he has penned; if by misapprehension an undue advantage has been taken in a single letter, I express my sorrow, and retract absolutely all that in that place has been written. And if happily any future circumstances hereafter should induce him on further reflexion to recall anything which he has published in his Essay, it is very certain that his brethren in the ministry of the Church of Christ, would hail with brotherly feelings of joy, even a partial retraction of what in those pages is surely calculated to make the scoffer exult, but to make good men weep.

THE END.

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AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

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AN EXAMINATION INTO  
THE PRINCIPLES AND STATEMENTS  
ADVANCED IN PROFESSOR JOWETT'S ESSAY  
ON THE INTERPRETATION  
OF SCRIPTURE.

BY

JAMES FENDALL, M.A.

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Proctor in Convocation for the Clergy of the Diocese of Ely.*






# AN EXAMINATION

ETC.

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HE interpretation of Scripture is a subject in which all true believers in Christ are interested, so that every investigation which may lead to a right understanding of these sacred writings, must be hailed with delight by those who feel deeply on this vital question.

But the vast importance of the interests involved in the inquiry imposes a corresponding weight of responsibility on those who undertake the serious office of interpreter. The subject cannot safely be treated lightly, nor without a full conviction of the sanctity of the volume about to be handled. The biblical critic must enter upon his task with the same feeling of reverential awe with which Moses was instructed to approach the burning bush. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." \* He must, as far as may be, divest himself

\* Exod. iii. 5.

of mere natural feelings and spiritualise his mind for his hallowed work, remembering that "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." He must be assured that he is following the guidance of heavenly light, not led away by the phosphoric exhalations springing up from the corrupt vapours of human conception. When, however, the office of guide to the interpretation of Scripture is undertaken by a distinguished member of one of our ancient seminaries of sound learning and religious education, we might reasonably predicate of such an interpreter that he would in an eminent degree possess the qualifications requisite for adequately fulfilling his self-prescribed task, and we should be disposed to look into his pages with a confident assurance of discovering therein, not merely the indications of superior knowledge, but a brighter enlightenment proceeding from the pervading influence of God's holy spirit—a clearer insight into the dark sayings of God's word, derived from an acquaintance with sound theology based upon religious teaching—we should expect to find in him a safe and steadfast teacher, competent to direct the hesitating steps of the weak and inexperienced to that pure wisdom that is from above.

In proportion then to the height of the level on which our anticipations have run must be the severity of the shock to our feelings, when we see our calculations not realised but reversed, when we observe the high intellectual gifts of a cultivated mind employed to mystify rather than elucidate, to throw doubts and stumbling-blocks before the simple searcher after truth, instead of being engaged in removing difficulties and

paving the way for less learned Christians in their hallowed progress towards heaven. It is painful to be forced by the exigencies of truth to avow that the author of this Essay has not merely failed to come up to the high estimate which antecedent considerations led us to anticipate, but has marred his pages with blots unworthy of his distinguished professional character, and inconsistent with his position as an ordained minister of Christ's Holy Catholic Church; and the regret at this exhibition of unfaithfulness is still further heightened by the admixture not only of eloquence and beauty, but of sensible observations and pious fervour in many of the passages comprised in this Essay. The noxious quality of the poison is rendered more effective by the agreeable and palatable character of the ingredients with which it is mixed. The peril to the immortal souls of his readers is rendered more imminent by the guarded manner in which the pit of destruction is hidden from their view. The Essay before us cannot be regarded as a mere abstraction emanating from the closet of a speculative philosopher, which will be limited in its influences to the minds of visionary theorists, and which will be quietly laid on the shelf with a smile of incredulity by those who do not agree with its conclusions. Not only will the celebrity of the author's name give greater expansion to its circulation and exempt it from the liability of indifferent treatment, but its subject-matter is so all-engrossing that it will naturally excite an interest in every religious mind, and predispose the youthful divine to accept it as a guide to direct his theological studies.

It is not the province of an individual to pronounce on the personal delinquency of the writer of this Essay, but it must not be overlooked that a serious injury

would be inflicted on right moral feeling if it were conceded as a recognised principle that a priest of the Church might without rebuke take advantage of his official position to propound theories at variance with the Catholic faith as taught by the Church; and it is needful that attention should be called to the special danger of such a publication as this, arising from the known character and office of the author.

The officer who takes a commission in her Majesty's army is presented with the Articles of War, as the code of laws by which he is to regulate his conduct in military affairs, nor is he permitted to put any private construction upon them, but is obliged to comply with them, according to their literal meaning as interpreted by the rulers of the State; and great would be his culpability in the sight of his fellow-officers, if he made use of his acquired influence among the soldiers to spread a feeling of disaffection towards her Majesty's Government, or by means of artful innuendoes to rouse a mutinous spirit within the ranks; even if he made no direct personal demonstration of disobedience, nor openly upraised the standard of rebellion. In like manner the man who engages to fight under Christ's banner in defence of the Church, and receives in consequence a commission from the Church to promulgate the doctrines of the Gospel, has the Articles of the Faith and the Formularies of the Church put into his hands, which he is bound to construe according to the Church's received interpretation; and he would be deservedly condemned, if he exercised the influence gained by his clerical station to injure the Church which he had solemnly undertaken to defend, or if he attempted to lead the humble soldiers of Christ's army into the sloughs of doubt or infidelity; even if it could not be proved against him that he had

so openly avowed doctrines repugnant to the true faith, as would lay him open to conviction on the charge of heresy.

To judge, however, properly, of the merits and demerits of this Essay, as a literary composition, it is necessary to divest the mind of all *à priori* considerations arising from our knowledge of the writer's celebrity and social position, to examine its statements with the same impartiality as we should do, if they proceeded from the pen of an anonymous author, and to found our conclusions on the basis of sound reason, irrespective of prejudice or antecedent expectations. The value of the book should be estimated by weighing the specific gravity of its contents.

It would, moreover, be most unreasonable and unfair to pass a sentence of condemnation on a work by the expression of vague generalities, or to expect that such expressions of opinion would convince the public of its evil tendencies. It is necessary to enter into particulars and to scrutinise the Essay in detail, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the sentiments broached in its pages should be regarded as deserving of favourable consideration, or as dangerous and objectionable to every rightly-directed mind.

There are three different aspects under which this Essay may be viewed:—

1st. The aspect in which it presents itself to the members of the Anglican Church,—those who adhere to her Articles of Faith, and conscientiously believe in the scriptural character of her Formularies.

2nd. The aspect in which it presents itself to the believers in the great truths of Christianity as

contained in the Bible, irrespective of the definite declarations of the Church, and her theories of government and discipline.

3rd. The aspect in which it presents itself to those who discredit both ecclesiastical and scriptural authority, repudiate revelation, and profess to be guided solely by the light of reason.

Though, strictly speaking, the Churchman will have sufficient grounds for condemnation, if he discovers that the Essay propounds opinions inconsistent with the Church's teaching, yet the defects of the composition will appear more striking, if it can be shown that it contains passages from which every Christian believer will naturally shrink, and still more, if it can be proved to advance arguments which will not satisfy the conditions of logical reasoning.

I. In considering the Essay, as it presents itself to the eyes of the Anglican Churchman, the first point that will attract notice is, that there are statements contained in it which directly as well as indirectly controvert the Articles of the Christian faith in which he has been taught to believe.

Article VI. states, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith." The logical deduction from this statement is, that whatsoever the Church requires to be believed as an article of the faith may, in the opinion of the Church, either be read in Holy Scripture or be proved thereby; hence the affirmation or insinuation that any of the Articles of the Faith, which are required by the Church to be believed, cannot be proved by Holy

Scripture, is contradictory to the Church's teaching, and consequently deserving of condemnation by Churchmen; but yet this Essay contains statements of this description. The author states in pp. 358-9,—“Some texts of Scripture have been eagerly appealed to and made (in one sense) too much of; they have been taken by force into the service of received opinions and beliefs; texts of the other class have been either unnoticed or explained away. Consider, for example, the extraordinary and unreasonable importance attached to single words, sometimes of doubtful meaning, in reference to any of the following subjects:—1, Divorce; 2, Marriage with a Wife's Sister; 3, Inspiration; 4, the Personality of the Holy Spirit; 5, Infant Baptism; 6, Episcopacy; 7, Divine Right of Kings; 8, Original Sin.” He then proceeds to show in the following pages the insufficiency (as it appears to him) of the Scripture argument in reference to these subjects, and in page 361 he concludes by saying,—“Yet to avoid misconception it may be remarked, that many of the principles, rules, or truths mentioned, as for example, Infant Baptism, or the Episcopal Form of Church Government, have sufficient grounds; the weakness is the attempt to derive them from Scripture.” It does not appear which of the other subjects besides Infant Baptism and the Episcopal Form of Church Government, are regarded by the essayist as having “sufficient grounds,” but it may be presumed from these words, that *some* of them have in his opinion no “sufficient grounds:” at all events it is evident that the author's strength of mind has preserved him from the “weakness” into which the Church has fallen, of attempting to derive any of them from Scripture. The subjects here enumerated may be divided into those which relate to doctrine, and

those which relate to discipline; the former are indisputably laid down by the Church as articles of faith, and consequently regarded as capable of being proved by Holy Scripture.

1. *Personality of the Holy Spirit.*

Article I. "And in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

In the Litany we are taught by the Church to address "the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity as three persons;" and in the service for the Holy Communion we express our belief on this point in the most emphatic terms: "Who art one God, one Lord; not one only person, but three persons in one substance." In the Homilies, of which mention is made in Article XXXV. as containing a godly and wholesome doctrine, it is stated: "The Holy Ghost is a spiritual and divine substance, the third person in the Deity, distinct from the Father and the Son" (Hom. for Whitsunday); and by adopting the Athanasian Creed into her Liturgy, the Church directly affirms her belief that "there is one person of the Father, and another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost;" hence it is manifest that the Church maintains the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, and requires it to be believed as an article of the faith; and therefore upon the principle laid down as deducible from Article VI. it is certain that the Church believes that this doctrine may be proved by Holy Scripture.

Here, then, the essayist is at issue with the Church, as he considers it "a weakness to attempt to derive this doctrine from Scripture."

But still this weak point of the Church's teaching



has been sustained by a phalanx of most approved champions. The names of Barrow and Pearson and Jewel, in the Anglican branch of the Church, will have weight with those who have respect for deep erudition and strong powers of reasoning, even when put in the scale against the learned exponents of modern intellectual development.

The Churchman who has built up his faith on the Scriptural evidence adduced by these and other divines of the Church, will not be content that his religious convictions should be set aside by the mere assertion that such learning is not suited to the present times. If cogent argument and logical reasoning do not recommend themselves to the intellectual capacity of modern philosophers, it is not a proof of the improvement, but of the degeneracy, of the human intellect. The colossal man must be approaching the days of his dotage when strong meat is no longer adapted to his enfeebled digestion.

## 2. *Infant Baptism.*

The Church in her XXVIIth Article declares that "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." The Churchman is therefore required to regard the observance of this ordinance as an article of the faith grounded upon Scripture; yet according to the express words of the essayist, this is a weakness. It may, however, be some satisfaction to know that on this point he is disposed to acquiesce in the practice, though not on the authority of Scripture, but on the presumed higher authority of human reason.

There is, however, a misstatement introduced into

the Essay on this point, which is material, as tending to weaken the force of the Scripture argument. It is stated, p. 360: "The mere mention of a family of a jailer at Philippi who was baptized ('he and all his,' Acts xvi. 33), has led to the inference that in this family there were probably young children, and hence that infant baptism is, first, permissive, secondly, obligatory." Now the Church in her Formularies makes no mention of the jailer at Philippi, but directly points to the words of Christ Himself as the scriptural ground for the observance of this rite, and concludes in language that must be familiar to every one who is in the habit of attending at her ordinances: "Wherefore we being thus persuaded of the good will of our Heavenly Father towards this infant, declared by His Son Jesus Christ; and nothing doubting but that He favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours in bringing this infant to His holy baptism."

### 3. *Original Sin.*

There is no evidence to show that the essayist believes in this doctrine at all; whilst the suggestion of the possibility that "mankind may have spread not from one but from many centres over the globe," or "that the supply of links which are at present wanting in the chain of animal life may lead to new conclusions respecting the origin of man," strikes at its very root. He states, however, positively, that it is a weakness to derive it from Scripture. The Church, on the contrary, affirms this doctrine, in very strong language, in her Articles and Formularies, and by requiring it to be believed as an article of faith, considers it as deducible from Scripture.

Article IX. "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but

it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil."

Article X. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God."

In Baptismal Service, "Forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin;" and in private baptism, "Concerning the baptizing of this child, who being born in original sin;" and in the Book of Homilies, whose special object it was, "by the true setting forth and pure declaring of God's word, to expel and drive away as well corrupt, vicious and ungodly living, as also erroneous and poisoned doctrines," it is stated that "the Holy Ghost, in writing the Holy Scriptures, is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man's vain-glory and pride, which of all vices is most universally grafted in all mankind, even from the first infection of our first father Adam." "And the holy man Job, having in himself great experience of the miserable and sinful estate of man, doth open the same to the world in these words, 'Who can make him clean, that is conceived of an unclean seed?'"

So that it is evident that in this particular also the essayist is at variance with the Church as to the scriptural grounds for her belief.

With respect to the doctrine itself we may quote the pithy words of Hooker: "It is true we are full of sin, both original and actual; whosoever denieth it is a double sinner, for he is both a sinner and a liar."

Among the subjects enumerated above there are

some which relate to discipline. These may not be regarded in the same light as those which relate to doctrine; nevertheless it is certain that the Church is guilty of the weakness of maintaining them as agreeable to Scripture, contrary to the opinion of the essayist.

### 1. *Divorce.*

The prohibition of divorce, *a vinculo matrimonii*, as resulting from the indissolubility of the marriage contract, is insisted upon by the Church, not on the grounds inaccurately stated in the Essay, viz. the designed or accidental omission of a clause in Matt. v. 32, but on the authority of Christ himself, whose words the Church utters in her Marriage Service, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder;" and its avowed accordance with God's word is still further declared in a subsequent prayer wherein the Church addresses God, as having taught "that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom He by matrimony had made one."

### 2. *Marriage with a deceased Wife's Sister.*

The Church evidently considers that there is Scripture warrant for the prohibition in this case, as in her 99th Canon, passed A.D. 1603, she declares that "No person shall marry within the degrees prohibited by the *laws of God*, and expressed in a Table set forth by authority in the year of our Lord God 1563." In this Table the wife's sister is comprehended within the prohibited degrees, so that the prohibition is specially based in this Canon on the laws of God. The Church's teaching has been enunciated and confirmed by an eminent ecclesiastical judge in delivering his judgment in a recent case: "In the first place, this is a contract

which is prohibited by the laws both of God and man; for so, sitting in an ecclesiastical court, I should be bound to consider it even if I were, as I am not, among the number of those who privately entertain any doubt upon the subject." "But whatever may have been the intention of the legislature, this marriage is an incestuous marriage, and must ever so remain. The law of God cannot be altered by the law of man."\*

The analogy of the brother's widow, adduced by the essayist against the prohibition, has been generally and reasonably used as an argument on the other side.†

In both these cases the prohibition is not to be regarded as an innovation of comparatively modern date, for it can be proved to have been the law of the Church in very early days, as is evidenced by the Apostolical Constitutions‡ and the Decrees of the Council of Eliberis§; and its consistency with Holy Scripture may still further be inferred from its having passed unscathed through the severe ordeal of the Reformation, when unscriptural restrictions were very generally abolished.

Reference must next be made to the language in which the essayist speaks of the Creeds. In page 343 it is stated as an objection that "the language in which our Saviour speaks of his own union with the

\* Sir H. J. Fust, in *Ray v. Sherwood*, 1 Curt. Ecc. Rep. 197.

† Lev. xviii. 16.

‡ "Εἰ τις λαϊκὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐκβύλλων ἕτεραν λάβῃ, ἢ παρὰ ἄλλου ἀπολελυμένην, ἀφοριζέσθω."—c. 48. "Ὁ δὺο ἀδελφῆς ἀγαγόμενος, ἢ ἀδελφιδὴν, οὐ δύναται εἶναι κληρικός."—c. 19.

§ "Fœmina fidelis quæ adulterum maritum reliquerit fidelem, et alterum duceret, prohibeatur ne ducat."—c. 9. "Si quis post obitum uxoris suæ sororem ejus duxerit, quinquennium a communione placuit abstineri."—c. 61.

Father is interpreted by the language of the Creeds." Again, in page 353, "The temper of accommodation shows itself especially in two ways: first, in the attempt to adapt the truths of Scripture to the doctrines of the Creeds." "The growth of ideas in the interval which separated the first century from the fourth or sixth makes it impossible to apply the language of the one to the explanation of the other." "Between Scripture and the Nicene or Athanasian Creed, a world of the understanding comes in." "And although this last had a truth suited to its age, and its technical expressions have sunk deep into the heart of the human race, it is not the less unfitted to be the medium by the help of which Scripture is to be explained;" and page 355, "Still greater difficulties would be introduced into the Gospels by the attempt to identify them with the Creeds." There is a further way in which the language of creeds and liturgies as well as the ordinary theological use of terms exercises a disturbing influence on the interpretation of Scripture." These words grate harshly against the words of Article VIII. "The three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." If the Creeds are thoroughly to be believed as being consonant with Scripture, they may surely be appealed to with confidence as useful guides for the elucidation, of its difficulties; and the Churchman will not shrink from the attempt to identify the Gospels with the Creeds, since he is taught to believe that the one may be proved by the other; but will rather consider that he is engaged in a more profitable employment than in the endeavour

to disconnect them, and thus create uncertainty and produce confusion in the minds of truth-seeking Christians. The sentiments expressed in the Essay are scarcely consistent with a hearty belief in the truth of the Article, and are certainly a condemnation of the Church for requiring their constant repetition in her services; for if the language of the Creeds is "unfitted to be the medium by the help of which Scripture is to be explained," the Church cannot be justified in using them as instruments for the expression of her faith. The Churchman, on the contrary, who believes that these confessions of faith have been carefully drawn up by competent authority, and sanctioned by the reception of Christian believers for more than fifteen centuries, will regard them as speaking a language safely applicable to the interpretation of Scripture as well as containing truths deserving of universal belief.

The language moreover, used by the essayist in illustrating "the difficulties introduced into the Gospels by the attempt to identify them with the Creeds" (p. 355) might be termed puerile, did not the sacredness of the subject and the hallowed character of the person alluded to induce us to regard it as bordering on profaneness, and as approximating to a denial of the two-fold nature of our Lord and Saviour. The words of the Athanasian Creed stating that "our Lord Jesus Christ is equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood," will help to remove rather than introduce difficulties. An attention to the arguments of the judicious Hooker (Book v. ch. xlvi. 9, 10) or those of the learned Bishop Pearson in his "Treatise on the Creed" (pp. 181 &c.), will furnish the reader with a clearer insight into the true meaning of these passages, than he will gain, by follow-

ing the leading of the essayist, and refusing to listen to the apologetic discourses by which the distinctions of later ages are reconciled with the natural meaning of the words of Scripture.

The author may perhaps wish, by finding fault with the technical language of the Creeds, indirectly to disparage their authority, from a consciousness that these fundamental articles of faith, which have been received in all ages of the Church since their first promulgation, which have stood the test of adverse criticism, and whose truths have been established by the sound learning of able and pious divines, contradict certain theories, in which he is disposed to indulge. It is an easy method for a controversialist to maintain his own views, by questioning the authority of all expressions at variance with his own. But it is assuredly unfair to reject the plain meaning of authoritative statements, because the language in which they are expressed belongs to a different age from that of the writings to which they refer. If this canon of interpretation were valid, it would afford a more powerful argument against adopting the expressions of modern language as suitable instruments for the interpretation of Scripture; and as a necessary consequence all interpretation must cease from the want of a proper vehicle to convey information.

Instead of adopting at the suggestion of the essayist, unfavourable ideas respecting the Creeds, the Churchman will remember that on these conditions of faith he has been received, through the Holy Sacrament of baptism, into the congregation of Christ's flock; that from childhood he has been taught to rehearse them as the articles of his belief; and that he is required by the Church to reiterate his assent to them whenever he



joins in her daily services. He looks upon the Creeds both as an epitome of the abstract truths delivered by the inspired Apostles of our Lord, and also as a standing protest against heresy. He knows that two of them were promulgated for the express purpose of driving away strange doctrine from the Church; and being fully aware of the natural tendency of the human mind to reproduce exploded fallacies, he considers the constant assertion of these truths by the Church, as, humanly speaking, the mainstay for supporting the integrity of the Christian faith; and he consequently keeps a watchful eye on these her appointed sentinels, from the conviction that if allowed to slumber at their post, the enemy would contrive to effect an entrance into the citadel.

There is again a difference between the statements of the essayist and the declarations of the Church, as expressed in her Articles, with regard to the nature of the truths contained respectively in the Old and New Testaments. In p. 348 we read: "For what is progressive is necessarily imperfect in its earlier stages, and even erring to those who come after, whether it be the maxims of a half-civilised world which are compared with those of a civilised one, or the Law with the Gospel." In p. 369: "For the Old Testament will receive a different meaning accordingly as it is explained from itself or from the New." In p. 382: "The Old Testament is not to be identified with the New." In p. 387, speaking allegorically of the childhood of the Church, the essayist states that "the child is led by temporal promises;" and in p. 406: "The new truth which was introduced into the Old Testament, rather than the old truth which was found there, was the salvation and the conversion of the

world." There is a certain vagueness and ambiguity in some of these remarks, but it is difficult to reconcile them with the plain statements of the Articles.

Article VII. states: "That the Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and the New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises."

This Article of Faith is doubtless grounded on the expressions of our Lord when speaking to the Jews concerning the writings of the Old Testament: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John v. 39); as well as those of His apostles St. Paul and Peter (Heb. xi. 13; 1 Peter i. 10; Acts xxvi. 6 and 7; 2 Tim. iii. 15). These passages show the intimate connection between the Old Testament and the New; and plainly indicate not only that the old truth respecting eternal life and salvation was to be found in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but that the Jews thought it was to be found there; and that the patriarchs were consequently led by something higher than "temporal promises." On this point Hooker says: "So that the general end both of Old and New is one; the difference between them consisting in this, that the Old did make wise by teaching salvation through Christ that should come, the New by teaching that Christ the Saviour is come."\*

The essayist also appears at variance with the

\* Hooker, book i. ch. xiv. § 4.

Church in the sentiments expressed in the following passage: "Or, once more, supposing the passage of the Red Sea to be regarded not merely as a figure of baptism, but as a pre-ordained type, the principle is conceded" (p. 369). It is to be presumed from these words that the Essayist does not consider the passage of the Red Sea as a pre-ordained type of baptism. The Church, on the contrary, in her Baptismal Service, addresses Almighty God as one who "did safely lead the children of Israel, His people, through the Red Sea, figuring thereby His holy baptism." Now, though men may apply as a figure what is merely recorded in Scripture as a fact, yet it cannot be properly said that God "figures," or represents in a figure, that which was not present to His omniscient mind. The Church, therefore, must be supposed to express in her formulary her belief that the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea was intended by God as a typical representation of the passage of the true Israelites from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, effected by the waters of baptism—that it is not merely a figure of baptism but a pre-ordained type, and the Church's views on the subject are confirmed by St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2.

It is next necessary to advert to a subject which is of too much importance to be passed by unnoticed, inasmuch as it gives a colouring to the whole Essay, and is indicative of the spirit in which it is conceived; but which at the same time requires very delicate handling, since there is danger lest from indistinctness, or want of skill, false impressions and misconceptions should be conveyed to the reader's mind. In p. 343 we read: "It is better to close the book than to read

it under conditions of thought which are imposed from without. Whether those conditions of thought are the traditions of the Church, or the opinions of the religious world—Catholic or Protestant—makes no difference. They are inconsistent with the freedom of the truth and the moral character of the Gospel.”

There are other passages in the Essay of like import, showing a disposition to repudiate all authority, and to insist upon the unfettered exercise of private judgment in religious matters. Now the assertion of such a principle is most congenial to the natural instincts of man, and most accordant with that spirit of independence which forms so striking a feature in our national character. It agrees with high sounding phrases, such as “freedom of discussion,” “unrestricted expression of opinion,” “liberty of thought,” “breaking through the trammels of prejudice,” which recommend themselves so strongly to the ardent and aspiring, and have such a show of reason as may succeed in entrapping the less thoughtful and reflective. A little consideration will however show that the arguments in its favour are more plausible than valid. The sound Churchman, indeed, will at once perceive that it is a position which he cannot maintain consistently with his adherence to the teaching of the Church. He will refer to Article XXXIV.: “Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like), as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren;”

and to Article XX.\*: “The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith,” as precluding him from exercising without restriction the right of private judgment.

Still the question may be raised, whether the Church has a right to put this restraint upon her members; and it may be said that the framers of the Articles in this particular ran counter to their own acts at the Reformation, and have claimed for the Church an infallibility which they denied to the Bishop of Rome.

An examination of the Articles will vindicate the reformers from the charge of inconsistency in laying down precepts contrary to their practice, whilst the constitution of the Church will establish her right to impose such restrictions.

It will be seen by Article XX. that the reformers did not lose sight of the possibility of diversities of opinion existing in the Church. They were aware that the natural dispositions of the human mind would lead to different conclusions respecting the interpretation of Scripture or the intention of the Church, which could not be prevented by any positive enactment. They therefore had the foresight to point out the method by which controversies should be settled in case they did arise. Each individual is permitted to exercise his judgment in forming an opinion; but in case that opinion

\* It is right to notice that the genuineness of this part of the Article has been disputed on account of its omission in Archbishop Parker's MSS. This omission has been satisfactorily explained by my late lamented friend, Archdeacon Hardwick (*Hist. of Arts.* p. 131), as well as by other commentators; but whatever doubt there may be as to its origin, its continued publication among the Church's formularies from A.D. 1582 to the present time is a proof of its reception by the Church.

is deemed contrary to the teaching of the Church, appeal must be made to the regularly constituted ecclesiastical authorities to determine the soundness or unsoundness of the opinion entertained, and its consistency with the Church's traditions. Such proceeding is analogous to the course pursued in civil cases. Each individual may form an opinion as to the justice of his claims to certain property, or on any other secular matter, but in case of dispute the decision is not left to the private judgment of the person interested, but must be obtained through the instrumentality of the courts of law; and in case of a manifest defect in the law itself, an amendment must be sought by the operation of Parliament.

It was in this way that the reformers themselves acted in their proceedings relative to the errors and false doctrines which had crept into the Church. Opinions were formed by individuals adverse to the teaching of the Church as practised previous to the Reformation, which led to discussion and controversy. The controverted opinions were then submitted to Convocation, as the Church's representative, for decision, and after due deliberation, the Articles of Faith were drawn up by them as the authoritative declaration of the Church's views respecting the points in dispute; so that it cannot be said that the reformers set up private judgment in opposition to the Church, but obtained the Church's sanction for the maintenance of their particular opinions; a course of proceeding which is still open to any members of the Church.

With respect to infallibility, the reformers did not maintain, by granting the Church authority in controversies, that the Anglican branch of the Church must infallibly decide right; but since, when differences arise,

the power of pronouncing a decision must be lodged somewhere, they conceived it right to invest the Church with the needful authority, and considered, that though liable to error, as intimated in Article XIX., yet it was a safer guide for arriving at a sound judgment, than trusting to each individual's fanciful interpretation. In this particular, too, there is kept up the analogy to civil courts; since the State, by granting authority to temporal judges to adjudicate in secular affairs, does not intend to attribute to them infallibility, but makes use of them as the best means for maintaining order in the Commonwealth. These observations are intended to clear the reformers from the imputation of having acted in a different spirit in their attacks upon Romish errors, from that by which they were influenced in framing the Articles. But it is necessary further to show that the Church has a moral right, if she thinks fit, to limit the exercise of private judgment among her members.

It will be admitted, that though each individual in a state of nature may be at liberty to hold what opinions he pleases, yet if he is desirous of joining any civilised society, he is obliged to give up some of his natural rights in order to entitle him to the benefits of communion; now every civilised society has not only the right, but is under a moral obligation, of making regulations for its own efficient government, with which regulations all its members are bound by the terms of union to comply; nor will any of the community be allowed to allege differences of opinion as to their propriety, as a valid reason for their infringement. Take, for instance, the case of smuggling. The prohibition against the introduction of contraband goods may be considered by an individual

as an unjust restriction on his freedom of action; but still he cannot be permitted with impunity to put in practice the convictions of his private judgment in opposition to the regulations of the State to which he owes allegiance. In like manner an individual in his natural position may have a right to maintain whatever opinions he pleases respecting religion, but in case he is desirous of becoming a member of a Christian community, he must be prepared to adapt himself to its requirements. Now, the Church, regarded from a human point of view, is composed of individuals, who are banded together in one communion and fellowship for the avowed purpose of upholding and inculcating true religion. Rules and restrictions are therefore as necessary for maintaining the discipline and conducting the affairs of the Church, as they are for like purposes in any other community. It is consequently a plain deduction that the Church has a right to impose rules and restrictions, in order to carry out effectually the objects she has in view; and she must be the sole judge of what is most expedient for her own interest. If, therefore, she thinks fit to require an assent to certain religious truths, as the test of Church membership, she is acting within her legitimate powers, and no one who is admitted into the privileges of the Church, on the profession of an adherence to her Articles of Faith, can reasonably appeal to the natural "freedom of thought," as a justification for holding opinions, which have been condemned by the voice of the Church, speaking through her Formularies. Contraband Articles of Faith must be excluded from the Church, as much as contraband articles of commerce from the State.

It may be alleged that there is considerable difference between matters of opinion and matters of practice;



and that therefore no analogy can be made between them. This is true in a certain sense as to the existence of a difference, but it does not affect the question of the analogous necessity of rules for the proper direction of each. If concord of action is requisite for the due preservation of order in the State, concord of opinion is far more requisite for the preservation of truth in the Church; and such concord cannot be attained without definite rules in one case any more than in the other. Moreover, as divergencies of opinion in matters of faith are more subtle and less easily detected than divergencies of practice in matters of duty, the former must be watched with a more vigilant eye than the latter, especially as offences against religious truth may be fraught with far more fatal consequences than offences against the enactments of the State.

Thus much may be advanced with respect to the Church's right to place restrictions on her members; but it may possibly be advisable to go a step further, and show that such restrictions on the exercise of private judgment are necessary as well as allowable for her peace and safety.

The essayist has in one part of his work (pp. 334—336) dilated almost in a tone of derision on the various interpretations and commentaries which have been made on the Scriptures. Now, to what an incalculable extent would these variations reach, if there were no restraint placed on the promulgation of private opinion? What mode would there be for ordinary minds to arrive at a clear perception of the meaning of Scripture, if there were no authoritative declarations of faith to which they might appeal? Where could the distracted mind find rest amid the conflicting statements with which the uncontrolled imagination of weak, reckless, and

inconsistent men would inundate the Christian world? There could be no settled standard of faith, if it were liable to be attacked without rebuke by its professed supporters. Confessions of faith would be nugatory, if no obligation were attached to them. The adoption of regular forms of divine worship would be useless, if they might be superseded or mutilated by the ever-varying judgment of individual opinion. And without any fixed standard of faith, without specific confessions of faith, without ordinances of Divine service, what chance would there be for the maintenance of pure religion? The Church not being any longer regarded as the witness or the keeper of Holy Writ, where could a safe substitute for her hallowed guidance be found?

The philosopher would probably elevate human reason to the judgment seat, and leave the decision to its arbitration. Now, it must not be permitted for a moment to be supposed that the Church rejects the use of reason, or imposes any restraint on its proper and legitimate use. She only requires that the instrument should be confided to tried and skilful hands. To refer, however, the settlement of differences of opinion to the arbitration of reason, is, in fact, to refer the question to an abstract quality; but such reference can produce no result, unless some person is specified as the exponent of this abstract equality. In cases of trials in courts of law, when doubts are raised respecting the presence of poison in any substance, in common parlance, the question is said to be submitted to the test of chemistry; but in order that chemistry may be made available for this purpose, its application is committed to scientific and trustworthy persons, not left to the chance experiments of any ignorant empiric. In like manner in the case of the arbitration of reason, there

must be called in certain agents to apply the test, and it is not unreasonable to require that the case should be submitted to regular practitioners rather than self-appointed arbitrators. The Church is as desirous as the philosopher, that reason should be the human guide to right interpretation, but she considers that she secures the aid of a more able expositor, if she confides the application of reason to the judgment of her constituted authorities, in preference to trusting them to the variable decision of individual opinion. In fact, the appeal to reason without defining how reason is to be applied, is merely a reference to each individual's conception of what is reasonable; and so far from resulting in any general and specific conclusion, will only be productive of confusion and uncertainty. The right of unaided private judgment imposes upon the individual mind a responsibility which no reasonable man would wish to claim, no religious man would dare to assume.

The nature, too, of the several writings contained in the Bible renders the exercise of private judgment in their interpretation more hazardous than in any other book. Had the Bible only contained a precise code of laws, or a simple narrative of facts, there would have been less scope for contradictory opinions as to its meaning. But the difficulties of interpretation, and the danger of misconception, are multiplied an hundred fold by the consideration that the Bible is a book, written at different periods extending over a space of 1500 years, and relating to circumstances which go back to the origin of man, wherein the narrative of human events is intermixed with divine revelations, doctrines with exhortations, poetry with precepts, positive injunctions with argumentative reasoning, prophetic announcements with legal enactments.

Surely in examining such a complicated work as this there is need of a restraining hand to circumscribe the fields over which the imagination may roam, and to check the extravagance and distortion into which the fallible mind of man is prone to fall, under the sole guidance of private judgment. The unlearned and the unskilful may lay hold of a right idea, yet from want of discretion may push it to absurd conclusions, whilst the learned and the artful may lay hold of a wrong idea, yet, by skilful treatment, may invest it with the semblance of truth.

But there is one distinguishing characteristic in the Church which renders the exercise of private judgment inconsistent with her very essence. In the emphatic prayer uttered by our Lord on behalf of His disciples, as recorded in St. John xvii., He says, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are;" and St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "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." (1 Cor. i. 10.) Hence it is evident that oneness and singleness of purpose is the grand idea intended to be presented to the mind in contemplating the Church. In illustration of this view of the Church St. Paul compares it to a building (Eph. ii. 19—22), "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy

temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;” and St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 5), “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” And in many places the former Apostle compares it to the component parts of the human body (1 Cor. xii. 12; Eph. iv. 16; Col. i. 18, and ii. 19).

Now the exercise of private judgment is destructive of the idea of compactness and consistency. If permission were granted to pick out single stones from a building, it is probable that the whole fabric would fall upon our heads; and thus the removal of a single doctrine might imperil the unity of the Church. In like manner the exercise of private judgment is incompatible with the due discharge of corporate functions. We all have witnessed the futile attempts of the enfeebled paralytic to regulate the actions of his hands or feet according to the volition of his mind; but the indisposition of the members to act in subordination to the direction of the head is never regarded as a sign of healthy action, but is contemplated with a feeling of compassion as a manifest token of physical infirmity; in like manner whenever attempts are made by the members of the Church to act in contradiction to her declared opinions, we may be sure that the spirit which influences them is not the spirit which the great Founder of our religion wished to infuse into His Church.

The Churchman, too, is taught to believe that human reason must always be exercised under the guidance and governance of God’s Holy Spirit, if it wishes to be led into the way of truth, and to hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life; he will therefore scrupulously check the presumptuous notion that the human intellect can ever reach

such a degree of perfection as will entitle it to assume the position of an accredited judge in matters of faith, irrespective of the influences of the Divine spirit. He will remember the words of the homily: "Thus, if ye will be profitable hearers and readers of the Holy Scriptures, ye must first deny yourselves, and keep under your carnal senses taken by the outward words, and search the inward meaning; reason must give place to God's Holy Spirit; you must submit your worldly wisdom and judgment unto His divine wisdom and judgment." "And in another place Chrysostom saith that man's human and worldly wisdom or science is not needful to the understanding of Scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore;" and he will be disposed to endorse the opinion of Bishop Horsley: "I do not mean to affirm generally that reason is not a judge in matter of religion; but I do maintain that there are certain points concerning the nature of the Deity and the schemes of Providence upon which reason is dumb and revelation explicit, and in these points there is no certain guide but the plain obvious meaning of the written word."\*

Moreover, on the lowest grounds of expediency it may be asked, Is this the most advisable time for insisting upon the exercise of the right of private judgment? Is the circulation of private opinion so languid as to require stimulants to promote its increased action? Is the spirit of independence so subdued that the employment of the powers of rhetoric is necessary to rouse its dormant energy? Is truth in danger of being sacrificed from too great subserviency to authority? or, is

\* Sermon, p. 141.

error likely to be stereotyped from too servile an adherence to conformity? Surely in the present day it is the special duty of all lovers of peace to utter words of caution rather than add incentives to the natural inclination to free-thinking; to endeavour to heal dissensions, not aggravate them by irritating applications; to pray to "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; to take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that as there is but one body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all: so we may henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

II. In regarding this Essay from the Christian's point of view, it will be immediately observed that there is apparent in its pages a depreciation of the Scriptures considered as a special revelation from God to man, a studied attempt to magnify the difficulties of interpretation, to overstate the seeming inaccuracies in the narrative, and to present the Bible altogether in the most unfavourable light to the minds of his readers. Now there is nothing more offensive to the pious Christian than disrespect shown to that book which he has always religiously revered as the revealed word of God. The rigid interpreter may consider this oversensitiveness on the part of the Christian believer as deserving only of contempt and derision, but it surely contains as strong signs of being a divinely planted seedling, as the acquired indifference generated in the

mind of the reasoning philosopher. The practised surgeon may exhibit no outward token of feeling when probing the wound or amputating the limb of his patient; but he can hardly expect that like unconcern will be displayed by the patient's relatives and friends; and when they see a bungling operator needlessly lacerating the nerves of one most dear to them, it is no matter of surprise if they break forth in an exclamation of horror and indignation. So the abstract philosopher may indicate no reverence for the Bible, and may proceed to dissect its sentences with perfect nonchalance, but he must not be surprised if such treatment should shock the feelings of those who look upon that book as the depository of Divine truth, nor expect that the Christian believer will be unmoved at the ruthless mutilation of his most valued friend.

This disparaging tone is observable in the first pages of the Essay, when speaking of the differences of opinion that exist respecting the interpretation of Scripture; especially in the forced and illogical comparison which he institutes between the treatment of the Bible at the hands of commentators, and that of the works of Plato or Sophocles. It might be inferred from the author's remarks that, in his estimation the one was no more deserving of reverence or respect than the other, were it not for the disclaimer contained in the saving clause, "No one who has a Christian feeling would place classical on a level with sacred literature." Material circumstances, however, are omitted in making the comparison, so as completely to destroy the correctness of the parallelism. He leaves out of the consideration the magnitude of the volume and the diversity of the several writings which constitute the Bible, and also the paramount and overwhelming importance of the



subjects propounded in its pages. He does not notice that the Scriptures proclaim truths which affect mankind in their most intimate relations; that they profess to be the positive declarations of the Creator to his creatures; and that on a sincere belief in their statements the happiness of each individual to all eternity is said to depend. No such vital importance can attach to the writings of Sophocles or Plato, nor is any claim made by these authors on the special attention of their readers. These differences, which are kept in the background by the essayist, are sufficient to account for the different modes in which these writings have been treated. The simple circumstance of the number and variety of the sacred writings would of itself call forth a multitude of commentators, who could not be roused by the delineations of the poet, or the abstract reasoning of the philosopher; whilst the knowledge of the fact that the book professed to bring life and immortality to light, and to teach the way of salvation to a perishing world, would produce a host of anxious inquirers, such as no other work could attract. Multitudes, who could not be induced to drop a tear over the woes of Antigone, or who have not required the aid of an *Œdipus* to solve the dark riddle of the sphinx, have pondered with heartfelt emotion over the unmerited sufferings of the Man of Sorrow, and have been eager to unravel the deep mystery of godliness, comprehended in the statement that "God was manifest in the flesh." Thousands, who have regarded with cold indifference the learned Athenian's system of philosophy, have devoted the high powers of the human intellect to elucidate the truths of redemption, and to prove the all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement to satisfy the justice and to propitiate the favour of an omniscient

God. At the same time, the consciousness that they were dealing with God's word has given a delicacy to their touch in handling these sacred documents, and produced a caution and reserve in meddling with authorised versions, which commentators would not be careful to observe in examining mere human productions. We may, therefore, unhesitatingly state, in contradiction to the essayist, that "the figure" he has drawn, is a gross exaggeration of "the fancy of men in the use of Scripture—of the tenacity with which they cling to the interpretation of other times, and of the arguments by which they maintain them."

Again, the Christian who has built up his faith in the word of God by means of the received methods of interpretation, will not be satisfied either with the tone or the accuracy of the statement contained in the following passage (p. 372): "If words have more than one meaning, they may have any meaning. Instead of being a rule of life or faith, Scripture becomes the expression of the ever-changing aspect of religious opinions. The unchangeable word of God, in the name of which we repose, is changed by each age and each generation in accordance with its passing fancy. The book in which we believe all religious truth to be contained, is the most uncertain of all books, because interpreted by arbitrary and uncertain methods." So far from there being any appearance of uncertainty in "the book in which he believes all religious truth to be contained," the Christian will observe that its leading doctrines have been preserved unimpaired from their first promulgation, so that he can confidently appeal to the writings of the early fathers in corroboration of his own views of Scripture truth; and he will consider the embodiment of these fundamental articles

of the faith in the ancient Creeds, as one of the means appointed by an all-seeing God for preserving the purity and integrity of the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Nor will he admit the conclusion that, "if words have more than one meaning, they may have any meaning," when applied to the prophetic writings of the Scripture; inasmuch as, according to the Christian's view of inspiration, the Holy Spirit of God, when putting words into the prophet's mouth, may, in the exercise of his attribute of prescience, comprehend, under the expression of a direct meaning, some more remote or metaphorical signification of the words, which could only be thoroughly understood by their subsequent fulfilment. Such idea of a secondary meaning may not be realised by those who refuse to admit that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;"\* but the Christian, who "recognises an authentic utterance of Divine knowledge and not a human utterance" in the words of the prophets, when they proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord," or "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," † can feel no difficulty in believing that a double meaning may be attached to the words of Scripture without being led to imagine that the Bible is consequently the most uncertain of all books. The Christian, indeed, will carefully abstain from indulging in fanciful interpretations of Scripture, such as the human imagination may

\* 2 Pet. i. 21.

† "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" or "over me." The expression implies a superiority and control of the Divine Spirit, the Spirit's government and guidance of the man, and the man's entire submission, in the prosecution of the work he had in hand, to the Spirit's direction. — *Horsley*, p. 95.

suggest; but when he perceives that the words of the Old Testament are referred to by the Lord Jesus and his Apostles, as being fulfilled in their days in a sense in which they did not obviously present themselves to the minds of those who lived at the time when they were uttered, and that they are not quoted as mere applications arising from the accidental coincidence of circumstances, but that their fulfilment was the completion of the Holy Spirit's preconceived intention, he will readily conclude that this second meaning was not only present to the eye of omniscience, but was intended to be comprehended in the declarations made by the mouths of the sacred writers, although the prophecies in their primary signification may have had reference to anterior events. Thus, the prophecy contained in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah may be held by some to have received a primary fulfilment in the delivery of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and their restoration to their own land; but since the Lord Jesus has said, in reference to this very passage, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," the Christian will not hesitate to put implicit faith in his Lord's declaration, and to express his belief that the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God had imparted these words to the prophet, as a predictive announcement of the mission of His son on earth. And when St. Matthew says, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my son," the Christian, while he admits that the quotation from the prophet Hosea had a primary reference to the delivery of Israel out of Egypt, still accepts as a Gospel truth, on the authority of the Evangelist, that the prophet's words were intended by God's Holy Spirit to have a

further allusion to our Lord's sojourn as a child in Egypt.\*

With respect to a typical, in addition to a literal meaning to be applied to certain passages in Scripture, the Christian, having not only the example of St. Paul † to sanction this twofold interpretation, but having the authority of the same apostle for declaring that such signification ‡ was intended by the Holy Ghost, will not scruple to make use of such mode of interpretation, nor be deterred by an apprehension that he may thereby render the word of God uncertain, in spite of the averment of the essayist, that "it is impossible to maintain the principle" (of more than one interpretation) "in the types of the Mosaic law and the double meanings of prophecy, at least in any sense in which it is not equally applicable to all deep and suggestive writings" (p. 419): he will prefer to be guided by the teaching of the Homily: "And though in sundry places of the Scriptures be set out divers rites and ceremonies, oblations and sacrifices, let us not think strange of them but refer them to the times and people for whom they served, although yet to learned men they be not unprofitable to be considered, but to be expounded as

\* Dr. Townsend, in his learned work on the "Harmony of the New Testament," has the following significant note on this passage: — "Midrash Tehillim (Ps. ii. 7) has these remarkable words: 'I will publish a decree;' this decree has been published in the Law, in the Prophets, and in the Hagiographa. In the Law, 'Israel is my first-born' (Exod. iv. 22). In the Prophets, 'Behold my servant shall deal prudently' (Isa. lii. 13). In the Hagiographa, 'The Lord said unto my Lord.' All which passages the Jews refer to the Messiah; and St. Matthew, even if he had not spoken by inspiration, would have been justified, according to the custom of his countrymen, in applying the passage in question to the Messiah."

† 1 Cor. v. 7; Heb. vii. 1—15; Heb. ix. 1.

‡ Heb. ix. 8.

figures and shadows of things, and persons afterwards openly revealed in the New Testament.\*

The leaning of the essayist's mind in a direction opposed to the authority of Scripture, may be discerned in his remarks on the subject of prophecy. In p. 342 he says: "The failure of a prophecy is never admitted, in spite of Scripture and of history (Jer. xxxvi. 30; Isa. xxiii.; Amos vii. 10—17)." Can it be considered a fair and candid mode of reasoning to select three comparatively unimportant prophecies in the Old Testament, of which the literal fulfilment may not have been so clearly recorded, or so directly handed down to our times as to satisfy the writer's views of interpretation, and from their assumed failure, to cast a doubt upon the general fulfilment of prophecy; omitting all mention of the glorious concatenation of predictions, running like a golden thread through the pages of Holy Writ, and all centering in "Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write—Jesus of Nazareth?" The Christian, moreover, will not be prepared to admit the accuracy of the term "failure," as applied to these three prophecies. In the first case, it is true, that Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, succeeded him; but as he only continued three months on the throne of David, the facts of the history are sufficiently accordant with the words of the prophecy to satisfy the requirements of a prophetic announcement, in which a certain degree of ambiguity is universally allowed. With regard to Jehoiakim's dead body, there is no mention made of what became of it; but there is a circumstance relating to Jehoiakim which has a particular signification as connected with the prophecy of Jere-

\* Hom. Inform. on Scripture.

miah, viz., that he is the only king of Judah whose death is recorded without any notice of his burial, either in the Books of Kings or Chronicles. There may be difficulties in interpreting Isaiah xxiii., but as many learned commentators\*, both in our own country and abroad, have given satisfactory evidence of its actual fulfilment, it is rather a bold step, considering the imperfect knowledge that exists respecting the history of Tyre, to pronounce in the face of these commentaries the prediction to be a failure. As to the prophecy of Amos, it seems that the essayist has mistaken the false representation made by Amaziah, the priest, of the herdsman's words, for the actual prediction of the prophet; the fulfilment of which, in part at least, is recorded in 2 Kings xv. 10, and in no wise contradicted in the history.

Also in p. 408 the essayist says: "The prophecies again admit of many applications to the Christian Church or to the Christian life. There is no harm in speaking of the Church as the spiritual Israel." The Christian will hardly consider this hesitating admission of the propriety of the practice as accordant with his views of the Scriptural authority for its application. He will remember that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians †, has authorised this mode of interpretation; and he therefore will not merely think "there is no harm" in thus speaking of the Church, but will consider it a duty to apply Scripture to its legitimate use, in order to avoid the imputation of "shunning to declare all the counsel of God."

From the loose mode of reasoning adopted by the

\* See Drechsler, Com. on Isaiah.

† Gal. iv. 24—28; vi. 16.

essayist, it is difficult to determine whether he believes at all in prophecy, as in a strict sense predictive, and in types as really pre-ordained; or whether he looks upon the former as the conjectures of far-seeing mortals based on the calculation of probabilities; and upon the latter, as skilful adaptations of past events to existing circumstances, contrived by the ingenuity of man. But since he affirms "that Scripture has one meaning—the meaning which it had to the mind of the prophet or evangelist, who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it;" and repudiates "the idea of a spirit from whom they proceed, or by which they were overruled;" whilst he further states that there is "reason for not insisting on the applications which the New Testament makes of passages in the Old, as their original meaning;" it appears that he does not concur with Christ and his apostles in believing that these prophecies were originally intended to apply to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he does not hold to the teaching of the Homily for Whitsunday, that "it is evident that the Holy Ghost did wonderfully govern and direct the hearts of the patriarchs and prophets in old time: illuminating their minds with the knowledge of the true Messias, and giving them utterance to prophesy of things that should come to pass long time after." At all events, by speaking of the occasional failure of prophecy, and of the necessity of having "the courage to examine how far the details of prophecy have been fulfilled," he plainly intimates his disbelief in the doctrine that the Bible is the infallible word of God.

Again, when the Christian reads in the Essay: "He is not afraid that inquiries, which have for their object the truth, can ever be displeasing to the God of truth;



or that the word of God is in any such sense a word as to be hurt by investigations into its human origin and conception" (p. 376), he will not only be startled by the announcement, but will be puzzled to interpret the passage in any sense except as containing a denial that what is called "the word of God" is in truth the word of God; for if it be found on investigation to have a "human origin or conception," it cannot properly be designated as the word of God.

The essayist, in an early part of his publication, states that "it is necessary to examine some of the prior questions which lie in the way of a reasonable criticism" (p. 343); and in the front he places the question of inspiration. He begins by remarking, in terms not very complimentary, that "the meaning of inspiration has been variously explained;" and he then enumerates ten different meanings which the word has received. He ostentatiously parades the extremes of interpretation in which commentators have indulged, but gives no direction for determining the proper line of demarcation between these extremes. Having driven the reader into a state of perplexity by his statement of various meanings, he does not charitably proceed to extricate him from his difficulties, but by his observations contrives to sink him deeper in the mire of uncertainty. He tells him that, "To the question, What is inspiration? the first answer is, That idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it." A definition which not only leaves the reader in the dark as to the essayist's own opinion, but affords him very little light to assist him in forming an opinion for himself. It amounts, in fact, to this, that each individual may put whatever interpretation he pleases on the word. The only enlightenment which he vouch-

safes respecting his own views on the subject is of a negative character. "It is no mere *à priori* notion." "It is reconcileable with the attribution to the Divine Being of actions at variance with that higher revelation which He has given of Himself in the Gospels." "It is not inconsistent with imperfect or opposite aspects of the truth — with variations of fact in the Gospels, or with inaccuracies of language in the Epistles of St. Paul" (p. 347). But it must "conform to well-ascertained facts of history or of science;" so that when statements of history or theories of science clash with the views entertained of inspiration, the latter must give way to the former, or, in the language of the essayist, "the idea of inspiration must expand and take them in" (a dogma which almost amounts to an avowal that the revelations of God must yield to the knowledge of man). With these limitations placed on the meaning of the word, the reader is left in doubt whether the proper idea of inspiration extends at all beyond the gift of intelligence which the Creator has in different degrees imparted to His creatures; and the expansiveness assigned to the idea deprives it of all fixedness and certainty, and places the truthfulness of God's word upon the shifting foundation of man's intelligence. If the human device of expansion is constantly applied to the divine principle of inspiration, it must in time inevitably burst. It is the old fable of the Bull and the Frog.

As, however, there is an apparent show of reason in the statement that "any true doctrine of inspiration must conform to all well-ascertained facts of history or of science," it may be as well to pause and examine into its accuracy. It may be granted as an axiom that "the same fact cannot be true and untrue." But

before we yield up our idea of inspiration to meet the assumed conclusions of history or science, it is necessary to determine what are "well-ascertained facts." Now the truth of an historical representation must depend in a great measure upon the credibility of the source from which it is derived. When, therefore, a fact of history is stated to be true, which apparently contradicts a fact recorded in Scripture, we must balance the testimony on which the former fact rests, against the testimony which we possess relative to the Divine origin of the Scriptural statement; and if it be made out on satisfactory testimony that we are dealing with God's word, we must conclude that the truth of the fact which contradicts it has not been sufficiently ascertained, but through some defect in the human channel of communication has been misrepresented. We must affirm with the Apostle, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." And though the corroboration of historical facts in Scripture by external evidence, such as "the Ninevite inscriptions," may tend to confirm our faith, yet it by no means follows as a necessary deduction that we should admit as indisputably true any vague traditions, such as "the chronological discoveries from Egyptian monuments," which are opposed to the truths recorded in God's word. Again, the truth of a fact in science depends upon the skill and trustworthiness of those who have carried on the inductive process by which the result has been elicited. But as experience has taught us that the discoveries of a later age have overthrown the conclusions of a preceding one, we should be cautious how we pronounce any scientific discoveries to be "ascertained facts," especially when they controvert the truth of the Bible; we should rather be disposed to suspend our judgment, in

the hope that further experiments may produce a reconciliation of apparent discrepancies, and not hastily expand that idea of inspiration, which is consonant with the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. At all events, we should refrain from indulging in the expectation that as science advances the idea of any miraculous intervention on the part of God in human affairs will vanish away; or, as the essayist expresses it, that "it may hereafter appear as natural to the majority of mankind to see the providence of God in the order of the world as it once was to appeal to interruptions of it."

The essayist, however, after having expatiated on the interpretation of the word inspiration, cuts adrift the interpreter, and bids him "go on his way," and not "entangle himself with a theory about it;" telling him, that "if the term inspiration were to fall into disuse, no fact of nature, or history, or language, no event in the life of man, or dealings of God with him, would be in any degree altered. The word itself is but of yesterday"\* (p. 351); and therefore "the question of inspiration, though in one sense important, is to him as though it were not important." But can this be considered as good advice? Though it may be admitted that no change would take place in external circumstances, if the *term* inspiration were to fall into disuse, yet if the *idea* conveyed by the term were lost sight of, the credibility of the Scriptures, as being a revelation from God, would be undermined. The fable of Deucalion might be brought to a level with the Mosaic account of the deluge, and the miraculous conception of the Son of Mary be

\* How does the essayist reconcile this assertion with the words of St. Cyprian? "Item beatus Apostolus Paulus dominicæ inspirationis gratiâ plenus."—*De Op. et Eleem.* p. 201.

no more credited than the spontaneous production of Minerva from the brain of Jupiter. The interpreter may have higher objects in view than defining the limits of inspiration, but if the student's belief in inspiration is shaken, by permitting him to question the facts of Scripture, as if they were mere human statements, it may be the means of preparing his mind to doubt the truth of the atonement, and of overthrowing his faith in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Nor will the Christian searcher after truth be willing to admit that the question of inspiration is of no importance to the interpreter. Will not a clear view of the inspiration of the Scriptures tend to direct and strengthen his conclusions respecting their interpretation? Will not the conviction that he is examining a work inspired by the Spirit of God, render him more circumspect in the treatment of such an invaluable treasure? Will not a belief that the Bible does not merely contain a perfect rule of life for man's guidance here below, but a revelation of God's preconceived purpose respecting man's eternal welfare, check all rash and presumptuous interpretations, and the undue protrusion of individual opinion in antagonism to the deliberate determination of wise, and learned, and pious men, who have lived in former ages, or who are living at the present time? Will not a consciousness of the incalculable importance attached to the misinterpretation of the inspired word, as being the means of drawing men aside from the right way that leadeth to salvation, into the fearful mazes of doubt and infidelity, urge the interpreter to search deeper into the mysteries of Gospel truth, and to investigate more accurately into the dark sayings of God's word, before he ventures upon an authoritative decision on controverted points? and will it not prompt

him to abstain from relying exclusively on his own wisdom and knowledge, and urge him to take advantage of every assistance within his reach to guide him to a right judgment in things which pertain not only to his own everlasting peace, but to the peace of thousands of his fellow-creatures? The Christian setting this high value on a correct view of inspiration will not be satisfied with the recommendation of the essayist; but he will be more dissatisfied, when he reads—“Nor for any of the higher or supernatural views of inspiration is there any foundation in the Gospels or Epistles. There is no appearance in their writings that the Evangelists or Apostles had any inward gift, or were subject to any power external to them different from that of preaching or teaching which they daily exercised; nor do they anywhere lead us to suppose that they were free from error or infirmity.” The essayist acknowledges, by implication, that there is a foundation in the Old Testament for the supernatural views of inspiration; nor could he well deny it, when Moses states that “The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend;”\* when David says, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue;”† when the Prophet’s usual mode of expression is, “Thus saith the Lord;” and when Nehemiah in addressing God says, “Yet many years didst Thou forbear them: and testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit in Thy Prophets.”‡ But the essayist affirms that there is no confirmation of such views in the Gospels or Epistles, nor any claim made by the Evangelists or Apostles for such gifts on their own behalf. The Christian will be of a different opinion on the first point, when he remembers

\* Exod. xxxiii. 11.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

‡ Neh. ix. 30.

that the Lord Jesus Christ, in applying a messianic meaning to the words of the Psalmist, said, "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool;"\* and that in like manner His Apostle, St. Peter, said, "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas;"† and when he reflects that the writings of Moses and the Prophets were the basis on which an exposition was founded "of the things concerning Jesus," both by our Lord Himself in His conversation with the disciples at Emmaus‡, and by St. Paul in his address to the Jews at Rome§; and that St. Paul, in quoting the words of the Old Testament, speaks of them as the absolute expression of the Holy Ghost. || And on the second point, when he observes that though St. Peter does not claim inspiration for himself, yet he indirectly attributes it to his brother apostle, inasmuch as he classifies the writings of St. Paul with "the other Scriptures,"¶ of which he had previously said, that "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and that St. Paul uses the most emphatic language in speaking of the spiritual influence by which he was guided. "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God;"\*\* and "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." †† As also

\* Mark xii. 36.

† Acts i. 16.

‡ Luke xxiv. 27.

§ Acts xxviii. 23.

|| Heb. iii. 7; Heb. ix. 8.

¶ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

\*\* 1 Cor. ii. 12.

†† Gal. i. 11, 12.

1 Cor. xiv. 37. A further argument in favour of St. Paul's claim to special inspiration, may be founded upon the passage alluded to by the essayist, as one wherein St. Paul "speaks indeed with authority, but hesitating in difficult cases," p. 346. Now if St. Paul, when delivering an opinion on a matter of discipline of a peculiar nature, relating to which the Spirit of God had not prescribed a definite rule, thought it necessary, in order to avoid misconception, to introduce words of caution, intimating that in this particular instance he gave no commandment as of divine authority, "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment."\* May it not be fairly argued, that when he stated a fundamental truth without such limitation, he intended to affirm, and that he was understood by those whom he addressed to affirm, that "The things which he spake were not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." † Evidently distinguishing between the human intelligence or wisdom which he had in common with other men, and the peculiar divine intelligence, or wisdom derived from the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

The judgment, too, of antiquity, concerning the inspiration of the New Testament, going back to the very age of the Apostles, will have weight with the Christian believer (though it is ignored by the essayist), and will be regarded as a confirmation of the evidence which the book itself contains. Thus, when the Christian student observes that Polycarp speaks of them as "the oracles of the Lord," "Καὶ ὁς ἀν μεθ' ὁδῆς τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου" (c. 7); that Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, states, "Ἐπι μὴν καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης ἧς ὁ νόμος. εἶρηκεν,

\* 1 Cor. vii. 6.

† 1 Cor. ii. 13.



ἀκόλουθα εὐρίσκεται καὶ τὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν εὐγγε-  
 λιῶν διὰ τὸ τοὺς πάντας πνευματοφόρους ἐν πνεύματι Θεοῦ  
 λελαληκέναι” (l. 3, p. 124); that Clement of Alexan-  
 dria says, “Τὸ ἐν τῷ Ἀποστόλῳ ἅγιον πνεῦμα λέγει” (Pæd.  
 l. i. p. 88); and “Τὸν μέντοι Ἰωάννην. . . πνεύματι  
 θεοφορηθέντα, πνευματικὸν ποιήσαι εὐαγγέλιον.” (Eusebius,  
 H. E. lib. vi. c. 14.); Tertullian, “Cupiditatem omnium  
 malorum radicem Spiritus Domini per Apostolum pro-  
 nuntiavit” (De Pat. cap. 7, p. 163); and Cyprian,  
 “Prænuntiante per Apostolum nobis, et præmonente  
 Spiritu Sancto” (De Unit. Ec. p. 115); he becomes  
 more thoroughly convinced that these sacred writings  
 are something more than the productions of the en-  
 lightened intelligence of man; that they are, in fact,  
 revelations conveyed to the authors’ minds by the Holy  
 Spirit of God, in a manner different from that in which  
 he imparts ordinary information to intelligent men  
 through the channel of their natural faculties.

The essayist’s cursory intimation of St. Paul’s *mis-  
 take* respecting the coming of the Lord will not be  
 accepted by the Christian believer as a proof of the  
 absence of inspiration; but he may perhaps be satisfied  
 with the explanation of Bishop Horsley: “In the First  
 Epistle to the Thessalonians St. Paul’s expression taken  
 literally would imply that he included himself in the  
 number of those who should remain alive at the last  
 day. This turn of the expression naturally arose from  
 the strong hold that the expectation of the thing, in its  
 due season, had taken of the writer’s imagination. In  
 the confident expectation of his own reward, his inter-  
 mediate dissolution was a matter of so much indiffer-  
 ence to him that he overlooks it. His expression, how-  
 ever, was so strong, that his meaning was mistaken or  
 misrepresented. This occasioned the Second Epistle

to the Thessalonians, in which the Apostle peremptorily decides against an immediate resurrection, and desires that no expression of his may be understood of its speedy arrival; which proves that whatever he had said of the day of the Lord's coming as at hand, was to be understood only of the certainty of that coming."

The Christian too will not acquiesce in the assertion seemingly introduced to invalidate the testimony of the sacred writers, that the Evangelists made contradictory statements respecting the original dwelling-place of our Lord's parents. For there is nothing in the passage referred to in St. Matt. ii. 1—22, which justifies the conclusion that he considered Bethlehem as their original dwelling-place. It is merely a far-fetched inference of the essayist.

The remarks of Mr. Rennell on the subject of inspiration may have the effect of counteracting the evil influence of the essayist's observations: "We believe that the Holy Scripture was written by men, who were under the superintendence and control of the Spirit of God; but we believe also, that whether in writing, speaking, or acting, they were left in full possession and use of their own natural faculties. The Spirit of God directed, elevated, and purified their souls; all that was necessary He supplied; all that was erroneous he corrected. Every line, therefore, of the New Testament we believe to be stamped with unerring truth; and to be the voice of God speaking in the language of man."\*

Allusion must next be made to the employment of the discoveries of science for the purpose of lowering the estimation of Holy Scripture. This is a favourite topic

\* Rennell's Proofs of Inspiration, p. 17.

with the modern philosopher. The stalking-horse which is ostentatiously paraded on all occasions to trample under foot the statements uttered under divine inspiration—the uncircumcised Philistine ever ready to defy the armies of the living God. The philosopher attempts to prove from scientific discoveries that the Scriptures are in some instances not reliable testimony to the truth of certain facts. Such a proposition is a shock to the Christian's mind, as it weakens his confidence in the Scriptures as a divine revelation. If error be admitted in one particular, what certainty is there that it does not exist in others? If Moses is mistaken concerning the creation of the world, may not St. Paul be mistaken concerning its redemption? But are these sceptical insinuations of any real weight? The discoveries of astronomical science have not shaken the general belief in the phenomena recorded by Joshua—supposing, as some imagine, that it was necessary for God, as a God of truth, to have imparted to Joshua such a degree of science, as would have prevented him from falling into error on the subject of the earth's motion; yet, even if he were conscious of the popular error, he could not have made himself intelligible, except by using words which would convey an accurate meaning to those whom he addressed. He could only reach their understanding through the instrumentality of language, and such language must have been adapted to their knowledge at the time. It is this circumstance which removes all difficulty from reconciling the statement of Joshua with subsequent astronomical discoveries, and leads to its reception, as a faithful representation of a fact, though couched in terms not strictly applicable to the advanced knowledge of the present day. In like manner it was necessary for Moses to convey the infor-

mation of the details of creation in terms intelligible to those for whom he immediately wrote; and it may be well conceived that language adapted to our present knowledge of geology, would not have conveyed a true meaning to the earlier inhabitants of the world; but it is too much to jump to the conclusion that the geologist is right and Moses wrong. It may be unreasonable for the Christian to say that geology is false, because it seems to disagree with the Mosaic cosmogony; but it is equally unreasonable for the geologist to say that Scripture is false, because it seems at variance with the present state of geological science. It is possible that the statement of the prophet may be reconcilable with the researches of the philosopher, though the clue for such reconciliation has not yet been discovered.

There is, however, one point which appears to have escaped the notice of geological objectors, and that is, that the statement of Moses respecting the creation is not altogether uncorroborated. When a person states a startling fact in a court of justice, he is required, in order to bring conviction to the mind of the judge, to bring forward evidence in support of his statements. Now, in this case, it happens that Moses has such evidence to produce. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is evidently of opinion that Moses acted under the immediate inspiration of God; and he confirms the statement of Moses that "the worlds were framed by the word of God." \* St. Peter † also speaks of the creation of the world in terms analogous to those used by Moses. It may be replied that this is merely hearsay evidence, and therefore valueless, as the apostles only repeated what they gathered from Moses' own

\* Heb. viii. 5; xi. 3.

† 2 Pet. iii. 5.

account. But there is another source of information which is not open to the same objection. Whatever may be thought of Moses' competence to describe matters of which, humanly speaking, he could have had but partial knowledge, and respecting which he must have gained his information, if not from divine revelation, from uncertain tradition; yet all candid interpreters of the Bible will allow that he was a competent and trustworthy witness, as to matters which had come under his own observation. Relating to the circumstances connected with the Jewish Exodus, there could not possibly be a person selected who was so likely to furnish accurate statements, as the man who was the head of the enterprise. Now, in the narrative handed down to us, it is stated as a circumstance of which Moses had personal knowledge, that God not only uttered the words of the decalogue, but wrote them on two tables of stone. If, therefore, there be any part of Scripture, which more than another, bears an impress of the Divine hand, it is the decalogue; and in this decalogue there is a direct confirmation of the statement of Moses, that, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." In this case Moses must have asserted a certain truth, or been guilty of a wilful misrepresentation, as he spoke of an occurrence which came under his immediate cognisance. The philosopher, therefore, is placed on the horns of a dilemma, he must believe either that Moses misstated the words of God, as contained in the decalogue, or else, that his statement relative to the formation of the world in six days is true, as being directly corroborated by God Himself.

But even if an admission were made for argument's sake, that there might be inaccuracies in the details

of Moses' account respecting the creation of the world, yet it is very false reasoning to argue from thence that Moses might likewise be in error in his account of the origin of man. In the first case the error, if error there be, relates to circumstances in a great measure irrelevant to the subject matter which the author had in hand, viz., the creation of the world, so far as it was connected with the human race. In the latter case the scheme of religion, as developed in the Bible, would crumble into dust, since the whole system of God's dealings with man hinges upon the accuracy of the statement. If "mankind spread not from one but from many centres," the effect of one man's transgression could not influence the subsequent condition of the whole human race, but only of those who were descended from the transgressor; nor could the redemption wrought by the vicarious punishment of one be consistently extended beyond the limits of that race with which the Redeemer was connected by blood. If it be *not* true that "in Adam all die," then it is not a consequential truth that "in Christ shall all be made alive." An inaccuracy in representing the details of the creation is immaterial to the great question of man's relation to his Maker and Redeemer, but an inaccuracy in the statement of the fact concerning man's origin may destroy the very essence of Christianity. It may seem to the essayist imprudent to "peril religion on the possibility" of Moses' untruthfulness; but it is more imprudent to peril the overthrow of the faith of thousands, by questioning the veracity of God's word, or to raise doubts in the minds of the unlearned and the inconsiderate, by assuming the possibility of a supposition, which must upset the Scriptures as a reliable and authorised enunciation of God's dispensation to

man. The child of faith will not relinquish his belief in the truthfulness of God's word, because there are statements contained in it respecting matters far above his comprehension, and unconnected with the great object of revelation, which appear to be contradicted by geological discoveries, he will rather cherish the hope that further investigations in the field of science may be the means of closing, not widening, the breach. The science of geology, though advanced, cannot be said to be perfected; and there is, therefore, no just reason to conclude that the admission of greater light will have the effect of separating more distinctly philosophy from religion.

The same predisposition to disparage the testimony of Moses is manifested in the incidental allusion to a "contradictory narrative of the Exodus in the chamber of an Egyptian temple of the year B.C. 1500" (p. 350). The essayist admits that his supposition is not very probable; but the eagerness with which he seizes on such legendary information to damage the credibility of Moses as a faithful historian, shows the animus of the writer, and how willing he is to set aside the usual rules adopted in testing the proper weight of evidence whenever the Jewish law-giver is concerned. Would he advise us not to put faith in the despatches written by Lord Wellington in the peninsula because a Spanish romance might be discovered, alleged to be written at the beginning of the present century, which contained different statements relative to the movements of the British army?

Again, the Christian who has been instructed in the fundamental doctrines of the incarnation of the Son of God and redemption through His blood, and who believes that "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will

judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead \* ” will find much in the following passage discordant with his feelings. “ Absorbed as St. Paul was in the person of Christ with an intensity of faith and love, of which in modern days and at this distance of time we can scarcely form a conception—high as he raised the dignity of his Lord above all things in heaven and earth—looking to Him as the Creator of all things, and the head of quick and dead, he does not speak of Him as ‘ equal to the Father,’ or ‘ of one substance with the Father’ ” (p. 354). If this be a true representation of St. Paul’s complete conception of his Lord’s glorious attributes, then, according to the essayist, we are to imagine that St. Paul omitted from this conception the idea of Christ being God manifest in the flesh; that he failed to recognise His mediatorial office; and that he regarded this Divine being as the Creator of all things, but not the Redeemer of mankind; as the head but not the judge of quick and dead, in spite of the declarations of this apostle contained in 1 Tim. iii. 16; ii. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Heb. ii. 9. The Christian will also be astonished to find that the essayist claims the authority of St. Paul on the negative side of the proposition relative to the equality of the Father and the Son and their consubstantiality; intimating by implication that these Christian verities ought to be left open questions, as not having any sure warrant of Scripture, although Philip. ii. 6, and Col. ii. 9, appear to maintain the affirmative. But his astonishment may in some measure be modified, when he finds that with respect

\* Acts xvii. 31.



to the former passage, Philip. ii. 6, the critical eye of the Greek professor has discovered a grammatical error in the translation, though he does not show how a more literal rendering would materially vary the sense; and he seems forgetful of his former observation, that imperfect grammar is not to be excluded from the writings of such an unclassical author as St. Paul (p. 348).\*

It may, however, possibly pass unnoticed, that the essayist has, in this instance, carefully left himself a loophole, through which to escape from the imputation of making false charges against the Apostle, by the aid of a quibble between the words "God" and "Father," thus shifting the ground of objection from the question of equality between Christ and God, to the more metaphysical question concerning the nature of the God-head, a transition from Socinianism to Arianism. We must not, however, fail to observe that the essayist has carefully omitted to mention a fact of great moment in the argument, relative to the propriety of the expression introduced into the Athanasian Creed, viz., that though it may be insinuated that St. Paul is silent respecting the equality of the Father and the Son, yet that it is most manifest, as will appear by reference to St. John v. 17, 18; x. 30—34, that not only did our Lord Jesus Christ lay claim to this equality, but that the Jews who heard him understood him as making such a claim, and considered that by identifying himself with the Father he identified himself with God. The essayist's own opinion respecting the co-equality and consubstantiality of the Father and the Son is not

\* See Pearson "On the Creed" on the words "Τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ" (p. 123); "Pariari Deo," Tertull. "Esse se æqualem Deo," S. Cyprian. Thus all express the notion of equality, not of similitude.

distinctly stated, but it is difficult to understand for what purpose the passage is introduced, except for one of the two following reasons: either to signify the essayist's dissent from the doctrine of the Church, and to bring forward the testimony of St. Paul in his favour; or else, in intimating his concurrence with the teaching of the Church, to pass by implication a condemnation on St. Paul. It looks, indeed, like an attempt to revive the heresy which distracted the Church in the fourth century, when, as Hooker tells us, "Under Constantine the Emperor, about 300 years and upwards after Christ, Arius, a priest in the Church of Alexandria, a subtle witted and a marvellous fair spoken man, but discontented that one should be placed before him in honour, whose superior he thought himself in desert, became through envy and stomach prone unto contradiction, and bold to broach at the length that heresy wherein the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, contained but not opened in the former Creed, the co-equality and co-eternity of the Son with the Father, was denied."\*

The tendency of the essayist's mind to underrate the truth of Scripture may further be traced in the remarks made on the variations in the accounts given by the Evangelists, relative to the events connected with our Saviour's life—or, as the essayist puts it, "the differences which arose in the traditions of the earliest ages respecting the history of our Lord." Had his object been to direct, and not to mislead, would he have gathered together the minute particles of difference, discoverable in the several Gospels, and laid them in a heap before the bewildered student's eyes, without a

\* Book v. ch. xlii. 2.

word of instruction as to the best mode of reconciling the apparent inconsistencies? Would he not have been delighted to employ his glowing language to throw light upon the inquirer's path rather than use its powerful influence to confound and dismay? Would he not have remarked on the trifling and immaterial nature of these discrepancies, and instead of drawing special attention to their "cumulative weight," have shown how far they were outweighed by the magnitude and importance of the points of agreement\*, pointing out that whilst there was sufficient variation to disprove confederacy, there was sufficient concordance to supply corroboration? Would he not have advised the young divine to turn his attention to the study of the peculiarities of mind traceable in the writings of the several Evangelists, as a clue to their different treatment of the same subject, and noted the tendency to generalisation distinguishable in the writings of St. Matthew, as a mode of accounting for the vagueness of the representations of the Jewish publican, compared with the fondness for graphic description which characterises the style of the more learned and travelled physician? Would he not have gladly referred to the undesigned coincidences to be found in the Scriptures as a confirmation of their authenticity, instead of dwelling with manifest pleasure on slight divergencies as tokens of inaccuracy, and as grounds for placing but little reliance on the credibility of the statements?

There are other passages in the Essay which will appear objectionable in the Christian's eyes. For instance, "The Christian religion is in a false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to

\* The author has done this in a modified form in p. 425.

it" (p. 374); and "No one can form any notion from what we see around us, of the power which Christianity might have if it were at one with the conscience of man, and not at variance with his intellectual convictions" (p. 376). Can such statements as these be permitted to pass without remonstrance? When Christianity has existed as a divinely appointed institution for more than 1800 years, and has forced its way by sound argument against prejudices and predilections to the conviction of millions of reasoning beings, shall it be admitted, on the mere assertion of the essayist, that the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it, because he cannot reconcile its life-giving truths to his speculative opinions? Or, is it true that religious knowledge at the present day is at so low an ebb as to authorise the insinuation that "all intellect has gone the other way?" Also, "It saves him from the necessity of maintaining that the Old Testament is one and the same everywhere; that the books of Moses contain truths or precepts, such as the duty of prayer or the faith in immortality, or the spiritual interpretation of sacrifice, which no one has ever seen there" (p. 387). There possibly may be no direct precept in the Pentateuch enforcing the duty of prayer, but there are sufficient indications to lead us to believe that it was a service required by God from the earliest times. It is evident that Archbishop Usher saw the precept in the writings of Moses, as he says, "That will of God, according whereto we must direct our prayers, is revealed throughout the *whole* book of the Scriptures of God, which inform us, as concerning other duties, so specially concerning this of prayer, recording also for this purpose many excellent prayers, as of Moses," &c. "Whence we may learn that, for help of our weakness

and rudeness in prayer, we are to look unto the prayers of the holy men of God, set down in Scripture.”\* Example has always been considered a legitimate mode of teaching: St. James relies on it as an argument for proving “that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”† Now there are many instances of persons praying recorded in the Pentateuch: Abraham (Gen. xviii. 23), Abraham’s servant (Gen. xxiv. 12), Isaac (Gen. xxv. 21), Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 9), Moses, *passim*: and that there was a general belief in the efficacy of prayer is evident from the request of Pharaoh to Moses, to “entreat the Lord for him.”‡ May not these instances of persons praying, mentioned in the writings of Moses, be regarded as the mode adopted by God’s Holy Spirit for inculcating the duty of prayer by way of example? Nor can the practice of this service by holy men of old be satisfactorily explained, except on the supposition that they were originally directed to the observance by some unrecorded precept issuing from the Almighty; for it can no more be imagined that man, in the days of his “early childhood,” would adopt this practice as the means of procuring the favour and assistance of an omniscient and invisible God, unless he had received some previous communication from the Divine Being on the subject, than that Abel, from the force of his human intelligence, was induced to bring of the firstlings of his flock an offering to God in the way of propitiation, without the enlightenment of a divine revelation. On this latter point we have the testimony of St. Paul, that “by faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable

\* Usher, Body of Divinity, c. xxxiv.

† James v. 17, 18.

‡ Exod. x. 17.

sacrifice than Cain;”\* whereas, had it been an original idea of his own, it could not have been considered an exercise of faith, but an application of his intellectual faculties. Upon the question of “the faith in immortality,” the essayist is undoubtedly at issue with St. Paul; for since the Apostle, having given instances of the faith evinced by Abraham and other patriarchs, goes on to say, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.” “For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.” “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.”† And since, in like manner, after speaking of the faith of Moses, and stating that “he had respect unto the recompence of the reward,”‡ the Apostle closes the chapter by saying, “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,”§ it is only a reasonable deduction to conclude that St. Paul saw in the writings of the Old Testament the faith in immortality.

Another passage must be quoted, the gross offensiveness of which is too palpable to need any comment: “Without criticism it would be impossible to reconcile history and science with revealed religion; they must remain for ever in a hostile and defiant attitude. Instead of being like other records, subject to the conditions of knowledge which existed in an early stage of the world, Scripture would be regarded on the one side as the work of organic inspiration, and as a lying imposition on the other” (p. 411).

\* Heb. xi. 4.

† Ver. 26.

‡ Heb. xi. 13, 14, 16.

§ Ver. 39, 40.

The Christian may further be disposed to ask what the essayist means by the "principle of progressive revelation"? (p. 348). If he only intends to state that, the several books of Scripture being written in chronological order, increased enlightenment concerning God's eternal purpose, was gradually communicated through His Spirit to mankind, this evident truth will not be denied by any reader of the Bible; but if, as appears by the context, he wishes it to be understood that each succeeding revelation was made for the purpose of superseding, not confirming, the preceding ones, then it may be affirmed that he is not borne out in his interpretation by the passage which he adduces in proof of it,—“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts;”—for if the passage had been quoted in its entirety it would have shown that our Saviour referred to a prior revelation (“in the beginning it was not so”), as of higher authority than the precept of Moses, which was only delivered to meet a special condition of mankind, and never intended for universal observance; and he is directly contradicted by our Lord Jesus Christ, when He says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”\* There seems, however, to be another latent meaning, not clearly defined, but vaguely floating in the imagination of the essayist; for when he speaks of “the continuity or design (of Scripture) as best expressed under some notion of progress or growth” (p. 385), and that “the purposes of God towards the human race are only half revealed” (p. 389), and that “the continuous growth of revelation, which he traces in the Old and New Testament, is a part of a larger

\* Matt. v. 17.

whole, extending over the earth and reaching to another world," it may be doubtful whether the essayist does not apply "the principle of progressive revelation" to the natural gradual growth and development of the intellectual faculty, whereby each succeeding age is in advance of its predecessor, rejecting all idea of inspiration as specially attached to the writers of Holy Writ, and anticipating for future ages such a degree of intelligence as will place the deductions of their judgment in things divine on a level with, if not in a position of superiority to, God's revealed word.

Lastly, it may be imagined that the Christian reader will not derive satisfactory enlightenment from the remarks of the essayist upon the design of the Scriptures. He is told that, "Neither is there any ground for assuming design of any other kind in Scripture any more than in Plato or Homer. Wherever there is beauty and order, there is design; but there is no proof of any artificial design, such as is often traced by the fathers, in the relation of the several parts of a book, or of the several books to each other. That is one of those mischievous notions which enables us, under the disguise of reverence, to make Scripture mean what we please" (pp. 381, 382); and in page 384, "Yet in this consideration of the separate books of Scripture, it is not to be forgotten that they have also a sort of continuity;" and "there is nothing miraculous or artificial in the arrangement of the books of Scripture; it is the result, not the design, which appears in them when bound in the same volume. Or if we like so to say, there *is* design, but a natural design which is revealed to after ages" (p. 385); and "such a general conception of growth or development in Scripture, beginning with the truth of the unity of God in the



earliest books and ending with the perfection of Christ, naturally springs up in our minds in the perusal of the sacred writings" (pp. 386, 387). It is difficult to ascertain from these complicated statements the essayist's own design. It seems, however, that he wishes to warn his readers against entertaining the idea that there is any unity of design traceable in the Bible arising from the ever-pervading influence of the Holy Ghost supernaturally conveyed to the writers; and to lay down the proposition that it was not the design of the Bible to enunciate truths respecting the nature of the Godhead and the perfection of Christ, but that these truths may be deduced by the reader from the incidental remarks contained in Scripture, "it is the result, not the design." How different is this from the Christian's conception of the Bible! He has been taught to believe that there has been an eternal purpose in the mind of the omniscient God relating to man, and that the Scriptures were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with the special design of revealing this purpose to mankind. He believes that in its early pages the fallen condition of man is described with the design of showing the necessity of some propitiation to reconcile a justly offended God; that the ordinances of the Mosaic ritual were imposed with the design of familiarising to the mind of man the idea of a vicarious atonement by means of sacrifice; that the prophecies were uttered with the design of portraying the character of Him by whom the atonement should be made; that the Gospels were written with the design of showing the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose in the person of His Son Jesus Christ; and that the subsequent parts of Holy Scripture were composed with the design of inducing men to put their faith in Him whom God had

decreed from everlasting to be their Redeemer, and of exhibiting the glorious state designed by the determinate counsel of God for true believers at the consummation of all things, when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

Here is design, not such as might have been contrived by the 'prentice hand of man, but indicative of the master mind of the world's Creator.

III.—When this Essay is presented to the contemplation of one who rejects Church principles and scriptural authority, and who professes to be guided solely by the light of reason, he will probably be delighted to have met with a preceptor who can duly appreciate the vast capacity of the human intellect in its present advanced development, and who has had the courage to break off the fetters imposed by custom and education on the opinion of Theologians; but he will not have travelled far in company with his new instructor before he will have reason to doubt whether he is following a safe and trustworthy guide.

In examining the Essay for the purpose of ascertaining the scope of its argument, so far as an argument can be gathered from its inconsequent statements, it will be conjectured that the essayist aims at establishing the following proposition, "that a change in some of the prevailing modes of interpretation is not so much a matter of expediency as of necessity" (p. 418), and that on this hypothesis he endeavours to erect a new system of interpretation, by which the objections to the present system may be obviated.

In order to prove the necessity for this change, the essayist points out the evils attendant upon the prevailing modes of interpretation.

These may be classed as follows:—

1. The great variety of interpretations (p. 330).
2. The party efforts to wrest the meaning of Scripture to different sides (p. 342).
3. The different meanings attached to the word Inspiration (p. 344).
4. The tone of apology adopted by interpreters (p. 351).
5. The adaptation of the truths of Scripture to the doctrines of the Creeds (p. 353).
6. The adaptation of the precepts and maxims of Scripture to the language and practice of our own age (p. 353).
7. The neglect of the necessary contrast between the ideal and the actual, and the consequent unfair appropriation of some portions of Scripture and an undue neglect of others (p. 358).
8. The use of the words of Scripture in a technical sense (p. 367).
9. The application of more than one meaning to Scripture (p. 368).
10. The differences between the statements of Scripture and the discoveries of science (p. 349).
11. The discrepancies in the Gospel narratives and the doubts as to their origin (pp. 347, 370).
12. The difficulty of ascertaining the proper relation between the Old Testament and the New (p. 369).

The existence of most of the particulars here enumerated may be conceded without acquiescing in the conclusions which the essayist wishes to draw from them.

To make good his proposition it is necessary for him to prove:

1st. That this state of things arises from the prevailing mode of interpretation and cannot be attributed to other causes.

2nd. That the cause of religious and moral truth has suffered from "these traditional methods of treatment."

The varieties that exist in the interpretation of Scripture, the efforts to wrest them for party purposes, the different senses applied to words and sentences, and the use of technical language, may all be reasonably explained by attending to two circumstances totally unconnected with the prevailing mode of interpretation, viz. The subject matter of the Bible, and the natural constitution of the human mind. It is strictly in accordance with the principles of reason to conclude that a subject in which all mankind are deeply interested will engage the attention of an incalculable number of commentators, anxious to investigate its truths, and to discover its meaning in the minutest particulars; and since God has been pleased to form the minds of men with every variety of perception, and every degree of reasoning power, ascending from the lowest to the highest, it is also reasonable to conclude that among the vast host of enquirers there will be sufficient diversities of opinion to produce the effects complained of by the essayist. The consideration too, that there is a natural tendency in the corrupt heart of man to "lean to his own understanding," and to put a favourable construction on his own views, will be a ready mode of accounting for the alleged variances, perversions, exaggerations, and peculiarities, without being driven to the necessity of regarding them as the effects of an improper mode of interpretation. Differences of opinion, a disposition to look with a partial eye on one's own conceptions, and an inclination to strain an argument in one's own favour, are not confined to Scriptural investigations, but prevail wherever human thoughts or feelings are

deeply concerned; and if it be objected that these particulars are especially observable in matters relating to religion, the paramount importance of Divine Truths over all others may be assigned as a sufficient cause.

“The Apologetic temper” imputed to the interpreters of Scripture is not the result of any special system of interpretation, but is the natural consequence of the position in which they stand. It is the observation of St. Peter that in the writings of St. Paul there “are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. iii. 16), and every candid reader of the Bible will give in his adhesion to the sentiment. Now the adversaries of Christianity have purposely directed their attacks against these more vulnerable points in the Christian revelation, and have had the ingenuity to apply these obvious difficulties as instruments for overthrowing the authority of Scripture and damaging the credibility of the writers. An imperative duty has consequently been imposed upon the maintainers of Christian truth to give adequate explanations of these difficult passages of Holy Writ, and to refute the arguments based on them, and this duty has necessarily given an Apologetic tone to their writings. An answer to objections must of necessity partake of the nature of an Apology.\*

A Greek professor needs not to be reminded of the original signification of the word; and the Theologian cannot have forgotten that Bishop Watson uses the word according to its literal meaning as the title of his work in defence of the Bible.

\* “Ἡ ἐμὴ ἀπολογία τοῖς ἐμὲ ἀνακρίνουσιν αὕτη ἐστὶ.” (1 Cor. ix. 3.)  
 “Ἀπολογία λέγεται, ὅταν τινὸς κατηγορῇ τις, καὶ ἀπολογεῖται ὁ κατηγορουμένος.”—Phavor.

It may be further argued that the adaptation of the truths of Scripture to the doctrines of the Creeds has simply arisen from the conviction that the doctrines of the Creeds were originally extracted from Scripture, and that the two being consequently considered identical, the language of the one cannot be reasonably supposed to exercise a disturbing influence upon the interpretation of the other, or be unfitted to be the medium by the help of which Scripture is to be explained.

The adaptation of the precepts and maxims of Scripture to the language or practice of our own age may be a human weakness or else a logical deduction made from the expressions of Scripture, but in either case not necessarily connected with modes of interpretation.

The application of more than one meaning to Scripture is naturally suggested by the sacred writings themselves, which indicate an undercurrent of thought distinct from that which appears upon the surface, and doubtless has been superinduced by the practice of the writers of the New Testament with reference to the expressions of the Old.

“The unfair appropriation of some portions of Scripture, and the undue neglect of others,” is doubtless a practice deserving of condemnation, but the essayist has not only failed to show its necessary connection with the prevailing modes of interpretation, but also has not succeeded in proving the existence of unfair appropriation and undue neglect; whilst he has had recourse to an illogical line of reasoning in endeavouring to establish his proposition. The subjects which he has selected as illustrations of unfair appropriations, all relate to things required to be believed, but those

which he considers as having been unduly neglected, relate to precepts which are to be practised (pp. 358, 364). Now it is obviously unfair to apply the same test to these different orders of subjects. Matters of faith do not admit of degrees, and cannot be partially accepted. A doctrine must be believed to be true, or disbelieved—on the other hand matters of practice afford every shade of difference in the manner of their fulfilment—they may be fully, partially, or indifferently complied with, as well as neglected altogether. For instance, a person must either believe or disbelieve in the personality of the Holy Ghost; whilst the Christian duty of Charity may be fulfilled in a variety of ways, and to a greater or less extent: there is, therefore, no analogy between the two sets of cases adduced; and it is false reasoning to argue from the strict interpretation of the one, in favour of the strict interpretation of the other. It does not, however, appear from the essayist's remarks whether he would recommend a reversal of the method generally pursued, and exact a literal fulfilment of precepts whilst he permitted an extensive latitude in matters of faith—or whether he would leave both as open questions to be decided according to each individual's own conceptions.

The difficulties attendant upon the explanation of certain passages of Scripture, both with reference to other portions of Scripture and to scientific discoveries, (whatever weight may be attached to them) cannot be laid to the charge of interpreters; but are inherent in the book, and will naturally strike upon the eye of an attentive reader though he may be totally unprepared to offer a solution.

Nor can it with truth be said that the relation between the Old and New Testaments has been left

indeterminate on account of the traditional methods of treatment. Commentators may have differed and occasionally erred in their explanations of this relation, but a reasonable man will be contented to ascribe these differences and errors to the frailty of human judgment, instances of which are constantly presented to his view in secular as well as religious matters.

It cannot, therefore, be admitted on the ground of right reason, that the existence of the particulars brought forward by the essayist is fairly traceable to the prevailing mode of interpretation.

But the most material question to decide is, whether the effects of the existence of these alleged evils, from whatever cause they may proceed, have been so prejudicial to the interests of true religion as imperatively to call for a change of system.

In order to show that the instances adduced as of evil tendency are not altogether productive of pernicious consequences, it may be observed, that although the unbounded latitude allowed to varieties and antagonisms of opinion must be deplored and deprecated, and the Christian must earnestly desire that we "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among us; but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment;"\* yet, such perfection of the Christian idea of unity being unattainable among frail mortals, it is possible that an all-directing Providence may turn these seeming evils to good account. It may be said that the varied and contradictory remarks and conclusions of commentators have afforded the theological student an opportunity of exercising his intellectual powers to advantage

\* 1 Cor. i. 10.



within the boundaries prescribed by the Church, and have thus been the means of stimulating their healthy action, and counteracting the natural tendency to torpor and indifference, which a too rigid rule of interpretation is calculated to produce;—that the different meanings attached to the *term* inspiration, having recommended themselves to differently constituted minds, have brought about a tolerably general agreement as to the *fact* of inspiration, so that a widely extended conviction that the Bible is a divinely inspired book is the happy result;—that an apologetic tone, being the necessary shape in which answers to attacks upon the truth must embody themselves, can have had no effect in weakening the force of the arguments produced, but has been an effectual instrument for convincing gain-sayers. It may further be suggested that the continued repetition of Creeds, the use of technical language, and the special importance attached to single words, however objectionable in the abstract as tending to cramp the free exercise of thought and to “prevent men from changing their opinions,” may have been of essential service in permanently fixing the great Christian verities on the heart, and checking the inroads of error; and thus been beneficial to the cause of religious truth;—that the difficulties attendant upon the reconciliation of the discrepancies and the solutions of the dark sayings in God’s word instead of detracting from its credibility, may teach us a lesson of humility by bringing to our view the short-comings of man’s vain imaginings when compared with the illimitable intelligence of that Divine Being by whom these mysteries are clearly discerned, may warn us against the sin of seeking to be “wise in our own conceits,” and may furnish an incentive to the exercise of faith, and lead

us to realise the great truth comprehended in the Apostle's words, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Thus the incongruities and inconsistencies which appear distasteful and objectionable to the limited perception of man, may be made to work together for good by the infinite comprehension of a benevolent God.

It may be fitting further to enquire into the effects of the prevailing modes of interpretation as indicated by the state of religion around us, and so to ascertain whether we are "in an earlier stage of the same religious dissolution, which seems to have gone further in Italy and France" (p. 374). The essayist indeed repudiates the ordinary test of "the external circumstances of our own or any other religious communion," but we have higher authority for judging a tree by its fruits. Is there then no evidence of a deep and growing conviction of the truths of Christianity, as they are embodied in our formularies? Cannot numerous instances be produced from both of our Universities of men of highly cultivated minds not merely devoting themselves to the study of Theology, but freely communicating the fruits of their deep learning to less experienced students, and showing according to the old methods of interpretation how the Scriptures may be best explained and understood?

How many learned and pious men in our own times have devoted their talents to the heavenly work of propounding to the rising generation clear views of Christian doctrine and Christian practice, and have been the instruments in the hands of the Deity for framing a body of serious and earnest biblical students, and

building up in their minds a superstructure of sound Theology “upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”

Among the many names which will occur to those conversant with the theological status of our Universities, the thoughts of the Cambridge student will revert with a melancholy pleasure to one, now gone to his reward, who for years exercised a beneficial influence over the minds of theologians in that seat of learning, by conscientiously fulfilling the duties imposed upon him by his academical position, and promoting the growth of sound learning and religious education—who from his professorial chair, adhering to the teaching of the Church, uttered divine truths, so rigidly accurate, and yet so demonstratively plain, as to sink deep into the hearts of his youthful audience. Many there are, now labouring in their divine Master’s vineyard, walking in the old paths as they have been taught, and distributing among the people committed to their charge the pure principles of the Christian faith, who look back with satisfaction to the hours of theological study passed in the bosom of their Alma Mater; and feeling that their professional usefulness is, in its human acquirements, to be attributed to academical instructions, thank Almighty God for having granted them the privilege of hearing the words of prudent advice and sound wisdom, which proceeded from the lips of Professor Blunt.

The teaching of modern Christian divines, according to the old methods of interpretation, is not so barren of good results as to oblige us to acknowledge that “in the present day the great object of Christianity is not to change the lives of men, but to prevent them from changing their opinions,” or to create any serious ap-

prehension of “ the withdrawal of the educated classes from the influences of religion ” (p. 374).

The evidences of the effects produced in modern days by the inculcation of sound Christian doctrine upon holiness of life and earnestness of religious purpose, are not so circumscribed or unsatisfactory as to reduce us to the necessity of resorting to new paths along which the Christian may more safely walk in his heavenward journey.

Experience will rather lead to the conclusion that the Christian life, based on its only sure foundation true Christian faith, has improved and is improving under the prevailing system: and we may from thence be led to anticipate that the more human knowledge is increased under the guidance of the Church—the safest and most ancient interpreter of the Bible—the greater will be the extent of real Christian practice; and we may on the other hand reasonably fear that any new mode of interpretation, which has a tendency to dissociate faith and practice—the two essential characteristics of a Christian—will have an injurious not a salutary effect.

Evident tokens of the Christian life, springing from the fountain head of Christian faith, and permeating the interstices of civil society, may be discerned in the working of our social system. When we look around and see the manifold and various charitable institutions established in this land on truly Christian bases, the energy and zeal displayed in advocating their several claims to Christian sympathy, and the large amount of support which is willingly afforded them by the bounty of Christian contributors,—when we observe the strenuous and never-flagging efforts for increasing the knowledge of the Christian faith, and for providing

means for the due inculcation of divine truth,—when we witness the unhesitating self-sacrifice with which purely-minded Christians apply themselves to the arduous task of checking the progress of sin, of re-awakening the slumbering voice of conscience, and bringing back the wandering sheep into the folds of Christ's flock,—and, above all, when our attention is called to the devotedness and enthusiasm with which our missionaries throw themselves heart and soul into the stupendous undertaking of bringing life and immortality to light among the benighted heathen, by preaching unto them Christ and him crucified as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,”—can we dare to say that the old modes of teaching have lost their power? or that we need the factitious aid of some new school of philosophy to prevent the total dissolution of vital religion, or to stimulate her energies by the infusion of a new spirit?

Who, that has read the accounts of the faithful apostle of New Zealand, sailing among the islands of the Southern Seas, with the banner of the Cross floating from his mast-head, winning souls to Christ among those heathen chiefs by interpreting to them the Scriptures in accordance with the traditions of the Church, and teaching their children to declare their belief in a Redeemer in the words of those creeds which have been pronounced by modern philosophers as “unsuitable instruments for the interpretation of Scripture,” can say that the active principle of Christianity is extinct; or can fail to perceive that this sainted man, guided by the Holy Spirit of God, is conscientiously walking in the hallowed steps of his great prototype St. Paul? or who can refuse to admit that the early teaching of the Church has in his case proved a motive

power sufficiently strong to break through the barriers erected by worldly feelings against the exercise of a lively faith, and has inspired him with a holy zeal freely to spend and be spent in his heavenly Master's service?

Or who, that has sadly bid a long farewell to that true-hearted loving Christian hero, who has lately gone forth in a genuine missionary spirit to plant the standard of the Cross upon the uncultivated soil of Central Africa, and who has renounced at the bidding of his Lord all the earthly honours and distinctions to which his successful academical career justly entitled him to look forward, and has counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, will hesitate to acknowledge that there is still a power in the ancient forms under which Christianity has been presented to our notice, effectual to the bringing forth of good fruit; and that even the noblest human intellect may submit to the guidance of the Church's teaching without any derogation to her confessedly high prerogatives? Such examples of the working of Christian principles on truly pious and intelligent minds, prove that Christianity is at one with the conscience of man, and not "at variance with his intellectual convictions." It is by tokens such as these, and not by "the progress of ideas," seething in the disturbed brain of the speculative philosopher, that the vitality of Christian faith makes itself known and felt.

Upon these premises the conclusion may reasonably be built, that a change in some of the prevailing modes of interpretation is *not* "a matter of necessity."

Still, however, it must be confessed that, though the working of Christianity under the present system has been the means by God's grace of leavening the great

mass of iniquity that abounds in the world, yet there is ample room for improvement; and there should therefore be no disinclination to listen to any suggestions which are calculated to produce greater results, or to give a favourable hearing to any new scheme of interpretation, which will bear the test of scrutiny, and be found more effectual for promoting the cause of religious and moral truth. With this view the recommendations of the essayist may be examined as a question of expediency.

The new canons for the interpretation of Scripture laid down by the essayist may be summed up under the following heads:—

1. Interpret the Scripture like any other book, without any reference to its origin (pp. 377, 350).

2. Interpret the Scripture as having only one meaning (pp. 378, 404).

3. Interpret the Scripture from itself (p. 382).

4. Interpret the Scripture without the aid of commentators (pp. 338, 384, 404).

5. Reject the use of creeds as being unsuitable instruments for the interpretation of the Scripture (pp. 353, 354).

6. Repudiate the notion that prophecies are a divine utterance of future events, and thus avoid the necessity of expecting their fulfilment (pp. 342, 334, 347).

7. Separate adaptation from interpretation, and with this view consider types as the mere application by later writers of former events to the circumstances of their own times; and eschew as much as possible an imitation of their practice (pp. 407, 408, 409).

8. Bear in mind that “in religion as in philosophy there are two opposite poles of truth and action, of doctrine and practice, of idea and fact” (p. 356).

Such are the main features of the new scheme of interpretation.

Upon only a cursory inspection, it will be manifest that these recommendations can scarcely be regarded as affording facilities for arriving at a right interpretation of Scripture; and that they do not give greater scope to the exercise of the intellectual faculties, but rather confine them within a more limited range. Nor after a searching examination will they be found more deserving of a favourable reception. With the view of ascertaining their intrinsic worth, let us proceed to examine them in detail.

1. The first canon breaks down at starting, for the essayist is forced to the immediate acknowledgement, that in many respects the Scripture is not like any other book, and this want of similarity in its construction is sufficient to destroy the value of the canon as a reasonable rule for adoption. It is, however, scarcely correct to state that this sense of dissimilarity grows upon us as we read, for it is a fact that meets us at the very threshold, and consists in an absolute declaration by the several writers that they are charged with a direct communication from God to man—a claim to divine authority, which no other writers affect to make, as God's inspired messengers and ambassadors. This claim may be just or not, but its assertion obliges us to regard the Book in a very different light from any other. If the claim be well-founded, we shall surely not dare to analyse God's word in the same way as we should the works of Sophocles or Plato. If it cannot be established, then the writers of the Scripture are reduced to the position either of having made misstatements, or else of having written under a delusion or mistake. It would seem that the essayist acquits them of the former



charge, as he says that "there is no appearance of insincerity or want of faith." There are, however, passages which cannot be satisfactorily explained under the notion of delusion or mistake—there are prophecies recorded in the Scripture where the names of individuals are mentioned anterior to their birth. Such, for instance, is the mention of the name of Cyrus by Isaiah, xlv. 1, and the name of Josiah in 1 Kings xiii. 2. Under ordinary rules of interpretation these insertions would overthrow our belief in the genuineness or authenticity of the writings. The former instance it is presumed the essayist would account for by ascribing it to an error in the date of the prophecy, and not to any wilful misrepresentation on the part of the prophet. But the narrative in 1 Kings xiii., where it is stated that the man of God alluded to Josiah by name, cannot be explained by the suggestion of an error in the date; for although the historian may have lived after the time of Josiah, yet the circumstance recorded is alleged to have taken place in the lifetime of Jeroboam, more than three hundred years before the birth of any historical person of the name of Josiah; consequently, if we interpret this narrative by the same rule which we apply to other books, we must convict the historian of having made an unfounded statement, and our faith in his credibility will be shaken. The simpler solution of the difficulty is that which is afforded by the statement of St. Peter, and which admits the claim to divine inspiration, viz. that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If we approach the interpretation of the Scripture with this conviction of the peculiar character of the Book, the idea of treating it as any other book will vanish away. The method of interpreting the Bible must be different from that applied to

other books, on account of the marked distinction in its essence.

2. Remarks have already been made on the subject of interpreting the Scripture as having one meaning, when examining the Essay from the Christian's point of view; it is now therefore only necessary to add, that, under the belief that not more than one meaning can be attached to any expression in the Scripture, the only reasonable conclusion that can be arrived at, is, that the Evangelists were on many occasions guilty of mis-statements, and their credit as faithful witnesses of the truth must be materially invalidated.

3. The canon respecting the interpretation of the Scripture from itself, if adopted in its integrity, might be regarded as a wholesome direction; but it is so restricted by the subsequent remarks of the essayist that its application is almost rendered nugatory. The student is not permitted to consider the whole Book as emanating from God's Holy Spirit, and recording a scheme which had been eternally purposed in the Divine Mind. He is not allowed to identify the separate parts with each other, but is cautioned against making use of the rule in such an extended sense, or of giving such an explanation of its differences as would arise from "the idea of a Spirit from whom they proceed, or by which they are overruled." He is required to examine the Book as if it consisted of detached and unconnected writings—to confine the illustrations of one part of the Scripture to writings of the same age and the same authors—"not to conclude that an author meant in one place what he says in another"—and "not to venture to mend a corrupt phrase on the model of some other phrase." These restrictions unreasonably hamper the movements of the interpreter, and prevent

him from making a full use of the prescribed rule. Now, in examining the Bible, the reader will find repeated references made in the later portions of the Book to other portions written in a much earlier age, which throw considerable light upon its obscure passages, but the essayist's restriction would debar him from taking advantage of this proffered light. Again, instead of observing, as stated by the essayist, that "the comparison of St. John and the synoptic gospels tends rather to confuse than elucidate the meaning of either," the reader will derive considerable assistance in coming to a right interpretation by the comparison: for instance, we read in St. John's Gospel that our Blessed Lord, after his resurrection, made use of this expression in speaking to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father." It would be difficult to determine what meaning should be applied to our Saviour's words, viewed solely by the light which this Evangelist affords; but by a comparison with the other Gospels, where Christ's ascension is recorded, an easy solution of the difficulty is obtained. Moreover, it is laying down a strange rule to say that we must not conclude that an author meant in one place what he says in another; that is to say, that we must not expect an author to be consistent with himself. If such be considered a proper direction, the capability of the interpreter to solve difficulties will be much diminished. But surely this ruling cannot be regarded to be in accordance with sound reasoning. When an author in certain parts of his writings makes use of intelligible expressions to declare his meaning, it is certainly allowable to suppose that he intended to convey the same meaning by the same words in another place, where the sense is not so obvious. For example, the words

אל אהותה occur in certain passages of Moses' writings, Exod. xxvi., where they must of necessity be construed in a metaphorical sense: it is therefore not an unreasonable conclusion to adopt, that Moses likewise used these words in a metaphorical sense in Leviticus xviii. 18, where they are capable of receiving a literal interpretation. We all know how customary it is for persons to get into the habit of using technical expressions, and when we are accustomed to their language we naturally apply the same meaning to these technical expressions, whenever they are uttered by the same speaker. But this method of testing an author's meaning by comparing him with himself is excluded by the essayist's restriction. With these drawbacks on the free use of the canon, the student will have little chance of gaining any insight into the real meaning of Scripture. The thread which is apparently running through the whole sacred volume is cut asunder, and he is left to grope his way to the open light without the aid of any clue to direct his hesitating steps. Surely the spirit of candour and fair dealing would permit the student (especially if he is forbidden to seek for external aid) to avail himself of all the enlightenment which he can obtain from a reasonable comparison of the several parts of the Book, even though they be written at different periods and by different persons.

4. It is evident that the main object of the canon "Non nisi ex Scriptura Scripturam potes interpretari," as construed by the essayist, is to prohibit the Biblical student from deriving assistance from the learning and researches of others. This is intimated in many passages. Thus in pp. 340, 341, "And it is no exaggeration to say that he who in the present state of knowledge will confine himself to the plain meaning of words and

the study of their context may know more of the original spirit and intention of the authors of the New Testament than all the controversial writers of former ages put together ;” and in p. 384, “ Any one who, instead of burying himself in the pages of the commentators, would learn the sacred writings by heart, and paraphrase them in English, will probably make a nearer approach to their true meaning than he would gather from any commentary.” It accords well with the self-sufficiency of the natural man to be told that “ the intelligent mind will ask its own questions, and find for the most part its own answers,” and that “ when the meaning of Greek words is once known, the young student has almost all the real materials which are possessed by the greatest Biblical scholar in the book itself” (p. 384). But is it prudent advice thus to recommend the rejection of all external aid, and especially such aid as is derivable from those who lived near the age in which these books were written, and who may be reasonably supposed to have caught the spirit of the authors? or if the recommendation were generally acted upon, would it tend to greater unanimity of opinion respecting the meaning of the Scripture? Is this practice adopted in human affairs and on ordinary subjects? Men in general, before they decide on any important undertaking, are anxious to obtain information from those who from experience or professional knowledge are best qualified to form a correct judgment; and they are disposed to put greater dependence on the soundness of their own opinions when they are confirmed by competent authority. Nor is the rule in any wise followed in examining the writings of Sophocles or Plato. So far from being content to unravel the intricacies of classical authors by himself,

the student not only has recourse to the expositions of those who lived in preceding ages, but he seeks for further elucidation from the learning of living scholars. But if all commentators are to be excluded, those who now sit in professorial chairs can no more claim to be heard than those who occupied their place in times gone by. To carry out the rule to its full extent, education as derived from instruction must cease. If the rule then be inapplicable in general cases, what reason is there for imagining that it is expedient for the interpretation of the Scripture? If it be not good advice in reference to any ordinary book written in a foreign language or upon an abstruse subject, can it be good advice with respect to a book written in divers languages and at different times, including matters of history, mysterious predictions, varied forms of poetry, deep doctrinal statements, and profound arguments, — requiring a diversified power of intellect, as well as comprehensive information and accurate knowledge, to enable the reader to come to a full understanding of its contents?

What student can be conceived to possess a compass of mind adequate to grapple single-handed with all the difficulties of interpretation connected with this book? Instead of boldly claiming as a privilege such great responsibility, the humble-minded investigator of the truth will rather be disposed to ask with St. Paul “who is sufficient for these things?” and to exclaim “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!”

5. Sufficient has been already said on the subject of Creeds to deter any reasonable man from their absolute rejection as aids to interpretation; but still further to

encourage him in making use of them, he may be reminded that there is historical evidence to show that they were purposely framed to settle doubts by establishing an authoritative declaration of the meaning of the Scripture.

6. It may be a convenient method of getting over some difficulties in the interpretation of Scripture to regard prophecies as not in a strict sense predictive; but it will create greater difficulty in putting a reasonable construction on many expressions of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles, such for instance as Luke xviii. 31, Acts iii. 24. It is evident that Philip the Evangelist did not think it advisable to adopt this rule, when requested by Candace's treasurer to interpret to him the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. It is also a well authenticated fact that all Jewish authorities have regarded the prophecies of the Old Testament as intentionally applicable to him whom they termed their Messiah.

7. Though a rational man will not regard every fanciful adaptation of the words of the Scripture as an interpretation of their original meaning, yet when St. Paul points to a metaphorical and spiritual interpretation of Jewish ordinances as being the signification intended by the Holy Ghost, Heb. ix. 8, he will consider himself justified in thus applying them.

8. With regard to the distinction between "truth and action, doctrine and practice, idea and fact," the candid reasoner, though acknowledging that the one side of the antitheses may fall short of the other, can scarcely be prepared to admit that they are as far as the poles asunder; but he will be rather disposed to consider that there is a necessary connection between them, inasmuch as the one results from the study and

contemplation of the other. Nor would the treating them as necessarily antagonistic or irreconcilably disjunctive be serviceable in putting a right interpretation on such passages as Matt. v. 38, Eph. iv. 13.

Judged, therefore, according to the principles of right reason, this new scheme of interpretation will scarcely be considered preferable to the old. Nor can the interpreter reasonably expect, by following the devious course here prescribed, to make more rapid progress in his researches after truth. On the contrary, it may be imagined that the deduction drawn by every logical reasoner from these premises will be, that neither on the grounds of necessity or expediency can a change in the prevailing method of interpretation be demanded.

In contradistinction to the teaching of the essayist, the student who is sincerely anxious to arrive at a right understanding of the Scripture will find the advice contained in the Homily much more consonant with good common sense: "Read it humbly with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God and not yourself with the knowledge of it, and read it not without daily praying to God that he would direct your reading to good effect; and take upon you to expound it no further than you can plainly understand it. For, as St. Augustine saith, the knowledge of Holy Scripture is a great, large, and a high place; but the door is very low, so that the high and arrogant man cannot run in; but he must stoop low, and humble himself, that shall enter into it. Presumption and arrogancy are the mother of all error. For humility will only search to know the truth; it will search and will bring together one place with another, and where it cannot find out the meaning, it will pray, it will ask of



others that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define anything which it knoweth not." \*

Before concluding these remarks it is necessary to notice some other objectionable traits in this Essay. The impartial reader cannot fail to observe the studied attempt to magnify the Gospel discrepancies, to make inappropriate comparisons, to overstate the varieties of interpretations, to lay too great stress on fanciful constructions, imaginary difficulties, and improbable hypothetical cases, with the manifest object of disparaging the authority of Scripture. This exaggerated form in which many of the statements are presented in the Essay, will not satisfy the requirements of the clear-headed reasoner. These flashes of rhetoric may suit the purpose and be consistent with the character of the avowed advocate, but the reader whose sole object is the discovery of truth will find that he is dazzled rather than enlightened by their brilliance.

As another instance of unfair reasoning, attention may be called to the practice of bringing forward an improper application of a principle, and from thence arguing against the principle itself. Now it is contrary to sound argument to reason against the legitimate use of anything on account of its occasional abuse. If the Fathers have carried the mystical application of the Scripture too far, we are not consequently debarred altogether from making use of this mode of illustration. If the explanation given by Clement to the scarlet thread of Rahab is considered fanciful, it does not follow as a direct consequence that we must be condemned of the crime of "reading the Bible cross-wise," if we attribute to the details of the Mosaical

\* Homily on Reading Holy Scripture.

ritual (on the authority of St. Paul) a reference to the New Testament. Such a rule of criticism is analogous to the teetotaler's condemnation of the use of fermented liquors because the licence to use them has been occasionally abused. It would apply to the prohibition of the use of lampreys as an article of food, because a king of England is reported to have died in consequence of having immoderately indulged in the luxury. "We are not so nice," says Hooker, "as to cast away a sharp knife because the edge of it may sometimes grate."\*

Allusion has already been made to the essayist's remarks upon the Scriptural discrepancies; but they may be again referred to as affording specimens of unfair reasoning. It might be inferred from the paragraph, "For the proportion which these narratives bear to the whole subject, as well as their relation to one another, is an important element in the estimation of differences," that the essayist intended to argue against the credibility of the Evangelists on account of the cumulative weight of these differences; and the logical reader, if he admits their existence, will draw the natural conclusion that these discrepancies are at any rate a proof that the Evangelists did not write with any premeditated concert, and that their statements are independent testimonies. However, in a subsequent page (371) it will be perceived that the essayist argues from their agreement that the Gospels have a common origin, and that therefore the Evangelists cannot be spoken of as three independent witnesses of the Gospel narratives. So that whether they agree or disagree it is evident that the essayist is

\* Book v. c. xxxvi. 4.

determined to turn their statements into arguments against themselves.

The endeavour made by the essayist to confound the explanation of prophecies relating to the future, with the explanation of the records of the past, may also be adduced as a case of false analogy. The interpretations of prophecies not yet fulfilled, such as those made by Joseph Mede, must of necessity be conjectural, and, as founded upon mere human judgment, fallible; but because they have proved erroneous, no analogous conclusion can justly be drawn respecting the explanations of the First Chapter of Genesis (p. 341). The credibility of the latter must be examined by very different tests, and be made to depend upon very different authority, from the credibility of the former, so that the want of success in the one case is no valid reason to deter us from applying our intellectual faculties to the consideration of the other. The essayist's analogy reminds us of the argument used against the stability of Tenterden steeple on account of the treacherous nature of the Goodwin Sands.

To these observations it may possibly be replied, that the writer of the Essay does not directly identify himself with all the opinions expressed therein, but merely throws out suggestive hints for the consideration of the reader. It is, however, in this particular that the evil tendency of the Essay is most dangerously operative. Had the author boldly avowed his intention of subverting the authority of the Bible and throwing discredit on its contents, his work would have been comparatively harmless; for all religiously disposed persons would have shrunk from contact with such undisguised pollution. But when this object is attained by means of hidden innuendoes and false assumptions, the poison is cir-

culated throughout the veins of society before its noxious qualities are discovered. The youthful student of divinity would be startled and repelled by an open assertion of false doctrine or denial of a great Christian verity; but he might be unconsciously led to doubt or disbelieve through the agency of skilfully applied insinuations. Herein a manifest resemblance can be traced to the guile of the tempter in his attack upon our first parents. "As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety," so the eager searcher after divine truth is beguiled by the attractive prospect held out to him of acquiring superior knowledge, and is encouraged in scepticism by the insidious suggestion that there may possibly be some misconception in the sense applied to God's word: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"(Gen. iii. 4, 5).

Whilst compelled to make these strictures on this Essay, it must in justice be acknowledged that there are in it some valuable suggestions pertinently put and forcibly expressed — some salutary cautions embodied in beautiful language. But we may be called upon to purchase these excellences at too high a price: gold may be bought too dear. If we can only obtain possession of these glittering treasures by placing ourselves in antagonism to the teaching of the Church, by sacrificing our trust in the authority of the Scripture, by renouncing our conviction of the value of creeds, and by setting at nought all the learning and wisdom which have enlightened and adorned preceding ages, no man who is accustomed to count the cost will be disposed to hazard his true riches on such a dangerous speculation. The

Christian believer will prefer to follow the advice of Jeremiah: "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

"It is time," to quote the words of the Essay, "to make an end of this long disquisition." But it cannot properly be closed without a word of comment on "the few words of application to the circumstances of a particular class in the present age." "If any one who is about to become a clergyman feels, or thinks that he feels, that some of the preceding statements cast a shade of trouble or suspicion on his future walk of life, who, either from the influence of a stronger mind than his own, or from some natural tendency in himself, has been led to examine those great questions which lie on the threshold of the higher study of theology, and experiences a sort of shrinking or dizziness at the prospect which is opening upon him, let him lay to heart the following considerations:—First, that he may possibly not be the person who is called upon to pursue such inquiries" (p. 430).

What can exceed the cruel mockery of this sentence? The youthful student, after having had his imagination fascinated by the beauty of the language in which these suggestions are clothed, and after having had his mind bewildered and affrighted by the variety and the magnitude of the difficulties placed in his way, and his reasoning faculty distracted and perplexed by the contradictory directions imposed on him, is quietly told that after all he may possibly not be the person who is called upon to pursue such inquiries, but that he may find other work to do. He is remitted to the path of practical usefulness,—to the performance of the sacred duties of a parish priest: but with what different

views and aspirations will he resume his appointed task from those which animated him in the freshness of youth, before he read these dangerous pages! The armour in which he trusted has been taken away from him, and yet he is told to go forth and manfully fight for the propagation of gospel truth against the errors, the scepticism, and the passions of a sinful world; and he is unreasonably encouraged to expect that he may achieve a victory though he has been stripped of the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. He is not allowed to enforce obedience to the Scriptures as given by the inspiration of God. He is taught to put no faith in the language of creeds, as being unsuited to express the opinions of the present day. He is precluded from vindicating the Athanasian Creed in its statements respecting the personality of the Holy Spirit on Scriptural grounds, and from speaking of original sin "as the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." In applying the prophecies of the Old Testament to the recorded circumstances of his Saviour's life, he is forbidden to declare, on the authority of the evangelist, "then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet;" and in alluding to the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish ritual he is cautioned against saying, with St. Paul, "the Holy Ghost this signifying." He is not permitted to apply the words of the New Testament for the purpose of interpreting the meaning of the Old. He cannot insist on infant baptism as a Christian ordinance, but must utter with faltering lips the impressive words of the baptismal service: "Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will likewise favourably receive this present infant." He is informed that he has no sure warranty of Scripture for declaring,

as the Church requires him to do, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." He cannot maintain his position as an episcopally ordained minister of the Gospel deriving his authority from apostolical usage. He is hindered from reproofing the man who has married his wife's sister as guilty of incest. He cannot inculcate obedience to the rulers of the State as a Divine injunction; and he is required to pay no respect to the authority of the early fathers, but to regard them as well-meaning men, living in an age of intellectual darkness, and totally unfit to be the guides of the intelligence of the nineteenth century.

With these fetters twined around him, how can the young clergyman freely move? or how can he hope to convince gainsayers if he is refused the use of the spiritual weapons which God has specially provided? Would it be a matter of great surprise if the overloaded mind should break down under this accumulated weight of difficulties? Could we greatly wonder if, under this baneful guidance, the timid and inexperienced priest should abandon his sacred calling in utter hopelessness of fulfilling its duties; if the thoughtful and inquisitive student should be driven into the mazes of scepticism or infidelity; or if the ardent and enthusiastic speculator should be hurried by his overwrought sensibilities beyond the verge of reason?

The anticipation of such sad results, as likely to ensue from the perusal of these pages, must cause a sensation of shuddering and dread to thrill through the Christian's heart; and such sensation will be intensely quickened by the recollection of our Saviour's words denouncing woe against "that man by whom the offence cometh." Viewed in its relation both towards

those who read and him who wrote, the true Christian cannot fail deeply to regret the publication of this volume, and to regard the day on which it issued from the press as one of evil omen (*quod Deus avertat*) to the cause of religious and moral truth.

Christian charity may drop a tear of unfeigned sorrow over this sad perversion of a powerful intellect, but Christian truth must point to the concluding words of that book whose authority has been so unscrupulously impugned: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (*Rev. xxii. 18, 19*).

THE END.

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# ON MIRACLES.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE  
REMARKS OF MR. BADEN POWELL ON THE  
STUDY OF THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,  
CONTAINED IN THE VOLUME ENTITLED  
“ESSAYS AND REVIEWS.”

BY

WILLIAM LEE, D.D.

*Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, and  
Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Dublin.*



## ADVERTISEMENT.



THE Essay of which the following pages contain an examination, stands apart from any other in the volume entitled "Essays and Reviews." Its author is no longer living to take his place in the controversy. It is almost needless to point out how largely this circumstance must affect the treatment of the questions at issue. Who shall undertake to decide, in the case of a statement really ambiguous, which was the author's true meaning? When an inference legitimately follows from certain premisses, who shall venture to say how far the author is, or is not, responsible for such a conclusion? Who shall unravel the texture of a sentence essentially obscure? No reply in defence of Mr. Baden Powell can alter this state of things. Approaching my task with a sincere desire not to outstrip the bounds of fair and candid criticism, I cannot but feel conscious how greatly my responsibility is thus increased. I may, indeed, confidently pledge myself to discuss the subject with courtesy of tone and moderation of language — were I to violate either condition I should possess but little claim to be heard. One may, how-

ever, fairly mistrust oneself on the point of interpretation of an author's meaning, when that meaning is not seldom obscured by a discursive style, and by the frequent introduction of collateral subjects.

To the necessary examination of the authorities cited by Mr. Baden Powell, is to be attributed the greater number of the quotations which occur in the following pages. My argument is, of course, chiefly critical, and but indirectly constructive. In both cases, the principles laid down in Bishop Butler's "Analogy" have served as my guide. That great writer has rendered the part to be performed by his successors one of comparative ease. With the instinct of genius, he has seen through every subtilty by which the evidences of Christianity might be undermined; and he has suggested, if he has not developed, the true method of defence. An attempt to group together the hints scattered through "The Analogy" which relate to my immediate subject, and also to present them divested of that obscurity which is owing to their depth and far-reaching penetration, will not, perhaps, be deemed unacceptable at the present time.

WILLIAM LEE.

*Dublin, Trinity College,  
July 1861.*

\* \* The references throughout are to the eighth edition of  
"Essays and Reviews."

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# AN EXAMINATION

ETC.

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## § I.—*Introductory.*



WE claim to investigate the evidences of Christianity as if the subject were one of purely speculative interest, ought not, in itself, to excite surprise. There is no province, wherein human thought can possibly range, over which reason has not, at one period or another, endeavoured to assert its prerogative. Nor can it be maintained that the desire to vindicate such a claim is without foundation. However exaggerated the demands of reason may be, or perverted its application, all must, at the same time, allow that this faculty is the sole instrument whereby man can take cognizance of truth. In a matter of such practical importance as religion, it is, no doubt, difficult to separate the speculative inquiry from all consideration of the results which may follow from the conclusion arrived at. When seeking, however, what should influence our judgment, as distinct from our practice, the question of consequences must not be introduced.

“To be influenced by this consideration in our judgment,” writes Bishop Butler, “to believe or disbelieve upon it, is, indeed, as much prejudice as anything whatever. And like other prejudices, it operates contrary ways in different men; for some are inclined to believe what they hope, and others what they fear. And it is manifest unreasonableness to apply to men’s passions in order to gain their assent.”\*

The recognition of the legitimate claims of reason has ever been the boast of the Christian religion. From its adaptation to every want and aspiration of human nature, Christianity, as a matter of fact, has never failed to lay hold of the highest intelligences, moulded under the influence of each noblest form of civilisation and of philosophy. Natural religion, too, although in no sense the whole of Christianity, is its foundation; and the principle is admitted by the most sagacious divines, that if, in any statement of revelation, the meaning appear to contradict natural religion, such seeming meaning is not the real one.

We often hear, nevertheless,—and the charge is repeatedly advanced by Mr. Baden Powell—that the defenders of Christianity, at the present day, do not act up to these professions. They lag, we are told, behind their age; they are ignorant of, or indifferent to, the revolution in every department of human inquiry effected by the progress of science; in a word, they will not acknowledge the right of reason to be heard in matters of religion. The superficial plausibility which alone this charge possesses, is altogether owing to a leaving out of sight the contrast between the fixed character of divine truth, and the ever-progressive

\* “Analogy,” part ii., ch. 7.



character of human knowledge. This, however, is not the place to enter fully upon a subject so extensive. The object of the following pages is simply to meet the accusation of Mr. Baden Powell on his own ground; and to show that the defenders of "an external revelation" need not shrink from the most searching examination which reason can suggest, of the miraculous evidence of Christianity.

§ II.—*The Place of Miracles in Christianity.*

THE argument of Mr. Baden Powell's Essay is restricted to the single topic of miracles, as forming an element of the evidences of Christianity. The conclusion which he seeks to establish is that miracles are incredible. The statement of this proposition renders it necessary to consider how far miracles are connected with the Christian religion.

Christianity professes to be a new revelation from God, announced to the world by a Being who is Himself divine; who, taking upon Him the form and fashion of a man, was born of a Virgin; who, during His appearance on earth, performed, in proof, as He expressly declared\*, of His office and character, a series of acts to which the ordinary course of nature presents no parallel; who, at length, after suffering death, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. On one of the events, moreover, here specified—the Resurrection of Christ—Christianity openly declares that its claim to acceptance altogether rests. "If Christ be not risen," wrote one of the first teachers of this religion,— "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain,

\* See, *e. g.*, S. John v. 36; x. 25, 38; xiv. 11; xv. 24.

and your faith is also vain.”\* In a word, leave out of sight the miraculous aspect of Christianity, and Scripture becomes what Kant and the rationalists of his school endeavoured to prove it to be,—a series of moral allegories, a kind of popular commentary on the law of duty. Christ, miracles apart, is but an ideal vision which floats before the eye of conscience; and, the Resurrection being taken away, there remains but a gospel of pure reason, an abstract Jesus without a birthplace and without a sepulchre.

Mr. Baden Powell saw this consequence clearly; and, accordingly, from the first page of his *Essay* to its close, he endeavours to maintain a distinction between “the essential doctrines of Christianity” and its “external accessories” (p. 94); between “matters of external fact (insisted on as such)” as to the evidence of which “reason and intellect can alone be the proper judges,” and “points of moral or religious doctrine” where “other and higher grounds of judgment and conviction must be appealed to.” He considers that, in the discussion of these subjects, this distinction, while “professedly acknowledged by the disputants,” is “extensively overlooked and kept out of sight in practice.” “We continually find the professed advocates of an external revelation and historical evidence, nevertheless making their appeal to conscience and feeling, and decrying the exercise of reason . . . and on the other hand we observe the professed upholders of faith and internal conviction as the only sound basis of religion, nevertheless regarding the external facts as not less essential truth which it would be profane to question.” (p. 97.)

\* 1 Cor. xv. 14.

On the passages here quoted two observations may be made.

i. The "facts" of Christianity are represented as forming no part of its "essential doctrines;" they rank, it is argued, no higher than its "external accessories." It is impossible to maintain this distinction. In the Christian revelation the *fact* of the Resurrection is the cardinal doctrine; the *doctrine* of the Incarnation is the fundamental fact. Christianity exhibits its most momentous truths as actual realities, by founding them upon an historical basis, and by interweaving them with transactions and events which rest upon the evidence of sense. The facts and the ideas which the truths of Christianity embody must stand or fall together. The miracles, the doctrines, the moral precepts of the Gospel, rest upon precisely the same evidence; they are attested and recorded by the same eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses; they are part, an inseparable part, of the same history. Bishop Butler\* has pointed out how, in both the Old and the New Testament, miracles are placed on the same footing as the ordinary matters of fact therein recorded. The writers do not intersperse miracles through their narratives in order to render their history more animated, or to engage the attention of their readers, as prodigies and wonders are introduced in poetry or romance. The facts of Scripture, both natural and preternatural, stand alike on the same foundation of historical evidence.†

\* "Analogy," part ii., ch. 7.

† This peculiarity of the miraculous history of Christianity has been noted by Lord Bolingbroke. He argues against the authenticity of the Old Testament from the fact of its containing "incredible anecdotes." The miracles in the Bible, he observes, are not like those in Livy: "these incredible anecdotes stand by them-

There are, indeed, certain "external accessories," certain "external facts" of Christianity, as to the evidence of which all will admit that "reason and intellect can alone be the proper judges." Such, *e. g.*, is the *character* of the evidence on which we believe the narrative of the Bible. Thus, the genuineness and authenticity of its several books, like all writings of equal antiquity, must submit to literary criticism. This, however, is a matter which Mr. Baden Powell, as it should seem \*, excludes from the class of evidences which he undertakes to examine. Again, whether the eye-witnesses, on whose testimony recorded in the Bible Christians believe the miraculous history, are to be looked upon as truthful and trustworthy persons, affords, in like manner, a fair topic of judicial examination. The moral world has its laws and its probabilities as well as the material: and it is an issue on which "reason and intellect" may fairly be invited to pronounce their verdict, how far it is credible that, on several occasions, the senses of many persons should simultaneously deceive them; or, on the other hand, whether any prodigy can be esteemed greater than that many persons should, without any assignable motive or object, conspire to propagate a falsehood fatal to themselves. This inquiry forms the chief theme of the treatise of Paley and of similar works.

selves, as it were, and the history may go on without them." But the miracles of the Jewish historians are intimately connected with all the civil affairs, and make a necessary and inseparable part. The whole history is founded on them; "it consists of little else, and if it were not a history of them it would be a history of nothing."—"Works," vol. iii., p. 279, ed. 1754. This passage is referred to by Bishop Fitzgerald in his edition of the "Analogy," p. 251.

\* See pp. 102, 103.

But matters of this nature, which are, properly speaking "the external facts" of Christianity, are either not adverted to by Mr. Baden Powell, or are dismissed as irrelevant. His one argument is that miracles from their very nature are incredible :—that they are merely "external facts" on the evidence of which "reason and intellect," as distinct from "faith and internal conviction," "can alone be the proper judges." "An alleged miracle," he concludes, regarded "as connected with religious doctrine" "ceases to be capable of investigation by reason, or to own its dominion; it is accepted on religious grounds, and can appeal only to the principle and influence of faith." (p. 142.)

ii. This passage suggests the second observation called for, as already stated, by the principle which lies at the basis of Mr. Baden Powell's reasoning; and on which he founds his charge against "the professed advocates of an external revelation and historical evidence," of "inconsistency between their professed purpose and their mode of carrying it out." (p. 98.) What, it may reasonably be asked, is his conception of "faith?" How can "faith" exist without an object? When a person vaguely speaks of "faith and internal conviction," the question necessarily arises—faith in what? Does religion consist in believing the cold deductions from some intellectual abstraction, or the visions and fancies of an excited enthusiasm? Religious belief must be the work of the whole man\*, whether we regard him as endowed with sense, or the faculty of intuition, or the power of perceiving the beautiful and the sublime,—as a being possessed of a logical faculty, or of a power of moral and spiritual

\* See Mr. J. S. Boone's Sermons "On the theory of Belief."

discernment. In the formation of religious belief, we cannot limit ourselves to argument and inference alone. We must obtain our premisses before we can draw our conclusion. We ascend from facts to principles, from phenomena to laws, from effects to causes. We find a striking correspondence between the world without and the world within ; between “the objective” and “the subjective ;” between our own feelings and instincts, and the impressions made upon us by the objects of sense. Our religious belief, independently of revelation, is to be formed from a wide and careful consideration of the universe ; from all that we can discover or know of its laws and relations ; from the history of mankind ; from the opinions and customs of different nations ; from the intuitions and emotions of the individual heart. Without the foundation of natural religion there would be no point of contact whereby revealed religion could approach the human soul. It was to the facts of nature that S. Paul appealed when addressing the idolaters of Lystra and the philosophers of Athens.\* When the word “faith,” therefore, is employed, it must not be used as if it were an empty abstraction. All belief must have an object. For the knowledge of realities there must be something real. Without this assumption there is nothing true or false : the past, the future, even the present, are but a shadow and a dream.

### § III. — *Ambiguities of Language.*

BEFORE entering upon the subject of miracles and their evidence, it is necessary to point out an important

\* Acts xiv. 14—17 ; xvii. 23—28.

ambiguity of language which, in all discussions of this nature, is a fruitful source of error and confusion, and from the influence of which even the most eminent authors are not wholly free. The occurrence of such ambiguous terms, indeed, supplies an explanation of several of the results at which Mr. Baden Powell has arrived. From one meaning of a word he constantly deduces inferences which follow only from another; while, from his giving to certain terms employed by other writers a sense different from that in which they used them,—as we shall see, *e. g.*, in the case of the word “Theism,”—he has advanced statements the tendency of which he cannot have clearly perceived.

Archbishop Whately, in his “Logic,” treating of “Ambiguous Terms,” notices three meanings of the word *impossibility*: viz. “moral impossibility,” “physical impossibility,” and “mathematical impossibility.” In order to avoid the confusion inseparable from this use of the same word in three different senses, it is proposed here to employ the three distinct terms—improbable, impossible, inconceivable.

i. That which is *improbable* is to be regarded as both *possible* and *conceivable*. Probability has been distinguished from demonstration by this, that it admits of degrees; and of all variety of degrees, from the lowest presumption to the highest moral certainty. In the same manner there are different degrees of improbability. In themselves, things are not probable or improbable: they either are, or are not; they either will happen, or will not happen. Relatively, however, to any finite mind, they are probable or improbable: but “nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite intelligence.” To man, however, “pro-

bability is the very guide of life.”\* Persons sometimes speak as if probability was an inadequate ground of assent; as if to believe on evidence less than demonstrative was a token of a weak or inferior understanding. Mr. Baden Powell, for example, criticises “certain forms of expression commonly stereotyped among a very large class of divines,” who, in reply to a “critical difficulty or a sceptical exception,” observe: “‘These are not subjects on which you can expect demonstrative evidence; you must be satisfied to accept such general proof or probability as the nature of the question allows.’”† It might be sufficient, in answer to this criticism, to say that in religion, from its very nature, we have not, nor can we expect to have, demonstrative evidence. Religion is concerned with the past and the future: it relates to the origin of man, and his ultimate destiny; to things which had their existence before his birth, and to the world which awaits him beyond the grave. But there is another reply which may seem more direct to those who undervalue evidence when only probable. It should be borne in mind that, even in the exact sciences, the line between probability and demonstration is not strictly settled. For example,

\* Butler, “*Analogy*,” *Introd.*

† The continuation of this passage affords an example of that discursiveness which often renders it difficult to see the real drift of Mr. Baden Powell’s argument. “‘You must not inquire too curiously into these things;’”—so proceeds the sentence quoted in the text—“it is sufficient that we have a general moral evidence of the doctrines; exact critical discussion will always rake up difficulties, to which, perhaps, no satisfactory answer can be at once given. . . . It is in vain to seek to convince reason unless the conscience and the will be first well disposed to accept the truth.” (p. 99.) It is plain that we have here an alternative very different from that between probability and demonstration.



the famous Swedish mathematician, Abel, published a memoir respecting the roots of equations of the higher degrees, which he brings forward as a "demonstration."\* Sir W. R. Hamilton, on the other hand, considers that Abel has merely constructed an *argument*, not *demonstrated* a mathematical truth. As to the result arrived at by Abel, he tells us that mathematicians are not yet entirely agreed respecting its possibility or impossibility; he notices certain particulars which render "it difficult to judge of the validity of Abel's reasoning;" and, in conclusion, he proves that "the *conjecture*" of Mr. Murphy, as to the roots of an equation of the fifth degree, is unfounded.† When Mr. Baden Powell, therefore, censures those who offer *probable* evidence as a sufficient ground of assent, he not only leaves out of sight the very condition of our being, but also forgets that reasoning, which one mathematician regards as "demonstrative," may be criticised by another as a mere "argument," the validity of which is still a matter of probability.‡

Improbability on the other hand, when it rises to a very high degree, — to such a degree, suppose, as "that unloaded dice should turn up the same faces one hundred times successively" — is termed by Archbishop Whately a "moral impossibility;" because, although it implies no "violation of the laws of nature," yet we are "rationally convinced" that it will never occur,

\* "Démonstration de l'impossibilité de la résolution algébrique des équations générales qui passent le quatrième degré."

† "Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy," vol. xviii., — "On the argument of Abel," pp. 248, 256.

‡ It may be noted, in illustration of this fact, that Bishop Butler does not scruple to use the phrase "an *universally acknowledged* demonstration." — "Analogy," part i., ch. 2.

“merely from the multitude of chances against it.” The popular use of the word *impossibility* in such a case, qualify it how you will, seems to leave room for endless confusion. No one can really regard the instance adduced, that of unloaded dice turning up the same faces a number of times successively, as either *impossible* or *inconceivable*. No one can look upon cases like this as incapable of proof. Let sufficient evidence of the matter of fact be adduced, and there is no man who can dismiss it as absolutely *incredible*. Assuming such a fact to be attested by “a person of veracity and tolerable accuracy,” and who professed “that he took particular notice,” Mr. J. S. Mill observes that if the witness affirmed that he had thrown any other series of numbers we should believe him: the series alleged to have been thrown is “exactly as likely to have been really thrown as the other series. If, therefore, this assertion is less credible than the other, the reason must be, not that it is less likely than the other to be made truly; but that it is more likely than the other to be made falsely.” And he adds as “one reason:” “It excites wonder. It gratifies the love of the marvellous. The motives, therefore, to falsehood, one of the most frequent of which is the desire to astonish, operate more strongly in favour of this kind of assertion than of the other kind.”\* On such principles, the use of the word *impossibility*, however qualified, is sure to generate confusion of thought. Words, according to Lord Bacon’s illustration, shoot back their influence on the mind, “impetum suum, more Tartarorum sagittationis, retorquent;” and, owing to the use of this term, that which is merely improbable—suppose in a high degree—

\* “A System of Logic,” 4th ed., vol. ii., p. 169.

may come to be thought of as *impossible*, and therefore incredible, considered as a matter of fact. Indeed, it will be seen, in a passage to be quoted presently (see *infra*, p. 29), that Mr. Baden Powell does actually interchange the terms *improbable* and *incredible*.

ii. That which is *impossible* may be perfectly conceivable. It is *impossible*, *e. g.*, by plane geometry, to find two mean proportionals between two right lines. There is also what Archbishop Whately calls "*physical impossibility*,"—"something at variance with the existing laws of nature, and which, consequently, no being subject to those laws (as we are) can surmount:" thus, to walk on the surface of the waves is a thing "*physically impossible*." And he adds, with due caution: "Not but that one person may perform without supernatural power what is to another physically impossible; as, *e. g.*, a man may lift a great weight which it would be physically impossible for a child to raise."

In the following passage, Mr. Baden Powell confounds what is *improbable*—no doubt in a high degree—with what is *impossible*. "If the most numerous ship's company were all to asseverate that they had seen a mermaid, would any rational persons at the present day believe them? . . . No amount of attestation of innumerable and honest witnesses, would ever convince any one versed in mathematical science that a person had squared the circle." (p. 141.) These two cases are by no means parallel. The former is no more than highly *improbable*; the latter is absolutely *impossible*. Consider how naturalists discuss such matters. After a lengthened examination of the evidence of witnesses as to the existence of the sea-serpent, Mr. Gosse observes: "I express my own confident persuasion that there exists some oceanic

animal of immense proportions, which has not as yet been received into the category of scientific zoology." \* And again, in like manner arguing from testimony, he considers it "highly probable," that "the famed unicorn," an animal quite distinct from the rhinoceros, exists in Central Africa. †

iii. That which is *inconceivable* cannot be compared with anything which is merely improbable or impossible—it essentially transcends both. We are here brought within view of the limits by which the operations of the human mind are restricted. "There are *laws* under which the mind is compelled to think, and which it cannot transgress otherwise than negatively, by ceasing to think at all." ‡ There are certain truths which are *necessary*; in which we not only learn that the proposition *is* true, but see that it must be true. Thus, two and two are equal to four, and cannot by any possible effort of thought be *conceived* equal to five. Nay, we cannot conceive it possible that, by any future change in the constitution of things, this fact can be altered hereafter, even by an exertion of Omnipotence. § On the other hand, there is no difficulty

\* "The Romance of Natural History," London, 1860, p. 368.

† *Ib.* pp. 285—290.

‡ Mansel, "Prolegomena Logica," 2nd ed., p. 79.

§ Mansel, "Metaphysics," p. 248. On this statement the following criticism has been offered: "There is a world in which, whenever two pairs of things are either placed in proximity or are contemplated together, a fifth thing is immediately created and brought within the contemplation of the mind engaged in putting two and two together. This is surely neither inconceivable nor can it be said to be beyond the power of Omnipotence, yet in such a world surely two and two would make five. That is, the result to the mind of contemplating two twos would be to count five. This shows that it is not inconceivable that two and two might make five."—*Saturday Review*, June 30, 1860. The ingenious writer must surely perceive

whatever in *conceiving* that which is improbable, or, to us, impossible. "A centaur is as conceivable as a horse or a man, whether the actual existence of such a creature is physically possible or not. I may imagine or conceive a stone remaining suspended in air or water, or mounting upwards instead of falling downwards, though, consistently with the natural law of gravitation, it can do nothing but sink to the ground."\*

The judgments which appear to possess the character of absolute necessity may be classed under four heads. 1. Logical judgments:—the sums of equal things must themselves be equal. 2. Mathematical judgments:—two straight lines cannot enclose a space. 3. Moral judgments:—ingratitude or treachery must at all times and in all persons be worthy of condemnation. 4. Metaphysical judgments:—every change is brought about by some cause.†

It has been observed above that the most eminent writers sometimes fail to recognise this character of necessary judgments. Thus, neglecting Kant's distinction between the necessary laws under which all men think, and the contingent laws under which certain men think of certain things, even Dr. Whewell, as Mr. Mansel notes ‡, says of certain discoveries of physical laws: "So complete has been the victory of truth in most of these instances, that at present we can hardly imagine the struggle to have been necessary. The very essence of these triumphs is that they lead us to regard the views we reject as not only false, but *inconceivable*."

that what the mind "counts" here is  $2+2+1$ . Two and two may, if he chooses so to express himself, "make five," but they are still equal to four.

\* Mansel, *ib.* p. 206.

† *Ib.* p. 251.

‡ "Proleg. Log.," *Note A*, p. 309.

In Mr. Mill's writings similar instances occur. For example, having observed that, even in the case of educated persons, the separation of any two facts which have once become firmly associated in their minds, presents itself with "all the characters of an *inconceivable* phenomenon," he proceeds to say: "There are remarkable instances of this in the history of science: instances in which the most instructed men rejected as impossible, *because inconceivable*, things which their posterity, by earlier practice, found it quite easy to *conceive*, and which everybody now knows to be true. . . . It would be difficult to name a man more remarkable at once for the greatness and the wide range of his mental accomplishments than Leibnitz. Yet this eminent man gave as a reason for rejecting Newton's scheme of the solar system, that God *could not* make a body revolve round a distant centre, unless either by some impelling mechanism, or by a miracle."\*

Throughout Mr. Baden Powell's argument, this character of necessary judgments is consistently overlooked. "The grand truth," he writes, "of the universal order and constancy of natural causes, as a primary law of belief," is "so strongly entertained and fixed in the mind of every truly inductive inquirer, that he cannot even *conceive* the possibility of its failure." (p. 109.) "The enlarged critical and inductive study of the natural world, cannot but tend powerfully to evince the *inconceivableness* of *imagined* interruptions of natural order." (p. 110.) According to "the physical conceptions" of the present day, miracles "are seen to be *inconceivable* to reason." (p. 126.) "Beyond the domain of physical causation and the

\* "A System of Logic," 4th ed., vol. i., p. 269.

*possible conceptions* of intellect or knowledge, there lies open the boundless region of spiritual things, which is the *sole dominion* of faith." (p. 127.) And lastly, as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the assertion that 'on a certain amount of testimony we might believe any statement, however *improbable*,' Mr. Baden Powell remarks:—"So that if a number of respectable witnesses were to concur in asseverating that on a certain occasion they had seen two and two make five, we should be bound to believe them!" (p. 141.)

§ IV.—*The Evidences of Christianity, External and Internal.*

WITH such views respecting the laws of human thought, Mr. Baden Powell has undertaken to discuss the credibility of miracles. He approaches the subject gradually. "The idea," he writes, "of a positive external divine revelation of some kind has formed the very basis of all hitherto received systems of Christian belief." (p. 101.) It is impossible to speak with confidence, where no express statement is made, as to how far Mr. Baden Powell believes in the reality of "a positive external divine revelation." Arguing strictly from his premisses he must deny that such a revelation is possible. A revelation from God, in the Christian sense and apart from any divine manifestation in nature, is, by the very force of the term, miraculous; and the theme of his Essay is that miracles are incredible. But as the closing sentence of the Essay asserts that "the true acceptance of the entire revealed manifestation of Christianity will be most worthily and satisfactorily based on that assurance of 'faith,' by which the Apostle

affirms 'we stand,'"—one is bound to take for granted that the existence of such a revelation is conceded.\* Now, the direct and fundamental proofs of the Christian revelation, as generally agreed upon by divines, are miracles, and the completion of prophecy. A series of collateral proofs is also to be taken into account, which, "however considerable they are, yet ought never to be urged apart from its direct proofs, but always to be joined with them;" and the general argument consists "both of the direct and collateral evidence considered as making up one argument." Such is the sketch given by Bishop Butler†, in his discussion of the particular evidence for Christianity; and Mr. Baden Powell, in one of his closing remarks, accurately describes the position thus assumed: "The advocate of Christian evidence triumphs in the acknowledgment that the strength of Christianity lies in the variety of its evidences, suited to all varieties of apprehension." (p. 143.)

With the exception of a remark of Dr. Johnson,

\* It seems hopeless now to attempt to reconcile this concession with remarks such as the following. Speaking of the introduction of Archbishop Whately's theory of civilisation "as a comment on Paley in support of the credibility of a revelation," Mr. Baden Powell observes: "An admirable argument no doubt it is, though perhaps many would apply it in a sense somewhat different from that of the author. If the use of fire, the cultivation of the soil, and the like, were divine revelations, the most obvious inference would be that so likewise are printing and steam. . . . But no one denies revelation in this sense; the philosophy of the age does not discredit the inspiration of prophets and apostles, though it may sometimes believe it in poets, legislators, philosophers, and others gifted with high genius. . . . The modern turn of reasoning . . . rather adopts the belief that a revelation is then most credible when it appeals least to violations of natural causes." (p. 140.)

† "Analogy," part ii., ch. 7.



quoted at page 122, in which the argument for Christianity is summed up nearly in the words of Bishop Butler, the term *prophecy* does not occur throughout the Essay. The two following sentences indicate, with sufficient clearness, the view which is upheld as to miracles. In the ideas and prepossessions of the contemporaries of Christ and the Apostles "we may trace the reason why miracles, *which would be incredible now*, were not so in the age and under the circumstances in which they are stated to have occurred." (p. 117.) "If miracles were in the estimation of a former age among the chief supports of Christianity, they are at present among the main difficulties, and hindrances to its acceptance." (p. 140.)

In order to justify the severance of miracles from the proofs of Christianity, it is argued, firstly, that miracles, after all, cannot be of such great importance, because certain persons of unimpeachable orthodoxy do not attach any value to "external attestations;" and, secondly, that miracles, as their upholders must allow, are, in any case, superfluous.

And firstly, having spoken of "a school of writers, of whom Paley may be taken as the type, who regard them as the *sole external* proof and certificate of a divine revelation," Mr. Baden Powell adds: "But at the present day this 'evidential' view of miracles as the *sole* or even the *principal external* attestation to the claims of a divine revelation, is a species of reasoning which appears to have lost ground, even among the most earnest advocates of Christianity." (p. 119.) It is somewhat difficult to detect what is here meant; as no other *external* evidence of revelation is spoken of. Subsequently, indeed, the word *external* is dropped; and the inquiry suggested is, whether miracles are to

be made "the *sole* certificate" (p. 121), or "*sole* criterion" (p. 123), of a professed revelation. But what is intended seems to be contained in the following words: "It has been even more directly asserted by some zealous supporters of Christian doctrine, that the *external* evidences are altogether inappropriate and worthless." (p. 119.) In proof of this statement, reference is made to the opinions of certain writers in the "Tracts for the Times," and in the "British Critic," as well as to Mr. Coleridge. One may fairly ask here, how can individual opinions affect the general argument? Miracles may be the *sole*, imaginable, *external* proof of a revelation; and yet, some writers may place little value on any "external evidences" whatever. A few persons may have satisfied their own minds by other arguments; but in what sense can this affect the truth of the assertion that miracles are to be regarded as *one* of the two direct proofs of Christianity? It is a well known fact that the same argument tells with different force on different minds. Thus, Goethe writes to Lavater: "You hold the gospel, as it stands, to be the most divine truth. For my part, even a voice proceeding from heaven would not convince me that a dead man could rise again. I regard such statements rather as a blasphemy against the great God, and against His revelation in nature."\* On the other hand, Bayle relates that Spinoza was wont to tell his friends, that could he have believed the resurrection of Lazarus, he would have broken his system to pieces, and embraced without repugnance (*sans répugnance*) the Christian faith.† Hence the importance of the variety

\* Quoted by Tholuck in the preface to his "Die Glaubwürdigkeit der evangelischen Geschichte."

† "Dictionnaire Hist. et Crit.," 3<sup>me</sup> ed., art. *Spinoza*, note N.

of Christian evidences. Hence it is that the upholder of Christianity cannot consent to obliterate a single element of the general argument whether direct or collateral,—whether resting upon miracles and prophecy, or upon that long series of proofs, foremost among which are the internal characteristics of divine revelation.

This remark leads to the second argument, noticed above, by which the severance of miracles from the rank of Christian evidences is sought to be justified. The admitted fact that “the true force of the Christian evidences lies in the union and combination of the external testimony of miracles, with the internal excellence of the doctrine,” amounts, in fact, Mr. Baden Powell argues, to “practically making the latter the real test of the admissibility of the former.” (p. 121.) “In this fundamental assumption of internal evidence,” he continues, “some of the most orthodox writers are in fact in close agreement with those nominally of a very opposite school,”—viz. the rationalists whom he quotes; and he concludes: “In a word, on this view, it would follow that all external attestation *would seem superfluous* if it concur with, or to be rejected if it oppose, these moral convictions.” (p. 124.) He adds that this was the argument of Lord Shaftesbury, and that it would “approach very nearly to rejecting the peculiarities of the gospel altogether.”

The question here started is, no doubt, of great importance; but the inference to be drawn from the function assigned to the *internal* evidences of Christianity is very different from that deduced by Mr. Baden Powell. “What is it,” he asks, “but to acknowledge the right of an appeal, superior to that of all miracles, to our own moral tribunal, to the principle that the human mind is competent to sit in moral and

spiritual judgment on a professed revelation." (p. 122.) The manner in which this speculative difficulty is to be met has long been recognised by all judicious divines. 'Does the miracle prove the doctrine, or does the doctrine prove the miracle?' There are here two distinct questions; and each of them must be answered separately. This was the solution of the difficulty which Pascal gave. "We must judge of the doctrine by the miracles; we must judge of the miracles by the doctrine. In this there is no contradiction."\* The true relation, as Dean Trench observes, "is one of mutual interdependence." When we thus affirm that the miracles prove the doctrine, and the doctrine the miracles, we argue according to the strictest rules of logic. We receive "the sum total of the impression which this divine revelation is intended to make on us, instead of taking an impression only partial and one-sided."†

The truth is, it is impossible to draw an exact line in matters of this nature. Where, indeed, can such a line be drawn in the affairs of practical life? Any one who has ever opened the pages of such a work as Bishop Jeremy Taylor's "Ductor Dubitantium," or who has followed the mazes of a legal argument, must see the impossibility of thus nicely discriminating. Nay, as in

\* "Pensées," ed. Faugère, tom. ii., p. 222:—"Règle. Il faut juger de la doctrine par les miracles. Il faut juger des miracles par la doctrine. Tout cela est vrai, mais cela ne se contredit pas." And again: "Les miracles et la vérité sont nécessaires à cause qu'il faut convaincre l'homme entier en corps et en âme."—p. 223.

† "Notes on the Miracles," 2nd ed., p. 94. One can scarcely understand the meaning of the writer of the article on "Essays and Reviews," in the "Edinburgh Review" for April 1861, when he remarks: "The chapter of Dean Trench on the 'Apologetic Worth of Miracles,' is in principle identical with any fair and charitable construction of the main argument of Professor Powell."—p. 485.

the case above referred to, even mathematicians are not agreed as to whether an alleged proof amounts to a *demonstration*, or affords merely a *probability*. Mr. Baden Powell himself lets fall a remark which contains, perhaps, the nearest approach to a solution of the difficulty that seems admissible. The "unworthiness" of the doctrine, he writes, "will discredit even the most distinctly alleged apparent miracles." (p. 121.) To the same effect Bishop Butler observes: "I express myself with caution, lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason; which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself: or be misunderstood to assert that a supposed revelation cannot *be proved false* from internal characters. For it may contain clear immoralities, or contradictions; and either of these would *prove it false*."\* In other words, while the doctrine cannot be looked upon as proving *the fact* of the miracle,—which rests upon the proper evidence, if forthcoming; it may, nevertheless, prove the miracle *not* to have come from God. This is the express meaning of the passages of Scripture quoted on the subject by Mr. Baden Powell. (p. 121.) Every revelation from God addresses us as moral beings, as endowed with a power of recognising what is just, as ruled by the law of conscience. We read in the prophet: "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?"† On a similar principle, the preachers of Christianity appeal to the moral sense of their hearers. "The Gentiles," writes S. Paul, "which have not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in

\* "Analogy," part ii., ch. 3.

† Ezek. xviii. 29.

their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness."\* But while divine revelation thus insists upon its "internal characteristics," it no less strongly appeals to its "external attestation." To this proof, the Founder Himself of Christianity appealed in proof of His doctrine: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works." †

On such grounds, therefore, miracles have ever been regarded as the great foundation of the revelation from God to man. To the inquiry, "*Ubi est Deus tuus?*" Pascal truly answered, "Les miracles le montrent et sont un éclair." ‡

#### § V. — *Historical Summary.*

MR. BADEN POWELL'S historical summary can scarcely be deemed satisfactory. It will readily be granted that "the early apologists" seldom exhibit "what would now be deemed a philosophical investigation of alleged facts, and critical appreciation of testimony in support of them." (p. 101.) It is well known that, during the first three centuries of Christianity, the argument from miracles was rarely employed. Of this, the cause commonly assigned is the charge of magic, or imposture, so often brought against the Christians. § It would, per-

\* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† S. John x. 25, 37, 38; cf. ch. v. 36; xiv. 11; xv. 24; 2 Cor. xii. 12.

‡ "Pensées," l. c., p. 219.

§ See the proofs adduced by Mr. Baden Powell, p. 116; for which, as well as for his other historical references, the materials are supplied by Dr. Newman's "Essay on Miracles." Compare, for example, Dr.

haps, be more correct to say that, to adduce miracles in proof of the new religion was felt to be, at that time, unnecessary. The religions of the old world had proved powerless to satisfy the cravings of the human soul. The question of Pilate, prompted rather by a feeling of sadness than of mockery, "What is truth?" sums up the mental history of that age. The restlessness with which each honest heart then groped for truth is well depicted by a writer at the opening of the third century:—"From my early youth," says the author of the work known as the "Clementine Recognitions," "I was agitated by doubts; I know not how they had taken possession of my soul. When I die, I asked myself, shall I really be no more? Is there no memory beyond the grave? When, I pondered, was the world created? What was before it? What is to come after it? These thoughts pursued me everywhere for my torment; and when I wished to free myself from them my torment increased. My longing for immortality was my guide to truth. I frequented the schools of philosophers. Everywhere I found only opposite principles and conflicting dogmas. One proved for me the immortality of the soul; another argued that it was mortal. There was no firmness of truth in my heart. I was cast from doctrine to doctrine; and my breast was filled with pain."\* The want thus felt Christianity supplied. Its sublime morality, when contrasted with even the purest forms of heathen religion, arrested the attention of all who honestly sought for truth. By

Newman's note (p. liv.) on *γοητεία*, in making use of which Mr. Baden Powell has interchanged the opinion of Julian and the claim of Apollonius.

\* "Eoque magis in profundo pectoris cruciabar."—Lib. i., c. 1—3, ap. Coteler., t. i., p. 493.

such persons alone was Christianity welcomed during the ages of persecution. About the opening of the fourth century the Church was entering on her new career. At this period Christian writers began to find additional arguments necessary. Arnobius, as every student knows, was one of the first to insist upon the miraculous character of Christianity; and to what an extent his example was followed, any one can satisfy himself by a glance at the indexes to the works of S. Chrysostom or S. Augustine.

Proceeding to "subsequent ages," it is scarcely accurate to allege that "to discuss evidence became superfluous, and even dangerous and impious;" and that, "accordingly, of this branch of theological literature (unless in the most entire subjection to ecclesiastical dictation) the mediæval Church presented hardly any specimens." (p. 102.) Nor is it just to add, by way of contrast with earlier times, that "the sterner genius of Protestantism required definition, argument, and proof, where the ancient Church had been content to impress by the claims of authority, veneration, and prescription." A reference to Neander's "History of the Church"\* will inform those who are curious as to this matter of the actual state of things. They will there find a critical summary of the views respecting the miraculous character of Christianity (*Wunderbegriff*), which were put forward, from the eleventh to the fourteenth century, by writers such as Abaelard,—one not likely to bow before "ecclesiastical dictation,"—Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, and Raymond Lull. Nor will the student, who may be tempted to consult the original

\* See vol. ii., p. 582, &c., of the third German edition, Gotha, 1856; or Bohn's translation, vol. viii., p. 158, &c.



treatises, detect many tokens of resting on authority, or of appealing to prescription. He will perceive throughout the closest reasoning, and, as might be expected, the most refined distinctions. To quote a single instance, in which one of the presumptions against miracles which Mr. Baden Powell puts forward has been anticipated:—“In advancing,” he writes, “from the argument for miracles to the argument from miracles, it should be considered that the evidential force of miracles (to whatever it may amount) is wholly relative to the apprehensions of the parties addressed. . . . Columbus’s prediction of the eclipse to the native islanders was as true an argument to them as if the event had really been supernatural.” (p. 115.) Aquinas, having proposed the question, “Is everything that happens out of the course of nature a miracle?” thus replies: “A miracle is so called from the wonder it excites (*miraculum ab admiratione*). What is wonderful to one may not be wonderful to another: the rustic wonders at an eclipse of the sun, but not the astronomer (*non autem astrologus*). Consequently, those acts of God which are beyond the reach of any causes known to us (*præter causas nobis notas*) are called miracles.”\* Mr. Baden Powell, however, in his cursory remarks on mediæval literature, merely refers to Mr. Hallam, who dismisses the subject with graceful indifference. Contrasting Pope Nicolas V. — to whose accession Dean Milman brings down the history of “Latin Christianity” — with “his famous predecessor” Gregory I., Mr. Hallam writes: “These eminent men, like Michael Angelo’s figures of Night and Morning, seem to stand at the two gates of the

\* “*Summa*,” i., qu. cv., art. vii., t. xx., p. 579, Venet. 1755.

middle ages, emblems and heralds of the mind's long sleep, and of its awakening."\*

Passing on to more modern times, Mr. Baden Powell observes: "In an earlier period of our theological literature, the critical investigation of the question of miracles was a point scarcely at all appreciated." Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, the speculations of Woolston, and subsequently "the celebrated Essay of Hume, had the effect of directing the attention of divines more pointedly to the precise topic of miraculous evidence; and to these causes was added the agitation of the question of the ecclesiastical miracles, giving rise to the semi-sceptical discussions of Middleton." (p. 105.) Dr. Newman's Essay on the ecclesiastical miracles, quoted by Mr. Baden Powell at page 117, supplies the information on this subject. In that singular composition, Dr. Newman attempts to strengthen the evidence for the ecclesiastical miracles, by lowering the character of the miracles of Scripture. Some of the miracles of Scripture, he writes, "fall short of the attributes which attach to them in general, nay, are inferior in these respects to certain ecclesiastical miracles, and are received only on the credit of the system of which they form part."† But notwithstanding the general drift of Dr. Newman's argument, he has done good service by pointing out, with characteristic clearness, the broad line which separates the miracles of Scripture from those of ecclesiastical history. The "miracles posterior to the Apostolic age are, on the whole, very different in object, character, and

\* "Introd. to the Lit. of Europe," vol. i., p. 141. Mr. Hallam subsequently modified his contemptuous estimate of the Mediæval Church:—see his "Middle Ages," vol. iii., p. 301, ed. 1848.

† Page 55.

evidence, from those of Scripture on the whole, so that the one series or family ought never to be confounded with the other." "The Scripture miracles are wrought by persons consciously exercising under divine guidance a power committed to them for definite ends, professing to be immediate messengers from heaven, and to be evidencing their mission by their miracles: whereas, ecclesiastical miracles *are not so much wrought as displayed*, being effected by divine power without any visible media of operation at all, or by inanimate or material media," &c. And once more: "An inquirer should not enter upon the subject of the miracles reported or alleged in ecclesiastical history, without being prepared for fiction and exaggeration in the narrative to an indefinite extent."\* Such being the state of the case as to ecclesiastical miracles, on the admission of so competent a witness as Dr. Newman, the remarks of Mr. Baden Powell on the subject, as well as his criticism of the tests suggested by Bishop Warburton and by Bishop Douglas (p. 105), have not much weight in the present discussion. These writers may have advanced unsound arguments, or given fallacious criteria; but this should not be urged in prejudice of the cause which they have failed to defend.

#### § VI. — *Theism.*

"THE arguments of Middleton and others," writes Mr. Baden Powell, "all assume the antecedent *incredibility* of miracles in general, in order to draw more precisely the distinction that in certain cases of a very special nature *that improbability* may be removed, as in

\* Pages 13, 24, 105.

the case of authenticating a revelation." (p. 113.) In this statement the important substitution will be observed of one term for another. Had the word *improbability* been used in both members of the sentence, no comment would be necessary. If "miracles in general" were "antecedently *probable*,"—just as it is antecedently probable that there will be frost and snow next winter,—they would cease to be miracles. But this would not suit the exigencies of the argument. The assertion that miracles are merely *improbable*, was precisely that which Middleton indirectly, and Hume directly, denied. The *incredibility* of miracles is the real point at issue; and so it has been always understood by writers on the subject—by Butler, by Paley, and by others. Paley thus puts the alternative: "In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not *incredible*":—or, as Mr. Baden Powell travesties the proposition, "Paley's grand resource is 'once believe in a God, and all is easy.'" (p. 114.)

In this portion of his Essay it is that Mr. Baden Powell appears open to the gravest criticism; not only from the vagueness of the language which he employs, but also from the character of the authorities which he quotes in illustration. "The belief in divine interposition," he observes, "must be essentially dependent on what we previously admit or believe with respect to the divine attributes. It was formerly argued that every Theist must admit the credibility of miracles; but this, it is now seen, depends on the nature and degree of his Theism, which may vary through many shades of opinion." (p. 113.) Before any description is given of the "degrees of Theism" here referred to, a special theory is interposed as to our "views of the divine attributes." Having observed that the con-

clusions of the older writers on natural theology as to Omnipotence "appear carried beyond those limits to which reason or science are competent to lead us," an assertion is made which, once admitted, closes the discussion. "The divine Omnipotence is entirely an inference from the language of the Bible, adopted on the assumption of a belief in revelation. That 'with God nothing is impossible,' is the very declaration of Scripture; yet on this the whole belief in miracles is built." (*ib.*) Admit this principle and all controversy is at an end; *cadit quæstio*, and an easy triumph is secured. The Christian argument would run thus: 'The external evidence of a revelation from God consists in miracles which His Omnipotence alone could have performed; while, at the same time, the Omnipotence on which we rely is "entirely an inference" from that same revelation.' It is unnecessary to point out how this singular assertion runs counter to every human instinct, to every deduction of human reason. Whatever speculations may have been started respecting other divine attributes, *power*, at least, has always formed a primary element of the conception of Deity.

The grounds, too, on which this remarkable proposition is founded excite no less surprise: "That 'with God nothing is impossible' is the very declaration of Scripture; *yet* on this the whole belief in miracles is built." Whence, it may be asked, has Mr. Baden Powell collected that the universal belief in the divine Omnipotence to which an appeal is made, *e. g.*, in the words "with God all things are possible," as elsewhere appeals are made to man's instinctive belief in the divine "truth," "holiness," "goodness," "knowledge,"—whence has it been collected that the belief in this attribute has no other foundation than a text of Scrip-

ture? As reasonably might it be urged, when another sacred writer argues from the premiss, "As it is appointed unto men once to die,"—that our belief in the mortality of the human race is "entirely an inference from the language of the Bible." Mr. Baden Powell, indeed, had for a moment qualified the generality of his assertion; he had remarked that "all our *higher* and *more precise* ideas of the divine perfections are really derived" from revelation. But this qualification he altogether omits when drawing his inference. Forgetting that his premiss dealt merely with the *degree of precision* which revelation confers upon our already existing notions of the divine perfections, he assumes, in his conclusion, that, previously to revelation, we have no such notions at all. He does not, however, dwell long on this topic—although, were his inference valid, his argument would be irresistible—he proceeds to the other matters introduced in the passage already quoted, which, as has been said, calls for some closer criticism.

"But were these views of the divine attributes, on the other hand, ever so well established, it must be considered that the Theistic argument requires to be applied with much caution; since most of those who have adopted such theories of the divine perfections on abstract grounds, have made them the basis of a precisely opposite belief, rejecting miracles altogether. . . . All such Theistic reasonings, in fact, if pushed to their consequences, must lead to a denial of all active operation of the Deity whatever." (p. 114.) And he illustrates this remark by the two following authorities quoted from Mr. Mansel's "Bampton Lectures."\* Theo-

\* Lecture VI., notes, 1st ed., pp. 390, 393.

dore Parker states that he denies miracles, because "I find *law* the constant mode of operation of the infinite God;" and Wegscheider, because such a belief is irreconcilable with the idea of an eternal God consistent with himself. The opinions of certain other writers are next referred to, of whom, as well as of the authors just named, Mr. Baden Powell remarks,—and the statement is particularly important as affording some clue to his own views: "We here speak impartially and disinterestedly, since we are far from agreeing in their reasonings, or even in their first principles;" but of whom he also says: "No men have evinced a more deep-seated and devout belief in the Divine perfections than the writers just named [Theodore Parker and Wegscheider], or others differing from them by various shades of opinion, as the late J. Sterling, Mr. Emerson, and Professor F. W. Newman." (p. 114.)

It is extremely unfortunate that Mr. Baden Powell has afforded no means of estimating how far he dissents from the "reasonings" or "first principles" of these writers. Still more unfortunate is it that he has not defined his own meaning of the word 'Theism;' especially when one recalls the remark already cited: "It was formerly believed that every Theist must admit the credibility of miracles; but this, it is now seen, depends on the nature and degree of his Theism." It was the more necessary, too, to have given this definition, as one cannot forget the result at which, according to Mr. Baden Powell himself, the authors whom he quotes have arrived: "These writers have agreed in the inference that the entire view of Theistic principles, in their highest spiritual purity, is utterly at variance with *all conception* of suspensions of the laws of nature, or with the idea of any kind of external manifestation addressed to

the senses, as overruling the higher, and, as they conceive, sole worthy and fitting convictions of moral sense and religious intuition." (p. 114.)

As Mr. Baden Powell, however, has left his own views on this matter unexpressed, it becomes necessary to inquire into the nature of the opinions by which he illustrates the assertion that "it is now seen" that the credibility of miracles depends on the degree of each person's 'Theism.'

Theism will, perhaps, be taken by most readers to be simply equivalent to Deism\*, the term commonly in use in former stages of this controversy; just as, *e. g.*, Mr. Baden Powell had previously spoken of "the Deists of the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth century." (p. 104.) Deism, as generally understood, implies a belief in "an intelligent Author of nature, and natural Governor of the world." This belief Bishop Butler assumed to be held by those with whom he engaged in controversy; and who, considering "the light of nature" to be sufficient, rejected or disparaged revelation. At the present day, however, Theism, it should seem, has acquired a new and special significance: and in order to see this more clearly something must be said on the subject of pantheism.

'There exists but a single *substance*, of which the world and man are only attributes:—in this proposition consists the essence of every form of pantheism.† Whether, with Hegel, we call this substance *Being*, or, with Schelling, give it the name of the *Absolute*; whether, with Spinoza, it be regarded as the *Infinite*, or, with Jordano Bruno, as the *supreme Unity*,—the

\* Bishop Butler sometimes speaks of *Theism*; but it is in cases where he distinctly contrasts it with *atheism*.

† See Maret, "Essai sur le Panthéisme," p. 196.



same principle is affirmed with merely verbal differences. Pantheism, however, presents itself under two forms. (i.) The pantheism of the Materialist, which sees in the universe only matter and its transformations, amounts to the absorption of God in the world, of the infinite in the finite. To discriminate between atheism and a pantheism such as this is evidently futile. (ii.) The pantheism of the Idealist — of Xenophanes and Parmenides, of Plotinus and Proclus, of Jordano Bruno and Spinoza, of Schelling and Hegel — consists in the *unity* and *identity* of substance. From this principle follows, on the one hand, the denial of the Personality of God; on the other, the denial of the reality of the world. The finite is absorbed in the infinite; and the infinite, despoiled of every mode of being, is reduced to a pure abstraction, to a mere nonentity. For all religious purposes this form of pantheism also is equivalent to atheism. “It has of late,” writes Mr. Mansel, “been a favourite criticism of Spinoza to say, with Hegel, that his system is not atheism but acosmism: and this is true in a speculative point of view. But if I allow of no God distinct from the aggregate of the universe, myself included, what object have I of worship? Or if, according to the later manifestation of pantheism, the divine mind is but the sum total of every finite consciousness, my own included, what religious relation between God and man is compatible with the theory? And, accordingly, the pantheism of Hegel has found its natural development in the atheism of Feuerbach.”\*

Pantheism, under the most favourable point of view, may be regarded as the poetic side of atheism. The

\* “Prolegomena Logica,” 2nd ed., p. 298.

beauty of nature, the harmonies of earth and sea and sky give forth an utterance, it is said, which tells us everywhere of God; which speak a language articulate and full of solemn meaning. Thus, the universe is personified, and religion becomes a metaphor;—a something as fantastic as the pagan mythology, and as destitute of living power as a philosophical abstraction. The fascination exercised by those systems of philosophy which result in pantheism, is one of those remarkable facts which meet us as we trace the history of the human mind. Pantheism may be followed through the speculations of the Hindoo, the eclecticism of the Neo-Platonist, the self-contemplation of the modern Mystic. That singular chapter in mediæval history which records how Mysticism succeeded to Scholasticism, tells also how the Mystic was often transformed into the pantheist. About the commencement of the fourteenth century, the leading representative of this strange transformation was the famous Eckart, whose system was the chief forerunner of the pantheistic speculations of later times.\*

The denial of the *Personality* of God, which is the characteristic of all pantheistic systems, can only be regarded as a denial of His existence altogether. What conception can the human mind frame of a Deity who is not *a person*? Mr. Mansel truly says, “A Personal God cannot be identified with all existence; and an impersonal deity, however tricked out to usurp the attributes of the Godhead, is no God at all, but a mere blind and immovable law or destiny, with less than even the divinity of a fetish, since *that* can at least be imagined as a being who may be offended or propitiated

\* See the remarks of Ullmann, “Reformers before the Reformation,” vol. ii., p. 23 (Clark’s Series).

by the worshipper."\* Atheism, however, is a creed which men seem naturally to shrink from avowing; and consequently the term pantheism, which appears to be instinctively identified with it by mankind in general, has fallen into some disrepute. 'Theism,' accordingly, has been adopted by the writer whom Mr. Baden Powell selects as the leading exponent of "theistic reasonings." (p. 114.) "Speculative Theism," writes Mr. Theodore Parker, "is the belief in the existence of God, in one form or another; and I call him a Theist who believes in any God. By atheism I mean absolute denial of the existence of any God. A man may deny actuality to the Hebrew idea of God, to the Christian idea of God, or to the Mohammedan idea of God, and yet be no atheist." †

The name of one of the writers referred to by Mr. Baden Powell suggests an important illustration of "theistic principles." Archdeacon Hare, in his memoir of Mr. Sterling, having referred to his opinion of Strauss's "Life of Jesus," tells us how "in Sterling's peculiar case, that which to the bulk of English readers would have been very repulsive in Strauss, his Hegelian philosophy, was on the contrary an attraction. . . . Thus, he was unable altogether to resist the fascination of those pantheistic tendencies which philosophy in her wiser moments has ever been trying to escape from." ‡

In order to understand what "pantheistic tendencies" lead to, and also to exemplify the use made by votaries of this system of the language of Christianity, it is necessary to quote a passage from the work of Strauss which had such charms for Mr. Sterling, where we shall see the letter of the gospel transformed into a metaphysical mythology. Towards the close of

\* "Metaphysics," p. 372.

† "Theism," p. 2.

‡ "Essays and Tales by J. Sterling," vol. i., p. cxxxvi.

his work Strauss sets himself "to re-establish dogmatically that which has been destroyed critically."\* "Humanity," he writes, "is the union of the two natures — God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude; it is the child of the visible mother and the invisible father, nature and spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature. . . . It is humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven. . . . By faith in this Christ, especially in his death and resurrection, man is justified before God: that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of humanity, the individual man participates in the divinely human life of the species." †

Elsewhere ‡ will be found extracts from the writings of Mr. Theodore Parker, Mr. Emerson, and Mr. F. W. Newman. Assuredly, Mr. Baden Powell could not have borne in mind the real sentiments of these writers, when he expressed the opinion that "no men have evinced a more deep-seated and devout belief in the divine perfections." (p. 114.)

The digression, however, respecting the divine attributes, is professedly based on the principles of Mr. Theodore Parker, and of the other writers quoted. That digression, accordingly, is altogether irrelevant. To reason from such principles is to shift the discussion to a totally different province. The Christian argument for miracles takes for granted two elementary truths — the Omnipotence and the Personality of God; while on "theistic principles," as Mr. Baden Powell chooses

\* "The Life of Jesus," Chapman's translation, vol. iii., p. 396.

† *Ib.* p. 438.

‡ See the note at the end of this Essay.

to call them, the controversy is moved back to the first rudiments of natural religion. Is there, or is there not, "an intelligent Author of nature, and natural Governor of the world?" must in that case be the subject of our inquiry. But this proposition Christianity assumes to be true; and as Mr. Baden Powell would, doubtless, recognise its truth, there is no need to examine here the reasoning which rests upon its denial. The present argument is not with the atheist, or pantheist, or "Theist," who does not believe in a Personal God. Mr. Baden Powell's critic, therefore, is relieved from the responsibility which he would impose upon him when he writes: "We think it deeply incumbent on all who would fairly reason out the case of miraculous evidence at the present day, to give a full and patient discussion to this entire class of arguments, which now command so many adherents." (p. 115.)

### § VII.—*What is meant by a Miracle?*

IN approaching directly the argument for miracles, it must be distinctly understood what is meant by the events which are thus named. And first of all, the signification of the expressions *natural*, *course of nature*, must be determined. The only distinct meaning of the word *natural*, writes Bishop Butler, "is, *stated, fixed, or settled*: since what is natural as much requires and presupposes an intelligent agent to render it so, *i. e.*, to effect it continually, or at stated times; as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once."\* And again, having described "the general method of divine administration," he thus replies to the superficial

\* "Analogy," part i., ch. i., *ad fin.*

objection, "But all this is to be ascribed to the general course of nature,"—"True. This is the very thing which I am observing. It is to be ascribed to the general course of nature; *i. e.*, not surely to the words, or ideas, *course of nature*; but to Him who appointed it, and put things into it: or to a course of operation, from its uniformity or constancy, called natural; and which necessarily implies an operating agent."\* What is meant by a miracle can now be distinctly seen. "A miracle, in its very notion, is relative to a course of nature; and implies somewhat different from it, as being so."† Nothing can be added to the clearness of this explanation. With reference, however, to the terms commonly used as synonymous with *miracle*, perhaps the following distinction may conduce to greater accuracy. The miracle, regarded as a phenomenon to which the human senses bear testimony, may be termed *preternatural*—it stands apart from the events which occur in the ordinary course of nature. When regarded, on the other hand, as a divine act, the miracle may be termed *supernatural*—it proceeds from a power which is not to be reckoned among the ordinary forces of nature.

But the question arises here, On what foundation does this discussion rest? Does the present inquiry relate to matters of speculation merely, or to matters of fact? When supernatural power, or preternatural events are spoken of, are we engaged in an examination of what is actual and real, or is our imagination busied with the construction of a baseless hypothesis? In a word, are there any phenomena of which the mind can *now* take cognisance which necessarily suggest the idea

\* "Analogy," part i., ch. 2.

† *Ib.* part ii., ch. 2.

of what is miraculous? The defender of Christianity answers the question as follows, and on the merits of this answer the issue is joined.

Three phenomena of this kind demand the attention of the most sceptical. "The appearance of a standing miracle," as Bishop Butler expresses it, "in the Jews remaining a distinct people in their dispersion\*;" "the standing miracle," as Mr. Coleridge expresses it, "of a Christendom commensurate and almost synonymous with the civilised world †;" and, lastly, the world itself which we see around us. The observer may, at the same time, notice the existence of a Chronicle of great antiquity, which professes to account for the origin of the Jewish and Christian religions, and even of the world itself. Now let the principles applied to the examination of other phenomena be also applied here.

i. And first of all, let the admitted fact of the existence of the Jews be contrasted with one of the parallel cases in history which afford matter of controversy. Take, for example, the controversy as to the existence, at the present day, of the old Hellenic race in Europe. It is well known that scholars of eminence maintain that the present inhabitants of Greece are but "Byzantinised Slavonians." With learning alike and probability, it is argued that the undying memories of Greece belong to a race that is no more; and that the people who inhabit that same historic land are barely entitled to the shadow of a name. ‡ Contrast with doubts such

\* "Analogy," part. ii., ch. 7.

† "Literary Remains," vol. iv., p. 261. Compare the brilliant passage with which the second volume of Mr. Gladstone's "Studies on Homer" closes.

‡ See the summary of Fallmerayer's treatises on this subject, given in the opening chapter of Mr. Finlay's "Mediæval Greece."

as this, the preservation of the Jews in their long and wide dispersion. Every attempt to explain this fact by natural causes has merely served to account for the *event* itself, but not for its coincidence with what had been foretold many hundred years before. The *preternatural* character of the fact consists altogether in the correspondence and coincidence between ancient predictions and the present condition of the Jewish people:— a condition which one scarce knows how distinctly to express, but in the words of the prophetic account of it, given too by the legislator of the commonwealth whose dissolution he is directed to foreshow: “Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.” \*

ii. Any one who reviews with impartiality the rise or progress of the Christian religion, will, perhaps, feel little disposed to question its preternatural character. In order to estimate that character aright, one should compare the force which, to human eyes, Christianity had at its command, with the forces which it was called upon to encounter. The opposing forces comprised every influence which usually sways the world. Under the aspect of material force, Christianity had to confront the iron rule of the Cæsars. The intellectual force which it must overcome, was embodied in those forms of philosophy which the genius of Greece had elaborated. The spiritual force which proved the most obstinate antagonist of the gospel, proceeded from that aggregate of established religions which tended ever more and more to the same melancholy issue,—the pollution of human life, and the darkening of human conscience. On its own side, Christianity originated among

\* Deut. xxviii. 37.



a people neither renowned in literature, nor foremost in civilisation. It arose within an outlying province of the Roman Empire, the inhabitants of which were regarded by their masters partly with feelings of irritation on account of their turbulence, partly with feelings of scorn on account of their exclusiveness. The first preachers of the gospel, too, were taken from the lowest ranks of a community which did not share in the privileges of Roman citizenship—a circumstance which in that aristocratic age placed them at a still greater disadvantage. When Christianity triumphed over all such obstacles, its labours must be once more renewed. The civilisation of Rome and Greece was swept away:—to restore the mere outlines of that civilisation is now the task of the antiquarian and the scholar. The date of this ruin in the West, may be counted from the day on which Alaric entered Rome; in the East, from the day on which the ambassador of Mohammed proposed the faith of Islam to Heraclius. Thenceforward, amid that dissolution of all order and law which ensued, Christianity had for its second task to reconstruct the fabric of society: and, now, throughout the habitable world, every form of genuine civilisation is strictly limited to those races which own the Christian name.

To assign causes to effects such as these, is the problem which Philosophy is invited to examine.

But, in this investigation of causes, another problem must be solved by Philosophy, in a province more peculiarly her own.

iii. The irresistible and universal principle which impels man to refer every phenomenon to some cause, necessarily leads to our referring the existence of the world to a power to which the forces of nature, which we see now in operation, present nothing analogous.

The ancient Chronicle, indeed, already spoken of, suggests a solution here: it appears essentially distinguished from all other books—except such as are copied from it—by this circumstance, that its general design is “to give us an account of the world in this one single view, as *God’s* world.”\* It opens with an account of how the world came to be: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.” To this point of time, every speculation which human intellect can frame must of necessity converge.

Among the necessary laws of thought, stands foremost what metaphysicians term “the principle of causality:” in other words, the mind of man cannot *conceive* any phenomenon to begin to exist without a cause. This is a fact wholly independent of the conflicting opinions as to the origin of the principle itself. Meanwhile the various objects of sense present a combination of facts, and phenomena, with which each member of the human family is connected by ties from which he cannot extricate himself. By an intellectual necessity he is impelled to ask, Whence came all this? His mind cannot be satisfied with a succession of causes, without assuming a First Cause. What was the beginning? is a question which he perpetually asks. No failure in obtaining a satisfactory answer can prevent inquisitive spirits from again and again repeating the inquiry, “although the blank abyss into which it is uttered does not even return an echo.”†

“The ablest endeavours,” writes Professor Owen‡, “to penetrate to the beginning of things do but carry us, when most successful, a few steps nearer that be-

\* Butler, “Analogy,” part ii., ch. 7.

† See Whewell, “Indications of the Creator,” p. 152.

‡ “On Parthenogenesis,” p. 3.

ginning, and then leave us on the verge of a boundless ocean of the unknown truth, dividing the secondary or subordinate phenomena in the chain of causation from the great First Cause."

These principles will be appreciated more justly, if they are compared with certain theories which profess to draw aside the veil that parts the present from the beginning.

i. The, so-called, "Positive Philosophy" of Comte gives up all speculation concerning a *beginning* as hopeless. It is necessary, for the present inquiry, to notice the principles which have led to this result, although this particular application of the inductive argument has not been dwelt upon by Mr. Baden Powell. We have here a pregnant instance of the consequences of unduly estimating physical laws. Comte's theory is a vast system of materialism, based upon the most advanced physical science. All philosophy, according to this system, rests upon the observation of outward facts. Comte's maxim is that science must study only the *laws* of phenomena, and never the mode of production: a maxim which affords a curious example of that barren caution which hopes for truth, without daring to venture upon the quest of it.\* The "Positive Philosophy," in short, refuses to admit the idea of *cause*, all science being reduced to the mere expression of *laws of phenomena*. The investigation of causes is pronounced worthy only of the infancy of science. Let this empiric method be illustrated by Comte's attempt to explain the history of man — the *origin* of the species, of course, not being sought for. By virtue of the "law of human progress," the first step of our

\* See Whewell, "Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences," 2nd ed., vol. ii., p. 104.

knowledge is "theological or fictitious." Comte accordingly writes: "The real starting point is, in fact, much humbler than is commonly supposed, man having everywhere begun by being a fetish-worshipper and a cannibal. Instead of indulging our horror and disgust of such a state of things by denying it, we should admit a collective pride in that human progressiveness which has brought us into our present state of comparative exaltation, while a being less nobly endowed than man would have vegetated to this hour in his original wretched condition."\* The organ of Comte's system in England has, indeed, advanced this singular proposition as to the "Positive Philosophy,"—"It has enthroned humanity upon nature; it has fulfilled the promise of Hebrew poetry; it has really made man the lord of the world, and put all things in subjection under his feet."† Such a conclusion, however, deviates strangely from its premisses, which, as has been truly said, represent man as "an orphan at his birth, and an outcast in his destiny." In a universe such as this, which, according to the principles of Comte, displays no proof of an all-directing mind, and where the bright hopes and intellectual achievements of man alike terminate in the tomb, life, in reality as well as in metaphor, becomes a dream.

ii. Mr. Darwin, in his recent volume, approaches the question, "What was the beginning?"—a question which the "Positive Philosophy" refuses even to consider. Mr. Baden Powell describes Mr. Darwin's work as a "masterly volume on 'The Origin of Species' by the law of 'natural selection,' which now *substantiates on*

\* "The Positive Philosophy of A. Comte," translated by Harriet Martineau, vol. ii., p. 186.

† "Westminster Review," April 1858, p. 310.

*undeniable grounds* the very principle so long denounced by the first naturalists—the origination of new species by natural causes.” (p. 139.) Mr. Darwin himself, indeed, is very far from asserting that his hypothesis is “substantiated on undeniable grounds.” He fairly tells his reader the grave difficulty which weighs upon his system: “As on the theory of natural selection an interminable number of intermediate forms must have existed, linking together all the species in each group by gradations as fine as our present varieties, it may be asked, Why do we not see these linking forms all around us? . . . Why is not every geological formation charged with such links? Why does not every collection of fossil remains afford plain evidence of the gradation and mutation of the forms of life? We meet with no such evidence, and this is the most obvious and forcible of *the many objections* which may be urged against my theory. . . . I can answer these questions and grave objections only *on the supposition* that the geological record is far more imperfect than most geologists believe. . . . I have felt these difficulties far too heavily during many years to doubt their weight.”\* And thus, on Mr. Darwin’s own showing, “the origination of new species by natural causes,” so far from being “substantiated on undeniable grounds,” as Mr. Baden Powell asserts, amounts, at most, to an ingenious hypothesis which can *never be proved*. The result, which Mr. Darwin endeavours to establish, he states as follows:—“I believe that animals have descended from at most only four or five progenitors, and plants from an equal or lesser number. Analogy would lead me one step further, namely, to the belief

\* Pages 462—466.

that all animals and plants have descended from some one prototype. . . . Therefore I should infer from analogy that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form into which life was first breathed.”\*

iii. On Mr. Darwin's hypothesis, some unexplained origin of organic life is, apparently, taken for granted. On the other hand, setting out from principles not altogether different from those of Comte †, a “scientific explanation” of the origin of organic life is courageously advanced by the author of the work entitled “Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.” This “explanation,” as will presently be seen, Mr. Baden Powell seems disposed to accept. The author of the “Vestiges” rejects every manner of accounting for the beginning of things which is not susceptible of a “scientific explanation.” “It is not easy,” he writes, “to say what is presumed to be the mode of his [“the eternal Sovereign's”] operations. The ignorant believe the very hand of Deity to be at work. Amongst the learned, we hear of ‘creative fiats,’ ‘interferences,’ ‘interpositions of the creative energy,’ all of them very obscure phrases, apparently not susceptible of a scientific explanation, but all tending simply to this—that the work was done in a marvellous way, and not in the way of nature.”‡ And having offered arguments (*e. g.*, the production of the *Acarus Crossii*.)

\* “On the Origin of Species,” p. 484.

† Mr. Theodore Parker, when defining “material pantheism,” writes: “If I mistake not, M. Comte of Paris, and the anonymous author of the ‘Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation,’ with their numerous coadjutors, belong to that class.”—*Theism*, p. 106.

‡ “Vestiges,” 11th ed., p. 104.

in proof of the "simply natural origin of life upon our planet,"\* the author proceeds to inquire how that life might have passed on, in the natural order of things, through that double series of higher forms which terminates in dicotyledons and the mammalia, and has left the earth occupied by its present organisms. He suggests the following solution:—"Neither can it be irrational to suggest that embryonic development shadows forth the principle which was employed or followed by the Uncreated in filling the earth with the organic creatures by which it is inhabited." And from this "principle of progressive development" follows the author's conclusion: "Remembering these things, it does not seem, after all, a very immoderate hypothesis, that a *chemico-electric operation, by which germinal vesicles were produced*, was the first phenomenon in organic creation."† It is not suggested, however, whence proceeded the "chemico-electric operation."

This entire matter, the more closely it is examined, will be found to turn upon the single question: Is there, or is there not, a Being superior to nature, and its cause? Has the world, with its inhabitants,—has man, proceeded from the hand of a Creator; or are they the products of some unexplained process of "development," which starts from "the self-evolving powers of nature?" In a word, is the universe itself to be identified with God? There are some passages in Mr. Baden Powell's Essay which almost point to this conclusion. He writes: "The simple but grand truth of the law of conservation, and the stability of the heavenly motions, now well understood by all sound cosmical philosophers, is but the type of the *universal self-sustaining and self-*

\* "Vestiges," p. 123.

† *Ib.* p. 137—139.

*evolving powers which pervade all nature.*" (p. 134.) Mr. Darwin's work, he considers, "must soon bring about an entire revolution of opinion in favour of the grand principle of *the self-evolving powers of nature.*" (p. 139.) Mr. Baden Powell, moreover, appears to call in question the very idea of creation. "The first dissociation," he observes, "of the spiritual from the physical was rendered necessary by the palpable contradictions disclosed by astronomical discovery with the letter of Scripture." The discoveries of geology, he adds, the antiquity of the human race, "and *the rejection of the idea of 'creation'* have caused new advances in the same direction." (p. 129.) Further still:—he had just remarked that the real conclusion from Archbishop Whately's "Historic Doubts" is simply that "there is a rational solution, a real conformity to analogy and experience," in the case of "apparent wonders;" and that "the Bible narrative is no more properly miraculous than the marvellous exploits of Napoleon I.;" on which he adds, "Just a similar scepticism [similar, *i. e.*, to that of "a partially informed inquirer"] has been evinced by nearly all the first physiologists of the day, who have joined in rejecting the development theories of Lamarck, and the 'Vestiges;' and while they have strenuously maintained successive creations, have denied and denounced the asserted production of organic life by Messrs. Crosse and Weekes, and stoutly maintained the impossibility of spontaneous generation, on the alleged ground of contradiction to experience. Yet it is now acknowledged under the high sanction of the name of Owen, that 'creation' is only another name for our ignorance of the mode of production." (p. 139.)

One naturally turns to Professor Owen's address to



the British Association, to which reference is here made, in order to compare the real meaning of his words with the singular application of them in the passage just quoted. Speaking of the "endeavours to determine whether, and how many, distinct creations of plants and animals have taken place;" and having referred to "the submerged tracts that once joined what now are islands to continents," Professor Owen adds: "These phenomena shake our confidence in the conclusion that the apteryx of New Zealand, and the red-grouse of England, were distinct creations in and for those islands respectively. Always, also, it may be well to bear in mind that by the word 'creation' *the zoologist* means 'a process he knows not what.' Science has not yet ascertained the secondary causes that operated when 'the earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after its kind'. . . . And supposing both the fact and the whole process of the so-called 'spontaneous generation' of a fruit-bearing tree, or of a fish, were scientifically demonstrated, we should still retain as strongly the idea, which is the chief of the 'mode' or 'group of ideas' we call 'creation,' viz. that the process was ordained by, and had originated from, an all-wise and powerful First Cause of all things."\*

This assuredly is not what one would have collected from Mr. Baden Powell's interpretation of the remarks of Professor Owen. From those remarks we simply learn that the scientific naturalist must pause when he has reached the end of his tether, — the observation of facts, and the results to be deduced from physical laws. But Professor Owen does not leave us in any doubt as to his own opinion respecting creation. He

\* "Report of the British Association," Leeds, 1858, p. xc.

speaks of "the axiom of the continuous operation of creative power, or of the ordained becoming of living things." "Not a species of a fish," he tells us, "that now lives, but has come into being during a comparatively recent period;" and he thus enunciates the conclusion resulting from the most advanced scientific research: "Geology demonstrates that the creative force has not deserted this earth during any of her epochs of time; and that in respect to no one class of animals has the manifestation of that force been limited to one epoch." \*

In no instance, however, in which man has attempted to ascend from the present state of things to a more ancient condition, has he ever been able to arrive at a beginning which is homogeneous with the known course of events. The primitive state of things remains, and probably ever will remain, undetermined, however near the origin we may seem to ascend. Between us and any intelligible beginning of things, not merely an interruption, but an abyss interposes itself. In every inquiry as to the original condition of things, the course of investigation, followed backwards as far as our materials allow us to pursue it, ends at last in impenetrable gloom. "The strain of music from the lyre of science," writes Dr. Whewell, "flows on rich and sweet, full and harmonious, but never reaches a close: no cadence is heard with which the intellectual ear can feel satisfied." †

In this darkness, or this light of science — call it which we please — revelation comes in: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." From this point of time, which Scripture and science alike

\* "Report," p. li.

† "Indications of the Creator," p. 163.

call "the beginning," that order, that system of physical laws which we term "the course of nature" takes its rise. Now, as has been already stated, a miracle, in its very notion, is relative to a course of nature, and implies something different from it considered as being so. At "the beginning," however, there was either no course of nature, or, if there were, we do not know what the course of nature is at such epochs. Any question, therefore, as to what then took place—whether physical phenomenon or spiritual revelation—is to be considered, not as a question concerning a *miracle*, but as a question concerning an ordinary matter of fact of the same antiquity, and, like it, to be established by *historical evidence*:—such a question, for example, as what part of the earth was first peopled? Bearing in mind, therefore, what science has established on the subject of creation, it is manifest that at "the beginning," when man was first placed on this earth, there was a power exerted—call it miraculous or not\*—totally different from the present course of nature. Now whether this power, thus wholly different from the present course of nature, stopped at this point, or went on and exerted itself further, is again to be regarded as a question concerning an ordinary matter of fact; of the same kind, *e. g.*, as the question whether any ordinary power exerted itself in such a particular degree and manner, or not. In other words, any sub-

\* See Butler, "Analogy," part ii., ch. 2. In like manner Aquinas, in his commentary on the Second Book of "The Sentences," considers that the creation cannot, in strict propriety of language, be regarded as miraculous; it is deficient, he observes, in one condition of the miracle: "Quamvis enim causam occultam habeat, tamen non est in re unde aliter esse deberet, immo esse rerum naturali quodam ordine a primo ente producitur, quamvis non per necessitatem naturæ."—*Dist. xviii.*, qu. i., art. 3, t. x., p. 259.

sequent manifestation of supernatural agency is but the reappearance of the original creative power, penetrating, as it were, the veil of nature, and adjusting anew the destiny of the world. In this light, the Bible itself — the only chronicle of the first creation — represents the miracles of which it is the record. Miracles are not placed in Scripture among the ordinary sequences which flow from natural causes; they are spoken of as events which result, at certain periods of time, from a new interposition of the First Cause,—as events which are *preter-natural*, and to be ascribed to a *super-natural* power. They become themselves *new centres*, as it were, of creation, from which new epochs date; when by means of single, visible, acts of creative power, elements absolutely new are introduced among the ordinary sequences of events. Thus, Jehovah tells Moses: “Behold I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as *have not been done* [Heb. *created*] in all the earth.”\* In a passage of Isaiah, the fact is insisted upon that such proofs of power are not to be collected from experience: “I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are *created* now, and not from the beginning . . . lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.”† Jeremiah employs the same terms when announcing the great miracle of the Incarnation: “The Lord *hath created a new thing* in the earth.”‡ In the New Testament, the Christian dispensation is repeatedly spoken of as “the new creation.”§ This principle has been expressed, with his usual force, by Lord Bacon. He compares the

\* Exod. xxxiv. 10; cf. Numb. xvi. 30. † Isai. xlvi. 6, 7.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 22.

§ *E. g.*, 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; Rev. xxi. 5.

miracles of our Lord with the original work of creation: "Omne miraculum est nova creatio, et non ex lege primæ creationis."\*

Such, then, is the real aspect under which the miracles, on which the Christian religion rests, must be regarded. The Being to whom the universe owes its origin, did not withdraw His presence at the moment when He ordained that system and order which constitute what men call "the laws of nature." When the influence of "secondary causes" commenced, the influence of the First Cause was not for ever banished from the world of matter. With "secondary causes" alone, is natural science concerned. If we refer to any work of authority on the inductive method, this proposition is laid down as a first principle. "When I speak of the cause of any phenomenon," writes Mr. Mill, "I do not mean a cause which is not itself a phenomenon. I make no research into the ultimate or ontological cause of anything. . . . The only notion of a cause which the theory of induction requires, is such a notion as can be gained from experience."† One of the leading lines of argument, therefore, adopted by Mr. Baden Powell against miracles, is, as regards the Christian position, altogether inconclusive. In the first place, as if the "causes" with which the natural philosopher has to deal were not (as Mr. Mill points out) themselves "phenomena," like the "physical facts" which are the object of his investigation, — Mr. Baden Powell seems to regard these "causes" as a sort of absolutely unchangeable, self-existing forces. "The entire range of the inductive philosophy," he observes, "is based upon

\* "Meditatt. Sacræ;" he is comparing the text S. Mark vii. 37, with Gen. i. 31. See Trench, "Notes on the Miracles," p. 37.

† "A System of Logic," 4th ed., vol. i., p. 359.

. . . the grand truth of the universal order and constancy of natural causes, as a primary law of belief; so strongly entertained and fixed in the mind of every truly inductive inquirer, that he cannot *even conceive* the possibility of its failure." (p. 109.) He speaks of "the *inconceivableness* of *imagined* interruptions of natural order, or supposed suspensions of the laws of matter, and of that vast series of dependent causation which constitutes the legitimate field for the investigation of science." (p. 110.)

The "natural causes" and the "natural order" here spoken of are confessedly those on which the theory of induction, according to Mr. Mill, is built; the "causes" being neither *ultimate* nor *ontological*. Of such causes Mr. Baden Powell strangely asserts that an "*imagined* interruption" of them is *inconceivable* — meaning, perhaps, *impossible*. This, however, would only be true on the supposition either that there was no Author of nature at all, or that the Author of nature, admitted to exist, had renounced all power over the matter which He had created. Neither of these alternatives has been *demonstrated* by Mr. Baden Powell: — indeed, the presumption is that he did not hold either to be true. The conclusion, therefore, which implies that either of them is true, falls to the ground.

But, secondly, from first to last, he argues as if miracles were to be considered *purely* as "physical facts." "Intellect and philosophy are compelled to disown the recognition of anything in the world of matter at variance with the first principles of the laws of matter." (p. 127.) "The more knowledge advances, the more it has been, and will be, acknowledged that Christianity, as a real religion, must be viewed apart from connection with *physical things*." (p. 128.) "The

particular case of miracles, as such, is one specially bearing on *purely physical considerations*, and on which no general moral principles, no common rules of evidence or logical technicalities, can enable us to form a correct judgment. It is not a question which can be decided by a few trite and common-place generalities as to the moral government of the world, and the belief in the divine Omnipotence—or as to the validity of human testimony, or the limits of human experience. It involves, and is essentially built upon, those grander conceptions of the order of nature, those comprehensive primary elements of *all* physical knowledge, those *ultimate ideas of universal causation*, which can only be familiar to those thoroughly versed in cosmical philosophy in its widest sense." (p. 133.) It is true that the miracles to which the Christian religion appeals, are facts perceived by the senses; and so far, speaking loosely, they may be called *physical facts*,—although, from what has been already said, it must appear that, as understood by Christians, miracles possess a significance widely different from "purely physical considerations." But when Mr. Baden Powell insists upon "the paramount dominion of the rule of law and order, of universal subordination of physical causes, as the sole principle and criterion of proof and evidence in the region of physical and sensible truth" (p. 138), he confines himself to a region with which miracles have nought to do. By their very definition they stand apart, not only from what he chooses to call "physical causes," but also from the phenomena on which the inductive philosopher builds his system of law. To employ the principles of induction, as commonly understood, when treating of the miraculous evidence of Christianity is, therefore, simply irrelevant. To do so

is to adapt rules collected from observing the natural sequence of events: to phenomena of which the fundamental idea is that they do not belong to the natural sequence of events; it is the application of what Mr. Baden Powell calls "cosmical philosophy in its widest sense," to test facts with which "cosmical philosophy" has absolutely nothing in common.

On the subject of *causes* he again writes: "In an age of physical research like the present, all highly cultivated minds and duly advanced intellects have imbibed, more or less, the lessons of the inductive philosophy, and have, at least in some measure, learned to appreciate the grand foundation conception of universal law—to recognise the impossibility . . . of any modification whatsoever in the existing conditions of material agents, unless through the invariable operation of a series of *eternally impressed consequences* following in some *necessary* chain of orderly connection,—however imperfectly known to us." (p. 133.) And once more: "In nature and from nature, by science and by reason, we neither have, nor can possibly have, any evidence of a Deity working miracles; for that we must go out of nature and beyond science.\* If we could have any such evidence from nature it could only prove extraordinary natural effects, which would not be miracles in the old theological sense, as isolated, unrelated, and *uncaused*; whereas no physical fact can be *conceived* as unique, or without analogy and relation to others, and to the whole system of natural causes." (p. 142.) But one meaning can be attached to the assertion either of "a series of eternally impressed consequences;" or of "miracles in the old theological sense" being "uncaused." Each assertion is in harmony, it is true, with

\* In first edition, "beyond reason."



some form of materialism, and with the denial of a Personal God; but it is impossible to reconcile either with principles which one gladly traces elsewhere in Mr. Baden Powell's Essay. Thus, he speaks of "the grand conclusions of natural theology" (p. 110); and he notices how the "broader views of physical truth and universal order in nature" prevalent in the present age, "point to the acknowledgment of an overruling and all-pervading supreme intelligence." (p. 127.) But how, on such principles, he can speak of "self-evolving powers which pervade all nature;" or of "a series of eternally impressed consequences;" or of miracles, when ascribed (as at all times by "theologians") to God's interposition, being "uncaused?" is a question to which no reply can be given. It cannot be too often repeated that the Christian argument, at each stage, reverts to the foundation of all religion; namely, that there exists "an intelligent Author of nature, and natural Governor of the world."

§ VIII.—*Miracles may occur according to "Law."*

THE truth seems to be that Mr. Baden Powell has been unconsciously led to deviate from the conclusions of natural theology, by his singular estimate of the *order* of material nature, and of the universality of *law*. His reasoning on this subject appears to assume that our globe stands in no relation to the rest of the universe. His distinction between *religion* and *physical things* (p. 128), rests upon the supposition that this world forms no part of any greater scheme; that it is a system eternally complete in itself, and admitting no interference from a higher power. If we believe in a Personal God, the laws of nature mean His arrange-

ments, and nothing more. "The expression, laws of nature," writes Mr. Mill, "means nothing but the uniformities which exist among natural phenomena, when reduced to their simplest expression."\* That miracles themselves may be reduced to some law more general than the laws which regulate the course of nature, has been allowed by the most thoughtful writers on Christian evidences. Bishop Butler considers it "supposable and credible, that God's miraculous interpositions may have been, all along, by *general* laws of wisdom."† "It would be a shortness of thought, scarce credible," he writes elsewhere, "to imagine that no system or course of things can be *natural*, but only what we see at present. . . . Nor is there any absurdity in supposing that there may be beings in the universe whose capacities, and knowledge, and views, may be so extensive as that the whole Christian dispensation may to them appear *natural*, *i. e.*, analogous or conformable to God's dealings with other parts of His creation; as *natural* as the visible known course of things appears to us."‡ From this point of view, *e. g.*, he argues "that the future punishments of wickedness may be in the way of *natural* consequence," that is, that they are to come to pass by "His doing who is the God of nature."§ And again: "That the affairs of the world, being permitted to go on in their natural course so far, should, just at such a point, have a new direction given them by miraculous interpositions . . . this may have been by general laws."||

Mr. Baden Powell, indeed, in one place (p. 109) remarks that a miracle "is asserted to mean something

\* "A System of Logic," 4th ed., vol. i., p. 349.

† "Analogy," part ii., ch. iv.

§ *Ib.* part ii., ch. 5.

‡ *Ib.* part i., ch. 1.

|| *Ib.* ch. 4.

*at variance with nature and law."* But does not that very science to which he so constantly appeals, afford hints as to the existence, under God's government of the universe, of some higher law which transcends all that experience can teach us? This earth during unknown periods passed through a course of discipline, as it were, to fit it for the habitation of man. The fossil remains, by which the geologist determines the age of his strata, have been termed medals struck by nature to record the epochs of her history. A new era now commences. The human epoch of the earth's history is different from all the preceding epochs. And whatever answer may be given to the question, How long has this state of things endured? the wildest imagination cannot suggest that corals and madrepores, oysters and sepias, fishes and lizards, may have been rational and moral creatures; nor even those creatures which come nearer to human organisation — the megatherium and the mastodon, extinct deer and elephants.\* The "creative force" thus exerted at what we call "the beginning" of the human epoch, seems now to have paused; and the question as to its subsequent exercise, on certain occasions, under the form of miracles, is the subject of our present discussion. Frequent though the instances of miracles recorded in Scripture seem to be, still, if the narrative be examined closely, they will be found grouped round those epochs which, in the history of the Jewish and Christian religions, are also "beginnings." Compare, *e. g.*, the series of miracles displayed between the bondage in Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, with their comparatively rare occurrence during the period from Samuel to Malachi. This

\* See the work entitled "Of the Plurality of Worlds," ch. vi.

latter was the age of prophecy. After Malachi, miracles and prophecy alike cease; to be succeeded by the final and grander manifestation of both at the epoch of the Incarnation.

This fact has not escaped the notice of Bishop Butler: "It is an acknowledged historical fact," he observes, "that Christianity offered itself to the world and demanded to be received upon the allegation, *i. e.*, as unbelievers would speak, under the pretence, of miracles, *publicly* wrought to attest the truth of it, in such an age. . . . And Christianity, including the dispensation of the Old Testament, seems distinguished by this from all other religions."\* In the later history, indeed, of other religions, when personal ambition and political interests have become blended with religious claims and religious distinctions, alleged miracles have been brought forward in *confirmation*. But this is not a parallel case. It is *peculiar* to the Christian religion that it should have been originally offered to the world, upon the allegation of *public miracles* wrought in order to attest its truth. Whenever, indeed, any pretence to a *revelation* is made, there must be *some* pretence of miracles, for any revelation by its very idea is miraculous: *e. g.*, Mohammedans bring forward the Koran as a divine revelation †; but it is matter of history that their religion was originally propagated, not by miracles, but by other means. Accordingly, when challenged to produce the miracles by which their prophet proved his claim to be a divine messenger, Mohammedans still reply, as in Mohammed's own day — the Koran is itself the greatest of miracles. ‡

\* "Analogy," part ii., ch 7.

† See the Koran, chaps. xiii. and xvii.

‡ As Mr. Baden Powell gives no reference, one is at a loss to

Under this point of view, therefore, no Christian apologist will resign the claim of miracles to form part of a grand scheme of order and law. He, too, will assert this principle with no less earnestness than Mr. Baden Powell. Such manifestations of creative power, he will maintain, are made according to law; but according to laws as much transcending those which God permits us to infer from the phenomena of nature, as His thoughts surpass our thoughts, or as eternity surpasses time.

§ IX. — *How are Miracles to be proved?*

THE abstract arguments, indeed, against miracles have no force, as soon as the doctrine of a Creator and supreme Governor of the world is admitted. There can be no longer any question as to the existence of a cause *adequate* to their production. The question now is, whether God *has* worked miracles? What proof have we of the existence, at any period, of phenomena different from those presented by the ordinary succession of natural causes and effects? Let the point at which we have arrived in this discussion be borne in

know his authority for stating that when Henry Martyn was among the Persian Mohammedans, "they believed readily all that he told them of the Scripture miracles, but directly paralleled them by wonders of their own." (p. 118.) In the "Memoir of the Rev. H. Martyn" (2nd ed., 1819), however, the statement made in the text is abundantly confirmed. The chief Moollah of the Persians tells him: "We desire you to look at the great Koran; that is an everlasting miracle." (p. 387.) And more than once, Martyn presses upon them the fact that Mohammed had performed no miracles,— see p. 385. For an account of a curious attempt of the Mohammedans in India to meet the argument founded on their not being able to appeal to miracles, see the "Colonial Church Chronicle," vol. vii., p. 374.

mind for a moment. Three facts have been appealed to:—the world around us, the existence of the Jews as a distinct people, and the existence of Christianity as the religion of civilised man. The principle which necessarily impels the human mind to seek for some cause of every phenomenon that begins to exist, combined with the failure of science to give any account of the origin of the world,—has led to the belief in One First Cause, the intelligent Author of nature, the Governor by whom the laws of nature have been imposed. From the very notion of a miracle, moreover, implying as it does a *relation* to some law of nature from which it differs, we have seen that there is no presumption against a miracle at that point of time when those laws were *first* established, and before any inference to the contrary could be drawn from their permanence, and their regularity. The question remains: Is there any presumption against miracles *after* that time?—after, that is, the ordinary course of nature has been fixed, and its laws have come into operation. This is the next step in the argument; and that this inquiry is strictly practical, appears from the existence of the second and third of the three facts to which reference has been made. The establishment of the Jewish and Christian religions is a matter of historical fact; and the documents which record that establishment appeal to miracles, as evidence that both religions have proceeded from the same First Cause to which nature owes its origin. Now these miracles are a satisfactory account of the origin of Judaism, and of the origin of Christianity, of which events “no other satisfactory account can be given, nor any account at all, but what is imaginary merely, and invented.”\* It has been also

\* Butler, “Analogy,” part ii., ch. 7.

noticed that the miracles related in the Bible are placed on the same footing as historical facts. This characteristic of Scripture not only exhibits how its several writers regarded miracles as an essential element of their narratives, but also lets us clearly see what the alternative is which the rejection of miracles involves. With the historical truth of miracles Christianity stands or falls; and that historical truth is to be established by the same proofs by which other alleged facts of history are established, namely, by human testimony.

Mr. Baden Powell writes: "The one topic constantly insisted on as essential to the grounds of belief, considered as based on outward historical evidence, is that of the credibility of external facts as supported by testimony." All "evidential writers," he adds, "in the representations which they constantly make," exhibit "a strong apparent tendency and desire to uphold the mere assertion of witnesses as the supreme evidence of fact, to the utter disparagement of all general grounds of reasoning, analogy, and antecedent credibility, by which that testimony may be modified or discredited." (p. 131.) The inquiry, therefore, here parts into two branches:—(1.) Is the antecedent presumption against miracles so strong that no evidence can establish their truth? (2.) What is the value of human testimony in inquiries of this nature?

### § X.—*The Credibility of Miracles.*

ON the former of these questions, apart from the subject of testimony, something has been already said, when attention was directed to Mr. Baden Powell's statement that miracles are purely physical facts, without any reference either to their supernatural cause, or

their spiritual significance. This statement receives curious illustration from the manner in which he seeks to uphold the antecedent incredibility of miracles, despite all testimony to their reality. Having spoken, in terms of studied disdain, of "redoubtable champions" who, as an "argument for miraculous interposition," have "actually revived" "the peripatetic dogma," informing us that "'the whole of nature is like a mill, which cannot go on without the continual application of a moving power!'" and having referred to "would-be philosophers" who adduce the mistakes into which others "have fallen in prematurely denying what experience has since fully shown to be true,"—he observes in a note: "Numerous instances of the kind referred to will be found cited in Mr. R. Chambers's 'Essay on Testimony,' Edinburgh Papers, 1859; and in Archbishop Whately's edition of Paley's 'Evidences.'" (p. 135.) The various instances which Mr. Baden Powell then proceeds to accumulate, from page 135 to page 138—namely, the crocodile, the sea-serpent, the marvels of Marco Polo, the hovering angel at Milan, the spires of Plausac, and others,—are all taken from the Essay of Mr. Chambers. Few readers, unacquainted with the contents of that Essay, could, perhaps, conjecture its real object from the nature of the reference to the names of "Hallam and Rogers" which occurs at page 137; nor would the next citation from it be likely to render the matter clearer. Having alleged that miracles "are at present among the main difficulties and hindrances" to the acceptance of Christianity, Mr. Baden Powell proceeds: "One of the first inductive philosophers of the age, Professor Faraday, has incurred the unlimited displeasure of *these* profound intellectualists, because he has urged that the mere con-



tracted experience of the senses is liable to deception. . . . In opposition to this heretical proposition, *they* [the sole reference in the note is to Mr. Chambers] set in array the dictum . . . that ‘on a certain amount of testimony we might believe any statement, however improbable.’” (p. 140.) The reader may not be prepared to learn that Mr. Chambers—whose object Mr. Baden Powell thus identifies with that of writers on Christian evidences—is simply engaged in replying to the arguments of Professor Faraday against “the delusion of table-moving,” “clairvoyance” and “mesmerism.”\* Mr. Chambers, it is true,—and how far he is herein respectful to Christianity is another question,—endeavours to support table-turning and mesmerism by the analogy of miracles. His argument is, that “if miracles are violations or interruptions of the course of nature, and yet can be proved by human testimony, much more are we entitled to receive, upon human testimony, facts extraordinary, *but not supposed to be, or set forth as, discrepant in any way from the course of nature.*”† With respect to the instances which he quotes from Mr. Chambers, Mr. Baden Powell asks: “What do they prove, except the real and paramount dominion of the rule of law and order, of universal subordination of physical causes, as the sole principle and criterion of proof and evidence in the region of physical and sensible truth?” (p. 138.) But this is precisely the object for which Mr. Chambers brings these instances forward; while the use of them by Mr. Baden Powell is rendered still more strange by his own repeated assertion that miracles are *not* analogous facts. Mr. Chambers had quoted them to prove that mesmerism *may* yet be discovered to

\* “Observations on Mental Education,” pp. 54, 83.

† Edinburgh Papers, “Testimony,” p. 22.

be a natural law; but Mr. Baden Powell expressly rejects this hypothesis as an explanation of the Christian miracles. "There are still," he writes, "some who dwell on the idea of Spinoza, and contend that it is idle to object to miracles as *violations* of natural laws, because we know not the extent of nature. . . . Such are the arguments of those who have failed to grasp the positive scientific idea of the powers of the inductive philosophy, or the order of nature. . . . *There is not the slightest analogy* between an unknown or inexplicable phenomenon and a *supposed suspension of a known law*. . . . Arbitrary interposition is wholly different in kind; no argument from the one can apply to the other." (p. 109.) In fact, Mr. Baden Powell's argument, founded on his views of "order and law," at last amounts simply to this: Every alleged fact which does not proceed from "physical causes" established in nature, is incredible — or, as he sometimes says, inconceivable; miracles are facts of this kind; therefore, miracles are incredible. "The philosopher," he asserts, "denies *the credibility* of alleged events professedly, in their nature, *at variance with* all physical analogy." (p. 135.) Nay, he excludes the comparison between miracles and "the most seemingly improbable events in human history," on the grounds that "no such cases would have the remotest applicability to alleged *violations* of the laws of matter, or interruptions of the course of physical causes." (p. 132.)

In thus describing miracles by the phrase "alleged *violations* of the laws of matter," Mr. Baden Powell expressly adopts the principle of Hume's argument. He refers, indeed, to Hume's name but once, where that writer's "celebrated Essay" is incidentally mentioned (p. 104); but it is manifest that the idea of

that Essay underlies all Mr. Baden Powell's reasoning. Hume's fundamental proposition is this:—"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."\*

The definition here given of a miracle,—namely, that it is "a violation of the laws of nature,"—constitutes, as the most acute of his critics have seen, the grand fallacy of Hume's argument. In order to maintain this position, no power can be supposed to exist in the universe except that with which the abstraction termed *nature* is assumed to be endowed. Every phenomenon, past, present, or future, must be supposed to result from certain forces eternally and necessarily inherent in the material world. Such a creed, by whatever name it may be called, denies the existence of an Author of nature; and, as has been already observed, the arguments, to which this creed supplies the foundation, may be dismissed from the present discussion. Admitting, therefore, that there exists a Being by whom the world was formed, to deny the *possibility* of His operating again on certain occasions, in order to vary the usual course of events, must be looked upon as in the highest degree unphilosophical;—whatever opinion may be held as to the *probability* of such an interposition. That God has once operated, the whole universe which is the result of that operation shows. As He operated then, He *may* operate again. To affirm that the Deity has interposed in those variations from ordinary events called miracles,

\* "Of Miracles," part i.

is merely to affirm that a new cause, or antecedent, has been introduced among the ordinary causes to the assemblage of which we give the name of the course of nature. The error of Hume, observes Dr. Thomas Brown, lies “not in any miscalculation of the force of general testimony,” but “far deeper, in the false definition of a miracle which he has given as ‘a violation of the laws of nature.’ . . . . The laws of nature surely are not *violated* when a new antecedent is followed by a new consequent; they are violated only when, the antecedent being exactly the same, a different consequent is the result.” The asserters of a miracle do not contend “that when the extraordinary event which they term miraculous happened, the previous circumstances were the same as at other times when no such event was consequent. . . . On the contrary, they contend that the difference of the effect—as proved by the evidence of their senses, or of indubitable testimony, in the same way as the truth of any other rare phenomenon is established—implies an extraordinary cause. . . . If, indeed, the asserter of a miracle had to combat with an atheist, it would be impossible for him to obviate the force of the abstract negative argument, till he had previously established the truth of the first principles of Theism.” But if the existence of the Deity be admitted, the evidence of His asserted agency is to be regarded in the same manner as the evidence of any other extraordinary event that is supposed to have resulted from any other new combination of physical circumstances. We surely cannot think ourselves justified in rejecting that evidence altogether, “because the physical power to whose agency the extraordinary event is sup-

posed to bear witness, is the greatest of all the powers of nature.”\*

On this reasoning of Brown, Mr. Mill, than whom there can be no more unexceptionable authority in this particular case, observes: “A miracle (as was justly remarked by Brown) is no contradiction to the law of cause and effect; it is a new effect, supposed to be produced by the introduction of a new cause. Of the adequacy of that cause, if present, there can be no doubt; and the only antecedent improbability which can be ascribed to the miracle, is the improbability that any such cause existed.”† No evidence, adds Mr. Mill, can prove a miracle to any one who did not previously believe the existence of a Being possessed of *supernatural* power. And even admitting the existence of such a Being, the alternative of an unknown *natural* agency remains; for, with the knowledge which we now possess of the general uniformity of the course of nature, there is an antecedent *improbability* in every miracle. This alternative, however, of “an unknown *natural* agency” by which the alleged miracle may have been effected, need not be examined here:—it has been seen that Mr. Baden Powell distinctly rejects this explanation.‡ The only matter,

\* “On the Relation of Cause and Effect,” Note E.

† “A System of Logic,” 4th ed., vol. ii., p. 159.

‡ With reference to this hypothetical explanation, Archbishop Whately observes, in his pointed manner:—“It would be shorter to say at once, that we cannot believe any fact of ancient history, because something may be discovered hereafter to refute the truth of it — or that we cannot believe any man to be honest, because he may turn out a rogue — or, indeed, trust any moral evidence, because all moral evidence leaves a *possibility* of the fact being otherwise.”—*Notes on Paley’s Evidences*, p. 31.

therefore, that remains to be considered before the question of testimony is introduced is this, — Does the antecedent *improbability* of miracles amount to so high a degree as to render it futile to adduce testimony in their favour? This question Mr. Baden Powell endeavours to evade. His chief argument throughout has been to remove miracles from the class of things which are merely *improbable*; and to represent them as being absolutely *inconceivable*. The importance of this distinction was insisted upon at an early stage of the present remarks. What is *improbable* may be proved to be true; of what is *inconceivable* man can form no notion at all. The instance already quoted, in which Mr. Baden Powell has interchanged these ideas, will illustrate the effect of this confusion. He compares the proposition, that “on a certain amount of testimony we might believe any statement however *improbable*,” with the following: “If a number of respectable witnesses were to concur in asseverating that on a certain occasion they had seen two and two make five, we should be bound to believe them.” (p. 141.) This latter proposition, however, relates to what is *inconceivable*; and does not admit of being even compared with the former. With the antecedent *improbability* alone of miracles are we now concerned. The argument, accordingly, will run as follows: —

The laws of the human mind are among the laws of nature. By those laws, men believe, on very slight *positive* proof, facts against which there had been very strong antecedent presumption. Let this antecedent presumption against some fact increase to any certain extent,—to that extent, suppose, which some fancy the *peculiar* presumption against miracles amounts to — and the case remains manifestly unaltered, provided,

at the same time, the *positive* proof for the fact increase in the same proportion. The only question, therefore, as to miracles is, whether their antecedent improbability amounts to such a *degree* as to render them absolutely incapable of proof, and *incredible*; and to show that this is *not* the case, has been the chief object of the foregoing pages. In a word, to quote again the proposition which Paley's strong common sense pointed out to him as the key to the solution, and which Mr. Mill allows to be a valid answer to Hume, "Once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not *incredible*."

Bishop Butler states this argument in the following form:—"There is a very strong presumption against common speculative truths, and against the most ordinary facts, *before the proof of them*; which yet is overcome by almost any proof. There is a presumption of millions to one against the story of Cæsar, or of any other man. For, suppose a number of common facts so and so circumstanced, of which one had no kind of proof, should happen to come into one's thoughts; every one would, without any possible doubt, conclude them to be false. And the like may be said of a single common fact. And from hence it appears that the question of importance, as to the matter before us, is concerning *the degree* of the peculiar presumption supposed against miracles; not whether there be any peculiar presumption at all against them. For, if there be the presumption of millions to one against the most common facts, what can a small presumption, additional to this, amount to, though it be peculiar? It cannot be estimated, and is as nothing. The only material question is, whether there be any such presumption against miracles, as to render them in any sort *incredible*."\*

\* "Analogy," part ii., ch. 2.

As the validity of this reasoning has been questioned, it is necessary to pause for a moment in order to examine the force of the objection.

Bishop Fitzgerald, in his notes on the "Analogy," observes: "Mr. Mill has, I think, correctly pointed out the mistake here made by Butler.\* . . . 'The mistake consists in overlooking the distinction between (what may be called) improbability before the fact, and improbability after it; two different properties, the latter of which is always a ground of disbelief; the former is so or not, as it may happen. . . . In the cast of a perfectly fair die the chances are five to one against throwing ace; that is, ace will be thrown on an average only once in six throws. But this is no reason against believing that ace was thrown on a given occasion, if any credible witness asserts it; since, although ace is only thrown once in six times, *some* number which is only thrown once in six times *must* have been thrown, if the die was thrown at all. The improbability, then, or, in other words, the unusualness, of any fact, is no reason for disbelieving it, if the nature of the case *renders it certain that either that or something equally improbable*, that is, equally unusual, did happen. . . . We are told that A. B. died yesterday: the moment before we were so told, the chances against his having

\* It may be noted, in passing, that Mr. Mill does not himself, at least directly, urge this objection against Bishop Butler. He speaks of "a very serious misapprehension of the subject" on the part of "Dr. Campbell and others" when writing against "Hume's Essay on Miracles." Now the "Analogy" first appeared in the year 1736; Hume's Essays were not published till 1742; and the first edition of Dr. Campbell's reply appeared in 1762. Dr. Campbell, no doubt, quotes this argument of Bishop Butler; but Mr. Mill does not refer to the "Analogy."



died on that day may have been ten thousand to one; but since he was certain to die at some time or other, and when he died must necessarily die on some particular day, while the chances are innumerable against every day in particular, experience affords no ground for discrediting any testimony which may be produced to the events having taken place on a given day.'"\*

Without stopping to examine how far these remarks have force against Dr. Campbell's argument †, it is clear that Mr. Mill's criticism is inapplicable to the reasoning of Bishop Butler. So far is Bishop Butler from ignoring the distinction between "probability before and after the fact," or, as he expresses himself with greater precision, "before and after *the proof*,"—that his whole argument proceeds upon its recognition. The two instances selected by Mr. Mill are, indeed, as he states, "things in strict conformity to the usual course of experience," "the chances" merely being against them; but they are not in the least analogous to the instances on which Bishop Butler founds his proposition. The great difference is, that we do know all the chances in the one case, and that we do not know all the chances in the other. There are but six sides to the die; the chances, therefore, are but five to one against ace, at any throw. The years of human life cannot exceed a definite number,

\* See Bishop Fitzgerald's edition of the "Analogy," p. 184.

† Dr. Campbell gives the following instance:—"I have lived for some years near a ferry. It consists with my knowledge that the passage-boat has a thousand times crossed the river, and as many times returned safe. An unknown man, whom I have just now met, tells me in a serious manner that it is lost; and affirms that he himself standing on the bank was a spectator of the scene. . . . Must I set the thousand, or rather the two thousand, instances of the one side, against the single instance of the other?"—*Dissertation*, p. 21.

to which we can approximate within moderate limits\* ; but the probability of the events on which the argument of the "Analogy" depends, cannot be thus estimated. The history of Cæsar, or of any other man, or common facts, are matters incapable of being submitted to the calculus of probabilities. The events of human life present a variety to which no bounds can be set. What human calculation can make full allowance for the influence of human motives; or foresee all the possible outbursts of human passion; or reduce the contingencies of political change to the dominion of unvarying law? Mr. Baden Powell can evade this argument only by relying upon Hume's definition of a miracle. "The most seemingly improbable events," he writes, "in human history may be perfectly credible, on sufficient testimony, however contradicting ordinary experience of human motives and conduct, simply because we cannot assign any limits to the varieties of human dispositions, passions, or tendencies, or the extent to which they may be influenced by circumstances, of which, perhaps, we have little or no knowledge to guide us. *But* no such cases would have the remotest applicability to alleged *violations of the laws of matter*, or interruptions of the course of physical causes." (p. 132.) Even the "Positive Philosophy," which claims to have achieved some success in the application of its principles to history, speaks with modesty of what it professes to have hitherto accomplished.† It is a common remark

\* On this principle "the risk" in Life Insurances is calculated.

† The "Positive Philosophy," according to Mr. Mill, has "let in a flood of light upon the whole course of history." Under its guidance, "the more advanced thinkers" hold that we may proceed, "on Baconian principles," to look forward into the history of the human race, and to determine what artificial means may be used to acco-

that nothing ever falls out as one had previously anticipated; and the "common facts" of life are precisely those, that cannot be judged according to the principles on which Mr. Mill's objection to Dr. Campbell is based. The argument of Bishop Butler, therefore, remains unshaken. From the nature of human belief, all presumption against miracles—already shown not to be, in themselves, *incredible*—disappears in the face of suitable evidence, no matter how strong the antecedent probability may be against any deviation from the usual sequence of events.

It may be well to add the further considerations by which Bishop Butler reinforces his argument:—Leaving religion out of the question, we are in such total darkness as to everything upon which the present course of nature depends, that there does not seem to be any improbability *for* or *against* supposing that five or six thousand years may have given scope for occasions from whence miraculous interpositions may have arisen. There is, accordingly, a *greater* presumption against *particular* common facts,—in the case of which no such supposition can be made,—than against miracles *in general*, before any evidence of either. But if we take in the consideration of religion, then we see a distinct particular reason *for* miracles:—to afford mankind instruction additional to that of nature, and to attest the

lerate its natural progress as far as it is beneficial. (*A System of Logic*, vol. ii., p. 518.) Sir James Stephen ("Lectures on the History of France," 3rd ed., vol. i., p. 15) has happily illustrated the assumption on which Comte's view of history is founded, by the parable of "Agur the son of Jakeh." (Prov. xxx. 24—28.) The Almighty has laid open to our inspection the *laws* by which the polity of these "exceeding wise" people is conducted. Has any *such* disclosure of the *laws* which govern human actions been made to man?

truth of it. Nay, the comparison hitherto, of miracles to common natural events, has placed the argument at a needless disadvantage. The fair comparison would have been to the extraordinary phenomena of nature. And before one can determine whether there be any peculiar presumption against miracles, more than against other extraordinary things, one must consider what, *upon first hearing*, would be the presumption against the appearance of a comet, or of such a power in nature as electricity, to a person acquainted only with the daily course of nature respecting this earth, and with the common powers of matter.

#### § XI. — *Human Testimony.*

How then are miracles to be proved? The strangeness of such events, it is true, demands caution on the part of the inquirer, but does not, of itself, furnish counter-evidence. Still less does it entitle us to say that whatever evidence can be offered on the subject is unworthy of examination. That evidence is to be admitted or rejected, not simply as being evidence for *a miracle*, but as evidence which is, or is not, of weight sufficient, in itself, to establish the truth of the alleged facts in support of which it is adduced. We have thus arrived at the second branch of the inquiry suggested by Mr. Baden Powell's remarks already quoted (see page 65), as to the value of human testimony. Here Mr. Baden Powell appears to shift his ground, from the evidence for the *fact*, to the evidence for the *cause* of the fact. This he does twice, once towards the opening, and once towards the close of his Essay. The former of these passages is to the following effect:—The proposition "An event may be so incredible intrinsi-

cally as to set aside any degree of testimony," means merely this, "that, from the nature of our antecedent convictions, the probability of some kind of mistake or deception somewhere, though we know not where, is greater than the probability of the event really happening in the way, and *from the causes*, assigned. . . . What is alleged is a case of the supernatural; but no testimony can reach to the supernatural; testimony can apply only to apparent sensible facts; testimony can only prove an extraordinary and, perhaps, inexplicable occurrence or phenomenon: that it is due to *supernatural causes* is entirely dependent on the previous belief and assumptions of the parties." (p. 107.) On this passage it may be asked, what *testimony* can reach to *any* cause? or show the tie that unites the consequent to the antecedent? Assured, no matter how, of the reality of any occurrence, by a necessary law of thought, known as "the principle of causality," the human mind refers it to *some* cause. The reference, therefore, to *testimony* in this place is simply irrelevant. The second statement is: "Testimony, after all, is but a second-hand assurance; it is but a blind guide; testimony can avail nothing against reason.\* The *essential question* of miracles stands quite apart from any consideration of testimony: the question would remain the same, if we had the evidence of our own senses † to an alleged miracle, that is, to an extraordinary or inexplicable fact. It is not the

\* These words merely reflect a quotation (p. 123) from Mr. F. W. Newman:—"What is the value of 'faith at second-hand?'—Ought any external testimony to overrule internal conviction?" One can hardly regard such questions as serious.

† One scarcely knows how to explain the words, "if we had the evidence of our own senses."

mere fact, but the *cause* or explanation of it, which is the point at issue." (p. 141.) The meaning, perhaps, is this: "Testimony assures us that an event has taken place which must be referred either to a supernatural cause, or to some unknown natural cause. But a supernatural cause is not even *conceivable*; nor is there 'the slightest analogy between an unknown or inexplicable phenomenon and a supposed suspension of a known law.' (p. 109.) Therefore, testimony, in proof of a *miracle*, must be cast aside altogether." This argument, if valid, would overturn all natural science. It is an admitted principle that we know nothing of *causes* except by ascending from facts; while according to this reasoning we cannot admit a fact to be a fact until we have agreed as to its cause.

Mr. Baden Powell, indeed, regards testimony as of very subordinate importance. He seems to forget that testimony, as well as the trust which the human mind reposes in it, are alike *facts*. He tells us of "the great extent to which all testimony must be modified by antecedent credibility." (p. 112.) In a passage already quoted, having remarked that "evidential writers" insist on "the credibility of external facts as supported by testimony," he adds: "In the representations which they constantly make, we cannot but notice a strong apparent tendency and desire to uphold the mere assertion of witnesses as the supreme evidence of fact, to the utter disparagement of all general grounds of reasoning, analogy, and antecedent credibility, by which that testimony may be modified or discredited." (p. 131.) And he observes, with reference to the leading idea of his Essay, — viz. that the question of miracles is one "specially bearing on purely physical considerations," — that there has been "undue confusion between the

force of testimony in regard to human affairs, and events in history, and in regard to physical facts." (p. 132.)

Now, when such reliance is placed on the method of induction; when an appeal is so confidently made to the laws of the material world; when it is alleged, as the foundation of the argument against miracles, that they stand apart from that series of effects of which the causes are known to exist in nature;—it is left out of sight that there are also psychological laws, which induction has equally established, and that a deviation from the known laws of mind, is an event fully as extraordinary as a deviation from the known laws of matter. Of these psychological facts, none holds a higher rank than the fact that human testimony is received by mankind as a rational ground of assent. The practical conduct of life depends on our belief in the law that human testimony is trustworthy. According to a natural law, men distinguish between truth and falsehood; men are, in like manner, naturally endowed with the principle of veracity, or a regard to truth in what they say. There are exceptions, no doubt, to the universality of these laws. To what natural law are there not exceptions? According to the law of gravitation each planet should describe a perfect ellipse round the centre of force. The disturbing influences of the other planets meanwhile come into action; and produce perturbations and inequalities which often perplex the astronomer: and yet, each planet, in due course, returns to the same point in space, and completes its orbit round its primary. What would be thought of the philosopher who should argue that, in consequence of the perturbations which he may have failed to account for, the law of gravitation had failed? The attempt to call in question the law that human

testimony is trustworthy, is no less unphilosophical. Hume, for example, asserts that "there is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good-sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others;"\* and so forth. All of which amounts to saying that, if we choose to disbelieve any alleged fact, we can never be at a loss to assign some imperfection, real or supposed, in the evidence on which it rests, and so, can reject the evidence altogether. Let one or two of the imperfections, which are held to destroy the force of testimony in the case of miracles, be briefly considered: —

We are told that religion is peculiarly liable to enthusiasm, and that enthusiasm in such a case *weakens* the testimony even for facts. Now, it must be borne in mind that this observation is not peculiar to religion. In the affairs of ordinary life, testimony is affected by prejudice, by party spirit, by a desire to engage attention or to surprise. We do not, however, on account of such drawbacks, reject human testimony as a legitimate and natural ground of belief. We are also told that the first Christians, if not wholly, were partially, deceivers; and that such mixed characters are by no means uncommon. Such a criticism on mankind is, no doubt, just; and it may be observed, incidentally, that characters of this very kind are often described in Scripture, and that they are most severely reprov'd. But instances of such a constitution of mind are frequently to be met with in cases with which religion has nothing in common. Men are liable to be them-

\* "Of Miracles," part ii.



selves biassed and deceived; they are capable of intending to deceive others in every degree: and yet, human testimony remains a natural ground of assent; and this assent a natural principle of action. It is said, moreover, that for miracles now acknowledged to be fabulous there is a very considerable amount of historical evidence. But, admitting for the sake of argument, and on that account alone,—for the statement is not true,—that such miracles were vouched for by historical evidence equal to that for the miracles alleged in proof of Christianity, what would such an admission amount to? Not, surely, that the evidence for the Christian miracles is not to be believed. To draw such an inference would be “the same as to argue that if two men of equally good reputation had given evidence in different cases no way connected, and one of them had been convicted of perjury, this confuted the testimony of the other.”

Mr. Baden Powell enumerates many similar exceptions:—“the uncertainty in the transmission of testimony;” “the enormous influence exerted by our prepossessions previous to the event;” “prejudices;” the emotions caused at the time “by surprise and astonishment” (p. 106); “the possibility of misconception” of the tenor of testimony, “or of our not being in possession of all the circumstances on which a correct judgment can be formed” (p. 112). All such exceptions go to establish a single assertion, and nothing more:—they *weaken* the evidence of testimony in all cases, but they do not *destroy* it in any. If a witness, indeed, be not a correct judge of the facts to which he gives testimony; if, in giving that testimony, he can be proved, in the particular case, to have actually been under some indirect influence, his evi-

dence is destroyed. But till this be made out, the *natural* laws of human actions require that testimony be admitted." \*

In the foregoing pages it has been shown that miracles are not beyond the scope of testimony; and writers on the Evidences of Christianity have proved that the testimony which is adduced in support of them is of a character on which we may rely with the same confidence as on the course of nature itself. When Hume, therefore, penned his well-known objection, he left out of sight the existence of certain laws of the human mind, which are established by the same process of induction as the laws of the material world. "No testimony," he asserts, "is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish. And even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior." † It may be asserted with confidence, that to reject testimony altogether, in a particular case, for no other reason than that the facts attested cannot be traced to

\* Compare Butler, "Analogy," part ii., ch. 7.

† Hume's "argument respecting miracles," writes Archbishop Whately, "stated clearly, and in regular form, would stand thus: — Testimony is a kind of evidence very likely to be false: The evidence for the Christian miracles is testimony; Therefore it is likely to be false. Now it is plain that everything turns on the question whether what is meant be *all* testimony, or *some*. The former is what no one in his senses would maintain. . . . But if the meaning be *some* testimony, this is true enough, but involves a gross fallacy: '[Some] testimony is likely to be false; and the evidence for the Christian miracles is [some] testimony,' proves nothing." —Notes on Paley's Evidences, p. 33.

causes the existence of which we only know by observation and experience, would be to violate all the principles of just reasoning. Of course the entire question turns on the nature of the testimony. But when the testimony is such as that adduced in support of the Christian miracles, the paradox of Hume disappears. It may be safely maintained, that the falsehood of this evidence would be more miraculous than the very miracles which it endeavours to establish. The testimony of the first Christians was not merely testimony to a doctrine, which might deceive the understanding; or to a dream or vision, which might impose upon the imagination;—it was the testimony of eye-witnesses to a number of public and notorious facts, of which the senses had full opportunity to judge. If it be objected that strong evidence from testimony may exist for the truth of things which we are nevertheless convinced cannot be true,—*e.g.*, of things which we consider, whether justly or unjustly, to be incredible, or in cases where there is contrary testimony,—such an objection presents no difficulty here. For, in the first place, the assertion of the *incredibility* of the Christian miracles has been already disposed of; and, secondly, there exists no contrary testimony in the present instance.

On the subject of *contrary testimony*, however, the second clause in Hume's proposition just quoted, namely, that in the case of miracles there is, at best, but "a mutual destruction of arguments,"—requires one or two remarks. In striking the balance in such a case, due weight must be assigned to an important property of highly probable judgments. The favourable evidence for such judgments not only preponderates over, but utterly expels, the unfavourable, especially in matters where the moral nature is concerned. In cases

where we have *to act* on probabilities, adverse judgments must, when once we have made up our minds, be entirely ignored, "because to permit them the smallest influence would weaken and fetter our actions."\* Suppose a man tried for murder and found guilty on circumstantial evidence:—the verdict of the jury, on which a human life depends, is given after striking the balance between opposite probabilities. In this case, the probabilities *in favour of* the prisoner must have been altogether annihilated by the probabilities in support of his guilt. In a word, in cases where the evidence is circumstantial, if *any* doubt were felt to remain after the jury had agreed, justice could *never* carry such a verdict into execution. The supposition which Hume's argument requires is, indeed, altogether unpractical. "It is experience only," he observes, "which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but to subtract the one from the other."† It is, no doubt, *conceivable*—perhaps it would not be strictly correct to say that it is *impossible*—that an instance exactly corresponding to this supposition should ever actually occur. In such an instance there must be nothing to disturb the balance of evidence; the opposing witnesses must be really independent. But is such an instance in any degree probable? Some such case as the following—the example given by Paley is of this nature—must be assumed:—Suppose *four*, or *one hun-*

\* See Dr. Thomson's "Laws of Thought," 4th ed., p. 334.

† *Loc. cit.* The words, "when these two kinds of experience are *contrary*," are merely another form of the fallacy noticed already, viz. that a miracle is a *violation* of the laws of nature.

*dred*, witnesses, independent of each other, perfectly trustworthy, and with every opportunity of correct observation,—to give evidence that a certain event occurred at a certain time and place. Suppose that *two*, or *ninety-eight*, witnesses, in an equal degree independent of each other, trustworthy, and capable of observing, bear testimony that *no* such event occurred. Now, admitting such a case to be possible, one asks, What is the balance of evidence? Writers who have reduced the calculus of probabilities to mathematical formulæ have proved that the evidence is reduced, in each of the supposed instances, to that of *two* witnesses:—in other words, to the difference between *four* and *two*, or between *one hundred* and *ninety-eight*; *two*, or *ninety-eight*, of the witnesses going for nothing on each side. It is strange that so acute a writer as Archbishop Whately should question this conclusion. Hume, he observes, “lays down as a principle, that any witnesses, or other evidences, on one side of a question, are *counter-balanced* and *neutralized* by an equal number (supposing them individually of equal weight) on the opposite side; and that the *numerical excess* on the one side is the measure of the probability. Thus, if there were ten witnesses on the one side, and fifteen on the other, ten of these are neutralised by the opposite ten; and the surplus of five gives the amount of the probability. A mere tyro in arithmetic could have taught him that the measure of the probability is the *proportion*—the ratio of the two numbers to each other.”\* Archbishop Whately goes on to exemplify what he considers to be Hume’s error by the figures given above,—*two* and *four*, *ninety-eight* and *one hundred*: and he regards it as an absurdity to

\* “Notes on Paley,” p. 33. For a criticism on this passage, see the *Athenæum*, Nov. 19, 1859, p. 662.

maintain that “these two cases would be alike; since in each there is an excess of two on one side: *i. e.*, that one to two is the same thing as forty-nine to fifty!”

To leave, however, imaginary cases, and to return to the matter of fact before us:—The experience which assures us of the laws of matter has been brought forward in opposition to the experience which assures us of the laws of mind. Now, Christianity, by its very idea, excludes the supposition that the Great Being, who has ordained the laws of both mind and matter, *cannot* interpose in the concerns of the world which He has called into existence. Let any antecedent presumptions, therefore, against such divine interposition, be balanced against the accumulated mass of positive testimony on the other side; and let the result be estimated on Hume’s own principles. However improbable it may be deemed that the Author of nature should suspend the natural order for the purpose of vindicating the claims of religion, that improbability *disappears* before the series of proofs which the gospel narrative and the subsequent records of Christianity supply; and the fact of miracles wrought in attestation of the Christian faith remains established by evidence as overpowering as that which any other fact in history can command.

#### § XII. — *Conclusion.*

IN conclusion:—Two causes may be assigned for the position which Mr. Baden Powell has maintained on the subject of miracles:—firstly, his estimate of “the order of nature,” and of what he calls “cosmical philosophy;” secondly, his habit of employing ambiguous and indefinite terms. As a result of the former, he considers that no phenomenon can ever

exist apart from the usual "*physical* cause," or antecedent; as a result of the latter, the term "inconceivable" takes its place in his reasoning as if it were synonymous with "improbable," or with "incapable of demonstration," or with "physically impossible." Hence it follows, on the one hand, that a miracle, which by its very idea is *preter-natural*, is regarded by him as an event which no testimony, however strong, can prove; and, on the other,—miracles being always associated with the idea of what is *inconceivable*,—that to introduce testimony into the question at all becomes irrational, and unmeaning.

That the conclusion at which Mr. Baden Powell has arrived implies the denial of a Personal God, and the denial of the idea of creation, as well as the assertion of certain "self-sustaining and self-evolving powers which pervade all nature," has been made apparent: in other words, the results attained can be upheld, logically and consistently, on one class of principles, and on one only—the principles of material pantheism. In passages already quoted such principles are disavowed by Mr. Baden Powell. When he cites the opinions of professed pantheists, he states that he is "far from agreeing in their reasonings, or even in their first principles;" and the last words of his Essay express the sentiment that "the true acceptance of the entire revealed manifestation of Christianity will be most worthily and satisfactorily based on that assurance of 'faith,' by which the Apostle affirms 'we stand' (2 Cor. ii. 24), and which, in accordance with his emphatic declaration, must rest, 'not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.' (1 Cor. ii. 5.)" But, though Mr. Baden Powell may neither have accepted pantheism as his creed; nor have perceived that his reasoning, at every

step, was built upon its principles, there must be no reserve in plainly asserting that his argument, if followed to its legitimate conclusion, necessarily involves pantheism as its result.

Pantheism, indeed, affects still to speak the language of Christianity; just as the rationalistic school which preceded it preserved the body of the gospel narrative while it destroyed its soul. But we may well ask what remains of religion after it has passed through the crucible of pantheistic metaphysics? To this question one answer only can be given :—“A tradition without a gospel, a dogma without immortality, a Christianity without CHRIST.”



*Note referred to at page 38.*

Mr. Theodore Parker informs his readers, in the Introduction to the work quoted by Mr. Baden Powell (p. 114), that the Christian Church "looks back for its inspiration." "Its God," he continues, "is a dead God; its Christ is a crucified Christ. . . . It does not trust the living God, now revealing himself in the fresh flowers of to-day and the fresh consciousness of man. . . . It looks back to some alleged facts in the history of God, counting those fictitious miracles as greater than the nature of God. He has done his best, spoken for the last time!"—*Theism*, p. xxi.

And again:—"If a man has outgrown the Hebrew, or common Christian, idea of God, he may say what Paul said of the idol—'It is nothing.' He will not be an atheist, but a Theist all the more."—*Ib.* p. 2.

Mr. Parker states how far he differs from both the "material pantheists," and the "spiritual pantheists." With both classes, "Their idea of God is only the idea of the world of Nature and of Spirit, as it is to-day; . . . according to them God will be fairer and wiser a thousand years hence than He is now." "This is the great point in which I differ most widely from those philosophers. I find no fault with them. I differ from their conclusion."—*Ib.* p. 107.

Elsewhere, we collect his opinion as to the Personality of God:—"The affections want a person to cling to:—my soul reveals to me God, without the limitations of human personality."—*Sermons*, London 1853, p. 154.

The following extracts will give an idea of Mr. Emerson's opinions:—"O my brothers, God exists! There is a soul at the centre of Nature, and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe." (*Essays, On Spiritual Laws*, p. 64.) "The Supreme Critic on all the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great Nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other." (*Ib., The Over-soul*, p. 121.) "*Persons* are supplementary to the primary teaching of the soul. In youth we are mad for *persons*. Childhood and youth see all the world in them. But the larger experience of man discovers

the identical nature appearing through them all. Persons themselves acquaint us with the impersonal. In all conversation between two persons, tacit reference is made to a third party, to a common nature. That third party or common nature is not social; it is impersonal, is God." (*Ib.* p. 125.)

And again:—"The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God." (*Ib.* p. 133.) "If a man is at heart just, then, in so far, is he God." (*Ib.*, *The Christian Teacher*, p. 508.) "The word Miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression: it is Monster. It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain." (*Ib.* 511.)

Mr. F. W. Newman's opinions are of a different stamp. He expressly states his belief in a "Boundless, Eternal, Unchangeable, Designing Mind, not without whom this system of things coheres: and this Mind we call God." (*The Soul*, p. 26.) He also expresses his "intellectual belief" in "One Personal God." (*Ib.* p. 30.) But there is considerable difficulty in seeing what he precisely means. Thus he writes: "Infinity, or the absence of bounds, is an idea wholly relative to the mind which contemplates it. That of which I believe that I cannot know the bounds, is practically boundless to me; and if there were a being revealed to my senses, so god-like in all his attributes, that in no direction could I discover infirmity, or expect ever to discover it, he might become the object of devout reverence, as exalted and as pure as that which I am capable of rendering to an invisible and eternal God." (*Ib.* 38.)

In the "Defence of the Eclipse of Faith" the author thus, perhaps correctly, interprets Mr. Newman's view:—"He believes that man's notion of God is the projected, indefinitely enlarged image of man's own intellectual and moral nature. In accordance with that, he declares that he rejects whatever facts of Scripture apparently attribute to God, what *we* should call harsh, cruel, or unjust *in man.*" (3rd ed., p. 29.)

THE END.

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THE  
SACRED RECORD OF CREATION  
VINDICATED & EXPLAINED:

IN ANSWER TO THE ESSAY "ON  
THE MOSAIC COSMOGONY," IN THE VOLUME  
OF "ESSAYS AND REVIEWS."

BY

EDGAR HUXTABLE, M.A.

*Vicar of Weston Zoyland, Somerset, and Prebendary of Wells Cathedral ;  
Late Vice-Principal of Wells Theological College.*



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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WHILE the following pages are meant to be in reply to Mr. Goodwin, they aim, however, not so much at being controversial as constructive. Mr. Goodwin's Essay embodies feelings, which no doubt occasion perplexity and uneasiness in not a few reflective minds, which nevertheless are wholly averse from the conclusions which Mr. Goodwin avows. If the view of the opening part of Genesis, which is here advocated, serves to relieve any labouring under such difficulties, or if it prove a contribution only tending in the direction of such a result, to be taken up and matured by some more successful labourer in the cause of truth, the writer will have abundant reason to feel that his work has not been fruitless.




# THE SACRED RECORD OF CREATION.

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## I.

### THE RELATION OF THE FIRST SECTION OF GENESIS TO OTHER PARTS OF SCRIPTURE.

N dealing with the account of the first birth of things which is given in the commencing section of Genesis, — beginning with the first verse of the first chapter and ending at the close of the third verse of the second, — the subject which first claims consideration is the relation which this account bears to the subsequent parts of Revelation. Is it vitally and (so to speak) organically connected with the later communications given or purporting to be given from heaven, so that it cannot be cut away without mortal injury to the whole organism? Or is it an excrescence, at least an unessential part, which may be removed with perfect safety to those other, certainly essential, matters which remain? In other words, can a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ retain his hold *firmly* and *certainly* upon the revelations and promises of the Gospel, while he yet abandons the Mosaic account of the creation as a mere human utterance, — as uninspired by the Spirit of Truth?

This question, however, may be liable to misconstruction. The doubt, then (it may be added), is not, whether it is possible that a man may be a believer in Christ, who yet denies the canonical character of the Mosaic record of creation. It would be most presumptuous and unwarrantable to affirm that such an one *cannot* be a real believer in Christ. The combinations of thought and conviction in men's minds are infinite in variety and often most unaccountable; so diverse are men's temperaments, so subtle the influences of passion and prejudice, so manifold and capricious the obscurations of the understanding through inadvertence or ignorance. It would be in the highest degree narrow-minded and rash to assert that a disbeliever in the first section of Genesis cannot be a Christian.

This, however, is not our present question. Our question is this: Is there ground in fair reasoning for the conviction, that there is a vital connexion between the beginning of Genesis and the rest of Scripture, so that no one can reject the former, without being bound *by just consequence of thought* to reject also the other?

*If there is ground for this conviction*, — then it is clear, that, though individual minds can without forfeiting salvation reject the one while yet by an inconsequence, — to them a most blessed inconsequence, — they hold fast by the other, yet such a combination of disbelief and belief is fraught with the utmost danger. It is dangerous to the individual mind which entertains it; for there is cause to apprehend that the same taint of disbelief may work onward upon those salutary convictions which at present are still cherished, and at length poison the very life of the soul. But however, if this result should not befall, as in very many cases through God's grace it may not befall, yet the consequences of



the propounding of such views may prove to others in the very highest degree noxious. The man promulging and arguing for such a mixture of disbelief and Christian faith may himself not be aware of his inconsistency. But there are others who will be ready to detect it. *They* will not let the matter rest thus. They will adopt the disbelief which he avows, gladly availing themselves of the pleas by which he fortifies his disbelief, and then will press the argument home with fatal consecutiveness of reasoning upon what he still believes. "Do you not see, that the whole revelation as you call it is essentially committed to this part which you reject as untenable and even absurd? Is it not on your part hoping against hope and believing against belief, to affirm, that while *this* is a mere human utterance full of self-evident untruth, yet *that*, built though it is upon the other, affirming it, identifying it with itself as essentially one with it, is still a Divine utterance, fit to form the stay of the soul against death and for eternity? If *you* cannot see the untenableness of your position, we do; and we thank you for showing us so convincingly as you have done the utter futility of the whole pretended revelation." We all know that this in effect has been really said.

It is no more than fair to remark, that not only has Mr. Goodwin not shown in his Essay that he himself adopts such consequences, but that the *general* strain of his Essay warrants us in believing that he does not. But it is just also to add that he has not been at any pains to guard against them. Now there was a call upon him carefully to fence his whole position as a Christian believer against such attacks from infidelity. There is commonly felt to be such strong reason for identifying the cause of the inspiration of the Mosaic

record of creation with the cause of all the subsequent revelations purporting to be given in Scripture, that, standing forth publicly as rejecting the former, he was bound to show grounds justifying him in disconnecting it from the latter. As a Christian man, concerned for the precious revelation of hope given to the world through Christ, he owed it to the blessed Gospel which he believes, he owed it to the religious welfare of other men, to explain how it was, that he *could* reject the "Mosaic Cosmogony" and yet in all consistency hold by the faith of a Christian.

He cannot justly plead that as a geologist *that* was not *his* concern. His business as an advocate for Christian truth (for as a Christian he can never abdicate this character), is not inferior in importance to his concern with geological speculation, and claims to be always kept in view. Moreover the volume in which his Essay appears professes to aim at promoting in the best way "the cause of religious and moral truth" (*Advertisement to the Reader*); therefore the relation in which his denial of the "Mosaic Cosmogony" stands to his holding the Christian faith was a matter, the consideration of which his professed position in this volume forbade him so wholly to evade.

Before endeavouring to determine the place which the First Section of Genesis holds in relation to the rest of Scripture, it will be proper to give its due degree of attention to a warning voice which we may hear addressing us from the quarter of controversial prudence. We may be told that no man is doing real service to the advocacy of Christian truth, who unnecessarily aggravates or multiplies the difficulties of faith; that in connexion with Christianity itself there are already difficulties enough which the spirit of the pre-

sent age is only too keenly alive to; and that wisdom would dictate to us not to press to their utmost rigour considerations tending to embarrass yet further the Christian advocate with those peculiar difficulties which belong to the revelations of the Old Testament. My answer to this warning would be, that I do not believe that we really do increase our difficulties by adopting the Mosaic account of the creation. But, however *that* may prove to be, nevertheless, even if it be really true that by showing the maintenance of this account to be imperative upon the Christian advocate we are adding to our difficulties, it is neither the policy nor the safety of the Christian believer, nor indeed compatible with his proper character, to shut his eyes upon such difficulties or to ignore their existence. No good can ever come out of wilful blindness. Faith does not require of us the abnegation of our proper character as rational creatures; neither is she honoured or really served by such intellectual self-mutilation. Christian faith is faith in God as the God of truth; and never is faith more genuine in its character than when, having fairly looked round upon all the realities by which it is encompassed, having taken note of them all, having estimated them all at their proper value, it is yet able and resolved to repose simply upon the utterances of the voice of God. To act otherwise; to be shy of looking at that which really is there; to be uneasy and irritable at the statement of objections honestly and fairly urged; to be anxious to silence all such voices and to refuse them a hearing, — what does such behaviour betoken, except a want of steadfast faith, an inward misgiving that possibly after all our cause will not bear investigation? Neither can we expect in the end to gain anything by endeavouring to shelve away

actual facts and to put them out of sight. If the Christian faith really is compromised to the revelations of the Old Testament,—to this particular revelation, for example, which is now in question,—by seeking to suppress the fact, we shall only damage our position in arguing with unbelievers; for they will not be backward in assailing us in what they see we ourselves consider our weak points; while they will also have the opportunity of charging us with a want of argumentative honesty. And more than this: the believer in God's word may feel certain, that, though he may at times have been conscious of a certain feeling of uneasiness in reference to certain parts of Divine revelation, God's truth will be far better able to maintain itself by being left complete in its own entire being, than if we make bold to lop off this or that part of the fabric under the foolish, God-distrusting notion, that we are thereby giving it a firmer and more stable shape. Would we be wiser than God? Would we build more durably than He has done?

In estimating the degree in which the First Section of Genesis is connected with the other parts of Scripture, attention is first due to the references made to it in the subsequent writings; for these show that the later bearers of Divine inspiration founded upon it as an authoritative record.

Some of these are found in the Psalms, in which the phraseology of various passages at once directs our view back upon this primary section.

“*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made* (Gen. i. 6—8), *and all the host of them* (Gen. i. 14—18, ii. 1) *by the breath of his mouth*—[the *word of the Lord* and the *breath of his mouth* evidently point to the creative Fiats recorded in this section, upon which the

psalmist presently after lays yet more emphatic stress]. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap* (Gen. i. 9, 10), *he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake and it was; he commanded, and it stood fast.*" (Ps. xxxiii. 6—10.)

"*Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.*" (Ps. civ. 5—9, 19.) The first verses of this citation might at first sight be taken as a reference to the Deluge; but when we consider that the general purport of the Psalm is a review of the works of nature in general, and not at all of God's historical dealings with men; and when we see the pointed character of the reference of v. 19 to Gen. i. 14—*Let them be for signs and for seasons*—it is impossible to escape from the conviction that the former verses refer to the separation of the dry land from the seas recorded in Gen. i. 9, 10, and recorded there only. So likewise of the 14th and 15th verses of the same Psalm—*He causeth grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.* These verses, if they had stood apart from other plain references to the first section contained in the context,

would admit of being regarded as a pious thought, spontaneously suggested by the contemplation of God's goodness in nature; but when we consider the references already shown to be made in this Psalm to the beginning of Genesis, we are led to recognise in them the echo of what we read in Gen. i. 11, 12, 29, 30.

*"To him that made great lights [Gen. i. 16, two great lights]: for his mercy endureth for ever: the sun to rule the day [Gen. i. 16, the greater light to rule the day]: for his mercy endureth for ever: the moon and the stars to rule the night [Gen. i. 16, again]: for his mercy endureth for ever."* (Ps. cxxxvi. 7—9.)

*"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."* (Ps. viii. 6—8.) This is in fact merely a repetition in the form of devout and humble thanksgiving of the words which we read in Gen. i. 26 — *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."*

Passing from the Psalms, we have in 2 Cor. iv. 6 the words: *"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined,"* &c., which is a manifest reference to the words, *"Let there be light: and there was light."*

*"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise: And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."* (Heb. iv. 4.) This is a direct quotation from Gen. ii. 2, where alone these exact words are found.

"But all this" (it will perhaps be urged) "is the language of men; who, whatever degree of inspiration

they possessed, were yet uncritical readers of the more ancient Scriptures: they accepted those Scriptures as they were commonly received by the people of their age, without being at the pains to determine the (perhaps varying) canonical authority of particular parts."

Of course I do not for one moment admit the validity of this objection; while, neither, on the other hand can I here enter upon the proofs which the New Testament affords, that the *strictly canonical authority* of the Old Testament Scriptures in general, as we now receive them, was recognised, and even directly enforced, not only by the Apostles, but also by the Lord Jesus Himself. I will only observe, that it is quite clear that the several sacred writers who have now been quoted, and who may be regarded to be fair samples representing the feeling of the whole body of believers in God's revelation, both those under the Old Dispensation and those under the New, did not regard this exordium of Genesis as a mere "human utterance," but received it with lowly reverence, as among the authenticated sayings of Divine truth. It can hardly be an easy or satisfactory position for a believer in God's revelation in Scripture to occupy, to find himself in such a matter placed in direct antagonism to the universally prevailing judgment of God's people, and God's inspired organs.

But what is to be objected, when the Lord Jesus Himself appears implicitly expressing the same judgment?

*"He answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said: For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Therefore they are no longer*

*twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" (Matt. xix. 4—6; cf. Mark, x. 6—9.) The latter part of this reference is to the latter part of the second chapter of Genesis; but the former part, "*he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*" is drawn from Gen. i. 27. It is clear that Christ argues from this passage as being, together with the other cited from the second chapter, of canonical authority—as the reliable statement of Divine inspiration.

If a disciple had been by, endued with the scientific *enlightenment* which is now laid claim to, he would have been in a position to put his Lord to rights, in the mistaken apprehension which He showed Himself to entertain of the Divine character of the section in question. Such an one would have been able to suggest to Him the propriety of founding the premises of His argument upon some other more satisfactory basis.

There is however evidence, if possible, of a yet more direct character, for the Divine origin of this section, and which still more distinctly marks its strictly organic connexion with the subsequent revelations; indicating, indeed, a connexion so vital that we cannot part it off from the rest without inflicting upon the latter a mortal stroke. I refer to the manner in which its general import is incorporated with the Decalogue.

The Fourth Commandment runs thus: "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the*



*seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.*" (Exod. xx. 8—11.)

It is obvious that this language gathers up the contents of the whole first section of Genesis, and reasserts them in the strongest manner. If the first section is a "human utterance," because of its incompatibility with the teachings of science, then the inference appears inevitable, that the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue is a "human utterance" as well; and therewith, that the whole story of its promulgation from Mount Sinai by the voice of God Himself is unhistorical and untrue. But if so, what becomes of the whole body of the Old Testament revelation, which is beyond question founded upon the Mosaic legislation as of Divine origin? It collapses into a mere ruin. And then, again, what becomes of the New Testament revelation, which constantly founds upon that of the Old Testament, and professes to be merely an upgrowth from it?

It is difficult to see how this chain of argument can be evaded. If we deny the Divine inspiration of the first section of Genesis, by strict logical consequence we must give up also the Divine authority of the whole of the Old Testament and likewise of the New; for the teaching all through is bound together by a connexion which cannot be dissolved. After doing so, we may still find in both Testaments many noble thoughts, many soul-elevating utterances; as we may find noble thoughts and soul-elevating utterances in a Plato or a Cicero. But both Testaments alike cease to have any *canonical* character: they cease to furnish a rule which by virtue of a Divine authorisation is to bind our faith or to regulate our practice.

## II.

## THE EXEGESIS OF THE FIRST SECTION OF GENESIS.

THERE is reason to fear that great damage has been done to the cause of Divine inspiration, so far as it is concerned with this exordium of Genesis, by the endeavour which in various ways has been made to expound its language in such a manner as to *rationalise* its contents. The method of fair and honest exegesis would have been simply to consider what is the probable meaning of the several clauses, forming our judgment from the grammatical import of the terms employed, and viewing its statements in the light which other passages of the Scripture appear to throw upon their import. But men have too often not been satisfied with adopting this mode of procedure. They have pursued another plan. They have regulated their exegesis by reference to those views of Nature which science has established as true. They have proceeded upon the principle that the God of Revelation is the God also of Nature, and that therefore the notions found in the book of Revelation must exactly represent the truth of things as found in Nature, or at least not be in disharmony with them; and, accordingly, they have affixed to the several terms employed in the record, not the sense which those terms would convey to them *to* whom the record was originally addressed, or the sense in

which they were probably used by those *through* whom the revelation was originally made, but the sense which would have been embodied in those terms, or in other terms which might have been employed in their room, by persons who have been enabled to form juster views of Nature than in those early times we know were entertained.

Against any such theory of interpretation Mr. Goodwin strongly protests; and his reclamation, I think, must be admitted. The terminology employed in Scripture can only be taken in the sense in which we have fair reason to believe it to have been used by those whose language the voice of revelation condescended to adopt. Since it was by the medium of such terminology that the revelation was originally conveyed, the revelation, *as thus embodied*, was not only true, but, *as thus embodied*, was also just the particular revelation which in each instance was intended to be conveyed. To affix to the terminology a different meaning from that which then it was felt to bear takes us away from the particular point of view in which the revelation contemplated those as placed to whom it originally came, and places us in a different point of view. Is there not a danger that, looking at the revelation from this altered standing-point, we shall find it different from what it originally was — shall hear therein, in fact, another voice than that in which God was then heard to speak? Besides, the views which science has formed of Nature have varied according to the different degrees of scientific culture. If, therefore, the signification attached to the terminology of Scripture is to be regulated by the views of science, it is plain that the meaning of that terminology will be from time to time continually shifting, and thus the interpretation of the revelation

itself be always uncertain. The only stable interpretation of the revelation is that which rests upon those views of the meaning of the terms employed which we may reasonably suppose would be taken by those to whom it was originally addressed. What those views were we must ascertain as well as we can by the grammatical analysis of the words themselves in the language to which they belong, and by the light thrown upon the text by other passages of Scripture.

The reader will be pleased particularly to bear in mind that these remarks relate merely to the import of the terms employed, and to the forms of thought which those terms embody, and not to the purport of the revelation itself. The former must be human; for since the revelation must be made in language intelligible to those to whom it is spoken, the terms and forms of thought which it employs must be those already in men's mouths or minds, and therefore are to be estimated by the language and ways of thinking prevailing amongst those who are addressed. Not so the revelation. The import of *that*, as coming from heaven and Divine, is not to be estimated merely by the apprehension formed of it either by those to whom it was at the first addressed, or even by him through whom it was communicated. In many instances its import may far transcend both the one and the other (see 1 Peter, i. 10, 11). I am anxious to guard against misapprehension on this point; for the distinction now indicated is not merely of consequence, but is absolutely vital to just views of inspiration generally.

Holding these views respecting the interpretation of Scripture language, I heartily concur with Mr. Goodwin in refusing in every case to ascribe to terms employed in this first section meanings which have been only attri-

buted to them on the ground that such interpretation was necessary, in order to make the forms of thought square with those which we ourselves entertain or think reasonable. I am ready further to accept, *for the most part*, the exposition which he has given of the record ; but as in some points I cannot agree with him, and as it is desirable that such as do not happen to have carefully studied the passage should be led to consider its contents more exactly, in order that they may stand in that point of view in which the revelation supposes its readers placed, I shall go a little into the details of its interpretation ; after which I shall endeavour to show, that, while we may *in the main* accept as just Mr. Goodwin's exegesis, we yet are able utterly to reject his inference, that this section is a mere human utterance, and to affirm that it is what the whole of Scripture bids us regard it — an utterance of God, of the deepest significance and moment.

The *in the beginning* of the first verse naturally directs our thoughts to the very first bringing into being of the material substance, out of which *the heavens and the earth* were subsequently shaped, and leads us therefore to regard the *barā* (*created*) of this verse as used in the strict sense of *made out of nothing*. The verb *barā* is frequently used of forming things not out of nothing. It is so employed in this very chapter, and in this sense some have understood it in this first verse, which they have taken as a proleptic summary of the whole section. If this view were just, the *beginning* would be relative to the histories which follow this first section ; but since it is probable that this section is a complete independent whole, it is more obvious to understand the *beginning* as relative to the acts of creation recorded in the section itself, *i. e.* as referring

to the first creation of the *matter* of the universe. It is thus the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews appears to have understood it. (Heb. xi. 3.) And from the nature of the case it may be presumed to be likely that such a statement would stand at the head of the record; for the doctrine of God being at the first the Author of the very substance of all things, and not merely of the present forms of things, is intimately connected with the general import of the section; for it appears to be designed to assert the entire and absolute supremacy of God over all things, as being their original Maker.

The condition of things, after they were originally brought out of nothing, was one of mere *wasteness* and *emptiness* (*thohu vabhohu*). The same words are found combined in Jeremiah (iv. 23), of the desolation produced by the Babylonish invasion: *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was (thohu vabhohu) without form and void, and the heavens and they had no light.* And again in Isaiah (xxxv. 11), of the desolation of Idumea: *He shall stretch out upon it the line of (thohu) confusion and the stones (=plummet) of (bhohu) emptiness.* *Bhohu* occurs nowhere else; but *thohu* does repeatedly for *waste, wilderness* (e. g. Ps. cviii. 40). The two passages in Jeremiah and Isaiah probably were written with a conscious reference to Genesis, and were intended by a poetical exaggeration to describe the desolation of Judea and Idumea as exhibiting a state of things like that of chaos.

Upon the *deep* of waste waters, both those waters (it should seem) which afterwards were above the firmament and those which were under it, as yet forming one mass, wherewith was blended or wherein was buried the yet unseparated land, there rested *darkness*. The whole image is that of absolute formlessness and chaos, the pri-

vation of all distinction, of all possibility of discerning ought, mere vague indiscriminateness and obscurity. Yet, already in anticipation of the coming production of order and life, there was present the Spirit of God moving, hovering, fluttering (for so the Hebrew verb, here rendered *moved*, means in Deut. xxxii. 11, "*as an eagle stirreth up her nest, FLUTTERETH over her young*") over the vast confusion, prepared to communicate to it such successive forms of order and vitality as the will of God should determine. The Spirit of God is often in Scripture referred to as the principle of creative energy, as in Job xxvi. 13, "*by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens;*" Ps. civ. 30, "*Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created,*" &c. And this is the only sense which is suitable here. The rendering: *the breath of God*, i. e. *an air or wind*, which some commentators, both Jewish and Christian, have followed, and which Mr. Goodwin prefers, appears comparatively vapid and meaningless.

And now the voice of God is heard: *Let there be light, and light was.* The Divine Artificer eyed this product of His power, so congenial with His own nature, with complacency. *He saw that it was good, and he separated the light from the darkness*, disengaging the former out of the latter with which it was before commingled, so that even darkness ceased to be that phantom of disorderly viewlessness which it before was, and itself became one of the regulated and beneficent phases of nature. This reduction of the chaos of light and darkness into elements of only diversified order is, I apprehend, the chief thing indicated by the great Maker giving to the light the name of Day and to the darkness the name of Night; as, when it is said, *he calleth them all (the stars) by their names*, there is thereby indicated the dutiful

dependence of the stars on the Supreme as subject to His order and control.

But here we are struck with the strangeness of the circumstance, that light and darkness are stated to have been in existence on the First Day, whereas the sun, moon, and stars, to us the great sources of light, were not brought into being till the Fourth Day. But the ancient Book of Job strikingly illustrates the disposition of men in those days to regard light and darkness as separate principles or elements in nature, and apart from solar agency. In the 38th chapter the Almighty is represented as asking Job, "*Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?*" (v. 19—21.) We may also refer to Isa. xlv. 6, 7: "*I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.*" If this latter passage has a polemical bearing upon the Persian system of theology, which made darkness and evil eternal principles, which were independent of the creative and ruling power of the eternal Principle of light and good, yet none the less is it evidence for the disposition of the ancients to regard light and darkness as apart from the sun, but rather serves the more strongly to illustrate it.

"*And the evening was and the morning was one (or the first) day,*" i.e. "*and the evening and the morning were the first day.*" The phrase *evening morning* is used to denote a day in Dan. viii. 14—*unto two thousand and three hundred days*, where, in the Hebrew for *days*, we have *evening morning*, the singular being used according to



the regular construction in Hebrew in the case of numerals. The expression, *and the evening was and the morning was*, recurs at the end of each of the Six Days of work. It is certainly peculiar, there being no other parallel instance in Scripture than the one cited out of Daniel. But, however, the plain and obvious sense of the word *day*, as used throughout the section, as meaning the space of time familiar to men in all ages under that designation, appears, by this clear though peculiar expression, to be made yet more certain. For the rest, we can see a twofold propriety in the evening being put before the morning. 1. We know that the Hebrews have ever reckoned the day from sunset to sunset; as for example (if example be necessary in a matter doubted by none) in Psalm lv. 17, "*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud.*" There is, further, evidence of many other nations in ancient times having followed the same usage; while the recurrence of the phrase before us in this section goes a great way to show that this was the customary reckoning from the very earliest times. 2. The beginning of the First Day's work was the production of the universe in its condition of chaotic *darkness*; it was the latter part of the First Day which brought into being *light*.

The Second Day's work is the formation of the *Firmament*. The use of the firmament is described, in the first instance, as being to separate the waters beneath it from the waters above it. Subsequently, in the Fourth Day's work, it serves to receive the sun, moon and stars, which are then "set in it." Divesting our minds of all our own scientific notions respecting nature, it is our proper business here to endeavour to realise to ourselves that idea of the firmament, which there is good reason to believe to have been originally

embodied in the term; and our guide must be partly the etymology of the Hebrew word, and partly its use both here and in other passages of the sacred writings.

The verb *raqa'*, from which the noun in question, *raqā'*, is derived, means, as we learn from the lexicographers, *to stamp*, in Ezek. vi. 11; xxv. 6; as also in 2 Sam. xxii. 43, "*as the mire of the streets I crushed them and STAMPED them;*" *to spread out* in Isa. xlii. 5, "*who spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it*" (where the second object appears to be made dependent upon the verb by that impropriety of construction which the grammarians have named *zeugma*); xliv. 24, "*that stretcheth forth the heavens alone;*" and in Ps. cxxxvi. 6, "*that stretched out the earth above the waters,*" the dry land being regarded as a vast plain emerged from the waters, and *spreading* far and wide. Here, however, the Septuagint renders the verb  $\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\epsilon\acute{\omega}\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ , understanding, seemingly, the Hebrew verb to denote that condensation of matter which is produced by stamping: whence also, in this section, the Septuagint renders *raqā'* by  $\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega\mu\alpha$ , followed by the Vulgate in its *firmamentum*, and our English version in *firmament*; but there are few who would now consider this to give the right turn to the expression. The piel or frequentative conjugation of *raqa'* gives us the sense of *beating* or *hammering out*; as in Exod. xxxix. 3, "*they beat the gold into thin plates;*" Num. xvi. 39, "*they made them broad plates for a covering of the altar;*" Isa. xl. 19, "*the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold.*" Similarly the passive frequentative in Jer. x. 9. Lastly, the hiphil conjugation occurs in Job xxxvii. 18, "*hast thou with him spread out the sky* (the Hebrew word for *sky*, *shechagim*, is different from that which is rendered *heavens*, *shamayim*, and according to Gesenius's Thesaurus, denotes *expan-*

sion, extension), which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass" (a mirror of polished metal)?

Such is the use of the verb in the Scriptures; and the inference would naturally be, that the noun *raqā'*, which has the form of a passive derivative, denotes something *spread* or *stretched abroad*, like a lamina or plate of metal. *Expanse* might be accepted as equivalent, provided the expansion be understood as that of length and breadth, and not to contemplate the third dimension of a solid, *i.e.*, thickness.

This view of the etymology of the word would conduct us to the old view, that the ancients imagined the existence of a vast (crystalline?) rigid vault, rising to an immense distance above the earth, and overarching the sky.

We are next to consider whether the passages of Scripture in which the word is found favour this view.

In Ezekiel (i. 22—28; x. 1) we read that there was over "the four living creatures" a *firmament*, whose *likeness was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above*. This firmament bore upon it a throne on which Jehovah Himself appeared seated. The only notion which suits the term as here employed is that of a solid or rigid canopy or vault, *similar* to that above described,—for it does not seem to be the *same* firmament, the firmament of heaven.

Dan. xii. 3 ("they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament"), and Exod. xxiv. 10 ("there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of HEAVEN in his clearness"), suggest the idea that the *firmament* or *heaven* was itself considered to be resplendent with brightness; a view which men, accustomed to the clear and brilliant vault of the eastern heavens, would be more apt to conceive

than those familiar only with the dimmer and less sparkling skies of our climate. In Ps. civ. 2, we have "*who spreadest out the heavens like a curtain,*" i.e., a curtain stretched from a pole or wooden framework to form a tent: this conveys a similar conception under another image. In Ps. xix., after saying that in *the heavens* (which are identical with the firmament) is manifested the glorious workmanship of God, conspicuous (ver. 2) alike by day and by night, for that they loudly proclaim their Maker throughout all the world (ver. 3, 4), the Psalmist notes in particular that *in them (the heavens, the firmament)* a *tabernacle* or dwelling-place is assigned to the sun, whose circuit from one end of *the heavens* to the other is portrayed (ver. 5, 6) in terms of the most glowing admiration: here the firmament, as displaying the Creator's glory, is spoken of in distinction from the sun. In Ps. cl. 1, "*Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power,*" the firmament itself is specified as a peculiar manifestation of God's almightiness. I have already cited for another purpose Job xxxvii. 18, "*hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass?*" but I would now observe in reference to it, that the passage, in a writing dating probably as early as the Pentateuch, is of considerable importance as showing the kind of image into which the conception of the highest sky then shaped itself in men's imaginations. Granting that if it stood alone it might have been taken as a mere poetical image, and not as the representation of what was supposed a reality, yet when taken with other passages it sways the mind of an impartial critic towards one particular conclusion. So also, again, in Job xxvi. 11, "*the pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof;*" and in 1 Sam. xxii. 8, "*the*

*foundations of heaven moved and shook because he was wroth,*" the mention of *heaven* (or *the heavens*, for in Hebrew it is always the same plural noun) having *pillars* or *foundations* uprearing their structure, might, perhaps, if they stood alone, have been understood as bold figures of poetry; but when viewed in connexion with the other passages already cited, they go to confirm the notion, which these suggest, that the ancient Hebrew writers conceived of *heaven* as being a solid expanse of glorious material overarching the earth. Certainly these two passages gain greatly in sublimity as well as in distinctness of thought through this interpretation being applied to them.

It has been observed, in reference to several of the passages now cited, that the firmament itself is spoken of as a signal manifestation of the Creator's glory and power. This view of it is in remarkable conformity with the representation of the Mosaic record, in which an entire day is appropriated to its formation.

The conception of such a firmament is so alien to our thoughts, so far removed from the views of the physical world which our own more scientific culture has taught us to entertain, that it is apt to seem to us incredible and absurd that such a notion should be found in any part of the Sacred Scriptures—much more that it should have been incorporated into an inspired account of the Creation. I must, however, beg my readers to pause before they pronounce this judgment: considerations, which will subsequently be stated, will, I trust, make it appear that in such a record of Creation as this section was intended to give, it was exactly suitable that this conception of a firmament, supposing it to have then occupied the imaginations of men, should have been introduced. But at present it has been

simply my aim to ascertain upon reasonable evidence what the notion of the firmament entertained by the ancient Hebrew writers really was: what it ought to have been is not the point to be considered.

It may help us yet further to see that such a notion of the firmament commonly prevailed in ancient times, if attention be given to the fact that we find it in various heathen authors. It underlies the epithets of σιδήρεος and χάλκεος, which Homer applies to οὐρανός (Od. xv. 328; Il. xvii. 425). In the book *De placitis philosophorum*, ascribed to Plutarch (ii. 11), Empedocles is stated to have thought that heaven was στερέμνιος, *solid*, and formed κρυσταλλοσιδῶς. So, according to Seneca (Natur. Quæst. vii. 13), Artemidorus affirmed: summam cœli oram esse solidissimam, in modum tecti duratam, et alti et crassi corporis.

Josephus, in his paraphrase of the account of Creation given in Genesis (Antiq. I. i. 1), writes thus: "On the second day He placed the heaven over the whole world, and separated it from the other parts; and He determined it should stand by itself. He also placed a crystalline [firmament] round it (κρύσταλλον περιπήξας αὐτῷ), and put it together in a manner agreeable to the earth, and fitted it for giving moisture and rain, and for affording the advantage of dews." (Whiston's Translation.)

The firmament is represented as having *waters above* it. Here again we have a notion which is at variance with those views respecting supra-mundane space which we have been taught to entertain. But here again, too, it behoves us to inquire, not what ought to have been thought, but what in those days really was thought; and with this view we may take note of the expression in Ps. cxlviii. 4, "*Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and*

*ye waters which are above the heavens ;*" for to interpret this of the clouds and vapours of our own atmosphere is altogether out of keeping with the tenor of the immediate context both before and after. We may recollect also that in the account of the beginning of the Deluge, in Gen. vii. 11, 12, it is stated that "*the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights ;*" whilst at the staying of the Deluge we are told (viii. 2), that "*the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.*" In both these passages, the waters which came down from *the windows of heaven* appear spoken of as distinct from the rain, and most naturally are identified with *the waters above the firmament*, which the firmament separated from the waters which were below the firmament.\*

On the Third Day, *the waters under the heaven*, as distinguished from those above, are commanded to gather themselves together into a separate place by themselves, so as to permit the dry land to appear. These two several parts, again, as now brought into serviceable order and under control, have names given them—*earth* and *seas*. On this day, also, the earth is

\* It is with reluctance and almost with trembling, that, at the dictate of uncompromising truthfulness, I have added these two last references. I am apprehensive lest this interpretation of their meaning may be construed into an inference against the properly historical character of the account of the Deluge. The inference is obviated by the consideration, that the details of this history are given, not from the point of view from which Omniscience beholds events, but from that occupied by man; in other words, the details are described as they *appeared* to be to those who witnessed them at the time.

commanded to bring forth various produce; there are specified three classes of produce,—grass (which in ancient times was thought to grow spontaneously and not from seed), the (probably larger) herb yielding seed, and fruit-trees. This is the only account given of the formation of inanimate growths. If it be judged an incomplete specification, we may perhaps suppose that the threefold classification was intended to include the whole vegetable kingdom, the parts mentioned synecdochically denoting the whole; thus, *e.g.*, the *trees bearing fruit* bring along with them the forest trees also, though these bear no fruit popularly so called.

The Fourth Day is set apart for the formation of the sun and moon, and also of the stars. These are first *made*, and then they are *set in the firmament*, to give light to the earth and to regulate the divisions of time.

That this was intended to denote the actual formation of the heavenly bodies, and not merely their being made serviceable to the earth, is only a fair inference from the 16th verse, in which their formation as viewed in themselves is first described, as compared with the two following verses, in which we have the evidently *additional* circumstance of their being made available for the good of the world. The same view is implied in the other references made to this particular part of the work of creation. Thus, in the first verse of the second chapter, “*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them ;*” and in Exod. xx. 11, “*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.*”

Once more we must remind ourselves, that our business is not to determine what sense of these words would be most in accordance with our own views of the physical universe, but what, judging from the evi-



dence before us, we have fair reason to conclude was actually meant by those who penned and first used these words. This clue will help us through all our difficulties if we trust its guidance, while if we let it go we shall be in danger of missing our way altogether, and being entangled in manifold subterfuge and embarrassment.

The Fifth Day is occupied with the creation of the animals, both small and great, which swarm in the seas, and of the winged tribes. Both are represented as brought forth by *the waters*. This fact, of the common aqueous origin attributed to them, is noticeable. It has been explained with some degree of probability by the minds of the ancients being impressed by the remarkable similarity between fishes and birds: both classes alike are in the main oviparous; both also alike use their forearms to work their way through the liquid elements to which they respectively belong, the one as wings in flight, the other as fins in swimming. This explanation however appears to rest only on conjecture.

In the 20th verse, *moving creature* translates the Hebrew word *sheretz*,—the noun of the verb *sharatz*, which is well rendered in the same clause *bring forth abundantly*. In the next verse, the Hebrew for *moveth* belongs to a wholly different root, and seems rightly translated. The verb *sharatz* is used of men multiplying in Gen. ix. 7 and Ex. i. 7 (*increased abundantly*), and of *all* kinds of living creatures in Gen. viii. 17. The natural inference is that the noun *sheretz* means whatever animals exist multitudinously; here fishes. It is used for the whole class of aquatic animals also in Lev. xi. 10, where one particular section of that whole class is specified, viz. of those not having fins or scales. The word *sheretz* does not point to any particular kind

of locomotion such as is indicated by the English *reptile*; — the only kind of motion which it would indicate being that which is seen in a number of animals thickly crowded together and moving amongst themselves, and which the Germans express by *wimmeln*.

The *whales* of the English version, in the Hebrew is *tanninim*. It is rendered *whales* also in Job vii. 12. In these two passages, as well as in Ps. cxlviii. 7, where our version has *dragons*, it is considered by Gesenius to denote large fishes, and is etymologically connected by him with the *θύνος* or *tunny*, the largest fish of the Mediterranean. Some call in question this meaning, and deny that the word ever denotes any kind of fish. It is not questioned by any, that in the several other passages in which it is found, *tannin* does not mean a fish. It is rendered *serpent* in Ex. vii. 9, 10, 12; *dragon* in Isa. li. 9, Ez. xxix. 3, and Ps. lxxiv. 13; in which three places it symbolises Egypt, and therefore may mean the crocodile, which is so remarkable an inhabitant of the Nile. It is taken for a *dragon* of evidently a venomous kind in Deut. xxxii. 33, and probably Ps. xci. 13. In the verse now before us, it would seem precarious to give it any other sense than *large fishes*; but it may possibly denote *serpents*, *crocodiles*, and similar animals, the classing of which with birds and fishes would admit of being explained by their being, like them, oviparous.

On the Sixth Day the earth is commanded to bring forth the various classes of land animals. The enumeration, under the heads of *the beast* (more exactly, *the living thing*) of *the earth*, and *the cattle*, and *every creeping thing of the ground*, appears intended to be exhaustive of the whole animal kingdom belonging to the land.

The work of the Sixth Day is closed with that which

is evidently contemplated as the crown and consummation of the whole,—the formation of man. This last creative act is ushered in with peculiar solemnity. God is heard speaking as if in deliberation with His fellows, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*” To whom is this august utterance addressed? The *we*, which is sometimes used by monarchs and is called the *plural of majesty*, is plainly out of place here, and cannot be shown to have been ever employed in ancient times. Angels are in this particular portion of scripture nowhere mentioned; the Deity alone standing out as the agent in the transaction recorded, unaccompanied by any other being. To the minds which this revelation primarily addressed, this *We* must needs have seemed a profound mystery, there being, so far as we know, no other clue supplied to them for its interpretation than that which might have been gathered out of the reference to *the Spirit of God* in the second verse. The same *We* recurs in Gen. iii. 22; xi. 7; and Isa. vi. 8.

“*In our image, after our likeness.*” There are not many who will agree with Mr. Goodwin’s explanation of these words, attributing to the sacred author such gross anthropomorphism as would suppose the Almighty Creator of the universe to exist in a bodily shape to which the body of man was conformed! How alien such an anthropomorphic view was to the mind of Moses is strongly indicated by the earnest warning found in Deuteronomy iv. 15, 16, as well as in the Second Commandment of the Decalogue, against making any similitude of any figure, *the likeness of male or female*, to represent God. For the reason given for such prohibition is that the Israelites *had seen no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto them in Horeb out of the midst of the fire*; which reason implies that no form

which man could devise *could* be a likeness of God,—a reason which would not hold, if the human body is itself the likeness of the Divine Being. Mr. Goodwin makes reference to the Theophany in Gen. xviii. Can he really suppose that the sacred historian imagined the form in which the Lord (for no doubt it was He,—in the Second Person, as we may believe, of the Adorable Triune) then appeared, was the proper form of God's own Eternal Being?

And *why* should we suppose that *the image or likeness* of God in which man was first made related to the corporeal part of his being, rather than to his moral and intellectual nature? and to the fitness which his moral and intellectual nature gave him to be ruler over all the lower parts of the creation? Leaving out of view the Divine inspiration under which Moses wrote, is such a notion to be judged too elevated, too spiritual, for the writer (say) of the Pentateuch or for the times which could produce the book of Job? Is it not a miserably false estimate of the relative value of physical science, to conceive, that because men were babes in *that*, therefore they were babes in apprehension of moral and spiritual truth? The whole both of the Old and of the New Testament rebukes such a misconception.

The dominion assigned to man comprises the various classes of animated nature which had before been created,—“*the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth;*”—a similar enumeration to that which is given in the 8th Psalm. It was the primary intention of the Creator that such sovereignty should belong to man. How far that intention has been frustrated by man's departure through sin from his own original position, is a question which can now only be thus glanced at.

The style of the 27th verse, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them,*" has been commented upon by the more æsthetical class of critics, as remarkably distinguished by an air of vivacity and joyful complacency. The Divine Artificer rejoiced in His other works; as they severally were brought into being *He saw that they were good*; but over this crowning work of His power He seems to exult above all the rest.

"*Male and female created he them.*" The purpose of this being specified only of man, being equally true in fact of almost every other species of animated being, is thought by some to have been to mark the co-ordinate position of the woman as sharing with the man the Divine likeness. But though this view of the original position of the woman may be a fair *inference* from the passage, I see nothing to warrant the supposition that it was here definitely contemplated. The complexion of the context leads rather to the view, that the fact that God *created them male and female* was a circumstance which appertained to the highest excellence of man and to the completion of his happiness. It points to the marriage relation, or to that relation between our first parents to which marriage was afterwards in the case of their descendants analogous, as being a prime manifestation of the Creator's wise and loving care for man. There can be no doubt that this relation constitutes the integration of man's nature, that it is the principal fountain of human virtues, that it is the source of man's purest and sweetest joys. The relation was therefore worthy of being particularly specified; even in a passage such as this, in which the Creator's delight in His last and greatest work is, as we have seen, so glowingly shown forth. This view of the words is confirmed by

the reference made to them by our Lord in Matt. xix. 4.

It may be asked whether this clause, *male and female created he them*, affirms a single pair to have been created from whom the whole race should spring. I cannot see that it contains any reference to that particular circumstance. The descent of all mankind from Adam and Eve, Scripture does, I doubt not, elsewhere teach clearly and emphatically. But here, the individuality of the two persons Adam and Eve lies altogether in the background. In the following Section (ch. ii. 4—iii. 24), it is quite different: *there* their individuality comes out with the greatest sharpness of outline possible; we feel *there*, that we are reading the history of a particular man and a particular woman. But at present, the creation of man, the creation of them as male and female, is set forth only in general terms as the creation of the species; and with that statement the purpose of the author must be supposed to terminate.

In the 29th and 30th verses a difficulty has been raised, founded, as I conceive, upon a misapprehension of the main point brought out in them. "*God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat. And it was so.*" A comparison has been made by Mr. Goodwin and others with the passage in Gen. ix. 2, in which animal food is allowed to man as well as *the green herb* which had been previously assigned to him; and an inference has been drawn that this First Section designedly represents man in his original con-

dition as not carnivorous; and that it also represents the other animals as likewise not carnivorous, but made to live on vegetable food alone. Now, whatever may be said respecting man, to whom, as all must allow, animal food is not necessary, seeing that there are perhaps hundreds of millions who never taste it, yet respecting many tribes, both of land animals and of birds, it is certain, not only from what we observe in the present state of animated nature but also from what is shown to have been the case in the Geological Periods, that they were originally made to be carnivorous. And thus this First Section and Science are thought to be brought into collision.

The solution seems to be that the thing thought of here is simply the care and forethought with which the great Creator had provided for the sustentation of the various classes of animated being which His power had brought into existence: that the wants of man and beast and bird were all found supplied. Since the principal food of man and of the cattle—those animals with which man is most concerned—has ever been drawn from the vegetable kingdom, the gift of this is particularly specified, as a note-worthy token of the Creator's parental providence. The silence respecting the carnivorous habits of many classes of animals proves nothing in a passage which does not profess to be a complete statement of the food of animals; for of the food of fishes there is no mention made at all. And that there is no *implicit* reference of a negative kind involved in the passage, as if animals were none of them originally carnivorous, is evidenced by the absence, in the subsequent parts of Scripture, of any mention of *animals* becoming at a later period carnivorous, or of a change being made in their original constitution. Indeed one passage tells directly the opposite way,

namely that in Ps. civ., in which lions *roaring after their prey* are said to be *seeking their meat from God*; for this particular circumstance, evidently mentioned as a sample of many others in the animal kingdom, is noted as a part of that glorious constitution of nature, as it was originally framed, which forms the subject of the Psalmist's adoring admiration throughout the Psalm.

It may be true, and I believe it is, that man was originally not *meant* to be carnivorous, and that he became so by a later dispensation of God's providence. Mr. Goodwin appears right in his supposition, that this is the only conclusion to be drawn from the ninth chapter of Genesis. And it can hardly be affirmed that Science has anything to offer in disproof of this view.\* But,

\* Since, in a question so purely scientific, I feel but little disposed to lean upon my own judgment, I will here introduce a paragraph relating to this point which has been kindly supplied to me by W. Boyd Dawkins, Esq., F.G.S., and Burdett Coutts Geological Scholar in the University of Oxford.

“The apparatus in man for the prehension, mastication, and digestion of food by no means argues a carnivorous habit. The flattened and tubercular crowns of the molar series and the small canines, coupled with the absence of sectorials, point rather to a frugivorous or omnivorous type. The mechanism by which the jaws are worked, presents no analogy to that of the carnivora, the temporal or biting muscle being relatively small, as also are its points of attachment, the coronoid process of the lower maxillary, and the ridge on the parietals which is the homologue of the sagittal crest; while the lower jaw is not restricted to a hinge-like motion by the depth of the glenoid cavity of the temporal bone. In the small intestine, also, the largely developed valvulæ conniventes, in the large the sacculated walls, are points of difference. The stomach certainly in its form approximates to that of the carnivora; in its simplicity it reminds us of the omnivorous Suidæ. (For carnivorous characteristics vid. Owen, *Skeleton and Teeth*,\* p. 250, published 1859. J. Bell's paper in the *Cyclopedia of Physiology and Anatomy*, and Van Der Hoeven's *Handbook of Zoology*, vol. ii. p. 702, published 1858.)”



however, the passage now before us neither affirms nor implies (as I apprehend) the original non-carnivorous nature of either man or beast. The sole point presented to our view is this, that the Creator, in bringing man and the other creatures into being, also was careful to make provision for their wants. And I would submit for the consideration of my readers, whether it would not have been a particularity in detail quite out of keeping with the generalising tone which characterises the section, if the Record had gone into a discriminating statement, how different tribes of animals had different kinds of food assigned to them, some being made to be graminivorous, some insectivorous, some carnivorous, and so on; and yet this seems to be what Mr. Goodwin's objection desiderates.

"*And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*" Again and again, not less than six times before, has the Record noted of the several parts of the creation, as they successively came into being, that God "*saw that they were good.*" And now that the entire work is finished, and crowned by the creation of man, the Divine Artificer takes a view of the whole, and it appears, to His all-wise and truly judging mind, *good exceedingly*. What is the purpose of this statement, so often repeated, and at the last with such especial emphasis? Is it to mark the primæval excellence of the creation in contrast with the deterioration introduced by the Fall? That such a contrast exists between the state of things before and after the Fall, is quite evident upon a comparison of the two first chapters of Genesis with those which immediately fol-

The just inference appears to be, that while man is so fashioned that he *can* eat flesh, the make of his constitution is not such as to determine that he *shall*.

low. And perhaps some such reference may have been in part implied in these expressions of the Divine complacency. But I would submit whether it is not their more direct object to impress the mind with a sense of the Divine Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, as manifested in the works of creation—whether their tenor is not this: “These products of His creative hand are all of them worthy of profoundest admiration: both severally, and yet more in their exquisitely adjusted combination, they answer to the infinite excellence of their Author.” In short, this statement of God’s recognition of the goodness of His works is, as I apprehend, the tranquil expression of the thought which, in utterances of devotion, we find embodied in such fervent words as these: “How glorious are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all.” “Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His glory.”

And now the Six Days’ Work is complete. A seventh day supervenes, in which God did no work, but reposed in the complacent contemplation of what He had already done.

It is with fear and trembling that we should venture to fill in the features which appear to belong to this picture; yet reverence itself requires us to contemplate the picture presented to our view as it really is. That is at bottom a false reverence, not unmingled with unbelief, which would lead us to shrink from beholding the portraiture of inspiration, as if we doubted whether it were in fact worthy of its Author. Let us look at the delineation as it stands there before us. It may be that realising its actual character may help us in some measure to a just appreciation of the whole section.

“*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*” *The host of heaven* is no uncommon

phrase in Scripture, denoting sometimes the army of angelic beings, of whom, however, in this section we have no mention, and sometimes the heavenly bodies, which are so styled as being, like the ministering angels, marshalled in order as if waiting upon the Great King. But here there is the peculiarity, that we have the *host of the earth* mentioned as well as *of the heavens*. But the term is apparently to be taken still with the same turn of meaning. It denotes all the creatures of this lower part of the universe, both animate and inanimate, as waiting in dutiful allegiance upon their sovereign Creator.

“*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made.*” A difficulty has been felt in its being said that *God ended* (or *finished*—for the verb is the same as in the first verse) *his work on the seventh day*, whereas in fact it was completed on the sixth. Various explanations have been offered; but the most probable solution, I venture to think, is this:—that the *entire week* is to be conceived of as devoted to the creation of the universe—the day of rest as well as the six days of work; the reason for this being, that the refreshment of the day of rest is ordinarily made necessary by the six days’ labour which precedes it, and therefore may be reckoned as its proper appendage and completion.

“*And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.*” Attention is due to the particular expression which is here employed, the proper import of which is, perhaps, sometimes unnoted by the reader, through its being in a measure disguised, partly by the translation, and partly by the pre-occupation of thought with which we read the sentence.

The term *work* is in the Hebrew *melākhah*, and is the same as we have in Gen. xxxix. 11—“*Joseph went into*

*the house to do his business,*" the last phrase, *to do his business*, being the identical one which is here rendered *work* which he had *made*; so that the analogy of that passage might lead us to translate rather thus:—*rested from all his business that he had done.* So in Exod. xx. 9, 10:—"Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work (or business); but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work (or business)." And Exod. xxxi. 14-17:—"Ye shall keep the sabbath: whosoever doeth any work (or business) therein, shall be cut off: six days may work (or business) be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."

In a good many passages *melākhah* denotes in particular the workmanship of the artificer, whether in building or in other kinds of artisan labour: thus we find it used in Exod. xxxi. 3, 5; xxxv. 35; xxxvi. 8; 2 Kings xii. 11 (*work*), 14 and 15 (*workmen*, literally *doers of work*), and elsewhere. And this notion of the term seems, in the passage before us, to blend with the former general one of *business, occupation*, giving it the specific sense of business of the kind which appertains to the artificer.

The conclusion is, that the word *melākhah*, as here employed, is designed to convey to the mind the notion, not merely of a *result* of operation—in thinking of which we might escape altogether from any associated idea of labour, toil, effort, since we readily and immediately interpolate the thought, that the production of any objects in nature, or of all creation together, would cost the Almighty just no effort whatever—but of work-day occupation and labour, such occupation and labour as is wont to make the seventh day of repose a

sweet solace and refreshment. In the passage just cited from Exod. xxxi., the reader has no doubt been struck by the expression, "*he rested and was refreshed.*" It throws light upon the verse which we are now considering. It shows that by its being said "*he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done,*" more is meant than merely this, *on the seventh day he did no work*; it brings rather before us the image of a workman, having laboured in his business through the six days of the week, and now rejoicing on the seventh day in the sweetness of repose from his toil; and this image it presents to adumbrate the great Creator as now arrived at the conclusion of His work in creating the heavens and the earth.

And this, again, prepares us to understand the bearing of the next verse: "*And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested (or he rested) from all his work which he had created and made,*" or rather *from all his workmanship which he had created to do (or make)*. If what has just been advanced is just, the meaning of this, again, is, not merely this:—God set the seventh day apart as a day of rest from labour, because on the seventh day of the week of creation there was no work of creation done;—but rather this:—God found the rest of the seventh day which succeeded the six days of creation so grateful, that, in pleasant recollection (if I may dare so to paraphrase the sense) of the repose, He pronounced His blessing upon the seventh day of the week generally, and set it apart as holy.

How all this is to be interpreted is a matter for subsequent inquiry: our business at present is to ascertain the primary import of the writing; in doing so we should endeavour not only to gather the general sub-

stance of the meaning, but also, if we may, to catch the finer hues of tinting (so to speak) belonging to the picture which Heaven has so condescendingly presented to our view.

The words of the 4th verse, "*These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth,*" no doubt refer to the preceding record; for in what follows we have no account whatever of the creation of *the heavens*, and hardly any of *the earth*, the attention being taken up with the primæval history of man himself. Nevertheless, the words probably form no part of the foregoing record itself, but were added by Moses as a landing-place in the composition, before passing on to the narrative which follows.

## III.

## RATIONALISING AND GEOLOGICAL EXPOSITIONS.

AFTER thus endeavouring to gain as clear an apprehension as we are able of the import of the several parts of this inspired Record, so far as their sense can be determined on the ground of verbal criticism, we shall presently have to examine into its import and bearing as a whole. But before we proceed to this part of our inquiry it is necessary to clear the ground of certain forced constructions which have been put upon the account by those who, from different points of view, but as agreeing to regard the section as strictly and literally historical, have laboured to bring its statements into harmony with the more or less certainly established truths of cosmical science.

In doing so I shall seem to be working by Mr. Goodwin's side; and, in fact, for a while I must take this position; but it will only be for a while. The end to which the results of my inquiries lead me is far remote from that to which he has been brought. This end will not be that of convicting the "Mosaic cosmogony" of a merely human origin, and, indeed, of almost childish error; but rather, instead, that of conducting our minds to a point of view from which this venerable heirloom of God's people from the beginning of time will be seen to be worthy of the position which the Scriptures have

been shown to assign to it—worthy to be the foundation-stone on which the whole of Divine Revelation was to be built.

And, first, there are several interpretations to be noticed, not connected with geology, which have evidently sprung from a desire to make the statements before us agree with our reason, but which seem to introduce elements of thought wholly foreign to the region of Scriptural ideas.

Light is created on the First Day, while the heavenly bodies, which to us are the great conveyers of light, were not formed till the Fourth. In reference to this, we are reminded, by the class of expositors now referred to, that we know not *how* it is that light is given us by the sun, and that therefore we have no just ground for affirming that the earth could be lighted by the sun only; that in actual fact we see light evolved in other ways; it is evolved from that unknown substance, so variously produced, which we call flame; it flashes forth as an effect of electricity,—the aurora borealis, sometimes yielding quite a strong illumination, will serve to show what things were possible in this way, apart from solar radiation. Taking all this into account, what right, it is asked, has any one to assert that the notion of the illumination of the earth without the sun is absurd? And it is added that the question is not, what were the philosophical views of the ancient men who penned the Record, but what was meant by the Spirit of God,—that Spirit to whose view all the mysteries of nature are fully known.

Now such reasonings may serve to put to silence the stout dogmatiser who undertakes to deny the possibility of the statement in the third verse being true. For that end they may be sufficient; but they do little



more. They help the candid mind but a very little way forward towards the conviction that the statement itself is true; and it may be fairly questioned whether, supposing the whole section is to be taken as literally historical, our persuasion of the truth of this particular portion of it is not much firmer and more secure when left to rest upon the simple dictum of inspiration, than when it is, *in any degree*, made to rest upon the consideration of such merely not impossible hypotheses as those which have just now been adverted to. The admixture of this element of possible thought is clay weakening the iron. The sort of belief which it generates is more nearly akin to doubt and misgiving than to the certain persuasion which forms the very essence of faith in God.

In dealing with the Second Day's work, the creation of the firmament, rationalism has of late years taken a very bold tone. The notion of a solid canopy over-arching the heavens it scouts as altogether unworthy even of consideration, so repugnant is it felt to be to the persuasions of a scientific age. The principle at the bottom of these views is this, that the Word of God, speaking in Revelation, must be in harmony with the Word of God speaking in Nature; and that, therefore, if what Scripture at first sight appears to affirm is inconsistent with what we know to be true in Nature, we are bound at once to seek some other interpretation. Supposing the principle is just, there is yet room to ask whether in the present case it is properly applied; and I shall hope to show further on why I do not think it *is* in this case properly applied. Meanwhile, it is right to observe that, nothing can justify our putting aside that interpretation of any part of Scripture which is commended to our acceptance by the fair principles of exegesis,

merely on the ground that the sense which is thus brought out is not agreeable to what we should have expected to find. If we explain Scripture thus, we plainly are not receiving its teaching in the spirit of simple docility, but are, in fact, insisting upon its teaching us according to our own mind; and this is the very essence of Rationalism.

What we have reason to believe was meant by the first writer of this Record, and understood by those whom he addressed under the term *firmament*, has been already explained. The evidence appears to lead decisively to one conclusion—so decisively that the conclusion would, no doubt, be readily and commonly recognised, if our minds were not so strongly pre-occupied with the feeling of its absurdity as to refuse even to listen to what is to be said in its behalf. The view which ordinarily takes its place holds that the *raqīa'* (*firmament*) means the circumambient atmosphere of our globe, which is *spread abroad*, and which bears up the clouds, which thus are *the waters above the firmament*. But against this view there lie the following objections:—

(1.) The etymology of *raqīa'* is adverse to the notion of a circumfused fluid filling a certain considerable depth of space; for it suits properly an object which presents (as has been before stated) the two dimensions only of length and breadth, and does not readily apply to an object of which a prominent characteristic is the third dimension of thickness. It is true that compared with the magnitude of the whole globe, as modern science has ascertained it, the depth of the atmosphere is such as makes it appear to us no more than a thin sheet of space; but this is not the view which antiquity took of the atmosphere; and since the question relates

to the meaning of a word, we must be governed in our decision by the sense which was entertained of its meaning by those who originally used it.

(2.) "*The waters above the firmament*," in Gen. i. 6, 7, plainly bear a very much larger relative proportion to the *waters under the firmament* than is borne by the water in the clouds (where there *are* clouds at all) to the waters which are lying on the surface of the globe. Besides, the water in the clouds is itself derived by evaporation from the water on the earth's surface, and, on this account, and also as being vapour, presents an object of thought of a kind widely different from that of a body of waters, homogeneous with those on the earth's surface, and only parted off from the latter by the *firmament* being inserted between.

(3.) The sun, moon, and stars were *set in the firmament* (Gen. i. 14, 17); but it is absurd to say that they are *in* the circumambient atmosphere which is underneath the clouds, or to imagine that any one could ever have conceived of them as being so. Nothing is more patent to the eye than that clouds come between us and the heavenly bodies.

This interpretation of the *firmament*, as meaning the elastic atmosphere of our earth, must therefore be put aside, as incompatible alike with the etymology of the word, and with what is said concerning it in this very section.

A third instance of violence done by rationalising exegesis to the obvious meaning of the letter of Scripture is afforded by its treatment of the Fourth Day's work. Instead of that work being the formation of the heavenly bodies themselves, it is made to be nothing more than their being made available for giving light to the earth and for regulating times and seasons. Can it

be supposed that such a sense would ever have been put upon the words if it had not been felt necessary to see in Scripture, not what its words would naturally import, but what should appear to us to be reasonable? The interpretation (as already has been observed) is resisted by the terms in which the Fourth Day's work is itself described, and by those in which it is subsequently referred to. Scripture knows of no other coming into being of the heavenly bodies than that which is here recorded.

We are next to turn our attention to the attempts which have been made to explain this first section on the ground of geological science.

Here we are first met by the scheme of interpretation broached by Dr. Chalmers, and afterwards adopted, more or less, by Dr. Buckland, and very recently by Archdeacon Pratt. Its relation to geology is very slight; indeed, that relation amounts to no more than this, that by taking the first verse to describe the original creation of the universe, and by supposing an interval of time of untold duration to elapse between that *beginning* and the era at which, in the second verse, the earth is found *without form and void* (in consequence of some mighty catastrophe which overwhelmed everything with confusion and disorder), we introduce a space of time during which all those successive phases of Nature could have come and gone, the history of which it is the business of geology to unfold. This scheme of interpretation supposes the Six Days to have been literally six days; so far, it agrees with plain and natural exegesis. But inasmuch as it makes the work of those Six Days to have consisted, not in the actual bringing into being of the several parts of Nature, but simply in modifying their appearance and relations,—this scheme not only gives the section as a whole a different

import from that which it naturally is understood to bear, but also becomes liable to all those several objections which have just now been urged against a rationalising construction of certain parts of the Record. It is condemned, therefore, on the ground of fair exegesis; and it seems to fare no better when judged in the light of geological science, being apparently irreconcilable with the phenomena presented in the Tertiary Strata. Geologists, it is true, have so often had to reconstruct their theories, that it does not become them to be very confident, even in those positions which they hold to be now fairly or even completely ascertained. Nevertheless, they seem to have good grounds for their conviction, that at least during the long Tertiary Period, which preceded the present phasis of the earth and the appearance of Man, and during the transition from that period into that to which the history of mankind belongs,—there has been no such sudden and violent break as the Bucklandian view of Gen. i. 2 requires. There appears to have been an uninterrupted progression running through the Eocene, Meiocene, Pleiocene, and Pleistocene Periods, and issuing in the present geological period, such as allows no room for supposing any such vast catastrophe of the world's condition. This scheme of interpretation, therefore, is condemned alike by Biblical exegesis and by geology.

Another system of interpretation, instead of finding in the sacred narrative a place into which all geological history may be thrust away out of sight, undertakes to trace certain of the great phases of geological history in the Six Days' work itself. This scheme was unfolded to a great extent by the late Hugh Miller, in his posthumous volume of "The Testimony of the Rocks." It has been worked up into somewhat more complete detail by Dr. McCausland, in his "Sermons in Stones, or Scripture

confirmed by Geology." The speculation of these two writers, and particularly as lighted up by the genius and eloquence of the lamented Hugh Miller, presents features which are often highly alluring to the imagination; and at times the reader may be forgiven for being almost inclined to admit it as true. Yet a closer examination shows that the speculation is an unreal one—shadows of fiction, which, as they pass over the face of the original record, seem occasionally to harmonise with its details with a surprising correspondency, but which, however, when steadily contemplated, are found to be shadows, and not really to belong to the substance which they momentarily disguise.

The Six Days, according to this view, are geological periods; for either we are to suppose that *a day* may itself mean a protracted period (which, however, can hardly be made out), or else we are to conceive that, out of successive geological periods, a real day was taken as a sample of the whole period to which it belonged—for this latter view seems suggested in one passage of the "Testimony" (p. 168). Dr. McCausland supposes the First Day to have been the dark aqueous period, ending in the Silurian era; during the time which corresponded to the *evening*, *i. e.* the earlier part of this day, the existence of marine animals (and there were no others)—zoophytes, mollusks, and crustaceans—indicated that there was a vitalising influence already at work within the obscure waters; and that this is what is meant by "*the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters.*" The existence of light towards the close of this day is betokened (so Dr. McCausland thinks) by the organs of vision which are found in the trilobites abounding in the Silurian period.\* But it was a very dim kind of

\* "The compound faceted eyes of the trilobite do not warrant

light, the sun not being yet able to pour his rays through the vast masses of cloud and vapour with which the earth, still hot, was enveloped. The Second Day, during which the *atmosphere* was being formed, is not very clearly marked even by Dr. McCausland, but seems to terminate with the close of the Silurian period, when it is conceived the atmosphere began to be better able to bear up the mass of vapour. The Third Day comprises the carboniferous period: during the earlier part of this day, at the ushering in of the Devonian epoch, there appear to have been tremendous disturbances of the earth's surface\*, such as may very well be supposed to have caused *the dry land to appear*; and accordingly, as it has been commonly thought, it is at this period that traces are first found of the existence of land plants. The latter portion of this day, in which grass, herbs, and trees were created, answers to that period, so wonderfully rife with vegetation,—owing probably to the rankness with which vegetation would grow under the hot and cloud-enveloped atmosphere,—to which we owe the coal formations. The Fourth Day, in which the sun began to shine, was the Permian era, during which the

the supposition that there was a difference in the degree of light during the Silurian period. In structure they resembled those of the insecta and crustacea, of the former of which some genera have eyes adapted for vision in darkness, while others, as the butterflies, delight in the brightest rays of the sun.”—*Mr. Dawkins*.

\* The general prevalence of these violent disturbances of the earth's surface, introducing the Devonian period are subject to some doubt. “ In Herefordshire, the Devonian overlies the Silurian system conformably, the one graduating into the other so imperceptibly that no fixed boundary line clearly defines the province of either. This conformity is well seen in a section of the series given by Professor Phillips in his ‘Manual of Geology,’ p. 141. In *Russia*, the Silurian is unconformed to the Devonian series (Phillips and Murchison).”—*Mr. Dawkins*.

season-rings, the product of the sunbeam on the tree, begin to appear.\* At this time, also, the gradual disappearance of the heterocercal fishes, clothed in that bony armour which fitted them for life in the tepid ocean in which they had lived, and the coming in of homocercal fishes, with horny scales after the present form, testify to the cooling of the earth's surface, and to the consequent diminution of that steamy vapour which before had made the heavenly bodies invisible. The Fifth Day, the day of the creation of the *tanninim*, *sea-monsters*, and of the fowl, is the Oolitic period, with its horrible saurians, both reptile and winged. The Sixth comprises the Cretaceous and Tertiary periods, ushering in the mammals, and the last period, when man was created.

Such is the scheme as elaborated by Dr. McCausland. Hugh Miller does not work it out in quite so complete a form: he holds himself, as a geologist, responsible only for the Third, Fifth, and Sixth Days. After Mr. Goodwin's examination of it, as it came out of Hugh Miller's hands, a lengthened criticism would be superfluous. It will be only necessary to note a few of the more striking objections.

On the meaning which it assigns to the term *day* it is not necessary to lay much stress; for although the word itself, especially as accompanied by the parallel phrase, *the evening and the morning*, can only mean a diurnal space of time, yet this notion of its length of duration may belong only to the section as being a *vision* of the creation, as Hugh Miller regards it; while retaining its proper meaning of a simple day, the day

\* "In the Oxford Museum is a thin section of wood from the coal measures which exhibits the season-rings with great distinctness."  
—*Mr. Dawkins.*



as apprehended by the seer may stand as a *symbol*, representing a long geological period. Here, then, we need find no great difficulty. But there are other points to be considered.

1. The *darkness which covered the face of the deep* is supposed to have been caused by the vapour which rose from the waters seething with the intense heat of the earth's crust. Does not this assume the existence already, on the First Day, of an elastic atmosphere capable of buoying up the vapour? But the atmosphere, we are told, was not formed till the Second Day.

2. The explanation of the firmament to mean the atmosphere labours under the hopeless embarrassment of being (as we have seen) resisted by the proper meaning of the term. But besides this, supposing it to mean the atmosphere, we find Hugh Miller compelled to confess that, "respecting the work of at least the first and the second days, more especially that of the second, we can still but vaguely guess" ("Testimony," p. 159). Neither will Dr. McCausland's readers be disposed to think that he has been able materially to help out the theory in this part of its development. The facts or hypotheses which geology supplies present still no materials for constructing anything parallel to the work of the Second Day.

3. The obvious construction of the Third Day's work leads us to suppose that provision was then made for sustaining the existence of the animals to be formed on the Sixth Day, and especially of man; for "*the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit whose seed was in itself,*" mentioned in respect to the Third Day (Gen. i. 12), are identical with the "*every herb bearing seed, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed,*" which on the Sixth Day are given to man

for food (Gen. i. 29), and no other creation of objects belonging to the vegetable kingdom is mentioned. It is, therefore, with some degree of surprise (as Mr. Goodwin has intimated) that we learn that the Third Day's work relates to the vegetation which lies embedded in the coal measures.

4. Again, a protest must be raised against that view of the Fourth Day's work which would make it mean nothing more than that the heavenly bodies were then made visible, through the dispersion (we are told) of the thick clouds of steam and vapour consequent upon the cooling of the earth's crust. And, indeed, it is a strange way of describing a change of this kind, to say that then God *made* the sun, moon, and stars, and *set them in the firmament*, whereas, in fact, nothing at all was done in respect to the heavenly bodies themselves (for such is the interpretation we are now considering); only the clouds were dispersed which before had prevented their being seen. Dispose the notion that "the description would be optical" ("Testimony" p. 155) as we will, yet it requires a wide stretch of fancy to suppose that a witness viewing (we will say) the change from the earth's surface would have been beguiled into the apprehension that the objects, gradually discovered to his view by the evident removal of an interposing curtain, were then first created.

5. The Fifth Day we have seen assigned to the formation of the saurians of the Oolitic period. At first sight there is a certain plausibility lent to this view by the specification of the *tanninim*, for since *tannin* sometimes means *dragon* or *serpent*, and occasionally perhaps *crocodile*, it may very well designate a creature of the saurian class in general; though the passage before cited from the Psalms (Ps. cxlviii. 7), as well as some

others, shows that we need not go back to the Oolitic period to find these *tanninim*. But there are fatal objections. On this day were made (so the Record tells us) all the inhabitants of the waters, as well as all the birds. Now fishes had been in being in geological periods anterior to the Oolitic, traces of heterocercal fishes abounding in the Devonian strata. Moreover, as has been already seen, the *sheretz of the waters* (Gen. i. 20) is the whole class of animals swarming in that element; it would include, therefore, not only fishes properly so called, but the mollusks and crustaceans; and these appear very early, being found profusely in the Silurian rocks and onwards. Even if *sheretz* be taken to mean *creeping things*, as the Septuagint renders it, yet it might still describe mollusks and crustaceans as suitably as saurians. Neither can we fail to observe that, according to the exposition now under view, fishes disappear out of the sacred narrative altogether; their place being taken by saurians, we have no account left of the formation of fishes at all. In like manner birds disappear to make room for the monstrous pterodactyls. Is this a likely exposition of the text? On the Sixth Day these creatures are specified as subjected to the dominion of man; while in fact almost all the races of animals which existed in those periods have disappeared from the earth altogether.

6. A similar objection lies against the exposition which this scheme gives of the Sixth Day's work. The earlier part of the day is thought to be recognised in "those Tertiary ages during which the gigantic mammals possessed the earth and occupied the largest space in creation." ("Testimony," p. 167.) In the Sacred Record, man has assigned to him the dominion over these as well as over the other classes of animals; for

compare the language of the 26th and 28th verses with the 24th, as well as with the 20th and 21st. Yet these "gigantic mammals" have never been subject to his dominion, having likewise disappeared before he came upon the scene.

In fact the gist of the most important objection all lies here; the whole of the chapter, as naturally construed, appears to portray the production of all these various objects in nature by which man was to find himself surrounded when he should at the last appear on the earth; whereas, according to this scheme of interpretation, the greater part of the chapter relates to classes of objects with which man has no connection whatever; the works of the First Day (for *that* light is not *our* light), of the Third, of the Fifth, and of the former part of the Sixth, are works which have ceased to be countless ages ago, leaving nothing but mere traces of their existence, requiring to be toilsomely disinterred out of the bowels of the earth by scientific investigation.

Neither can this exposition be regarded as discovering in the words one class of objects symbolised by another class of objects, which, however, likewise retain their place; like, for example, the interpretation of words relating to David or to Cyrus as prophetic of Christ. This is something altogether different. It is the setting aside wholly of the obvious and primary sense of the words, to substitute for it another with which the original one cannot at all co-exist. We read the chapter and fancy we see one thing, when our geologist comes in and tells us that it is nothing whatever of the kind, but something quite diverse to, and even irreconcilable with, that which we before found there. It is not easy to believe that a sense wrapped up in words

which are so very apt to lead the reader away from apprehending it, can have been the sense which the Spirit of God intended us to find there.

In short, while it is impossible to deny to Hugh Miller's scheme the praise of great ingenuity, and though, as already confessed, we plain unscientific readers may in parts of it almost feel inclined to fancy it true, yet it is impossible to admit it. It is irreconcilable with many of the details of the chapter; it is, in especial, out of keeping with what, according to natural exposition, must be regarded as the general import of the whole.

## IV.

THE SECTION NOT HISTORY, STRICTLY SO CALLED, BUT  
PARABLE.

THE most important part of our problem is yet to be solved. It has been shown (as I believe) that this first section of the Bible is not a human but a divine utterance; for we have for this the guarantee, not only of Moses and the prophets, but of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. On the other hand, viewed in the light of fair and honest exposition, the section seems to contain notions which are not merely not comprehended in the lessons of modern science, but are felt to be incompatible with them. It would not be, perhaps, accurate to affirm so much respecting the existence of light apart from the sun,—though, in fact, even here we find ourselves before a statement which we do not easily square with our notions of physical facts;—but when we take account of the conception of a firmament vaulting the skies, of waters above that firmament, and of the sun and stars, as well as the moon, being made after the earth, and as accessory and ancillary to the earth, however congenial such views may have been, and we know in fact were, to the persuasions of mankind in general, down to very modern times, yet now we must confess that they can no longer be admitted among just views of physical facts.

We have seen the attempts which Geology, meaning

to work as the handmaid of Faith, has made to find in the sacred story an account of geological eras, and we have acknowledged their failure. It would be rash to say that no attempts made in this direction ever can succeed. Possibly they may yet. The science of geology is itself in its infancy, and we cannot tell what developments it has to undergo, what changes of its form, before it shall have assumed the most perfect shape to which, in the present state, human investigation is able to bring it. The failure of former efforts, then, is not decisive for the incredibility of the success of all future efforts; and the Christian geologist, if hitherto unable to gain from science the full satisfaction of his perplexities, may, however, have so much faith in God, that if he thinks he has reason to suppose that the passage of Holy Scripture now before us is really to be construed as a history, he will pause before he ventures to put contumely upon His word by affirming that it is not His word; but will wait.

For if geology has not served to clear up the perplexities which the student of Scripture finds in the opening section of Genesis, it yet has rendered very material support to some great truths both of Natural Religion and even of Revelation. This point has been drawn out by several writers, and with much eloquence and force by Hugh Miller, in those two lectures contained in his "Testimony of the Rocks," which are devoted to "Geology viewed in its bearings on the two Theologies."

For example: Geology has scattered to the winds for ever the hypothesis, working in the service of atheism, of a succession from eternity of living objects as they now exist. It of itself makes almost certain the belief of successive *creations*, as contrasted with the view of a

progressively self-developing power inherent in nature herself, whether according to the Lamarckian doctrine, or according to that modified form of it more recently broached by Mr. Darwin ; for all its evidence tends to show the *sudden* introduction from time to time of new and complete phases of animal and vegetable life ; while it finds no trace whatever of the *gradual* passing of a type, whether of animal or vegetable life, out of one stage of manifestation into another,—no tokens of its transition while as yet in an immature and, so to speak, wavering form. This brings the hand of a *Creator* very near to us,—a God who has not once for all made the world, and then left it thenceforward to pursue the career once for all assigned to it ; but a God who has times without number interfered with the exercises of creative energy, and who therefore may in all reason be expected to do so yet again.

Geology shows that the usual law observed in the introduction of new phases of life has been that of progression from lower to higher realisations of typical ideas. There may have been exceptions in which a high phasis has been displayed, and has again for a while receded ; but the usual law has been that of progression. At length, man has been reached, towards whom all the types of animal life seem, in converging lines, to point,—in whom they all, as combined, find the highest realisation which they have hitherto received. But as it would be the height of presumption to affirm that the Creator cannot hereafter go beyond what He has already done—for from era to era we find Him transcending former displays of His wisdom, power, and goodness, by yet higher displays of wisdom, power, and goodness ; and as former geological history so much familiarises our minds to the



idea of progressively higher development under His creative hand, as to have made it natural to us even to *look* for it as we advance from one geological era to another; so geology gives us to understand that it is *not incredible*, that, on the contrary, it is even *probable*, nay, that it is even *to be expected*, that there will hereafter appear some yet higher form of animal life than even man's nature as now constituted exhibits. And this, under a particular notion of it—that is, through an extraordinary interposition of divine power through Christ—Christianity bids us look forward to as one great object of hope.

We see, then, how far it is from being true that Religion owes nothing to Geology. It owes much. Faith may have been over-eager in seeking to win trophies from this science; and upon finding them torn from her grasp, she may feel mortified, and be even tempted (as we see illustrated in the Essay now before us) for a moment to forego her own nature, and doubt. Yet, while failures should teach her greater sobriety and caution, yet be she her own self still. Let her still believe, and in hope—or rather in assured anticipation—of clearer light, not “make haste,” but WAIT.

Nevertheless, the direction in which we are destined to find the solution of the difficulties which we meet with in the Mosaic record of creation, may not be that of geological exposition, neither perhaps is *that* the quarter in which a right appreciation of our position would direct us to look for it. Without affirming that endeavours to find it there must necessarily fail, I am more disposed to look elsewhere, and am indeed bold enough to think that most of those difficulties will be seen to vanish altogether, if we will only consent to

adopt a different view of the general character of the record from that which all such schemes of interpretation presuppose.

Our perplexities have mainly arisen from our regarding this opening section of Scripture as a history of the phenomena of the Creation as they actually came into being. But is this a right apprehension of its character?

I quite agree with Mr. Goodwin, that "we can know nothing as to the *object* of the account except from the account itself." But he takes his stand upon the position—which again and again he urges—that it is a "cosmogony." He is persuaded that it is "simply a speculation of some early Copernicus or Newton, who devised a scheme of the earth's formation as nearly as he might in accordance with his own observations of nature, and with such views of things as it was possible for an unassisted thinker in those days to take" (p. 247); or again, that it is "a speculation of some Hebrew Descartes or Newton, as the best and most probable account that could then be given of God's universe" (p. 252). And whereas Dr. Auckland had remarked, that the object of the account was not to state *in what manner*, but *by whom* the world was made, Mr. Goodwin replies, that "every one must see that this is an unfounded assertion, inasmuch as the greater part of the narrative consists in a minute and orderly description of the manner in which things were made" (p. 232).

This view of the contents has no doubt been held by many, and in fact forms the basis on which the several schemes of interpretation above commented upon have been raised. Yet a dispassionate consideration of the whole section, with an eye to this particular question, may perhaps conduct a reader to a very different con-

clusion from that which Mr. Goodwin here so confidently announces. I shall have occasion, in the course of the inquiry, to advert to this point again. At present it may be remarked, that no doubt Mr. Goodwin means to speak respectfully, and even, after a sort, reverently, when he describes the Mosaic account of the creation as the speculation of "some early Copernicus or Newton," or again, of "some Hebrew Descartes or Newton;" but what grounds, he may be asked, do the contents of the composition afford for our paying its author any such compliment? Does he really *attempt* any such philosophical explanation of the processes of cosmogenesis as the application to him of such designations would seem to imply? There is no attempt whatever of the kind throughout the section. The utmost that is stated in the least savouring of any such philosophising, is the statement with which the account begins, of the existence at the first of chaos and of darkness. But this itself is not so much a "speculation" as to what, positively, was the original state of things, as to what, negatively, it was not: it forms no more than the basis to the thought which was to be developed in the whole account, that the order and distinction of elements which the observer now sees in nature, did not exist till they were *brought into being* by the fiat of the Creator. *How* the several steps in the work of creation were brought to pass—*through what instruments* existing in the workhouse of nature—or *through what interior processes of causation*,—of all this, we here find nothing. It is true that one thing is mentioned after another; for in what other way *could* the matter have been stated, if there was intended to be an enumeration of the different objects in nature at all? And there would, of course, also be an order of sequence

in the enumeration, such as would suit the relative character of the objects specified. But for all this, the proposition still holds, that there is no *philosophising* whatever, no attempt at any scientific interpretation of processes of cosmogenesis. We find nothing but the bare and most emphatic reiterated assertions as the utterance touches upon the several grand divisions under which material objects may be grouped, that this, and this, and again this, came into being through the simple fiat of God. This is the entire sum of the *philosophy* of the section.

Mr. Goodwin might have spared himself the effort which, with his appreciation of the childishness of the statements which the section contains, it must doubtless have cost him to call its author a "Copernicus," or "Descartes," or "Newton." Such designations can only mislead. The author of this composition was no philosophising speculator, by dint of reasoning fashioning out a theory of the processes of worlds coming into being: if he were, we might well marvel at the boldness with which he affirms as certain and known facts, what he must have been perfectly conscious was all of it the merest hypothesising. But he does not come before us as a philosopher. He appears in a higher character, as a Prophet, commissioned to announce to mankind that everything in nature alike owes its existence to the creative power of God.

But as the question, whether we are to regard this section as properly historical, is the very part of our subject which the most especially requires to be carefully sifted, being the point on which must hinge our whole determination of its meaning, I beg to submit to the reader's attention, in relation to it, a variety of considerations, tending in different ways towards one par-

ticular conclusion, the direct opposite of that on which Mr. Goodwin so confidently relies as proving the utterance to be one of merely human origin.

Much of the reasoning now about to be urged, though not by any means all of it, presupposes, as my readers will observe, that the section is inspired. Some of it relates to the question what an inspired account of the creation, supposing such should be given, might beforehand have been expected to be,—a question which calls for some consideration, inasmuch as the answer to this question will in some degree help us to a probable conclusion as to how the account now in our hands, *on the supposition of its Divine origin*, is itself to be construed. In those parts, what is now to be alleged will seem, directly and in the first place, to address itself to those who believe the Book of Genesis to be an inspired work. But I apprehend that Mr. Goodwin himself cannot complain of my presupposing its Divine inspiration in an argument like this, designed to show in what manner it is to be interpreted, as if such presupposal were a *petitio principii*. For he denies the Divine origin of the section on the ground of its being irreconcilable with our own scientific knowledge. But if it can be shown, that such incongruity of its contents with the teachings of modern science is not inconsistent with the probable theory of an inspired record of creation, supposing such should be given, but, on the contrary, is just what such a probable theory would require, then plainly his whole argument against its Divine inspiration has fallen to the ground.

1. Suppose, then, that the Bible is an inspired vehicle of revelation, and that among the rest this part of the Bible, certainly on the very face of the whole book a

very important part, is likewise inspired. Since, then, this section is inspired, if it is also to be regarded as a history of cosmogenesis as it actually took place, then as a history it must be *true*; the account which it gives of cosmical phenomena and facts, this account being interpreted in the light of fair exegesis, must be conformable to the reality of things as we know them to be. But in certain important statements—apart from the relation which it gives of the succession of the several works of creation—which relation we will suppose ourselves not in a position to criticise—in certain important statements fairly interpreted, we find this conformity to the reality of things wanting. Then there must be an error somewhere in our premises. Our premises are three: the inspiration of the section, its exegesis, and its historical character. The first being unquestioned, the error must lie either in our interpretation of its details, or in the supposition of its properly historical character. Which is the more probable—that our exegesis is wrong, or that the account is not intended for a history? Those who feel that the language of Scripture is *designed* to give its readers that very impression which, when taken in its plain and grammatical sense, it does give, will, in the dilemma now before us, feel disposed, at least for a while, to *acquiesce* in the interpretation; at any rate until they have taken up the third premise, and considered whether, after all, this premise is so certain as they, perhaps, have been wont to regard it. They will rather do this than shift back the ground of doubt, which they will else be obliged to do, and make it lie between their accepting, on the one hand, the natural exegesis, and their retaining, on the other, their belief of the inspiration of the passage. This they will be

reluctant to do ; for they will feel it to be an uneasy position to hold, not to be able to believe a scripture to be inspired without putting force upon the natural meaning of its language. I conclude, therefore, that the want of correspondence between some of the statements of the section and the facts of nature as now become known to us, is a reason why we should at least *call in question* its strictly historical character ; it is even a reason why we should be disposed to believe that it is *not* historical, supposing some other probable explanation of its general character can be offered for our acceptance. It is more probable that it is not strictly historical than that it is not inspired.

2. Is it, *à priori*, reasonable to believe that a history of cosmogenesis, properly so called, would be given in a revelation of such a kind as we see the Scriptures generally to be ? The purpose and scope of the Bible Revelation is, beyond question, to teach man his spiritual relation towards God. Does it appertain to this purpose and scope to give us instruction in cosmical history ? Why, everybody is ready to protest to the contrary ; everybody affirms it to be a settled principle that it is not the object of the Bible to teach man scientific knowledge. Then, since this part of Scripture, placed at its very threshold, and forming the basis upon which the whole is reared, must, of course, be homogeneous in character with the revelation in general, is it not in the highest degree probable—nay, may it not even be regarded as certain—that its purpose as inspired writ is in no degree to give us a history of cosmogenesis, a knowledge of which is certainly not *material* to our spiritual welfare, if it be in any respect related thereto — but solely to communicate religious truth ? The religious truth which it embodies is

plainly, according to every interpretation of the record, truth of the very supremest importance. Why should we not acquiesce in the conviction that the communication of that truth was its entire aim? Why mix up therewith the notion that it was also meant to instruct us in a branch of knowledge so alien from the general scope of Scripture as that of cosmogenetical history?

One would suppose that the present condition of the solar system is a matter of greater interest and concern to us than the earlier history of our planet; that it would be more relevant to our case to tell us, *e.g.*, of the material relations between the sun, moon, earth, and stars. But Scripture confessedly has not done this. It has left untouched the notion, universally held in ancient times, that the sun moves round the earth. Why should we suppose that it has passed over this to go to occupy itself with telling us of phases of the earth's condition which existed untold millenniums ago? Yet this is what is in effect believed to have been done, by those who regard this first section as properly historical.

Mr. Goodwin, if I mistake not, has himself fallen into a misconception which is only another branch of the same tree of error. He complains, and justly, of those who play fast and loose with the maxim that the Bible was not designed to teach us physical science. Yet he himself deems that, if inspired, this section must speak of cosmical facts according to their real character; and then, not finding that it does, he puts it aside as a human utterance. Why could he not rather have surmised that, just because it is a divine utterance, it would of course not make it its business to interfere with man's notions of cosmical facts, but



would occupy itself exclusively with the communication of religious truth ?

3. If, *à priori*, a history of cosmogenesis was not to be expected from Scripture because it lies out of the proper scope and purpose for which revelation was given, so again, *à priori*, it was not to be expected because of the subject itself being one which was altogether unfitted to be communicated at all. For let us consider what such a history would contain. Geology, by means of theories founded with very varying degrees of solidity upon positive evidence, traces the progress of our world only from the period of the igneous rocks. But there must have been a vast series of processes going on through great lengths of duration before that — processes over which there hangs an impenetrable veil, and respecting which science can only form mere guesses of probabilities ; I mean the periods of the (hypothesized) condensation of gases, of (hypothesized) nebulous existences, of the (hypothesized) solar system as yet forming one unbroken whole. If revelation was to give any history of cosmogenesis, at a length (we will say) equal to that of the first section, the account might be expected both to be conformable to the truth of things and to have its details proportioned to the relative importance of the several steps of the actual history. Now, the question arises, Was such a story fit to be told at all in a revelation designed for the spiritual guidance of mankind in all ages ? It would have been altogether incomprehensible in those ages in which physical science was yet in its infancy ; its several statements would have been mere riddles over which men would have pondered, if at all, in hopeless unintelligence. This, however, would not have been the worst. The com-

munication, during those long ages, would not merely have been useless, it would also have been prejudicial to the great object for which revelation is given. And this in two ways ; it would in a measure have withdrawn men's minds from the spiritual import of the revelation in general, to dwell upon speculation in physical science, as if that were a part of religious faith, which in fact it would then have really been made. And further, since the prevailing convictions relative to cosmical philosophy were inconsistent with the truth in matters of fundamental importance in that science, these would have come into conflict with the statements which our supposed cosmogony would have contained, and have proved a stumbling-block to the reception of the revelation itself ; in the very same way in which, in many instances, we have seen like difficulties operating during the last few years.

And how would it have fared with ourselves? Suppose such a cosmogony before us, now at the present day, with all our vaunted superior knowledge : could the geologist, or could the astronomical philosopher who professes to take up the history of the world at that point beyond which the geologist declares himself unable to pursue it, really think himself capable of decyphering such a supposed record? We might allow them to call in to their deliberations the chemist, the meteorologist, the mathematician, and any others whose lore might bear upon the subject : would they be able "to read the writing, or to declare the interpretation thereof?" The forces at work in nature, whose united operation has, under God's guiding hand, evolved this glorious fabric amid which we live — these forces, some of which we have named, knowing little or next to nothing about them, while of others, which probably

exist, we do not even form the faintest surmise — furnish a subject which, even if Heaven were imagined as discoursing to us concerning it, would be a mystery altogether beyond the reach of our faculties to apprehend. What would avail to us a communication which should treat according to the actual truth of things of the successive forms of nature evolved by these forces? Would it be intelligible? or, if in any degree intelligible, would it seem to us — yes, even *us*, with all our scientific wisdom — credible?

*À priori*, then, cosmogenesis is a subject in its own nature unfitted to become a matter of Divine communication; and therefore on this ground likewise, as well as on the *à priori* improbability founded upon the irrelevancy of a cosmical history to the great purpose of revelation, it is to be judged unlikely that any such communication *has* been made.

4. But it will be still said, However we may reason as to *à priori* probabilities, what is the fact? Have we not, after all, a professed cosmogony here before our eyes in this first section? In reply, I must beg my reader to review the section itself, taken as a whole; to study (if I may so speak) its general contour; to take account of the pervading tone of its representation; and then to judge, from his *feeling* of its character, whether it wears the appearance of being *designed* to be taken as historical.

This is a way of viewing the subject which it is extremely difficult to embody in definite statement; for it turns on points which must be entrusted very much to each man's own appreciation of composition and æsthetic tact. I will endeavour, however, to draw attention to a few features which appear to myself to be especially worthy of being noted.

Let us, then, observe how prominently what I may, in all reverence, venture to call the moral personality of God (I mean God as a living person, endued with activity and feeling), stands forth throughout the record. God does not appear merely as creating and forming, but as an artificer engaged upon a great, we may almost say, an arduous piece of workmanship. Over the several steps of the work as they are successively achieved, He pauses, eyeing and considering the result. He is heard *speaking* ; not only uttering commands which summon the several products into being, but, after they appear, giving them, in various instances, names. In every instance He is described as feeling and, we may suppose, expressing satisfaction and complacency in the work as being *good* ; at the last as being *good exceedingly*. We may note this feature of moral personality again, as shown in the language in which He addresses Himself to the creation of man ; betokening not the passionless Creator, but the Artificer proceeding with joy to the execution of that for which He has already made complete provision, that which He looks forward to as His noblest and most favourite work, that, in fact, which shall be upon earth His own darling counterpart, and which, therefore, He feels delight in investing with supremacy over all the rest. Then let us view the Adorable One on the Seventh Day keeping His Sabbath, feeling in its rest, after the Six Day's work and "business," a "refreshment" which prompts Him to pronounce His blessing upon the seventh day throughout time, because, as it should seem, of the tranquil joy which He had Himself experienced in "resting therein from all His workmanship which He had created to do."

Does all this wear the air of a cosmical *history* ?

Further, let us note the distribution of the whole work into Six Days, with a Seventh Day added, in which no work was done. If it be said that the former part may be the history of what was really done in six days, or in six periods of time, yet what is to be said of the Seventh Day? What *history* is represented by the rest on that day?

Once more, we are to observe that the section does not give an account of the earth being brought into one state after another, so that each state in succession disappears to make place for another; this *would* be a cosmical history; and thus, as we have seen, geological interpretation has endeavoured to represent it. But the several objects in nature by which man, when he appears, finds himself surrounded, and man himself, are grouped into distinct portions which are assigned among six days, the great thing had in view being, apparently, to make a brief but exhaustive enumeration of the various phenomena of nature, declaring of them in detail that the same mighty Artificer wrought them all.

Again I ask, is all this *like* a history? does it on the very face of it seem to profess to be a history?

Do not the form and manner of the representation lead us rather to feel that the section is meant to be taken as a kind of apologue or parable?—a parable in which the supreme Creator is compared to an artisan doing a week's work; He in *His* week of work elaborating in succession the various parts of His magnificent workmanship, which we behold with so much admiration in nature—the heavens and the earth, and, last of all, man; and then, *almost*\* like a workman who is tired

\* I say *almost*, for it deserves our particular attention that while (apparently to mark the vastness of the work achieved) the description approaches very near to this image, both in this section itself

and worn out with a week's heavy toil, which, however, has been throughout perfectly successful, and which, in its last effort that had called forth all his energies, has been incomparably felicitous, abandoning Himself on the seventh day to the sweet joy of a holy and self-satisfied repose.

I venture to ask my reader whether, without our putting the least strain upon one single feature of the account, and upon our simply resigning ourselves to its natural effect, the impression which the whole leaves upon the mind is not such as I have now endeavoured to trace.

5. The probability of the delineation being parabolic rather than historical appears the greater, if we consider the time to which the events that it symbolizes must be referred. There is for man a period of duration which falls properly under the conditions of history; but beyond which, whether at the one limit or at the other, history has no place. From the time that man began to live and to take cognisance of the objects and occurrences of the world, he could form a record which might either subsist in his memory only, to be transmitted by oral tradition, or be written in books or other kinds of external monuments; and this record, so far as it relates to man's religious history, the

and in what we read in Exod. xxxi. 17, it yet seems careful to stop just short of it; and the reason is obvious: the inspired author is distinctly conscious of the fact—which he will have us sensible of, too—that “the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.” There seems to have been a twofold purpose, at once to mark the exceeding magnificence and vastness of the Creator's work, as if its accomplishment had *almost* tasked even the energies of the Almighty; and, also, the really inexhaustible power of the Creator, who “spake, and it was done; who commanded, and it stood fast.”

Book of Revelation has largely embodied in its pages. This period of history runs on through successive ages, to terminate at the end of the present state of being, whenever that end shall come. Of future events, such as are to occur before the close of the historic period, we of ourselves can know nothing, and can only guess. God, however, if He sees fit, can give us intimation of some of such future events, falling within the historic period; and He has from time to time actually given to men such intimations; and these may be regarded as pieces of history written beforehand. God has further vouchsafed to give us intimation of future things beyond the historical period; and many of these are couched under forms of representation which outwardly seem historical, but which we know to be not really so. They belong to a future state, the conditions of which we are apprised will be very different from those under which we now live; and, therefore, though the forms of delineation are drawn from the present historical period, we at once recognise the fact that they are altogether parabolic or symbolical, and interpret them accordingly. For example, in the delineation of the future state given in the closing part of the Apocalypse, and given, too, at considerable length, we are all aware that it does not, strictly speaking, furnish any historical statement of the outward conditions of our state as it will then be, but that it simply images forth certain spiritual characteristics of that future state; giving, in short, merely religious truth, and not information about physical facts. And the ground of our judging thus lies, in effect, in our conviction that the time referred to transcends the historic period. It is on that account that we pronounce the delineation to be a parable. On the same grounds we may infer that the

description which God has given us of the creation may be reasonably construed as also being a parable. The time to which it points transcends the historic period on the one side, as that in the Apocalypse does on the other. The conditions of being in that foregoing period, running on, as science teaches us, through a vast duration, while God was as yet bringing the world as it now is into existence, were also diverse from those under which we are at present placed; so diverse, we know, in respect to very much of that period, as to make descriptions of its phases or events borrowed from our historic period, if such had been applied, to appear as of course analogous merely or parabolic. We may, therefore, conclude that the first section of the Bible, as well as its concluding portion, is a parable, and that the purpose of the parable in the one case, as well as in the other, is, in conformity with the whole scope of revelation, to convey to us information, not relating to physical facts, but simply to religious.\*

And the consideration now last urged will of itself serve to fence the theory of this section being a parable against any such abuse of the principle, as would apply it to get rid of the miraculous histories of Scripture by affirming them likewise to be (ideological) parables. One principal ground on which we feel warranted thus to interpret alike the first section of Genesis and the close of the Apocalypse is, that the times to which these passages refer transcend the period of history, and that therefore the delineations which these passages contain do not admit of being

\* I was pleased to find the line of thought pursued in this last paragraph confirmed by the remarks of Dr. Kurtz, quoted and enlarged upon by Hugh Miller, in his "Testimony," pp. 157—159.



taken as historical. Our thus interpreting these passages, therefore, affords no countenance to those wild schemes of interpretation, which would solve into parables historical narratives relating to the period of history, and describing occurrences which in ten thousand ways are mixed up with historical places, and persons, and states of society, with which they stand in intimate, and, so to speak, homogeneous connexion. It is not here my business to pursue any further this particular evasion of unbelief. I only mention it in order to point out that it receives no help from the principle of interpretation which peculiar grounds warrant us in applying to this opening part of Genesis.

6. In further confirmation of the view that this first section is a parable, and not a commencing part of the sacred history, properly so called, I may urge its isolated character as compared with the succeeding chapters. It is strongly marked by a twofold peculiarity distinguishing it from what immediately follows.

One point of peculiarity is the term which is employed throughout to designate the Divine Being: this is simply *God, Elohim*; whilst in the section which commences from the 4th verse of the 2nd chapter, the term by which God is named is *the Lord God, Jehovah Elohim*. We have heard of the numerous theories of disintegration which in succession have been applied by various German writer to Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch, founded upon the use in some parts of these Scriptures of the name *Elohim*, in others of *Jehovah Elohim*, in others *Jehovah*; theories by which it has been attempted to break up the Pentateuch into a variety of original documents, which have been named (with more conciseness than reve-

rence) *Elohistic, Jehovah-Elohistic, Jehovistic*. For a view of these theories and their refutation, I may be content to refer my readers to the compendious analysis of the whole discussion, which they will find in Keil's *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen Schriften des Alten Testaments*. I notice these theories here to express my entire persuasion of the unity of the Pentateuch, and to state that it is not with the smallest sympathy with any of these hopeless schemes of disintegration, that I lay stress upon the difference of the designation of the Divine Being which we find all through this first section, as compared with the part which immediately succeeds it. It is very possible, it may be even thought probable, that Moses, under Divine superintendence, adopted in this first section an ancient tradition which embodied a revelation made to some former seer. For there is no incongruity in supposing that one prophet made use of another prophet's utterances. (Compare, for one example, Isa. ii. 2—4 with Micah iv. 1—3). But for my present purpose it is unnecessary to dwell upon this. If it be judged that the peculiar designation of the Divine Being in this section, as compared with the following, does not indicate its *origination* to have been distinct,—if the original authorship be assigned to Moses in the case of both alike,—this point of distinction still proves at least so much as this, that the sacred penman regarded the Divine Being in this commencing section in a somewhat different phasis from that in which he is regarded in the historical delineations which follow; and, therefore, it at once parts off this portion of Scripture as standing to a certain degree in a peculiar position of its own.

The other feature which may be noted as separat-

ing it from the section which immediately follows, is the manner in which the creation of our first parents is described in the two records. In the first it is represented in the most general terms ; it takes place like the production of all the other objects in nature upon the simple expression of the Divine volition. This volition, it is true, is expressed in a peculiar manner in reference to this case, to signify, as it should seem, the especial gravity of this particular act of creative power ; still the creation of man takes place, as well as that of the other objects in nature, upon the simple expression of the Divine volition. There is no *process* described, or at all implied. Here, as with the rest, “He spake and it was done.” “*God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.*” But in the second chapter we have an account of the formation of Adam first — his moulding out of the clay and subsequent vitalisation ; then Adam’s isolation is described, as he finds in all the creatures around him, who are successively brought to him to see how he would name them, not one meet to be his partner. We have after that, his deep sleep, the abstraction of a rib from his body, the building up of this rib into a woman, who is brought to him and welcomed as every way a suitable partner, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. This is *history*, — peculiar and mystical if we will, yet still it is history ; it is the account of an individual man, his successive acts, sensations, and experiences. Who does not feel the marked difference of tone from all this, in the merely general assertion of the creation of man, — of the male and female, which we read in the first chapter ? There is no history there ; we have the bare declaration that God created man by the exercise of his power. His-

torical processes are kept back, because, as it would seem, the simple object was emphatically to set forth the truth that God was the maker of man; and because the impressive grandeur of the form in which the doctrine is now simply exhibited would have been marred by the introduction of any historical circumstances, for such would have had the effect of diverting the attention in some degree from the one great object of thought which it is here proposed to view. It cannot be said that the second section takes up the story of the first and continues it. For, in fact, if we read them both as history, they do not fairly admit of being pieced together. In the first account, the creation of man, male and female, appears as the concluding work of the sixth day. After all the other animals belonging to the dry land had been created in the former part of the day, man — *male and female* — are created last of all. There is, then, no room in point of time for all those circumstances which are related in the second chapter as occurring between the formation of Adam and the formation of Eve. Not only are the two accounts obviously not one continued account, but they appear as so distinct, that if they are both to be regarded as historical, we have to encounter a very serious difficulty in showing how, without violence, they can be reconciled into one narrative. The solution of the difficulty is furnished at once, if we suppose that the first section is not a history but a parable, designed to teach us in general terms that God was the creator of the heavens and the earth.

But it may be asked, was not this first section always regarded as simple history, and is not this theory of its being a parable, or, as others will have it, a vision, a mere makeshift, a new device which has been invented for the purpose of getting rid of modern scientific diffi-

culties, and which otherwise would never have occurred to any one ?

There is not, I apprehend, much force in this objection. Modern discoveries in science may very properly set Christians upon a more discriminating consideration of the contents of holy Scripture than they otherwise would have applied ; and the recent establishment of conclusions which in consequence are arrived at, infers no just suspicion upon their soundness. Not many hundred years ago it was imagined, and firmly maintained, that whatever is said or even remotely implied in Scripture relative to cosmical facts, must be absolutely true without any qualification whatever ; and hence it was for a long while reckoned a point of religious faith to resist that theory of the solar system which is now universally recognised. This circumstance alone would lead, and has led, thoughtful minds to the conclusion that it is not the proper function of Revelation to furnish correct views of science. This is not a polemical makeshift to evade difficulties ; it is a just discrimination of the proper office of Scripture. It is admitted that the clear perception of this truth is due to the progress of science ; it is admitted that it is thereby that theologians have been led to review their convictions, and to inquire whether a certain degree of disharmony felt to exist between their dogmatic system and the reliable teachings of physical truth may not have been due to their having confounded with “the true sayings of God” notions which are of merely human origin. Yet, if on the one hand, the cordial believer in Christ ought not to be loth to accept any such modifications of his previous views, as just reasoning shall show to be in perfect accordance with the maintenance still of the paramount authority of Divine Reve-

lation; on the other, the sceptic may forbear his taunts, such as even Mr. Goodwin has allowed himself to let fall (p. 211), as if theology was fast sinking into utter contempt, "maintaining a shivering existence, shouldered and jostled by the sturdy growths of modern thought, and bemoaning itself for the hostility which it encounters." Theology can hold her own still, and has had far less to unlearn and reconstruct than any of those "sturdy" systems of science which speak such proud things; and in particular incomparably less than geology, which of all sciences has been hitherto the most shifting and the most "jostled" about.

If we ask what was felt in reference to this first section in ancient times, and by those in particular to whom this Word of God was first brought, it may well be doubted whether the notion of its being a *history* of cosmogenesis, properly so called, was one which they ever thought of either affirming or denying. The references which it makes to the various objects in the cosmical system would fall in at once with their own notions about them, and would in no way solicit their minds as requiring to be themselves thought about. They would, in all probability, only gather from it the truth which the whole section presented to their view respecting God being the creator of all things. And so the account would not "mislead" them as Mr. Goodwin imagines, but, on the contrary, simply impress them with a vivid perception of that grand doctrine, fundamental of all religion, which it holds forth to view, written in such flaming characters.

Besides, in respect to those ancient times, we are to consider how much more familiar this mode of giving religious instruction by figures and parables was then than it is with us now. Let us recollect how often, as

we see in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus would put forth to the people a parable and there leave it,—adding no explanation, nor even, in some cases, saying that it *was* a parable, but expecting the hearers themselves to apprehend its character and to gather from it the truth which it embodied. And so it was in more ancient times. Both in the Prophets and in the Psalms we see the same custom of hanging up (so to speak) pictures for the conveying of religious instruction, while also the ceremonials of worship, sacrifices, and other circumstances of ritual, no doubt served the same office of communicating religious notions through the medium of emblems. Such a word-picture, it is conceived, is exhibited in this first section,—a large emblem hung up in the vestibule of Divine Revelation to image out what is beyond question the first and cardinal truth of all religion. To us, perhaps, with our habit of saying out our thoughts in direct statement, it may not at first occur to feel in what way this account of creation was designed to be viewed ; but with an oriental it may be supposed to have been different ; to him it would be a ready action of thought,—one which his habits would make obvious and almost natural to him,—to recognise at once its parable-like form, and to interpret it accordingly.

On these grounds, therefore, it may be safely concluded that the first section of Genesis was neither intended, nor originally understood, as a history of cosmogenesis, but as a parable enunciating religious truth relative to the creation. The grounds briefly recapitulated are these: (1) the Divine inspiration of the section being admitted, but a great want of conformity being noticed between its details if it be construed as history, and the known facts of nature, we are driven to surmise that our notion of its being historical is

itself wrong: (2) *à priori*, a cosmogenetical history was not to be expected, because the communication of such knowledge does not fall within the proper scope of a Divine Revelation: (3) *à priori*, again, a cosmogenetical history from heaven was not to be expected, because, if true (as of course it must have been), it would have been unintelligible in all ages till now, and most probably even now; it would further have been prejudicial to the proper purpose of revelation,—for it would have led men away to speculations on physical science, it would have made notions of physical science matter of religion, and it would have impeded faith in the revelation generally, when its statements relative to cosmical facts were not felt to be in accordance with what science was supposed to teach: (4) the whole manner of the delineation in this section disinclines the reader to regard it as history, and leads him to feel it to be a parable: (5) that it is a parable, and not historical, is evidenced by the consideration that the time in which the events that it refers to took place transcends the historical period, and that, therefore, like the closing delineations of the Apocalypse, this opening delineation of Genesis can in all reason be only construed symbolically: (6) this first section stands apart from that which follows, and refuses to be taken in conjunction with it as homogeneous history: and (7) though it is not so obvious to us with our ways of thinking and speaking, to take a passage like this as parabolic, with an oriental it would be different; his habits of speaking and thinking would dispose him readily to conceive of it under that character; and we may very easily believe that he might not have thought of it as history at all, but have fastened his mind altogether upon the religious notions which it embodies.



## V.

## SCIENTIFIC DIFFICULTIES OBVIATED.

WE have now to consider whether the view of the first section being a parable, and not a history, will not serve to relieve us from those difficulties which we feel to arise from the cosmical notions which it expresses being contradicted by the ascertained truths of science.

When an inspired person delivers a parable, what are the elements in the parable to which the seal of his inspiration attaches? Does it attach to the images under which the religious truth intended to be conveyed is couched, or solely to the religious truth itself? I apprehend that the intelligent reader of Scripture will not hesitate in giving his answer: the seal of the inspiration attaches exclusively to the religious doctrine which is conveyed, and not at all to the outward forms in which that doctrine is embodied.

And the reason lies in this: on the one hand, the conveyance of religious truth is the sole object of Divine inspiration; and, on the other, the very notion of a parable withdraws the mind away from the outward form, and fixes it exclusively upon the thing signified.

The forms of thought which are employed may be drawn not only from the actual visible world, but also from views relative to the spiritual world which were

current at the time of the speaker; but in this case still the inspiration under which the parable is spoken does not in any degree guarantee the truth of such pneumatological notions, since the purpose of the parable was not to teach anything respecting these, but simply to use them as forms for conveying the particular truth which was its own proper concern.

A few illustrations from the parables in Scripture will both explain and prove this position.

There are few who can read without intense admiration and delight the imagery under which Isaiah embodies his song of triumph over the destruction of the Babylonish power in the 14th chapter of his prophecies. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?"

The imagery here is drawn from those current notions respecting Hades, which invested the souls of the royal departed with a shadowy sovereignty even in that world of ἀμεινυτὰ κάρηνα. On the destruction of the Babylonish power, the shade of the sovereign, who ideally represents that monarchy in general, upon going down to the world of spirits causes by his arrival a stir of lively interest among the shades of defunct powers already there, who burst forth into an ironical congratulation upon his having been made even as one of them.

Isaiah was a prophet inspired by God; and the truth in all this passage to which his inspiration affixes its guarantee, is the certain impending destruction of the Babylonish monarchy. But the forms of thought

which furnish the imagery of his prophecy belong to the region of conjectural belief, and are no more and no less to be accounted true because they have been thus used, than if they had never been mentioned by the prophet at all.

In several of our Lord's parables we find a similar use of notions relating to the spiritual world which were prevalent amongst the Jews; but we make no difficulty in separating these from the purpose of the parables; we discern clearly that the *doctrine* of the parable is true because He taught it, but that the pneumatology from which the imagery is drawn stands just as it did before, not to be pronounced true because He made such use of it, but to be estimated still upon its own intrinsic merits.

For example, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the imagery of the invisible world is, we doubt not, derived from prevailing Jewish notions. Now that would be surely felt to be very precarious reasoning which should require us to believe that because our Lord specifies in the parable a number of particulars as taking place in the history of these two imaginary persons after their death, that therefore such things do take place. It would be very precarious positively to affirm that angels carry the souls of the pious to some place of happy existence,—however probable we may otherwise deem the fact,—or that the soul of a pious Jew reposes in Abraham's bosom; or that the wicked do actually in "Hades" suffer the burning of fire; or that they can, from their place of suffering, see the happiness of the pious; or that they can from thence converse with Abraham; or that Abraham has the power of despatching those who are with him, on such errands as he thinks proper; or that the lost care for those who

are still living upon earth. These things may on other grounds be estimated as true or false, as probable or otherwise; but no sound commentator would think of affirming them to be true because they are stated, though by our Lord himself, in a parable.

Let us take another instance. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Luke xi.)

It is unnecessary here to enter upon the subject of demoniac possession. The really historical nature of such possession rests, as I apprehend, upon certain grounds in the narratives of the Gospels, and I have no thought of throwing suspicion upon it. But, taking the above parable by itself, any unprejudiced reader will allow that the use of the figure of a man under demoniac possession, which is here employed to represent the Jewish people, of itself leaves the question respecting the reality of demoniac agency just where it was. We feel that we are not warranted in inferring its certainty from the parable; neither do we feel warranted in supposing that the parable gives us information respecting the habits of evil spirits, as, *e.g.* that they delight in dry places, or that they love to herd together. We know that, while the parable is inspired, yet, notwithstanding its inspiration, nay, even perhaps *because* of its inspiration, it means to give us no information on these points, but is simply a prophetic description of the growing wickedness of the Jewish people, after the

promise of improvement which they had given during the ministry of John the Baptist and the earlier part of our Lord's own ministry.

I may take another instance; though if any shall feel less disposed to admit its relevancy, I will simply ask such persons to leave it out of account, for if admitted, it is at any rate only an additional testimony, when the case has already been sufficiently explained and proved. The instance referred to is this:—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xviii.)

The explanation of this passage is afforded by Acts xii. 15, when the disciples, upon Rhoda's confidently affirming that Peter was at the door, were satisfied that she had seen and heard what seemed to be very much like St. Peter, and concluded that it was "his angel." This proves that the Jews regarded a man's angel, *i.e.* his attendant or tutelary spirit, as being his counterpart. Hence we may infer that our Lord, in the parabolic language last cited, means simply to describe the especially high regard with which God looks upon the humble believer in Christ. Such an one's angel stands high among the courtiers of the Heavenly King; and, as the angel is, such is the man himself. If this be the right view of the passage, it plainly leaves altogether where it was before, the question respecting guardian spirits,—whether there really are such,—whether their position in the view of God is regulated according to the estimation in which God holds those on whom they attend,—whether they really are their counterparts. The inspiration of our Lord's utterance decides nothing respecting any of these particulars.

I have chosen to dwell especially upon parables

spoken by our Lord himself, and for this reason:—If these parables had come from the lips of another, some might have taken occasion to say that the speaker said what he, with his contemporaries, really believed when he made use of these current pneumatological terms and notions; and that we are not able to determine how far the speaker's inspiration would affect or correct his own judgment respecting such matters. Now, in the case of our Adorable Lord, none with whom, for the present, I care to reason, would venture upon any such language. We feel persuaded that He uses such images, not because he shares in the popular belief or delusion (if it were such) respecting objects appertaining to the spiritual world, but because he employs them simply as images wherein to embody the truth which, from time to time, He wishes to convey. We regard exclusively the main substance of the doctrine: the forms through which it is conveyed we treat as the vehicle only, and as nothing more.

And it may not be irrelevant to my present purpose to add that the use of such images might have been misconstrued,—and we know, in fact, actually has been misconstrued, by ill-judging hearers or readers, as if it did indicate what was the real fact in regard to those spiritual objects. But such misconstruction we do not ascribe to anything really “misleading” in our Lord's teaching itself. We set it down, and justly we set it down, to the account of inconsiderateness and want of just discrimination on the part of those who did not reflect, as they ought to have done, what is the nature of a parable, and what are the elements in a parable to which alone the seal of inspiration is attached.

We are now in a position to estimate the several

elements which make up the record of creation which is given us in the first section of Genesis.

Let us suppose, as I venture to think has been shown to be the case, that this passage of Scripture was designed to be taken as a parable, the great and leading purpose of which was to exhibit, in a form of delineation calculated to impress every mind, the fundamental truth, that the Author of this universe by which we find ourselves surrounded is God. There *may* be, and indeed there *are*, other elements of religious thought embodied in it, which will be adverted to presently, but these are only subordinate and dependent ; the grand and main purpose is to set forth God as the Creator of all things.

In order to give this doctrine a form of sensuous imagery, such as shall make it the more impressive upon the imagination, the utterance represents one week of God's existence, — Six Days of work and One Day of rest,—as appropriated to the production of the universe.

The several parts of the universe are distributed among the Six Days, according to such a division and arrangement as should appear *suitable to the notions then entertained* as to the character and relative mutual importance of the several parts of which the universe is composed.

It was fitting that the utterance should deal with the subject thus ; for, on the one hand, it was not at all its business to instruct men in the scientific knowledge of nature, and, therefore, it would not seek in any way to correct the erroneous views then held ; and, on the other hand, the utterance must take it for granted that men would instinctively feel what it was that it designed to set forth : namely, that its object was to convey just

those religious views which we see it exhibits *additional* to the notions already prevailing of physical nature,—the latter being left by the utterance as it found them, and being employed only as vehicles of imagery to communicate the former.

The order of arrangement which was to be followed, in specifying the production of the several parts of the universe, would follow that notion of fitness which the (unscientific) mind which was addressed would recognise as in accordance with its own views. This follows, of course, from the premise that the revelation, being in no wise a revelation of the true science of cosmical facts, would leave undisturbed that view of those facts which already existed in the human mind.

Hence the utterance, while of Divine inspiration, attaches the sanction of its inspiration, neither to the notions of cosmical facts and relations, which it makes use of to constitute the sensuous imagery of its parabolic form, nor to that representation of the succession, in point of order and time, of the several creations which it gives as adapting itself to those notions. It is to the religious doctrine which the utterance, viewed as a parable, embodies, and to this alone, that the seal of inspiration either (we may venture to believe) was designed to attach, or would be likely to be felt to attach by those whom it addressed. Since those to whom it came would not be led to feel that it concerned itself about their cosmical views, inasmuch as its form was in fact fashioned in harmony with those views, and would, therefore, in this respect, not solicit their thoughts at all, there was nothing in the accessories of the utterance to prevent their attention being fixed exclusively upon that grand and glorious Revelation of a Creator which the Record so commandingly



held forth. It was in this way that its purpose as a religious revelation could alone be the most effectively accomplished.

For, in reference to this particular point, let us again glance over the details. We shall be going over much the same ground as we have already traversed; yet we may find it worth the while to do so, in order to estimate the relative bearing of the several particulars upon the view which I am advocating, of the whole representation having been designed as parabolical.

On the First Day the Divine Workman is shown creating, out of nothing, the heavens and the earth, in their first rude, undigested material; in this chaotic *moles* darkness absorbed light, and water overmastered the more solid elements. Already, however, the Spirit of God enwrapped this product of creative energy with Its vivific influence, ready to evoke the order and the several forms of being which God should further see fit to produce. Nothing could be effected without light, in which the work to be elaborated might be discerned. The first thing, therefore, now to be done was to separate the light out from the before intermingling darkness; upon which the now distinct darkness and light, made into the serviceable and orderly seasons of night and day, receive their names from the great Artificer, as portions of His work now completed.

On the Second Day was fashioned that glorious crystalline vault which overarches the world, and which parts off the waters which were under from those unknown waters which were above. This work (it would be felt) suitably comes next, because it provides clear scope for the subsequent development of this mundane creation. It would also be felt, further, that so magnificent a product of operative power and

skill might well occupy an entire day's elaboration to effect it.

On the Third Day the hitherto intermixed elements of water and solid ground are separated, in order to become serviceable spheres for the business of the great Artificer, to be exercised in them severally; after which God proceeds, on the same day, to command the dry land to clothe itself with verdure and every kind of vegetable life.

Having thus, in part, made provision for the animated nature which was to be brought into being, and especially for the human race, it was suitable, however, before proceeding to that part of the creative work, to perfect the provision necessary for its well-being by the creation of the sun, moon and stars; these, accordingly, were next made, and then set in the firmament, to revolve in those different orbits in which we see them moving. This occupies the Fourth Day.

The Fifth Day was taken up with replenishing the wide world of waters with its living inhabitants, and with filling the air with its varied classes of winged fowl.

On the Sixth Day, the work now approaching its final consummation, the dry land receives the manifold classes of living beings fitted for that element; and then, last of all, everything having been prepared for his being ushered into the world, man, the image of God, is created, and endued with sovereignty over all that lower nature by which he is surrounded.

The reader will observe that the immediate object of this cursory review has been to draw out the feature, that the delineation is carefully adjusted to these views of cosmical phenomena, which, in fact, until within a very few generations, have been generally entertained

amongst mankind, and that the order of sequency observed in the succession of the several parts of the creative work, is just that which would fall in with the feeling of fitness corresponding to those views. This is, I apprehend, the true explanation alike of the one circumstance and of the other. The utterance, fashioned into the form of a parable, might reasonably be expected to speak thus of *cosmical objects* ; it might reasonably be expected, also, thus to describe the *succession of creative acts*. A different way of describing the objects of nature, or a different way of portraying their successive production, would at once have been wholly uncalled for in a representation which on the very face of it appears to be a parable, and have hindered, rather than helped forward, the acceptance of the religious truth which it aims to impress upon the mind.

Is it not, therefore, unreasonable to urge these notices of cosmical facts, and this method of shadowing forth the work of creation, as constituting objections to the Divine inspiration of the utterance? If it were a plain history, there *might*, perhaps, have been some ground (I do not affirm that there would have been, though I cannot myself *see* the way for escaping from the inference), but, however, there *might*, perhaps, have been some ground for urging such objections. But seeing that its whole construction indicates that it does not profess to be a history, but a religious revelation clothed in the form of a parable; and seeing that an inspired parable not merely *permits* the introduction of the thoughts and notions of men without thereby giving them its sanction, but, in order to do its proper work, may even, in some instances (and this appears to be one), find it the most fitting, if not necessary, to do so, —the inference that these features of the first section of

Genesis bespeak its being a mere human utterance, is proved to be in itself altogether ungrounded ; while other evidence, demonstrating the Divine sanction which attaches to this part of Scripture, shows the inference to be false.

## VI.

## THE RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE PARABLE.

AFTER what has been already said, it might be thought almost superfluous to dwell at any length upon the *purport* of the great parable of creation, viewing it as a means for conveying religious truth. There are some points, however, which it may be well to particularise, and there is one which will claim a somewhat fuller discussion.

*First*, it is plain to the most cursory reader, that, as has been already repeatedly stated, the one great doctrine which is here inculcated, is that of God being the Maker of the universe,—that the present order of the universe is due, not to a Fate, or a Power of necessary self-evolution, or a Soul essentially and eternally dwelling in the world, or some other of those imaginary forms of being in the conception of which the intellect of man has lost itself while endeavouring to escape from the notion of a Personal God; but to a Living Person, existing before the world, and therefore apart from the world, a Being who wills, and operates, and loves,—an object, therefore, as would readily be inferred, of prayer and spiritual communion, to be obeyed, trusted, loved. Such a God this section reveals to us as the Creator of the universe. And we may suppose that it is for the purpose of making this im-

pression the more vivid, that the Great Creator is here portrayed to us, in a form of description, as graphic as dramatic representation can make it, speaking, commanding, working, approving ; till at length, under the hands of the Almighty Artificer, the whole of the vast fabric is perfected, owning itself in every part to be the product of His only power.

And let us look at the result. This short passage of Scripture has served to stamp upon the minds of God's people, in all ages, the conviction that God is the Creator of all things with an ineffaceable depth and distinctness, such as has caused the notion to be regarded as the essential characteristic of all true religious belief. So effectually, indeed, has this utterance done the work which, it is plain, it was principally designed to do, that one might almost doubt whether any further proof of its Divine origin needs to be offered. The strong and indelible persuasion which it alone has sufficed to produce of this fundamental truth, is of itself strong evidence for its inspiration. It may say to the believing myriads throughout all ages, "We need no letters of commendation : the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord."

All other points of religious instruction which the parable embodies are subordinate and ancillary to this. Yet there are such offering themselves for consideration.

We may notice as a *second*, the high admiration which the utterance bids us entertain towards the several parts of creation, and especially man, as the workmanship of God. It is not for nothing that we read the oft-repeated statement that *God saw that it was good*, and the affirmation at the close, that *God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was good*

*exceedingly*. The frequent reiteration appears designed to impress our minds with the noble character of God's workmanship; it bids us, in effect, to look at it with wonder and delight, to recognise in it the Divinity of its Author, and not to be afraid of extolling its excellence,—if only we bear in mind that it is an emanation, a transcript, of the infinitely excellent perfection of God, and that, therefore, it serves to magnify the glory of God. We know the tendency which has ever been rife in the childhood and early youth of nations, to eye the glorious works of nature with an intensity of wonder and love which has led men on to idolatrous forms of religion of never-ending variety. The antidote to this tendency is furnished in this utterance, by its converting that glowing admiration of the beauties and glories of nature, which in its perversion has been so apt to lead into deadly sin, into a form of Divine homage, a means of quickening the sentiment of adoring reverence, directed towards God as its alone Author.

A *third* point of religious instruction which it communicates, is the especial relation in which man stands to God. The general tenor of the representation—leading up to man, as the highest of all created beings in the world, for the appearance of whom all the rest was preparatory, to whom all was made subject, in whom all found its crown and head—strongly betokens how dear this creature of His power is to His Maker, how honourable and precious. We cannot help feeling, also, how vividly the Divine complacency and benevolence beam forth upon this favoured creature, centring upon him with a lustre outshining far the complacency and benevolence which are seen, however, shedding their illumination upon all the other works of God too; manifestly it is just here, in the whole of creation, that

they find their most delightful point of attraction. For, here again, we need not be afraid of over-estimating the gloriousness of the Divine workmanship, as long as we bear in mind that it *is* His workmanship—that this noblest work of all is yet the Son of God (Luke iii. 38), only good and dear as reflecting *His* image, and owning its subordination to *Him*.

It is obvious to remark how admirably this view of man, as standing in a relation to God which is borne by none other of His creatures, prepares the way for the revelation of those many condescensions, in which the Divine goodness appears in later scriptures stooping to this favoured creature in all ages; and especially for that last and most wonderful condescension of all, when the Eternal Son Himself stooped to take upon Him our nature, and to appear walking upon earth as very man. The view which this section gives of the especial nearness of man to God, seems to be a sort of key-note to the whole of Scripture; and this again furnishes no slight presumption for the Divinity of its origin.

There is a *fourth* point, the statement of which I approach with somewhat less confidence; for it is one which I fear many will not be disposed to recognise as so clearly traceable as those which have been hitherto specified, and which is certainly bound up with questions on which different opinions have been expressed by men of the highest standing in Biblical learning, and in heartiness of Christian belief.

I would premise that its recognition is not, so far as I can see, *essential* to the adoption of the views now stated in reference to the character and bearing of the first section of Genesis. The ground hitherto taken has been, I trust, shown to be trustworthy and stable,



and such as may be maintained without additional support. A difficulty, however, is still left upon our hands, which we should be glad to be able to dispose of ; and it is to the solution of this difficulty that we must next direct our attention.

The difficulty is this : Why does this divine utterance represent the work of creation as accomplished in Six Days ? Can we discover any ground for this, either in the actual facts of the world's creation, or in the exigencies of the parable form in which it has been seen fit to clothe the doctrine of the Creation, or in the religious teaching which the utterance, viewed as a parable, was intended to inculcate ?

No solution of this difficulty is given, hardly any indeed attempted, by any of those theories of interpretation which have hitherto solicited attention amongst us. It is not afforded by that set forth by Hugh Miller and Dr. McCausland. A very large number of eras may be marked out or imagined as divisions of the cosmical history, beginning as this history does from the first (supposed) nebular phasis of the solar system, and proceeding onwards till at length we come to the geological periods, and through them down to the creation of man ; amongst which the selection of the six period-days which this scheme has made especially prominent, appears in itself in the highest degree arbitrary, while it leaves the reason for the specification of the number of days in the record as being six, altogether untouched. The older scheme, again, which supposes the record a piece of plain history, revealing to us that God actually fashioned the present form of the world in six days, leaves it unexplained, and it must be acknowledged was not bound to explain, *why* the work was done in six days ; but, if

we were otherwise at liberty to accept this scheme of interpretation, so far as it relates to the Six Days of work, it abandons us in a condition of helpless perplexity when we come to inquire what was the One Day's rest. For if these six days were literally six diurnal spaces of time, what imaginable interpretation is there to be offered of that seventh diurnal space of time during which God is represented as holding his Sabbath ?

Here, again, I may remark that it would be rash to affirm that the solution of our present difficulty never can be gained out of the actual history of the creation ; for who can venture to say what discoveries in this branch of science may not yet be made ? But so far as we may judge from what is offered in this way by the schemes of interpretation which have hitherto been broached, founded on the supposition of the first section of Genesis being in a proper sense historical, it does not seem very likely that the explanation of the circumstance that the Sacred Record appropriates seven days to the work of creation, will ever be supplied to us from this quarter. And, indeed, if there be any truth in that view which it has been the purpose of these pages to set forth, there is no ground for positively expecting it. For although this view does not set aside the possibility of there being some real historical basis answering to the description which the first section gives of the transactions of these seven days—for the sense of inspired utterances is often seen to glance forth in other directions besides the one which seems originally contemplated, following out subtle analogies present to the mind of the Spirit, though not at once discernible to us — yet the supposition that the section is a parable makes it wholly unnecessary for

the understanding of its proper import to believe that it has any such strictly historical basis ; and, therefore, we are led to inquire whether we may not find the solution which we are in quest of, either in the exigencies, or at least the proprieties, of the parable form in which the work of the creation is represented, or in the religious instruction which it is the purpose of the Record to convey.

*Some* help can certainly be derived from these two sources. Since it was the object of this exordium of Scripture to set forth the creatorship of God, and since the form chosen for that purpose was that of describing the creation of the universe under the particular notion of *workmanship*, it may well have been accounted a suitable shape to give to the description, that the universe should be represented as the result of one week's operation of God, viz., six days of work, and then one day of rest as the proper appendage to the six days of work. A *week* of divine operation was appropriated to the creation, and no less, because the universe is a work of such immensity and magnificence as to demand some considerable space of time to be allotted for its production, even though the Almighty himself was the maker ; whence also the Seventh Day was added as a day of rest after the accomplishment of so vast a work. On the other hand, *one* week may have been selected as a suitable period to be assigned, and no more, by reason of the greatness of His power who was the doer of the work. To meet both of these requirements, viz., that of impressing the mind with the greatness of the creation, and that of exalting the almightiness of the Creator, — the form in which the parable should be moulded may be thought to have been very suitably adjusted, when it was made to represent the production of the universe

under the image of one such week of God's existence as is here portrayed.

*So far* the generality of my readers who are disposed to accept the general scheme of interpretation now propounded will find, I apprehend, no difficulty in going along with me. But I must ask them to go a step or two further.

In the twentieth chapter of Exodus, the Fourth Commandment briefly recapitulates the substance of the first section of Genesis, making it the ground for the observance of the sabbath on the part of men, that God, having rested on the Seventh Day of the week of creation, blessed the Seventh Day of the week and hallowed it. Similarly, in the thirty-first chapter, the Lord, speaking of the sabbath, says: "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed:" that is, This shall be a token of harmony between Me and the children of Israel, that they are willing to have respect to the pattern which the record of creation holds out to them, and to follow it, by resting on the seventh day of every week, because I also am set forth as having rested on the Seventh Day of the week of creation.

Now in what relation do these references to the week of creation made in the first giving of the Law stand to the first section of Genesis? Are we to suppose that the proclamation of the Fourth Commandment from Sinai was the first announcement to the children of Israel of this account of God's creation of the world, and that Moses afterwards received by Divine inspiration the fuller record which we now have in our hands, and incorporated it with the rest of the Pentateuch? Or, rather, is not this an account of the matter which, though

not absolutely impossible to receive, is yet one which we should only have recourse to in case of none other of a more obvious character presenting itself? Moreover, if the first section of Genesis was a suggestion of inspiration given to Moses subsequently to the proclamation of the Decalogue, and for the purpose in part of explaining its language, would not the designation of the Divine Being employed through the whole of it, instead of being so remarkably peculiar as we see it is (cf. p. 75), have been rather that of *the Lord*, Jehovah, which we find both in the Decalogue and in the thirty-first chapter?

The more *obvious* supposition is the reverse one to this: namely, that the week of creation is referred to in the Law because it was a notion already established in the minds of God's people by a revelation previously in existence. If there is no stringent proof to offer for this hypothesis, at any rate it presents itself to the mind more readily than the other, and therefore should not be set aside without some good reason.

And what reason is there *against* our supposing this revelation of the week of creation to have been given previously? I am not myself aware of any; on the contrary, the probabilities of the case appear to lie the other way; they favour the belief that the revelation had been given, not only before the giving of the Law, but long before.

Is it not likely that a revelation establishing, as this does, that which is in truth the fundamental notion of all religion,—not giving an account of some particular dispensation of God, or of some particular interposition relative only to certain of the race, but setting forth that great primary truth of God's being the Creator, which was of the most vital concern to mankind in general,—is it not likely that such a revelation would have been

accorded to man early—nay, to the very first man that was brought into the world? Were the Israelites the first who needed to be well grounded in this persuasion? Was it not as requisite for Abraham, for Noah, for Enoch, for Adam?

I grant that such reasoning by itself is never of *very much* force: reasonings beforehand as to what methods would be most proper or most likely for Heaven to pursue in making religious communications to the world, can never of themselves afford stable grounds for belief as to what methods Heaven has actually seen fit to pursue. Bishop Butler has well taught us how incompetent judges we are of such questions. Nevertheless, such reasonings, though not in themselves conclusive, are yet not therefore without some weight, especially in a case like this, where there is no doubt a considerable dearth of historical evidence to guide us to more certain grounds of persuasion.

What in the way of historical evidence there is, goes, I venture to think, to favour the conclusion that this revelation was communicated early. That there is an intimate connection between this revelation and the institution of the sabbath is plain; the closing sentence of the first section, *God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it (made it holy); because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made*, clearly points to a setting apart of the seventh day of the week as holy, and therefore could not fail to be taken as binding upon those who accepted the revelation, the sanctification (more or less) of the seventh day as the Sabbath. We need not infer that such sanctification, if regarded in the pre-Mosaic ages, was so strict and formal as it was made to be by the Law. No doubt, in those earlier ages, all forms of religious

observance would be much freer, much less rigidly formal, than they appear to be as moulded by the severer genius of the Law. Nevertheless, if the revelation embodied in the first section of Genesis had been communicated early in the world's history, it must of course have been followed by some degree of hallowing of the seventh day of the week. And, conversely, if there is any evidence whatever of such regard being rendered to the seventh day in very early times, such evidence goes far also to make it probable that the revelation found in the exordium of Genesis had been as early communicated ; for the revelation would furnish an adequate explanation of the observance.

The experience which we have had of the different ways in which learned and thoughtful men have concluded in reference to the first appointment of the sabbath, makes it idle to expect that the evidence for any particular conclusion will be found so convincing as to overpower all doubt. Perhaps one reason why the evidence offered by the advocates of its early institution has been disregarded by so many, is that it has been urged as being more stringently conclusive than it really is ; though another reason may also be, that those who have set it aside have been beforehand indisposed to accept it, in consequence of a strong previous conviction, drawn from a possibly mistaken apprehension of what the New Testament teaches respecting the sabbath, that the sabbatical observance was simply a part of Judaism, and owed its existence to the Mosaic legislation.

We find, however, that other institutions incorporated into the Mosaic law and forming most important elements in its constitution, were in existence before, some of them even from the beginning of human history ;

such as distinctions between clean and unclean animals, bloody sacrifices, and meat-offerings. This consideration should make us ready to find something of the same kind also in reference to the sabbath. This very important element of the Mosaic law, in fact, one of its most important elements, we may by analogy even *expect* to discover existing earlier, or if not expect it, at least be not unprepared for the fact, not think it incongruous with the rest of the history, if we should find it existing earlier. This consideration may serve to outweigh the indisposition which some feel to read its remote antiquity in those somewhat dim traces (for such we must in all honesty confess them) which have been relied upon as proofs in this question.

These points of evidence are the following :—

The sabbath certainly was known before the proclamation of the law from Sinai. This is ascertained by the 16th chapter of Exodus. It is true that the same chapter also seems to show that its observance, perhaps even the knowledge of it, was partial among the Israelites ; but this circumstance is readily accounted for from their previous history, and does not in the least militate against its having been an institution of very remote antiquity.

The reckoning of time by weeks is to be traced in Genesis l. 10, and in Genesis xxix. 27 (*week of years*), and even much earlier in the history of the Deluge, Genesis viii. 10, 12. It existed also among many ancient nations, which were so far as we know wholly unaffected by Jewish traditions. How is this division of time to be accounted for ? Some have sought it in a quadripartite division of the lunar month, which is a little more than twenty-nine and a half days ; but considering that numeration by tens, derived, no doubt, from



the number of the fingers, has always prevailed amongst mankind, we might have expected that the division of the month which would most naturally have offered itself would have been rather by decades, as it actually was *e.g.* at Athens. Certainly a decade approaches much nearer to an integral part of the month than a week does.

To this, we may add the sacredness and the notion of perfection which were attached to the number seven.

All this does not (it must be admitted) constitute very decisive proof. Yet all of it *agrees* with the supposition of an early institution of the sabbath; and, more than this, it is all more easily explained upon this supposition than in any other way. Now this is historical evidence of real weight; not such that if it had stood alone it would have commanded our conviction; but superadded as it is to the analogy of the fact that other leading institutions of the Mosaic law had an earlier existence, and also to the probability that such a revelation as that contained in the first section of Genesis would have been given early, and favoured likewise by the peculiarity of style already noted, which renders it in some degree probable that this first section was not originally composed by Moses, but was incorporated into his work from an earlier tradition, — this whole body of reasoning, unopposed by any inherent improbability, and unweakened by any historical evidence tending to an opposite conclusion, appears to constitute a sufficient ground for the persuasion, that this primary revelation of the Creator, together with the observance of the sabbath resulting from it, formed an element in human history from its very earliest commencement.

Let man be conceived of as he was early in his

dwelling upon this earth; let it be supposed that God in His mercy sees fit to reveal Himself to him, clearly, and in a manner especially impressive upon the imagination, as the Creator of the world; let it be supposed further, that God sees fit to associate with this revelation an external observance, such as shall secure the permanence of religious feeling in general, and in particular keep alive the vivid impression of His creatorship; finally, let it be seen that the particular distribution of time, whereby every seventh day should be sequestered from worldly business and devoted more or less to religion, was in the highest degree salutary to man in all his interests; supposing all this,—and there is nothing supposed here which is not completely in unison with all that we know to be true,—would it not appear a suitable form in which the revelation and its attendant outward observance should be cast, that the work of creation should be announced in a parable exhibiting God as working *six* days and resting on the *seventh*; thus at one and the same time holding forth to view the creatorship of God in the most vivid and impressive form imaginable, and also exhibiting the Most High as a kind of example to men, that they, by observing this distribution of time in an analogous manner, should both keep in mind the religious truth thus taught them, and also feel themselves in harmony with Him whom they obediently thus honoured?

Is there anything at all unreasonable in this supposition thus conceived of as *à priori*? and is not the supposition further so borne out by the body of reasoning just before adduced as to be removed out of the region of mere hypothesis and to be brought into that of very high probability, and even of historic truth?

If this be so, then the particular circumstance that

the form of the parable of creation has been so moulded as to represent the work as done in *six* days followed by a *seventh* day of rest, seems to be with much probability accounted for by a *fourth point of religious instruction* which it was intended to convey, besides those *three* which have been above (pp. 95 — 98) particularised. That is to say, this particular form was chosen in order to inculcate upon the worshippers of God the observance of the sabbath, which was to be between God and them a sign, connecting them with their Maker by a bond of loyalty and reverence which would be alike promotive of their religious feeling, and also replete with advantages to them in regard even to their secular well-being.

And *because* the fourfold teaching conveyed by this parable of creation had been hereby instilled into the religious mind from early times and become incorporated among its primary convictions, *therefore* it was that the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue gathered it up in the reference which it makes to it, and which would at once come home to the deeply-settled religious sympathies of those who were addressed: *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

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